

# Buliisa, Hoima men shun antenatal visits

**HOIMA**

By Robert Atuhairwe

Health officials in the districts of Buliisa and Hoima have expressed concern over the failure by men to accompany their expectant wives to health facilities for antenatal care services.

Dr. Nelson Naisye, the Buliisa district health officer, cited stigma and negative cultural beliefs as the major reasons for men's reluctance to accompany their wives.

Lydia Kutegeka, a nurse at Buliisa Health Centre IV, said men shy away for fear of compulsory HIV/AIDS testing carried out at the facility.

She added that out of the 300 to 400 expectant mothers, only two to three come with their husbands.

Kutegeka explained that such a practice makes men miss out on important information regarding child health and upbringing.

Rosette Kabahuma, an expectant mother in Buliisa, said men think if they test HIV-positive and their wives negative, it might lead to domestic violence.

Studies show antenatal

health education intervention involving husbands increased post-partum care utilisation among women, compared to women who received antenatal health education alone and with women who received no education.

Women who attended antenatal classes with their husbands were more likely to be highly prepared for birth compared to women who received no education.

Fredrick Byenumé, the Hoima district health inspector, said less than five per cent of the expectant mothers in Hoima are escorted by their husbands while seeking antenatal care. He added that some women have resorted to hiring bodaboda riders to stand in as their husbands.

## What others say

Violet Asaba, an expectant mother, says there is need to create a supportive environment that encourages men to be involved in maternal health services.

Scovia Kusiima, a mother of two, says men must be involved since they are often the decision-makers in the family.

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