



MINISTRY OF HEALTH

**MINISTERIAL STATEMENT ON THE OUTBREAK OF
INFLUENZA VIRUS AT NATURAL RESOURCES
DEVELOPMENT COLLEGE**

Presented to the National Assembly

by

Dr. Joseph Kasonde MP, Hon. Minister of Health

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Introduction:

Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for granting me the opportunity to update the house and through you the public, following a point of order raised by the Hon. Member of Parliament for Kasenengwa on the reported outbreak of a disease at the Natural Resources Development College NRDC in Lusaka.

Background:

Mr. Speaker, on the 10th of November 2015, the Ministry of Health received a report from Levy Mwanawasa General Hospital indicating that more than 140 students from NRDC, ^{had} presented to the hospital with an assortment of symptoms including fever, sore throat, chest pain, headache and fainting episodes. The first of the cases to present to Levy Mwanawasa Hospital were seen on the 6th of November 2015.

Response:

Mr. Speaker, following this report, from Levy Mwanawasa Hospital, the Ministry of Health immediately constituted a team of experts to investigate the outbreak. The team went to NRDC and

screened a total of **78 students**. Many of the students screened presented with flu-like symptoms which included the following:

- Runny nose,
- Sore throat,
- Irritation and redness of eyes,
- Diarrhea,
- Fever
- Headache,
- General body pains and weakness.

Mr. Speaker, biological samples, including blood, stool and throat swabs were collected from 48 students for further analysis, and these were analyzed. The initial examinations of 140 students, at Levy Mwanawasa General Hospital, indicated that all had normal vital signs. A total of 44 out of the 140 had blood collected for investigations which included full blood count and Malaria rapid diagnostic test (Malaria RDT) examination. The results were all within the normal range.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Health team further carried out an inspection of the hostels, kitchen and the dining areas. Water, and food samples which included raw beef, milk and cooked chicken were collected for laboratory analysis.

In addition, Veterinary experts carried out a survey of the animals in the institution. They did not find any evidence of disease among the animals. Blood and stool specimens were collected from the animals on 11th November, 2015 and forwarded to Balmoral Research Centre for further examinations.

Results:

Mr. Speaker, laboratory tests on the samples collected from the students have confirmed that the current outbreak at NRDC is due to Influenza H3N2 virus. This is a non-life threatening infection that is spread from person to person. This Influenza H3N2 has been shown to be in circulation around the country. It is common to have outbreaks of Influenza in schools and colleges, as is the case at NRDC, because you have a number of people gathered in one place.

Way forward:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to assure the nation that this infection poses no danger to the students and members of staff at NDRC and hence the college should continue operating normally. The Ministry of Health will however, continue to monitor the situation at the institution. Any students who develop symptoms are encouraged to report immediately to Levy Mwanawasa General Hospital. Our medical staff are ready and equipped to deal with any cases that may arise.

Mr. Speaker I thank you