

The new donation of medical equipment from the Rotary Club of Ibanda will significantly improve the survival chances of premature babies.

BY JOVITA KYARISIIMA

The opening of a neonatal facility at Uganda Martyrs Hospital in Ibanda Municipality has raised hope for the survival of premature babies in the district.

According to hospital authorities, premature babies have previously been referred to Mbarara Regional Referral Hospital, a process that was risky because of the distance involved, with some babies dying on the way.

Dr Gothardo Tumubugane, the officer-in-charge of the hospital, said the facility has been having only one incubator despite receiving numerous referrals of premature babies from neighbouring areas.

"We have always been overwhelmed by referrals of premature babies from this area and other districts such as Kazo, Kitagwenda and Kiruhura, yet we did not have the capacity to handle them," Dr Tumubugane said.

However, on Monday, the facility received a donation of medical equipment from the Rotary Club of Ibanda.

Dr Tumubugane assured the public that the new facility will significantly improve the survival chances of premature babies.

# Neonatal facility gives hope to Ibanda locals



Health officials from Uganda Martyrs Hospital, Ibanda, receive equipment for the neonatal facility donated by the Rotary Club of Ibanda on Monday. PHOTO/JOVITA KYARISIIMA

"We have been facing challenges of limited funding, and our bed capacity has been small, with only five beds. We are glad that with support from the Rotary Club of Ibanda, we shall be able to save

more premature babies," he added.

Mr Kenan Akantorana, the president of the Rotary Club of Ibanda, said the organisation had spent Shs190 million on the facility, including training of health

workers and the purchase of medical equipment.

"Among the equipment delivered are incubators, a continuous positive airway pressure machine, beds, and phototherapy machines. We became concerned after learning that babies were dying in these areas due to the lack of a suitable facility to handle their condition," he said.

Dr Eugene Bakahika, the secretary of the Rotary Club of Ibanda, said efforts were underway to extend improved neonatal services to other health facilities in the district.

"We are still looking for resources to improve health service delivery in Ibanda, especially neonatal care. The next support will go to Kihani Health Centre II so that we can save parents the transport costs and other expenses involved in seeking these services elsewhere.

"The biggest challenge facing our health facilities is limited resources. We are also going to embark on training health workers on how to manage neonates across our facilities," he said.

Dr Darlington Muhwezi, the principal health officer for Ibanda Municipality, said the availability of such services would help reduce child mortality in the district.

"This is the biggest hospital in the district, while the rest are lower-level government health facilities. We are glad that there will be an improvement in saving the lives of premature babies. Children have been dying because we did not have a facility to care for them. This is the first of its kind," he said.

Ms Betty Kwitegyetse, the deputy chairperson of Ibanda District, pledged additional support to the facility, noting that limited funding had long hampered service delivery in the area.

## SHS190M

**Cost.** The money the Rotary Club of Ibanda has spent on the facility at the hospital.