



THE NATIONAL ENVIRONMENT MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY

**ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES FOR
ESTABLISHMENT, REFURBISHMENT AND MODERNIZATION OF COVID-
19 EMERGENCY MEDICAL CENTERS IN KENYA**

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BACKGROUND

The novel corona virus (2019-nCoV), has been spreading across the world since December 2019. On 30th January, 2020 the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the 2019-nCoV outbreak as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC). The WHO defines a PHEIC as an “extraordinary event” that “constitute[s] a public health risk to other States through the international spread of disease” and “potentially require[s] a coordinated international response.

The first confirmed case of Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in Kenya was reported on March 13, 2020. Since then the number of confirmed cases have increased to over 5000. COVID-19 pandemic is posing significant social and environmental impacts on lives and economies across the globe with more severity in the low-and-middle income countries like Kenya.

The ministry of Health has projected a worst case scenario where there could be high person to person transmission in several communities in the country hence overwhelming the public health system. In the National Preparedness and Response Contingency Plan several pre-cautionary measures are being integrated to flatten the COVID-19 transmission curve and make the health system more resilient in managing the pandemic.

NATIONAL COVID-19 PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE PLAN

The government of Kenya through the National Emergency Response Committee (NERC) on COVID-19 is implementing a raft of National Preparedness and Response Action Plans. Among the strategies is establishment of quarantine, isolation and treatment centers to strengthen the health systems capacity to effectively provide Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) and case management of COVID-19 cases. Secondly, the Government is implementing Medical waste disposal programme to ensure the safe disposal of waste generated by laboratory and medical activities.

Ministry of Health has developed a number of protocols and management guidelines to ensure safe management of Covid-19 cases, safety products and facilities.

In support of the government measures to control and manage COVID-19 pandemic in a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) is implementing the National Guidelines for the Management of COVID-19 waste (NEMA 15.4.20 Guidelines) in line with the Environmental Management and Coordination (Waste Management) Regulations, 2006.

To further facilitate and enable realistic feasible timelines for implementation of the Government preparedness and response emergency plans, the Authority has developed the following guidelines on Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for establishment, refurbishment and modernization of COVID-19 Quarantine, Isolation and Treatment Centers.

OBJECTIVE:

The objective of these guidelines is to ensure that timely and appropriate safeguards and precautionary measures are planned and implemented in the establishment, refurbishment and modernization of COVID-19 Quarantine, Isolation and Treatment Centers through Environmental and Social Impacts Assessment in compliance with the provisions of the Environmental Management and Co-ordination Act, 1999 and the Environmental (Impact Assessment and Audit) Regulations, 2003.

THE GUIDELINES:

- 1. Reference to existing planning frameworks and policy direction:** COVID-19 Quarantine, Isolation and Treatment Centers are recommended to be undertaken within existing health facilities that have environmental protection facilities such as bio-hazardous waste management framework and wastewater treatment facilities. This is to ensure compliance with the area land use zoning requirements and reduce the risks associated with poor biomedical waste disposal as well as minimize the extent of Project Affected People and any potential displacement of persons, properties and livelihoods.
- 2. The Ecosystem Approach:** The COVID-19 medical centers shall be located away from sensitive ecosystems and infrastructure such as rivers, wetlands, wildlife migratory and dispersal areas, riparian reserves etc. All medical and chemical wastes shall be properly disposed of to prevent pollution of living natural resources.
- 3. Community Health and Safety:** Infection control and waste management requires that each proposed COVID-19 medical center shall have an elaborate infection control and waste management plan to ensure containment of the highly infectious Coronavirus disease from spreading to the neighboring communities. Strict adherence to the extra-precautionary measures to control spread of the pandemic like social distancing, hand washing and sanitization, wearing of face masks among others as provided in Occupational Safety and Health Advisory on Coronavirus (Covid-19) by Directorate of Occupational Safety and Health Services (DOSHS). In cases where the proposed COVID-19 medical center involves renovation of existing buildings that have Asbestos roofing materials, the works shall be in strict compliance with the National Guidelines on Safe Management and Disposal of Asbestos to protect the environment and minimize risk to workers and public from the hazardous asbestos fibers.
- 4. Public participation:** Adequate Stakeholder Engagement and Information Disclosure shall be developed for each COVID-19 medical center to ensure respect of human rights, dignity, aspirations, identity, culture and livelihoods of affected persons and communities. The affected persons and

communities shall appropriately be informed to be able to share in the benefits of the project in an inclusive and culturally appropriate manner (i.e. prevention and treatment). Any public participation shall be conducted in line with the NEMA guidelines on public consultation for EIA, EA and SEA during the period of the Corona Virus (COVID-19) Pandemic.

5. **Hierarchy to mitigate impacts and adequacy of environmental Management Plan:** all potential impacts shall be adequately identified and avoidance of adverse impacts prioritized and when avoidance is not possible, minimize, mitigate or compensate for such impacts to ensure sustainable development. An adaptable Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF) shall be put in place as a safeguard to all identified adverse impacts and emerging ones.
6. **Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) and Case Management:** Accessible grievance redress mechanism shall be made publicly available to receive and facilitate resolution of public concerns and grievances in relation to the COVID-19 medical center. A systematic COVID-19 case management shall be established allowing communication between quarantined people and their relatives.
7. **EIA Processing:** The COVID-19 Quarantine, Isolation and Treatment Centers that meet the above guidelines shall be processed at Summary Project Report level in accordance with the Environmental (Impact Assessment and Audit) (Amendment) Regulations, 2019 or as a variation of a valid existing EIA license as provided in regulations 25 of the Environmental (Impact Assessment and Audit) Regulations, 2003, subject to the variation complying with the requirements of the original license.
8. **Compliance Requirement;** The Authority call upon all health sector stakeholders to comply with these guidelines to ensure sustainable development of the COVID-19 Quarantine, Isolation and Treatment Centers in adherence to provisions of EMCA, 1999 and the regulations therein.

26th June, 2020