

PRESS RELEASE

EAC-CASSOA OPERATIONAL ACTIONS IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The rapid spread of Novel Corona Virus 2019 (COVID-19) across the world has been attributed to human mobility across countries, largely driven by air travel. Needless to say, many of the confirmed COVID-19 cases in the EAC region have also had a history of air travel. It is important to note that some airline operators are based in or transit through the East African Community Partner States, and operate direct flights into the affected Region.

The EAC Region has been on high alert because of Ebola, in the past, and their preparedness and response mechanisms are fairly developed. The East African Community Civil Aviation Safety and Security Oversight Agency (EAC-CASSOA) led by the Center for Aviation Medicine's Medical Assessor; Dr. Daniel Kirunda, has been at the forefront in conducting Technical Assistance/Support visits to all the EAC Partner States' International airports to evaluate the implementation of the Collaborative Arrangement for the Prevention and Management of Public Health Events in Civil Aviation (CAPSCA) Preparedness plan and provide intervention strategies, in conjunction with public health experts. As a result, airports in the EAC region enhanced their preparedness and response measures early and have been able to intercept several COVID-19 susceptible travellers through intensified surveillance and screening.

EAC-CASSOA in cooperation with AMREF Flying Doctors (AFD) has therefore organized an emergency COVID-19 Intervention Training for staff and other airport Stakeholders at eight (8) international airports in the six (6) EAC Partner States during this time of minimized activities at airports prior to resumption of normal travel. The Training is facilitated by the German Government through the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH in its effort to support States in their response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The objective of the Training is to enhance awareness of National and airport emergency preparedness and response plans, public health capacities at the airports and prevention and surveillance of the spread of COVID-19 in and out of the Region through airports. It is also geared towards building on and improving existing frameworks and resources to develop more robust emergency management systems and procedures while at the same time facilitating airport collaboration. The Training will target airport personnel in the following categories:

- Civil Aviation Authorities,
- Airport Health Services,
- Immigration,
- Cargo and Baggage Handlers,
- Security,
- Airline Operators,
- Rescue and Fire Fighters, and
- Customs.

The Course Design and Curriculum Development will be based on the International Health Regulations, best practices of the World Health Organization (WHO) and the US Centers for Disease Control (CDC), as well as the Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs) of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO).

It is anticipated that each class will have fifteen (15) participants - taking into account social distancing requirements - so that a total of two hundred and forty (240) key airport personnel will become Trained Trainers and are expected to spearhead the development and conduct the targeted Training Sessions for the rest of the airport personnel. The Training is scheduled to start in May 2020. It will be done by two Teams of three Trainers divided to cover the eight (8) identified airports over a period of about thirty (30) days. Subsequently, the Trained Trainers will develop and conduct their own classes to roll-out their brief training sessions. AFD and EAC-CASSOA will support the process, monitor and evaluate the progress.

The Training is in line with the EAC-CASSOA Vision of attaining a safe, secure and efficient regional aviation industry and their Mission to develop, promote and coordinate implementation of sustainable Civil Aviation safety and security oversight systems in the Partner States. It also covers measures highlighted in the EAC Regional Health Sector Novel Corona Virus 2019 (COVID-19) Emergency Response Plan.

EAC-CASSOA
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