**Weekly Newsletter**

**Volume 1, Issue 1, June 2020**

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**Announcement**

*Day of the African Child, June 16, 2020*

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**Covid-19 Posing Multifaceted Challenges: Adversely effecting child health and immunization**

When the immunization schedule is well followed, vaccines have the potential to save many lives. According to GAVI, Since 2000, immunization has helped reduce child mortality by half in GAVI-supported countries.

With the pandemic, the gains made against vaccine preventable diseases are at risk, with BBC reporting that at least 68 countries have been affected - with some stopping vaccination campaigns completely, following the WHO advisory to help slow the pandemic.

Recent health reports indicate a sharp dip in pediatric emergency and pediatric immunization services (with a 13% decline) in 2020, alongside other socio-economic challenges. Further in a report shared by the Council of Governors in their 10th week statement on the preparedness of counties, to fight the pandemic, collaborated these reports highlighting a general drop in the uptake of antenatal care with April reporting lows of 39% for the 4th ANC, delivery by skilled birth attendants shot to 32%, immunization at 34% for under one year and family planning services at 25%.

The reasons advanced for the decline in vaccination services include, parents' fear of catching Covid-19 when they leave the house, health workers being diverted to deal with the pandemic as well as problems getting vaccine supplies to clinics.

WHO has reported that at least 80 million children under the age of one are at risk of missing routine with 22.9 Million these children being in Africa.

Towards mobilizing communities, to keep up the uptake of immunization, KANCO has been supporting trainings and sensitizations for communities across 17 counties for continued uptake of services.

This comes at a time when GAVI has announced a $2bn procurement fund aimed at ensuring that poorer countries access doses of a potential coronavirus vaccine. The announcement was made at the third Gavi vaccine alliance replenishment summit, a virtual pledging event that raised $8.8bn, above the target of $7.4bn, for the private-public alliance’s general work on immunizing millions of people worldwide from longstanding diseases such as measles.
Home Based Care for Patients with COVID-19

Home care for people with suspected or confirmed COVID-19
Take care of yourself and your family

For caregivers

Ensure the ill person rests, drinks plenty of fluids and eats nutritious food.

Wear a medical mask when in the same room with an ill person. Do not touch the mask or face during use and discard it afterward.

Frequently clean hands with soap and water or alcohol-based rub, especially:
- after any type of contact with the ill person or their surroundings
- before, during and after preparing food
- before eating
- after using the toilet

Use dedicated dishes, cups, eating utensils, towels and bedlinens for the ill person. Wash dishes, cups, eating utensils, towels, or bedlinens used by the ill person with soap and water.

Identify frequently touched surfaces by the ill person and clean and disinfect them daily.

Call your health care facility immediately if the ill person worsens or experiences difficulty breathing.

As the COVID-19 cases rise the government has called on the need to consider home based care for COVID-19 patients especially for asymptomatic patients, as the health facilities become overwhelmed. This move is to facilitate hospitals based treatment to prioritize those with the highest probability of poor health outcomes including the elderly and those with pre-existing conditions. Speaking on this the Health Cabinet Secretary Mutahi Kagwe said the move will pave way for the release of asymptomatic COVID-19 patients from isolation facilities across the country, noting that more than 80 percent of patients in hospitals are asymptomatic and will have to be managed at home in order to minimize congestion at health facilities.

Acting Director General Patrick Amoth added that the new protocols will facilitate smooth running of hospitals managing COVID-19 patients "The home-based care is a key intervention which is approved by World Health Organisation (WHO) and it is meant to prevent hospitals from being overwhelmed," he added.

From the government guidelines, those eligibility for the home based care include: a laboratory confirmed COVID19, asymptomatic patients or patients with mild symptoms of COVID19, absence of co-morbidities, and those with access to a suitable space for homebased care.

In assessing feasibility for the home based care, consideration for the clinical judgement and patient’s environment will be determined through different mechanisms.

The guideline also provides care procedures and referral guidelines for home based care, when to end the isolation, as well as home based monitoring tools, symptoms and a checklist assessment for the environmental conditions for persons with covid-19.

Read the guideline here.
Interim Guidance on Continuity of Essential Health Services during the Covid-19 Pandemic

As the country continues to battle the pandemic, the Ministry of Health has issued interim guidance on the continuity of essential health services during the covid-19 pandemic.

This is towards supporting enactment of measures to contain the transmission of the virus and reduce the numbers affected by the pandemic, while ensuring that the health systems remain strong and responsive.

This is also in response to the understanding that in other pandemics such as the Ebola pandemic higher number of deaths came from communicable and non-communicable diseases, such as Malaria, HIV and AIDS and Vaccine Preventable diseases.

Further, special groups such as pregnant women, children, people living with disabilities, people with chronic illnesses and older people, may experience increased interruption of care caused by COVID-19, leading to high morbidity and mortality in the country.

This guidelines therefore seeks to ensure that all groups continue to access critical services including access to medication and health services. Further, the strategy seeks to provide guidance and support to the counties in provision of these essential services, a document subject to periodic review in line with emerging evidence and updates on the continuity of essential services.

Read the full document here