Govt to vaccinate 8 million people against Meningitis

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GULU: Nearly eight million Ugandans are expected to benefit from the massive Meningitis A vaccination drive in at least 39 districts in northern Uganda.

The five-day exercise kicks off today [Thursday, January 19] and will run until Monday January 23 at all government health facilities, according to the Ministry of Health.

Speaking at the launch of the programme at the Omoro District headquarters on Tuesday, Health minister Ruth Acheng said the vaccination programme follows fears of a possible outbreak of the epidemic in the country.

"Meningitis A disease breaks out in a cycle of every 10 years. Since we last experienced an outbreak in 2007 where the ministry registered more than 4,000 cases, we are anticipating an outbreak soon," Dr Aceng said.

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> DR RUTH ACENG, MINISTER OF HEALTH

The minister said Uganda is one of the countries with the highest rates of Meningitis A disease and one of the 26 countries that lie in the extended Meningitis belt of Sub-Saharan Africa. She added that West Nile, Teso, Karamoja and parts of Bunyoro region are more susceptible.

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Dr Manzila Tarande Constant, the World Health Organisation representative to Uganda said vaccination is important at such a time when bacterial carriage and transmission has to be reduced nationally. "We have partnered with the health ministry and put together resources to ensure we achieve a target of 90 per cent across the 39 districts," Dr Tarande said.

Rtd Cpt Santos Okot Lapolo, the Gulu Resident District Commissioner overseeing the newly created Omoro District called upon people to embrace the exercise. Meanwhile, Mr Douglas Peter Okello, the Omoro District chairperson urged the minister to equip health facilities in the district with refrigeration equipment to store the vaccines.

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