

Regional News

Surging unsafe abortions alarm Soroti hospital staff

The number of crude abortions at Soroti Regional Referral Hospital average 80 cases per month.

BY SUSAN NANJALA

Soroti Regional Referral Hospital is grappling with an average of 80 women seeking medical care each month after unsafe abortions go wrong.

Abortion refers to the termination of a pregnancy through the removal or expulsion of an embryo or foetus. In most contexts, the term commonly denotes induced abortions; deliberate actions taken to end a pregnancy.

Dr Irene Chebet, a senior gynaecologist and obstetrician at the hospital, said the growing number of abortion-related cases is linked to pregnancy complications, often triggered by infections such as malaria. However, she adds that a significant proportion are intentionally induced.

"Many mothers do not plan for their pregnancies, and in some cases they are poorly managed," Dr Chebet said. She emphasised the importance of pregnancy planning and preconception care, urging women to screen for infections such as malaria, seek early treatment, and obtain proper dietary guidance to ensure healthier pregnancies.

Dr Chebet also cautioned expectant mothers against excessive alcohol consumption and smoking, calling on them to adopt healthier lifestyles to safeguard both their health and that of their unborn babies.



People outside Soroti Regional Referral Hospital maternity ward. PHOTO/SUSAN NANJALA

Hospital records paint a worrying picture. According to Ms Agnes Akongo, the assistant nursing officer at Soroti hospital, the facility registered 778 abortion cases in 2024, resulting in two deaths. By December 2025, 520 cases had already been recorded.

"On average, we register about 80 abortion cases every month. For instance, there were 107 cases in August, 90 in September; 82 in October, 96 in November and 81 in December," Ms Akongo said.

She attributed many of the deaths to delays in seeking medical attention, explaining that patients often arrive at the referral hospital when it is too late for effective intervention.

Ms Akongo added that once patients are stabilised, health work-

ers link them to family planning services, including pills, implants and counselling on other contraceptive methods, to prevent repeat unplanned pregnancies.

"We want the uterus to rest for a minimum of six months. That is why family planning is critical in reducing deaths related to abortion," she said.

One such patient is Sarah, a 17-year-old student who was referred to the

hospital for further management after undergoing an unsafe abortion.

Afraid of judgement from her community after becoming pregnant, she opted to terminate the pregnancy, a decision that left her critically ill.

Now recovering, Sarah has a warning for her peers: avoid teenage pregnancy, use family planning where necessary, stay in school, and steer clear of unsafe abortions that could cost them their lives.

Recent reports and estimates from 2024 indicate that Uganda continues to record high levels of induced abortions, with a significant proportion classified as unsafe—raising renewed concerns about reproductive health awareness, access to care and timely intervention.

ABORTION CASES

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