

Rwanda has celebrated a hard-won victory: the World Health Organization (WHO) officially declared the Marburg virus outbreak over. After three months of tireless effort, Rwanda had successfully defeated a virus that posed a grave threat to the nation's health.

The crisis began on September 27, 2024, when the first case of Marburg was confirmed. The news was unsettling—Marburg is a highly dangerous virus with a mortality rate of up to 88%. Yet, instead of succumbing to panic, Rwanda acted swiftly and decisively.

Dr. Brian Chirombo, the WHO Country Director for Rwanda, commended the nation's resilience and teamwork. "Rwanda's response to this outbreak was nothing short of extraordinary," he said. "This victory is the result of relentless effort and collaboration from all levels—government, health workers, and international partners."

Rwanda's healthcare system faced a formidable test. Doctors, nurses, and health workers worked around the clock to track every case, test potential exposures, and care for the infected. Despite the immense challenges, the country's determination remained unwavering. Dr. Chirombo emphasized, "The leadership's swift and coordinated response, combined with the dedication of health workers on the frontlines, was essential in preventing further spread."

Investigations revealed that the outbreak originated from Egyptian fruit bats living near a mine outside Kigali. The bats carried the virus, which spread rapidly among those in close contact with them, including healthcare workers. Despite the risks, Rwanda's health workers were resolute in their mission to contain the outbreak.

Dr. Sabin Nsanzimana, Rwanda's Minister of Health, played a pivotal role in leading the response. On December 20, he proudly announced, "After 42 days with no new cases, I can confidently declare that Marburg is no longer a threat to Rwanda. We have triumphed." His statement marked the end of a grueling three-month battle that tested the nation's healthcare infrastructure but ultimately showcased its resilience.



Rwanda's success extended beyond containment and treatment. It also involved addressing the gaps left by the loss of healthcare workers who tragically

succumbed to Marburg. Dr. Nsanzimana expressed the country's gratitude for the international support received. "We owe much of this success to our international partners," he said. "The assistance from countries like Uganda, Sierra Leone, and the United States, as well as the Africa CDC, was crucial in overcoming this crisis."

The international community played a vital role in Rwanda's victory. Medical teams from Uganda, Sierra Leone, and other nations provided expertise to treat patients and bolster the healthcare response. The Africa CDC worked closely with Rwanda's Ministry of Health, offering guidance and logistical support throughout the outbreak.

Dr. Chirombo lauded Rwanda's unity and determination. "What we have witnessed in Rwanda is a model of collaboration and commitment," he said. "This is a nation that has demonstrated that when health systems, governments, and global partners unite, no challenge is insurmountable."

This achievement serves as a powerful reminder of the strength that comes from unity. The government, health workers, and international partners joined forces to confront the deadly virus head-on. As Dr. Nsanzimana reflected, "This was not just a victory over Marburg; it was a victory for all of us—for every healthcare worker, every community member, and every partner who stood with us."

While Rwanda celebrates this milestone, the country remains vigilant against other health threats. Monitoring efforts continue for potential outbreaks, including MPOX, which is spreading in neighboring countries. However, Rwanda's experience with Marburg has demonstrated that strong leadership and rapid action can overcome even the gravest challenges.

Dr. Chirombo concluded, "Rwanda's story is one of resilience and determination. It's a story of how a nation united in purpose can face a crisis head-on and emerge victorious. This triumph will inspire others around the world."

This achievement is not only about defeating a virus; it reflects the heart, strength, and unity of the Rwandan people. With determination and a strong sense of community, Rwanda has shown that no challenge is too great to overcome.