

Govt announces mass measles vaccination

BY TONNY ABET

The Ministry of Health has announced a nationwide mass vaccination campaign targeting all children under five years of age against measles, regardless of their previous vaccination status, following persistent outbreaks of the disease across the country.

Dr Michael Baganizi, the programme manager for the Expanded Programme on Immunisation at the Ministry of Health, said the campaign will be conducted in October as part of efforts to curb recurring measles outbreaks.

Speaking in an interview yesterday, Dr Baganizi attributed the frequent outbreaks—reported in at least 66 districts last year—to the growing number of unvaccinated children and the low uptake of the second dose of the measles vaccine.

He identified Kampala, Wakiso District and several districts in Karamoja Sub-region as among the areas still grappling with measles outbreaks, largely due to gaps in immunisation coverage.

“The measles vaccine is given in two doses—one at nine months and a second at one and a half years; the uptake of the second dose has improved over the years, but it is still not as high as the first dose, and that is partly why we continue to see outbreaks,” Dr Baganizi explained.

He said while the first dose coverage stands at about 95 percent, uptake of the second dose remains around 60 percent, leaving many children without adequate immunity.

He explained that measles outbreaks are often driven by an accumulation of



Dr Diana Atwine, and Dr Michael Baganizi at a media briefing in Kampala yesterday. PHOTO/TONNY ABET

unvaccinated children over time. Dr Baganizi also cited population movements, particularly refugee inflows from neighbouring countries, as a contributing factor.

According to the Ministry of Health, 66 districts reported three or more measles cases last year. Dr Baganizi said more than 40 of these districts responded

promptly by identifying affected areas and conducting targeted vaccination campaigns.

“Of those that responded, many have already managed to control the outbreaks,” he said.

“About 23 districts are currently in the 40-day observation period, during which no new cases should be reported before

the outbreak is officially declared over,” he said.

However, he said challenges persist in eight districts, five of which are in Karamoja, while Kampala and Wakiso continue to report sporadic cases.

“In these districts, we are still seeing cases reported every other day,” Dr Baganizi



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zi said. In response to the persistent outbreaks, the ministry will conduct a nationwide mass measles and rubella vaccination campaign in October.

“This is a WHO-recommended intervention, usually carried out every three to four years. Uganda last conducted such a campaign in 2019,” Dr Baganizi said.

He said the mass campaign will serve as a booster to ongoing routine immunisation efforts.

The Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Health, Dr Diana Atwine, said the country continues to grapple with misinformation and disinformation driven by anti-vaccination groups.

She said the government will intensify public engagement to counter false information and reassure communities about vaccine safety and effectiveness.

“Many of our people require continuous reminders,” Dr Atwine said. “It is our duty to keep informing the public about the risks that exist and what government is doing to mitigate them.”