

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) Outbreak – Update on Ghana’s Preparedness as at 25 February 2020

I. Highlights

- The Government of Peoples Republic of China on the 7th January 2020, reported to the World Health Organization (WHO) a confirmed novel corona virus outbreak. The virus has demonstrated efficient human to human transmission and the WHO has declared the outbreak a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC).
- Consequently, the WHO requested all member states to strengthen systems for preparedness to prevent importation, ensure early detection and appropriate response to any emergence.
- Using WHO’s Country Readiness Checklist, Ghana assessed its capacities to respond to any suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19 and has developed a plan to address identified gaps in respect to preparedness, response and control activities.
- The Government of Ghana has committed 2.8 million Ghana Cedis as initial amount to support Ghana’s preparedness.
- Various activities are being undertaken to strengthen systems along the thematic areas of the national strategic plans at the district, regional and national levels. These include Surveillance, Coordination, Laboratory, Points of Entry, Case Management, Social Mobilization and Risk Communication, Logistics and Finance.
- There is capacity in country to test for COVID-19 disease (Noguchi Memorial Institute for Medical research and Kumasi Centre for Collaborative Research).
- As of 25 February 2020, total of 24 suspected cases have been reported and all have tested negative for COVID-19.
- Ghana is classified among 13 Priority-1 countries in WHO Africa region for being at risk, based on flights and passenger volumes

II. Ongoing Preparedness Activities



Coordination

The public health emergency (PHEMs) structures

- Public Health Emergency Management Structures have been activated at all levels (national, regional and districts). At the national level, the Emergency Operation Centre (EOC) has met four times following activation.
- Alert has been sent to all regions to update their respective preparedness plan and activate the respective Public Health Emergency Management Committees.
- Stakeholder engagements have been conducted with Ministry of Health / Ghana Health Service (MOH / GHS) involving the GHS Directors at Head Quarters, Regional Directors of Health Services (RDHS); Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) of Teaching Hospitals; Christian Health Association of Ghana (CHAG); Private Sector; National Ambulance Service (NAS); Noguchi Memorial Institute for Medical Research (NMIMR); Kumasi Centre for Collaborative Research (KCCR).
- There have also been meetings with a number of stakeholders: WHO, World Bank, US-CDC, DFID, IOM and other Development Partners

- The Honourable Minister Health has met and engaged the Chinese Ambassador to Ghana to enhance information sharing and discuss issues related to the safety, security, and well-being of Ghanaian Nationals in China and also the requisite monitoring / surveillance activities for Chinese Nationals travelling to Ghana.
- The National Technical Coordinating Committee (NTCC) has met twice to plan coordination and other national preparedness activities.
- Monitoring of the national preparedness is being done through the WHO preparedness checklist.
- The national Public Health Emergency Preparedness Plan has been updated and a draft COVID-19 preparedness plan has been developed
- Alerts on the outbreak have been issued by the Director General (DG) of Ghana Health Service (GHS) and circulated to all regions and districts to initiate preparedness activities and enhance surveillance for respiratory diseases.
- The Director General of Ghana Health Service has held a meeting with all the Regional Directors of Health Services (RDHS) to discuss preparedness activities and planning for the outbreak.
- The Regional Public Health Emergency Management Committees and structures at all levels (national, regional, district) activated and on high alert and all the regions have updated their plans.
- The Parliamentarians and Select Committee on Health have been briefed on preparedness activities on two (2) occasions



Points of Entry (PoE)

- Stakeholder engagements have held with the Ghana Airport Company Limited (GACL) management, Kotoka International Airport (KIA), Ghana Immigration Services, Customs Division of Ghana Revenue Authority, Kotoka International Airport (KIA); Tema Port etc. to strengthen COVID 19 preparedness and surveillance systems.
- Screening of passengers on arrival has started and is ongoing using thermal scanning and a health declaration form (HDF).
- Sensitization for points of entry (PoE) staff on surveillance, screening, case detection and Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) has been undertaken for the heads of all 14 the designated points of entry and all the KIA port health staff.
- Holding room has been identified at the Kotoka International Airport to be utilized to hold suspected cases COVID-19 for laboratory investigations and testing.
- Alerts and health education are displayed on airport screens, pull-ups and leaflets on COVID-19 are available at the KIA arrival and departure halls.



Surveillance

- COVID-19 case definition has been adapted and disseminated to regional and lower levels
- COVID 19 case investigation form has been adapted and shared with the regions and districts for use
- National Rapid Response Team (RRT) has been activated
- National Level Training for Rapid Response Teams and other Health Workers on Severe Acute Respiratory Illness (SARI) has been done
- Training of regional and district Rapid Response Teams have been planned for execution
- Clinician sensitization (Including the private sector providers) has been conducted

- Quarantine facility (a newly completed 100 bed hospital) has been identified for potential use.



Laboratory testing

- Testing of suspected cases is ongoing at the Noguchi Memorial Institute for Medical Research with support from WHO, CDC and US Naval Medical Research Unit 3 (NAMRU3)
- Samples from 23 suspected cases have been received and tested on at the NMIMR. All the 21 suspected cases have tested negative for COVID-19, and five (8) tested positive for Influenza
- Capacity to test for COVID 19 cases also established at The Kumasi Centre for Collaborative Research (KCCR) with support from Bernard Nocht Institute
- Procurement of more reagents & primers for confirmation Coronavirus cases ongoing
- US Government (NAMRU-3, CDC) has provided technical support, funding and diagnostic reagents to NMIMR for testing



Case management / Infection Prevention and Control (IPC)

- Case management protocols for COVID-19 have been adapted from WHO protocols and disseminated to the regions for further dissemination to the districts and facilities.
- Greater Accra Regional (Ridge) hospital and Tema General Hospitals designated as treatment / isolation centres.
- Technical support visits have been undertaken by the Institutional Care Division (ICD) of Ghana Health Service and WHO to designated facilities to assess IPC measures, logistics, etc)
- Staff at the two identified treatment centres (Tema and Ridge hospitals) given preliminary training in case management and IPC
- Four other facilities (Ga East, Police, LEKMA and Korle-Bu Teaching Hospitals) have been identified as additional facilities to support case management.



Risk Communication / Social Mobilization

- Media briefing has been conducted on preparedness activities by the Ministry of Health / Ghana Health Service
- Key messages and educational materials on COVID-19 preparedness and preventive measures have been developed and disseminated
- Preventive messages on COVID-19 and related instructions for passengers have been developed and being broadcast on the airport screens
- Four (4) press releases on COVID-19 have been issued by the Minister of Health / Ghana Health Service providing:
 - Information on evolution of the outbreak globally, clinical symptoms, directions on prevention and measures being taken within the country to early detect and manage possible cases.
 - Updates on the country's preparedness activities and on cases suspected and tested for COVID-19
- Radio and television discussions and engagements on the outbreak and Ghana's preparedness activities have been started and are ongoing.
- Jingles have been developed for public education in the regions and districts



Logistics

- Five thousand (5,000) PPEs provided by the government distributed to all regions, PoE, Teaching Hospitals, and treatment centres and selected health facilities and other frontline facilities.

III. Funding for COVID-19 Preparedness

- Support from Government so far has gone towards the provision of PPEs, coordination activities, health declaration forms.
- Total budget for COVID-19 preparedness stands at 35 million Ghana Cedis.
- There are funding gaps and additional funding will be required to implement remaining activities at the national level, regions and districts.
- The World Health Organization (WHO), World Bank and other Health Partners are supporting the country to identify priority areas as per the WHO national capacities tool, to map out and access support for the entire preparedness process.

IV. Partner Support

The country has been working in close collaboration with partners (WHO, World Bank, US-CDC, UNICEF, Red Cross etc.) who are supporting by providing technical, logistic and financial support.

- The WHO has
 - Donated PPEs valued at \$5,000 to the GHS
 - Shared WHO COVID-19 guidelines and tools on surveillance, points of entry, case management, laboratory protocols, risk communication
 - Provided laboratory supplies to support sample collection and testing
- US Government (NAMRU-3, CDC, USAID)
 - Provided technical support, funding and diagnostic reagents to NMIMR for testing
 - Supporting development and printing of social and behaviour change communication materials and training
- DFID
 - Support for case management technical assistance

V. Contacts

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