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Saviour. Sister Molly Nakalembe, the officer in charge of the surgical ward at Jinja Regional Referral Hospital, described the oxygen plant as a saviour of life.

BY DAVID MAFABI
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JINJA. Every time premature babies would be born at Jinja Regional Referral Hospital, chances of them dying were high.

For those who got accidents on Kampala-Jinja highway, and needed oxygen urgently, would be referred to Mulago hospital.

Before getting a Shs400m oxygen plant, Jinja Referral Hospital, according to the director, Dr Sophie Namasopo, would lose lives of many accident victims and about three babies a week, sometimes up to six premature babies at a time.

"Many, especially the babies could die before reaching Mulago hospital and it was worse for those who had pneumonia, they would die within minutes without oxygen," Dr Namasopo said.

The oxygen plant compresses atmospheric air to remove nitrogen, carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide, moisture and other gases.

Sister Molly Nakalembe, the officer in charge of the surgical ward at Jinja hospital, described the oxygen plant as a saviour of life.

"This is actually my saviour because I used to lose many lives at the acute and surgical wards. Many babies and injured persons used to die along the way to Mulago but we can now save their lives from here since we have the oxygen plant," she said.

Ms Nakalembe said the number of deaths at Jinja hospital in the past pointed to the dangers of severe pneumonia, especially in children, particularly in areas without medical interventions such as intubation because they lacked the oxygen plant.

She said pneumonia is the leading killer in children under the age of five globally and oxygen is often necessary for young patients while they are on treatment with antibiotics.

"The availability of this plant has saved many people from

Oxygen plant saving lives at Jinja hospital



Support. A baby on oxygen support at the paediatric ward at Jinja hospital recently. PHOTO BY DAVID MAFABI

expenses of transferring the pa-

KEY ISSUES

Components. The oxygen plant compresses atmospheric air to remove nitrogen, carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide, moisture and other gases.

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tients to Mulago," she added.

At the location, there is Oxygen-wise and a compressor with a range of oxygen filling station used for filling cylinders of any size up to 200 bar and the filling capacity ranges from 20 to 40 cylinders per day.

Ms Betty Nangendo, the technician said the system has been set up to fill the hospital pipeline directly to the theatre and acute [surgical ward] by using a filling ramp as a backup system.

"At this plant, oxygen cylinders can be filled simultaneously or during hours with low consumption and our target is to

have the entire hospital wards supplied with oxygen directly from the station to avoid delays in saving life," Ms Nangendo said.

She added that the machine can run continuously overnight and that is able to provide the oxygen needed to treat four children at a time.

Ms Nangendo further revealed that there is a standardised compressed air quality class, which makes easier for the oxygen station to define required air quality to ensure trouble free operation of their equipment.

"Many, especially the babies could die before reaching Mulago hospital and it was worse for those who had pneumonia, they would die within minutes without oxygen,"

DR SOPHIE NAMASOPO, DIRECTOR JINJA REGIONAL REFERRAL HOSPITAL

"The ISO specify three major contaminants of compressed air solid particles, water and oil. These contaminants are specified by three digits that are referring to purity class; Particle size and density, Pressure dew point and Oil content," Ms Nangendo added.

She went on to reveal that the machines define the size and concentration of solid matter particles like dirt or rust that may remain in the compressed air, residual quantity of aerosols and hydrocarbons contained in the compressed air and temperature to which the compressed air can be cooled without condensation of the moisture it contains.

The chairman of hospital management committee, Mr Brewer Abaliwano, said the oxygen plant saves lives of people as far as Kamuli, Buyende, Iganga, Kaliro, Namutumba, Luuka, Buikwe, Mayuge, Namayingo and Busia districts."

He urged government to secure oxygen machines to all regional referrals and district hospitals.