

## ent of Kalangala malnourished'

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nutrition in the district have increased.

Kalangala District in collaboration with Heifer International and other partners, started distributing yogurt to different children to complement children's diet.

According to Mr Daniel Mbatia, the programme officer at Heifer International, the national project is aimed at meeting international goals on curbing prevalence of malnutrition in low development countries.

The project would help in the improvement of diet, especially to young children. Our initiative is at having a healthy society that would fight for transformation, he said.

Kalangala District health officer, Hillary Bitakaramire, said why parents fail to feed their children with a balanced diet is that they can't spend on

the Kalangala District Forum in December stated that several children in the district had been malnourished.

The Action Aid Uganda, to fund a project that would provide milk for the

in schools while many children are malnourished.

by Kizito, Kalangala District Health Officer, to provide their children with a balanced diet.

at least one child in every five is malnourished.



**Numbers.** Pupils of Butale Primary School in Masaka District display locally made pads. Statistics from Sembabule District education department indicate that 300 pupils missed Primary Leaving Examinations in 2016 as they reportedly dropped out of school due to teenage pregnancy and early marriages.

PHOTO BY MARTINS E. SSEKWEYAMA

county, one of the areas where early marriages are rampant, said on average, about four girls drop out of school every term, especially those in Primary Six and Primary Seven.

"What defeats my understanding is that many parents take it as a normal practice and don't fear inviting me to grace the giveaway functions of their children," he said.

He said a section of parents in the area loathe him because he has continuously reported them at police over marrying off his pupils at a tender age.

"They look at me as an enemy because I make them lose out on getting cows from their would be sons-in-law. Some have even plotted to have me transferred to another district, but have not yet succeeded," said Mr Matovu in an interview with *Daily Monitor* recently.

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THE ESTIMATED NUMBER OF GIRLS WHO ARE DEFILED EVERY MONTH IN SEMBABULE DISTRICT.

# Early marriages hurt girl-child education

**Early marriages.** According to United Nations Children's Fund 2016 report, nearly one in every two girls in Uganda is married before 18 years.

BY MOSES MUWULYA  
editorial@ug.nationmedia.com

**SEMBABULE.** Despite government's effort to offer free primary and secondary education, the rampant cases of early marriages have derailed the primary school completion rate among girls in Sembabule District, education officials have revealed.

According to Mr Paul Bwana, the Sembabule District education officer, the completion rate for both girls and boys in the district is as low as 35 per

cent, with many girls deprived of their right to education as they get married at a tender age.

Statistics from the district education department indicate that in 2014, 2015 and 2016, a staggering 250,254 and 300 pupils respectively, missed Primary Leaving Examinations as they reportedly dropped out of school due to teenage pregnancy and early marriages.

Records show the pupils did not even fill Form-X, a requirement for joining second-

ary school. These cases were mainly registered from cattle rearing sub-counties of Ntuusi, Lugusuulu and Lwemiyaga where early marriages are common, Mr Bwana explained. Teachers from schools in the three sub-counties attributed this to primitive social norms which ought to have ceased long time ago.

"A good number of parents in the three sub-counties still look at the girl-child as a source of wealth, mainly in form of cows and thus put pressure on their daughters to get married to bring home bride wealth," he said.

Mr Moses Matovu, a head teacher at Kabukongote Primary School in Ntuusi Sub-

county, the chairperson of Ntuusi Sub-county, said as local leaders, they seem to have failed as their efforts to condemn early marriages are fruitless since parents have continued to marry off their young daughters.

"We have a big challenge that calls for a swift government intervention. We need strong deterrent penalties for the offenders, otherwise, a big gender disparity in education is looming," Mr Kamiyango says.

According to United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)'s State of the World's Children 2016, nearly one in every two girls in Uganda is married before the age of 18.

On June 16, 2015, government launched the African Union Campaign to end child marriage and its first ever National Strategy on Ending Child Marriage and Teenage Pregnancy (2014/2015-2019/2020), which was developed in partnership with civil society organisations.

Led by the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, the strategy contained a multi-sectoral monitoring and evaluation framework, as well as an indicative budget for the implementation of the strategy.