

“Sometime back because of a pending debt with UBC and

media... first require an amenu....

Immunisation survey stalls as researchers fight over Shs300m

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KAMPALA. At least 360 researchers have withdrawn from a Shs2.7b immunisation survey, and petitioned Ministry of Health, accusing a senior doctor at Makerere University of ‘abusing’ their facilitation.

The researchers claim that they collected data in a yet to be finalised donor funded immunisation survey, but were not facilitated to a tune of Shs300m. They conducted the survey in February but have since withdrawn from the project and accused the lead consultant of lack of transparency and respect.

Some of the researchers have alleged that their money was sent by donors but was abused by Dr Juliet Babirye of the Makerere University School of Public Health, who doubles as a lead consultant in the survey.

Mr Geoffery Mutole, one of the affected researchers, said he has not been paid Shs800,000 for his work in Bushenyi, Mitooma, Kasese and Rubirizi districts.

In an interview with *Saturday Monitor*, the Health minister, Dr Jane Ruth Aceng, acknowledged researchers’ grievances but indicated that she has also written to Dr Babirye seeking an explanation and why she has not delivered a report of the survey findings.

“It was brought to my attention that there are people (researchers) who were not paid and I included that matter in



Healthcare. A child is immunised against polio in Kalangala recently. An immunisation survey has stalled following a disagreement among researchers pay, among other issues. PHOTO BY RACHEL MABALA

my letter to Dr Babirye. I don’t know why they were not paid,” the minister said, adding that the agreed time frame for the survey had expired without Dr Babirye handing in the survey outcomes.

The survey was aimed at getting an independent scientifically safe and unbiased immunisation coverage for all antigens. It was also aimed at verifying whether children have been getting the required antigens during immunisation campaigns. These include: BCG,

Measles, HPV, Polio, Tetanus and Hepatitis B, among others.

According to a source at the World Health Organisation (WHO), the survey results were expected at the beginning of June.

“The national consultant, Dr Babirye has not been forthcoming and we have not received any communication and report from her,” the source said.

WHO contributed about Shs1.1b to the Uganda National Immunisation Survey 2017 through the Health ministry but

they have neither received the research report nor accountability of the funds.

United Nations Children’s Fund (Unicef) contributed about Shs980m and the Clinton Health Access Initiative also provided technical and physical support.

The source at WHO also indicated that they have heard that researchers and data collectors have not been paid their allowances but referred this newspaper to the Health ministry which received the funds.

Complaints

In her July 29 resignation letter from the position of survey coordinator, Dr Anne Najjuka accuses Dr Babirye of lack of respect and transparency in the issues concerning the survey.

“You regularly disrespected me...I have not been paid or compensated for any of the work I have done,” she adds.

Dr Fredrick Makumbi of the School of Public Health also resigned from the survey on similar grounds.

Although attempts to speak to Dr Babirye’s failed, in one of her email correspondences, she accuses the researchers of failing to complete the work. “Next time you get to the field please be cooperative in the field and be available to complete the work,” she said while asking the researchers to be patient.

She also indicated that the researchers have failed to return 38 phones used in data collection process.