

# 20 districts battle measles outbreak

In response, the Ministry has organised a nationwide mass measles-rubella immunisation campaign scheduled for October, targeting all children under five years, regardless of their vaccination status. A child should receive two doses of the Measles Rubella vaccine at nine months and again at 18 months of age to achieve full protection.

BY TONNY ABET

Concern is growing as the Ministry of Health confirms that 20 districts across the country are grappling with a measles outbreak, a vaccine-preventable disease that has so far claimed 12 lives this year.

The resurgence has been reported in Bulambuli, Kassanda, Amolatar, Kibaale, Nwoya, Karenga, Amuru, Agago, Kagadi, Kiboga, Kyegegwa, Kaabong, Kotido, Kween, Lira, Sembabule, Kikuube, Gulu, Kazo, Mubende and Adjumani.

Dr Charles Olaro, the Director General of Health Services at the Ministry of Health, said fatalities have been recorded in Kagadi, Kikuube, Adjumani, Bulambuli and Karenga.



Women having the children vaccinated against measles. PHOTO/TONNY ABET

"Measles is a deadly, highly contagious viral disease. It spreads rapidly from person to person through respiratory droplets or direct contact and poses a serious threat to children under five years,

particularly those who are unvaccinated," he said. Addressing journalists yesterday, Dr Olaro warned that an infected person can transmit the virus from about four days before a skin rash ap-

pears to four days after its onset.

Symptoms of measles include fever, skin rash, cough, a runny nose and red eyes.

Dr Olaro attributed the recurring outbreaks to gaps in immunisation coverage.

"Uganda has made commendable progress towards measles control and immunisation coverage. The national measles vaccination coverage increased from 79%

90%  
VACCINATION  
COVERAGE BY  
2024

in 2016 to 90% in 2024. But this is still below the required target of 95% to stop measles outbreaks," he said.

In response, the Ministry has organised a nationwide mass measles-rubella immunisation campaign scheduled for

October, targeting all children under five years, regardless of their vaccination status.

"Measles can be prevented by giving at least two doses of the measles vaccine. It is a safe vaccine. The first dose is given when the child is nine months old or soon afterwards. The second dose should be given when the child is 18 months old," he added.

"Every child under five years should receive two doses of the Measles Rubella vaccine at nine months and again at 18 months of age to achieve full protection against the disease and to help safeguard the health of the entire community," Dr Olaro emphasised.