

By Martin Kitubi

Ugandans seeking treatment in public hospitals, education in government institutions and other essential public services are increasingly bearing the burden of a widening staffing crisis after unfilled government vacancies surged to 306,635 positions, a new report has revealed.

The latest *State of Human Resource in Public Service Report 2025* by the public service ministry paints a grim picture of a public sector struggling to function with barely half of its required workforce.

The report indicates that government is currently operating at only 58% staffing capacity, despite recent recruitment efforts.

Data from the ministry shows that although the approved public service structure increased by 23,173 positions (from 634,841 in 2024 to 658,014 in 2025), actual recruitment only added 18,138 workers, raising the number of public servants from 356,504 to 374,642.

This left the country with 306,635 unfilled positions by December 2025, up from

295,361 vacancies recorded in 2024, representing a 3.82% increase.

The report, released yesterday at the National Records Centre and Archives in Wandegaya, Kampala, warns that frontline sectors such as health and education are the worst affected.

Health facilities, particularly referral hospitals and lower health centres, emerged among the hardest hit institutions.

According to the report, referral hospitals are operating with 69% unfilled positions, severely affecting access to specialised treatment and surgery.

Out of the approved 25,959 positions in referral hospitals, only 7,930 are filled.

Primary healthcare facilities, including district hospitals, health centre IIIs and health centre IVs, are also grappling with acute staffing shortages. Of the 128,231 approved positions, only 43,567 have been filled, leaving nearly two-



Rogers Irumba Kaija

thirds vacant.

The staffing crisis, analysts at the event said, means patients are likely to experience longer waiting hours, delayed surgeries and limited access to specialised healthcare services.

EDUCATION SECTOR

The education sector is equally strained. The report indicates that out of the 266,747 approved positions for primary and secondary education, only 179,667 are occupied, leaving

a gap of 87,080 teachers and education workers.

Public universities are also struggling with critical shortages that experts say could undermine research, innovation and quality learning.

The universities have an approved structure of 24,824 staff, but only 8,451 positions are filled, leaving 16,373 vacancies, equivalent to 66% of the required workforce.

LOCAL GOVTS, SECURITY

Local governments also remain significantly understaffed, with only 43,798 positions filled out of the approved 76,307 jobs.

Security agencies are equally affected. Uganda Police has an approved structure of 69,828 personnel, but only 48,090 positions are occupied, while the Uganda Prisons Service has filled just 14,896 positions out of the approved 42,178, leaving 27,282 positions vacant.

Government ministries and departments are also operating below capacity. The report shows that ministries and departments have an approved structure of 29,765 positions, but only 16,206 are filled.

Meanwhile, government agencies have filled 12,037 positions out of the approved 16,897 jobs.

Catherine Bitarakwate, the ministry's permanent secretary, explained that the findings underscore the critical importance of human resource planning and management in achieving Uganda's national development aspirations.

In her message delivered by her under secretary, Rogers Irumba Kaija, Bitarakwate noted that human resources remain the engine through which government policies, programmes and services are implemented.

"Therefore, the availability of accurate, timely and reliable human resource statistics is indispensable for effective policy formulation, workforce planning, budgeting, monitoring and institutional performance improvement," Bitarakwate said.

James Tegyeza, the commissioner for statistics, monitoring and evaluation at the ministry, said the report is an important reference document that will not only support government

UNPROMOTED STAFF

The report has further highlighted that the majority of the public servants have waited for too long to be promoted and, therefore, earned lower salaries.

According to the report, a total of 93,683 staff, representing 25% of the public servants, have waited for at least 12 years without promotion, while 103,803 others, representing 28% of the civil servants, have waited for 6 to 11 years without promotion.

Under the public service system, the staff on government payroll are entitled to a promotion after every three years in service.

This implies that at least 53% of the current civil servants have waited beyond the official period to earn a promotion.

"The report is intended to support informed decision making, policy formulation, workforce planning, and institutional performance improvement across the public sector," he noted.

THE POSSIBLE IMPACT

Senior officials at the release of the report warned that unless government urgently addresses the staffing gaps, service delivery in critical sectors could continue to deteriorate, affecting millions of Ugandans who rely on public institutions for healthcare, education and security services.

Prof Umar Kakumba, an economist and former deputy vice-chancellor in charge of academic affairs at Makerere University, warned that the human resource gaps at public universities mean that they will struggle to conduct research.

While the Government is establishing public universities per region, Kakumba warned that these are bound to struggle due to lack of qualified staff.

"We need to revise the policy of creating public universities per region because we do not have enough staff to work there. These universities are both critical and international institutions, but we need

Kakumba recommended the Government transform universities into colleges of established universities to bolster before they can finally stand-alone institutions.

This, he said, will enable the Government to utilise the little resources supporting recruitment and research.

"We have about five universities that are standing alone. These should be supported. But the public universities should serve as constituent colleges of faculties of these five," he said.

"Look at Makerere University Business School. Serving as a constituent college of Makerere University has helped it grow naturally. Now, they even have the capacity to stand alone. The process with the other public universities."

In a separate interview, Onesmus Mugenyi, analyst and deputy executive director of Advocates Coalition for Development and Environment, warned that the staff gaps will derail government performance targets.

According to Mugenyi, the Government will struggle to enhance service delivery if these human resource gaps are not addressed.

"It is alarming that we have these gaps. This is the time for everyone in the Government to lobby to ensure these gaps are filled on time. It may not be at once, but we must have a proper plan on how this will be handled," he said.

"According to what the public service ministry report is saying, we cannot achieve service delivery. These are the things we want to see captured in the national budget."

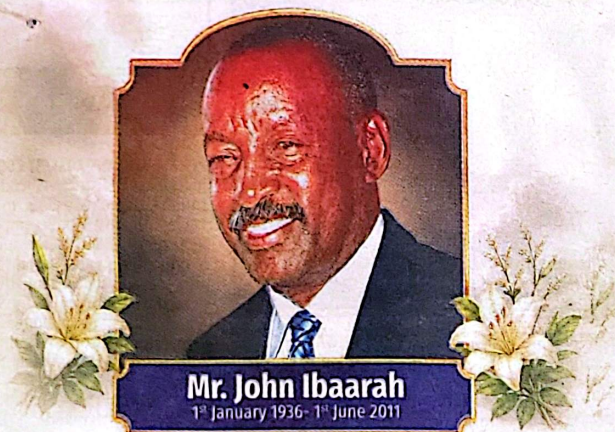
Prof. Francis Omaswa, the former director general of health services, noted that the gaps at the health sector confirms the African challenge of fewer job openings and that there are many unemployed health workers.

The human resource gap, he said, has been worsened by immigration of labour, with many of the country's health workers opting to work outside the country due to favourable terms there.

According to Omaswa, all is not lost. The report, he said, should be

Thanksgiving Service

15 YEARS OF GOD'S FAITHFULNESS



Mr. John Ibaarah

1st January 1936- 1st June 2011

With hearts full of gratitude to God for His unfailing faithfulness and sustaining grace through the years, **Mrs. Joy Ibaarah** and family warmly invite family & friends to Thanksgiving Prayers marking fifteen years since the passing of **Mr. John Ibaarah**.

Though years have passed, his love, wisdom, and memories continue to live in our hearts and inspire all who knew him.

The Thanksgiving Prayers will be held during the 10:00 AM Service at All Saints' Cathedral, Nakuru.