



# Citizen's Taskforce on COVID-19 (South Sudan)



## POLICY BRIEF

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**Title: Enforcement of Measures for Preventing and Managing COVID-19 Pandemic**

### *Summary of Recommendations*

1. National Task Force on COVID-19 (NTF) to lead & Facilitate the Development of a safety manual for security personnel engaged in combating COVID-19 Pandemic;
2. The NTF should establish a strong coordination and communication mechanism with different actors;
3. The National Taskforce should regularly update the public on all resources & pledges received, allocated and utilized for combating the pandemic in South Sudan;
4. The National Taskforce is urged to review the instituted measures and develop protocols necessary to contextualize the intervention in South Sudan
5. The National Taskforce on COVID-19 to consider developing a comprehensive multi-sectoral National Strategy for efficient and effective management of the pandemic.

### *Highlights*

The global trend of COVID-19 pandemic remains a threat to humanity. Infection rates have surged to over 15million<sup>1</sup> and growing. Confirmed cases in South Sudan stand at 2,211 as of July, 20<sup>th</sup> 2020<sup>2</sup>, with Juba being the epicenter, South Sudan joined the region and the globe in instituting measures necessary for prevention of the disease but these efforts were relaxed after two (2) Months since the first case in South Sudan was diagnosed on 5<sup>th</sup> April 2020 leaving the population exposed to anticipated adverse effects of the pandemic. Deficiency in commitment to implement or respect the measures have being observed among citizens and institutions tasked with the responsibility of enforcement. It is important to note that involvement of different actors and the population in enforcement of such measures is of great importance.

Any such measures that impact social norms require cooperation and involvement of all stakeholders for its effective implementation. However, in the case of South Sudan, such cooperation needs to be strengthened to avert the seeming challenges being faced in enforcing

the preventive measures. Actors involved in fight against the pandemic in South Sudan should step up efforts toward prevention and management of the disease. Regionally, governments have made attempts and frantic efforts to institute and enforce necessary protocol for adaptation to the COVID-19 context. South Sudan should instituted similar measures to curb the spread of Corona Virus.

While people in the urban areas would worry about access to basic commodities from the market, those in the rural areas worried about access to humanitarian assistance. It has been observed that both divide did not see the need to respect measures instituted for preventing spread of the Corona Virus because the measures did not take into consideration the prevailing hunger pandemic. Business owners are reported to be experiencing increased rate of exploitation by security personnel. This already paints a grim picture, which further exacerbates the vulnerability of citizens and pose challenges to enforcement of the measures and awareness creation initiatives.

<sup>1</sup> [nytimes.com/2020/07/22/world/coronavirus-covid-19.html](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/22/world/coronavirus-covid-19.html)

<sup>2</sup> [www.worldometers.info](https://www.worldometers.info)

# Analysis

South Sudan suddenly relaxed the instituted preventive measures on May 8th 2020<sup>3</sup> with minimal efforts made to reinstate the measures. It was clear that implementation of such measures did not meet expectation of many and yield the desired results. Findings from Citizen's Taskforce on COVID-19 (CTF) volunteer across the country reveal that, 59% of the populace appreciated the preventive measures instituted by the government. However, 75% are dissatisfied with the government's efforts in enforcing the measures. Therefore, it is important to note that continued stay without reinstatement of the preventive measures and development of clear plan for implementation of such measures is disastrous to the nation. The current status of enforcement of preventive measures in South Sudan seems deceptive, resulting in many citizens believing that COVID-19 is no longer a threat, does not exist, might be a ploy to make money or it only affects a certain class of people<sup>4</sup> Hence, they are continuing with their lives without any restriction or adhering to the preventive measures. Knowing that COVID-19 has no cure and the condition of infected persons can only be clinically managed; it is prudent to keep the level of infection as low as possible. Therefore, strict adherence to the instituted measures is paramount.

Efforts should be made not to allow the country to revert back to the life style exhibited before the pandemic. In this regard, preventive measures should be reinstated and strictly adhered to so as to reduce further spread of the virus. At the moment, focus seems to be slowly shifting from COVID-19 to *national economy, inter communal fighting, formation of state governments and the political discourse around reconstitution of the national legislature and formation of state government*. While these are equally important processes, it should not overshadow the efforts being made to combat COVI-19 Pandemic. As such, it is essential to separate the role of political actors in the fight against the pandemic and that of technocrats. Failure to do so may predispose the already vulnerable country with weak health system to a wave of infections that could have been averted.

Initially, measures such as ban on social gatherings, suspension of all nonessential travels, closure of all schools, universities, health science institutes and all other institutions of learning<sup>5</sup> were instituted to prevent spread of Corona Virus. However, there was no clear plan to monitor and evaluate the impact of such decision. The National Taskforce on COVID-19 (NTF) has been rather quiet with limited communication to the public. Much as it is important to recognize their efforts to realize accountability and galvanize expertise from different sectors of the society, the desire among the public to receive regular updates from the NTF remains high. Based on public response to the first and second CTF policy briefs, feedback during CTF radio talk shows and spot-check perception survey conducted by CTF volunteers, it is clear that the public expects formidable leadership for the enforcement of the preventive measure. Failure to provide such leadership has created room for social life in most parts of the country to reverted back to normal and the wide spread thinking among the public that COVID-19 is no longer a thread. Though in general it seems that few people still endeavor to uphold the preventive measures, it is purely done on individual basis. The fact that NTF seems not to regularly communicate to the public waters down the magnitude of the pandemic.

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<sup>3</sup>[www.voanews.com](http://www.voanews.com)

<sup>4</sup>SSuDEMOP-CTF-SSHRC Policy Brief Issue 002 June 2020

<sup>5</sup> Communication from the Presidency number 33 Tuesday, 21<sup>st</sup> April 2020

# Recommendations

1. National Taskforce on COVID-19 (NTF) to lead and facilitate the development of a safety manual for security personnel engaged in combating COVID-19 Pandemic. A comprehensive and Simplified COVID-19 Safety Manual with graphics illustrating the preventive measures is necessary for general population and the security personnel themselves. This is a two-way process that requires involvement of different sectors to bring in the multiple dimensions;
2. NTF should establish a strong coordination and communication mechanism with different actors that will facilitate regular update and review of the enforcement and impact of the preventive measures. Regularly share update, review the instituted measures and contextualize them as a way to re-enforcing strict adherence;
3. The National Taskforce on COVID-19 should regularly update the public on all resources and pledges received, allocated and utilized for combating the COVID-19 pandemic in South Sudan;
4. The National level taskforce is urged to review the instituted measures and develop protocols necessary to contextualize the intervention in South Sudan. Measure such as the imposed curfew, inter-state travel ban, closure of schools/learning institutions, churches and mosques should be periodically reviewed with special attention on observance of human rights;
5. The NTF to consider developing a comprehensive multi-sectoral National Strategy for efficient and effective management of the Pandemic in South Sudan

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## About SSuDEMOP

**South Sudan Democratic Engagement, Monitoring and Observation Programme (SSuDEMOP)** is a consortium of civil society organizations drawing its membership from Faith Based Organizations (FBOs), Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Community Based Organizations (CBOs) Youth groups, individual activists and Churches. SSuDEMOP is registered under the South Sudan NGO Act of 2008 and has been in operation since 2009. SSuDEMOP can broadly be categorized as an advocacy and lobby organization for civil rights. We strive to Mobilize Citizens, Empower Voices and Shape South Sudan. SSuDEMOP is an organization that values voluntarism.

## About YWCA

The Young Women's Christian Association of South Sudan (YWCA) was formed in 1997 by a group of 25 young women who had a common goal of empowering other young women. YWCA is a non-governmental and non-profit organization registered with the South Sudan relief and Rehabilitation Commission (SSRRC) as a National Non-governmental organization. In July 2007, the YWCA of Sudan officially became a full member of the World YWCA and has since established partnership with other regional YWCAs including YWCA Kenya, YWCA Uganda, YWCA Norway and Switzerland. Nationally, YWCA South Sudan expanded into seven operational branches, which include Wau, Juba, Maridi, Mundri, Yambio, Nzara and Tambura. Being a membership organization, the YWCA of South Sudan has over 5,000 registered members.

## About CTF

Citizen's Taskforce on COVID-19 (Citizen's Taskforce) is a coalition of individuals with diverse background, expertise, experience and skills. Membership of the taskforce is open for individuals (South Sudanese and foreign nationals living and working in South Sudan) and organizations. The Citizen's Taskforce continues to accept volunteers to join the cause throughout this difficult moment when the entire world is battling with COVID-19. The initiative is designed to complement existing efforts such as the High-Level Taskforce on COVID-19 by conducting continuous situation analysis, providing responsive recommendations to inform/enhance policy decisions and actions of key actor's, awareness creation, advocacy and social mobilization among other activities.

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