

# LDC pre-entry exams scrapped

By Farooq Kasule

The Law Council has scrapped the pre-entry exams for the bar course at the Law Development Centre (LDC).

According to the memo issued by the Law Council secretary, Margaret Apiny, yesterday, the bar course pre-entry exams have been scrapped for a period of two years, pending conclusion of the final legal procedures.

It has been a requirement under the professional requirements for admission to post graduate bar course for law graduates to pass examinations set by the Law Council before being admitted.

“Law Council has resolved to suspend LDC pre-entry examinations for a period of two years, effective this year. LDC is authorised to admit 1,680 students for the bar course for the academic year 2019/20,” Apiny stated in the circular dated August 14.

She noted that 1,120 will be enrolled at main campus in Kampala, while 560 at the Mbarara branch.



Lwemiyaga MP Theodore Ssekikubo (second-right) celebrating with his friends. This was during a graduation ceremony at the Law Development Centre in June

This has opened a flood gate for lawyers across the country to join the bar course.

Previously, the tight pre-entry examinations had left many wallowing in pity with some politicians, especially some Members of Parliament,

attacking and blaming Law Council for their failure to join the bar course.

Last year, LDC received more than 2,200 applicants, but only 600 passed the pre-entry exams. The Law Council has also directed LDC to re-open

applications for the bar course for this academic year that had been closed on August 9.

Apiny noted that students that will not be accommodated in this academic year would be admitted in the 2020/21 academic year. Others cleared

to be admitted in this academic year include those who did not write, pass the bar course last year or repeaters.

Apiny said LDC should engage last year's applicants and explain to them the selection criteria and the way forward.

The development comes at a time when West Budama MP Jacob Oboth Oboth is planning to table a Private Member's Bill in Parliament, seeking to amend Section 6 of the Advocacy Act to, among others, scrap the pre-entry exams for the bar course at LDC.

Section 6 of the Advocacy Act gives the Law Council powers to regulate the legal training and determine qualifications for a Bar Course.

Both argued that the idea of pre-entry exams had outlived its expediency and that it is more commercial than academic, the process of screening and sieving those who would undertake training in law.

Oboth pointed out countries, such as Ghana and Kenya which, he says, have already

out-lawed the bar course pre-entry exams.

Justice and constitutional affairs minister Kahinda Otafiire is among the many Ugandans who have been against the bar course pre-entry exams.

Otafiire contended that pre-entry exams were locking out many lawyers from LDC and creating frustration and hostility, in the process.

Former Law Council chairperson Justice Remy Kasule, however, has been against scrapping of the pre-entry exams.

Appearing before the Parliament's legal committee in April this year, Kasule described the scrapping of pre-entry exams as a regrettable move, noting that it would grossly compromise the quality of advocates in the long run.

## Background

The bar course pre-entry exams were introduced by Prof Frederick Ssempebwa in 2010.

Ssempebwa was by then the chairperson of the committee on legal education and training at the Law Council.

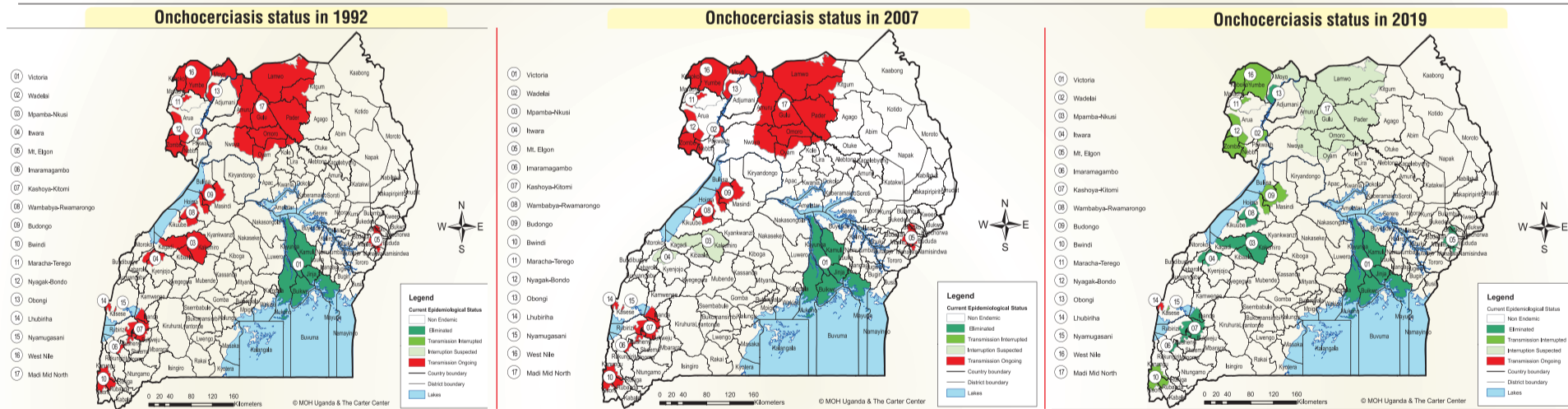


THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA

## MINISTRY OF HEALTH

### UGANDA LEADS THE FIGHT IN AFRICA IN SUCCESSFUL ELIMINATION OF RIVER BLINDNESS /ONCHOCERCIASIS

Ministry of Health declares elimination of river blindness in Obongi focus and Interruption of transmission in Nyagak-Bondo focus (Nebbi, Zombo and Arua districts)



Uganda has stopped interventions among 608,219 people previously treated for river blindness (Onchocerciasis), based on the current World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines, bringing the country closer to achieving its goal of eliminating river blindness nationwide by the year 2020. River blindness has been known as a health problem affecting a significant population of Uganda since early 1950's. It wasn't until 2007, when the Government of Uganda declared a national wide elimination policy.

River blindness is a vector borne disease that is transmitted by the black flies which breed in fast flowing rivers. It causes serious eye and skin disease that may result in blindness. The disease was originally endemic in 40 districts in Uganda with about 4.6 million people at risk, excluding districts in the Victoria Nile focus that eliminated the disease in the early 1970's.

The strategy for elimination of river blindness from Uganda is mass treatment of affected communities with ivermectin and vector

control/elimination. The twelfth meeting of the Uganda Onchocerciasis Elimination Expert Advisory Committee (UOEAC) of the Ministry of Health held from 6th to 8th August 2019, concluded that another river blindness transmission zone, the Obongi focus (Obongi District) with a population of 43,518, has met the WHO criteria for eliminating river blindness. Since the launch of the elimination program in 2007, Obongi is the 7th foci to achieve elimination, joining the current foci of Itwara (Kyejojo and Kabarole districts); Elgon (Mbale, Sironko, Manafwa and Bududa districts); Mpamba-Nkusi (Kagadi district); Wambabya-Rwamarongo (Hoima, and Kikuube districts); Kashoya-Kitomi (Kamwenge, Rubirizi, Buhwenju, and Ibanda districts); Immaramagambo (Bushenyi and Mitooma districts), excluding Victoria Nile (Jinja, Mukono, Kamuli, Mayuge and Kayunga districts), which was eliminated in the early 1970's.

It is estimated that this has added a total of 1.3 million people that are no longer at risk of

onchocerciasis to the 2.8 million people living in the Victoria focus, where onchocerciasis was eliminated prior to the start of the program.

In total, river blindness has been eliminated in 8 out of the 17 foci and over 4 million Ugandans living in these districts are no longer at risk of acquiring the river blindness disease. In addition to the eight foci where elimination has been confirmed, seven other foci (Wadelai, Maracha-Terego, Nyamugasani, Budongo, Bwindi, West Nile and Nyagak-Bondo) are believed to have been protected from onchocerciasis and are awaiting final confirmation. The Madi-Mid North focus comprising of Pader, Lamwo, Kitgum, Gulu, Omoro, Amuru, Nwoya, Oyam, Lira, Adjumani, and Moyo districts, with a population of approximately 1.5 million, has changed from Transmission Ongoing to Interruption Suspected. The status of Lhubirha focus (Kasese district), with a population of 139,087 remains unchanged as Transmission Ongoing.

The Nyagak-Bondo focus (Nebbi, Arua and Zombo districts) has been reclassified as Transmission Interrupted and Mass Drug Administration (MDA) interventions will stop in October 2019 among 608,219 people. Nyagak-Bondo now joins Maracha-Terego (Arua district); Nyamugasani (part of Kasese district); Wadelai (Pakwach district); West Nile (Koboko and Yumbe districts); Bwindi (Kisoro, Kanungu and Rubanda districts); Budongo (Hoima, Buliisa and Masindi districts) foci that are undergoing post-treatment surveillance. This means approximately 4.2 million treatments for Onchocerciasis have been stopped.

The largest river blindness focus in Uganda, Madi-Mid North (Moyo, Adjumani, Amuru, Gulu, Omoro, Pader, Kitgum, Lamwo, Lira, Oyam and Nwoya districts), has moved from the status of Transmission Ongoing to Interruption Suspected.

The Government of Uganda, in collaboration

with neighboring countries, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Republic of South Sudan (RSS) continues to promote cross-border river blindness activities. Uganda continues to register success in the fight against river blindness, through the effort of the Ministry of Health's River Blindness Elimination Program, with the support of partners including; The Carter Center, Sightsavers, Act to End NTD | East, the Lions Clubs International Foundation, Lions of Uganda, Merck, Mectizan Donation Program, BASF, World Health Organization, and the Governments of Democratic Republic of Congo and the Republic of South Sudan. This accomplishment is evidence that total elimination of River Blindness is possible in Africa.

FOR GOD AND MY COUNTRY

*Aceng Jane Ruth*

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