

# New ward at Kakuuto brings hope

The new structure at Kakuuto Health Centre IV is a stark contrast of the old ward and has restored hope to the residents of Kakuuto and beyond.

BY AMBROSE MUSASIZI

Residents of Kakuuto County and the surrounding areas in Kyotera District have every reason to smile following the commissioning of a modern general ward at Kakuuto Health Centre IV. The new structure, valued at approximately Shs500m, is already transforming health service delivery in the border community.

For years, patients feared being admitted at the facility due to the state of the old general ward. The aging structure, visibly worn out and fragile, had become a source of anxiety rather than comfort.

"It was in a very sorry state," Dr Edward Muwanga, the district health officer, said. "Many people were afraid to be hospitalised there because the building was too old. Some even feared it could collapse while they were inside. That is not the environment we want for our patients."

As a result, many residents opted for private clinics despite the high costs, while others travelled long distances to health facilities in neighbouring districts. Some sought care in Rakai District, while others went as far as Kalisizo General Hospital. The journeys not only delayed treatment but also increased expenses for already vulnerable families.

"With the new ward, we expect to see a big reduction in unnecessary referrals," Dr Muwanga explained. "The government invested about Shs500m in this project to ensure people access safe and dignified healthcare nearer to



The new general ward has brought joy to communities in Kakuuto and Mutukula areas. PHOTO/AMBROSE MUSASIZI

their homes."

The new general ward stands in sharp contrast to the previous structure. Spacious, well-ventilated, and fitted with modern sanitation facilities, the building has restored confidence among patients and staff alike. Unlike the old ward, where patients had to use bathrooms outside the building, the new facility has internal bathrooms, improving hygiene and patient comfort.

Sarah Nantongo, a resident of Kakuuto Town, recently had her son admitted to the new ward. She could not hide her relief.

"Before, we feared coming here for admission," she said. "When my son was sick last year, we went to a private clinic and spent a lot of money. This time, I felt

## FACILITY STATUS

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Another resident, Joseph Ssemanda, noted that the new facility has

eased the financial burden on families. "Transport to Rakai or Kalisizo was expensive, especially for patients who needed frequent reviews. Now, we save that money and still receive good care here at home."

Situated near the Uganda-Tanzania border, Kakuuto Health Centre IV also serves people from across the border. Dr Aloysius Musoke, the medical superintendent, said: "Being a border facility, we attend to many people, including some from Tanzania who present themselves as Ugandan nationals." He added: "On average, we see about 500 patients every week. That is a big number for any health centre IV, and it requires adequate infrastructure and staffing."

While the new general ward marks a significant milestone, challenges remain. Dr Musoke pointed out that the maternity ward is still in a dilapidated state and does not match health centre IV standards.

"Our maternity ward is small and old, yet it handles many deliveries every week. We urgently need a new maternity structure to ensure safe deliveries for mothers and babies," he said.

Staffing is another pressing concern. Under the standard structure, a health centre IV is expected to have a senior medical officer, a medical superintendent, and at least four medical officers, among other health workers. However, Kakuuto currently operates with only one doctor.

"The approved staffing structure for the new setup is 133 staff members, but we are operating at only about 33 percent of that," Dr Musoke revealed. "That gap puts a lot of pressure on the few available health workers, especially now that we have expanded infrastructure."

The Chairperson of the Health Centre Management Committee, Mr Johnson Lwondo, described the new ward as a testament to what can be achieved through collaboration between the government and the community.

"This general ward is a big achievement for us," Mr Lwondo said. "For a long time, we have been lobbying for better facilities. We thank the government for responding to our cries. However, infrastructure alone is not enough. We need more staff and staff houses so health workers can stay near the facility and provide timely services."

He added that the board will continue advocating for additional funding to address the maternity ward and staffing gaps.

Despite the challenges, the mood in Kakuuto is overwhelmingly positive.

The new general ward has not only improved service delivery but also restored dignity and trust in public healthcare.