

REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES

**STATEMENT BY DR. KALUMBI SHANGULA ON THE OCCASION OF THE 25th
COVID-19 BRIEFING: ANNOUNCEMENT OF AMENDMENTS TO PUBLIC
HEALTH COVID 19 GENERAL REGULATIONS: PUBLIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL
HEALTH ACT, 2015: MINISTER OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES.**

24 February 2021

WINDHOEK

**Check against Delivery.*

Your Excellency, Dr Hage G. Geingob, President of the Republic of Namibia
Your Excellency, Dr Nangolo Mbumba, Vice President
Right Hon Dr Saara Kuugongelwa-Amadhila, Prime Minister
Hon Dr Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of MIRCO
Hon Ministers
Senior Government Officials
Members of the Media
Fellow Countrymen and Women

1. On the 3rd of this month, amendments to the COVID-19 public health regulations were announced here at State House during the 24 COVID-19 Briefing hosted by His Excellency the President. Today, we are here to announce new amendments to the regulations that will expire at 23:59 tonight. I wish to start by stating that while the countermeasures that we have put in place to combat the COVID-19 pandemic have averted the worst-case scenario, the pandemic is still with us.
2. We continue to see an upward trend in the number of new infections, especially in boarding schools in different parts of the country. Different stakeholders in the health and education sectors are working together, involving school authorities to curb the further spread of the virus. We call for greater vigilance and compliance with the measures by our school learners and teachers, alike. We call for greater vigilance and compliance with the measures from all Namibians and visitors to our country. The onus is on all of us to ensure that we do everything necessary in order to suppress further spread of the virus.
3. According to the disease projection models, Namibia has done well in most areas of the response, such as surveillance and contact tracing, logistics, COVID-19 testing, community engagement and development of health facility infrastructure. However, with respect to the number of deaths attributed to COVID-19, the numbers have exceeded our projections. While it was estimated that Namibia would record 338 deaths attributable to COVID-19 by March 2021, this number has been overshoot and 411 deaths attributable to Covid-19 have been recorded by the 23 February 2021. Our scientists have collected and submitted samples for gene sequencing to determine whether the new variant, (B.1.351) originally detected in South Africa is present in Namibia, and if so, the extent of its prevalence. According to the National Institute for Communicable Diseases of South Africa, the results of these tests will be available next week. This is very important as it will further inform our decisions on the acquisition and procurement of vaccines.
4. It is true that the measures introduced to fight the pandemic have had devastating outcomes to our economy. It is true that the measures changed our ways of life and the manner in which we interact with one another. In order to ensure responsiveness, we conduct regular reviews and assessments of the different aspects of our response. It is for this reason that, on the eve of the expiry of each dispensation, announcements are made pointing to the way forward.
5. As I did during the 24th COVID-19 Briefing, I will share with the nation the information on the adjustments that have been effected to the COVID-19 public health regulations on

advice from the National COVID-19 Monitoring Team and the National Health Emergency Management Committee. These structures made up of experts from various fields, have the important task of analyzing the COVID-19 situation in the country and advise government on the best course of action, taking into account the imperative of saving lives and livelihoods of the Namibian people.

6. Like other countries, Namibia is working hard to secure and acquire sufficient doses of the COVID-19 vaccines and to roll them out in order to protect our people. Vaccination will serve as an important tool in our arsenal against this pandemic. By protecting the priority demographics such as frontline workers, vulnerable populations at risk of developing severe COVID-19 illness and the elderly, we will be able to ensure that our health system is able to provide care as required.
7. The past few weeks have witnessed good progress in our preparations towards COVID-19 vaccination in Namibia. Not only have we initiated the process on procurement of the vaccine through the pooled procurement mechanisms such as the COVAX Facility and the Africa Medicines Supply Platform (AMSP) of the African Union, we have also completed the National COVID-19 Deployment and Vaccination Plan. Like other countries, Namibia submitted her Plan to international scrutiny and review by the World Health Organisation. I am proud to state that the WHO found Namibia's Deployment and Vaccination Plan to be among the best in the world. The WHO have therefore decided to recommend it as a template to countries that have not yet completed their Deployment and Vaccination Plans.
8. Allow me now to turn to the proposed amendments to the COVID-19 Public Health Regulation that were announced on 3rd February 2021. Again, I wish to inform that where no amendments have been effected to a particular Regulation, such Regulations remains in force as originally gazetted and will thus, continue to have legal force and effect. Following below are the amendments to the Public Health Regulations that will come into force at 24:00 tonight until 23:59 on the 31 March 2021. I will highlight only some of the regulations hereunder:
 - 8.1. **Regulation 3: Wearing of Masks**
This regulation remains unchanged.
 - 8.2. **Regulation 4: Public Gatherings**
This regulation remains unchanged. Public gatherings indoors shall not exceed two (2) hours. Law enforcement will be enhanced to ensure compliance.
 - 8.3. **Regulation 4 A: Restriction of Movement (Curfew)**
This regulation remains unchanged. However, the curfew starts at 22:00 as is currently the case but ends at 04:00 instead of 05:00. In the case of boarding schools, out-weekends are suspended in schools were cases of Covid-19 have been detected or are suspected.
 - 8.4. **Regulation 5: Restrictions Relating to Liquor**
This regulation remains unchanged. However, liquor may be sold to and purchased on Sundays and Public Holidays by guests booked in or staying at establishments such as

hotels, guesthouses, Bed & Breakfast facilities and Casinos.

8.5. Regulation 6: Resumption of business operations and activities

Businesses are allowed to operate within their normal working hours, with adherence to COVID-19 protocols, and subject to Regulations 4 and 5.

8.6. Regulation 7: Additional provisions relating to work place

This regulation remains unchanged. However, the definition of Nursing Mother is redefined as any mother still breastfeeding up to a period of 6 months.

8.7. Regulation 7A: Restrictions related to certain activities

This regulation remains unchanged.

8.8. Regulation 8: Restrictions related to Entry into Namibia

This regulation remains unchanged.

8.9. Regulation 9: Quarantine and COVID-19 Testing

This regulation remains unchanged.

8.10. Regulation 10: Public Transport

This regulation remains unchanged.

8.11. Regulation 16: COVID-19 Deaths and Burials

This regulation is amended as follows:

- Only fifty (50) mourners are allowed at a burial of the remains of a person whose death is attributed to COVID-19. Close family members are allowed at a distance of three meters from the grave. Other mourners must be stationed at a distance of not less than 10 meters from the grave. Mourners must maintain a minimum of not less than two meters physical distancing from one other.
- Installation of tombstones and other works on the grave of the deceased person may be carried out one (1) month after the burial.
- Unclaimed bodies of deceased persons whose death is attributed to COVID-19 will be buried within seven (7) days in line with the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and Directives on COVID-19 burials.
- As a general rule, exhumation may only be conducted on authority of a court order. Exhumation of human remains of deceased a person whose death was attributed to COVID-19 may be done after a period of six (6) months under the supervision and with consultation with the State.

9. Procurement of COVID-19 Vaccines

- 9.1. I wish to inform that in addition to the COVAX Facility, and manufacturers of Covid-19 vaccines in China, Russian Federation, India and United States of America, which I reported on at the beginning of February, Namibia is also working with the Africa Medicines Supply Platform (AMSP) to procure additional doses of Covid-19 vaccines. I now share with the public the milestones.

- 9.2. The Namibia Deployment and Vaccination Plan for COVID-19 vaccines is completed and approved by the World Health Organisation (WHO). This week all 35 districts, the private health sector, the Ministry of Home Affairs, Immigration, Safety and Security and partners are refining district deployment plans for implementation. This will be followed by Training of Trainers and district staff training in early March.
- 9.3. The total proposed budget for Namibia Deployment and Vaccination Plan for COVID-19 vaccines is **N\$583 068 783.84**, of which **N\$484 800 000** is for actual procurement of the vaccines. This will enable Namibia to procure vaccines for additional 40% of the population to attain a 60% vaccination coverage. The Republic of China has pledged to donate 100 000 doses of the Sinopharm vaccine and the Republic of India has pledged to donate 30 000 doses of the vaccine from the Serum Institute of India. The COVAX Facility allocated doses of vaccines to Namibia are expected in March 2021.
- 9.4. The Namibia Medicine Regulatory Council (NMRC) published guidelines for approval of vaccines. The NMRC obtained data from WHO, Manufacturers and some Stringent Regulatory Authorities (SRAs) for use in approving vaccines for Namibia. For vaccine approval, it is required that manufacturers provide full dossiers of their products to the NMRC as required by the Medicines and Related Substances Control Act of 2003.
10. We have drawn important lessons over the past year since the announcement of the COVID-19 index case in March 2020. These lessons have enabled us to hone our preparedness and response. I commend all the members of the national response team who have been working hard and with dedication as part of this national call. I have had the opportunity to interact with many of them both Namibians and non-Namibians, alike. I have witnessed, first-hand, their dedication and commitment to duty and to serving our country. This has been heartwarming indeed. It is at times like these that patriotism, selfless service, and the spirit of humanity are demonstrated.
11. Thousands of these frontline workers have literally put their lives on the line for our sake. Many have been infected with COVID-19 in the line of duty. Some have fallen severely ill and regrettably, some have lost their lives. Their deaths should not be in vain. Therefore, let each and every one of us do our part to suppress the further spread of this deadly disease. For the sake of those who continue to work, let us comply fully with the Public Health Regulations. This is the only way we can defeat this deadly enemy. I have said it before, and I will say it again. Together, we can defeat COVID-19.
12. The development of vaccines against Covid-19 has created a new sense of optimism. I therefore call on the Namibians to welcome and embrace our vaccination campaign like the rest of humanity.

I thank you.