

Ebola: Let us support Government's measures

THE Ministry of Health has confirmed two imported Ebola cases, both linked to the outbreak currently spreading across eastern DR Congo.

With the World Health Organisation declaring the outbreak a Public Health Emergency of International Concern and over 80 people already reported dead in DR Congo, we cannot afford complacency.

Yet this is not the first time the country and, indeed our health teams, are facing Ebola. Over the past two decades, we have battled several outbreaks and, through the health workers' expertise, sacrifice and co-ordinated action, succeeded in containing them.

From the devastating 2000 outbreak in Gulu to the more recent Sudan strain outbreak of 2022-2023, the Ministry of Health has built strong surveillance, detection and emergency response systems. The quick identification of the latest imported cases, the tracing of more than 100 contacts and the activation of emergency teams demonstrate that the ministry is far more prepared today than it was years ago.

However, the Government alone cannot defeat Ebola. Public co-operation remains the most important weapon against



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infectious diseases. Ebola spreads through direct contact with infected persons and contaminated materials, making individual behaviour critical in stopping transmission.

We must each, therefore, remain vigilant, observe proper hygiene, avoid unnecessary physical contact with sick persons and report suspected cases immediately to health facilities.

The decision by President Yoweri Museveni and religious leaders to postpone this year's Uganda Martyrs Day celebrations was difficult but necessary.

The celebrations attract thousands of pilgrims from across the region, including eastern DR Congo where the outbreak is worsening. While the spiritual significance of the celebrations cannot be underestimated, the protection of life must come first. History has shown that large gatherings during epidemics can accelerate the spread of infectious diseases with devastating consequences.

The public should therefore support, rather than politicise or resist, the precautionary measures announced by the Government.

Temporary inconvenience is a small price to pay compared to the human and economic cost of a widespread Ebola outbreak. Religious leaders, cultural institutions, local leaders and the media also have a responsibility to amplify accurate health information and encourage compliance with official guidelines.