



Republic of Namibia

PRESS STATEMENT

BY

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Minister of Health and Social Services

**UPDATE ON INFLUENZA A H1N1 ("SWINE FLU")
THE FIRST CONFIRMED CASES OF NOVEL INFLUENZA A H1N1
IN NAMIBIA**

MONDAY 20 JULY 2009

14h30

Media Version

Programme Director, Mr. K. Kahuure, PS, MoHSS
Dr. Tiruneh Desta, WHO
Members of the Media,
Ladies and gentlemen,

The Director General of the World Health Organisation, Dr. Margareth Chan, declared Influenza A H1N1 as a public health emergency of international concern on the 25th of April 2009. On the 30th April she raised the pandemic threat level, to Phase 5. As a result, I immediately re-activated the National Health Emergency Management Committee the same day.

The first meeting of this committee took place on 5th May 2009. After I had consulted with the Regional Director of WHO, Dr. Sambo, for an Epidemiologist, Dr. Pascal Mkanda joined Dr. Vries and the committee on 12th May 2009. On 28th May 2009 the National Preparedness and Response Plan for Pandemic Influenza A (H1N1) was finalized, and presented to H.E. the President and Rt. Hon. Prime Minister for their information.

On 8th June, 2009 Egypt reported the first confirmed case in Africa.

As you are aware, on 11 June 2009, the WHO Director General raised the alert level to Phase 6. On the 19th June the Republic of South Africa reported its first confirmed case.

On Wednesday, last week, Botswana reported its first confirmed case.

Programme Director, Ladies and Gentlemen,

During the past month, it has become clear to my Ministry that it would just be a matter of time before Namibia would have its first confirmed H1N1 Influenza case. Last Friday, 17th July 2009, we received confirmation through the Namibia Institute of Pathology that we now have two confirmed H1N1 cases in Namibia – one in Windhoek and one in Rehoboth. I immediately informed H.E the President and the Rt. Hon. Prime Minister. Today, we are gathered here to inform the nation at large.

WHAT DID WE DO? :

- Chief Medical Officers and Principal Medical Officers were trained on H1N1 – using the Preparedness and Response Plan. (On 5th and 10th June respectively.)
- A workshop for media personnel was conducted on 8th June 2009.
- Brochures and pamphlets for travelers and the general public were printed and disseminated country wide.

- Case management guideline is being printed for distribution for health workers across the public and private institutions.
- 20,000 courses of Tamiflu®, masks and personal protective equipment (PPE) were procured.
- The Namibian Institute of Pathology procured specimen collection swabs and disseminated them countrywide.
- The National Health Emergency Committee is meeting twice a week to monitor the situation and take the necessary measures in time.

Programme Director, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I refer you back to our first confirmed cases of Influenza A (H1N1).

(1). In the 1st case, a 13year old learner had returned from the Republic of South Africa on the 4th July 2009. A swab was taken by a private doctor, which returned positive on Friday 17th July 2009. The boy went to R.S.A together with 20 other learners to participate in the rugby Craven Week Tournament. Five adults accompanied the learners. So far, we have identified and traced everybody who was on the bus and have contacted them for prophylactic treatment.

In Rehoboth:

Tracing of Contacts:

- (a) The close contacts of the index case, i.e. his family, class mates and relatives were traced and treated (eleven received treatment and nine were swabbed for virus identification.)
- (b) The Director of Education, Principals, the Town Councillors, the Namibian police, the local media and private health care providers were invited to a briefing meeting today, 14h00 at St. Mary's Hospital Conference room. A "Flu-Clinic" will be opened for all (and only) cases with flu-symptoms for treatment.

Programme Director, Ladies and Gentlemen,

(2). In the 2nd case, a young woman had returned from Europe on Wednesday 15th July 2009. After receiving her traveler's health passport at Hosea Kutako airport, she informed the health personnel on duty that she had all the symptoms suggestive of Influenza. She was transported by ambulance to Windhoek Central Hospital where a nasal swab was taken and she was put on treatment and allowed to go home. Three adults and a 2 year old girl were given prophylaxis.

Saturday, 18 July 2009: Robert Mugabe clinic was opened for prophylaxis dispensing to the contacts on board the flight. Fifteen contacts reported at the clinic. Two contacts were

traced in Katima Mulilo. The Principal Medical Officer was contacted at Katima Mulilo and they were attended to. Two health workers who attended to the patient at the airport were given prophylaxis.

Sunday, 19 July 2009: The two ambulance drivers who transported the patient from the airport also received prophylaxis. The two rugby team coaches reported at the clinic, one was referred to Windhoek Central Hospital where a swab was taken and both received treatment. Two South African Airline employees were given prophylaxis at Hosea Kutako International Airport. Three passengers on board the flight with the index case reported at the clinic. Three relatives of the driver of the bus were given prophylaxis.

My Appeal to the Namibian nation is to remain calm. I call for your co-operation with the health workers. All measures to treat and stop further transmission are now in place. As a result, there is no need for panic. We trained personnel at our border posts and the Hosea Kutako International and Eros Airports. We have stock piled Oseltamivir medicine and swabs for virus identification. Indeed, our logistics are in place.

I would like to urge the public to practice hand hygiene (washing hands with soap and water as frequently as possible) and respiratory etiquette (keep a distance of 2 meters from a person who is sick, use tissue when sneezing and coughing) in order to minimize the chance of transmitting Influenza virus.

The symptoms of the new Pandemic (H1N1) 2009 are similar to the seasonal flu, i.e. fever ($>38^{\circ}\text{C}$), headache, muscle and joint pain, cough and sneezing. If you develop flu like illness, stay at home and consult your doctor.

I assure you all that my ministry will keep the public informed of the developments on regular basis.

Finally, I commend the efforts of the WHO and thank the Organization for the generous donation of antiviral medicines, Personal Protective Equipments, continued guidance and technical support. I would also like to use this opportunity to thank the Republikein Group with the Partners: First National Bank, Renaissance Health Medical Aid Fund, Cell One and Shoprite who played a major role in printing and distributing the travelers and general public pamphlets. I also wish to congratulate Dr. Jack Vries, Gladys Kamboo and the Team for good coordination and hard work.

I Thank You.