



Council for Non Governmental **Organizations in Malawi**
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Press Release

COVID-19 NATIONAL PREPAREDNESS & RESPONSE

PREAMBLE

The Council for NGOs in Malawi (CONGOMA);

- as an umbrella body of all NGOs in Malawi with the mandate to represent the collective interests and concerns of NGOs;
- is greatly concerned with the global trends on the spread and impact of the corona virus disease 2019 (Covid-19)
- has noted with profound anxiety the state of national preparedness/ national response and would like to provide its input as below:

I. OUR COMMENDATION

CONGOMA commends;

- a) **The Government of Malawi** through the State President who declared a State of Disaster in the wake of alarmingly fast and global spreading of Covid-19 which has come to all Malawi's neighbouring countries. With shortfalls in our health delivery system and infrastructure, and an import dependent economy, Covid-19 coming to Malawi indeed becomes a highly predictable disaster.
- b) **The Ministry of Health** for taking lead in coming up with national response plan that CONGOMA has seen. It is CONGOMA's considered view that the plans look solid vis a vis our level of development and that is good enough to provide a national response as it addresses issues of Covid-19 scenarios to Malawi; coordination; resource mobilization (with itemised supplies and budget estimates); training; acquisition of equipment; national awareness raising; surveillance and testing; and monitoring and devaluation among others.
- c) **The Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development and District Councils** of Rumphi, Kasungu, Mchinji, Mangochi, Zomba, Phalombe, Chikwawa and Nsanje for allowing and

incorporating NGOs and Civil Society District Networks in their Covid-19 response plans. This inclusivity should be strengthened and commended.

- d) **The people of Malawi and their social support institutions including NGOs, churches; schools and colleges; private companies** and many more for a positive response and taking heed of the precautionary measures announced by Government. This solidarity is what is required to fight back Covid-19, and is highly commended.
- e) **The security forces** for quickly coming in to enforce precautionary measures put in place by Government banning public or social gatherings of more than 100 people for now. In addition, the **Immigration Department** should be commended for swiftly coming in to assess in-coming visitors and take corrective measures.

II. OUR CONCERNS

CONGOMA is very concerned that;

- a) Only 15% (MK2.5 billion) of the MK 15.3 billion budget for the national response against Covid-19 has been allocated by Treasury. This puts the whole plan into disarray and is another disaster for the country, if we do not get support from our development partners and other well wishers.
- b) There is a great deal of the population (rural, elderly, persons with disability, children among others) that does not have access to formal information about Covid_19 and rely on fake news unknowingly. This is a great danger to the country.
- c) Testing facilities, supplies, equipment and human resource are still in very critical shortage, which is a danger to diagnosis/ assessment, treatment and knowledge.
- d) There are still some faith groups and well knowledgeable people who willingly tend to ignore Covid-19 and take the issue of observing precautions including washing hands with soap and observing social distance, lightly. Such faith groups and such people are a danger to society and should be condemned in strongest terms possible. **Those that have travelled from hotspot countries and are not observing self isolation/quarantine for 14 days need to be penalised.**

III. OUR APPEAL

CONGOMA:

- a) Strongly calls upon development partners to come in quickly and support the Government national response budget so that planned tasks are done on time which is not the case as of now.
- b) Strongly call upon Ministry of Health to scale up and proliferate testing centres so that Malawians can easily test for Covid-19 early enough and take corrective measures but also settle their fears.

- c) Strongly appeal to Government to consider setting up a **Covid-19 Command Center** with 'sovereign authority' and powers to take swift and on-the-spot decisions and actions in the fight against Covid-19.
- d) Appeal to Government to consider setting up a volunteer scheme for mobilizing human resource that can be trained for specific tasks from all corners of Malawi to fight back Covid_19 at community level.
- e) Strongly calls upon the public broadcaster (MBC) and all media institutions to prioritise and concentrate messaging on Covid-19 to the general public at no cost.
- f) Appeals to Government to draft in more NGOs into the national coordination and surveillance response for purposes of inclusivity, mutual accountability for results and the funds, and monitoring and evaluation.
- g) Calls upon Malawians, churches and NGOs to remain vigilant, cautious and only rely on official information about Covid-19 from the **Ministry of Health** and report suspicious cases of Covid-19 to health authorities through the following **Toll-free line 54747**.
- h) Specially appeals to the faith community to protect their congregants by strictly observing all prescribed health precautions but still allowing their faithful to access the spiritual needs and partake in sacraments.
- i) **Strongly calls upon all citizens to take to task and report to Police or to health authorities all individuals that are ignoring self isolation or quarantine rules after they travelled to high risk countries. In addition, citizens should not allow use of uncharted routes by travellers to enter Malawi borders as this can bring Covid-19 to Malawi.**
- j) Calls upon NGOs and well wishers that would like to donate to the Covid-19 cause to contact CONGOMA for details and modalities.

IV. CONCLUSION

CONGOMA would like to appeal to all Malawians that they should remain calm but vigilant against Covid-19, taking all precautions given by authorities seriously including observing social distance and regular washing of hands with soap, reporting any suspected cases of Covid-19 to authorities and not taking the law in their hands. CONGOMA is of the view that with strong national solidarity, leadership and right facilities, we can defeat Covid-19.

Signed



Steven Duwa
CHAIRPERSON

26 March 2020