

Uganda, Kenya sign pact to fight Marburg

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KAPCHORWA. Uganda and Kenya have signed a communiqué to jointly fight Marburg in the two neighbouring countries following the outbreak of the disease in Kween District last month.

The agreement was signed by representatives from Trans-Zoia county, Kenya, Sebei sub-region, Bugisu and Busia as well as Ministry of Health and World Health Organisation (WHO) officials in Kapchorwa District on Tuesday.

The committees will be coordinated at Busia, Uganda and Kitale, Kenya.

Mr Nobert Musundi, the Trans-Zoia County public health officer, said Kenya had so far registered no case of the virus but two contacts of the last victim are still being monitored.

"One of the contacts, who happened to have come to Kenya to seek care from a herbalist, is still undergoing the 21-day follow-up. So far two tests have turned negative and we are waiting for the last test," Mr Musundi said.

Mr Andrew Bakinaga, Uganda's WHO adviser for emergencies and immunisation, said the meeting aimed at having a harmonised approach in response to the disease.

Call to action

"It is important that we bring together not only our Kenyan counterparts but also the districts that border Kween and Kapchorwa where there is confirmed Marburg to be able to know what is happening and leave with a clear way forward on how to respond and put on high alert surveillance systems," he said.

Mr Musundi said there was no need to close borders and asked traders not to panic because the disease is being managed according to international health regulations.

"You do not necessarily have to restrict trade, movement because then you are collapsing the economies of countries. We need to manage the diseases within the context in which they can be managed with as minimal limitation as possible in the other areas of the economy," he said.

Dr Issa Makumbi of Ministry of Health urged participants to adopt a common plan to ward off Marburg outbreak in the region.

"This outbreak can be disastrous if quick response mechanisms are not put in place," he said.

CASES

Three people have succumbed to the virus, two confirmed and one probable. Two people, one of whom is a medical worker, are admitted