



GOVERNMENT OF MALAWI

**MINISTERIAL STATEMENT ON OPENING OF
PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN
BLANTYRE AND LILONGWE**

**DELIVERED BY
HON. KHUMBIZE KANDODO CHIPONDA, MP
CO-CHAIRPERSON OF PRESIDENTIAL
TASKFORCE ON COVID-19 AND CHOLERA**

**AT
CENTRAL OFFICE OF INFORMATON**

ON

THURSDAY, 12TH JANUARY 2023

- Fellow Malawians,
- Fellow Honourable Ministers
- Other Honourable Members of the Presidential Taskforce on Coronavirus and Cholera,
- Senior staff of the Ministries of Civic Education, Education, Health, Labour, Water and Sanitation,
- Members of the Press,
- Ladies and Gentlemen

As Malawians will remember, that on 2nd January 2023, due to an unprecedented and continuing increase in Cholera cases and deaths, especially in Blantyre and Lilongwe Districts, the Presidential Taskforce on Coronavirus and Cholera announced a resolution to delay the opening of primary and secondary schools in the two districts.

The two-week delay was meant to provide time and opportunity for learning institutions, various ministries and stakeholders:

- to carry out assessments of the situation of water, sanitation and hygiene in Blantyre and Lilongwe District schools and also schools in other districts of the country,
- to put in place plans to increase access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene facilities in peri urban areas, and
- to establish \ strengthen alternative ways to support uninterrupted learning in schools, going forward.

I can confirm to Malawians that since the announcement was made:

- an assessment of water and sanitation needs in schools in both Blantyre and Lilongwe cities and /districts has taken place
- the Ministry of Education is rolling out approaches to facilitate remedial

learning, including through distance learning initiatives, for learners that may miss lessons due to this or any other disasters or epidemics

- working jointly with City Councils and Water Boards, the Ministry of Water and Sanitation is working provide safe water in schools, including reconnecting piped water supply to schools that had their water supply disconnected;
- work is continuing to strengthen provision of sanitary and hand washing facilities in Blantyre and Lilongwe schools and in schools across the country
- the Ministries of Health, Information and Civic Education are working to intensify Health Education activities using multiple channels, including loud hailing, radio and TV
- more Cholera treatment units are being established close to where cases are originating from to limit spread through referral

- additional health care workers are being recruited in a number of districts to support work in the cholera treatment units
- the Taskforce has reactivated the security cluster to strengthen compliance with preventive and containment measures at district levels;
- the MoH is working with the Office of the Attorney General to gazette preventive and containment measures for Cholera under the Public Health Act, and
- ministries of Health, Water and Sanitation, and local councils are intensifying hygiene promotion messages, as well as distribution of chlorine for pot to pot chlorination at community, household and point of collection levels.
- Ministry of Labour is working on Cholera Workplace Guidelines to guide employers and employees to effectively respond to the Cholera outbreak.

Going forward, the Ministry of Water and Sanitation, working with respective Water Boards and local councils, will also be facilitating the following interventions;

In Urban areas

- providing free water connections, and providing safe water through using water bowsers in all cholera hotspot areas
- suspending outstanding water bills in areas with public water kiosks, and reopening kiosks that had been closed due to unpaid bills
- conducting water quality assessment and testing in targeted areas
- expanding piped water networks, targeting poor peri urban areas in Lilongwe and Blantyre
- distributing chlorine for water source and pot to pot chlorination, including in schools

- desludging of public toilets (especially in schools, markets and bus depots, and, disinfecting public sanitation facilities

In Rural areas, there will be works towards

- water quality assessment and testing
- rehabilitating dysfunctional boreholes, including in schools
- constructing new water points in hotspot areas
- sanitation and hygiene promotion
- chlorine distribution, and increasing availability of Chlorine dispensers in targeted hotspot areas

Members of the Press, Ladies and Gentlemen

Having reviewed the steps taken to date, those planned for the short to medium and long term, the cooperation of the school authorities in the two districts and other districts across the

country, and Malawians in general, I am pleased to advise that the Taskforce is satisfied to allow primary and secondary schools in the two districts to open as from Tuesday 17th January 2023.

Meanwhile, the Taskforce is:

- is directing all public and private schools and other education institutions to enforce safe water and sanitation practices using the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for Schools and all Education Institutions already made available by the Ministry of Education
- is directing higher education institutions to ensure that food vendors and suppliers in their institutions are oriented and adhere to the SOPs.

directing all district and city councils to

- ban, with immediate effect, vending of precooked foods along streets, in local markets and bus depots, within school

premises, and such like places, using provisions in their by-laws.

- close, with immediate effect, all marketing, transport and travel, sporting, religious and entertainment facilities, including those belonging to the local councils, that do not have on-site safe water, functional toilets, organized and hygienic refuse disposal facilities, until the deficiencies are corrected
- clean up all centralized refuse dump sites, and or hygienically retire filled up dumpsites,
- urging all public and private employers and responsible officers to enforce safety and health standards, and Cholera preventive and containment measures, at their places of work [use of safe water, frequent hand washing with soap, and provision of hygienic toilet facilities]

Members of the Press, Ladies and Gentlemen

Further, the taskforce is calling upon

- all inhabitants in the country to adhere to the recommended Cholera preventive and containment measures, and early seeking of care when one is experiencing Cholera signs and symptoms
- all parents, teachers, traditional, religious, and political leaders to enforce adherence to the Cholera preventive and containment measures in their areas of jurisdiction, and to advocate for early seeking of care when one is experiencing Cholera signs and symptoms, such as vomiting and diarrhea.
- Local Councils, working through the Ministry of Education, to intensify and act on school inspections of water and sanitation facilities, as an ongoing exercise towards improving access to safe water and sanitation facilities at school institutions

In closing, let me remind Malawians that the Cholera outbreak is still firmly with us, and we continue to record rising number of cases across the country, despite signs of reduced transmission and deaths in a few areas. As of 11th January 2023, 22,759 Cholera cases and 750 Cholera related deaths have been reported since the onset of the outbreak in March last year. Most worrying is that our case fatality rate remains around 3.3%, as opposed to the recommended rate of less than 1%. And there are currently approximately 892 Cholera cases admitted for care in treatment units across the country.

The Government, working with well-wishers and partners, will continue to do everything possible to contain the outbreak, and the Taskforce will continue to update the public regularly on the progress.

The reduction of the Cholera cases in our communities begins with us.

Thank you all for your attention.

