



THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA
MINISTRY OF HEALTH

PRESS STATEMENT

UPDATE ON COVID-19 RESPONSE IN UGANDA

09 November 2020

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09th November 2020 - The Ministry of Health would like to update the general public on the status of the COVID19 Pandemic in Uganda and government's considerations for phased lifting of the lockdown and adjustments in some areas.

OVERVIEW OF COVID-19 IN UGANDA

The COVID-19 national picture remains generalized across the country with spikes in the districts of Kiryandongo and Kikuube. While the major transmission remains in Kampala Metropolitan area, West Nile, Elgon and Karamoja regions are the main hotspots.

As of **08th** November 2020, the total number of COVID-19 confirmed cases stand at **14,574**, recoveries at **7,771** with **133** deaths registered to date representing a case fatality rate of 1%.

On 06th November 2020, the country recorded 14 COVID-19 deaths, the highest number reported in one single day. However, it is important to note that these deaths occurred over a span of four days from 02nd to 06th November. 13 out of 14 of the deceased were male and 90% were in the category of the vulnerable population. i.e. 50 years and above. Whereas we have noticed more mortalities in this age group, please be reminded that we have lost people to COVID-19 in all age groups including 20-year olds. COVID-19 affects everyone of all age, tribe and anyone is prone to progressing to severe form of the disease.

This sends a strong message to everyone; do not take lightly, the preventive measures. It is important to adhere to the standard Operating Procedures set by the Government in order to protect yourself and your loved ones.

With the current trend of infected cases increasing daily, the health system is overwhelmed and overstretched as we continue to admit more patients with severe forms of COVID-19. It is evident that the



deaths will continue to increase if we do not adhere to the Standard Operating Procedures that Government has instilled.

HEALTH WORKER INFECTIONS

To-date, a total of **971** health workers have contracted COVID-19 and of these, **9** have succumbed to the disease. This is a significant number. Analysis of our data shows that most of the health workers got infected through their interactions with the communities and not necessarily in the line of duty.

I would like to appeal to **all** our health workers to wear Personal Protective Equipment and follow Infection, Prevention and Control (IPC) measures at all times. Please remember, as much as your patients need you, your family needs you as well.

PHASED LIFTING OF THE LOCKDOWN MASS GATHERINGS

As Government continues to relax the restrictions in the control of COVID-19, the Ministry of Health is revising the regulations and SOPs for mass gatherings. You may recall that on the 20th September, 2020, His Excellency, the President announced resumption of schools, specifically for the finalist and candidate classes, in addition to allowing the reopening of places of worship.

We have since observed considerable compliance of the SOPs in most schools and places of worship, and from the ongoing epidemiological assessments of the outbreak we have not seen a concomitant increase of transmission related to this. As such, the Ministry of Health wishes to appreciate the respective leaders of the schools and places of worship, and request you to do more to protect the communities from contracting COVID-19.

Noting that implementation of SOPs requires the people to be in manageable numbers, and bearing in mind the feedback from the umbrella religious organizations, the National Task Force directed the



Ministry of Health in consultations with the Scientific Advisory Committee to review the situation and statistics which would inform the second part of phase 4 lifting of the Lock down in line with scientific principles of infection prevention and control and manageable numbers.

In light of the information provided to the National Task Force, the National Task Force has directed the Minister for Health to inform the General Public as follows:

1. That in addition to the basic standard operations procedures (also referred to as universal precautions for COVID-19 prevention) which include hand washing, physical distancing of at least 2 meters and consistent wearing of face masks while in public places, mass gathering for prayers, political rallies, meetings and weddings **shall not exceed 200 persons**.
2. In addition, Statutory rule 14 shall be amended to allow meetings or gatherings of not more than 200 persons provided the persons attending such events maintain a 2-meter distance in all directions from each other.
3. Cinemas halls under sub-rule (b) should also be allowed to operate beginning 14th November 2020, provided the persons attending such events maintain a 2-meter distance in all directions from each other.
4. In the same vein, the closure of gymnasiums and massage parlors under Rule 14(2) **should be lifted**, except that in respect to gymnasiums, the persons attending such sessions should maintain a 2-meter distance in all directions from each other.
5. **Political rallies and Processions:** All aspiring politicians should ensure that their gatherings are limited to 200 people at most and



everyone **MUST** wear a face mask at all times, maintain a physical distance of at least 2 meters on both the left and right-hand side and make available hand washing facilities with soap and water.

Candidates are advised to avoid the use of open car roofs and waving to the population while moving. Such acts attract mass gatherings which may be in the excess of 200 people with no social distancing. The candidates are advised to remain seated in their vehicles at all times while moving from place to place and only wave through the car windows. Unnecessary stops along the way to speak to electorates are discouraged.

6. **Casinos and gaming outlets** may resume operations after fulfilling conditions included in the SOPs beginning Saturday 14th November 2020. However, the hours of operation **will be restricted to 6.30am to 7.00pm**. The local governments in consultation with the National Gaming and Lotteries Board will inspect the gaming and casino places before they are allowed to operate. Continued monitoring will also be conducted to ensure adherence to SOPs.

7. Mobile markets

Mobile markets attract large numbers of people with varied risk profiles from a wide range of geographical settings and sometimes across countries, depending on the location. The transportation of goods to and from the markets is also done on trucks and other business vehicles which are often very congested and increase risk of transmission in transit. The relevant Ministry of Trade and Industry, has developed SOPs in consultation with MOH to enable the reopening of these activities. The Mobile markets may begin their operations starting Saturday 14th November 2020, if the local Governments have empowered the leaders with the SOPs.

8. Bars and Discotheques

In countries that have proceeded to a second lockdown phase, bars and discotheques have been identified as focal areas of spread.



Considering the phase of the epidemic Uganda is in, with rising cases and deaths in urban areas, suspension on bars and discotheques will continue.

The Ministry of Health will re-evaluate these activities in due course. In the interim, the owners are advised to explore other businesses like restaurants attached to their premises, which are safer.

CONCLUSION

The Ministry of Health would like to appeal to the general population to adhere to the preventive measures instituted by H.E the President and the Standard Operating Procedures issued by the Ministry of Health in order to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in Uganda.

Please wear a face mask when in public, maintain a social distance of at least 2 meters, wash your hands with soap frequently or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer and avoid unnecessary movement to crowded places. Practicing these preventive measures and adhering to SOPs will enable us sustain the strides achieved as a nation.

COVID-19 is real, it is dangerous and it kills like we are now experiencing.

Stay safe, Stay alive.

Thank you for listening and God bless

Dr. Jane Ruth Aceng Otero

Minister for Health

09th November 2020