



**THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA
MINISTRY OF HEALTH**

PRESS STATEMENT

UPDATE ON COVID-19 RESPONSE IN UGANDA

13 August 2020



13 August 2020 - As part of our routine duties, the Ministry of Health would like to update the general public on the COVID-19 pandemic situation in the country and the response activities.

THE COVID 19 SITUATION IN UGANDA

As you may all be aware, the COVID-19 situation in the country is rapidly changing. As I mentioned in my previous address to the public, we are in phase 3 of the COVID-19 pandemic – where we are seeing clusters of community transmission and now deaths in the country specifically in Kampala Metropolitan Area.

General update on the outbreak in Uganda

The cumulative number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Uganda is **1,353** with a breakdown as follows; Returnees from abroad **183**, contacts and alerts **557**, truck drivers **574** and health workers **39**.

The total recoveries are **1,311** and broken down as follows: Ugandans – **1,141**, Non-Ugandans – **170**.

From March 21st 2020, when we reported the first case, we have registered a total of **595** community cases in **48** districts: Amuru and Kyotera districts have been recording the highest rates of transmission in comparison to other districts, but have now been joined by Kampala City. Amuru (116), Kyotera (84) and Kampala (104). Other districts like Tororo (57), Buikwe (45) and Namisindwa (33) are also experiencing a slow but steady increase in cases.



To date, **59** districts in Uganda have registered confirmed cases of COVID-19, these include:

Adjumani, Amolatar, Amudat, Amuru, Arua, Bugiri, Buikwe, Bukwo, Buliisa, Bushenyi, Busia, Buvuma, Dokolo, Gomba, Gulu, Hoima, Iganga, Isingiro, Kabale, Kagadi, Kakumiro, Kalangala, Kampala, Kasese, Kayunga, Kiryandongo, Kisoro, Kitgum, Koboko, Kumi, Kyankwanzi, Kyotera, Lamwo, Lira, Luwero, Lwengo, Madi Okollo, Masaka, Masindi, Mayuge, Mbale, Mbarara, Moyo, Mpigi, Nakaseke, Nakasongola, Namisindwa, Nebbi, Ntungamo, Nwoya, Obongi, Oyam, Rakai, Sironko, Soroti, Tororo, Wakiso, Yumbe and Zombo.

Active cases on Admission

Currently, there are 190 active cases on admission in 12 health facilities broken down as follows; **180 nationals and 10 foreigners**). Of the active cases, 2 are in ICU.

Deaths

As of today, Uganda has registered a total of eleven (11) COVID-19 related mortalities. Out of the eleven; 8 are from Kampala Metropolitan Area, 1 from Hoima, 1 from Wakiso and 1 from Namisindwa districts.

From the trend of the deaths we are witnessing, three (3) were recorded from 21st July 2020 to 29th July 2020 while from 31st July to 12th August, the mortalities more than doubled to 8. Additionally, we have noted that the disease kills everyone irrespective of their age. The youngest COVID-19 related mortality was 27 years old while the oldest was 80 years old. 90% of the mortalities presented at private health facilities and had a history of underlying conditions such as: diabetes, hypertension, HIV, asthma among others.

A total of **645** contacts to the eleven (11) deaths have been listed, 9 secondary cases and 2 tertiary cases turned positive.



EMERGING COMPLEX SITUATION OF COVID-19 IN KAMPALA METROPOLITAN AREA

Over the past three weeks, the Ministry, and the country have seen an emergence of cases largely from previously unknown transmission lines in Kampala and parts of Wakiso districts.

Since the 1st COVID-19 case was reported in Kampala on 23rd March, 2020, a cumulative total of 160 confirmed cases have been registered. Of the cases registered in Kampala, 56 are imported (55 returnees, 1 truck driver) while 104 are locally transmitted (Contacts: 35; Alerts: 49, Health workers: 20).

In relation to the cases in Kampala, 79 cases have been reported in the last 14 days. To note is that 23 community cases were registered in one week, from 28th July to 3rd August. However, in the following week, 4th August to 12th August 2020, the confirmed cases more than doubled to 56. This trend implies that we shall be seeing the number of cases go up.

It is important to note that of all the 11 deaths so far reported nationally, eight (8) are from the Kampala region alone. More so, all were identified from unknown transmission lines. It is possible that with the phased lifting of the lockdown, the virus may have been imported into Kampala and it appears to have spread among the communities in Kampala.

This, in essence signals tougher times ahead and thus a much deeper need for compliance to the Presidential directives, the Ministry of Health SOPs and the Statutory Instruments in place for this Public Health Threat.



In addition, we have registered emerging clusters of transmission in three business premises in the last one week where in all, 11 cases and 316 contacts have been identified. These business premises have been recommended for temporary closure.

- a. Eagle Holdings (4 cases confirmed): linked to the 5th death (46-year-old /Female; Indian)
- b. Megha Industries (4 cases confirmed)
- c. Toyota Uganda (3 cases confirmed)

Following the current trend of COVID-19 in Kampala Metropolitan Area, the Ministry of Health working closely with Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA) and partners will intensify response activities to a level to commensurate with the threat at hand.

The following is being done;

1. Increased the human resource at the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) of KCCA with experts from the Ministry from Health who have been re-assigned to KCCA to revitalize and build capacity of the EOC. The goal is to strengthen the response coordinating mechanism for all the 5 divisions, and build a foundation for the anticipated increased response activities in the Greater Kampala area (that includes Wakiso, and Mukono). As of now, all the five divisions are linked and report to the KCCA EOC as the operations situation room.
2. The Ministry has intensified efforts to reach out to the private healthcare facilities and increase their level of alertness on early case identification, sampling, notification, isolation, and clear referral pathways. Patients suspected of COVID-19 in any health facility will be sampled, isolated, and care will continue until a confirmation for COVID-19 is made. If confirmed positive COVID-19, the patient will be referred to the designated treatment centres (Mulago National Referral Hospital, China-Uganda Friendship



Hospital, Naguru, and Entebbe Grade B Hospital). In this regard, all health facilities are advised to create holding rooms for suspected cases who may be identified in their hospitals, where such patients can be admitted and offered treatment as they await laboratory analysis of their samples. This is to ensure that symptomatic people are identified and well cared for while ensuring that further transmission is limited.

3. Intensify risk communication for the population in Kampala city and targeted messages for population subgroups such as; factory workers, business locations like Kikuubo and the arcades and locations where cases have been identified like; Kisenyi, Nateete.
4. Enhanced disease surveillance including identification and listing of all contacts to confirmed cases.
5. Rapid Assessment Survey to determine the extent of spread of the virus among the communities, population sub groups most affected, map out the affected areas and implement targeted interventions to quickly identify and pick out cases to prevent further spread of the virus.

EASTERN UGANDA

The first confirmed COVID-19 death occurred on 21st July 2020; this was a 34-year-old Ugandan female resident of Namisindwa district (Elgon Sub-region). The deceased was a Village Health Team (VHT) worker and a support staff at Wasungui Health Center II in the same district.

Following this death, an investigative team was deployed to follow up the case and trace her footsteps till the time of admission to Hospital. By 2nd August 2020, 145 contacts to the deceased have been listed and placed under quarantine in several districts in the Elgon and Bukedi regions; Namisindwa (76), Manafwa (11), Mbale



(21) and Budaka (37) districts. Of the samples collected from the contacts, 10 turned positive and this includes family members and healthcare workers. In addition, three (3) health workers that cared for the deceased while admitted at Wasungui Health Centre II turned positive.

To address this chain of transmission, a Regional Task Force has been established in the Mbale region with support from the Security Forces to coordinate the response efforts in the affected districts of Mbale, Namisindwa, Manafwa, Bududa, Sironko and Tororo. It is envisaged that a regional effort will yield a more comprehensive approach to surveillance and coordination and build capacity in the region for immediate and sustained prevention and control of COVID-19.

POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS

In preparation for the upcoming general elections, political rallies have commenced across the country with various aspiring candidates conducting campaigns. We have seen a trend of nearly all candidates not adhering to the set SoPs. Some candidates, regrettably, have gone ahead to organize huge rallies and address people without protection. On the 29th July 2020, I wrote to all Political Party Presidents about the need to comply with the COVID-19 Standard Operating Procedures and urged them to cascade the information through their structures to the last person.

While the Ministry of Health acknowledges the importance of candidates engaging with the people, holding rallies as usual without wearing face masks and social distancing is extremely harmful to the lives of the population and can spike a chain of infections that may be difficult to control. We urge all candidates to adhere to the guidelines that have been provided by the Electoral Commission that was developed with the support of the scientists. We also urge the different political parties to work with the Ministry of Health to Develop SOPs for their activities.



In this regard, I would like to remind all candidates to practice the following;

- Wearing a face mask at all times when engaging with your electorates. This is to protect you and the population from contracting COVID-19
- Always keep a hand sanitizer with you and sanitize as frequently as possible
- Maintain a social distance of at least 2 meters between yourself and your electorates. Encourage your campaign teams to ensure that social distance is adhered to during consultative meetings
- As you talk to your electorates, integrate COVID-19 preventive measures in your messages.

As leaders, your electorates look up to you for information and guidance. It is pertinent that you show and live as a good example and use the opportunity to educate the people. The pandemic is still growing and careless behavior may cause it to increase to unmanageable levels and costs us hundreds of lives of people who may be your voters or even yourself. Be wise and value the lives of your electorates.

MULTI-SECTORAL TECHNICAL TASK FORCE (MTTF)

His Excellency, the President and chair of the National Task Force, having observed the poor compliance to his directives and the Ministry of Health Standard Operating Procedures meant to guide us and help prevent infection has appointed a Multi Sectoral Technical Task Force to coordinate all sectors, Institutions and organizations, Follow up on enforcement of the Presidential directives and work with sectors, Institutions, Organizations and the general population to ensure compliance to the SOPs. The Multisectoral Technical taskforce is chaired by Maj General Geoffrey Muheesi from Uganda People's Defence Force (UPDF) and he will be deputized by Dr Monica Musenero, the Senior Presidential Advisor on Epidemics and Dr Ario Alex the Director of the National Institute of Public Health. Other members have been



drawn from the Universities, Uganda Police Force and Uganda Peoples' Defence Force.

The task force is mandated to carry out the following activities and report to the Ministry of Health.

1. Strengthen the multi-sectoral co-ordination of COVID-19 related response activities and facilitate linkages across and between all sectors. The MTF will create an enabling platform for the different MDAs to ensure they all deliver on their core and implied mandates.
2. Support the enforcement of all Presidential directives including those contained in the Statutory Instruments of COVID-19 and the Ministry of Health SOPs.
3. Work with MDAs to assign/appoint Compliance Officers for enforcement of SOPs and follow up to ensure full compliance and where gaps exist devise means to troubleshoot compliance. This will involve;
 - a. Carrying out prompt or pre-scheduled supervisory visits to any sector/MDA, Institution or organization including the private sector.
 - b. Having a direct link with the appointed/assigned Compliance Officers in the different MDAs who will be required to compile weekly reports.
4. Coordinate multi-sectoral approach to safe and dignified burials (SDB) in close collaboration with Uganda Red Cross, and support the districts to undertake SDB according to SOPs,
5. Support the nationwide mass mask distribution of community masks and enforce proper usage of the masks by the general population.

It is important to note that this task force will NOT duplicate efforts and interventions done by the Ministry of Health.



As I conclude, I would like to appreciate H.E the President and Chair of the National Task force for his guidance and commitment in ensuring that Ugandans are protected and remain safe and alive. His guidance has enabled us to control the pandemic so far.

I would also like to appreciate the Rt. Hon Prime Minister and the entire National task force, the District task forces, security officers, UPDF AND Uganda Police Force. It's been a long 5 months yet we are just at the beginning of the war. Let's soldier on.

Special appreciation goes to the entire population of Uganda and more so to those who have understood the danger in the house and are committed to protect themselves and stay safe. We the Ugandan population will determine the direction this pandemic will take us, either to the worst case scenario or to a reversal of the current situation. Let's all choose life and adhere to the Standard operating procedures.

A great acknowledgement and appreciation goes to the health workers. We are very proud of you. You have sacrificed your lives, stayed away from your families for over 5 months and you feel bad to see the population not adhering to the set SoPs. With your experience you know what lies ahead as you all watch what is happening all over the world. Hang in there. Your services are priceless.

Lastly, the Ministry of Health would like to appeal to the general population to adhere to the measures instituted by H.E the President and standard Operating Procedures issued by the Ministry of Health in order to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in Uganda. COVID-19 is real, it is dangerous and it kills like we are now experiencing.

We also appeal to the religious leaders of all denominations to reach out to the people through all channels available to you including; social media, mass media and print



media to educate people about the dangers of COVID and the need to adhere to the SOPs.

Please adhere to the COVID-19 preventive measures such as; hand washing with soap or use a hand sanitizer, maintain a social distance of at least 2 meters, stay at home, if you do not have any serious business outside and always wear a face mask when in public and ensure that the mask covers your nose and mouth. **Do NOT** let the mask hang on your neck like a necklace, or hang on your ear. The mask must be worn correctly at all times to protect you, your family, friends and your colleagues from getting infected by COVID-19.

Thank you.

Dr. Jane Ruth Aceng Ocer

Minister for Health

13 August 2020