

Uganda rallies for zero malaria deaths on World Malaria Day

IGANGA

By Donald Kiirya

Uganda marked World Malaria Day 2026 in Iganga district with a renewed pledge to eliminate malaria deaths, as the Ministry of Health passed out 105 Community Health Extension Workers (CHEWs) to strengthen prevention and treatment at household level.

Held under the global theme “Driven to End Malaria: Now We Can, Now We Must” and the national call “Zero malaria starts with me,” the event attracted government officials, development partners, cultural and religious leaders, and health workers from Busoga and across the country.

Representing Health Minister Dr. Jane Ruth Aceng, Director



PHOTO BY DONALD KIIRYA

Dr. Olaro (right) addressing Community Health Extension Workers (CHEWs) as they received medical kits during passout at the celebrations to mark World Malaria Day 2026 held at Bulamaji sub county headquarters ground in Iganga district last week

General of Health Services Dr. Charles Olaro said the joint celebration of World Malaria Day and CHEW graduation was deliberate.

“You are very unique, the 105 CHEWs that we are passing out

here. Your chief responsibility is actually to respond to malaria,” Dr. Olaro said.

He stressed that “Zero malaria deaths” is more than a slogan. “No Ugandan should die from preventable and

treatable diseases.”

Dr. Olaro said gains from the Busoga Health Forum model had already reduced malaria cases in the region.

“Health is made at home and is only repaired at health

facilities; 75% of the burden of disease we see in facilities could have been managed at home,” he said.

EXTENSION WORKERS

The CHEWs received bicycles, gumboots, medicine boxes, blood pressure machines, glucometers, malaria test kits and tablets for real-time reporting. To date, over 8,000 CHEWs have been trained in 68 districts.

“No child should have a fever for 24 hours without treatment. No mother should stay for 24 hours with a fever without treatment,” Dr. Olaro said.

World Health Organisation Country Representative Dr. Kasonde Mwinga, represented by Dr. Christine Musanhu, said malaria elimination is now within reach due to better diagnostics, treatment,

surveillance and vaccines introduced in 25 African countries. “More than 52 million vaccine doses have been delivered since 2023, with early evidence showing meaningful reductions in child mortality and malaria cases,” she said.

However, she warned that global malaria cases rose to an estimated 282 million, with 610,000 deaths in 2024.

“The cost of inaction is simply too high,” she said, citing a projected \$45 billion funding gap between 2026 and 2030.

Busoga remains one of Uganda’s highest-burden malaria regions, with Iganga, Luuka, Kamuli and Kaliro among the top 10 districts nationally, according to Makerere University Joint AIDS Program malaria specialist Marie Gorreti Zalwango.