

Door-to-door blood donation boosts supply

BY PHOEBE MASONGOLE

MBALE. Hospitals in eastern Uganda are reporting fewer delays in accessing blood for emergency cases following the introduction of a door-to-door blood donation initiative by the Mbale Regional Blood Bank.

The community-based approach, which takes blood collection services directly to homes, schools, markets and workplaces, has significantly increased the volume of blood collected each month, ensuring a steady supply for health facilities across the region.

Dr Ahmed Bumba, the senior medical officer and manager at the blood bank, said the facility now collects about 5,000 units of blood per month, with blood group O accounting for nearly 48 percent of total donations.

"Previously, we struggled with shortages, and hospitals would frequently

raise concerns about inadequate blood stocks. Now, by taking services closer to the people, we have managed to stabilise supply," Dr Bumba said.

Under the initiative, small teams of health workers camp in different communities to mobilise and collect blood from eligible donors. In some cases, entire households participate.

"If a family has five eligible members, we visit them, and they donate from the comfort of their home. Many people are willing to donate but cannot travel to the blood bank, so we decided to go to them," he said.

Dr Bumba noted that each unit of blood undergoes rigorous laboratory testing before being cleared for transfusion to ensure patient safety. Even during the typically busy month of January, the blood bank maintained adequate stocks, a milestone he attributes to the sustained community engagement strategy.



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The blood bank has also strengthened partnerships with local organisations to increase turnout during donation drives. In some areas, teams are able to collect up to 120 units in a single outreach.

Dr Bumba, who has also published research on blood safety in the *Journal of Blood Medicine*, said maintaining quality standards remains a priority alongside increasing supply.

"In our study, we found that some group O donors carry high antibody

levels that could cause transfusion reactions if not properly screened. That is why strict laboratory protocols are critical even as we expand collections," he said.

Mbale City Health Officer Moses Mugonyi said the initiative has enhanced public participation and improved emergency response.

"By reaching people where they live, work and study, we ensure that no patient has to wait when they urgently need blood. Demand continues to rise due to road accidents, malaria cases and maternal emergencies," he said.

Health facilities that rely on timely transfusions have welcomed the development.

At CURE Uganda Children's Hospital, where surgeries are conducted for children with neurological conditions, Medical Laboratory Scientific Officer Deogracious Okutui said the reliable supply has reduced disruptions.