

Weekly Press Briefing on COVID-19 11 February 2021

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

- **Acknowledge** the sacrificial effort of all frontline workers supporting COVID-19 response across the continent.
 - **Thank** the journalists for participating in the weekly briefings and for helping to spread the right information to the public.
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Epidemiology Update

- As of 9:00 am Eastern Africa Time today, over 106 million cases and more than 2.3 million deaths have been reported globally, giving a case fatality rate of 2.2%.
- **Africa Union Member States** have reported:
 - **3,703,913** cases, accounting for 3.5% of total cases reported globally
 - **3,241,258** recoveries, accounting for 88% of the total cases reported in Africa
 - **96,732** deaths, (case fatality rate of 2.6%), and accounting for 4% of deaths reported globally.
- Five Member States have reported the presence of the 501Y.V1 variant:
 - Ghana
 - Morocco
 - Gambia
 - Nigeria
 - Senegal

- Seven Member States have reported the presence of the 501Y.V2 variant:
 - Botswana
 - Comoros
 - Ghana
 - Kenya
 - Mozambique
 - South Africa
 - Zambia

- 5 countries accounting for 67% of all cases reported in Africa are:
 - South Africa 1,482,412 (40%)
 - Morocco 476,689 (13%)
 - Tunisia 219,650 (6%)
 - Egypt 171,390 (5%)
 - Ethiopia 144,249 (4%)

- The number of countries with case fatality rates (CFR) higher than the global CFR (2.2%)¹ continues to increase. Two additional countries were added to this list this week, for a total of 20 countries (**36%**), reporting elevated CFRs:
 - Sahrawi Republic (17%)
 - Sudan (6.6%)
 - Egypt (5.7%)
 - Liberia (4.4%)
 - Mali (4.1%)
 - Zimbabwe (3.9%)
 - Eswatini (3.8%)
 - Comoros (3.7%)
 - Niger (3.6%)
 - Chad (3.5%)
 - Tunisia (3.4%)
 - Malawi (3.2%)
 - South Africa (3.2%)
 - Gambia (3.1%)
 - DR Congo (2.9%)
 - Somalia (2.8%)
 - Algeria (2.7%)
 - Mauritania (2.5%)
 - Senegal (2.4%)
 - Angola (2.4%)

¹ Tanzania is excluded as they have not reported data on cases or deaths since May 2020.

Epidemiological Trends for Week 5 (1-7 February 2021)

- During epidemiological week 5 of this year (**1-7 February 2021**), 99,710 new cases and 4,102 new deaths were reported in Africa, a 25% decrease in cases and 28% decrease in deaths over the previous epidemiologic week 4 of 2021.
- The highest proportion of new cases reported for the week was from the Southern Africa region (45%), followed by Northern Africa (23%), Western Africa (19%), Eastern Africa (9%) and Central Africa (3%) regions.
- 5 African countries reporting the highest number of new cases are:
 - South Africa (22,374)
 - Nigeria (8,506)
 - Zambia (8,416)
 - Tunisia (7,708)
 - Mozambique (5,946)
- 5 countries with the highest daily incidence per million population (average number of new cases per million population per day):
 - Seychelles (440)
 - Libya (119)
 - Tunisia (93)
 - Botswana (92)
 - Cabo Verde (84)

COVID-19 4-Week Trend Analysis in Africa

- Over the past 4 epidemiologic weeks (11 January-7 February 2021) there has been a **18% average decrease** in new cases reported in Africa each week. On average, by region, there has been a:
 - 13% decrease in the Northern region
 - 26% decrease in the Southern region
 - **14% increase** in the Central region
 - **22% increase** in the Eastern region
 - **5% increase** in the Western region

- Over the last 4 epidemiologic weeks, we have noted the following trends for the most populous countries in Africa:

New cases:

- **Ethiopia: 18% average increase**
- South Africa: 35% average decrease
- Egypt: 17% average decrease
- DRC: 6% average decrease
- Kenya: 5% average decrease
- Nigeria: 0.2% average decrease

○ New deaths:

- South Africa: 11% average decrease
- Kenya: 6% average decrease
- Egypt: 4% average decrease
- **Nigeria: 31% average increase**
- **Ethiopia: 14% average increase**
- **DR Congo: 5% average increase**

- For more information on the epidemiological situation in Africa, please visit the Africa CDC COVID-19 dashboard at: <https://africacdc.org/covid-19/>

Testing and Medical Supplies

- As of this week, African Union Member States have reported **over 32 million** COVID-19 tests.
- For epidemiological week 5 (**1-7 February 2021**), 800,770 new tests were reported, a **14% decrease** from the previous week (931,120 tests).

Capacity Building for Member States

In the past week Africa CDC held the:

- Public Health Emergency Operations Centres and COVID-19 management webinar series on the topic “Incident Management System - Implementing Incident Management System”.

- 41st session of Clinical Community of Practice webinars entitled “Contextualized implications of the COVID-19 pandemic for children and young people in Africa” with over 100+ participants attending.
 - Infection Prevention and Control Technical Working Group held the 4th webinar session on “Recommendations for Healthcare Facility Leadership and Management in the context of COVID-19”.
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COVID-19 Vaccine Update

- On 7 February 2021, the South African Government announced a temporary hold to the rollout of the University of Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine manufactured by Serum Institute of India following reports that the vaccine only offered "minimal protection" against mild and moderate cases of COVID-19 infections.
- This was based on a placebo-controlled phase I/II trial conducted by a team at the University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa, conducted in collaboration with Oxford University.
- The study recruited 2,000 relatively healthy and young volunteers with a median age of 31 years and with few comorbidities.
- The aim of the trial was to assess the safety, immunogenicity and efficacy of the AstraZeneca vaccine for the prevention of COVID-19 caused by the predominantly circulating new SARS-CoV-2 variant (N501Y.V2 or B.1.351).
- None of the participants who received either the vaccine or the placebo developed severe disease nor required hospitalization.
- The efficacy of the vaccine against mild and moderate COVID-19 disease (defined as at least one symptom of COVID-19) was **21.9%**. This efficacy was below the minimal efficacy threshold of 50% recommended for emergency use of a vaccine candidate.
- Viral neutralization induced by the sera of the vaccine against the new SARS-CoV-2 variant (N501Y.V2 or B.1.351) was reduced when compared with the previous strain of the coronavirus.
- Protection against moderate-severe disease, hospitalization or death could not be assessed in this study as the target population were at low risk.

- **On 9 February 2021, Africa CDC convened a special session of the Africa Task Force for COVID-19 to review existing data and evidence and recommend the following:**
 - **For countries that have NOT reported the circulation of the SARS-CoV-2 N501Y.V2 (or B.1.351), Africa CDC recommends proceeding with the rollout of the AstraZeneca vaccine.**
 - **For countries that HAVE reported the circulation of the SARS-CoV-2 N501Y.V2 (or B.1.351), Africa CDC recommends the acceleration of their preparedness to introduce all COVID-19 vaccines that have received emergency use authorization or approval by regulatory authorities. Consideration should be given to the effectiveness of the vaccine against **SARS-CoV-2 N501Y.V2** or any other circulating **SARS-CoV-2** variant in the country.**
 - **All countries** should expand their genomic surveillance testing capacity, or liaise with the Africa CDC/WHO continental COVID-19 genome sequencing laboratory network. The **Africa CDC Pathogen Genomics Initiative aims to enhance disease surveillance** on the continent.
 - **All countries should strengthen their clinical trials research capacity to generate data on the safety and efficacy** of vaccine candidates in African populations as recommended by the Africa CDC Consortium for COVID-19 Vaccine Clinical Trials (CONCRACT).
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12th Ebola Virus Disease Outbreak in the DRC

- The 12th outbreak 12th Ebola Virus Disease outbreak was declared in the Democratic Republic of Congo 7 February 2021 in Butembo Area of North Kivu Province.
- More than 70 contacts have been registered and are being followed up.
- The DRC Ministry of Public Health is working with partners, including Africa CDC, to establish coordination and response mechanisms that will help contain the outbreak as quickly as possible.