1. HIGHLIGHTS

- Twelve (15) new cases of COVID-19 were reported in the reporting week bringing the cumulative total to 49 cases in South Sudan.
- Zero recoveries have been recorded to date.
- Zero deaths have been recorded to date.
- Three counties have reported cases: Juba (46), Torit (1), Magwi (2). There have been 3 imported cases.
- Three hundred and twelve (312) cumulative contacts have been registered.
- One hundred and one (101) contacts have completed the 14-day quarantine.
- One thousand, five hundred and eighty nine (1,589) samples were tested to date.
- One hundred twenty one (121) cumulative total alerts received, all were verified and samples were collected. Most alerts have come from Central Equatoria (71%) and Eastern Equatoria State (9%).

2. BACKGROUND

South Sudan confirmed its first COVID-19 case on 5 April 2020 and to date 49 cases have been confirmed by the National Public Health Laboratory. Confirmed cases are both imported (n=3) and locally transmitted (n=46). South Sudan is classified as having sporadic transmission. The most recent case was confirmed on 3 May 2020.

3. STATE HUB COVID-19 UPDATES (Activities conducted across the pillars)

All states and administrative areas have established COVID-19 Task forces to coordinate the response efforts. Most of health facilities have also established facility level case management task forces. States have preparing isolation centres.

4. EPIDEMIOLOGY SURVEILLANCE

Descriptive epidemiology

Most COVID-19 cases in South Sudan are citizens (80%, n=39), while some are foreigners (20%; n=10). The three imported cases are from Kenya (n=2) and Uganda (n=1). Patients range from age 6-70 years with an average age of 33.5 years.

The majority of confirmed cases are males (84%; n=41), while females accounts for (16%; n=8). Most confirmed cases were asymptomatic at the time of detection by active surveillance or through contact tracing, though some have subsequently exhibited symptoms; thus far, 28% (n=13) of confirmed cases have shown symptoms.

New and cumulative confirmed COVID-19 cases according to notification date are shown in figure 1, distribution by age and gender in figure 2.
Contact tracing summary (for events where contact tracing is necessary)

- A cumulative total of 312 individuals have been monitored as contacts of a case.
- 101 contacts (32%) have completed the 14-day quarantine period.
- Currently 211 known contacts are being monitored daily for signs and symptoms of COVID-19.
- To date, 36 contacts have converted into a case, 2 from the first case, 28 from the fifth case, and 6 from the sixth case. Cases 5 and 6 are within large household clusters of cases.

5. LABORATORY INVESTIGATION

- Cumulative number of cases tested as of 3 May 2020 is 1,589.
- Cumulative number of positive cases confirmed is 49.
- Sentinel surveillance data available from SARI/ILI sentinel sites in Juba County only.

6. PUBLIC HEALTH ACTION

6.1 COORDINATION

- Due to increasing number of COVID-19 cases in South Sudan, and observing community infections, the High Level Task Force (HLTF) on Wednesday 29 April revised the end of curfew time from 0700 hrs to 0600 hrs until further notice. Other measures were also imposed including closure of tea/shisha stalls. Guidelines were given for public transport (boda-boda, taxi, buses) to enhance social distancing. Restaurants remained closed except for delivery services.
- The 14-day quarantine directive remains in force for local contacts and persons returning to South Sudan. In addition, persons returning to the country must produce evidence of 14-days quarantine and a certification of being COVID-19 free following testing.
- To facilitate timely movements and access for humanitarian aid workers travelling on official duties to the States, the HLTF stood
down the requirement for COVID-19 testing prior to travel, but emphasized observance of 14-days quarantine.

● In Yei, as per HLTF directive to all 10 States, the Counties of Morobo, Kajo-Keji and Lainya have established COVID-19 County Task Forces (CTF), enhancing coordination at county level. In addition, a burial site for COVID-19 cases was donated by local Chiefs in a meeting held with the State Administrator and the MOH Director General (DG) on 28 April.

● The Western Equatoria State (WES) High-Level State Task Force established on 2 April continue to meet regularly to discuss COVID-19 operational issues, including ongoing preparation of VIP Hotel as a treatment facility for Covid-19 cases.

6.2 SURVEILLANCE

The following activities were implemented by the TWG and partners:

● Modified structure of contact tracing team for more efficient follow-up (1 team lead, 3 supervisors, 9 contact tracers [with 10 additional in May]).

● In Nimule, cargo truck drivers’ screening continues into 3rd week, with 150 swabs of drivers and passengers per day. So far, two cases tested positive and are being followed up. Following the Nimule pilot, coordination of assessment in Renk and Abyei by IOM, State and local officials is ongoing for implementation of cargo truck drivers testing at border locations.

● Sentinel site surveillance is ongoing in 45 health facilities in Juba, with plans to expand to 65 HF during May 2020.

● Surveillance TWG completed surveillance-contact tracing-testing 4W matrix, and analysis ongoing.

● In Morobo, orientation of 15 Community Based Surveillance (CBS) team was conducted on COVID-19 spread, signs and symptoms, preventive measures and reporting on persons meeting case definition through the hotline 6666 or nearest health facility. Concern Worldwide provided training to 8 PHCC health workers in Yei on COVID-19 (transmission, signs, symptoms, prevention, use of PPE in relation to COVID), and COVID screening/triage.

6.3 LABORATORY

● The HLTF has directed procurement of three PCR machines by MOH to enhance testing capacity in the Public Health Laboratory. In addition, the veterinary PCR machine under the Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries is being repaired to boost testing capacity.

● There are plans to deploy a mobile laboratory to Nimule to conduct testing and to relieve the workload in Juba, noting the high volume of border crossings especially of truck drivers and their passengers.

● Modification of testing strategy due to change in laboratory capacity – current priority profile remains, and will add community-based testing sites in May 2020.

6.4CASE MANAGEMENT (CM)

● Although no COVID-19 patient has been discharged so far, all patients are reported recovering.

● On 29 April, the HLTF approved the use of cloth face-masks and advised use in all public places. Local production of cloth masks will ensure availability and affordability for the community, noting they can be washed and reused. The Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) developed by the TWG was approved. The Case Management clinical guideline was approved by MOH.

● In Yei, MSF have volunteered to support the isolation facility established during EVD preparedness, with logistical support from WHO. Due to funding challenges, NGO AAHI which previously managed the facility discontinued its operation in March 2020.

● Case Management facility mapping across the States was initiated, to inform the emerging Case Management strategy.

● 30 TOT on case management were completed, organized by MOH in collaboration with SSDU and facilitated by IMC in Juba.

6.5 INFECTION PREVENTION CONTROL (IPC)

● IOM completed the training of 40 hospital staff of Yei district hospital on IPC/WASH and Case Management enhancing knowledge
for COVID-19 preparedness and response.

- In defunct Yei River State, to enhance hygiene promotion, Concern Worldwide provided handwashing stations and hygiene kits to 7 health facilities in defunct Yei River State (Kinyiba PHC, Kajo-Keji Civil Hospital, Jale PHCU, Kiri PHCU, Leikor PHCU, Lire PHCU & Jalimo PHCC) and Mitika Market. SSDO distributed IPC/WASH materials to the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Mukaya Payam in Lainya County, benefiting 333 households (1,732 individuals).

6.6 POINTS OF ENTRY (POE)

- COVID-19 screening is ongoing at 5 PoEs (Juba International Airport (JIA), Wau Airport, Nimule Ground crossing, Yambio & Gangura)
- The TWG is collaborating with the Epi-Surveillance and Laboratory TWGs on piloting of testing for truck drivers in Nimule (to expand later in Renk and Abyei) and will provide technical input into the strategy.
- PoE assessment to Renk is planned for 6-13 May the assessment.
- IPC activities continue at the 10 Points of Entry (PoE), in addition to IOM WASH programming in Juba, Magwi, Twic and Wau.
- POE TWG will collaborate with the Epi-Surveillance TWG on mapping to identify high risk neighborhoods within the five zones in Juba to facilitate swabs and test samples as part of the efforts to accelerate testing and manage spread of COVID-19. This will be done as part of an ongoing project with WFP, FAO, UNICEF and IOM on defining Enumeration Areas for Juba drawn within existing Boma boundaries from high-definition satellite imagery, taking into account the number of buildings, road network, waterways.

Populations of Humanitarian Concern (Internally Displaced Populations (IDPs))

- In support to efforts to decongest the PoC sites, Camp Management team in coordination with the Protection partners in Wau PoCAA has commenced tracking households registered for voluntary return, to facilitate return and provide protection packages.
- Handwashing stations are maintained at the PoC site entry and exit points, Humanitarian Hubs, logistics bases, and community centers in the PoC sites in Bentiu and Malakal.

6.7 RISK COMMUNICATION, COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & SOCIAL MOBILIZATION- (RCCE&SM)

- RCCE activities are ongoing in all States – through interpersonal awareness and megaphone announcements a total of 403,877 individuals reached with COVID-19 key messages during the reporting period. Monitoring community perceptions and rumors continues to inform programming.
- Continued mass media messaging through 42 radio stations is ongoing with an average of 6 radio jingles aired daily in 5 languages on each radio station, and radio talk shows hosting subject experts and influential stakeholders.
- Expanded orientation on COVID-19 messages and RCCE strategies accomplished during the reporting period: 514 community mobilisers, 1,591 community influencers including religious leaders, and 41 individuals drawn different partner organizations.
- Rumors and infodemic tracking using the online tool and community feedback mechanisms is being strengthened with support from CCEWG, IOM, UNICEF and other partners. 14 rumors were collected through the online tracking tool. In addition, the Communication and Community Engagement Working Group (CCEWG) is producing a weekly bulletin with qualitative data analyzing perceptions and rumors on COVID-19, and feedback collected from communities and social media on key themes such as source/transmission, symptoms, prevention and response.
- Cumulatively, 440,547 assorted IEC materials in five languages and equipment have been distributed countrywide. These include Posters – (English 22,002, Arabic 10,972, Nuer 11,800, Dinka 8,682, Zande 5,140); Banners – (English 4,425, Arabic 2,756, Nuer 1,410, Dinka 1,231, Zande 590), Fliers (English – 242,010, Nuer – 39,200, Dinka – 33,200, Arabic – 19,600, Zande – 18,000), Megaphones – 2,146 and Batteries 17,383. Other partners continue to reprint IEC materials to meet their needs.

- In Yei, on 27 April, the DG/MOH and partners commenced engagement of the community – example, business men/women,
religious leaders and traditional leaders- on COVID 19 preparedness and response, including social distancing especially in market places. The exercise will expand to the counties of Morobo, Kajo-Keji and Lainya supported by UNICEF.

6.8 LOGISTIC AND OPERATIONAL SUPPORT

- 3,700 viral transport media (VTMs) and 3,700 swabs from the Jack Ma’s donation were released by MoH. 2,400 were delivered by WHO to Nimule by road, while 1,300 VTMs with swab were assigned to the 10 States and 3 Administrative Areas (100 in each location). The transportation of the supplies by air is facilitated by the WFP-led Logistics Cluster.
- VTMs with swab and VHF 500 kits (procured by WFP on behalf of WHO) were dispatched to the State hubs in Aweil, Bentiu, Bor, Juba, Kuajok, Malakal, Torit, Wau and Yambio. VTM with swab, as well as PPE (also released by MoH from the Jack Ma’s donation stocks) was transported by air for the Abyei and Ruweng Administrative Areas (to Kuajok and Bentiu).
- The installation of the mobile unit provided by Logistics Cluster to expand the John Garang Infectious Diseases Unit for COVID-19 patient treatment has been completed. The extension will allow to increase the existing capacity by 18 beds.
- An inventory dashboard depicting PPE stocks status across the country has been designed by WHO and its first version was circulated for review by the Logistics Pillar members.
- Under the leadership of the UN Secretary-General and WHO Director-General, the COVID-19 Supply Chain Task Force (the “Task Force”) has been established to improve the availability of essential supplies for COVID-19. The terms of reference of the Task Force have been shared and discussions around its implementation in South Sudan are ongoing.
- WHO provided IT equipment, office network equipment and consumables to the PHEOC. In addition, WHO initiated orders of laboratory commodities and drugs.

7. MAJOR CHALLENGES/GAPS

- With increasing number of cases in the community, the need to increase testing capacity is paramount in understanding outbreak trends. Resource availability is still a challenge for enhanced testing. In addition, guesthouse for the laboratory staff requires renovation to support shift work until late at night and increase the rate of testing.
- Delays in the release of laboratory test results for patient admitted to the IDU in Juba pose serious issues in management of patients.
- Lack of PPE in health facilities is reported in all States; furthermore, the triage guideline not yet implemented in many health facilities.
- Stigmatization continues to impact willingness of people to disclose symptoms or provide information of contacts. Also growing mistrust of the COVID-19 testing results, especially among asymptomatic positive individuals.
- Despite a directive on restriction of interstate movements, a population movement through all points of entry into Yei and Morobo Counties continues. A quarantine facility with 50-room capacity identified in Yei requires resources for renovations and water connections.

8. CONCLUSION

The HLTF and NSC continue to provide strategic and operational guidance for COVID-19 preparedness and response. While some gains are made in accelerating testing, additional resources are required to increase testing capacity.
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