

# Govt steps up Ebola virus screening measures

**KISORO.** The government has stepped up measures to control the spread of the deadly Ebola disease following an increase in the number of Congolese refugees that report to Nyakabande Transit Centre in Kisoro District.

The Kisoro Deputy Resident District Commissioner, Mr Dan Ndikumwami, on Sunday said in the last seven days, they had received 1,615 Congolese refugees at Nyakabande Transit Centre, with an average record of 230 individuals reporting daily.

"We have alerted the management at the Nyakabande Transit Centre to enhance Ebola prevention measures such as mandatory handwashing for any one entering the facility, strict medical screening of new arrivals for Ebola symptoms, wearing face masks for staff and visitors, community sensitisation about Ebola and rescreening before relocation," Mr Ndikumwami said.

He said majority of the Congolese refugees who are accommodated at Nyakabande Transit Centre in Kisoro District originate from the towns of Kisigari, Binza, Kiseguro, Katwiguru, Bweza, Rugari, Kabaya, Kanombe, Karengera, Bukoma, Busanza, Kiwanja, Tongo, Rugari, Rumangabo and Mutanda.

Some refugees said they were running away from hunger because armed militias in the area do not allow them to access their crop gardens for either food cultivation or harvesting.

Nyakabande Transit Centre commandant, Mr John Bosco Kyaligonza confirmed they had prioritised Ebola screening since the disease has claimed some lives in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

He emphasised that hand washing and recording body temperature is



A health worker screens Congolese refugees at Nyakabande Transit Centre on Monday. PHOTO/ROBERT MUHEREZA

mandatory for all the refugees before they are allowed to enter the transit centre.

He also said they have established an isolation centre at the facility to act as an emergency unit.

"Although we have stepped up Ebola screening services at our facility, we lack manpower because many development partners laid off some of their employees citing funding gaps. We are also

faced with the challenge of congestion as the facility was constructed to accommodate about 850 individuals. We are now accommodating 1,775 Congolese refugees from 1,239 households and we are overwhelmed by the numbers.

Inadequate personal protective equipment such as face masks, gloves and sanitisers are some of the other challenges," Mr Kyaligonza said.

He revealed plans of relocating about

1,200 Congolese refugees from Kisoro Refugee Transit Centre to Nakivale Refugee Settlement in Isingiro District to reduce the challenge of congestion.

"From January to May 24, we have registered 7,183 cumulative numbers of refugees from 4,773 Congolese households. In the past months, we were registering about 50 Congolese refugees per day but beginning Mid May, the numbers increased and we are now register-

ing an average of 253 per day," Mr Kyaligonza added.

The refugees claimed that the withdrawal of the M23 from some areas initially under their control has exposed them to attacks by armed militia groups hence the desire to flee for their lives.

"Although there is no serious fighting in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, we are facing generalised insecurity in form of gross human rights abuses such as rape, gender based violence, economic exploitation through extortion and looting, abductions for ransom, forced recruitment, among others. All those atrocities are done by militia groups such as Wazalendo, Mai Mai and other bandits who take advantage of the security gaps," Ms Zawadi Simbenzye, a refugee, said.

The chairman for Bunagana Town Council in Kisoro District, which borders the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mr Ismail Ndyayambaje, called for vigilance among the people in the border communities.

He asked all locals to ensure Ebola preventive measures are followed.

**Prevention efforts.**  
We have alerted the management at the Nyakabande Transit Centre to enhance Ebola prevention measures such as mandatory handwashing for any one entering the facility, strict medical screening of new arrivals for Ebola symptoms, wearing face masks for staff and visitors..." **Kisoro Deputy RDC Dan Ndikumwami**