



Background: Mothers could not afford hospital bills

Evelyn Asiyo, a midwife at the Kamion Health Centre III in Kaabong district, said it was hard to deliver mothers without proper facilities. "It is heartbreaking,

unprofessional, and unhealthy for a mother to deliver on the floor. But, we had no choice as we could not chase away mothers because we knew they had no other alternative.

Sending them to Kaabong Hospital, which is about 80km from here, is impossible. There is no transport in this part of the world and the area is not secure. We had to deliver

and commit them to God for protection," Asiyo said. She adds that the donation has come in handy to help solve the health challenges they have been facing.

Equipment to improve quality maternal and newborn care

Kaabong district mothers acquire DELIVERY BEDS

By Hope Mafaranga

"When I reported at Kamion Health Centre III in Kaabong district in July to deliver my baby, there were no beds and the maternity ward was empty.

"I found three other mothers sleeping on the floor and I too joined them. I was worried that our babies would get pneumonia. We and our children survived on God's mercy," narrates Alice Kunume, a mother from IK county.

Kunume says due to lack of maternal facilities and transport, most mothers would deliver from untrained and unskilled traditional birth attendants.

"There was no difference between delivering from the health centre and traditional birth attendants. In fact, some of the traditional birth attendants could give one a mat to sleep on, compared to the health facility, where there was nothing," she says.

The relief

Kunume and other mothers have a reason to smile since they can give birth in a clean environment at Kamion Health Centre III, following a donation of delivery beds.

The equipment worth sh52m was donated and installed into the health facility by the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) Uganda, under the Safe Lives at Birth project funded by ADRA Netherlands.

Other items delivered at the facility were a four-panel ward screen, baby weighing scales, bed mounting steps, eight patient beds with backrest and castors, mattresses with PVC covers, examination bed, instrument trays and eight drip stands on castors for use in the maternity ward.

Lamech Lule, the ADRA Uganda area co-ordinator, said the equipment would go along way in reducing maternal and infant sickness and preventable death.

"We have furnished Kamion



BETWEEN THE LINES

■ Alice Kunume (pictured), a mother from IK county, says some of the traditional birth attendants, though they were unskilled, could give one a mat to sleep on, compared to the health facility, where there was nothing.

Health Centre III with the necessary equipment to improve accessibility of quality maternal and newborn care. This will also improve healthcare, attract and encourage women to deliver at the health centre," Lule said.

Men involvement

Sophia Achieng, a health systems strengthening officer at Mercy Corps, said they had



Asiyo, a midwife, interacting with a mother

embarked on sensitising men to get involved in the reproductive health of their wives.

"We have trained male change agents to bring other men on board in regard to



Delivery beds and drip stands which were donated by ADRA-Uganda. Photos by Hope Mafaranga



Mothers waiting to receive antenatal services

maternal health and supporting expectant mothers," she said.

to help in fighting the vice.

Solution

Charles Ed II Aguilar, the ADRA-Uganda country director, said he was pleased to support the community and be part of the initiative to provide better access to health care and improve the quality of life.

"Our hope is that the equipment will help to alleviate the difficulties in accessing quality public health services in the IK community. We are concerned about the health of Uganda and, that is why, since 1987, we have been involved in many support actions which provide health care to many mothers and children," he said.

He called on the Government and stakeholders to work together and use the community approach to achieve a universal health access for all.

Attitude and beliefs

Hilary Lokwang, the IK County Member of Parliament, called on people to abandon their traditional and cultural beliefs and embrace professional delivery to save mothers and their babies.

Lokwang said most IK women conceal their pregnancies, believing that they would be bewitched, which stops them from going for antenatal care.

"Even at birth, women in labour pain hide due to the belief that their babies would be bewitched. The mothers end up delivering themselves and some of the babies die at birth as a result of not going to health facilities," he said.

Lokwang said he was engaging with the clan leaders

Leaders address community



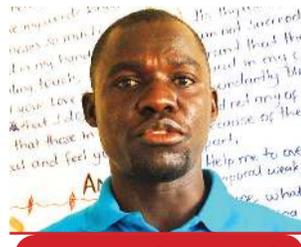
THOMAS ACHUKA

As leaders, we are going to ensure the women embrace safe delivery.



DAVID NGURU

Men should be supportive of their wives by escorting them to antenatal centres and get fully involved in bringing up their children.



PAUL OKELLO

At Kamion Health Centre III, we lack a placenta pit and incenerator. I urge district leaders and the health ministry to provide the facilities