

REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES

**STATEMENT BY DR. KALUMBI SHANGULA, MP, MINISTER OF HEALTH AND
SOCIAL SERVICES ON OCCASION OF THE 35th COVID-19 PUBLIC BRIEFING**

15 OCTOBER 2021

**STATE HOUSE
WINDHOEK**

**Check Against Delivery*

Your Excellency, Dr. Hage G. Geingob, President of the Republic of Namibia

Members of the Media

Dear Compatriots

1. Since the 34th COVID-19 Public Briefing on the 14th September 2021, our country has experienced a positive trajectory in the overall COVID-19 performance. In terms of epidemiological trends over the past few weeks, we observe a decline in new infections; decreasing hospitalization generally; decreasing numbers of severely and hospitalized persons and deaths; a declining positivity ratio among those being tested for COVID-19 and receding numbers in terms of case fatality ratio (CFR). These statistics are indeed encouraging and they tell a story of the effectiveness of the measures we have put in place to suppress the further spread of infections. This relief provides a window of opportunity to continue to strengthen the country's preparedness and response mechanism.
2. Positive trends on improvement of facilities to respond to the pandemic are also being observed. Government has upscaled investments into improvement and expansion our capacity and readiness for possible future eventualities. In this respect, we have enjoyed the understanding and support from the private sector. Covid-19 has created new demands for beds, mortuary space and oxygen. We can report and inform the nation about the completion of a number of infrastructural projects, implemented as part of the COVID-19 preparedness and response.
 - 3.1. In terms of infrastructure, new COVID-19 isolation facilities have been completed at various places as follows:
 - The Namibia Chamber of Commerce and Industry (NCCI) donated a 40-bed tented ward at Oshakati Hospital.
 - A 12-bed Prefabricated isolation facility at Okahao was commissioned on the 3 September 2021.
 - A 12-bed Prefabricated isolation facility at Okahandja Hospital was commissioned on the 7 October 2021.
 - An 8-bed Prefabricated isolation facility was commissioned at Karasburg Hospital and handed over on the 5 October 2021.
 - Construction of Andara and Otjiwarongo Hospitals 12-bed Prefabricated isolation facilities is on track and anticipated for completion on the 31 October 2021.
 - Construction of 15-bed ICU at Keetmanshoop hospital is completed and was commissioned on the 7 October 2021.
 - Scoping for construction of ICUs at various district hospitals was concluded at Outapi, Otjiwarongo, Rundu, Gobabis, Mariental, Engela, Opuwo, Mariental, Otjiwarongo and Nankundu.

These are in addition to various completed projects that I shared with the public previously at various platforms and occasions.

- 3.2. The government has invested in the servicing and repairs of the existing mortuaries. This is to enhance the functionality and increase the capacity of mortuaries. The capacity of mortuaries at public health facilities has been further enhanced with the acquisition, donations and installation of refrigerated mobile containers at Windhoek Central Hospital (80), Mariental (25), Okahandja (38), Otjiwarongo (38), Outapi (38), Onandjokwe (38), Gobabis (25), Tsumeb (40), Omaruru (25), Usakos (25) and Karibib Health Centre (6).
- 3.3. In addition to the construction of the isolation facilities, free standing oxygen generating systems have been installed and commissioned at Mariental State Hospital courtesy of NAMDIA Foundation and other private sector entities. The government continues to upgrade oxygen supply, generation and storage at various hospitals.
- 3.3. The Welsh Government through the Cardiff University and UNAM has initiated the procurement of oxygen tanks for Gobabis and Grootfontein as well as an oxygen generating plant for Katima Mulilo hospital.
4. The National COVID-19 Vaccination Programme continues to make progress. However, the uptake falls short of the projected targets, in terms of where we want to be. While the country target is to vaccinate 750 000 of the 1 501 041 persons targeted for vaccination by 13 October 2021, only 288 692 (19.2%) persons have so far received the first dose of vaccination and 213 294 persons or 14.2% are fully vaccinated. However, if we take the total population of Namibia and not only the vaccination eligible population as the denominator, 7.7% of the population is fully vaccinated. Regionally, as at 13 October 2021, South Africa has fully vaccinated 16.51% of the population, while Zimbabwe, Botswana and Zambia have vaccinated 16.3%, 10.4%, 1.6% respectively.
 - 4.1. The Government and stakeholders, regularly review and monitor the vaccination data and performance. The slow uptake for vaccination triggered several interventions to move Namibia closer to achieving its targets. Among these interventions are:
 - 4.1.1. A collaborative initiative, technological innovation between the government and the Mobile Telecommunication Limited (MTC) to increase vaccination uptake referred to as the “Namibia VaxUP081 Incentive” is to be rolled out. This initiative will incentivize people who are getting their first dose of vaccination. I encourage our compatriots who are not yet vaccinated to take advantage of this initiative and get vaccinated. I would like to commend the MTC management and their team of Technicians and Innovators for coming up with this technological intervention to promote Public Health. This is in line with the World Health Assembly recommendation on Health Digitalization and Technological Solutions for Health. We look forward to more exciting innovative interventions from the Public and private sector institutions, to address Public Health issues.

- 4.1.2. The Ministry of Information and Communication Technology, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Social Services is implementing “Roadshows” with participation of Local Artists to mobilize the public to get vaccinated.
 - 4.1.3. With sufficient doses of vaccines available in the country, all Regional Health Directorates are also preparing to launch intensified vaccination campaigns in their respective regions to offer vaccination to those who are not yet vaccinated.
 - 4.1.4. In addition, COVID-19 vaccination is now available at Anti-retroviral Clinic, Workplaces, Old Age Homes, Social Pension Payout Points, Shopping Malls and other places in addition to established Vaccination Sites. These strategies are yielding positive outcomes in terms of increased uptake for at risk populations. Namibia has acquired five different types of Covid-19 vaccines, namely Sinopharm, AstraZeneca, Johnson & Johnson, Pfizer and Sputnik V to satisfy the appetite of the public.
5. The Government continues to increase Human Resources capacity and footprint at the facility level across the country for improved service delivery. For the period from 15 September to 13 October 2021, under the dispensation of the expiring COVID-19 Regulations, 188 persons were recruited. This is a combination of Specialists (4), Medical Officers (2), Registered Nurses (21), Enrolled Nurses (90) Social Workers (4), Drivers (5), Occupational Therapists (2), Pharmacists (3), Radiographers (3), Health Programme Officer (19), Cleaners (21), and other cadres. These cadres are providing much-needed improvement in service delivery.
 6. The government of the United Kingdom’s Emergency Management Team (EMT) was deployed in Namibia for about five weeks and provided capacity building to Namibia, through training of Nurses and Doctors responsible for Case Management from the various COVID-19 facilities in 10 Regions. The training included Basic and Advanced Life Support, Infection Prevention and Control, and management of critically ill patients with COVID-19.
 7. We have all have witnessed, the Law Enforcement Officers in full force to ensure public compliance to the Public Health Regulations. These efforts and civic education at community level, coupled with the epidemiological interventions, have brought about the positive trends we have witnessed in recent weeks, regarding the suppression of the spread of COVID-19 pandemic in Namibia.
 8. I now transition to expand more on some of provisions of the amended Regulations, as announced by the Head of State:
 - 8.1. Requirement for entry into Namibia:

- Persons permitted to enter Namibia must present a SARS-Cov2 PCR test results from an authorized laboratory in the country of departure, which test results should not be older than 7 days, calculated from the date the sample for testing was taken.
 - Namibia will accept authentic de-isolation certificates from previously infected travelers who are still testing positive with the PCR test at the Points of Entry regardless of nationality. The certificate has to be valid for at least three (3) months from the time of issuance. The above provisions apply to travelers who present vaccination certificates.
 - The Ministry is exploring the use of digital certificates to identify the technology suitable for use in Namibia, for inbound and outbound travelers.
- 8.2. For Namibians who intend to travel to Europe, they must take their vaccination cards along. Entry into public places like restaurants, is only permitted after having provided proof of full vaccination against Covid-19. Treat your vaccination card the same way you treat your identification document.
- 8.3. The number of public gatherings has been increased to 200 persons per event. There is no longer a requirement to maintain an attendance register. However, there is a requirement for enhanced public health measures.
9. With the lifting of the curfew, there will be increased business activities and human-to-human interactions. We encourage business owners to encourage patrons, employees and customers to be vaccinated. We have just emerged from a devastating third wave of Covid-19 which claimed a lot of precious Namibian lives. Covid-19 found a fertile ground for transmission because the Namibian population is non immune to Covid-19 and is therefore highly susceptible. There is a direct correlation between the vaccination status of the population and the number of new infections, hospitalisation and deaths. We have an opportunity to avert another catastrophe by boosting our immunities through vaccination.
10. Our healthcare workers have served the country through the three waves of Covid-19 infections with dedication, compassion and commitment. They have witnessed unprecedented suffering and death and they are getting exhausted. Afterall they are just human. Let us not cause them to suffer compassion fatigue and burnout. Let us all get vaccinated.
11. Once again, I call upon all fellow Namibians, to do the right thing and get vaccinated. The campaign being rolled out is aimed getting more people vaccinated in the next 2 weeks. More Namibians should get vaccinated and complete the vaccination schedule ahead of the Festive Season. Let us do everything we can to remain one step ahead of the pandemic by getting prepared now.

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