

# Infant mortality rates high in Busoga, says survey

**Way forward.** Ministry of Health says they are working to improve the referral system.

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**JINJA.** Ms Juliana Nabwire, a resident of Buwekula Village, Mafubira Sub-county in Jinja District, delivered twin baby boys from Jinja Regional Referral Hospital in February but her happiness was short-lived when they all passed on due to infections.

The death of these twins and many other babies in Busoga Sub-region, points to an infant mortality rate that is currently higher than the national figure.

According to a 2017 survey conducted by Makerere University Excellence for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health under Makerere University School of Public Health, neonatal mortality rate in Busoga Sub-region stands at 28 of every 1,000 live births

against the national figure of 27 of 1,000 live births.

Infant mortality rate stands at 53 of every 1,000 live births against the national figure of 43 out of 1000 live births, and under five mortality rate is at 84 of 1000 births against the national figure of 64 of 1,000 children.

Prof Peter Waiswa, an associate at Makerere University School of Public Health, attributed the increase in infant mortality rates to the few public hospitals in the sub-region.

"Busoga Sub-region comprising of 10 districts with a population of three million people has only four public hospitals yet its fertility rate is high [with six children per woman against the national figure of five children] and the use of contraceptives is at 30 per cent," Prof Waiswa said

He added: "This has created congestion in the health facilities, forcing health workers to discharge mothers and their babies before recovering to create space for others."

Prof Waiswa also attributed the deaths to increased cases of malnu-

## APPEAL

**Affected. The Iganga Woman MP, Ms Brenda Asinde Suubi, who lost her one-month-old baby (Kaguta) whom she had named after President Museveni, said hospitals should be equipped with machines that support children with difficulties in breathing.**

trition and malaria, saying the sub-region is surrounded by rivers, lakes and wetlands.

"Following the health demographic survey, 53 per cent of the children in Busoga suffer from malaria. Government has been investing in the Northern region through residual spraying and Busoga has been neglected," he said.

He added: "50 per cent of the children are anemic because of malnutrition; the stunting rate is almost 30 per cent and the total immunisation coverage of Busoga is 45 per cent."

Ms Gertrude Namazzi, a researcher at Makerere University School of Public Health, attributed the high newborn death rates to poor quality care at health facilities within the sub-region.

She said 80 per cent of the newborn death rates [neonatal deaths] which occur between the ages of 1 to 28 days are due to failure to breathe at the time of birth, infections and