

REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



**STATEMENT BY DR. KALUMBI SHANGULA, MINISTER OF
HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES ON THE COVID-19
SITUATION IN NAMIBIA.**

28 JULY 2020

WINDHOEK
**Check Against Delivery*

Fellow Namibians,

For the past four months, Namibia has been combating the COVID-19 pandemic, which continues to challenge the health sectors, social fabrics and economies around the world. Some countries have done better than others in controlling the spread of the pandemic in their national territories. This is mainly due to the measures they have applied and compliance with those measures by the public at large.

Here in Namibia, the measures and interventions we have implemented, have to a large extent been effective in controlling and suppressing the spread of the disease. However, in recent weeks, we have observed a worrying upsurge in the number of cases reported. Although the town of Walvis Bay remains the epi-centre of the pandemic at present, cases are increasing in other parts of the country. This is, and must be a source of concern for all Namibians. It calls for greater vigilance and personal responsibility of each and every Namibian to do our part to stop the spread of this disease in its tracks. And it can be done. In this regard, I make this clarion call on all our in different parts of the country to:

- Wear face masks each time they go out in public,
- Practice prescribed social distancing protocols,
- Avoid crowded places and public gatherings,
- Practice hand hygiene, by using alcohol-based sanitizer or washing hands with soap and water for at least twenty seconds,
- Go out in public only when it is absolutely necessary,
- Avoid large meetings that are held indoors,
- We must avoid unnecessary travel, especially from region to region.

These are the realities of our times. The only way Namibia can suppress the spread of the disease is by following and complying with these measures without fail. At all times, and by everyone.

For our health care workers, the risks are even greater because of the nature of their work. In this regard, I urge them to continue protecting themselves with appropriate PPEs at all times. You are the tip of the spear in this fight. We need you healthy to be able to treat those who fall ill and need your care and your skills.

Already, the number of health workers in the country are not sufficient. It is thus critical to ensure that they are protected and safe at all times.

Fellow Namibians,

Government has thought long and hard about the socio-economic impact of the pandemic on our society. We have fully considered the imperative of protecting not only lives but also the livelihoods of our people. It is for this reason that a staged approach was adopted to bring in flexibilities in the restrictions under the State of Emergency. Against this background, I must emphasize that, given the changing situation, more care and vigilance are called for. This is particularly true for those parts of the country that have migrated to Stage 4. Some people have started to behave as if the pandemic is no longer with us. This dangerous and false sense of security will further put our country in greater risk. The fact is, the virus is still here and it is continuing to spread. And it spreads when people move and interact. It spreads when people fail to wear face masks or to wash and sanitize their hands.

In the past few weeks, we have seen new cases in Khomas and other Regions. Many of these cases are not connected to other known cases, and they are in individuals who have not traveled. This means that people are becoming infected in their localities, during their everyday activities. It is time for all Namibians to change our behaviors and do everything we can to reduce our risk.

Again, I want to say, before you go out, ask yourself whether a gathering you are going to is necessary. When we must go to public places, we should keep it as brief as possible, and we should be diligent with masks for the entire time we are near other people.

Those of us who are more vulnerable and those of us who care for vulnerable loved ones should be especially careful. People older than 65 years, and people with preexisting conditions like diabetes or high blood pressure, are much more likely to get very sick or even to die from this virus.

We must thus, protect those who are most risk and help them avoid exposures to the coronavirus. We can stop the spread of the pandemic when we avoid crowds, wear our masks, and stay home when we are sick.

We have seen in Walvis Bay how serious the spread of this virus can be. The risk is real in other parts of the country as well, and today is the time to take it seriously, before the damage to our communities becomes overwhelming.

Let us protect ourselves individually. Let us protect our neighbours. Let us protect our communities. Let us protect our country. Together, we can vanquish COVID-19. This message should be translated into all local languages so that our people can hear it for themselves.

I thank you.