

COUNCIL OF GOVERNORS

3rd June, 2020

PRESS STATEMENT ON PREPAREDNESS OF COUNTY GOVERNMENTS ON COVID-19 – WEEK 11

Fellow Kenyans, in the last few days we have seen the highest number of recorded positive cases in this Country. While we were careful before, we need to be more careful and vigilant. We need to view this disease differently now. We need to act like we are the ones infected and therefore take precaution not to infect those around us. We need to continue being our brother's keeper.

The Council of Governors has had multiple meetings with the Ministry of Health to strategize on how to combat this disease at the County level. We welcome the move by the ministry to visit various hospitals within our Counties because this pandemic cannot be won without collaboration and cooperation.

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

1. Community surveillance

Community surveillance is thriving due to an effective and efficient coordination mechanism that has been put in place by the Counties. These multi-agency teams are composed of various county departments chaired by fellow Excellency Governors and County

Commissioners. They consist of County Rapid Response Teams, County and Sub-county emergency response teams and hospital rapid response teams.

Surveillance teams led by county specialists conduct testing at the points of entry in order to facilitate CHVs to conduct household visits and community sensitization. This enables them to gather information on suspected cases and trace visitors in the county with the help of the community.

2. Helpline For Gender Based Survivors And A Message Of Hope In Counties

The ongoing extended quarantine, and other physical distancing measures enacted to manage the pandemic, are feared to have increased susceptibility of Gender Based Violence.

A few Counties have so far launched hotlines/helplines using toll-free calls and SMS numbers for gender-based violence victims while the rest are in the process of setting up the hotlines and helplines. The helplines provide confidential support and guidance to victims of GBV. Callers are connected with trained GBV champions to follow up on the cases at the police stations and hospitals as well as offer psycho-social support counseling.

The hotlines are definitely a best practice, positive step forward and a solid tool that will help the Government in its efforts to combat gender-based violence and support victims.

Challenges

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

1. Disbursement of Funds

In the Financial Year 2019/2020, County Governments were allocated Kshs 316 Billion. Out of this, only Kshs 240 Billion has been disbursed to the Counties so far. The Financial year comes to an end in 27 days and the gatekeepers of money have continued to create bottlenecks for this disbursement.

Additionally, we continue to appeal to The National Treasury and the Controller of Budget to disburse money to County Governments towards the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. The lack of disbursement of funds in the Counties has caused the delay of staff salaries at the Counties and for the health workers, which in effect has caused low morale in executing their duties among other arising issues. This needs to be urgently addressed and a resolution made as it will negatively affect the COVID-19 response.

2. Floods

Counties in the Western and North-Rift region continue to experience floods causing population displacement and increasing the risk of water-borne diseases and Malaria. Feedback from malaria endemic counties shows that there is a shortage of Rapid Test Kits (RTKs) as well as medication. This being a high incidence season, the affected Counties are encouraged to fast-track procurement of these commodities and to closely monitor the supply-chain system.

We also have incidents of other outbreak-prone diseases reported in some counties. County Governments are working with the National Government in closely monitoring and responding to these developments alongside the COVID-19 response.

The floods have also caused a lot of damage to the water system, siltation of river channel and collection sump, flooding of the scheme sites, flooding at the intake works, destruction of gabions and rivers changing their courses, intake works and rising mains, thereby damaging distribution pipelines, water kiosks and storage tanks especially in the Lake Region Economic Bloc.

The number of affected people in Tana River County has increased while other areas remained stable. In Western Kenya, the water level in the lake is going down and flood waters are subsiding slowly. The counties are currently analyzing the situation and strategizing to see what immediate interventions are needed before people can safely go back progressively as the floods recede.

3. Reduced utilization of essential services

Routine essential services data shows significant reduction in performance of essential services across indicators.

The proportion of children under one year who are fully immunized reduced by 40% in the month of April compared to March 2020. This means that in the coming days, with the status quo, there could be an increase in the number of children who acquire vaccine-preventable diseases with associated deaths. The prevention of Mother to Child Transmission rate has reduced by 31% within the same period. The proportion of targeted pregnant women provided with long lasting Insecticide treated nets (LLITNs) dropped by 10% in the same period exposing expectant mothers to Malaria in this rainy season when the incidence is normally high.

Fellow Kenyans, as I reported last week, hospitals have taken all precaution to ensure that the risk of contracting the COVID-19 disease is minimized by separating the areas that are dealing with respiratory problems from the rest of the hospital. Do not risk your lives by refusing to go to hospital because of fear of contracting this virus. Ensure that your children are vaccinated, and that you are able to access ARVs and any other medication you require.

4. Injuries resulting from enforcement of the curfew

We continue to see increased incidences of injuries inflicted by the police as a result of enforcing the curfew laws. We call upon the National Police Service to enforce the law with a lot of diligence. Understand the reason for violating the curfew before taking any action. Governors and other elected leaders will continue to engage the Ministry of Interior and IPOA to ensure justice for victims of police brutality. These injuries contribute significantly to the causes of morbidity, disability and death in Kenya and are therefore a social and health issue.

5. Long distance trucks' snarl-up

The delay in clearance of long distance trucks at some of our border points has contributed to the snarl-up of the trucks for over 80 kilometers and therefore posing a challenge to efforts towards effective management of Covid-19.

As we speak the road leading to Malaba border has trucks stretching up to Luandeti spanning across three counties of Busia, Bungoma and Kakamega. We propose that;

- No more trucks should be allowed to leave the port of Mombasa until the backlog at the border points is cleared.
- We call upon the President to intervene in this matter.

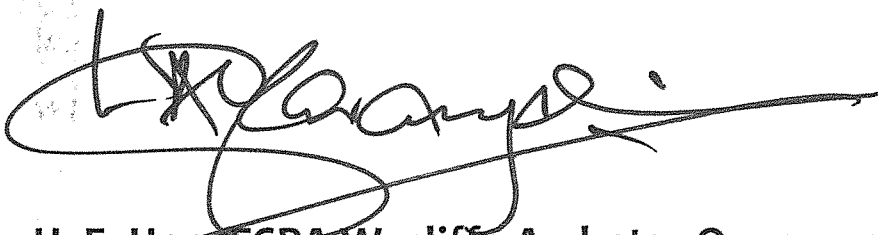
Conclusion

As I conclude, I wish to inform members of the public that our Youth committee, chaired by H.E Paul Chepkwony will be hosting a virtual meeting on Friday 5th June, 2020 with the Chief Administrative Secretary- Health, as well as representatives of CSOs and Private sector to discuss issues that have affected and continue to affect the youth during the COVID-19 season. From these discussions, the youth will come up with resolutions which will be incorporated in the Council of Governors post COVID-19 economic recovery strategy paper.

While the two levels of governments continue to work together towards flattening the curve, Fellow Kenyans, we need to do our part by wearing our masks properly, practicing social distancing as well as washing our hands with soap and water and being our brother's keeper.

Asanteni Sana.

Signed



H. E. Hon. FCPA Wycliffe Ambetsa Oparanya, EGH, CGJ
Chairman, Council of Governors