

Cholera hits Kagadi

KAGADI

By Ismael Kasooha

At least 20 suspected cholera cases have been reported at Kitebere landing site on the shores of Lake Albert in Ndaiga sub-county, Kagadi district.

Dr James Olowo, the district health officer, told *New Vision* that four cases were reported on Thursday, but by Monday evening the number had grown to 20.

Olowo said on Friday that samples were taken to the Government's central public health laboratories in Wandegaya, Kampala for testing.

However, as a precaution, the district health team did a Rapid Diagnostic Test on Monday and out of the three samples picked from members of one family, one tested positive to cholera.

Olowo said all the cases were being managed in the homes of the infected, but an isolation unit had been set up to avoid further spread of the disease.

Silvano Thembo, the district disease surveillance focal person, said a church had accepted to offer space to set up an isolation unit in Kitebere, where all the cases would be managed to prevent further spread.

The patients are characterised by passing of watery stool, vomiting, fever and general body weakness. Most of the affected are children.

Kitebere landing site has neither government health facility nor health workers.

Olowo said as soon as the suspected outbreak was announced, the World Health Organisation team based in Hoima rushed to Kagadi and delivered some emergency drugs and supplies to manage the situation.



Medical personnel talking to the mother of the sick children at Kitebere landing site. Photo by Ismael Kasooha

Olowo said some of the items delivered included antibiotics, intravenous fluids and disinfectants.

He said the district did not have funds for emergency response and whatever was being done was on voluntary basis.

"The place is a hard-to-reach area and accessing it requires a lot of money as they have to hire motorcycles and boats, which is costly," Olowo said.

He added that the district had constituted a team that comprises two senior clinical officers with vast experience in infection control and management, the district disease surveillance focal person, the district health educator, laboratory technicians and Uganda Red Cross Society emergency response team.

Oscar Chunyai, the Ndaiga sub-county LC3 chairman, who also lives at this landing

site, said residents will have to improvise whenever such outbreaks occur.

"We have no health unit nearby and even the health workers have to travel over 15km to handle any emergency," Chunyai said.

Challenges

The district health team say they lack funds to manage the outbreak and that since the cases were reported during the Easter holiday, it became more complicated.

There are no tents to set up an isolation centre and transporting items to the affected area is difficult. Most homesteads in the area do not have pit latrines and residents resort to using either nearby shrubs or the lake to ease themselves. Matters are not made any better because the same water from the lake is used for domestic use.