

*By Francis Byaruhanga;*

Officials and health practitioners in Musanze district are taking sleepless nights to see that COVID-19 cases are totally eradicated to keep the country's popular tourist spot remain at the top and safe for visitors.

The World Health Organization (WHO) recently declared that "COVID-19 is no longer a global health emergency" which meant that the death cases have reduced globally. Nonetheless, some countries across the globe have not declared the end to COVID-19 including Rwanda.

Meanwhile, the world is gradually returning to normal life. Countries have reopened their economies and dropped COVID-19 restrictions. But as the end of the pandemic seems obvious, the COVID-19 still poses a threat.



Isolation rooms at the district hospital of Musanze

WHO indicates that the disease is still causing a high number of deaths, whereby more than 135,000 people have died globally this year alone. Worse still, many people remain unvaccinated around the world. According to statistics only 29% of Africa's population is fully vaccinated implying that the pandemic will continue to spread as long as the vaccination rate remains low.

Domestically, COVID-19 was a big threat to the key sectors of the economy and one that was hit hard was the meetings and touristic destinations. Arguably, Musanze is a popular tourist destination and was among the towns which were hugely affected by COVID-19 restrictions and travel bans.

With the application of mitigation measures, however, COVID-19 cases have reduced tangibly.

Various measures and mechanisms are still applied including an awareness campaign against COVID-19. For instance, Last week, Rwanda Media Network cluster on HIV-AIDS and Health Promotion (ABASIRWA) in collaboration with Rwanda Bio Medical centre (RBC) organized a workshop held in Musanze with a *theme the role of journalist to increase their engagements in community mobilization and promoting public access of fact-based information on COVID-19 pandemic in Rwanda*. This was meant to engage the public in implementation of various measures on behalf of the state against the pandemic through media.



Health officials in Musanze District talking to journalist

Speaking to a journalist, Axelle Kamanzi, Musanze district in-charge of social affairs told journalists that prevention measures of COVID-19 in Musanze are still tightened despite the reduction of the cases.

She said that the pandemic still posed a threat to the residents.

“So far, we have traced two cases of COVID-19 in our district and the patients are closely monitored by doctors,” she said, emphasizing that “the pandemic is still a threat” and advised to remain vigilant.

Gilbert Nduwayezu, a medical practitioner at Ruhengeri hospital also echoed sentiments that prevention activities are still ongoing in the area including inoculating children aged 5-11 years.

“The hospital played a great role in fighting against COVID-19. We are continuing with vaccination programs and we are encouraging residents to apply measures such as washing hands, and remain clean throughout their practices.

On another hand, while commenting on the trend of Non-Communicable Diseases (NCD's) in the country, Evariste Ntaganda, the Director of Non-Communicable Diseases at RBC revealed that heavy drinking (3.4%) and overweight (2.8%) remain the main triggers of some particular diseases.

Furthermore, Ntaganda noted that the centre is reinforcing and engaging screening services at all health facilities in the country as a current response to curb non-communicable diseases.

“We are doing continuous education among the population as part of awareness,” he noted.

A new report by the World Health Organization (WHO) released last month indicated that non-communicable claim around three quarters of all lives each year.