NYAMIRA

HIV blamed

for decline in

breastfeeding

**BY NATION CORRESPONDENTS**

The spread of HIV/ AIDS poses

the biggest threat to breast-feeding

in Kenya, experts said yesterday.

This is because mothers infected

with the disease need constant

monitoring and medical attention

which is not accessible to many.

According to Linet Cherono, a

nurse at a private hospital in Kisumu,

nurses need to impart skills

on procedures new mothers should

follow to prevent mother to child

transmission. She added that some

women living in rural or marginalised

areas do not have access to

hospitals and those in slums cannot

afford the services.

“Some of the mothers have

stopped breastfeeding their babies

as a result,” she noted. Mothers

with HIV have either to follow exclusive

replacement or exclusive

breastfeeding for six months, both

of which need constant monitoring

by doctors.

Exclusive breastfeeding requires

that a mother starts breastfeeding

within one hour of birth up to six

months without complementing

the milk with any other food or

liquid. After six months, the breastfeeding

stops.

**Prevent obesity**

Ms Cherono explained that exclusive

replacement on the other

hand is where the mother does not

breast-feed a baby. “Practising both

increases the risk of transmission

by 10 times,” said Ms Cherono.

It is estimated that 50,000-

60,000 infants are infected by

HIV yearly. Speaking during

celebrations to mark World

Breastfeeding Week at Nyamira’s

Uhuru garden, Nyamira County

Interim Nutrition officer Rosemary

Otiende said research had

shown that proper breastfeeding

not only reduces mortality rates,

but can also prevent obesity.

“It improves intelligence quotient

and the IQ of the young

ones,” said the nutritionist.