



For Immediate Release

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CALL FOR VIGILANCE FOLLOWING AN OUTBREAK OF EBOLA IN UGANDA

The Ministry of Health Republic of South Sudan in collaboration with World Health Organization (WHO) would like to caution the general public to be vigilant following reports of an Ebola Hemorrhagic Fever outbreak in the Kibale in Mid-western Uganda. The outbreak reports follow confirmation by Laboratory investigations done at the Uganda Virus Research Institute in Entebbe have confirmed that the "Strange Disease" that was reported in the country since 6th July was Ebola hemorrhagic fever.

Although the mid western district is closer to the Democratic Republic of Congo than it is with South Sudan, all precautionary measures must be taken by the general public and all health workers in the country, more so those closer to the Ugandan boarder. South Sudan and Uganda share a lot, in terms of population movements and trade. As a result people move from one place to other likely to cause importation of the disease in to the two countries once the other is affected.

Since July 2012, a total of 36 cases with 14 deaths have been recorded (MOH, Uganda), two of them are health workers. Sixteen samples were taken from suspected cases; four have confirmed Ebola to be present in their biological specimen. Unfortunately one clinical officer who initially attended to the patient died. Forty (40) contacts have been listed and currently by followed by health officials in Uganda. This calls for more vigilance from all health workers at the health facilities, and are also requested to wear personal protective gear at all times of examining patients presenting at the health facility and prevent an occurrences similar to what happened to deceased clinical officer in Uganda. Universal Safety precautions should also be adhered to all the time.

In South Sudan, the Ministry of Health is working closely with all the state surveillance officers and health teams to enhance surveillance to ensure that all suspected cases are detected on time within the country, especially in the border states of Eastern Equatoria State, Central Equatoria State and Western Equatoria State. With the support of WHO, the Ministry of health taken the following steps;

- Informed all the states to be on high alert with specific emphasis of EES, CES and WES crossing points
- Heightened surveillance at Juba International Airport to ensure that any imported suspected case is promptly detected.

- Ensured information exchange with the WHO and MoH Uganda teams
- Provide technical guidelines for states bordering with Uganda in case of any importation.
- Requested all the states to reactivate taskforces at the state levels for any eventualities
- A national taskforce coordinated by the Ministry of Health will be re-activated.
- Requested all states to put in place a response team and plan have to respond to the outbreak
- Plans are under way to constitute a social mobilization taskforce and ensure alert messages are run on all local fm radio stations and production of IEC materials

Ebola is a highly infectious disease, which presents with high grade fever and bleeding tendencies. It is very infectious, kills in a short time but can easily be prevented. The signs and symptoms of the disease include

- fever,
- vomiting,
- diarrhoea,
- abdominal pain,
- headache,
- measles-like rash,
- red eyes, and sometimes with bleeding from body openings.

Ebola can be spread through direct physical contact with body fluids like saliva, blood, stool, vomit, urine, vaginal secretions and sweat from an infected person and soiled linen used by a patient. It can also be spread through using skin piercing instruments that have been used by an infected person. Likewise, a person can get it by getting in touch with a dead body of a person who has died of the disease. The Ministry of Health urges the public to take the following measures to avert the spread of the disease.

- Report and immediately take any suspected patient to a nearby health unit and the county health authorities
- Avoid direct contact with body fluids of a person suspected to be suffering from Ebola by using protective materials like gloves and masks
- Disinfect the bedding and clothing of an infected person
- Persons who are suspected to have died of Ebola must be handled with strong protective wear and buried immediately, avoid feasting and funerals
- Avoid eating dead animals especially monkeys and other game meat
- Burial of suspicious community deaths should be done under close supervision of state/county health workers
- Report all suspicious deaths at the community level to the health workers

The Ministry of Health calls upon the public to be vigilant and take all precautionary measures in case of suspicion. The country will be informed further on any outcomes if any occurs.

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