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Country on high alert for cholera outbreak



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Bududa

The landslide affected area of Bududa District is on high alert for a cholera outbreak, as the infection has already been confirmed in the neighbouring district of Manafwa, with further suspected infections in Butaleja.

"Several cases of cholera have been confirmed in Manafwa," said Ministry of Health spokesman Paul Kagwa.

"The Ministry of Health has sent a team to assess the situation and determine an effective response."

Cholera is an acute intestinal infection caused by contaminated food and drinking water which can cause diarrhea, severe dehydration and death if treatment is not promptly given.

300 unaccounted for

Over 300 people , now presumed dead, remain buried, along with hundreds of livestock.

As they decompose, bacteria will leak into the surrounding rivers, used by thousands of people across Eastern Uganda, it could cause an array of water borne infections and diseases in an area that already reported cholera cases in previous months.

Mr John Bosco Isunju, a lecturer at the School of Public Health, Makerere University, said the concentration of displaced people in nearby villages and relief camps would increase the risk of

"Effort needs to be put on providing clean and treated water for people to drink."

Mr Kagwa said all of the districts through which the Manafwa River flows are at risk, including Bududa, Manafwa, Butalega, Sironko and Tororo. "The problem with cholera is that it is very mobile," said Mr Kagwa.

Manafwa District Health Officer Josen Kiggundu told Saturday Monitor that 79 cases of cholera have been reported in his district, but said this was as a result of heavy rains in the previous month.

However, the United Nations International Children and Emergency Fund (Unicef) said the landslides presented a new danger for surrounding area.

Unicef representative in Bududa Mark Choenoo said, "The control of cholera will be our priority."

He said they will concentrate their efforts on community sensitisation; educating local people on the importance of good hygiene and sanitation. Unicef will soon be erecting education tents for such work.

The health response effort is being coordinated by the Ministry of Health through the District Disaster Management Team, which is operating out of two health centres in Bulucheke and Bukalasi.

The Red Cross has provided the area with medical supplies that can treat 1,000 patients suffering from cholera.

"For the time being the situation is ok, but we are ready if there is an outbreak," said Uganda's Country Director Michael Nataka.

But he warned that the contaminated water could also cause widespread diarrhea and confirmed yesterday that 20 children have already been admitted with the intestinal problems.

On Thursday, the Red Cross distributed 900 emergency kits to families displaced in Bududa. Each package included 100 water purification tablets, which can clean 2,000 litres of water.

Kabale floods

Meanwhile floods continue to cause havoc with torrential rains reported across the country with Butaleja and Kabale districts pressing the panic button for urgent help.

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