KEEPPING ALERT
With the continued mutation of the coronavirus and emergence of many variants, the government is not taking any chances. COVID-19 centres will remain on alert for any eventualities, the ministry has said.

By Betty Amanokpop

The Ministry of Health has said despite the low number of cases recorded that require hospital admission, it will not scale down its preparations for COVID-19 treatment. There are only 38 people on active admission in hospitals. These include Mulago (six), Entebbe Grade B Hospital (four), Boga Hospital (four), Soroti Hospital (four), Guu (four), Arua (two), Lira (three), Adjumani (one), Mbale (one) and five are in private facilities. Other treatment facilities such as Mendeota National Stadium, Namboole, China-Uganda Friendship Hospital Nakuru no longer have patients on admission.

Dr Charles Olara, the director of clinical services at the health ministry, told New Vision that for centres such as Namboole, they have had to shift the beds and maintain them in one room so that in case of a surge, they can easily clean the units and admit patients.

“We deployed the staff because we could not leave them redundant. We only kept a skeletal staff and there is a duty roster so that if a patient comes today, they know who should be on duty,” Olara said.

When COVID-19 struck in March last year, all government hospitals, including regional ones, were tasked with setting aside spaces for treatment of patients who present with the disease. Several private hospitals were also allowed to admit and treat patients with COVID-19. Olara said hospitals with no patients currently have been asked to preserve the facilities they had set aside for COVID-19 patients so that in case of an eventual surge, they are prepared.

Last week, health minister Dr Jane Ruth Aceng revealed that the country is currently experiencing a gradual surge in cases. She said the resurgence is being recorded in Arua, Gulu, Karamoja, Otuke, Lira, Amuru, Kayunga, Adjumani, Nebbe and Kamwenge districts.

WE WILL NOT SCALE DOWN DESPITE LOW COVID-19 CASES, SAYS MINISTRY

PHOTO BY ALFRED DURRAT

The surge in numbers coincides with the discovery of the deadly Indian strain in the country. This has prompted government to issue travel restrictions, including suspending flights from India.

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As of yesterday, Uganda had recorded a cumulative of 42,073, including the 59 new cases that were confirmed on May 2.

The 59 cases were recorded in Kampala (27), Pader (20), Waliso (10), Gulu (6), Moroto (2), Lira (1), Arua (1) and Amuru (1). So far, 342 people have succumbed to the disease, while 41,652 have recovered.

Fatality rate has slightly increased from the 1.9% on May 1 to 3.5% on May 2.

Ugandan invents gadget for reporting crimes

By Martin Kabali

In Uganda, thousands of crimes go unreported and several people often do not even report to the police stations. The reasons range from domestic violence, where people shy away from reporting, and fear of stigma or victimization.

However, a group of youth have invented a bracelet that can be used to alert authorities and friends on not only domestic violence but also robbery and other crimes.

Kabali said they were inspired by the increasing crime rates at universities to develop the bracelet.

"I was at Makerere University and there was a case of sexual assault, especially against female students. Many of them would not report because of fear of the police and this prompted me to develop it," he said.

Kabali said in just five seconds, one can be able to report or alert their closest people for rescue.

During ideation, he said, the bracelet would be triggered to alert your family and friends on how to rescue you.

A prototype of the bracelet

TESTED PROTOTYPE

"We have tested it already in northern Uganda. It has reported some cases of domestic violence," he said on Friday, at the DataFest Kampala 2021, an event organised by Makerere University through the Resilient Africa Network (RAN).

The DataFest took place at the Makerere University RAN Lab at Kololo, a Kampala city suburb. It was organised under the theme, "Leveraging data to increase creativity and

"These innovations are good. What the innovators need now is financial support to commercialise their ideas to bring money to the country," he said.

According to the Police Crime Report of 2020, 195,951 criminal cases were reported in 2020.

Besides the bracelets, there were four other unique innovations at DataFest. These included the Akousle Fresh, a mobile application for buying and selling of fresh foods, My Lib, a digital library for schools with audio and visual contents.

Others were EzyAgri, a mobile application that can provide agriculture extension services and Current4All, an application that can help assisted ladies access legal, police and health services.

Fabrice Mane, a data scientist at EzyAgri, said: "The agriculture extension services in Uganda are broken. Farmers do not know the right inputs and machinery. This is what we are here to solve."