

The Republic of South Sudan



Ministry of Health



COVID-19 Updated Guidance Public Health Measures and Travel Advisory

South Sudan
July 2022

Background

After the first case of COVID-19 was confirmed on 5 April 2020, South Sudan experienced three waves: the first wave from May to June 2020, the second wave from February to March 2021, and the third wave from December 2021 to January 2022. The waves typically lasted 3-4 weeks each.

Because of limited testing and weak surveillance, as of 30 June 2022, only 17,733 confirmed COVID-19 cases including 138 deaths have been reported in South Sudan since the start of the pandemic. In spite of the significant underreporting of COVID-19 cases and deaths in South Sudan, other epidemiological studies suggest continuous community transmission in the country. Moreover, 55% of South Sudan's population is under the age of 18 years, and with COVID-19 typically affecting the elderly and people with underlying health conditions, the country has been saved from high mortality as seen in neighbouring countries.

The most recent genomic sequencing data identified the BA.1 and BA.2 sub-lineages of the Omicron variant as dominant in South Sudan in May 2022. Earlier, the Alpha [B.1.1.7], Beta [B.1.351], and Delta [B.1.617.2] variants of concern were detected in the country.

With less than 10% of the population fully vaccinated against COVID-19, South Sudan remains at elevated risk of further surges in cases, especially in view of the potential emergence of new variants.

Justification

While the virus causing COVID-19 continues to evolve as a result of natural mutation, the public health measures to protect populations against COVID-19 have remained the same: use of facemasks in public places, frequent hand hygiene, physical distancing, and vaccination. These simple measures can continue to significantly reduce the risk of transmission of the disease and protect vulnerable individuals at elevated risk from becoming severely ill with the disease.

In spite of facing different challenges as compared to other East Africa Community (EAC) countries, South Sudan is keen to align its current COVID-19 travel guidance within the EAC framework, as an official member state.

The new requirements to enter South Sudan as per this updated guidance are in line with the EAC.

The National Task Force for COVID-19 in South Sudan therefore recommends:

Public Health Measures

1. Use of facemasks in public places, particularly in health facilities
2. Availability of hand-washing stations or alternatively hand sanitizers in public places to allow for frequent hand hygiene
3. Controlled organization of mass gatherings, allowing for physical distancing of minimum 1 meter between all participants

4. Avoid hand shaking and hugging each other
5. Vaccination against COVID-19 for everyone 18 years and older, especially the at-risk groups: people over 65 and people with underlying health conditions, such as diabetes, hypertension, and immunocompromised diseases. COVID-19 vaccination is free and safe.

Travel Guidance

1. **Presentation to port health officials for outbound travellers, depending on the requirements of the country of destination:**

a valid negative SARS-COV-2 PCR test certificate in hard copy with a verifiable QR code from a Ministry of Health approved laboratory in South Sudan, or a document indicating that the country of destination does not require a negative SARS-COV-2 PCR test certificate or evidence of vaccination

2. **Presentation to port health officials for inbound travellers:**

evidence of a full course of vaccination with a COVID-19 vaccine with WHO Emergency Use Listing (EUL)

OR

a valid SARS-COV-2 PCR negative test certificate for a sample collected not more than 72 hours prior to arrival in South Sudan. A hard or soft copy of the PCR result is required from a recognized laboratory from the country of origin. Exemption from this requirement maybe granted for the following categories of travellers:

- a. Crew members
 - b. Medical emergencies
 - c. Children not eligible for COVID-19 testing (that's children below the age of 5 years)
3. **All inbound travellers who show symptoms of COVID-19** upon arrival in the country will be tested with SARS-COV-2 antigen rapid diagnostics test (Ag-RDT) in spite of having a valid COVID-19 vaccination certificate or SARS-COV-2 PCR negative test certificate. The Ag-RDT will be administered by a designated port health official at no fee.
 - a. In case of a **positive Ag-RDT result** for a symptomatic traveller, confirming SARS CoV-2 infection, case management and contact tracing protocols will be followed.
 - b. In case of a **negative Ag-RDT result** for a symptomatic traveller, a sample will be taken to be retested using a GeneXpert or RT-PCR machine by the National Public Health Laboratory.
 - i. In case of a **positive GeneXpert or RT-PCR result** for a symptomatic traveller, confirming SARS CoV-2 infection, case management and contact tracing protocols will be followed.
 - ii. In case of a **negative GeneXpert or RT-PCR result** for a symptomatic traveller, the traveller can proceed with their journey.

This travel advisory will be reviewed and updated periodically based on guidance on evolving epidemiological trends at the national, regional, and global levels.

Please contact COVID-19 Incident Management at sspheoc@gmail.com or 0917235355.

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