

# Understaffing, housing gaps cripple healthcare in Rukungiri

**RUKUNGIRI.** The Rukungiri District Health Officer, Dr Akasiima Mucunguzi, has decried persistent understaffing and inadequate staff accommodation, saying the challenges have significantly undermined health service delivery in the district.

While receiving an ambulance for Bwambara Health Centre III last Saturday, Dr Akasiima said the district has very few health workers, most of whom lack proper accommodation.

“The district’s health staffing level stands at 69.5 percent, yet government-provided accommodation caters for only 10 percent of the workforce. A housing unit meant for one health worker is often shared by several others because of the shortage,” he said.

Dr Akasiima added that the complaints from the public stem from the fact that “we are too few compared to the district’s growing population”.

“Yes, there are a few undisciplined staff who absent themselves or report late, but such issues cannot cripple service delivery where staffing levels are adequate,” he said.

According to the 2024 National Population and Housing Census, Rukungiri District has a population of 376,110 people, of whom 169,608 (52.3 percent) are female and 169,502 (47.7 percent) are male.

The population is served by 41 Health



Residents receive an ambulance delivered by the Ministry of Health officials in Bwambara Sub-county, Rukungiri District last week. PHOTO/RONALD KABANZA

Centre IIs, 10 Health Centre IIIs and four Health Centre IVs, staffed by a total of 417 health workers and supported by 462 Village Health Teams (VHTs).

However, many facilities, particular-

ly in hard-to-reach areas, lack electricity, have limited infrastructure and are without basic amenities such as toilets and incinerators.

At Bugangari Health Centre IV in

Bugangari Sub-county, the officer in-charge, Dr Willy Rukundo, said the facility frequently experiences drug stock-outs due to an overwhelming number of patients.

“Right now, we have run out of Artesunate. We diagnose patients and refer them to drug shops to buy the medicine, but some cannot afford it,” he said.

Similarly, at Nyakagyeme Health Centre III, a midwife, Ms Bony Kyatuhaire, said frequent stock-outs are linked to the high patient load.

“Some essential drugs run out from time to time. In Nyakagyeme Sub-county, we receive many malaria patients, and TB cases are also on the rise. Because of this, medicines for these illnesses often run out, and patients complain when we refer them to private clinics,” she said.

Speaking at the same event, the Minister for Security, Mr Jim Muhwezi, commended the government for funding the purchase of the ambulance.

“This is a great achievement and a relief to mothers who have been struggling to access timely referrals during childbirth. I thank the government for taking this important step,” he said.

Mr Muhwezi added that the issues of understaffing and drug stock-outs will be addressed.

“On drug stock-outs, I will engage the National Drug Authority to ensure medicines are delivered on time so that patients can access them. The other concerns will be reported to the relevant ministry,” he said.