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REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

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Ms Fatima Hassan

**HEALTH JUSTICE INITIATIVE**

**PER EMAIL:** [info@healthjusticeinitiative.org.za](mailto:info@healthjusticeinitiative.org.za)

Dear Ms Hassan

**DEVELOPMENT OF A PLAN TO ENSURE AFFORDABLE ACCESS TO AND EQUITABLE ALLOCATION OF COVID-19 VACCINES: REQUEST FOR A RESPONSE**

Please accept my sincere apologies for the delay in responding to your information request as contained in your letter of 16 November 2020.

Below are responses to your specific questions as contained in paragraph 15.

*15. In light of these statutory duties placed on the National Centre and institutional role-players, we would be grateful if you would kindly advise on the following:*

*15.1. Has the National Centre, developed guidelines concerning the development, review and updating of disaster management plans which deal with access to and allocation of vaccines (Vaccine Access and Allocation Plans)? 17 [See section 19(a) and (e) of the Disaster Management Act.] If so, kindly provide us with a copy of the guidelines.*

The Minister of Health has appointed a Ministerial Advisory Committee on Covid-19 vaccines (MAC VAC) to provide the strategic framework for access to COVID-19 vaccines given that the initial supply of COVID-19 vaccines will be limited, and that only preliminary safety and efficacy data from a few of the candidate COVID-19 vaccines are available for scrutiny.

The MAC VAC provides regular reports to the Minister (for the National Command Council) in line with its Terms of Reference. The MAC VAC is in the process of developing the COVID-19: Vaccine Strategy. This Strategy will be available on the National Department of Health's website once it has been finalised.

The technical work of the MAC VAC is performed by the five work streams. These work streams make recommendations to the MAC VAC regarding the following five technical areas:

1. The review the evidence related to the efficacy and safety of the vaccine options and the populations in which it will work (*Note that SAHPRA will have an independent regulatory review of all vaccines planned for use in South Africa*);
2. Assessment of the cost effectiveness and budgetary impact of the vaccine options;
3. Procurement strategy of the vaccine; and
4. The plan for the rollout of the vaccine including to the priority groups.
5. Development of local manufacturing/fill-finish/distribution facilities and implementation plan



*15.2. If the National Centre has not developed such guidelines, kindly advise on the steps which will be taken in order to comply with this statutory duty, as well as the proposed timeline.*

See response in 15.1 above.

*15.3. Is there a plan to budget and prioritise vulnerable groups and key populations in relation to access to and allocation of vaccines? If so, what is the plan? It would be appreciated if we could receive a copy of any such plan.*

The goal is to have access to, and supply of, safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines for the people of South Africa. In the immediate short term, the goal is to provide protection to the vulnerable (these will be prioritised for vaccination) with the eventual goal being that of vaccinating as many people as possible with the aim of reaching herd immunity. The information related to the prioritization of vulnerable groups will be detailed in the Strategy referenced in 15.1 above.

Initially, the principle used to identify people eligible for vaccination are those with high risk exposure (i.e. front-line highest risk health care workers and those exposed in hospitals, clinics and care homes) and the medically vulnerable. The determination of high risk groups is based on global and local evidence and is currently being finalised. This will then be followed by universal vaccination for herd immunity.

*15.4. Which specific institutions and national organs of state have been identified as the key institutional role-players involved in disaster management which would be required to develop Vaccine Access and Allocation Plans as part of their disaster management plans and strategies? 18 [See, for example, sections 19(b) and (d) of the Disaster Management Act.]*

The MAC on COVID-19 includes representatives from the following institutions:

- The National Department of Health
- The Department of Science and Innovation
- National Treasury
- South African Health Products Regulatory Authority
- The Biovac Institute
- South African Medical Research Council
- Experts in vaccinology, immunology, virology and medical ethics

The representation in the various work streams include:

- Cochrane South Africa (South African Medical research Centre)
- NEMLC Subcommittee on Covid-19
- Vaccine Advocacy Resource Group
- The South African COVID-19 Modelling Consortium
- National Advisory Group on Immunisation
- The World Health Organization (WHO)
- Doctors without Borders (MSF)
- Treatment Action Campaign (TAC)

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15.5. Have any of these key institutional role-players developed Vaccine Access and Allocation Plans? If so, kindly provide us with copies of the plans.

See response 15.1 above

15.6. What specific steps have been taken by the National Centre to assist with the co-ordination and implementation of these plans if / when they are developed? 19 [See section 19(d) of the Disaster Management Act.]

N/A

15.7. We assume that to the extent that Vaccine Access and Allocation Plans have been developed, they will be made public in the interest of transparency, accountability, and general good governance. It is in that context that we have requested copies of any guidelines and Vaccine Access and Allocation Plans. If you are for any reason unable to provide copies to us, please advise us as to the reason/s why, and how we may otherwise obtain a copy.


See response in 15.1 above

15.8. In the event that no Vaccine Access and Allocation Plans have been developed, we would respectfully request that you advise on the proposed timeline for the development of such plans and consider having an urgent multi-stakeholder engagement regarding the factors which should be considered while developing them.

N/A

Should you require any further clarification, please do not hesitate to contact my office.

Kind regards

  
DR SSS BUTHELEZI  
DIRECTOR-GENERAL: HEALTH

DATE:

08/03/2021