

## Outbreak Brief #61: Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Pandemic

Date of Issue: 16 March 2021

**119,612,568 cases and 2,650,049 deaths**

*Data sources: World Health Organization and African Union Member States*

**Outbreak Update:** Since the last brief (9 March 2021), 3,083,440 new confirmed<sup>1</sup> coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) cases and 60,154 new deaths have been reported globally. To date, a total of 119,612,568 COVID-19 cases and 2,650,049 related deaths (case fatality rate (CFR): 2.2%) have been reported from 225 countries and territories. The distribution of cumulative cases (proportion of global cases) from the World Health Organization (WHO) reporting regions (excluding Africa) are as follows: Eastern Mediterranean Region 5,784,179 (5%), European Region 41,185,704 (34%), Region of the Americas 52,929,629 (44%), South-East Asia Region 13,917,115 (12%) and Western Pacific Region 1,720,559 (1%). Over the last seven days, Brazil, the United States, France, Italy, India and Poland have each reported more than 100k new cases. For more detailed information on cases and deaths being reported outside of Africa, refer to the WHO daily situation reports.<sup>2</sup>

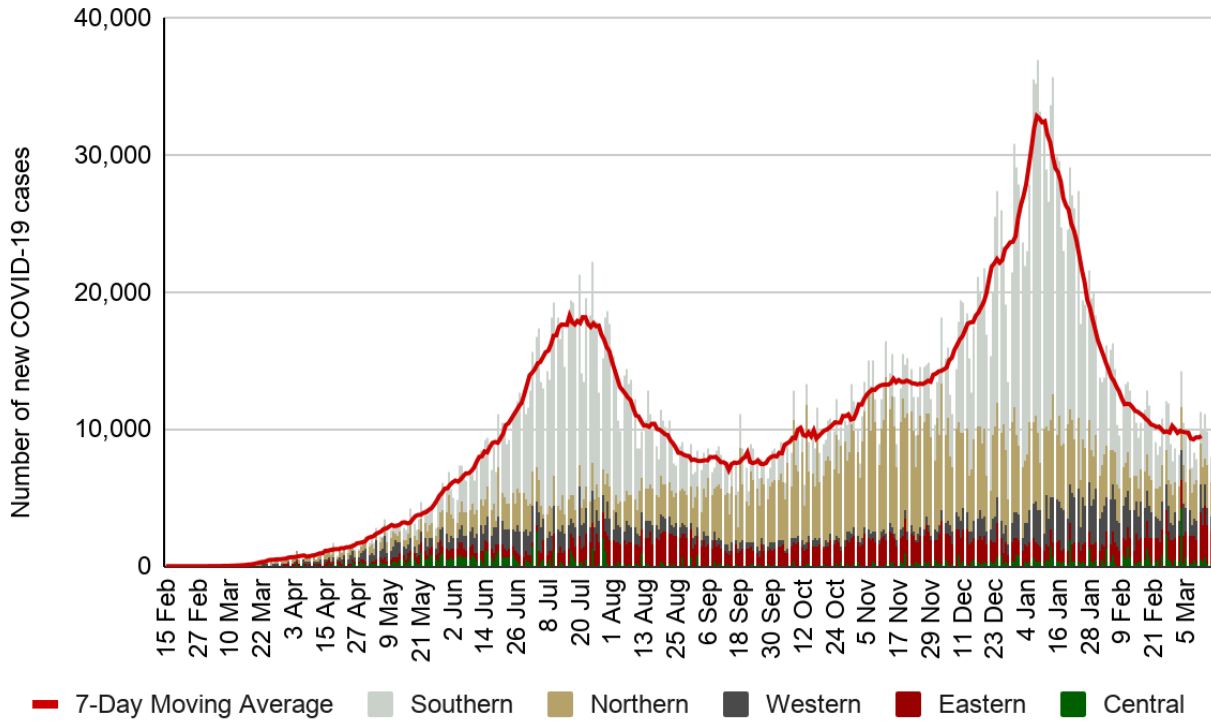
**As of 9 am East African Time (EAT) 16 March 2021,** a total of 4,042,736 COVID-19 cases and 108,087 deaths (CFR: 2.7%) have been reported in 55 African Union (AU) Member States. This is 3.5% of all cases reported globally. Figure 1 shows the trend of new COVID-19 cases reported by day from 15 February 2021 to 16 March 2021. The curve continues to trend downward to the level reported in October 2020. The majority (91%) of Member States continue to report community transmission. Of the countries actively reporting COVID-19 epidemiologic data, 21 are reporting case fatality rates higher than the global case fatality rate of 2.2%: Sahrawi Republic (16.7%), Sudan (6.3%), Egypt (5.9%), Liberia (4.2%), Mali (4.1%), Somalia (4.1%), Zimbabwe (4.1%), Comoros (4.0%), Eswatini (3.8%), Niger (3.7%), Chad (3.6%), Tunisia (3.5%), South Africa (3.4%), Malawi (3.3%), Gambia (3.0%), Lesotho (2.9%), DR Congo (2.6%), Algeria (2.6%), Senegal (2.6%), Mauritania (2.5%), and Angola (2.4%).

<sup>1</sup> WHO COVID-19 surveillance guidance and case definition: <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/who-2019-nCoV-surveillanceguidance-2020.7>

<sup>2</sup> WHO coronavirus disease (COVID-19) dashboard: <https://covid19.who.int/>

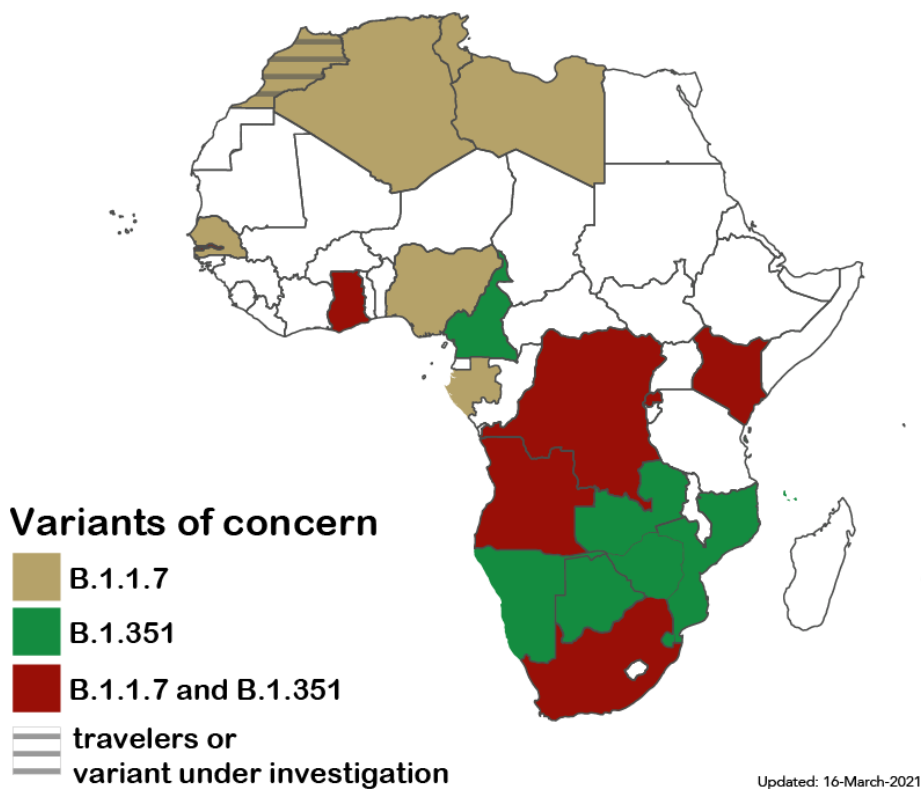
Currently, 22 Member States are reporting the presence of either one or both of the following **variants of concern**: 501Y.V1 variant (lineage B.1.1.7)<sup>3</sup>, 501Y.V2 variant (B.1.351). See Figure 2 for the breakdown of variant types reported by Member State.

**Figure 1: New COVID-19 cases reported by day in Africa by African Union region, 15 February 2020 - 16 March 2021.**



<sup>3</sup> Also described as VOC 202012/01

**Figure 2: Variants of concern (501Y.V1 and 501Y.V2) reported by African Union Member State<sup>4</sup> as of 16 March 2021.**



**For Epi week 10 (8 - 14 March 2021),** 66,516 new COVID-19 cases have been reported, which is a 3% decrease in the number of new cases reported compared to Epi week 9. The majority of new COVID-19 cases being reported for this week are from the Eastern (28%) followed by the Northern (28%), Southern region (26%), Western (15%) and Central (3%) regions. This week, seven countries account for about 61% of the new COVID-19 cases reported: Ethiopia (14%), South Africa (13%), Libya (10%), Egypt (7%), Kenya (7%), Tunisia (6%), and Côte d'Ivoire (4%) The countries reporting the highest incidence (COVID-19 new cases per 100,000 population) this week include Seychelles (365), Libya (93), Botswana (87), Sao Tome and Principe (64) and Cabo Verde (53). Table 1 lists the reported COVID-19 cases and deaths by Member State in Africa for epi week 10 and the current phase of the epidemic for each country.

<sup>4</sup> 501Y.V1/B.1.1.7 variant: Algeria, Angola, DR Congo, Eswatini, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Libya, Kenya, Morocco, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, and Tunisia. 501Y.V2/B.1.351 variant: Angola, Botswana, Cameroon, Comoros, DR Congo, Eswatini, Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Rwanda, South Africa, and Zambia

**Table 1. Confirmed COVID-19 cases and deaths<sup>5</sup> reported in Africa for epi week 10 (8 March 2021 - 16 March 2021)**

Country	Number of cases (new)	Percent change in new cases since the previous Epi week (9)	Number of deaths (new)	Percent change in new deaths since the previous Epi week (9)	Epidemic phase <sup>6</sup>
<b>Central Region</b>	<b>112,530 (2,271)</b>	<b>-63%</b>	<b>1,882 (62)</b>	<b>158%</b>	
Burundi	2,461 (142)	29%	3 (0)	NA*	3
Cameroon	38,988 (0)	-100%	588 (37)	NA*	3
Central African Republic	5,066 (43)	231%	64 (1)	NA*	3
Chad	4,309 (132)	-31%	153 (11)	450%	3
Congo Republic	9,329 (150)	-58%	131 (0)	-100%	3
DR Congo	27,077 (450)	-32%	717 (5)	No change	3
Equatorial Guinea	6,562 (191)	-31%	98 (2)	-50%	3
Gabon	16,660 (1,035)	-2%	96 (6)	-14%	3
Sao Tome and Principe	2,078 (128)	-22%	32 (0)	-100%	3
<b>Eastern Region</b>	<b>438,326 (18,650)</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>8,104 (336)</b>	<b>84%</b>	
Comoros	3,635 (34)	13%	146 (0)	-100%	3
Djibouti	6,268 (122)	53%	63 (0)	NA*	3
Eritrea	3,038 (94)	-3%	7 (0)	NA*	3
Ethiopia	175,467 (9,329)	32%	2,550 (121)	89%	3

<sup>5</sup> Data is continuously verified for accuracy and reliability, thus may change based on retrospective updates from Member States.

<sup>6</sup> Phases defined according to Africa CDC's Recommendations for a stepwise COVID-19 response -

<https://africacdc.org/download/recommendations-for-stepwise-response-to-covid-19/>: **Phase 0 (No COVID-19 case)**: no reported case in-country; **Phase 1 (Early stage outbreak)**: one or more imported cases, limited local transmission related to imported cases; **Phase 2 (Expanding outbreak)**: increasing number of imported cases, increased local spread but all cases linked to known transmission chains, outbreak clusters with a known common exposure; **Phase 3 (Advancing outbreak)**: localized outbreaks start to merge, one or more cases or deaths occur outside known transmission, multiple generations in transmission chains, cases are detected among severe acute respiratory illness (SARI) case with no known exposure; **Phase 4 (Large outbreak with nationwide transmission)**: widespread sustained community transmission, multiple generation transmission chains can be identified but most cases occurring outside of chains, community-wide transmission throughout all or nearly all of the country.

Kenya	113,236 (4,409)	54%	1,913 (37)	85%	1
Madagascar	21,587 (1,432)	NA*	334 (34)	NA*	3
Mauritius	761 (122)	321%	10 (0)	NA*	2
Rwanda	20,186 (635)	-9%	280 (12)	71%	3
Seychelles	3,315 (365)	2%	16 (1)	-75%	3
Somalia	9,190 (869)	-18%	367 (65)	3%	3
South Sudan	9,554 (684)	-20%	104 (2)	-75%	3
Sudan	30,989 (449)	133%	1,959 (64)	327%	3
Tanzania	509 (0)	NA*	21 (0)	NA*	3
Uganda	40,591 (106)	-10%	334 (0)	NA*	3
<b>Northern Region</b>	<b>1,200,718 (18,811)</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>34,318 (664)</b>	<b>-2%</b>	
Algeria	115,173 (1,031)	-10%	3,038 (23)	-23%	3
Egypt	190,924 (4,421)	8%	11,300 (305)	-1%	3
Libya	146,080 (6,422)	16%	2,402 (114)	46%	3
Mauritania	17,438 (116)	1%	444 (2)	100%	3
Morocco	488,937 (2,714)	6%	8,723 (41)	-31%	3
Tunisia	242,124 (4,107)	-6%	8,404 (179)	-12%	3
Sahrawi Republic	42 (0)	NA*	7 (0)	NA*	3
<b>Southern Region</b>	<b>1,873,394 (16,937)</b>	<b>-12%</b>	<b>58,191 (812)</b>	<b>-14%</b>	
Angola	21,380 (294)	5%	521 (7)	17%	3
Botswana	34,999 (2,087)	-4%	447 (34)	-58%	3
Eswatini	17,237 (53)	-69%	661 (3)	-50%	3
Lesotho	10,530 (7)	-78%	309 (2)	-87%	1
Malawi	32,831 (389)	-22%	1,083 (14)	-44%	2
Mozambique	64,516 (1,996)	-37%	725 (32)	-38%	3
Namibia	41,200 (1,170)	-1%	458 (20)	43%	3

South Africa	1,529,420 (8,352)	9%	51,326 (648)	-5%	3
Zambia	84,797 (2,376)	-39%	1,158 (34)	3%	3
Zimbabwe	36,484 (213)	17%	1,503 (18)	-18%	3
<b>Western Region</b>	<b>412,401 (9,847)</b>	<b>-18%</b>	<b>5,369 (148)</b>	<b>-31%</b>	
Benin	6,501 (163)	-77%	81 (0)	-100%	1
Burkina Faso	12,372 (191)	-4%	144 (1)	No change	3
Cape Verde	16,101 (319)	-16%	156 (2)	-71%	3
Côte d'Ivoire	37,653 (2,718)	25%	211 (11)	38%	3
Gambia	5,019 (227)	125%	153 (0)	-100%	3
Ghana	87,985 (910)	-61%	691 (24)	-49%	3
Guinea	17,851 (1,026)	25%	103 (8)	33%	3
Guinea-Bissau	3,447 (135)	170%	52 (3)	200%	3
Liberia	2,030 (6)	-40%	85 (0)	NA*	3
Mali	8,913 (333)	63%	360 (2)	-60%	3
Niger	4,860 (32)	-64%	182 (5)	No change	3
Nigeria	160,657 (2,122)	-26%	2,013 (44)	-29%	3
Senegal	36,892 (1,035)	-23%	963 (44)	-6%	3
Sierra Leone	3,937 (17)	-48%	79 (0)	NA*	3
Togo	8,183 (613)	-8%	96 (4)	-50%	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,037,369 (66,516)</b>	<b>-3%</b>	<b>107,864 (2,022)</b>	<b>-1%</b>	

\*No new cases/deaths reported in the previous week.

## NEW Africa CDC Response Activities

### General:

1. Last Thursday (11 March 2021), Dr. Nkengasong hosted Africa CDC's weekly press briefing with guest speaker H.E. Birgitte Markussen, Ambassador and Head of European Union Delegation to the African Union. The recording is available on the [Africa CDC Facebook page](#).

2. On 18 March 2021 at 3pm EAT, Africa CDC, in collaboration with the Korea World Bank Partnership Facility, World Bank, African Society for Laboratory Medicine and Quintiles and IMS Health, will hold a meeting discussing “The role of Regional Public Health Institutions in improving disease surveillance and response in Eastern and Southern Africa”. Register [here](#).
3. On 18 March 2021 at 3pm EAT, Africa CDC will host the Public Health Emergency Operations Centres (PHEOCs) and COVID-19 Incident Management System webinar series on the topic 'Administration and Finance Function'. Register [here](#).

#### **Laboratory:**

1. To date, over 37.8 million tests for COVID-19 have been conducted across the continent with a positivity rate of 10.6% and test per case ratio of 9.4. For epi week 10, 694,482 new tests were conducted, which is a 2.0% decrease when compared to the previous week (759,633 tests).
2. The Africa CDC Laboratory TWG with the mobilization of PACT partners such as Global Fund, WHO, AU, UNICEF, UNDP, Korean government, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Unitaid and Elma, Rockefeller, Global Affairs Canada, and FIND, supplied 19.3 million antigen test kits and started distribution to Member States since January 2021.
3. Sierra Leone and Malawi received 40,000 PCR testing kits procured by the United Nations Office for Project Services through the support of the Korea International Cooperation Agency.

#### **Healthcare Preparedness and Medical Countermeasures:**

##### *Case Management*

1. On 17 March 2021, Africa CDC’s Case Management TWG will conduct an in-country training on case management for Equatorial Guinea.

##### *Infection and Prevention Control (IPC)*

1. This week, the IPC TWG and partners will hold a sixth webinar series titled “IPC issues on COVID-19 vaccination roll-out ”. The English session is on Wednesday, 17 March 2021 at 1 pm EAT. Register [here](#). The French session is on Friday 19 March 2021 at 2 pm EAT. Register [here](#).

#### **Sciences, Standards and Regulations:**

1. Access the biweekly COVID-19 Scientific and Public Health Policy Update which is published every other week on Tuesdays at <https://africacdc.org/resources/> or the [WHO AFRO link](#). Subscribe [here](#) to receive the weekly Partnership for Evidence-Based Response to COVID-19 (PERC) update and all other products or visit the [PERC](#) and [Africa CDC website](#).

## Recommendations for the Member States

1. Member States should continue to enhance their COVID-19<sup>7</sup> surveillance efforts to include:
  - a. Syndromic surveillance like influenza like illness (ILI) and severe acute respiratory infections (SARI).<sup>8</sup>
  - b. Rapid mortality surveillance that includes the collection, analysis and use of all-cause mortality data collected through the facility- or community-based surveillance.<sup>9</sup>
  - c. Genomic surveillance<sup>10</sup> to monitor variant presence and spread as well as the continued evolution of the virus.
2. Member States should continue to perform contact tracing<sup>11</sup> of confirmed cases based on transmission type and country capacity and enhance diagnostic screening efforts with the use of rapid antigen tests<sup>12</sup>.
3. All Member States should notify and routinely share data regarding confirmed COVID-19 cases, deaths, recoveries, tests conducted and healthcare workers infected with WHO and Africa CDC to continually inform these and other updates. Notify Africa CDC by emailing: [AfricaCDCEBS@africa-union.org](mailto:AfricaCDCEBS@africa-union.org).
4. Member States should continue to guide the general public about seeking immediate medical care for those who develop severe symptoms (i.e. difficulty breathing).
5. Member States should put in place or strengthen existing public health and social measures as cases start to rise.

## Resources for more information

- Africa CDC COVID-19 updates: <https://africacdc.org/covid-19/>
- Africa CDC Resources, policy guidelines, and infographics: <https://africacdc.org/covid-19/covid-19-resources/>
- Partnership for Evidence-Based Response to COVID-19 (PERC) <https://preventepidemics.org/covid19/perc/>
- WHO. Technical Guidance. <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/technical-guidance>

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<sup>7</sup> [WHO COVID-19 Case definition](#)

<sup>8</sup> Africa CDC Protocol for enhanced surveillance for COVID-19 in Africa: [Protocol for Enhanced Severe Acute Respiratory Illness and Influenza-Like Illness Surveillance for COVID-19 in Africa – Africa CDC](#)

<sup>9</sup> Revealing the toll of COVID-19: A technical package for Member States – Africa CDC

<sup>10</sup> Genomic sequencing of SARS-CoV-2: a guide to implementation for maximum impact on public health

<sup>11</sup> Africa CDC Guidance on Contact Tracing for COVID-19 Pandemic: <https://africacdc.org/download/guidance-on-contact-tracing-for-covid-19-pandemic/>

<sup>12</sup> [Interim Guidance on the Use of Rapid Antigen tests for COVID-19 Response – Africa CDC](#)