



COUNCIL OF GOVERNORS

27th May, 2020

PRESS STATEMENT ON PREPAREDNESS OF COUNTY GOVERNMENTS ON COVID-19 – WEEK 10

Fellow Kenyans, I want to begin this week's update by applauding your efforts in the fight against the corona virus. You are now aware of people who have travelled into and out of our neighborhoods and villages. It is notable that people are now aware and vigilant. As a result of this diligence, there is increased reporting of persons to the authorities where the government has been able to trace and locate those who have travelled from towns that have high infection rate to the villages. This has also happened in Counties that border our neighboring Countries. I wish to commend you for being vigilant and for being your brothers' keeper.

I am also aware that many people are trying to find ways to travel to the villages because they have lost their jobs and are unable to sustain their families in Nairobi. Following the recent announcement by His Excellency the President on the stimulus program last Saturday, it is hoped that there will be jobs created during this period that will be able to cushion this group of people. Therefore, we implore the citizens to remain in Nairobi and such other towns and reduce the risk of spreading the disease to the elderly in the villages.

The Council of Governors welcomes the 8 point economic stimulus program recently announced by His Excellency The President. Despite this, Counties are not aware of the role they will play in implementing this program. We will make a deliberate effort to reach out to The Presidency to discuss how the National Government and County Governments can jointly implement this program.

In the past week, the 47 County Governments have addressed the following:

1. Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (RMNCH)

County Governments have invested extensively in implementing the health measures including re-focusing resources to strengthen the healthcare system to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. While these investments have resulted in slowing down the epidemic, evidence shows that this shift in healthcare delivery system has affected the uptake of RMNCH services. While the months of January to March 2020 had good performance, there is notable drop across majority the counties for the month of April in Antenatal Care (39% for 4th ANC), delivery by skilled birth attendants (32%), immunization (34% for under one year fully immunized), as well as uptake of family planning services (25%). I want to once again encourage the public to utilize health care services as needed. We have ensured that other health care services in all our facilities are not interrupted, and put measures in place to protect against COVID-19 infection at the health facilities.

2. Medical Waste Management

We are treating medical waste management as an urgent and essential public service in order to minimize possible secondary impacts of COVID-19 upon health and the environment. Counties have

made arrangements for proper medical waste disposal. This includes waste disaggregation, decontamination, autoclaving, and incineration. General waste from isolation and quarantine facilities is decontaminated and then incinerated.

3. Active Quarantine Facilities

39 counties have so far reported on the status of active quarantine facilities. Currently, there are 1659 People in quarantine. 2196 People who were confined in public quarantine facilities have been released having tested negative. This is good news for the County Governments. We encourage citizens to practice self-quarantine especially when they suspect they have come into contact with a person with the virus during movement.

4. Food Market Prices

In the past week, it was reported that there was adequate availability of cereals, pulses and fresh foods in the market and prices for most commodities remained stable.

Prices of maize grain, wheat flour, rice and sugar recorded slight increase, due to increased sales during preparation for the Eid ul-Fitr celebrations. Traders have sufficient stocks to meet the demand during this period.

The supply of beans in the markets is still low and therefore the low availability in the markets is driving prices up by about 18% compared to the previous week.

5. Food aid to vulnerable households

County Governments have mapped 1.9 Million Households that require food support due to livelihood challenges related to COVID 19. Out of the 1.9M households mapped, counties have prioritized 742, 038 homes for food aid through cash transfer, e voucher and in kind food distribution. 9 County Governments have so far been able to mobilize 1.087 Billion to support this initiative. We appreciate the support by National Government to 250,000 households in 10 counties and urge that the programme be expanded to cover the 47 counties.

6. Replanting and reclaiming of farm land

The ongoing floods have washed away crops in over 100,000 acres of land. The county Governments are working with the affected farmers by supporting them with provision of seeds for replanting as well as funds to reclaim their farms. We urge the National Government and other development partners to support counties in this noble intervention.

7. Payment of Cess

We are aware that some food transporters are experiencing challenges of paying cess in some counties during this period. We reiterate the commitment of all County Governments not charge cess for the transportation of food stuff across the country during this period.

Challenges

Whereas Counties are making strides towards combating the pandemic, Counties are experiencing the following challenges:

1. Disbursement of Funds

The National Treasury is yet to disburse the 5 Billion Kenya Shillings to the County Governments that His Excellency The President announced

as support towards the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. The National Treasury is also yet to disburse the 353 Million Shillings donated by the Danish Embassy towards this fight in the levels two and three health facilities. As the pandemic spreads rapidly to the Counties, Kenyans should be aware that there is adequate funding and we should not be held accountable for failure to act because the resources are being withheld by the National Treasury.

2. Floods

There is also an upsurge of waterborne diseases such as Diarrhoea, cholera and typhoid due to the ongoing floods. 50% of land in 20 Counties is currently submerged.

Accessibility in these Counties is a challenge because the road infrastructure has also collapsed. As a result, Health facilities across these counties are inaccessible. In Tana River, for example, 22 out of 55 Health facilities have been cut off. We note and also thank His Excellency The President for setting aside funds for the repair of among others, the road network. We urge those with the responsibility of disbursement to undertake a quick assessment across the counties and disburse these funds so that the reconstruction work can start immediately.

3. State of Water Service Providers

As I have reported before, Water Service Providers are struggling to meet their operational costs and thus accumulating huge electricity bills, failing to pay salaries and procure water treatment chemicals. While the National COVID-19 response committee gave the directive for free supply of water to informal settlements, the committee did not provide for funding for the revenue gap.

I wish to take this opportunity to urge the Food Supply and County Government Coordination Committee headed by CS Peter Munya to prioritize funding the water supply as they also focus on health and food security aspects.

I am happy to report that the Council held a virtual meeting on Tuesday 19th May 2020, with Water Sector Development Partners. I thank the WASH partners for the support extended to Counties so far and for demonstrating great willingness to work closely with the Council to cushion the sector from adverse effects of floods, COVID-19 and debt.

4. Support by Non-Governmental Organizations

We are aware that there are in excess of 11,262 NGOs in the country who have received huge support by their donors towards fighting this pandemic. However this support has not been seen or felt by County Governments. We encourage these organizations to partner with the Counties so that the support they are offering can reach the most deserving.

5. Insurance coverage for Frontline Health Workers

Civil Servants are currently not covered by the National Hospital Insurance fund thus will have to pay out of pocket for any expenses that arise from contracting any disease including COVID-19. We call upon NHIF to expedite this process and sign agreements with the County Governments to ensure that civil servants, including the medical personnel are insured.

Conclusion

The Council welcomes the decision by the Court of Appeal which states that Health is a devolved function and that the National Government cannot take back the functions of County Governments

without following the provisions of Article 187 of the Constitution. With this judgement in place, we encourage the union of health workers to reach out to the Council of Governors so that we can chart a way to work together to ensure that the lives of the citizens are protected by providing the highest attainable standard of health.

The Council extends its sincere condolences to the families that have lost their loved ones to this virus. The Ministry of Health has indicated that there is likely to be a peak in the number of COVID-19 positive cases unless we change our behavior and treat this pandemic with the seriousness it deserves. In order to reduce the numbers and flatten the curve, we need to behave better by wearing our masks properly, practicing social distancing as well as washing our hands with soap and water. We shall not tire sharing this message. We need to come out of this pandemic stronger.

Asanteni Sana.

Signed

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Chairman, Council of Governors