

COUNTIES EASTERN/NORTHEASTERN

CREATING AWARENESS

Garissa begins week of Covid campaigns

STEPHEN ASTARIKO/ Garissa launched a Covid-19 sensitisation campaign on Wednesday to educate residents about the dangers of the virus and encourage them to go for vaccination.

Health executive Roble Nuno said there was a need for the public to adhere to government containment measures to stop the spread of the

disease. He called on residents not to lower their guard but continue to wear their masks properly, keep the recommended 1.5 meters physical distance when in public places, wash their hands regularly with soap and running water, and avoid crowded areas.

The awareness and sensitisation campaign is part of the measures

announced last Friday by the County Emergency Response Committee on Covid-19 chaired by Deputy Governor Abdi Dagane and county commissioner Boaz Cherutich.

The committee had called for a renewed push to sensitise the public on Covid-19 protocols following an increase in the rate of deaths and infection.

Roble said the positivity rate in the county continued to surge with the numbers of those in the ICU also going up. "We have noted with a lot of concern that residents of Garissa, especially within the town where the numbers keep surging, have dropped their guard. People are overcrowding in markets".



Garissa health workers receive the Covid-19 jab on March 12 /STEPHEN ASTARIKO

HIGH LEVELS OF WASTING

Mandera has worst child malnutrition rates

Health ministry data shows 11,725 children suffer severe acute malnutrition and 57,786 moderate condition

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Mandera has the highest number of children who are weak and emaciated due to poor nutrition, the Health ministry says.

Data from the Ministry of Health shows 69,511 children in Mandera have low weight for their height.

Wasting in children is a symptom of acute under-nutrition, usually as a consequence of insufficient food intake or a high incidence of infectious diseases especially diarrhoea.

The data shows that 11,725 are suffering from severe acute malnutrition, with 57,786 affected by moderate acute malnutrition.

Overall, 290,000 (four per cent) children in Kenya are wasted while 794,200 (11 per cent) are underweight.

Research attributes high levels of wasting among children to poverty, poor education and healthcare, particularly in the arid and semi-arid counties. Mandera, Wajir and Turkana counties are affected by both security concerns and frequent droughts.

Malnutrition contributes to 45 per cent of all under-five child deaths. Five in every 10 children die due to malnutrition. Poor breastfeeding and complementary feeding practices contribute to 19 per cent of the deaths.

"Things are not normal in the



Margret Atabo, a resident of Nabwelpus, Turkana Central, uses a MUAC tape to check malnutrition /HESBORN ETYANG

nutrition circles and there are regional disparities in the distribution. Malnutrition is everywhere even in those counties that are thought to be doing well, there are pockets especially in the slums within the town areas," nutrition officer at the Health Ministry Rose Wambu said.

"Better nutrition is related to

improved infant, child and maternal health, stronger immune systems, safer pregnancy and childbirth, lower risk of non-communicable diseases and longevity," she added.

The data shows that 54,438 children in Nairobi are wasted; 11,725 with severe acute malnutrition and 57,786 with moderate acute mal-

nutrition. Turkana comes third with 51,850 children who are wasted with 12,006 affected by severe acute malnutrition. Garissa has 35,954, Wajir 33,658, West Pokot 31,009, Kajiado 23,373, Narok 23,251, Baringo 20175 and Samburu 19,204.

At least 5,511 children in Garissa, 4,808 in Wajir and 5,015 in Samburu

are facing severe acute malnutrition.

"It is critical to promote compliance to the Breast Milk Substitutes Act, 2012, a law that seeks to protect breastfeeding by protecting mothers and caregivers from undue influence due to unethical marketing of breast milk substitutes and other designated products by manufacturers, distributors and retailers," head of the Department of Family Health Bashir Isaak said.

According to USAID, malnutrition in childhood and pregnancy has many adverse consequences for child survival and long-term well-being and has far-reaching consequences for human capital, economic productivity, and national development overall.

"Increasing numbers of children are residing in rapidly growing informal settlements around the country's major cities, often in poor living conditions, with limited access to services, and heightened risk of violence and abuse."

The agency notes that the consequences of malnutrition should be a significant concern for policymakers in Kenya, adding that although malnutrition indicators are improving, it is estimated that from 2010 to 2030 undernutrition will cost Kenya approximately \$38.3 billion in GDP due to losses in workforce productivity.

Kenya is experiencing the triple burden of malnutrition, with the coexistence of undernutrition, over-nutrition, as well as micronutrient deficiencies, also known as "hidden hunger".



Meru Health CEC Misheck Mutuma and secretary Rufus Miriti /DENNIS DIBONDO

FIVE DEAD

Meru closes offices after surge in Covid-19 cases

DENNIS DIBONDO/ The Meru government has closed its offices following a surge in Covid-19 cases.

Health executive Misheck Mutuma gave an update on the worrying situation.

"We have been recording an average of five to six cases in a week but we have noted a high increase in the number of cases for the last two weeks. We have seen the number rising up to 86 new cases," he said.

He said in the last two weeks five people have succumbed to Covid. Mutuma said among the 86 new cases,

22 were hospitalised, 12 are in Meru Teaching and Referral Hospital while 10 are at St Teresa's hospital in Kiirua.

"Covid is still with us once again. The risks are still very high. Our learning institutions have not been spared by this as two learning institutions have been closed," he said.

He said people should follow the Ministry of Health guidelines as the Delta strain is very severe.

"Officers from the health department in the county will go around with enforcement officers to ensure all people adhere to the protocols. Nobody will be allowed to sell or buy without a mask," he said.

Mutuma urged churches and other social gatherings to follow the Ministry of Health guidelines.

He said the two schools that were closed have been fumigated and several people tested. Mutuma said they have vaccinated about 26,000 people.