



Kaducu (holding baby) and Shallon Ayebazibwe, a nutritionist, measuring Isalah Joya while Bustos looks on at Mengo Primary School yesterday. Photo by Mary Kansime

# 'Infant formula causes obesity'

KAMPALA

By Cecilia Okoth  
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A senior consultant and paediatrician at the Mulago Hospital has said mothers who feed babies with infant formula risk making them obese, something which will greatly impact their health.

According to Dr Jolly Nankunda, babies who take infant formula consume more than they need when care is not taken to control them.

Nankunda made the remarks on the sidelines of a function, organised by the health ministry, in partnership with UNICEF and World Health Organisation (WHO), that marked the climax of the World Breast Feeding Week at Mengo Primary School yesterday.

World Breastfeeding Week is commemorated annually, from August 1 to 7. This year's theme was "Sustaining breastfeeding together for a healthy nation".

Whereas WHO recommends that infants are exclusively breastfed for the first six months of life, to provide them a best

start for growth development and health, Nankunda said some mothers opt for infant formula, even before the babies make six months.

"Infant formula does not have protective factors that help the body of the child to fight

## BETWEEN THE LINES:

■ Joyce Moriku Kaducu, the Minister of State for Primary Healthcare, urged men to provide mothers with more space and time to breastfeed their babies

diseases," she said.

Dr Nankunda said the only situation where the mother can avoid breastfeeding is when she is suffering from a disease, such as cancer, and is on chemotherapy.

"Even when a mother is HIV-positive, we recommend exclusive breast feeding because the mother and baby will be on treatment, hence reducing the risk of infection," she stated.

Joyce Moriku Kaducu, the Minister of State for Primary Healthcare, noted that although

Uganda has surpassed the global targets of at least 50% of infants exclusively breastfeeding, more awareness needs to be raised to help mothers breastfeed to two years.

She challenged men to support the women to enable them successfully breastfeed.

"Men should provide mothers with more space and time to feed their babies, by taking up the household tasks during feeding time, supporting them to attend at least four antenatal care visits and providing nutrient-dense foods for the breastfeeding mother."

Cecilia De Bustos, a nutrition manager at UNICEF, said in order to achieve this year's theme, workplace feeding policies should be put in place and breastfeeding facilities introduced at workplaces.

Dr Bongomin Bodo, the national professional officer in charge of child, adolescent health and nutrition at WHO, said breastfeeding could save the lives of more than 820,000 children under the age of five and prevent 20,000 breast cancer deaths, annually, worldwide.