

THE EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE OF MALAWI



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OUR REF:

YOUR REF:

24th April 2020

Very Rev. Fr. Anthony Makunde
Secretary General
AMECEA Secretariat
Gitanga Road
P.O. Box 21191
00505 Nairobi
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Dear Very Rev. Father Anthony,

EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE OF MALAWI'S RESPONSE TO COVID-19

1. WHAT ECM HAS DONE AND CONTINUE DOING

The Episcopal Conference of Malawi (ECM) has been following the Corona Virus Disease (Covid-19) Situation Reports shared by the World Health Organisation and the Malawi Ministry of Health and Population (MoHP). Through these, ECM started responding to the pandemic before Malawi registered its first confirmed cases. The response was mainly on putting in place a contingency plan and raising awareness on Covid-19. The key interventions include:

- i. Institutionalization of Covid-19 Taskforces at both the National Office (Catholic Secretariat) and Diocesan Offices. The taskforces were mandated to develop Contingency plans which would guide the Conference in terms of operations and implementation of projects amidst Covid-19. The teams were also mandated advise the Local Ordinaries, the Office of the Secretary General and the Conference, and also develop strategies that would be used in responding to the pandemic. (ECM *Contingency Plan attached*).
- ii. Issuing and dissemination of ECM guidelines signed by the ECM President, Most Reverend Thomas Luke Msusa, for all church structures to avoid the spread of corona virus. These guidelines were issued when Malawi had not yet registered confirmed cases (*Attached*). Further Directives have been issued in view of Lockdown.
- iii. Communication through the office of the Secretary General on holding special prayers. These special prayers held on PALM Sunday, 5th April 2020 in homes, Small Christian Communities and churches had two objectives of which one of them was; praying for God's intervention and protection from Covid-19 pandemic in the country and entire world (*Communication and Prayers attached*). Further

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All official correspondence to be addressed to the Secretary General

clarifications have been made by the office of the Secretary General regarding directives from Government.

- iv. Sensitization workshops for staff, the clergy, pastoral agents and health workers facilitated by the Health Commission in all dioceses.
- v. Mobilization of infection prevention materials including hand sanitizers, handwashing facilities and liquid hand soaps for use in offices and churches.
- vi. Issuing and dissemination of ECM directives for the lockdown period signed by all Bishops and the diocesan Administrator. These directives were issued when it was announced that Malawi will be on lockdown for 21 days from 18th April 2020. However, an injunction on lockdown was sought by civil society rights group and granted by the High Court Judge for 7 days. However, the conference maintained the directives (**Directives attached**).
- vii. Development of a Covid-19 concept note and shared with potential donors. The concept note is mainly on awareness raising and empowerment of communities to prevent the spread of the virus. Discussions with the partners are underway and some have made pledges.
- viii. Mobilization of resources through Sunday Collections to be used towards implementation of the prevention and treatment strategies (*Communication attached*).
- ix. Currently in process of adapting Covid-19 messages developed by the (MoHP). These will be printed on leaflets and shared with communities and some will be turned into jingles and aired on Catholic media houses.

2. CHALLENGES

ECM is facing some challenges in responding to the pandemic. The challenges include:

- i. Inadequate resources in health facilities especially treatment for Covid-19 patients and personal protective equipment (PPEs) for health workers.
- ii. Inadequate financial support to effectively reach out to communities with Covid-19 messages.
- iii. Banning of gatherings poses a challenge in reaching out to communities. The church has to adopt new ways of reaching out to communities e.g. use of social media, use of Catholic media houses.
- iv. Lack of space within the health facilities to accommodate Covid-19 patients. There is need for allocation of isolation centres within the facilities. This requires financial support to either pitch up tents or refurbish existing rooms.

3. SUPPORT NEEDED

ECM, through the Covid-19 Taskforces, Pastoral and Health Commissions, is mobilizing resources for use in the Covid-19 response. The support is needed for the following:

- i. Procurement and distribution of PPEs and other infection prevention materials for health facilities.
- ii. Procurement of drugs and treatment for Covid-19.

- iii. Production and distribution of Behaviour Change and Communication materials that will be shared with all church structures and communities.
- iv. Production and broadcasting of programmes for airing on radio and television stations
- v. Production of biblical and spiritual messages in all forms.

I hereby share the documents.

Yours sincerely in Christ,



Rev. Fr. Henry Saindi

SECRETARY GENERAL – EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE OF MALAWI

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24 APR 2020

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