Republic of South Africa COVID-19 experience and multi-sectoral priorities for future pandemic preparedness

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Outline

• Country context and COVID-19 experience
• Key COVID-19 response best practices and challenges focusing on multi-sectoral actions
• Country priorities for multi-sectoral pandemic preparedness and resilience
Country context

- **Second largest economy** in Africa

- **Economic recovery** from the COVID-19 pandemic has been slow and estimated at **1.9%** in **2022**

- **Dual economy** with high inequality rates, **56 % (30.6 million)** South Africans live below the **upper bound poverty line**


- Health system challenged by **multiple burdens**:
  - HIV/AIDS, TB, and STIs
  - Outbreaks (including recent measles and cholera events)
  - Maternal, neonatal and child morbidity and mortality;
  - Non-communicable diseases related to lifestyle; and
  - Violence, injuries, and trauma
South Africa COVID-19 trends

- **>4 million** confirmed cases cumulative

- **COVID-19 transmission is ongoing**, but all indicators **are stable**

- **Transitioning** the COVID-19 response into routine platforms and continued **vigilance** are paramount

- Planning to update **pandemic preparedness plan**
## Highlights from COVID-19 multi-sectoral response best practices & challenges

### Coordination, governance, & leadership

**Good practices**
- Swift resource mobilisation for rapid response (National Treasury, private sector, partners, donors etc )
- Functional IMTs at national/provincial level and Ministerial Advisory Committee (MAC) policy decisions
- Whole-of-government response NCCC and NATJOINTS
- COVID-19 grant: human resource surge for pandemic response
- Risk based revision of Point of Entry (PoE) measures
- Centralized personal protective equipment (PPE) reporting system

**Challenges**
- Lack of a Public Health Emergency Operations Centre (PHEOC) meant unclear command and control
- Linkages between NCCC, NATJOINTS and IMTs not always clear
- Delays experienced in hiring surge workforce
- Challenges in managing risks posed by cross-border truck drivers
- Delays in PPE supply due to global shortages

### Community protection

**Good practices**
- RCCE TWG established in March 2020 and an RCCE plan developed
- Launch of several media campaigns
- Several campaigns by RCCE to scale up COVID-19 health education, promotion non-pharmaceutical interventions, vaccine uptake
- District level mobilization through NGOs and area-based teams established, and social listening platforms set up to identify rumors, misinformation etc.

**Challenges**
- Lack of RCCE sub-national committees delayed roll out
- Sub-optimal engagement of special interest groups noted
- Insufficient engagement for vaccine demand creation

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NCCC - National Coronavirus Command Council
NATJOINTS - National Joint Operational and Intelligence Structure
RCCE – Risk Communication and community engagement
Country priorities for multi-sectoral pandemic preparedness and resilience

Examples of actions planned
## Coordination, governance, and leadership

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<tr>
<th>ACTIVITY</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Timeline</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Institute the operationalisation of <strong>PHEOC at National and Provincial levels</strong> including strong command and control structures</td>
<td>NDoH – (EMS Directorate/CDC) Provinces NICD</td>
<td>Short term</td>
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<td>Review and <strong>revise inter/intra-governmental fora to communicate, plan, coordinate and govern</strong> across all spheres of government and all national government departments aligned to the One Health Strategy, integrated disease surveillance systems and PHEOC</td>
<td>NDOH - DG</td>
<td>Short term</td>
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| Ensure **sufficient resources available** for:  
  • setting up public health emergency operating structures & systems  
  • for public health emergencies during unforeseen outbreaks/disasters that can be rapidly released from National Treasury & other funding sources | NDOH – DG CFO | Short term |
| Establish a **NAPHISA [National Public Health Institute of South Africa]** | NDOH – DG | Short term |
**Recommendation**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Person responsible</th>
<th>Time line</th>
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<td><strong>A national policy framework and plan for pandemic response</strong> which integrates all sectors, institutions, structures (health and non-health) and clarifies roles and responsibilities</td>
<td>National Department of Health</td>
<td>Short term</td>
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<td><strong>A functional agile, Integrated Disease Surveillance and Response (IDSR) System</strong> including a health information system, with a unique identifier linking to other relevant systems (e.g. Home affairs for mortality data)</td>
<td>National and Provincial Department of Health National Institute for Communicable Diseases</td>
<td>Short term</td>
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<td>Invest in <strong>research</strong> and <strong>innovations</strong> for local production of vaccines, testing reagents, and consumables</td>
<td>National Laboratory Health Services NDoH</td>
<td>Short term</td>
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### Recommendation

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<td>Review the Human Resource for Health strategy, to include personnel categories for routine, essential and surge for emergencies</td>
<td>NDoH-HR</td>
<td>Immediate</td>
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<td>Develop strategy for demand forecasting, quantification, quality assurance and special guidelines to expedite procurement during routine and emergencies</td>
<td>NDoH-Affordable medicine</td>
<td>Medium</td>
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<td>Collaboration with Department of Labor &amp; Employment and DPS to ensure that OHS be functional (policies, certification, infrastructure and behavior)</td>
<td>NDoH-HR</td>
<td>Medium</td>
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*OHS – Occupational health and safety
DPSA – Department of Public Service and Administration*
Conclusion

- South Africa experienced one of the most devastating COVID-19 outbreaks on the African continent

- The COVID-19 transmission has stabilized since July 2022 and transition planning is currently underway

- South Africa is in the process of updating the Pandemic Preparedness and Response Plan taking into consideration capacities built, lessons learnt, addressing the emerging challenges and gaps from the COVID-19 response
END.