



**THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA
MINISTRY OF HEALTH**

PRESS STATEMENT

UPDATE ON COVID-19 VACCINATION IN UGANDA

02nd March 2021

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Samuel Kibuka'.



2nd March 2021 - The Ministry of Health would like to update the general public on the progress of the plans to roll out vaccination against COVID-19 Pandemic in Uganda.

However, to begin, allow me to provide an update on the COVID 19 situation.

To date, the cumulative number of COVID-19 confirmed cases stands at 40,367, reported and validated COVID-19 deaths at 334 and recoveries at 14,989.

Kampala continues to report the highest number of cases and deaths in the country (contributing 48% of the national figure for both cases and deaths). Currently, the following regions are the main transmission hotspots: West Nile and Elgon sub-regions.

COVID19 VACCINATION PROGRAM

Uganda will need a total of up to 45 million doses of vaccines (if all the vaccines provided are of 2 doses) to vaccinate a population of but 22 million and extra doses to cater for the refugee population. The Ministry of Health is finalizing the preparations to start vaccination against COVID-19 with the arrival of the initial batch of 864,000 doses of the AstraZeneca vaccines on the 5th of March 2021 and vaccination scheduled to begin on the 10th March 2021.

Sources of Vaccines:

As communicated in my last address, Uganda will access COVID-19 vaccines as follows:



- i) Directly purchased AstraZeneca vaccines from Serum Institute of India by the Government of Uganda: Of the 18 million doses ordered for, 400,000 doses will be received by mid-March 2021. The rest will be received in phases in the course of the year.
- ii) Donations from the COVAX facility; The COVAX facility has communicated a tentative allocation of 3,552,000 doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine to Uganda for the period January- June 2021. Of the above allocation, 864,000 doses are expected to arrive by 5th March 2021 and the remaining 2,688,000 by June 2021. In the course of 2021, Uganda expects to receive 17,872,037 doses of COVID 19 vaccines from the COVAX Facility on a quarterly basis for 20% of its population.
- iii) Donation from the Government of India: The Ministry has responded to the offer of 100,000 doses of AstraZeneca vaccines from the Government of India and has provided the requirements for shipping and regulatory clearance. The arrival date of these vaccines will be communicated in due course.
- iv) A donation from The People's Republic of China: The Ministry of Health is working on the technical processes for receiving an offer of 300,000 doses of the Chinese COVID-19 vaccine (Coronavac). The modalities of receipt of the vaccine will be communicated in due course.



Target populations for vaccination:

Uganda targets to vaccinate 49.6% of the population which is about 21,936,011 people, in a phased manner. Each phase is planned to cover 20% of the population which is about 4,387,202 people. The eligible population lies in the age range of 18 years and above.

In the context of global pressure on vaccine stocks, the priority persons to be vaccinated is guided by the occupational risk of infection, risk of developing severe disease, death from COVID- 19, and population characteristics (age, gender and geographical location).

Therefore, phase 1 of the vaccination exercise will focus on:

- Health workers (Public, Private Not for Profit (PNFP) and Private for Profit (PFP)) estimated at 150,000
- Security personnel (UPDF, Police, Prisons); estimated at 250,000
- Teachers (Public and Private) among other essential social service providers; 550,000
- Persons from the age 50 years and above, estimated at 3,348,500
- Persons with underlying health conditions aged below 50 years, estimated at 500,000
- Other emerging high risk and priority essential groups (airlines, media, Prisoners, tour operators and guides, Bankers, immigration officers, UWA, URA, Humanitarian workers and others to be identified.



In Phases 2 and 3 of the COVID-19 vaccination program, the Ministry will roll out the vaccination program to age groups between 18 and 50 years of age in a staggered manner until 49.6% of the Ugandan population is vaccinated. This exercise will also be guided by the local epidemiology of the disease.

Re-adjusted target populations for vaccination:

As you are aware, COVID-19 vaccines are new and additional information keeps emerging to guide the planning for vaccination; this includes the criteria for targeting population groups. Accordingly, the revised target population for vaccination in Uganda stands at 21,936,011 persons equivalent to 49.6% of the population of Uganda compared with the target population earlier communicated (60% and 27,000,000 people) in line with WHO and Africa CDC global guidance. The reduction is the result of the adjustment of target age group from 16 to 18 years for the *AstraZeneca* vaccine and the young population structure of Uganda where only 49.6% are above 18 years of age.

The vaccines available up to now are not yet authorized for use in persons younger than 18 years of age in whom research is still ongoing. If vaccines become available for below the age of 18, the Ministry will update its plan accordingly and inform the general public.



Procedure for vaccination of priority groups against Covid-19

The Ministry of Health has set a procedure for the priority groups who will be vaccinated against COVID-19.

The procedure is as follows:

1. Vaccination will begin on the 10th March 2021, following a National Launch on the 8th March 2021 and subsequent distribution to all the districts.
2. All persons eligible for vaccination will be required to provide a National Identification Card in the case of Ugandan citizens or a passport in the case of non-Ugandans.
3. Government Health center's IIIs, IVs, District Hospitals, Regional Referral, National Referral Hospitals and specialized Institutions have been designated as vaccination service points in each district and or City. Eligible persons will access their vaccines from any of these service points.
4. Vaccines will be given to eligible persons 8 weeks apart (56 days). However, this can be extended up to 12 weeks as recommended by WHO Strategic Advisory Group of Experts on Immunizations.
5. The vaccine is given intramuscularly on the left upper arm - 0.5mls each.
6. All vaccinated persons will receive a vaccination card and will be required to present this card for the second dose.
7. A team of well-trained health workers will be based at the designated service points to provide services.
8. All health workers from public, Private not for profit and private health facilities will be the first group to receive the vaccines. This



is because they are at the frontline in the response to the COVID19 pandemic and are vulnerable to infection as has been shown by the statistics of infection (1,892) and death among health workers (19). In addition, once they are protected, they will be motivated to continue providing health care to the populations. Health workers in the public health facilities will receive vaccines from their work places. Health workers from Private not for profit and Private facilities will be required to go to the nearest public facility for their vaccines. This procedure should be adhered to until each health worker has received two doses of the vaccine

9. The second group will be the teachers. This is extremely important as we prepare to reopen the schools for our children to continue with their education. All Teachers will be required to access vaccines from the nearest Public Health facility starting from Health Center III up to a National Referral Hospital.
10. The third category will be all persons above 50 years of age.
11. The next category eligible for vaccination are the 18 to 50-year old's who have the following underlying health conditions: hypertension, Diabetes, cancer, organ diseases such as Liver, Kidney or heart disease.
12. Estimation of the quantities of vaccines required for the security forces (UPDF, Police and Prisons) is ongoing. The activity will be handled within their facilities under the guidance of their health workers
13. Each category will be alerted on the days on which to report for vaccination



Note: This will be a phased activity depending on the availability of vaccine doses.

National preparedness for COVID- 19 vaccination

Uganda has fulfilled its obligations to receive vaccines under the Covax facility and from the Serum Institute of India. This required a National Vaccine deployment plan which was developed and approved, indemnification agreement with serum Institute of India, a vaccines purchase agreement cleared by the solicitor general and all regulatory approvals from NDA finalized. Uganda is therefore ready to receive vaccines.

The Ministry of Health will issue a statutory instrument as is required by the Public Health Act and the immunization Act 2016 for emerging and re-emerging epidemics to guide the vaccination process. Vaccination will be voluntary upon signing a consent form and will be free of charge.

Training

The Ministry of Health has commenced training of vaccinators. Training will be in two shifts;

1. The training of trainers and supervisors. These will in turn train the frontline health workers who will administer the vaccines. The following trainers are being trained; national level (50), regional level (145) and district level (145)
2. Each District will train five teams of Health workers, each team composed of 6 health workers (30 health workers) per district.



Vaccination will be conducted in static sites in HC IIIs, HC IVs, General Hospitals, Regional and National referral hospitals. Similar teams have been constituted by the security forces and have been trained as supervisors and vaccinators in their respective institutions.

Other activities

1. District Health Teams will provide detailed plans between 4th and 5th March 2021 on the target population estimates, the deployment of the vaccination teams to vaccination points, scheduling of days to reach all HC IIIs in order to vaccinate in all sub counties.
2. In order to prevent theft of vaccines en-route to districts, in district stores and at points of administration, the UPDF and the Police are finalizing the security arrangements from the national to sub county level. Vaccines issued out will be reconciled with use, wastage and balance on daily basis.
3. In consultation with the National Identification and Registration Authority (NIRA), UBOS and the Ministry of Public Service; an electronic information system for registration, capturing vaccination information to completion of second dose, including analysis and SMS reminders on drop-outs from the vaccination program is being finalized. This system will enable accountability for vaccines on a daily basis.



Sensitization and awareness creation

Ministry of Health, the district health teams and the district task forces have started engagement with all stakeholders to create awareness and demand.

Districts are encouraged to use the local government structure of LCs and VHTs to mobilize and sensitize communities about the vaccines and procedures to be followed for one to get vaccinated.

The Ministry of Health with effect from today 2nd March 2021 will run a campaign targeting the public with the purpose of creating awareness about the vaccines that are to be used in Uganda.

The Mass media campaign is meant to equip the population with clear information on vaccines given the fact that a lot of misinformation is already circulating. The campaign will run on **40 radio stations** and **five televisions** in the country and the messages will be delivered both in English and in our local languages.

At community level, information packs for health workers and VHTs have been prepared, and dissemination commences with immediate effect. We hope that at that level, community members will be reached with all the required information regarding the vaccines deployment.

The Ministry has prepared all the required health communication materials like fact sheets on vaccines, Frequently Asked Questions on vaccines (FAQs), with a focus on key prioritized populations during the initial phase of the exercise.



We encourage members of the public to only share information provided by the Ministry of Health and when in doubt, to always clarify with the Ministry of Health or your local district health officers.

Financing for the Vaccines

The direct financial obligation for Uganda to vaccinate 49.6% of the Ugandan population (21,936,011) stands at USD 162,801,475 (Ug. Shs. 582bn) arising from the cost of vaccines and supplies, handling, storage and distribution and the related operational costs for deploying vaccines received through COVAX and that directly bought by government.

The Government of Uganda is committed to ensure that the population of Uganda is protected against the covid19 pandemic. It's important to note that COVID19 vaccines will be provided free to the target population. However, vaccination is not compulsory and individuals will be required to consent in order to be vaccinated. After vaccination, the public will STILL be required to continue following the SOPS.

CONCLUSION

I would like to remind the public that COVID-19 testing is **FREE of CHARGE** for individuals with signs and symptoms consistent with COVID-19.

The general population should continue following the Standard Operating Procedures in order to prevent COVID-19 infections. It is



your responsibility to protect yourself and your loved ones. This will enable us sustain the gains achieved as a nation.

COVID-19 is real, it is dangerous, spreads fast and it kills.

Stay safe, Stay alive.

Thank you for listening and God bless

Dr. Jane Ruth Aceng Ocer

Minister for Health

2nd March 2021