

PMCT

Stigma

Initiative

Discordant

Support

KAMUJI

By Tom Gwebayanga

At least 62 children born to HIV-positive mothers in Kamuli district have been declared HIV-free after 18 months of surveillance.

The declaration was made on Tuesday at Kamuli General Hospital, during a function officiated by the district's deputy chief administrative officer, Siliman Jalwiny.

Present were also the district health team, organisations involved in the HIV/AIDS fight and members of the public.

The surveillance was conducted by the Anti-Retroviral (ART) Clinic team of Kamuli Hospital, in conjunction with Mothers2Mothers Uganda, a non-governmental organisation that believes in the power of mothers to end HIV/AIDS prevalence among children.

Jalwiny hailed the initiative, saying an HIV-free generation could only be achieved through disclosure, acceptance, adherence to treatment and proper nutrition.

He commended service providers, Mentor Mothers, for saving lives of children born to HIV-positive mothers through the Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission (PMCT) programme.

Mentor Mothers identify

62 Kamuli children declared HIV free



Children who have been declared HIV-negative with their parents at Kamuli General Hospital. The children were monitored for 18 months. Photos by Tom Gwebayanga

HIV-positive mothers in their respective areas and advise them to embrace the PMCT programme so as to give birth to HIV-negative babies.

He told couples, especially discordant partners, to support one another in the face of HIV, so as to decrease stigma. The beneficiary mothers

hailed the initiative, saying the approach had helped protect their children against getting infected with the disease. Fiida Nakisige, a senior officer



The children being served cake during the celebration

in the ART wing, challenged the community to sensitise the younger generation on the consequences of the HIV/AIDS. She noted that although ARV drugs are now available, reckless sex remains a death trap.

Mothers2Mothers Jinja area programme assistant Vivian Nalumu, who represented her boss, country director Marjorie Anna Mbula, congratulated the beneficiary mothers and their children on completion of the 18-month follow-up period and graduating as HIV-free babies.

The co-ordinator of the Kamuli district Young Positives Club, Brian Ibanda, said Kamuli has over 350 HIV-positive people, including infants and children below 13.

mothers were found to be HIV-positive

Ibanda, who tested HIV-positive in 2005, urged on the need to investigate why discordant couples are on the rise.

Nakisige disclosed that out of the 205 HIV-positive mothers recorded in the ART clinic, only 15 babies were born with HIV.

BANK OF UGANDA GOLDEN JUBILEE