

DANCING
FOR PEACE

Pastoralists celebrate

Turkana girls from Kenya dance during celebrations to mark 40 years of peaceful co-existence with Karimojong pastoralists in Moroto District recently. PHOTO BY STEVEN ARONG

Omoro top in Acholi teenage pregnancy cases - survey

Justification. Cases in the district stand at 28 per cent, higher than any other district in Acholi Sub-region, and above the national rate, which is at 25 per cent.

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OMORO. Omoro District is grappling with increasing cases of teenage pregnancies, according to a latest survey.

The district health officer, Mr Robert Ongom, told *Daily Monitor* that the survey conducted by the district health team between July last year and October this year put teenage pregnancy cases stand at 28 per cent, higher than any other district in Acholi Sub-region, and above the national rate, which stands at 25 per cent.

Mr Ongom said the latest survey shows a four per cent increment in one year, from 24 per cent. The most affected are girls between 10 and 19

years. "The survey established that low school retention, limited parental guidance and poverty are leading girls to conceive at a tender age," he said.

"It is a very depressing situation that calls for urgent attention. We are looking at young girls who can't produce on their own getting pregnant, which is dangerous for their health," Mr Ongom added.

The district criminal investigative officer, Ms Flavia Acayo, blamed the rising cases of teenage pregnancies on parents who, he said, do not monitor their daughters' movements.

"Most parents in this area don't give much attention to their daughters; they leave them to roam any time of the day," Ms Acayo said.

The district health officer said they have since instituted a task force to improve equitable access to essential health services.

The district chairperson, Mr Douglas Peter Okello, said the district is already working on several measures

to curb the vice, including reviving behavioural change clubs in various schools to enable teachers and health workers sensitise pupils and students.

Mr Okello added that they are soon launching a campaign dubbed "Go to School, Stay at School and finish Education," which, he said, will focus on improving retention of girls in school.

Mr Geoffrey Oyat, a senior programme officer on gender-based violence at Gulu Women's Economic Development and Globalisation, an NGO, said they have established youth clubs in schools in Ongako and Lalogi sub-counties to help curb teenage pregnancies.

Mr Oyat said one youth club consists of 10 boys and 10 girls who help their peers to report issues of violence, defilement and dropout of pupils from schools.

He noted that they have also trained teachers on how to observe pupils and

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UNRA assures on repairs

MOYO. The Uganda National Roads Authority (UNRA) has assured Moyo residents that it will work on the roads in poor state in the district. Two weeks ago, area residents held a demonstration, protesting failure by the roads authority to maintain the roads, especially Obongi - Moyo Town - Adjumani District. But speaking to *Daily Monitor* at the weekend, UNRA station engineer Benedicto Bairagha said they have secured funds to work on the roads. "Atiak-Moyo-Afoji road is slated for upgrading, and funding has been secured for the first section from Atiak-Omi and more funding for the section from Laropi - Moyo-Afoji is being sought from other prospective funders," he said. [Scovin Iseta]

LC5 boss tips on saving

MOYO. Moyo District chairperson Williams Anyama has asked families to take advantage of existing savings and credit cooperatives (Saccos) and village savings and loan associations (VSLAs) and save for the future. "Saccos are having a positive impact. So people should save money to construct houses and pay school fees for their children," Mr Anyama told *Daily Monitor* at the weekend. He appealed to the Saccos and VSLAs to inculcate a culture of saving among the residents. "If residents are poor then our Saccos will not progress," Mr Anyama said. [Denis Omony]

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FACT FILE

Omoro District was created by act of Parliament on September 3, 2015, and became operational on July 1, 2016. It was initially part of Gulu District.

Omoro tops in teenage pregnancy in Acholi

Voice

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DISTRICT HEALTH
OFFICER

"Most parents in this area don't give much attention to their daughters; they leave them to roam any time of the day."

FLAVIA ACAYO,
DISTRICT CID OFFICER

"Start teaching these young girls about the dangers of early pregnancy at an early stage, don't wait until the girls are becoming pregnant then you [leaders] embark on finding the causes because the causes are clearly known."

JACOB OULANYAH,
OMORO COUNTY MP

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students with challenges and their general welfare at school.

Early this year, Deputy Speaker of Parliament Jacob Oulanyah attributed the current high rate of teenage pregnancies in Acholi sub-region to older men preying on teens.

Mr Oulanyah, who is also the Member of Parliament for Omoro County, said older men are taking advantage of underage girls and impregnating them.

He called upon local government leaders to enact a by-law that outlaws marrying teenage girls by older men so as to protect the future of the girl-child. He also urged the district health task force to tackle the problem.

Appeal

"Start teaching these young girls about the dangers of early pregnancy at an early stage, don't wait until the girls are becoming pregnant then you [leaders] embark on finding the causes because the causes are clearly known," Mr Olanya said.

He advised the district leaders against pointing fingers at each other but to instead collectively work to ensure that the vice is curbed and girls are empowered to have a bright future.

The Uganda Demographic and Health Survey 2016 indicates a 1 per cent increase in teenage pregnancy from 24 per cent in 2011 to 25 per cent in 2016.

The report also shows that 19 per cent of women of between 15 and 19 years have given birth and another five per cent were carrying their first pregnancy at the time of the survey. The survey indicates that adolescent childbearing is more common in rural areas.

BACKGROUND

The Uganda Demographic and Health Survey 2016 indicates that the knowledge on HIV-prevention methods using condoms stood at 46 per cent among female youth of 15 and 24 years. A recent report by the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/Aids, indicated that at least two girls are infected with HIV every hour.

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