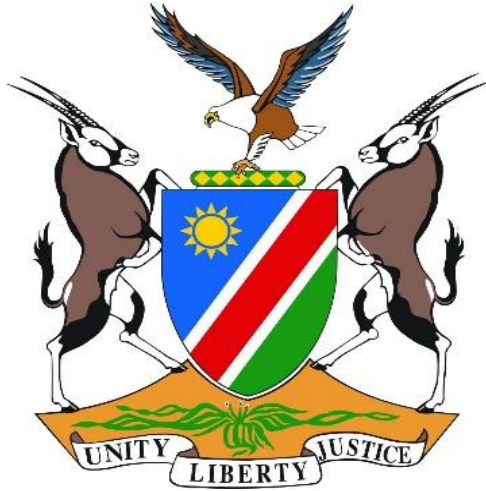


**REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA**



**MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES**

**STATEMENT BY DR KALUMBI SHANGULA, (MP) MINISTER OF HEALTH AND  
SOCIAL SERVICES, ON THE OCCASION OF THE 45<sup>th</sup> COVID-19 PUBLIC  
BRIEFING.**

**15 July 2022**

**STATE HOUSE  
WINDHOEK**

*\*Checked Against Delivery.*

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

Your Excellency, Dr. Nangolo Mbumba, Vice President

Right Honourable Prime Minister, Dr. Saara Kuugongelwa-Amadhila

Honourable Ministers

Senior Government Officials

Members of the Media

Dear Compatriots

1. I thank you, Your Excellency, for giving me the floor. At the very outset, I wish to restate that Namibia's approach to combating COVID-19 has been, and continues to be focused on saving lives, restoring livelihoods, and contributing to the recovery of the economy. As Your Excellency informed the nation, the trajectory of the COVID-19 here in Namibia and elsewhere in the world is changing. This means that our national response also has to be adjusted. This means shifting from containment of new infections to mitigation of the effects and impact of the pandemic. It means shifting from response to recovery, going forward. We must enter a new stage where the restoration of livelihoods and reconstruction of the economy take center-stage.
2. It is thus incumbent upon all of us as Namibians to adopt a culture of personal responsibility for our own health and wellbeing. It is pleasing that this culture is already taking root in our communities. This can be seen with the provision of hand hygiene amenities in workplaces and other establishments, to promote hand hygiene to mitigate the spread and transmission of COVID-19 and other mainly airborne infections. Going forward, it is important that we maintain this culture of personal responsibility of protecting ourselves and those around us from COVID-19.

### **Epidemiological Situation**

3. While we are transitioning from containment to mitigation, we will continue to keep an eagle's eye on the COVID-19 epidemiological situation in the country. By 15 July 2022, Namibia recorded a total of 169 400 COVID-19 cases out of the 1 066 329 samples tested. During the past 30 days, we conducted 15 837 COVID-19 tests, and recorded a positivity rate of 7%.
4. As at 15 July 2022, there are 136 active cases compared to 1 903 at the time of the last Public Briefing one month ago. Sadly, thirteen (13) lives were lost since the last public briefing, bringing the total number of deaths to 4 060 since the beginning of the pandemic. The number of deaths decreased from 18 deaths reported during the preceding 29 days, to 13 deaths reported during the period of 30 days of the dispensation ending at midnight

today. This amounts to a decrease of 27.7%. The number of patients admitted in health facilities due to COVID-19 increased to an average of 40 per day as compared to 30 reported during the preceding 29 days. However, the number of COVID-19 patients admitted to ICU has reduced from 7 to 1 case currently.

5. The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated that even well-resourced health systems can be quickly overwhelmed by an outbreak. In order to better understand the capacity of our public and private health facilities at the primary and secondary levels, the Ministry conducted a Frontline Readiness Assessment in selected health facilities around the country. The Assessment has sharpened our understand of the impact of COVID-19 on our health system. Informed by the results of the Assessment, the Ministry will strengthen specific components of the health system going forward.
6. We are closely monitoring other disease outbreaks at home and abroad. These include the outbreaks of scabies, measles as well as monkeypox, which has been reported in several countries around the world. The Ministry of Health and Social Services has put in place readiness mechanisms to detect and test for monkeypox infections locally. These include: capacity building of health workers and laboratory personnel in line with WHO guidelines, coordination of testing of samples from suspected cases, awareness creation among health workers on surveillance and case management. To date, no monkeypox case has been recorded in Namibia.

#### **Vaccination Campaign:**

7. The COVID-19 vaccination activities are on-going and will continue during the mitigation stage. We encourage the public to go out in bigger numbers as only 24.7%, or 442 379, of the total eligible persons in Namibia are fully vaccinated.
8. All vaccination sites are obliged to report any Adverse Event Following Immunization that may occur. Any person who experiences an adverse event is also encouraged to report such to health authorities. The overwhelming majority of people who reported or experience adverse events, or in other words side effects, recover within 2 days. Namibian data, like that of the world; continues to show that the vaccines are both safe and effective. To date, Namibia has not recorded a death that can be said to have occurred because of a vaccine that the deceased person may have received.
9. We are continuing to strengthen our health infrastructure to improve access and service delivery. We are in the process of establishing Intensive Care Units at District Hospitals

where these facilities are lacking. These include Katima Mulilo, Keetmanshoop, Rundu, Gobabis, Mariental, Outapi and Engela State Hospitals.

10. The initiative is complemented by the installation of oxygen generating systems and medical gas network infrastructure at Gobabis, Keetmanshoop, Onandjokwe, Rundu, Okahao, Eenhana, Okongo and Andara Hospitals. The Ministry is grateful to the WHO for the donation of 2 000 oxygen cylinders, which are currently being distributed to health facilities around the country.
11. **As His Excellency the President announced, given the current epidemiological situation, it was decided to remove the COVID-19 restrictions gazzeted under the Public and Environmental Health Act, 2015.** This decision in no way means that the COVID-19 pandemic is over. COVID-19 is still classified as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern. In this regard, COVID-19 vaccination activities will continue and will be intensified; foreign travelers to Namibia must present Vaccination Certificates at Points of Entry. In other words, proof of COVID-19 vaccination will be a requirement for entry into Namibia, as Yellow Fever Vaccination or other such are requirement in some countries around the world.
12. Our data continues to illustrate consistently that the overwhelming majority of COVID-19 cases being hospitalized, those in high care and ICU, and those succumbing to COVID-19 are invariably persons who are **unvaccinated!** So please, fellow Namibians, I implore you get vaccinated to protect yourselves and those around you. The new reality demands of all of us to do just that. It is the only way to succeed at our mitigation efforts.
13. We shall continue to build on past successes. Namibia has in the past dealt with and successfully managed pandemics and outbreaks. These include the plague, Crimea-Congo haemorrhagic Fever, poliomyelitis, Hepatitis E and the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Our experience in dealing with these pandemics will stand us in good stead as we enter the mitigation stage of the COVID-19 pandemic. Namibia declared a Hepatitis E outbreak on 14 December 2017. By 4 February 2022, a total of **8 092** Hepatitis E cases were reported nationally with **66** deaths translating into a Case Fatality Rate of **0.8%**, since the outbreak began, up to September 2020. On 1<sup>st</sup> March 2022, we declared an end to the Hepatitis E Outbreak in Namibia. Mitigation activities are ongoing.
14. The first case of HIV infection in Namibia was reported in 1986. In the intervening decades, HIV/AIDS became one of the leading causes of mortality and morbidity in the country. By 2021, it is estimated that more than 240 000 HIV infections have been reported in Namibia, with an estimated deaths of more than 119 700 between 1990 and 2021 due to

AIDS. Several interventions were adopted to deal with this pandemic including awareness raising, community mobilizations, roll out of anti-retroviral treatment, multi-month dispensing of ARVs, and messaging on adherence to treatment. We are proud that over the years, we have been able to significantly reduce the HIV/AIDS disease burden and our country is on course to end HIV/AIDS as a public health threat by 2030.

15. With respect to the UNAIDS 95-95-95 fast targets, Namibian programmatic data shows that 90% of People Living with HIV (PLHIV) aged 15-64 years know their HIV status, 98% of those who know their status are initiated on Antiretroviral Therapy (ART), and 91% of PLHIV on ART are virally suppressed. The suppression of viral loads is achieved by consistent use and strict adherence to ARV therapy. Persons who are HIV positive, but have suppressed viral load, do not spread HIV infections to their sexual partners. Thus, Namibia's status on the cascade is 90-98-91. The same way, we have been successful in dealing with Hepatitis E and HIV/AIDS, we must do our best as a country to conquer COVID-19.

#### **Words of appreciation**

16. I express gratitude and great appreciations to H.E Dr Hage G. Geingob for exceptional leadership throughout the currency of the pandemic in Namibia. The President was always available even at odd hours to give support and guidance. That alone has been a source of great inspiration. I thank the Right Honourable Prime Minister, Dr Saara Kuugongelwa-Amadhila and my Cabinet colleagues who had to sacrifice their ministerial responsibilities in order to lend support to Covid-19 control efforts.
17. I thank the Namibia Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the private sector for coming on board in no small way at critical time to complement government resources. The international community has proved itself a reliable partner. I thank both print and electronic media for spreading our messages widely to the public and for helping us fight fake news with real news. The public has been our companion. We understood their anxiety in the face of uncertainty. We understood their fear and apprehension when a loved one is admitted. We shared in their anguish when a loved one departs. It has been a harrowing experience, when one has to bury a loved one in an unfamiliar way. But we could not have reached this milestone without the support and cooperation of the public. We thank you immensely.
18. I express special thanks to the men and women in uniform. Right from the beginning, they were ever combat ready. Unfortunately, some of them became casualties and some lost their lives at the hand of the enemy they were fighting.

19. I shall be forgiven when I reserve the final words of appreciation to my team, the healthcare workers. They saved many lives that were destined to eternity. It is amazing to see those who became infected, come back immediately upon recovery to continue to serve the public. Their heroism was immortalised when H.E. The President devoted the Namibia Heroes Day to the Healthcare Workers for two consecutive years. This is a befitting recognition of their heroism and resilience. Thank you very much Your Excellency for this consideration.
20. I have been humbled and invigorated by immense support and cooperation from members of the public and my Team at the Ministry. I thank you all. As we are transition from containment of Covid-19 to mitigation, I assure the public that we shall continue to update the public regularly. We have demonstrated that when we work together, we can achieve the seemingly impossible.

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