

# Experience of a surrogate mother

**Making ends meet.** Ms Natabanzi, one of the surrogate mothers, says after delivery she was given Shs8 million which she believes will improve her life.

BY HENRY LUBEGA

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Lying on a hospital bed in a recovery room is 29-year-old Mariam Natabanzi (not real names). On one hand is a catheter with a tube showing she had been receiving blood.

A mother of two, this is Natabanzi's third time in a labour ward. But this time it was different. Less than five hours earlier, she had delivered two bouncing babies - a boy and a girl but she did not see them. They were picked by their bio-

logical mother from the labour ward as soon as they were born.

She was a carrier whose womb had been hired by the woman whose womb could not carry her own babies.

Natabanzi is one of the many surrogate mothers in Kampala who are helping couples experience the joy of parenthood.

The single mother of two says she offered herself not only for money but also help a fellow woman have the joy of being a mother. The two women don't know each other and will probably never meet.

"I first heard of being a surrogate from a salon where I was working in Kamwokya. When I got to know where its done, I decided to come and register. I was subjected to a number of tests to [ensure] I'm healthy enough to carry the babies. The hospital also did a background check with the local authorities where I stay," she says.

"After a while I was called and asked if I was ready. We discussed through an intermediary how much I was to be paid, when we agreed I started on the medical preparation to receive the embryos," she adds.

"I offered myself as a surrogate mainly for two reasons. I wanted to get some extra income to help me plan for the future of my children. I operate a small salon but it's not enough to give my children the kind of future I want to for them. When this chance of being a surrogate mother came up I took it. Besides getting the money I also wanted to help that woman know the joy of being a mother as well."

"During the pregnancy I was receiving Shs600,000 as my monthly upkeep. I was using part of that money as transport if I needed to come to the hospital. But in general I have been treated pretty well and I have no regrets. This morning after delivery I was given a total of Shs8

million. I am appreciative of whatever I have got out of this experience because at least it's going to elevate me to [a better] position. I hope to acquire a piece of land and give my children a place they can call home."

Asked if she would do it again, she is quick to respond in the affirmative. "I will because I have been well treated; at no single time did I regret doing what I have done and I can do it again. Though I wish the next time the money would be more than what I received this time."

"Personally, I don't intend to have more biological children, the two I have are enough. Some people may not like what I have done but I believe it's better than looking for money in dehumanising ways. I know there will be people talking when they see me without a baby, but that doesn't scare me as the local authorities know and the hospital has all the documentations about what I have done. There is nothing illegal at all."

## TOMORROW

In the fourth and final part tomorrow, read about Uganda's sperm and egg bank