



REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA

STATEMENT BY

**HIS EXCELLENCY DR. MOKGWEETSI E.K. MASISI
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA**

ON

**GOVERNMENT'S UPDATE ON THE RESPONSE TO THE
COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

27 APRIL 2020

GABORONE

1. **Bagaetsho**, it has been twenty four (24) days since we went into a national lockdown as a strategic measure to minimise and contain the risk of the spread and transmission of COVID-19 in Botswana. Since then, the majority of our citizens have complied with the health protocols of extreme social distancing and they have also restricted their movements by staying in their homes, which will contribute significantly to the containment of this pandemic.
2. At the commencement of the national lockdown, Botswana had imported cases of COVID-19 and no reports of locally transmitted cases. The most significant development driving the increase of new diagnosis of COVID-19 has been the occurrence of locally transmitted COVID-19 cases.
3. As you may be aware, as at 25th April, 2020 we had received six thousand, two hundred and ten (6210) samples for testing, out of which six thousand, one hundred and eighty eight (6188) were negative and twenty two (22) were positive with one fatality and it is my prayer and hope that this figure does not change. The six thousand, two hundred and ten (6210) samples include two thousand, seven hundred and two

(2702) suspected cases and contacts. So far, a total of three thousand, five hundred and eight (3508) people have been placed under quarantine and some in self-isolation. I am happy to report that the twenty one (21) cases that have tested positive are all asymptomatic and on the way to full recovery. Therefore, it is my ardent hope that in the fullness of time they will join their families.

4. As Government, our strategic focus as advised by the COVID-19 Presidential Task Force is the containment of the spread and transmission of the pandemic in the country. Therefore, the discovery of locally transmitted cases has prompted us to ramp up our testing through contact tracing. A new cluster of COVID-19 outbreak is being actively investigated in Metsimotlhabe where a total of seven (7) Batswana have tested positive for COVID-19.
5. These seven (7) cases from the Metsimotlhabe outbreak were exposed to COVID-19 prior to the national lockdown and several Batswana who were not aware of their exposure, travelled to their home villages across the country. Active contact tracing and assessment for possible COVID-19 infection for all persons known to have been exposed in

Metsimothabe is ongoing across the country with support from several local and international partners.

6. This outbreak has resulted in several public and private areas around Metsimothabe being treated as potentially infectious. To this end, appropriate disinfection of these places has commenced under the guidance of health officials.
7. **Bagaetsho**, it is now evident that COVID-19 has taken hold in our communities and in this regard more effort and time needs to be directed to breaking the local transmission of the virus.

HOW DO WE BREAK THE LOCAL TRANSMISSION

8. As it was previously reported, on 22nd April 2020, two (2) new cases of confirmed local COVID-19 transmission were diagnosed from Metsimothabe. The known contacts of these two (2) cases have been placed in mandatory quarantine and are awaiting further testing. In the unlikely scenario where there are unknown contacts from these two cases, such contacts pose a risk of spreading COVID-19 for at least fourteen (14) days starting from 22nd April to 6th May, 2020.

It therefore follows that, any person exposed within the aforementioned fourteen (14) days should have completed their self-isolation between 7th May and 21st May 2020.

9. Our field teams have also been deployed to Ramotswa, Molepolole and Siviya to augment our District Health Management Teams (DHMTs) to conduct active case finding because these places have had confirmed COVID-19 cases. In Mahalapye and Bobonong, there are persons who form part of the Metsimotlhabe COVID-19 outbreak, hence their inclusion in the contact tracing.

10. It is on the basis of these findings that the COVID-19 Presidential Task Force advised that the national lockdown period as is be extended by one week starting from 1st May to 7th May 2020 and a further two weeks during which the lockdown would be sequentially eased. The Government has accordingly accepted this recommendation.

11. **Bagaetsho,** it is important to inform you that the extended national lockdown also involves an exit plan which is based on the success we anticipate. The extension of the

current twenty eight (28) day lockdown will be implemented in the following phases:

- **Phase 1:** We will extend the current lockdown period conditions by one week, that is, from May 1st to May 7th, 2020. During this period, we will also develop and finalize regulations for a phased lifting of lockdown rules in low risk sectors.
- **Phase 2:** Starting from May 8th to May 14th, we will lift in a phased manner, some lockdown rules while at the same time introducing additional plans for further lifting of the remaining lockdown rules.
- **Phase 3:** From May 15th to May 22nd, which will be the final week of the lockdown extension, we will be lifting the remaining rules from the original lockdown rules implemented on March 30th, 2020.

12. Once again, let me remind you **fellow citizens** that this plan is based on the success we anticipate to achieve as a country. This success is dependent on the cooperation and

adherence to the current lockdown rules by citizens and residents of this country. In addition, it is important to note that the plan to relax the lockdown rules will be guided by the COVID-19 disease activity in our communities. That is, a faster relaxation of rules will occur if the threat of COVID-19 becomes very low. However, in the event that the threat of COVID-19 outbreak and transmission, exceeds the current level at any point, a return to the original twenty eight (28) day national lockdown rules or stricter rules will be put in place.

13. **My fellow citizens** and other compatriots the economic relief package that I announced at the beginning of the national lockdown is being implemented by relevant Government Ministries and they will continue giving you updates on their progress. Furthermore, I would like to reassure you that Government will continue to give you support to mitigate the negative impact of this pandemic through food supplies to vulnerable families.

14. To this end, three hundred thousand, one hundred and fifty six (300156) households have been assessed so far and out of these, two hundred and forty four thousand and eighty

(244080) have been recommended for assistance. To date, forty seven thousand, three hundred and ninety three (47393) households have been assisted with food packages which include agricultural products in season. So far one hundred and fifty million, eight hundred and seventy thousand and eighty three Pula (P150, 870, 083.00) has been earmarked for this exercise.

15. Government will scale up the distribution process of food packages and this assistance will continue until the situation regarding the containment of COVID-19 is fully under control.

16. **Bagaetsho**, let me once more thank our development partners, various organizations, the local business community and individuals for their unwavering support to Government's relentless efforts in fighting this pandemic through their financial contributions and donations in kind. Most importantly, I want to thank from the deepest part of my heart, the ordinary Batswana and residents who have dug deep into their pockets to contribute the little they have towards the COVID-19 Relief Fund. This kind gesture which is a manifestation of one of our founding national principles of

SELF RELIANCE, go ipelega, will go a long way in ensuring that Government and citizens work hand in hand to defeat this invisible enemy.

17. On behalf of the nation and indeed on my own behalf, I would like to express our profound gratitude to our doctors, men and women in uniform together with their support staff who are in the frontlines of fighting this pandemic. They have exhibited unparalleled patriotism and commitment to duty. Similarly, I would like to thank the citizens and residents of this country for their compliance with the health protocols and the lockdown regulations.

18. Remember to maintain social distancing, cough into your inner elbow, continue washing your hands with clean water and soap or use sanitizers. We are known to be a resilient nation. Together we will win this war.

19. In conclusion, let me urge you all to dedicate some moment of your time to ask God Almighty for guidance, wisdom and protection during this difficult period. With prayer, all things are possible.

I thank you.

PULA!!!