

This update summarizes:

- ETHIOPIA'S COVID-19 SITUATION UPDATE.
- BRAVE, NEW AND DIVIDED POST-COVID-19 WORLD

ETHIOPIA'S COVID-19 SITUATION UPDATES

➤ As of January 7, 2021, there were a total of 127,227 COVID-19 cases and 1,966 deaths across the country. Compared to the cases and deaths reported a week ago, both the cumulative case and deaths showed increment by 2% and 1% respectively. So far 113,021 cases have recovered from COVID-19 which showed nearly a 0% increment compared to the last week. Of the 12,464 active cases currently, 226 are critical which forms 1% of them (Fig 1). The total number of tests stands at 183,652 showing a 1% increase compared to last week.

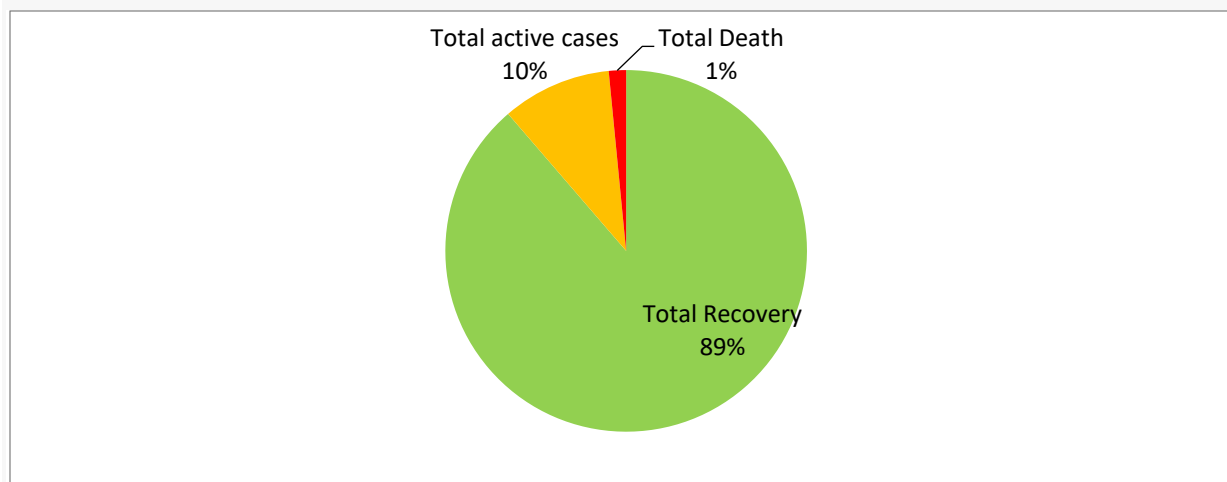


Fig. 1. Showing cumulative COVID-19 cases, recoveries and death as of January 7, 2020.

Case Management and Infection Prevention Control (Ipc):

- This week, Jan 1– Jan 7, 2020, there are 980 newly recovered cases bringing the total number of COVID-19 recovered cases to **112, 464**
- This week, Jan 1– Jan 7, 2020, **317** suspected cases are admitted
- This week, **80** initially suspected cases are discharged after laboratory test became negative

Home Based Isolation and Care (HBIC):

Since Home Based Isolation and Care (HBIC) is started in Ethiopia:

- A total **76,195** COVID-19 confirmed cases are followed in the HBIC as of January 7, 2020
- **69,942** of them have recovered in the HBIC as of January 7, 2020 **6,472** cases are currently on HBIC
- **9** COVID-19 related deaths have occurred in the HBIC
- **591** cases have been transferred from treatment centers to HBIC
- **363** cases have been transferred from HBIC to treatment centers

EPHI and FMOH COVID 19 response highlights of the week /trainings and supply

- Three days Basic COVID-19 Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) and counselling training for 29 Regional EOC Phone Handler Completed on Jan 1 /2020 at Sarem international Hotel, AA, Ethiopia.
- Two days Basic COVID -19 Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) and counselling training for 30 Regional EOC Phone Handler started on Jan 5/2020 at Bin international Hotel, Bishoftu City.
- Three days Covid-19 Basic IPC/WASH training for 32 Federal Police health staff working in Eastern Region started Jan 5/2020 at Triangle Hotel, Dire Dawa City.
- There is on-going distribution of PPE, Viral Transport Media (VTM), swabs, pharmaceuticals and other medical supplies isolation and treatment centers.

References

1. Public Health Emergency Operations Centers (PHEOC), Ethiopia https://twitter.com/lia_tadesse
2. <http://www.covid19.et/covid-19/>

BRAVE, NEW AND DIVIDED POST-COVID-19 WORLD

- In November 2020, three vaccine developers: AstraZeneca, Moderna and Pfizer/BioNTech have released encouraging data regarding the safety and efficacy of their potential COVID-19 vaccines. The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency has already given rapid temporary regulatory approval to the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine for use in the UK, and it is only a matter of time until regulatory agencies such as the Food and Drug Administration and European Medicines Agency approve one or more candidates for widespread human use.
- Initially, the focus will be placed on increased production, safe distribution and vaccination of high-risk individuals and healthcare workers. However, as production and availability of vaccines increase, governments will move on to vaccinate the general population in order to reach herd immunity as quickly as possible and to facilitate normalisation of everyday life.
- The herd immunity threshold for SARS-CoV-2 is estimated at 67%, but the exact percentage of population required to be vaccinated to reach it will depend mostly on the efficacy of the used vaccine. This will be further complicated by use of different vaccines with significantly different efficacies. Therefore, the goal should not be to vaccinate a fixed percentage of the population but to strive and vaccinate as high a proportion as possible, if not the whole population.
- Efforts aimed at reaching herd immunity to SARS-CoV-2 will certainly be hindered by vaccine hesitancy both in the USA and Europe and elsewhere, with significant geographical differences in vaccine uptake, where entire regions, and sometimes whole countries, will likely fail to achieve sufficient vaccine uptake to reach herd immunity levels. This could prove problematic since it will lead to new COVID-19 outbreaks occurring periodically, thus impeding post pandemic recovery.
- What would happen if we fail to defeat COVID-19 through widespread vaccination and how could our future coexistence with this virus look like? A potential answer to this question came recently from an unexpected source: the airline companies! Several international ones, including Qantas, Korean Air and Air New Zealand, have all announced that they

are seriously considering requiring all their international passengers to be vaccinated and to provide proof of their COVID-19 vaccination status as soon as vaccines become widely available.

- Such statements sound as if they were taken directly from a dystopian novel, where an already split world has been divided even further between those that were vaccinated and those that were not. It is not particularly hard to imagine a reality in which COVID-19 vaccination proof is required not only for international flights but also for participation in all social activities involving large numbers of people, such as concerts, sport events, theatre plays and cinema screenings, where unvaccinated individuals will be forced to continue practising a form of social distancing. Furthermore, some public services like state childcare and education might also remain available to vaccinated individuals only. Most importantly, SARS-CoV-2 will continue to circulate in the population, causing completely preventable deaths. Even though such a future provides for grim reading, it could still be completely avoidable, if we plan accordingly and take proper actions.
- Instead of focusing on divisions, our aim should be on emphasising the benefits of vaccination and on fighting the misinformation, fear, uncertainty and doubt sown by the antivaxxer and antiscience movements in order to minimise the worldwide impact of COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy. If we wait for vaccines to become widely available to start conducting educational interventions in that regard, it may be too late to achieve meaningful impact.
- Finally, once widespread vaccination becomes available, vaccination refusal will replace COVID-19 as the leading worldwide health problem. If we all hope to get our lives back to normality after 2020 and to be reading about pandemics and future dystopias only in the books, we really ought to start fighting vaccine hesitancy by increasingly educating the general public about the benefits of vaccines as soon as possible.

Reference

1. Marcec, R., Majta, M. and Likic, R. (2020) 'Brave, new and divided post-COVID-19 world', *Postgraduate Medical Journal*, p. postgradmedj-2020-139572. doi: 10.1136/postgradmedj-2020-139572.