WHO switches to response mode in fighting Covid-19 in Africa

With confirmed cases of Covid-19 in Algeria, Senegal, Nigeria and South Africa, the World Health Organization (WHO) is changing from a readiness to a response mode in the African region.

Image source: www.pixabay.com

Experts already in those countries with confirmed cases are now focusing on providing technical support to country health workers, rather than providing generalised preparedness advice. Training on case management and infection prevention has also been provided to health workers from the countries.

WHO convened a meeting in Nairobi this week, with representatives from the Kenyan Health Ministry, the African Union and key United Nations partner agencies in attendance. A parallel meeting was also taking place in Dakar with Francophone partners, also led by the WHO Regional Office for Africa.

Prioritise protection of health workers

"We are calling on all countries to invest urgently in preparedness for the arrival of cases, and to prioritise the protection of health workers, individuals at risk, and to communicate better the risks of transmission to their people," said Dr Matshidiso Moeti, WHO regional director for Africa. "These cases should be a wake-up call for governments across Africa. Governments must do all they can to prepare for an eventual outbreak: time is critical."

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WHO is supporting countries in their efforts to increase their readiness in this critical window, mainly in ensuring that vital early detection and control measures are in place and are as robust as possible. WHO is working with a network of experts to coordinate regional work on surveillance, epidemiology, modelling, diagnostics, clinical care and treatment, and other ways to identify, manage the disease and limit onward transmission. WHO has issued interim guidance for countries, which is regularly updated to take into account the current situation. Guidance has recently been issued on topics such as quarantine measures, citizen repatriations, and preparedness at workplaces.

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