



COVID-19 VACCINATION ROLL OUT: THE SIXTH GOLDEN RULE TO FIGHTING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

PRESS STATEMENT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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In December 2019, a novel coronavirus called SARS-CoV-2 resulted in the global outbreak of a respiratory illness known as COVID-19. It was not known at that time how great an impact the outbreak would have on the life of the global population.

Zambia has not been spared and many have contracted the virus while others have died. **To counter the spread of this virus, the Zambian Government, in line with global best practice,** has emphasized on the need to adhere to, “ **the five golden rules for COVID-19 prevention**”. These are:

1. Masking up (in public).
2. Maintaining a physical distance of at least one metre between you and the person next to you.
3. Frequently washing hands with soap and water and/or using hand sanitizer.
4. Avoiding crowded places and staying home.
5. Seeking medical attention early (if symptomatic).

On Monday, 12th April 2021, a 6th rule was added to this list: get vaccinated as soon as practically possible (if above 18 years of age).

Zambia received 228,000 of the 1,212,000 doses of Oxford AstraZeneca (COVISHIELD) vaccine allocated to the country and officially launched its vaccination on the 14th of April 2021, at the

University Teaching Hospital in Lusaka. Zambia has been amongst the last countries in the region to settle on what vaccine to bring into the country. This has been because of; **delays in the finalization of protocols on available vaccines on the market, safety assessments and suitability based on multiple COVID-19 variants.** The Ministry of Health is commended for taking this bold step to ensure that this measure of protection is available to citizens.

The vaccine is currently being **administered in various health facilities around Lusaka and other provincial centres and will be rolled out right down to district level. Government must be commended for prioritizing and fast tracking the vaccination of healthcare workers and the elderly, as these are the most at risk and vulnerable groups to COVID-19.**

While it is not mandatory, citizens are encouraged to get the vaccine in order to build their immunity and protect themselves against the development of new cases, especially with the onset of the cold season and the threat of a third wave. Kenya is currently experiencing a spike in COVID-19 cases and recent patterns have shown that over time this wave may spread to many other countries.

It has been recognized that a lot of sensitization is still required to allay fears of the possible side effects of the Oxford AstraZeneca vaccine. It is anticipated that with more awareness, the vaccination turnouts will translate into full coverage. Facts about how the vaccine works and its imperative relevance, coupled with a comprehensive feedback mechanism for its side effects (reactions) will go a long way in instilling confidence in the roll out of the vaccine and increase in its uptake. **It is gratifying to see that leaders have stepped up to get vaccinated and lead the way. So far, about 14,012 eligible persons have been vaccinated as of 25th April 2021 and the numbers continue to rise.**

As the country is administering the vaccine to those eligible, **it is important that people continue adhering to the five golden rules, which will result in less pressure on our health sector and the economy as a whole.** Therefore, as citizens we are called to support Government efforts in fighting the pandemic, as the realization of economic restoration and rebuilding calls for adherence to evolving COVID-19 measures by all citizens.

Lastly, PMRC would like to urge the various media houses in the country to be ambassadors of the campaign by ensuring correct information is shared with the public concerning the importance of the vaccine, thereby helping citizens make informed decisions.

For more details, interviews or queries about this PMRC Media Statement
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