

# Post-COVID-19: How to prepare for the next pandemic

South Sudan urgently needs a pandemic influenza preparedness strategy if we are to survive the next big one.<sup>[1]</sup> COVID-19 was the wake-up call. Globally, as of April 2023, there were 764,474,387 confirmed cases of COVID-19, including 6,915,286 deaths.<sup>[2]</sup>

Although the COVID-19 pandemic did not cause so much devastation and deaths in many African countries, including South Sudan, it could have been worse, considering our poor health infrastructure and high poverty levels.

As the world reviews the effects of COVID-19 and discusses the lessons learned, texts are being written about the next pandemic and how to prepare for it. Recently the World Health Organization launched its new pandemic prevention plan.<sup>[3]</sup>

For the resource-rich world, preparedness for the next pandemic revolves around early identification and containment of the new virus, development and distribution of vaccines against the virus, stockpiling effective personal protective equipment, and preventing the disease from getting into their countries.

In a globalized world, a new deadly virus could spread quickly. Policymakers must ensure that South Sudan develops a pandemic influenza preparedness strategy. If implemented well, the strategy would prevent or slow the entry of the virus into the country, increase surveillance and detection, reduce its spread, and prepare for mass casualties and hospitalizations.

Here are a few recommendations on what needs to be done:

- Establish a permanent national pandemic preparedness and response coordinating body
- Focus on preventing entry of the disease into the country
- Establish surveillance systems for early detection of cases
- Set up prevention strategies and activities
- Prepare for large numbers of hospitalizations and deaths nationwide
- Prepare to maintain critical functions and recovery after the pandemic
- Provide adequate funding to support the rapid implementation of the plan

Among the many health priorities we face as a country, the fear of another pandemic may seem far-fetched. However, the recent re-emergence in nearby countries of viruses such as Ebola Virus Disease should be our call to be better prepared.

## References

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