

Experts blame teenage pregnancies on poverty, ignorance

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MAYUGE/JINJA. Poverty and ignorance are the leading causes of teenage pregnancies in Busoga sub-region, experts have revealed.

According to the executive director of Save the Young Mothers, Ms Betty Angatai, teenage girls are either abandoned after conceiving or ostracised and more often, the person responsible for the pregnancy disowns it.

Ms Angatai, in an interview with *Daily Monitor*, said many parents in Busoga sub-region and Mayuge District in particular marry off their teen daughters in order to get dowry and monetary gifts. "Many teenage girls end up getting defiled and as a result become pregnant. But parents instead settle for cash than opening a case with police because they fear losing out on the dowry," she said.

Ms Lyzette Kasigwa, the executive director of Hope for Women, a non-governmental organisation that

supports teen mothers said lack of sex education and information on sexual reproductive health, rights and services has made many teenagers vulnerable.

"Slightly more than 90 per cent of the teenage girls in Uganda know nothing or very little about sex education. That means they are ignorant of the repercussions of their actions," Ms Kasigwa said.

According to Dr Sophie Namasopo of Jinja Hospital, more than 80 teen mothers deliver at the facility

monthly. Dr Namasopo noted that early pregnancies come with complications like premature and still births, prolonged labour, fistula among other adding that this is because their bodies [teenagers] are not prepared to have children yet.

Laws

However, the Mayuge District chairperson, Mr Umar Bongo, said the only way to curb teenage pregnancies is by enacting prohibitive laws.

Mr Bongo noted that the district has ratified by-laws and ordinances to deal with offenders.