

BY FELIX AINEBYOONA

MBARARA. Mbarara Regional Referral Hospital is grappling with overwhelming patient numbers amid limited space, ageing infrastructure, and a constrained budget, hospital administrators have said.

Acting hospital director, Dr Deus Twesigye revealed that the 93-year-old hospital is operating far beyond its intended capacity. This was during a tour of the facility by Inspector General of Government (IGG) Justice Aisha Nalule Batala on Wednesday.

The hospital was originally built to accommodate 270 beds, but currently has 554 beds squeezed into the same space to cope with the growing patient load.

"With narrow spaces, it becomes difficult for the medical staff to work on patients. Additionally, the plumbing and infrastructure continually breaks down," Dr Twesigye said.

He added that congestion has forced the hospital to admit some patients

Mbarara hospital grapples with high number of patients



Justice Aisha Nalule Batala, the Inspector General of Government (right), tours the hospital on Wednesday. PHOTO/FELIX AINEBYOONA

in tents and verandas, with others reportedly sleeping on the floor or under beds during peak periods.

"This space is not enough, and nurses

find it hard to operate efficiently," he said.

Dr Twesigye said the hospital's challenges are compounded by referrals

from neighbouring regional referral hospitals due to the specialised services offered in Mbarara, including neurosurgery, urology, and cancer treatment.

According to hospital records, the facility receives about 600 outpatients daily and handles between 500 and 570 inpatients every night.

Despite the heavy patient load, the hospital still operates on a Shs2.8 billion budget for medicines and sundries, supplied by the National Medical Stores every two months. Dr Twesigye said the funding falls far short of the estimated Shs52 billion needed to adequately cater for all patients.

"We are overwhelmed both in terms of service delivery and medicines," he said, adding that the hospital needs to be upgraded to a national referral facility to better serve residents of the Ankole sub-region.

During the visit, the IGG and her team observed patients sleeping on the floor

and in tents outside the wards, prompting concern.

Mr Savio Kakooza Ntensibe, the director of Ombudsman Affairs at the Inspectorate of Government, said the team had also noted cases of alleged misconduct by some medical staff.

"There are still medics who solicit money from patients, and we have found medical equipment lying idle despite government investment," he said.

He cited a newly procured ultrasound machine that had not been deployed due to lack of space.

"The hospital director has agreed to deploy the machine and improvise with curtains so that patients can access services," he added.

The ombudsman said her visit was primarily a courtesy call but urged hospital management and local leaders to promptly report any irregularities to the Inspectorate.