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Male, female patients share ward in Busia health centre

Challenge. The facility has one room which serves as an outpatient department, a maternity wing and a children's ward.

BY DAVID AWORI
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BUSIA. Male and female patients at Busitema Health Centre III in Busia District share one ward due to lack of space.

According to Ms Imelda Nafula, a nursing officer who has worked at the health centre for the last five years, the facility has only one room which serves as an outpatient department, a maternity wing and a children's ward.

"It's an admission ward for all the categories of patients," Ms Nafula says, adding that this leaves patients at risk of contracting infections and also violates their right to privacy.

She adds that the same ward also serves as a store for expired drugs and other materials.

"This has continued to put lives of patients and the health staff at risk from the hazardous medical waste," she says.

"We are aware of the conditions at the facility but we have nothing to do now until we have resources,"
PAUL OGUTTU, ACTING DISTRICT CHAIRPERSON

The health centre, which has 14 health workers, receives more than 150 patients a day. When this newspaper visited the facility recently, it found that hospital also lacks a dispensing room, forcing patients and medical staff to sit on the some benches.

Expectant mothers deliver from one bed placed in a corridor.

"We have on several occasions notified the authorities

been done to change the poor state of affairs at the health centre III," Ms Nafula said.

Mr Canan Wanyama, a resident, says although the health centre was constructed to help residents stop trekking long distances in search of medical attention elsewhere, the facility is not helping matters.

"This area is isolated; pregnant mothers and children are walking long distances to access health services but the facility is not equipped," he says.

"Nothing has changed 50 years since its establishment despite the government extending piped water and electricity," he adds.

Mr Hannington Bakumba says they have decided as resi-

dents to contribute towards the construction of maternity ward, including other amenities such as washrooms and toilets.

"We are tired of waiting for the NGOs and government. We will do it ourselves," says Mr Bakumba.

The acting district chairperson, Mr Paul Oguttu, says they have a programme to improve

on the general infrastructure of the health facilities but they are constrained by low funding from government.

Mr Oguttu also applauds the residents' initiative.

"This initiative by locals to embark on construction of a maternity for our mothers is a good idea because the district has no such funds and would take us 10 years to think of constructing a maternity ward at facility," Mr Oguttu, said.

The district health officer, Dr Robert Aputa, acknowledges most of the health facilities in the district lack enough space.

"The facilities face similar challenges but we are working through lobbying to improve the service delivery," he says.



Dilapidated. Busitema Health Centre, which was constructed in 1967. PHOTO BY DAVID AWORI

ABOUT FACILITY

Established in 1967 as a health centre II, the facility serves patients from several sub-counties, including Busitema, Buteba and Sikuda. Since its establishment, it has remained with one block, hence the congestion.