

# Relief as suspected Ebola cases test negative in Yumbe

**YUMBE.** Relief swept through Yumbe District at the weekend after health authorities confirmed that three suspected Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) cases had tested negative.

The district had been on edge after three people presenting symptoms associated with Ebola were isolated and samples taken for laboratory testing. The situation sparked concern in schools, trading centres and villages, with some residents avoiding crowded places for fear of infection.

Yumbe is considered one of Uganda's high-risk districts because of its proximity to South Sudan and its busy cross-border movement of people and goods.

Addressing a district Ebola taskforce meeting at the weekend, acting District Health Officer Dr George Angupale Okoboa said the three suspected cases had been investigated after exhibiting symptoms that raised concern among

health workers.

"Three people presenting Ebola-like symptoms were isolated and samples taken for testing. One of the patients, unfortunately, died before the investigation was completed," Dr Okoboa said.

According to the district health authorities, the deceased had reportedly been bleeding and coughing blood, prompting officials to withhold the body until laboratory results were obtained.

"This person died on Tuesday, but the body was released to relatives on Thursday after the results came back negative," Dr Okoboa explained.

He reassured residents that Yumbe currently has no confirmed Ebola cases but urged the public to remain vigilant and continue observing public health measures.



## Justification.

"When people hear the word Ebola, fear spreads immediately.

We need continuous sensitisation so that communities understand the facts and know what actions to take," **Fadhil Lemeriga, prime minister of Aringa Cultural Institution**

The announcement was welcomed by residents, who had closely followed developments over the past week.

"We were very worried when we heard about the suspected cases," said Ms Harriet Draleru, a resident of Yumbe Town Council.

Ms Draleru said parents were particularly concerned about the possibility of school disruptions, recalling the impact of Covid-19

lockdowns on learners.

Test of preparedness

Although the suspected cases were eventually ruled out, health officials say the incident provided an important test of the district's disease surveillance and emergency response systems.

## Vigilance

Principal Health Inspector George Madrara said the quick response demonstrated the importance of maintaining vigilance against infectious diseases.

"The purpose of surveillance is to detect and investigate any suspected case early," Mr Madrara said.

"Even when results turn out negative, the response is important because it helps prevent possible spread if the disease were present," he added.

He called for additional support from development partners to strengthen

the district Ebola taskforce and improve preparedness.

Local leaders also stressed the need for continuous public awareness campaigns to combat misinformation and encourage communities to rely on official sources of information.

The prime minister of Aringa Cultural Institution, Mr Fadhil Lemeriga, urged authorities to involve cultural and religious leaders in community sensitisation efforts.

"When people hear the word 'Ebola', fear spreads immediately. We need continuous sensitisation so that communities understand the facts and know what actions to take," he said.

Yumbe Deputy Resident District Commissioner Mathew Vuyaya Vuni said coordinated efforts among stakeholders would be key to preventing any future outbreak.