

Women who deliver Uganda's babies



Ahead of the International Women's Day, **New Vision** will celebrate individuals and community-based organisations that are transforming women's and girls' lives.

By Geoffrey Mutegeki

Towards the end of last year, 11 midwives from across the country were recognised for their excellent service.

They were awarded for excellence in midwifery and outstanding contribution to maternal and newborn health by the Government of Uganda in conjunction with Swedish Embassy and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

The exceptional midwives were awarded at a function held at the residence of the Swedish Ambassador in Kampala at the end of 2017.



Eva Kabajungu, 60, Bunyoro
After more than 34 years of work as a midwife, Kabajungu has called it a long walk of saving lives in Hoima.

At the rank of nursing officer, Kabajungu is among the longest serving health workers in Hoima district. Her last work station was Kikuube Health Centre IV in Hoima district.

For the first 10 years of her career, she served as an enrolled midwife in Kabwoya.

Kabajungu says she was the first registered midwife in Hoima district, having attained the status in 1996.

She has trained in nutrition, child management and several other health-related courses.

She goes in retirement with her head high for having not lost any mother during birth for the over 30 years of service.

Although Kabajungu lost some babies, she said she gave all she could to save lives.



Joyce Atim, 42, Acholl
Atim was born in 1976 and went to Holy Rosary Primary School, Gulu High School and Dr Obote College in Lira district. She joined Kalongo School of Midwifery in 1996 and she graduated with a certificate in midwifery. She joined Gulu district local government in 2000 and started serving at Kochi Goma HCIII. She later served at Odeki HCIII and Lakogi HCIV.

"I decided to concentrate on midwifery and furthered my studies at Nsambya School of Nursing and Midwifery in Kampala," Atim says. She notes that her greatest achievement is seeing the number of mothers delivering with the help of traditional birth attendants reduce in addition to a reduction in maternal deaths. She says apart from helping mothers, at times midwives almost run the facility in areas where there are no doctors.

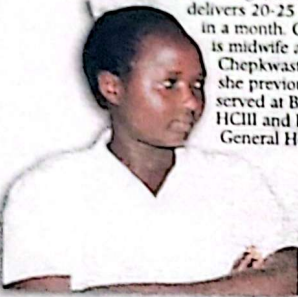
Juliet Chesuro 35, Bukwo
She holds a diploma and has over 10 years of experience. In 2015, she was awarded as the best health worker in Bukwo district for her outstanding service towards the health of mothers.

Chesuro studied at Sebei College before joining Kamuli Nursing School in 2002 and later Mengo School of Nursing and Midwifery in 2012 for a diploma.

She has served in the hard-to-reach areas of Bukwo district, sometimes working alone at the facility.

Chesuro says she dedicated her energy to mentoring fellow midwives and saving more lives. "Having the mother and the baby alive is the most fascinating thing in my job," Chesuro says.

On average, Chesuro delivers 20-25 mothers in a month. Chesuro is midwife at Chepkwasta HCII, she previously served at Bukwo HCIII and Bukwo General Hospital.



Sophia Yita Akello, Lango
An enrolled midwife with a certificate in midwifery, Akello works at Walela Health Centre II. From 1979 to date, Akello, who is about to retire, has been delivering mothers safely in Lira district. Akello was due to retire in December.

"Despite the poor conditions and the challenges I experienced during the course of my work, I feel satisfied with what I have offered mothers," Akello says.

During the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) insurgency in northern Uganda, which lasted about 20 years, Akello stayed put and served mothers in internally displaced people's camps in Lira district.



Veneranda Musasizi, Kabale region
Musasizi is a diploma holder midwife from Kabale district working in Mparo HCIV. She is a committed midwife who, in her 17 years of service, has never had any mother die in her hands. In addition to monitoring HIV-positive mothers to ensure that their babies remain negative, Musasizi involves male partners in this fight through counselling. She also sensitises the community on the importance of pregnant mothers attending at least four antenatal visits to a health facility during the course of their pregnancy, which is also a WHO recommendation. Due to her zeal to fight maternal mortality, facility delivery in Mparo HCIV rose from 18% in 2013 to 84% in 2016.

Juliet Namara, 36, Ankole
Namara went to Ibanda School of Midwifery, where she graduated with a certificate in 2001.

Namara's first employment was at Ibanda Hospital.

In 2005, she joined Mbarara district local government and was posted at Kagongi HCIII, where she has spent 13 years.

"I have dedicated all my life to seeing mothers have the best

services whenever they come to me," Namara says.

At Kagongi HCIII, Namara delivers between 25 and 30 mothers a month. However, she says she is happy because more mothers come to deliver in health facilities than dying in the hands of untrained personnel. "I always do my work with integrity and love for the mothers," Namara says.

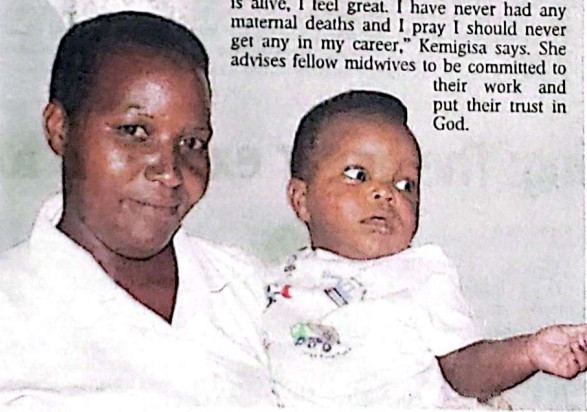


Peace Kemigisa, 39, Toro
She is based in Kyegegwa district and has over 15 years of experience as a midwife.

After attaining her certificate in midwifery from Virika School of Comprehensive Nursing and Midwifery, Kemigisa was posted at Wekomire HCIII in 2005.

Eight years later, she upgraded and became a registered midwife after attaining a diploma. "Right from my childhood I loved midwifery. So it is not a surprise that since I started practising it, I have always enjoyed it," Kemigisa says.

"When I deliver a live baby and the mother is alive, I feel great. I have never had any maternal deaths and I pray I should never get any in my career," Kemigisa says. She advises fellow midwives to be committed to their work and put their trust in God.



Juliet Achom, Teso region
Achom is serving at Ngora HCIV. She is a diploma holder who started at certificate level. Achom works beyond normal hours to save mothers and babies without complaining. She has served as a midwife for 11 years. She is well-equipped with knowledge and skills, which she passes on to students and fellow staff during mentoring. She demonstrated a level of confidence, which has made her a darling in the community.



Betty Agan, Karamoja
Agan is a diploma holder midwife who has worked at Iriiri HCIII in Napak district for the last seven years. A product of Kalongo Midwifery Training School, Agan is a committed, hardworking midwife who has the zeal to perform her duties with minimal supervision. She has spearheaded the adoption of innovations such as the solar suitcase in the maternity ward to improve on lighting during deliveries at night.

Catherine Oliver Mirembe, Busoga region

For the last six years, her duty post has been Mayuge HCIII in Mayuge district. Prior to that, Mirembe worked in Bukatube HC III as a certificate midwife for five years before joining Jinja Nursing and Midwifery School, to upgrade to a diploma. She acted as the in-charge of the facility. She was nominated for this award because she is hardworking, self-driven and motivated. She accomplishes assigned tasks in time with minimal supervision and builds capacity of other colleagues. She



has been very instrumental in implementing the voucher system that aims at reducing maternal mortality and morbidity in B