

By ROSE ATHUMANI

UNSCRUPULOUS medics who sell to patients the little blood available in public hospitals are reportedly crippling efforts by the government to mobilise members of the public into voluntary blood donation drive.

The National Blood Transfusion Service (NBTS), a government body entrusted with the responsibility of ensuring blood availability in all public hospitals, can collect hardly 160,000 units of blood annually against the national demand of 400,000 units, leaving the nation with an acute shortage of 240,000 units annually.

In an exclusive interview with the 'Daily News' in Dar es Salaam yesterday, NBTS Eastern Zone Quality System Officer Ndeonasia Towo condemned the sale of blood to patients, saying the dishonest health officers who sell the life-saving liquid were making the work of promoting and encouraging the public to turn out for voluntary blood donation difficult.

"Every time we hold public rallies to educate the public on advantages of voluntary blood donation and how they themselves benefit from blood stored in blood banks, many wonder why they should donate the blood for free while it is sold to patients," Mr Towo explained.

NBTS was established in 2004 under the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare to ensure availability of safe blood and blood products freely in the country.

Steps taken by NBTS, the government and other stakeholders include sensitising the public to report the perpetrators and issue advice that all health facilities should hang posters that clearly states that blood is given freely.

He said NBTS has seven zones responsible for collecting, testing and distribution of blood to health facilities in collaboration with the Red Cross across the country.

The Eastern Zone office is responsible for collecting, testing and distributing blood to 44 health faculties in Morogoro, Dodoma, Coast and Dar es Salaam regions.

Mr Towo said that there are three teams in the Eastern Zone, which are responsible to collect 50

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