



Ssekitto and Capt. Ketigan Mugisha donating blood at Nakasongola Military Hospital on Tuesday. Photo by Eddie Ssejjoba

Army joins blood donation drive

NAKASONGOLA

By Eddie Ssejjoba

The Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF) have embarked on a nationwide blood donation campaign in all their units to help end the current scarcity in health facilities.

Maj. Dr Robert Zavuga, the head of Nakasongola Military Hospital, which on Tuesday launched a four-day blood donation drive, said the army is one of the major users of blood and, therefore, ought to give back to Ugandans who have always donated it to them.

Zavuga said soldiers often suffer horrific injuries during combat operations, which require blood transfusion and, therefore, they needed to take a lead in the campaign.

He was on Tuesday speaking to *New Vision* after kicking off the donation drive at Nakasongola Military Hospital.

The drive, which ends today, targeted over 3,000 donors from the Nakasongola camp, which comprises a military barracks,

ARMY BOSS' VIEW

"This drive is the first of its kind the army is getting involved directly. It is easier for us because we are organised and hope this will help to reduce the blood shortage. I used to regularly donate blood while under the United Nations mission in Mogadishu, Somalia, where I learnt that it is healthy to regularly donate to reduce on the excess blood.



Maj. Dr Robert Zavuga

hospital, two schools (Nakasongola Army Secondary School and Primary School), Luwero Industries, the Special Forces Unit and the Marine Unit.

The army leadership in Nakasongola, led by the UPDF chief of medical services, Brig. Dr Ambrose Musinguzi, Zavuga and the hospital administrator, Lt John Baptist Ninsiima, mobilised all soldiers, their families and medical workers who qualify to donate

blood. Zavuga said the response was good on the first day.

Some students were, however, rejected for being underage, while other soldiers whose blood pressure was high were also told to wait until it normalises.

Allen Kikomeko, a senior nursing officer from the Uganda Blood Transfusion Services in Nakasero who headed the team in Nakasongola, said they targeted at least 300 units. She said the

response from the military barracks was encouraging and was optimistic they would hit their target.

Kikomeko said the donation was part of the countrywide campaign to end a crisis that had hit the Nakasero Blood Bank.

At least nine medical workers were on the team, some concentrating in the two schools where they accepted students above the age of 18 to donate blood.

The same team last week went to Oliver Tambo Leadership School Kaweweta, where they obtained over 100 units of blood.

After Nakasongola, they camped in Kitangaala, Kakooze and Cornerstone secondary schools.

Some of the donors included David Ssekitto, a medical sonographer at Nakasongola Military Hospital, who said it was his seventh time to donate blood.

"Every time I get the opportunity I donate blood because I know its value to the sick who need it," he said.

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