

EBOLA: 125 CONTACTS **CLEARED**, NO LOCKDOWN

PHOTO BY NICHOLAS KAJOBA

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The number of Ugandans who have so far contracted Ebola.

particularly across the border into the DR Congo, where over 200 Ebola cases have been confirmed.

RACE FOR VACCINE

Meanwhile, the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), an international research financing organisation, has announced plans to accelerate the development of three investigational vaccine candidates as part of a co-ordinated global response to the rapidly spreading epidemic affecting the DR Congo and neighbouring Uganda.

"With Bundibugyo virus spreading rapidly and no licensed vaccines, every day counts in the race against this deadly disease. CEPI's urgent funding and support for these three promising candidates aims to advance safe, effective vaccines to help control this epidemic," said Dr Richard Hatchett, the CEO of CEPI.

VACCINE DEVELOPMENT

The initiative will support vaccine development by longstanding research partners, including the International AIDS Vaccine Initiative, Moderna, and the University of Oxford, with manufacturing support from the Serum Institute of India. CEPI said it will also continue to evaluate additional candidates through an open call for proposals as part of efforts to strengthen the global vaccine pipeline and improve outbreak preparedness.

Currently, only the Zaire strain of Ebola has vaccines.



Health teams screen travellers entering Uganda through the Mpondwe border post in Kasese district on May 23, as authorities heightened Ebola surveillance

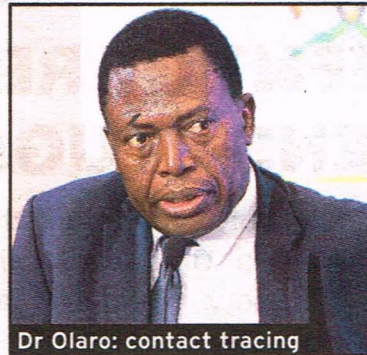
discharged from Ebola treatment facilities, while several others have tested negative and are awaiting formal discharge.

"We have already discharged case 002 and three of the other patients have since tested negative. They are due for discharge once they complete treatment," Olaro said.

He attributed the improving outcomes largely to early detection and prompt initiation of supportive treatment.

"We have strengthened our laboratory capacity to minimise turnaround time. If we are able to get patients early, then their chances of survival are much, much better," he noted.

Olaro said testing services are now available through laboratories in Arua district and Bwera area, supported by four mobile laboratories that can be rapidly deployed to outbreak settings.



Dr Olaro: contact tracing

NO PLAN FOR LOCKDOWN

While concerns have grown following the confirmation of additional cases, the Government has ruled out imposing a nationwide lockdown or closing schools.

The health ministry said the current situation does not warrant broad restrictions and that targeted public

health interventions remain sufficient to contain the outbreak.

"We have no intention of imposing a lockdown. We have only emphasised the closure of borders to prevent cross-border transmission of infections," Olaro said.

He said they have intensified efforts to combat misinformation, warning that rumours and false claims can undermine outbreak control measures.

"Rumours and fake news are spreading faster than the virus," Olaro said, urging members of the public to seek information only from verified government sources.

Health minister-designate Dr Chris Baryomunsi echoed the message, urging the public to remain calm while continuing to follow public health guidance.

He encouraged Ugandans to avoid unnecessary travel to affected areas,

By John Musenze

The Ministry of Health is set to discharge 125 Ebola contacts this week from quarantine, with three others in the pipeline after testing negative for the virus, even as the country's confirmed cases rose to 15 yesterday.

According to the ministry, the large number of contacts completing the mandatory 21-day monitoring period without developing symptoms demonstrates that containment measures are beginning to yield results.

Uganda has so far recorded 15 confirmed Ebola virus disease cases, with 12 active ones. Ten of these cases are Congolese nationals who came into the country to seek treatment, while others were their close contacts. In total, only five Ugandans have contracted Ebola and these are health workers, highlighting the continued risk facing frontline responders.

"We have already discharged 22 contacts who completed 21 days in quarantine. We expect that by Friday, we will have discharged 125, and these have been followed from the time of contact with cases," Dr Charles Olaro, the director general of health services at the health ministry, said during a talk show on the national broadcaster on June 1.

Olaro described contact tracing as one of the most important tools in controlling Ebola outbreaks, and once a confirmed case is identified, response teams track down everyone who may have been exposed to the infected individual and monitor them for symptoms over a 21-day period, which corresponds to the virus' maximum incubation period.

The ministry said a total of 668 contacts are currently under follow-up by the extensive surveillance operation in affected districts. The health ministry said two patients have already recovered and been