

Statement on the Impact of the Bundibugyo Ebola Outbreak on CWM Uganda Operations

Background and Present Health Situation:

Uganda is currently facing a highly complex outbreak of the Ebola virus, specifically the rare Bundibugyo strain, for which there is currently no licensed vaccine or specific therapeutic treatment. The outbreak crossed into Uganda from the neighbouring Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) after an infected patient seeking treatment tragically passed away in a Kampala hospital before diagnostic results were finalized.

As of late May 2026, Uganda has reported nine confirmed cases and one death, with at least three cases directly linked to cross-border travel. In response, health authorities have placed over 550 contacts under strict quarantine. Furthermore, the government has instituted severe containment measures, including a 7:00 PM curfew and total lockdowns in two heavily affected districts, completely restricting movement in and out of these zones. To prevent further transmission, all borders neighbouring the DRC have been temporarily closed.

Direct Impact on CWM National Programs:

The necessary government restrictions on travel and public gatherings have severely disrupted our activities. We have been forced to cancel our National Seminar and Annual General Meeting, where leaders from all corners of Uganda—including high-risk border regions—were scheduled to convene to elect a new National Executive Committee and plan CWM's five-year strategy. Since we cannot meet physically, the mandate of our current national leadership has been temporarily prolonged. While we are opting for online meetings to maintain basic administrative continuity, our ability to make major, legally binding constitutional decisions remains constrained. We find ourselves in a difficult situation, balancing organizational governance with the absolute priority of member safety.

Socio-Religious and Economic Disruptions:

The containment measures have caused widespread disruption across the country. Notably, a Presidential directive issued on May 19, 2026, postponed the annual Uganda Martyrs Day celebrations at Namugongo (traditionally held on June 3). This historic event draws millions of international pilgrims, particularly from the DRC, and this year's liturgy was to be animated by the Kasese Diocese which borders DRC. The sudden cancellation forced active pilgrims to turn back, causing immense heartbreak for the faithful and devastating financial losses for local businesses that had invested heavily in the preparation.

At the grassroots level, these restrictions threaten our Catholic Workers' Savings and Loan Associations (CW-SLAs). Our members meet physically every two weeks to save and pool resources. The limitations on movement, combined with broader business slowdowns caused by border closures, disturbs both the financial consistency of our savings circles and the livelihoods of our members.

Looking Ahead with Resilience:

This crisis has understandably reignited anxiety and painful memories of the COVID-19 lockdowns among Ugandans. However, the CWM leadership remains committed to navigating this trial with faith and practical adaptation. We are actively exploring virtual alternatives to keep our networks connected.

We pray for the safety of our frontline health workers, the recovery of those affected, and an end to this outbreak so we may safely resume our work in the communities.

Complied by;

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CWM Uganda