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THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA

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## **PRESS STATEMENT ON 14/6/2020**

### **RISING COMPLACENCY REGARDING THE EXISTING GUIDELINES**

Fellow Ugandans, government of Uganda has noted with concern the extremely dangerous signs of complacency and indiscipline that have started to emerge with regard to the existing guidelines on COVID-19.

When the country first went into lockdown on March 18, the country did so well and managed to put in place measures that prevented a major outbreak of COVID-19.

It was on the basis of this good performance from everyone and the general public that the country started to open up. Moderate public and private transport was reintroduced, general merchandise shops and malls were also allowed to reopen.

However, just after opening, the country has started to record an increase in community infections. The Ministry of Health tells us that clusters of community infections have started to emerge and these are now a bigger threat than even the truckers.

The country is experiencing a steady rise in the number of locally transmitted cases in now 33 districts with Amuru and Kyotera districts are reporting the highest number of local transmission cases in comparison to other districts.

The biggest concern for government at the moment is that community infections have started to rise and yet majority of the people no longer want to put into practice the existing guidelines on prevention of COVID-19.

Some of the dangerous practices that we are observing are as follows:

- Majority of People coming into towns and other public places do not want to put on their masks
- Trading in some of the key markets and zones such as Kikuubo, Kalerwe, Kasubi and also in other towns is happening without an form of social distancing.
- The practice of washing hands with soap for all market goers has long been abandoned.
- Boda Bodas that were limited to making deliveries only are not ferrying passengers.
- Recently we saw a number of taxis that were impounded in Mukula for ferrying passengers out of the district yet this is illegal in all the 40 boarder districts.

- We have noted with concern that a number of young people, teenagers, students who had not seen their friends since the lockdown have not started to converge in key public places, they are hugging, consuming alcohol and socializing with total disregard to the existing advisories.
- Some of the Taxis are loading passengers without any form of sanitizing or washing of hands with soap.
- We are also noticing people organising big weddings and attending burials that are against the guidance on mass gatherings.

These and more forms of dangerous practices are putting the country at a serious risk of more infections.

The Ministry of Health is also telling us that unless something is done quickly, the country is soon moving to the final and most dangerous stage of widespread community transmission.

Government of Uganda is going to continue doing its part in ensuring that that lives are saved from this pandemic.

- Distribution of Masks started on Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> June 2020 and a total of 750,000 masks were delivered to four districts of Adjumani, Amuru, Kyotera and Rakai.
- However we must remind everyone that Masks are not a decoration. Do not just take them and hang them around your neck instead. When you are in public, make sure the mask is properly covering your mouth, nose and chin properly.
- I want to call upon the market leaders in Kikubo, Kasubi and all other markets in the country, please put your places in order and ensure social distancing.
- For the people using public transport, please demand for a sanitiser or washing of hands with soap before getting into and getting out of the Taxi or bus.
- There have been some complaints in some areas that some Radio stations do not want to allow RDCs to speak to the people. I want to remind all stations that they are mandated to provide at least one hour per week for government programs.
- I want to also warn people in the villages who think that COVID-19 is only in the urban areas. This is wrong thinking, this virus could be anywhere and let us all be very careful.
- Let us continue practicing all other guidelines such as washing hands with soap all the time and maintaining social distance.

I want to warn members of the public that unless we change and fully adopt the existing guidance on prevention of COVID-19, government may consider re imposing strict lock down measures in order to prevent the country from slipping into a bigger outbreak.

For God and my Country

**Judith Nabakooba**

**Minister ICT & National Guidance**