

# Regional News

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The facility serves a catchment area of more than 500,000 people extending to the Kenya-Uganda border and beyond.

BY JOSEPH OMOLLO

Tororo General Hospital, a crucial facility for residents of Tororo, Busia, Bugiri, Butaleja, Manafwa, Mbale, Namisindwa districts, and parts of Western Kenya, has been without a functional X-ray machine for more than seven years.

Sources said the Health ministry procured a machine but it was delivered to the facility without a starter, a key component for its operation.

As a result, the hospital has faced significant challenges in diagnosing and treating patients effectively since 2019.

Health workers said the absence of an X-ray machine has made it difficult to assess injuries, particularly in emergencies.

"We're always at a standstill with patients who urgently need X-rays. We can't provide the necessary care here; they must seek treatment elsewhere," a health worker said, citing an example of two patients *Daily Monitor* found at the facility last Monday, who sustained injuries on their limbs during an accident.

Last week, hospital senior administrator Proscovia Awino told the Inspector General of Government, Justice Aisha Naluzze Batala, that patients visit private health providers or travel to Mbale

## Tororo hospital X-ray woes disrupt services



The IGG, Justice Aisha Naluzze Batala (right), conducts an impromptu inspection of Tororo hospital last week. PHOTO/JOSEPH OMOLLO

City for essential X-ray services.

"This journey not only causes delays for vital medical treatment but also imposes a financial strain on patients, many of whom struggle to afford the additional transportation costs and medical fees," she said during the IGG's impromptu visit at the facility last Monday.

The government facility with a capacity of 200 beds has, in recent years, become a place of frustration and despair.

The facility serves a catchment area of more than 500,000 people extending to the Kenya-Uganda border and beyond.

"It's not that we lack the capacity to treat patients; rather, we face a critical shortage of diagnostic equipment. As doctors, we are forced to refer patients to Mbale Regional Referral Hospital," Ms Awino said.

She added: "This situation has tragically led to numerous fatalities on the jour-

ney and has also contributed to overcrowding at the Tororo facility."

A caretaker said private clinics in Tororo Town charge between Shs20,000 and Shs50,000 for a scan or X-ray service.

Ms Scovia Nyawere, an expectant mother from Muwafu Cell in Nabuyoga Town Council in Tororo, sought treatment from Mulanda Health Centre IV in West Budama Central. She was referred to Tororo hospital for an ultra-

sound scan, which also could not offer the service.

She later did the scan at Divine Mercy Hospital in Tororo Town and another at Joint Clinic, which cost her more than Shs100,000.

Last Monday, Justice Batala ordered the arrest of three staff members at the facility over alleged corruption. They included the senior hospital administrator, her deputy, and the hospital mortuary attendant.

During the spot check visit to the facility, Justice Batala and her team discovered that, while the facility is supposed to offer free medical services, patients were being asked to pay, especially those recommended for operation, while others were told to buy drugs from outside pharmacies, even when the drugs were in the facility's stores.

### BACKGROUND

Sources said the facility had an X-ray machine, which broke down in 2015. But in 2019, Tororo District Woman MP Sarah Achieng Opendi, who was also then State minister for Primary Health Care, lobbied for a new X-ray machine that was delivered to the hospital. Acting district health officer Connie Bwire, however, said: "For us as a district, we became happy when the new X-ray machine was delivered. However along the way, we discovered that the equipment came without its starter, which is not available in open market, so we are stuck."