



COVID-19 Report

Exchange Rwanda

Version 1.0

7th of May 2020

Introduction

Since the virus first emerged in Wuhan, China in December 2019, the Rwandan government has established a multidisciplinary team to assess and strengthen preparedness and response to the pandemic. A huge screen used to detect fever among incoming passengers was installed at Kigali International Airport. Passengers undergo mandatory checks and provide information about travel history. Similar screening started at all Rwanda's borders.

The first case of COVID-19 in Rwanda was confirmed on 14 March 2020. Four other people were tested after the first case tested positive, bringing the number of cases to five.

By 16 March 2020, Rwanda confirmed two more cases in Kigali, bringing the total number of cases in the country to seven. In an attempt to stop the spread of coronavirus, the Rwandan Ministry of Health announced on 18 March, via Twitter, that all international commercial passenger flights would be suspended for 30 days, with effect from 20 March. Less than a day later, on 21 March, officials announced a two-week lockdown. Both public and private employees were to work from home, under strict measures. All borders were also to be closed, cargo and Rwandan nationals being exempt, with a mandatory 14-day quarantine.

Health and safety measures also increased to help prevent the spread of the virus, including urging citizens to avoid shaking hands and close body contact such as hugging, covering one's mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing in public and refraining from unnecessary travel. The Ministry of Health also called on citizens to ensure regular washing of hands with soap, limit unnecessary movements and avoid large gatherings.

500 health care workers, including lab technicians from hospitals across the country, were trained on the coronavirus response. All hospitals were asked to set up isolation areas where patients suspected of having COVID-19 could be attended to away from other patients. Preventive measures were also put in place to protect health care workers in the line of duty.



Generally, handshakes and hugs are a common practice in Rwanda, meaning the idea of social distancing due to COVID-19 did not initially go well. But as the number of cases grew, Rwandan people have come to understand the seriousness of the matter. Rwandan President Paul Kagame popularized the elbow bump as a safe way of greeting when he met American philanthropist Howard Buffett at a public function in the country.

The Catholic Church, which constitutes up to 80% of the Rwandan population, has also discarded its "peace greeting" involving handshakes. It also discarded the practice of receiving bread on the tongue during the celebration of the eucharist.

Until now Rwanda has not yet deplored any COVID-19 deceases and lockdown measures have been relaxed as from 4th of May 2020 so business can restart its activity to restore the Rwandan economy.

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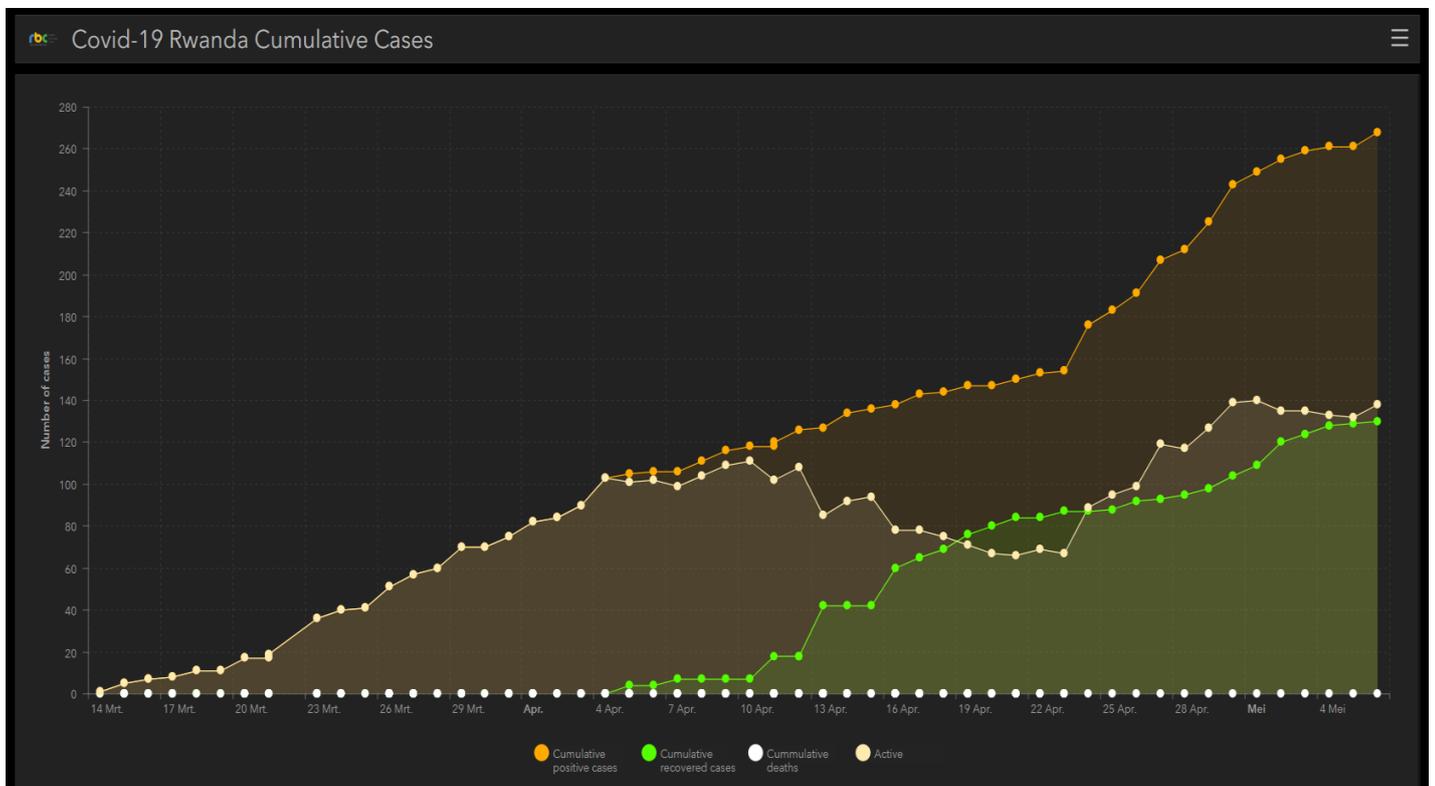
The information in this volume is destined to provide a description of the COVID-19 status and its impact on social and economic life in the 5 Sub-Saharan African countries with cooperation programmes of Exchange vzw. The ambition is to give insights, based on information gathered by Exchange's business development managers based in these countries. Exchange vzw. can not be held responsible for errors, omissions or lack of accuracy and disclaims any liability in connection with the use of this information. Feedback is welcome at info@exchangevzw.be

Statistical information

Situation on 5th of May 2020:

- Infections: total cases is 261 persons
- Deceased: 0
- Hospitalized : 132
- Recovered :129
- Tested :35.992 persons

Development of the Covid-19 Situation in Rwanda between the 14th of March 2020 and the 5th of May 2020:



Current situation: measures

The Rwanda Government approved the following measures to help contain the spread of the corona virus. These measure will remain in force from 4th to 19th May 2020

General measures

Preventive measures:

- mass screening and testing for Covid-19 continues on nationwide level
- masks must be worn in public at all times
- all resumed services must adhere to health guidelines from the Ministry of Health (hand hygiene, mask wearing and social distancing)
- Electronic payment and online banking services should be used whenever possible.
- Movements are prohibited from 8PM to 5AM except with permission

Services to resume:

- Public and Private businesses will resume with essential staff while other employees continue working from home
- Markets will open for essential vendors not exceeding 50% of registered traders
- Manufacturing and construction sectors will open with essential workers
- Hotels and Restaurant will operate but close by 7PM
- Individual sporting activities in open spaces is permitted; however, sports facilities remain closed
- Public and private transport will resume within the same province
- Bus operators will ensure passengers maintain social distancing and only passengers with masks are allowed on board
- Funeral gathering should not exceed 30 persons

Services to remain closed :

- Schools will remain closed until September 2020
- Places of worship will remain closed
- Gyms and recreational centers will remain closed
- All bars will remain closed
- Public and private transport between provinces and the city of Kigali is not permitted
- Motorcycles and bicycles are not permitted to carry passengers, but may carry goods and continue to offer delivery services
- All borders will remain closed, except for goods and cargo, as well as returning Rwandan citizens and legal residents, who will be subject to mandatory 14 day quarantine
- Meeting in public spaces and mass gatherings are prohibited

Domestic transport

- Public transport will resume on the 4th May 2020.
- The transportation services that operate within Kigali city are prohibited from operating outside of Kigali whereas public transporters working in the provinces will operate within their respective provinces;
- Passengers are required to wash their hands prior to entering the bus, always wear facemasks and must comply with the social distancing of at least one meter while getting on or off the bus;
- Public transport buses will operate at half capacity (number of passengers) and operators are required to clearly mark permitted passenger seats on the buses with an empty seat separating a passenger from another;
- Considering that buses are required to operate at half the normal passenger capacity, the transport tariff has been adjusted as follows: City of Kigali fare is increased from 22Frw/km to 31.8Frw/km, and for the rest of the provinces its increased from 21Frw/km to 30.8Frw/km. This will enable operators to sustain the service while observing social distancing guidelines.
- All employees of the transport companies (drivers, ticket sellers and others) must wear facemasks and respect all guidelines issued by the Rwandan Government;
- Service providers are required to provide digital payment channels, and passengers are encouraged to pay using the available technology options and avoid hand-to-hand money exchanges that could lead to the spread of the coronavirus.

Information can be found on: www.rura.rw

International transport

As from Monday 27th April 2020, drivers from the East African Region are not allowed to cross the border and enter in Rwanda. They are replaced by Rwandan drivers to avoid Covid-19 contamination.

Tourist and business travel and visas for foreigners :

Hospitality services are officially open with limitation of 50% of numbers of workers for 2 weeks (4th to 19th of May; restaurants and hotels are open from 6am to 7pm operating.

As the borders remain closed, tourists and guests are not allowed to enter the country.

Education

Students in pre-primary, primary and secondary schools will only restart the academic year in September 2020.

Students can access select e-learning platforms at no cost. Radio and TV will continue to broadcast lessons on a schedule shared regularly by MINEDUC and on radio. In addition, a USSD-based quiz on different subjects is available. All students should actively follow these alternative platforms until schools reopen.

More info on <https://mineduc.gov.rw/index.php?id=23>

Social and economic impact

Rwanda has implemented a strict lockdown in a bid to curb the spread of coronavirus, which has forced many low-income earners and unemployed people to struggle to get food and other basic necessities.

Rwanda's ministry of Local Government started distributing food to households and individuals most hit by the Covid19 lockdown

Top Rwandan officials will not get their April salaries in one of the drastic measures the government has enforced to raise funds for social protection programmes aimed for the most vulnerable in the community.

In the context of the fight against Covid-19, and in solidarity with the most affected Rwandans, the Government of Rwanda has decided, over and above ongoing social protection initiatives, that all Cabinet Members, Permanent Secretaries, Heads of Public Institutions and other senior officials shall forfeit one month's salary (April),

Those who will not get their April pay are 34 Cabinet members, 26 senators, 106 members of Parliament, and hundreds of heads of public institutions – who earn an average of Rwf2 million (about \$2140) per month.

This is likely to generate close to \$1 million to be used to combat effects of coronavirus on the vulnerable.

The number of those needing government assistance has been rising since the food distribution began as many have lost jobs or been unable to make a living due to the lockdown.

In Kigali alone, the number of households eligible for food distribution grew from 26,572 to more than 50,000 in a matter of days, with more people expected to be identified.

The government is providing relief to households where individuals depended on daily income such as casual jobs workers and those whose work was suspended over the lockdown measures.

The exercise is supervised by the respective local leaders and involves distribution of basic food rations. The food distribution also aims at stopping the urban poor from trying to flee the city for the villages – a move that could lead to importation of the virus from the city to the rural areas.

Impact on private sector and SME's

Hospitality

All accommodation establishments, restaurants and cafes with valid tourism operating license or occupational permit from districts or City of Kigali, can reopen as from Monday 4th of May. Home delivery of food and beverages from restaurants can continue to operate.

Hospitality facilities will be open from 6am to 7pm. In-house guests may receive room services beyond 7pm, as long as staff providing these services are resident within the hotels. Restaurants operating within a hotel must also close by 7pm.

Full guidelines for the hospitality sector can be found here <https://rdb.rw/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/GUIDELINES-FOR-HOSPITALITY-SECTOR-BUSINESS-RE-OPENING-DURING-COVID-19-...pdf>

Tourism

To mitigate the COVID-19 outbreak, all arriving and departing commercial passenger flights, including RwandAir, were halted at midnight on March 20th, 2020 for an initial 30-day period. All tourism and research activities in Akagera, Nyungwe, Volcanoes and Gishwati-Mukura National Parks have been suspended until further notice as a preventive measure against the transmission of COVID-19.

Tourism is one of Rwanda's revenue sources. Rwanda targets \$800 million from tourism by 2024 from \$438 million in 2017.

The country had this year projected to generate \$88 million from about 147 international conferences under the Meetings, Incentives, Conventions, and Exhibitions (MICE). About 20 meetings which had been scheduled in March and April were indefinitely postponed. These meetings were expected to generate \$8 million, about 10% of the projected revenue from MICE this year.

Following the COVID-19 outbreak, several tourists cancelled bookings, leaving tour operators and other stakeholders counting losses.

This year's Nyungwe marathon -- an annual event that gathers more than 700 participants from Africa and Europe, attracted fewer participants leading organizers to register a loss of \$200,000. Organizers handed out just 300 medals instead of 600 because they could not import from China.

Agriculture

All food supply chain services are essential services and will continue to operate. All agriculture construction projects will resume and will be done in accordance with the Ministry of Health measures to prevent COVID-19 transmission.

All industries, farmers and exporters in the agriculture sector who travel to and from Kigali for work will be required to write to the Ministry of Agriculture and Animal resources to obtain special clearance.

More info on www.minagri.gov.rw

Easing economic impact

On the 18th of March Rwanda's central bank announced a series of measures to mitigate the economic impact of the virus.

These included introducing the extended lending facility of roughly \$52 million which commercial banks with liquidity challenges can borrow from at the central bank rate and lowering reserve requirement ratio effective April 1 from 5% to 4% to allow banks more liquidity to support affected businesses.

The bank also allowed banks to restructure outstanding loans of borrowers facing temporary cash flow challenges arising from the pandemic.

Rwanda COVID-19 Emergency Response Project

The Rwanda COVID-19 Emergency Response Project is designed to help the government prevent, detect and respond to the threat posed by the coronavirus and strengthen national systems for public health preparedness. It will support the COVID-19 National Preparedness and Response Plan by financing critical interventions, such as prompt diagnosis of suspected coronavirus cases; contact tracing to minimize risk of transmission; risk assessments to identify hot spot areas; and screening travellers at ports of entry. The emergency project will also bolster clinical care capacity and establish isolation capacity at a selected number of national and district hospitals responsible for triaging and treating COVID-19 cases.

The Rwanda COVID-19 Emergency Response project also focuses on harnessing digital solutions and data analytical tools that will improve the management and containment of the COVID-19 response. Building on the country's strong track record on digital solutions, several innovations will be explored, including digital maps that allow to visualize the spread of the disease in real time; mobile apps for sending health messages; and telemedicine capability to allow for suspected cases to be assessed without the need for physical movements by patients.

Financial support for Rwanda's response to COVID-19

On the 7th of April 2020 the **World Bank Group** approved \$14.25 million International Development Association (IDA) credit in immediate funding to support Rwanda's response to the global COVID-19 pandemic under the Rwanda COVID-19 Emergency Response project.

On the 2nd of April 2020 The Executive Board of the **International Monetary Fund** (IMF) approved the disbursement of about US\$109.4 million to be drawn under the Rapid Credit Facility (RCF). This will serve to meet Rwanda's urgent balance of payment needs stemming from the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Other forms of support have also been coming in from different private sector entities like the **big corporate firms** that have donated money and supplies to be used by the national task force

charged with stopping the spread of coronavirus in the country. Some of the big donors include the major banks.

On 5 April, a statement from the office of the prime minister announced that senior government officials had agreed to forfeit their April salary as a contribution to the funds needed in the fight against COVID-19.

In solidarity with the most affected Rwandans, the Government of Rwanda has decided, over and above ongoing social protection initiatives, that all Cabinet Members, Permanent Secretaries, Heads of Public Institutions, and other senior officials shall forfeit one month's salary (April).

Due to the lockdown in place to slow the spread of the virus, Rwandans were for the first time compelled to commemorate the 1994 Genocide from their homes without any gatherings allowed.

Support to the private sector and entrepreneurs

The Private Sector Federation on Monday, May 4, signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Access to Finance Rwanda in a new initiative aimed at supporting entrepreneurs in Rwanda to adjust to economic realities of COVID-19.

Both parties, seek to share their respective strengths, experiences, technologies, including technical assistance to facilitate Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) during the COVID-19 pandemic.

SME Response Clinic as its termed, is a digital platform that will translate new policies and financial advisory services and access to finance related information in a clear and straightforward language in English and Kinyarwanda.

The SME Response Clinic will provide and collect needed information that will enable key stakeholders to support resilience of the MSME Sector in this period of Covid-19.

The Rwandan Government and financial sector have taken several significant measures to support MSMEs during this challenging period, reads part of the joint statement.

The SME Response Clinic will ensure that these important measures are communicated to MSMEs in an accessible and timely manner.