

Health ministry to roll out cholera vaccination

HOIMA

By Violet Nabatanzi

The Ministry of Health is to roll out vaccination against cholera in nine districts as part of efforts to control the cholera outbreak in some parts of the country.

The vaccination exercise started in the six hotspots of Kyangwali, Kigorobyia, Kabwoya and Buseruka sub-counties, Kigorobyia town council and Kyangwali refugee settlement in Hoima district.

Children, mobile populations in fishing communities and border communities close to the Democratic Republic of Congo were at risk of contracting cholera.

The spokesperson of the health ministry, Vivian Nakalika, said the first dosage was concluded last week and in two weeks time they would administer the second dosage.

She said, plans were underway to vaccinate residents of Buliisa, Pakwach

and Nebbi districts in July, while people in Kasese, Ntoroko, Zombo, Arua and Namayingo districts would receive their vaccinations in October.

This initiative is a comprehensive plan," she said.

The cholera outbreak in Hoima was officially declared in February this year. A total of over 2,000 people were suspected to be suffering from cholera and 44 cases were confirmed.

During the vaccination exercise in Hoima, more than 360,000 people were vaccinated against cholera in six hotspot areas. "The oral cholera vaccine is a key weapon in the fight against the disease," World Health Organisation (WHO) Representative Dr Yonas Tegegn Woldemariam said. "But it is important that other efforts such as improving water, sanitation and hygiene are stepped up, otherwise cholera will continue to haunt communities," he said.

The health ministry is being

supported by WHO, UNICEF, UNHCR, Médecins Sans Frontières and other local and international partners to roll out the exercise.

WHO recommends that vaccination against cholera be considered in emergencies and other high risk situations where there are increased threats of outbreaks, when combined with standard prevention

and control measures for the disease.

The acting director general of health services at the health ministry, Dr Henry Mwebesa, on Monday confirmed an outbreak of cholera in the country. He said the disease was active in parts of Kampala city. Four patients were confirmed to be suffering from cholera and are currently

admitted at China-Uganda Friendship Hospital-Naguru.

In order to avert the further spread of the disease, two isolation centres were set up at this facility and Mulago Hospital.

Cholera is an acute infectious disease characterised by watery stool and vomiting and kills a person within hours. It is spread through eating and

drinking food contaminated with faecal matter of an infected person.

Other factors responsible for the spread of cholera include poor personal hygiene such as not washing hands after using the toilet, using contaminated water, poor sanitation as it occurs in open defecation and eating food or drinks prepared under unhygienic conditions.

