

Common Market for
Eastern and Southern Africa



Easing of Measures and the Challenge of Containing the Pandemic

COVID-19

in **COMESA**

Situational Update N°22

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Easing of Measures and the Challenge of Containing the Pandemic

In June and July 2020, some Member States in the COMESA region have gradually and systematically started easing COVID-19 preventive measures that had been put in place to contain the spread of the pandemic. This is a tough balancing act between keeping citizens safe and trying to ensure that livelihoods are safeguarded by opening up businesses. Even as they relax the measures, they are also strengthening surveillance such as testing, tracing and isolation of cases.

In Egypt, Kenya and Rwanda, for instance, the Government have increased testing centres at sub-regional levels. Egypt has established testing and medical sites in various Governorates for testing and managing COVID-19 cases. For Rwanda, apart from the main testing centre at Kigali National Reference Laboratory, the Government has set up satellite testing labs in districts such as Kirehe, Rubavu, Rwamagana, Nyagatare and Rusizi for purposes of ensuring mass testing. In Kenya, the Government has decentralized testing and treatment to the County levels as a strategy to strengthen surveillance and contain the spread of the pandemic.

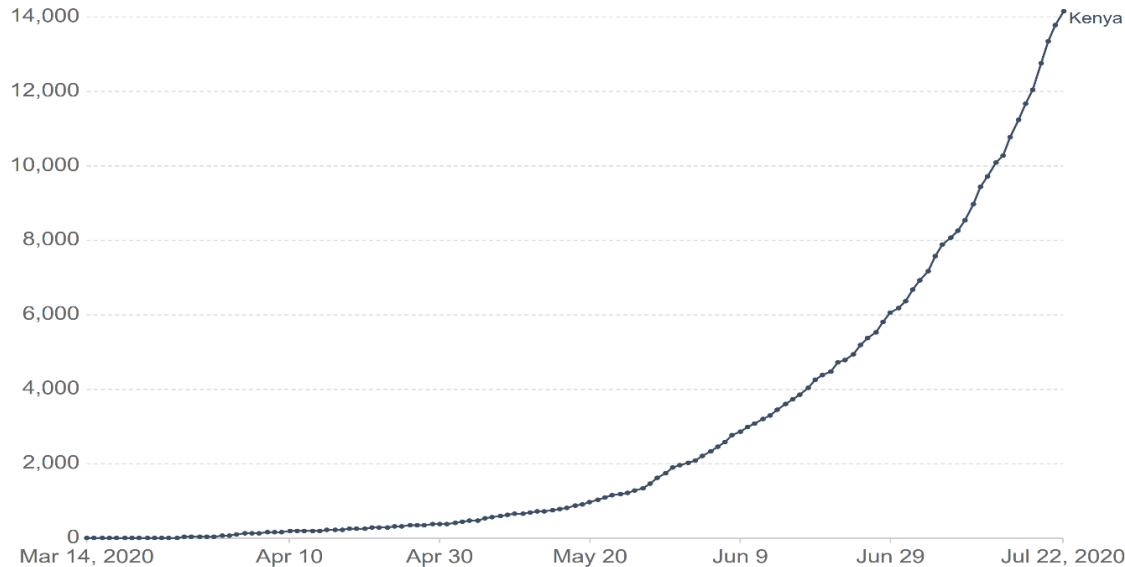
Rising Numbers

The gradual easing up of the measures is likely to contribute to the increase in the number of cases. In Kenya, for example, a significant rise in the number of new cases has been recorded since the partial lockdown was lifted on 6 July 2020. By 23rd July (about three weeks later) the cases had almost doubled to 14,168, a 79% increase. While this increase can be linked to the easing of measures, it can also be attributed to the increased numbers of testing.

Cumulative confirmed COVID-19 cases

The number of confirmed cases is lower than the number of actual cases; the main reason for that is limited testing.

Our World
in Data



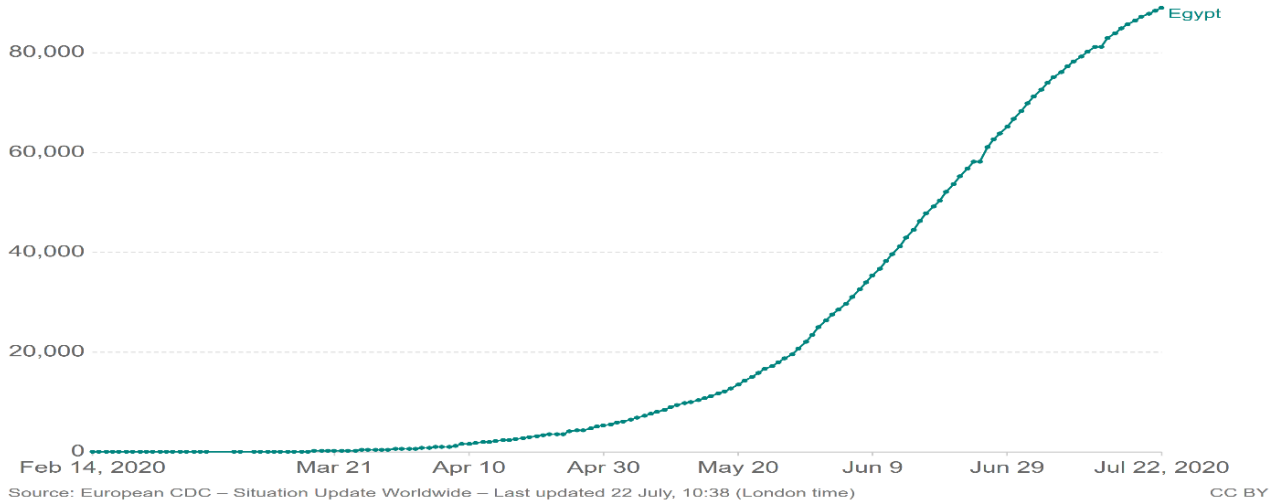
Source: European CDC – Situation Update Worldwide – Last updated 22 July, 10:38 (London time)

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Egypt was among the first countries to implement lockdown measures including closing of schools, religious institutions, restaurants and cafes, among others. The measures helped contain the increases in the numbers of new COVID-19 cases, However, since the easing of some of the measures at the end of June there has been an increase of approximately 40% new COVID-19 cases in about a month (27 June - 23 July 2020).

Cumulative confirmed COVID-19 cases

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The Potential Impact of Easing Up on Measures

While Member States have taken gradual steps to ease up the measures, the increases in new COVID-19 cases will continue to be recorded. This is likely to impact on the health system in several ways. Firstly, the increase in new cases is likely to overwhelm the health systems. The number of critical patients who need ICU care is likely to stretch the existing bed capacities. Secondly it has the potential to impact on the ability of Governments to provide medical services for other existing non-communicable and communicable diseases including Diabetes, TB, Cancer, HIV/AIDS, Measles, Malaria, Cholera, among others. While these diseases have a probability of being neglected, it is apparent that most of the COVID-19 deaths are related to pre-existing conditions above, particularly above 60 years. Thirdly, the continued increase of COVID-19 cases is likely to overstretch the health personnel given the increased focus on the pandemic.

Steps to Consider While Relaxing Measures

Given the increase in new COVID-19 cases, Member States can consider the following before easing measures:

1. Training of more medical staff in preparation for the upsurge of COVID-19 cases
2. Need for evidence that COVID-19 has been contained before lifting measures

3. Mapping of hotspot areas for targeted management of COVID-19 cases
4. Enhance health system capacity with both human and technological strategies such as utilizing telemedicine (provision of advice by telephone or online means to substitute in-person/ physical consultations)
5. Strengthen multi-sectoral approach in the containing the pandemic (e.g medical, education, security, social services, local administration, transport sectors, among others)
6. Enhance testing and surveillance for reliable contact tracing, isolation and treatment.

Summary of Regional Figures as of 23rd July 2020

Country	Total Cases	New Cases	Total Tests	Total Cases/ 1M pop	Tests/ 1M pop	Total Deaths	Deaths/ 1M pop	Total Recovered	Recovery Rate	Total Active Cases
Burundi	328	59	6,697	28	562	1	0.08	207	63.1%	120
Comoros	337	20		387		7	8	319	94.66%	11
Djibouti	5,030	53	55,048	5,087	55,672	58	59	4,904	97.50%	68
DR Congo	8,626	551		96		197	2	4,790	55.53%	3,639
Egypt	89,745	6,744	135,000	876	1,318	4,440	43	30,075	33.51%	55,230
Eritrea	251	19		71				155	61.75%	96
Eswatini	1,938	549	20,784	1,669	17,904	25	22	876	45.20%	1,037
Ethiopia	11,524	3,758	350,160	100	3,042	188	2	5,506	47.78%	5,830
Kenya	14,805	4,511	254,273	275	4,723	260	5	6,757	45.64%	7,788
Libya	2,176	664	44,202	316	6,428	53	8	489	22.47%	1,634
Madagascar	8,162	3,082	35,268	294	1,272	69	2	4,662	57.12%	3,431
Malawi	3,302	872	24,822	172	1,296	76	4	1,282	38.82%	1,944
Mauritius	343	1	205,285	270	161,401	10	8	332	96.79%	1
Rwanda	1,689	311	225,652	130	17,400	5	0.4	867	51.33%	817
Seychelles	108	8		1,098				27	25.00%	81
Somalia	3,161	89		199		93	6	1,495	47.30%	1,573
Sudan	11,237	921	401	256	9	708	16	5,835	51.93%	4,694
Tunisia	1,394	92	85,917	118	7,265	50	4	1,108	79.48%	236
Uganda	1,075	46	250,029	23	5,458			958	89.12%	117
Zambia	3,583	1,688	72,820	195	3,956	128	7	1,677	46.80%	1,778
Zimbabwe	2,034	1,000	107,788	137	7,246	26	2	510	25.07%	1,498
TOTALS	170,848	25,038	1,874,146			6,394		72,831		91,623

Source: World Health Organisation, Worldometer, Johns Hopkins University (compiled by COMWARN)



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