

# Ebola: Let's keep our schools safe

**A**cross the country, children returned to school for their second term of study this week. Unlike other terms, this time there is more worry beyond the fees and school requirements.

The country faces a delicate and urgent responsibility: ensuring that education continues without exposing learners to the growing threat of Ebola, while at the same time minimising panic across the country.

The escalating outbreak in neighbouring Democratic Republic of the Congo, where more than 900 cases have been confirmed, with more than 220 deaths, and the increasing risk of cross-border transmission into Uganda demand vigilance, not only from government authorities but from parents, teachers, religious leaders, and communities.

Children are among the most vulnerable during public health emergencies, not only because of their age but because schools and social gatherings naturally involve close interaction, shared facilities, and frequent physical contact.

Uganda has handled Ebola outbreaks before, and one of the country's greatest strengths has always been early prevention and public cooperation. Therefore, schools must strictly enforce Ministry of Health guidelines, including regular hand washing, temperature screening, sanitation of classrooms and dormitories, and immediate reporting of any suspected symptoms. Teachers and school administrators should not treat these measures as routine instructions, but as life-saving responsibilities.

The Health ministry has already warned that activities promoting "close physical interaction, uncontrolled crowd mixing and unnecessary movement" could facilitate rapid transmission if an infected person attends such gatherings.

Children showing signs of fever, weakness, vomiting, or unusual illness should never be sent to school. At the same time, social gatherings such as concerts, festivals, sports activities, and crowded celebrations must be approached with caution. While public life may not completely stop, unnecessary exposure during an active outbreak can quickly reverse the gains Uganda has made in controlling previous epidemics.

The government's decision to keep schools open while tightening preventive measures reflects an understanding that education must continue. However, keeping schools operational will only succeed if prevention remains consistent and serious at every level.

The media, religious institutions, and local leaders must intensify public awareness campaigns, especially among young people, who may underestimate the dangers of Ebola. Fear and misinformation can spread just as fast as the virus itself.

Uganda cannot afford complacency. Protecting children in schools and communities is not only a health priority but a national duty. The fight against Ebola will not be won by government directives alone, but by everyday decisions made in homes, classrooms, churches, markets, and public spaces across the country.

## The issue:

Ebola

## Our view:

The fight against Ebola will not be won by government directives alone, but by everyday decisions made in homes, classrooms, churches, markets, and public spaces across the country.

## Our commitment to you

### We pledge:

- To be accurate and fair in all we do.
- To be respectful to all in our pursuit of the truth.
- To refuse to accept any compensation beyond that provided by Monitor Publications Ltd. for what we do in our news gathering and decision-making.

Further, we ask that we be informed whenever you feel that we have fallen short in our attempt to keep these commitments.