

Two Ebola cases in Kampala

The Ministry of Health has instituted stringent measures to contain the imported Ebola Bundibugyo Virus Disease outbreak.

BY TONNY ABET & SYLVIA NAMAGEMBE

The Ministry of Health has instituted stringent measures to contain the imported Ebola Bundibugyo Virus Disease outbreak, with two laboratory-confirmed cases reported in Kampala on Friday and Saturday.

Information from the ministry and the World Health Organisation (WHO) indicates that the index case, a 59-year-

Congolese male, was treated at Kibuli Muslim Hospital in Kampala. He was admitted on May 11, but his health deteriorated and he died on May 14 in the intensive care unit (ICU).

The body was reportedly taken the same night back to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), a country that is also currently struggling with rising Ebola infections and deaths.

"Two laboratory confirmed cases (including one death) with no apparent link to each other have been reported in Kampala, Uganda, within 24 hours of each other, on 15 and 16 May 2026, among two individuals travelling from



Health workers inside an Ebola isolation centre in Uganda.

PHOTO/FILE

the DRC," the WHO stated.

"As of 16 May 2026, eight laboratory-confirmed cases, 246 suspected cases and 80 suspected deaths have been reported in Ituri Province of the DRC across at least three health zones, including Bunia, Rwampara and Monghwalu," the WHO added.

"The event requires international co-ordination and cooperation to understand the extent of the outbreak, to coordinate surveillance, prevention, and response efforts, to scale up and strengthen operations, and ensure the ability to implement control measures," the WHO advised.

According to the WHO, neighbouring

countries sharing land borders with the DR Congo are considered at high risk for further spread due to population mobility, trade and travel linkages, and ongoing epidemiological uncertainty.

Response cost

Uganda has previously been recognised globally for its rapid response and containment of viral outbreaks. However, the Health minister, Jane Ruth Aceng, said Ebola response operations remain extremely costly because of surveillance, contact tracing, isolation, and public sensitisation requirements.

"We have never handled any outbreak

that has cost us less than \$50m. It usually rises between \$150m and \$200m because of the various activities we must undertake," she said in an interview.

"Our intention is to ensure that we control these outbreaks as soon as possible, to limit expenditure, avoid further spread, and adhere to the international health regulations," she added.

The development comes as Uganda prepares to host thousands of Christian pilgrims for the upcoming Martyrs Day celebrations in June, including visitors from the DRC, prompting heightened vigilance among health authorities.

Officials have urged the public to remain alert, maintain hand hygiene

GLOBAL PANDEMIC

The WHO has said they assessed the situation and found that the outbreak caused by the Bundibugyo virus strain in the two countries "constitutes a public health emergency of international concern (PHEIC)."

(handwashing and sanitising), and report suspected symptoms early, via the toll-free line 0800-100-066 and free SMS to 6767.

Symptoms

Health experts say Ebola symptoms include sudden fever, chills, severe headache, fatigue, muscle/chest pain, diarrhoea, vomiting, unexplained bleeding, yellowing of eyes, and sore throat, which may appear between two and 21 days after exposure.

Objects contaminated with body fluids (like blood, faeces, vomit) from a person sick with Ebola or the body of a person who died from Ebola put people at risk of contracting the deadly virus.

Dr Diana Atwine, the permanent secretary at the ministry, urged the public "to avoid physical contact with anyone showing the above symptoms, continue with washing hands and maintain good hand hygiene at all times."

Dr Atwine said they have put in place measures at border points to screen people entering the country and are also doing contact tracing and quarantining.

"All public places in the country are required to institute hand washing facilities at their premises," she said.