

REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



**STATEMENT BY DR. KALUMBI SHANGULA, MP, MINISTER OF HEALTH AND
SOCIAL SERVICE ON THE OCCASION OF THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE
COVID-19 POST-STATE OF EMERGENCY DISPENSATION.**

17 SEPTEMBER 2020

STATE HOUSE
**Check Against Delivery*

Your Excellency, Dr. Hage G. Geingob, President of the Republic of Namibia
Right Honourable Prime Minister
Honourable Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of International Relations and Cooperation
Honourable Ministers Members of the Media
Ladies and gentlemen!

Thank you, Your Excellency for the opportunity for me to expound and provide details on public health aspects and policy measures that will be introduced as part of Namibia's COVID-19 response in the Post State of Emergency dispensation.

During the COVID-19 State of Emergency, Government allocated an amount of 727 million Namibia Dollars to the Ministry of Health and Social Services, which is spearheading our war against this invisible enemy. To date, 88 percent of this budget has been expended, towards the recruitment of additional human resource for health, procurement of medical supplies and equipment, such as PPEs, pharmaceuticals, the construction of isolation facilities, and renovation of existing health facilities as part of the COVID-19 response. These investments have significantly strengthened the capacities and preparedness to respond to the pandemic.

During the 6-month period, we exceeded our initial testing target of 25, 000 people by more than 200 percent, at the end of State of Emergency. We have to date conducted a cumulative 84 688 first time tests. During the response, we have tested beyond the standard case definition, so as to reach more of at-risk populations as warranted and we have increased data integrity, in our efforts to establishing community transmissions. Namibia's testing coverage ratio is currently 32 per 1 000 people. South Africa has tested 61 per 1,000; the UK has tested 1.09 per 1,000 and Italy has tested 0.91 per 1,000.

The policy decision to quarantine and test all arrivals twice during the quarantine period, was effective, as 72 percent of all cases diagnosed since 20 May 2020, were persons who were placed in quarantine facilities. By the end of the State of Emergency, we have quarantined a total of 13 010 people, at cost to Government.

The quarantine strategy has materially mitigated the spread of disease into our communities. We urge all those placed in quarantine to continue to comply with regulations. As at today, we have managed to contain the Basic Reproductive Ratio, which is the number of secondary infections arising from a single individual who had tested positive, to less than 1. This key indicator means that, currently, in the majority of cases, one COVID-19 positive person is not transmitting the virus to more than one other person. Maintaining control of the rate of transmission is an indicator of success and it truly justifies the collective sacrifices endured to this point and which is required going forward.

While the strategic investments and interentions made so far have produced positive results, we must and we will continue to strengthen capacities by investing into the necessary tools and

technologies and efficient procurement methods to augment our capability to manage, respond and treat those who need care.

Following the expiry of the State of Emergency at midnight tonight, the 17 September 2020, the COVID-19 response will be implemented through new Directives or Regulations to be issued by the Minister of Health and Social Services, in terms of the provisions of the Public and Environmental Act, 2015 (Act No. 1 of 2015) and any other relevant legislation, or by other public office bearers responsible for the administration of other relevant legislation. These will include, among others, matters related to:

1. Quarantine and Isolation protocols;
2. The removal and burial of bodies of persons who succumb to Notifiable Infectious Diseases;
3. Management of public gatherings;
4. Contact tracing;
5. Control of the movement of persons into affected areas;
6. Testing of Persons; and
7. The re-opening of Points of Entry and public transport by road or by air.

Under this ‘New Normal’, where Namibians must learn to live with the COVID-19 virus in our daily lives, emphasis will henceforth be placed on:

1. Information, public education and communication to foster behavioural change.
2. Intensification of compliance, especially voluntary compliance with public health measures such as the wearing of facemasks in public, social and physical distancing, hand washing, sanitizing and reduction in the size of public gatherings, as our first line of defense.
3. Government will continue to roll out expanded targeted testing.
4. We will pursue the strategy of ‘source reduction’, which relies on enhanced contact tracing, quarantine and isolation of suspected and confirmed cases.
5. We will augment patient management to ensure optimal care for both in- and outpatients.
6. Government will continue to invest in infrastructure development, specifically the expansion of isolation facilities, as well as the procurement of medical equipment and other supplies. This has already gone a long way by producing positive spin-offs towards the achievement of the overall objective of health systems strengthening.
7. We will also enhance psychosocial support to healthcare workers and affected families.

I wish to emphasize once again that the successes recorded so far in our COVID-19 national response and preparedness were only possible because the Namibian people joined and worked together to face this common enemy in unity. Going forward that will be the common denominator of our future success. There is no substitute for unity. It is the only way we can overcome this threat. Whereas the State of Emergency will lapse tonight, Covid-19 remains behind with us. In this “new normal”, we must place the highest premium on unity because it has become truly indispensable.

We are observing a consistent decline in the number of new Covid-19 cases. We are convinced that the measures we have taken since the first two index cases in Namibia have served us well. The responsibility for Covid-19 control has shifted from government to individuals, families and communities. I put it on records our greatest appreciation for the cooperation and support from the Namibian citizens. Let us move with the same spirit in the “New Normal”.

I thank you.