

REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES

Information Note: Covid-19 Vaccination in Namibia

Info Note #001/2021

This Information Note provides an update on the ongoing Covid-19 vaccination campaign in Namibia and addresses the anti-vaccination conspiracy theories.

COMMUNICATION CAMPAIGN: The communication campaign to raise awareness about the importance of vaccination using different platforms has picked up significantly. It has been observed that more Namibians now understand and have an appreciation of the importance of vaccination and they are turning up in numbers at vaccination sites. Engagement with public, religious, private entities as well as individuals has been intensified.

Many stakeholders have offered support to the Ministry to expand the vaccination campaign in different ways. On 26 June 2021, a vaccination day was organised and hosted at the Government Park, by Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture, NANTU and other stakeholders. The campaign did not only cater for Ministry employees, but all eligible persons who sought vaccination at the site. We would like to see more and more of such events in the future. These initiatives are helpful with encouraging more people to get vaccinated.

VACCINATION: By 24 June 2021, the cumulative number of persons who have received the 1st dose of COVID-19 vaccines stood at 112, 773 and 22, 285 are fully vaccinated (meaning they received both the 1st and 2nd doses). This translates into 1.5% of the targeted population being fully vaccinated. In order to achieve herd immunity, we still need to fully vaccinate a total of 1,478, 756 persons in Namibia. There are regional variations, whereby vaccination uptake has been slow in some regions, and we have been intensifying community engagement in such communities through Community health Workers, Regional Risk Communication and community Engagement Pillar and through regional leaders.

VACCINE STOCK LEVELS: Namibia received 100, 000 doses of Sinopharm vaccine by way of donation from China, and 30, 000 doses of COVISHIELD vaccine, also by way of donation from India. The Namibian Government has paid for 108, 000 doses from the COVAX Facility, of which 67, 200 doses of AstraZeneca have been delivered. The total number of COVID-19 vaccine doses received in the country to date is 197, 200. Of these, 135, 058 doses have been administered, as of 24 June 2021. The levels of vaccine uptake in different parts of the country is uneven. The Ministry has been redistributing vaccine doses from slow moving sites to those with faster uptake, especially to regions with high case incidence and deaths, such as Khomas, Erongo, Omaheke, Karas and Hardap.

The Ministry will continue vaccinating as many people as possible with the 1st dose, while the majority of the 2nd doses will be given as soon as the next consignment is received in July 2021. This is in accordance with the WHO guidance in case of limited vaccine supply. It should be noted that the 1st dose of the vaccine already offers some degree of protection against severe disease, hospitalization and death. Thus, vaccinating as many people as possible with the first dose will lead to the protection of the larger proportion of the population against severe illness, hospitalization and death.

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ACQUISITION OF ADDITIONAL VACCINE STOCK: The Central Medical Store (“CMS”) of the Ministry of Health and Social is responsible for overseeing the pharmaceuticals and clinical supplies supply chain, which includes the procurement, shipping, storage and distribution of the Covid-19 vaccine to the health facilities in the country.

The supply of COVID-19 vaccination by manufacturers is constrained due to high demand for the vaccines globally. This has affected supply under the mechanisms such as the COVAX Facility. The Minister of Health and Social Services, during March 2021 issued an exemption for the importation of various vaccines. These include:

- (a) Vero Cell manufactured by China National Pharmaceutical Group (manufactured in China);
- (b) Sputnik V manufactured by the Gamaleya National Centre for Epidemiology and Microbiology (country of manufacture: Russian Federation);
- (c) Ad26.COV2.S manufactured by Janssen Infectious Diseases & Vaccines (Johnson & Johnson) (manufactured in United States of America);
- (d) COVAXIN manufactured by Bharat Biotech (manufactured in India);
- (e) AZD1222 (AstraZeneca) manufactured by SK Biotek Co. Ltd (manufactured in South Korea); and
- (f) mRNA-1273 manufactured by Moderna TX, Inc. (manufactured in USA).

Namibia is procuring COVID-19 vaccines through different platforms, including direct engagement with manufacturers, appointed agents of manufacturers in instances where the manufacturer has appointed such, and Pooled Procurement Mechanisms such as the COVAX Facility, the Africa Medicines Supply Platform (AMSP) and the Africa Vaccine Acquisition Task Team (AVATT). We are also working with neighbouring countries in attempts to jointly acquire COVID-19 vaccine doses. Since many vaccines have a relatively short shelf life, they are being procured in a staggered fashion to ensure that only manageable quantities are on hand to avoid wastage and products expiring before they are used up.

The current status for the procurement of COVID-19 Vaccines for Namibia is as follows:

Vaccine Name	Quantity (Doses)	Supplier	Expected Date of Delivery in 2021
AstraZeneca	40,800	COVAX Facility	Remainder doses, early July, 2021
AstraZeneca	120,000	Astra Zeneca Europe	Mid July, 2021
Sinopharm	150,000	Sinopharm	Early July, 2021
Sputnik Light	100,000	Gamaleya Institute	Early July, 2021
J & J	250,000	AVATT	Early August, 2021

The COVAX Facility is currently allocating vaccine doses under Round 4. We expect information on the number of doses allocated to Namibia. This will trigger the process of payment to receive the vaccine. Although Namibia has entered into a Committed Purchase Agreement (CPA) with the COVAX Facility and already provided Financial Guarantee and reserved funding for the doses, the global vaccine supply has been a challenge. Some countries in Africa are also experiencing low vaccines stock levels, and have temporarily halted COVID-19 vaccination campaigns/activities, pending delivery of doses.

CIRCULATION OF FAKE NEWS AND MISINFORMATION: The circulation of fake news, misinformation and all sorts of anti-vaccination messages in the form of audios, videos and print and social media is continuing. It is particularly harmful when such information is purported to come from Health Professionals or other leaders of public opinion. This is a threat to our country, which has contributed to the worsening of the COVID-19 situation in the country. The nation must unite to fight such misinformation, concerted action, in order to save lives.

In terms of the Public and Environmental Health Act, 2015 and the Public Health Regulations, spreading false information regarding a public health threat is a punishable offence. Those engaging in such acts must therefore, face the full penalty of the law. All Namibians have a duty to report, to relevant authorities, any person who produces and/or spreads false information about the pandemic. In addition to reporting such persons to the Namibian Police or the Ministry of Health, a WhatsApp number will be established for members of the public to report incidents of false information and fake news.

Those who are campaigning against vaccination want the nation to believe that the current increase in the number of new infections, hospitalizations and deaths is caused by or is a result of vaccination. This is simply not true. Rather, the disease has spread because members of the public have failed to comply with public health measures put in place to suppress the spread of the pandemic. Additionally, there is emerging evidence that the rise in cases is due to newer and more transmissible COVID-19 variants.

There is absolutely no indication that those who have been vaccinated are experiencing more illness or are dying more as compared to the non-vaccinated persons. According to available statistics, those vaccinated make up only **five (5) percent** of those hospitalised with severe illness and **zero (0) percent of deaths**. Those vaccinated with the 1st dose make up **one point two (1.2) percent** of deaths. In most instances, the person became infected before the vaccine had time to produce the required immune protection in the individual. Importantly, it must be noted that more than **ninety-eight (98%) percent of all COVID or COVID-related deaths** in Namibia are among people who have **NOT HAD ANY** doses of COVID-19 vaccines.

It has been proven around the world that COVID-19 vaccines offer protection against severe illness and death. However, a person who has been vaccinated can still contract infection if he or she does not practice the health protocols and is exposed to the COVID-19 virus in one way or another. As matter of physiology and although vaccines offer protection, a vaccinated person may die, especially where such person's health condition is compromised and weakened by pre-existing conditions or comorbidities, such as high blood pressure, diabetes, autoimmune or immune degenerative diseases, respiratory ailments, and others. It is however true that these persons with such existing conditions and comorbidities benefit from the protection offered by COVID-19 vaccines. This will significantly reduce the likelihood of progression to severe illness, hospitalization and death.

WAY FORWARD: Getting vaccinated is the most effective way to protect our country against the onslaught of this dangerous pandemic. Thus, all eligible Namibians are urged to get vaccinated as soon as possible. As per WHO guidance, even the first dose, provides important protection against COVID-19. The available doses will be used to vaccinate those receiving the first dose as well as identified and invited persons considered to be at highest risk of the severe disease, hospitalization and death. Namibians must stand together to fight and defeat the infodemic of false information and conspiracy theories. I urge all Namibians to form a united front in order to continue combating this pandemic. Assuring the continuity and uninterrupted vaccine in order to reach herd immunity is an ongoing pursuit. It requires a combined effort from all stakeholders, using each and every tool in our arsenal.



Ben Nangombe
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