

Shs600m ward gives hope to fistula patients in Lango

The facility increases the hospital's bed capacity for gynaecological services from about 12-15 beds to 45.

BY BILL OKETCH

The government has commissioned a Shs600 million gynaecology and fistula ward at Lira Regional Referral Hospital in a move aimed at improving maternal health services and restoring dignity to women suffering from childbirth-related complications.

The facility, supported by Mbarara University of Science and Technology with funding from partners in San Diego, United States, increases the hospital's bed capacity for gynaecological services from about 12-15 beds to 45.

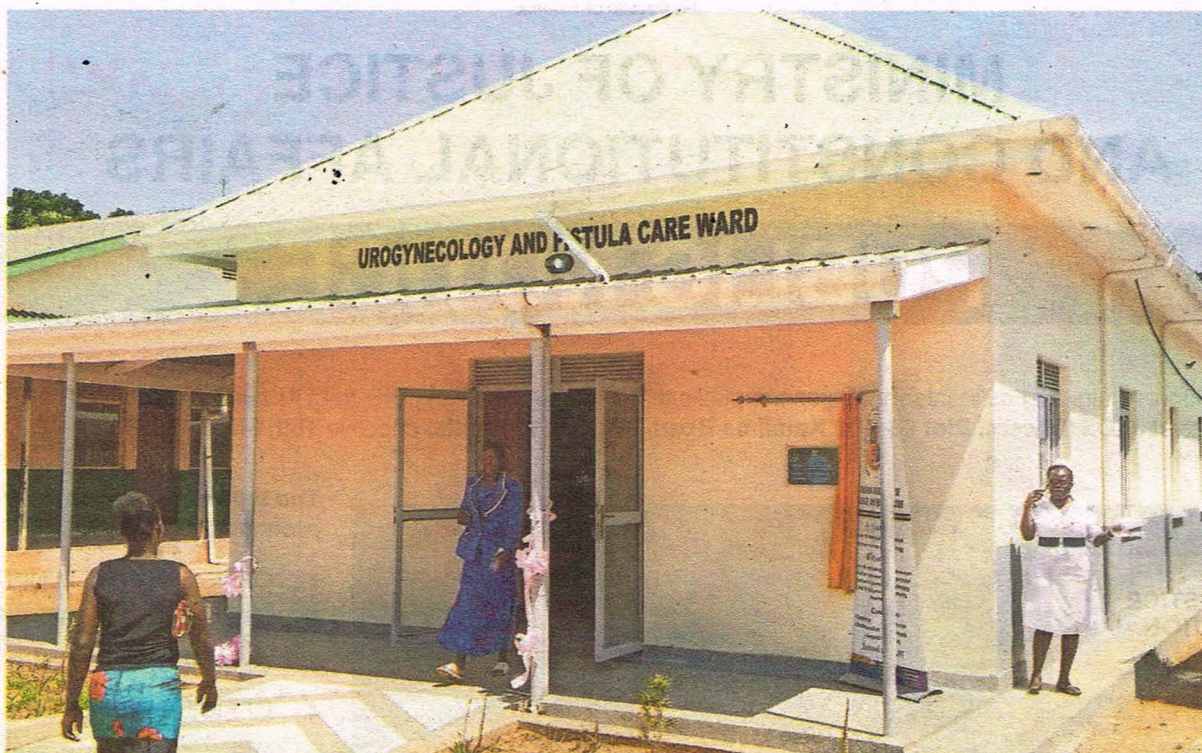
Speaking during the commissioning on Saturday, the Minister of Health, Dr Jane Ruth Aceng, said the project was completed within five months, from the groundbreaking in November last year to completion in March, demonstrating effective collaboration among institutions within the health sector.

Problem solved

Dr Aceng said the new ward will help address the long-standing problem of congestion at the hospital, which serves an estimated population of between 2.5 million and 3 million people across the Lango Sub-region and neighbouring areas.

"For a long time, we have had a ward with a bed capacity of 12 serving nearly three million people. Often, patients would be found under beds, beside beds, in corridors, and many outside in tents due to lack of space," she said.

She added that although the new 45-bed facility marks significant progress, the region still requires a much larger facility with a capacity of about 200 beds to adequately meet the demand for specialised care. Officials said the



The Shs600 million gynaecology and fistula ward at Lira Regional Referral Hospital. PHOTO/BILL OKETCH

new ward will mainly focus on treating gynaecological conditions, particularly obstetric fistula—a childbirth injury that causes uncontrollable leakage of urine or faeces and often leads to social stigma and isolation for affected women.

Dr Geoffrey Mukombi Mugisha, a principal medical officer at the Ministry of Health, said urogynaecological conditions are difficult for patients to live with and often cause significant psychological and social distress.

He emphasised the need to prioritise prevention by addressing teenage pregnancies and encouraging expectant mothers to deliver in health facilities where complications can be managed early.

"Encourage health teams to intensify efforts to fight teenage pregnancies and ensure mothers deliver in health facilities so that we prevent these

complications," Dr Mugisha said.

Dr Andrew Odur, the director of Lira Regional Referral Hospital, said the dedicated ward will significantly improve treatment for patients with

BACKGROUND

Obstetric fistula is a childbirth injury that occurs when prolonged or obstructed labour creates a hole between the birth canal and the bladder or rectum.

The condition causes uncontrollable leakage of urine or faeces. Health experts say most cases are preventable if expectant mothers deliver in health facilities where complications can be managed early.

fistula and other gynaecological conditions that have historically received less attention compared to obstetric care.

He said providing specialised space for such services will help restore dignity to women who often face stigma due to conditions such as incontinence.

Meanwhile, Associate Prof Musa Kayondo from Mbarara University Teaching Hospital said the project forms part of a broader effort to decentralise specialised urogynaecological services across Uganda.

Prof Kayondo, who pioneered the first urogynaecology and fistula surgery fellowship in East, Central and Southern Africa, said Uganda continues to face a critical shortage of specialists in the field.