COVID-19 pandemic in the Gambia

The COVID-19 pandemic was confirmed to have reached The Gambia in March 2020.

COVID-19 pandemic in Gambia	
Disease	COVID-19
Virus strain	SARS-CoV-2
Location	The Gambia
First outbreak	Wuhan, China
Index case	Banjul
Arrival date	17 March 2020 (4 months and 2 days)
Confirmed cases	61 (as of 6 July)[1]
Active cases	31 (as of 6 July)
Recovered	27 (as of 6 July)
Deaths	3 (as of 6 July)

Contents

Background

The largest hospital in the Gambia is Edward Francis Small Teaching Hospital (EFSTH), which is a tertiary referral hospital in the capital city Banjul. In 2012 it was reported that there were three other tertiary hospitals, 38 health centres, and 492 primary health posts. The leading causes of mortality in the country are malaria and tuberculosis.[2] There are two medical schools in the country, at the University of the Gambia and the American International University West Africa,[3] as well as MRC Unit The Gambia, formerly run by the United Kingdom's Medical Research Council, and now run by the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine.[4] Political health leadership is provided by the Minister of Health and Social Care, who is currently Ahmadou Lamin Samateh, the former Chief Medical Director of EFSTH.[5]

Disease prevention

According to the National Health Sector Strategy Plan 2014–2020, disease control and prevention in The Gambia is the responsibility of Epidemiology and Disease Control (EDC). EDC is the focal point for integrated disease surveillance and response (IDSR). It emphasises notifiable diseases and diseases of epidemic potential.[6]

Timeline

WHO response

On 31 December 2019, the World Health Organization (WHO) was informed of a cluster of pneumonia cases of an unknown cause in the city of Wuhan, China. This outbreak was declared a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) on 30 January 2020, and in turn was characterised as a pandemic by the WHO from 11 March.[7]

COVID-19 in The Gambia

The first case of COVID-19 in The Gambia was reported on 17 March and received treatment at MRC Unit The Gambia's specialist clinic in Fajara.[8] The patient was a woman in her thirties who had travelled to The Gambia from the United Kingdom on 15 March, and had gone into self-isolation after feeling feverish. The Ministry of Health said it was in the process of contacting and isolating all the passengers on the flight.[9][10]

The first death in The Gambia took place on 23 March.[11] By the end of March there had been 4 confirmed cases, 3 of whom remained active.

At the end of April there were 11 confirmed cases, 7 more than at the end of March. Eight patients had recovered, the death toll remained 1, and there were two active cases.[12]

In May there were 14 confirmed cases, bringing the total number of confirmed cases to 25. The death toll remained unchanged. By the end of the month 20 patients had recovered, leaving 4 active cases.[13]

In June there were 24 confirmed cases, bringing the total number of confirmed cases to 49. The death toll rose to 2. By the end of the month 27 patients had recovered, leaving 20 active cases.[14] Model-based simulations indicate that the 95% confidence interval for the time-varying reproduction number R_t has been stable above 1.0 since early June.[15]

Government measures

Overseas travel by public officials was suspended by a circular issued by President Adama Barrow on 13 March.[16] Barrow ordered all universities to close and for all gatherings to cease on 17 March.[17] On 18 March, sessions of the National Assembly and hearings for the Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission were suspended.[17] Flights from 13 countries were suspended on 19 March. Passengers arriving from a further 47 countries would have to undergo a mandatory 14-day quarantine.[18]

The only facility with capacity for COVID-19 testing in the country is MRC Unit The Gambia. According to their website, testing is arranged by appointment only, organised through a Ministry of Health specialist phone number.[19]

Response

The governments of The Gambia and its sole neighbor, Senegal, agreed to close their border for 21 days starting 23 March, with exceptions for "essential services" and transporting food and medicine. The Gambia's airspace was also closed, with exceptions for medical flights and transporting goods.[20] Health minister Ahmadou Lamin Samateh acknowledged that enforcing the border closure was challenging, but said that the closure was important for fighting COVID-19.[21]

On 27 March, President Adama Barrow declared a state of emergency, ordering places of worship and non-essential businesses, prohibiting gatherings of more than 10 people, and limiting passengers on public transportation.[22]

On 28 March, the Jack Ma and Alibaba Foundations donated test kits and personal protective equipment to the Gambia to help fight the pandemic.[23]

Businesspeople were arrested for price gouging.[24]

Impact

The tourism industry was affected by the pandemic, causing hardship for Gambians who depend on tourism for their incomes. Many restaurants and hotels were closed, with only a few hotels remaining open for tourists stranded by travel restrictions.[25]

See also

- COVID-19 pandemic in Africa
- COVID-19 pandemic by country and territory

References

1. "Gambia Coronavirus - Worldometer" (https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/country/gambia/). *www.worldometers.info*. Retrieved 6 July 2020.
2. Kretzschmar, Imogen; Nyan, Ousman; Mendy, Ann Marie; Janneh, Bamba (May 2012). "Mental health in the Republic of The Gambia" (https://www.cambridge.org/core/services/aop-cambridge-core/content/view/E135B098BC877D2B5F172D49543B5447/S1749367600003076a.pdf/mental_health_in_the_republic_of_the_gambia.pdf) (PDF). *International Psychiatry*. **9** (2): 38–40. PMC 6735051 (https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6735051). PMID 31508116 (https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/31508116).
3. "Medical Schools in Gambia" (http://www.accessgambia.com/tag/med-schools.html). *Access Gambia*. Retrieved 31 March 2020.
4. "Statement on the transfer of Medical Research Council Unit The Gambia to the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine" (http://www.mrc.gm/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/MRC-Unit-The-Gambia-at-LSHTM-Statement-on-Transfer-to-the-London-School-of-Hygiene-Tropical-Medicine-final.pdf) (PDF). *MRC Unit The Gambia*. May 2018. Retrieved 31 March 2020.
5. "Gambia: Dr. Samateh Appointed Health Minister" (https://www.freedomnewspaper.com/2019/03/27/gambia-dr-samateh-appointed-health-minister/). *Freedom Newspaper*. 27 March 2019. Retrieved 31 March 2020.
6. "National Health Sector Strategic Plan 2014-2020" (http://www.moh.gov.gm/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/National-Health-Sector-Strategy-Plan-2014-2020.pdf) (PDF). *Ministry of Health*. Retrieved 1 April 2020.
7. "Rolling updates on coronavirus disease (COVID-19)" (https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/events-as-they-happen). *World Health Organization*. Retrieved 1 April 2020.
8. "Confirmed Case of COVID-19 In The Gambia" (https://www.mrc.gm/confirmed-case-of-covid-19-in-the-gambia/). *MRC Unit The Gambia*. 17 March 2020. Retrieved 1 April 2020.
9. Darboe, Mustapha K. (18 March 2020). "Gambia confirms first coronavirus case" (https://www.aa.com.tr/en/africa/gambia-confirms-first-coronavirus-case/1769877). *Anadolu Agency*. Retrieved 1 April 2020.
10. "Gambia announces first coronavirus case" (https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2020/03/18/gambia-announces-first-coronavirus-case-.html). *The Jakarta Post*. 18 March 2020. Retrieved 2 April 2020.

11. "Covid 19 : Premier cas de décès en Gambie" (https://senego.com/covid-19-premier-cas-de-de ces-en-gambie_1062090.html). *Senego* (in French). 23 March 2020. Retrieved 2 July 2020.

12. "Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) situation report 101" (https://www.who.int/docs/default-sourc e/coronaviruse/situation-reports/20200430-sitrep-101-covid-19.pdf?sfvrsn=2ba4e093_2) (PDF). *World Health Organization*. 30 April 2020. p. 8. Retrieved 2 July 2020.

13. "Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) situation report 133" (https://www.who.int/docs/default-sourc e/coronaviruse/situation-reports/20200601-covid-19-sitrep-133.pdf?sfvrsn=9a56f2ac_4) (PDF). *World Health Organization*. 1 June 2020. p. 7. Retrieved 2 July 2020.

14. "Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) situation report 163" (https://www.who.int/docs/default-sourc e/coronaviruse/situation-reports/20200701-covid-19-sitrep-163.pdf?sfvrsn=c202f05b_2) (PDF). *World Health Organization*. 1 July 2020. p. 8. Retrieved 2 July 2020.

15. Future scenarios of the healthcare burden of COVID-19 in low- or middle-income countries, MRC Centre for Global Infectious Disease Analysis at Imperial College London.

16. "Gambia Suspends Overseas Travels By Public Officials To Curb Spread Of Coronavirus" (http s://foroyaa.gm/gambia-suspends-overseas-travels-by-public-officials-to-curb-spread-of-corona virus/). *Foroyaa*. 13 March 2020. Retrieved 2 April 2020.

17. "COVID-19: Gambia, Senegal to close border for 21 days" (https://www.aa.com.tr/en/africa/cov id-19-gambia-senegal-to-close-border-for-21-days/1776298). *Anadolou Agency*. 23 March 2020. Retrieved 2 April 2020.

18. "COVID-19: Gambia suspends flights from 13 countries" (http://thepoint.gm/africa/gambia/articl e/covid-19-gambia-suspends-flights-from-13-countries). *The Point*. 20 March 2020. Retrieved 2 April 2020.

19. "Information on COVID-19 Testing at the MRC Unit The Gambia at LSHTM" (https://www.mrc.g m/information-on-COVID-19-testing-at-the-mrc-unit-the-gambia-at-lshtm/). *MRC Unit The Gambia*. 18 March 2020. Retrieved 1 April 2020.

20. "COVID-19: Gambia, Senegal to close the border for 21 days" (https://www.aa.com.tr/en/africa/ covid-19-gambia-senegal-to-close-border-for-21-days/1776298). Retrieved 1 April 2020.

21. "Health Minister Calls on People to Respect the Border Closure" (https://foroyaa.gm/health-min ister-calls-on-people-to-respect-the-border-closure/). *Foroyaa Newspaper*. 28 March 2020. Retrieved 1 April 2020.

22. Mbai, Pa Nderry (27 March 2020). "BARROW DECLARES A STATE OF EMERGENCY, AMID CORONA INFECTION CASES IN THE GAMBIA!" (https://www.freedomnewspaper.com/2020/ 03/27/barrow-declares-a-state-of-emergency-amid-corona-infection-cases-in-the-gambia/). *Freedom Newspaper*. Retrieved 1 April 2020.

23. "Gambia receives support to contain spread of COVID-19 - Gambia" (https://reliefweb.int/repor t/gambia/gambia-receives-support-contain-spread-covid-19). *ReliefWeb*. Retrieved 31 March 2020.

24. "Police Arrest Traders for Over pricing Commodities" (https://foroyaa.gm/police-arrest-traders-f or-over-pricing-commodities/). *Foroyaa Newspaper*. 30 March 2020. Retrieved 1 April 2020.

25. "Coronavirus Cripples Gambia's Leisure Industry" (https://foroyaa.gm/coronavirus-cripples-ga mbias-leisure-industry/). *Foroyaa Newspaper*. 30 March 2020. Retrieved 1 April 2020.