



NATIONAL MUSEUMS OF KENYA

WHERE HERITAGE LIVES ON

**PROTOCOLS FOR RESUMPTION OF NATIONAL MUSEUMS OF  
KENYA**

**(GALLERY AND SITE VISITATION SERVICES) DURING THE  
COVID-19 CRISIS**

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## **Foreword**

The National Museums of Kenya (NMK) receives almost one million (1 million) visitors within all its 28 museums across the country annually. Majority of these visitors (75%) are educational groups whose aim is to learn and experience knowledge in the heritage sector. Since the onset of the COVID-19 Pandemic, all museums and cultural facilities run by the Institution were closed.

This dealt a big blow to the institution as it has been operating partially with most of its public facilities closed for visitation and many of its staff working from home through teleworking mode. So far, no case of COVID-19 has been reported among its staff or any of its research affiliates.

It is therefore urgent that resumption of operations within the Institution be allowed to caution further distress. Moreover, with the growing mental health, abuse and restlessness of the public due to lack of enjoyment facilities and minimal travel, museums and heritage sites within the country can offer therapy.

The Institution has heavily borrowed reopening protocols from the International Council of Museums (ICOM), an international body that was created in 1964 by museum professionals for the purposes of guiding and establishing best practices and standards of excellence in the museum business and operations. Many museums in the world today have reopened following these protocols.

## **General Principles**

1. Observe strict social distancing
2. Continuous monitoring and evaluation of the situation
3. Use of personal protective equipment in all the premises
4. Restriction of activities involving external personnel
5. Keeping safety and health of the public and NMK staff as the utmost priority
6. Ensuring regular handwashing and observance of cough etiquette
7. Proper use of face masks by public and NMK staff
8. Safe handling, storage and disposal of PPEs



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**Definition of Terms:**

“museum” means any facility that is visited by the public for heritage and cultural enjoyment and that is under the management of the National Museums of Kenya.

“gallery” means any room/space which contains cultural and heritage exhibition within a museum.

“curatorial” means duties related to management of collections and objects displayed in the galleries.

“disinfection” means the procedure whereby health measures are taken to control or kill infectious agents on a human or animal body surface or in or on baggage or spaces by direct exposure to chemical or physical agents;

## **INTRODUCTION**

On 12 January 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) confirmed that a novel corona virus was the cause of a respiratory illness in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China, reported to the WHO on 31 December 2019. Covid 19 as is referred today was declared a global pandemic by the WHO and has spread to every corner of the world to date. The effects of the pandemic include disruptions of social, economic and political establishments in the World including government services, global transport, financial and critical health services. The pandemic has disrupted virtually every aspect of individual, corporate, communal and global organizations livelihoods.

The first Covid 19 case was reported in Kenya on 13<sup>th</sup> March, 2020. The President thereafter directed that the following measures to curb COVID-19 be implemented among others:

- Travel from any countries with any case of Corona virus is restricted.
- Only Kenyan Citizens, and any foreigners with valid residence permits will be allowed to come into the country provided they proceed on self-quarantine or to a government designated quarantine facility.
- All schools and higher learning institutions be closed.
- Government and businesses people start working from home; except essential services.
- Cashless transactions over cash and Cost of transactions be reduced.
- No congressional meetings – weddings, malls, night clubs, churches and limitation of visits to hospitals.
- Offices and public places be equipped with soap and water/hand sanitizers, and regular cleaning of facilities.

The National Museums of Kenya (NMK) is a Government agency bound by these as well as other government regulations and policies. In the light of the COVID 19 epidemiological situation, the Government containment measures and WHO medical guidance, with the primary objective to protect the health and safety of the public, employees and their families, the Institution's public facilities including museums were closed on 16 March 2020. Since then, the Institution has been operating partially with most of its public facilities closed for visitation and many of its staff working from home through teleworking mode. No case of Covid-19 has been reported among its staff or any of its research affiliates. This positive outcome can be attributed to the institution following the laid down containment measures by the government in which only a small section of its staff performing essential services has been physically attending to these work stations. Similarly, these essential workers have followed all other recommendations including social distancing, wearing of masks and sanitizing.

Although the above has been achieved and followed, NMK like many other business facilities has greatly borne the wrath of closure of its public facilities.

The Institution's operational budget is dire with no gate collections/revenue coming in. This means the institution is at the verge of permanent closure if the situation is not addressed. Daily running costs and utility bills have now turned into pending bills. In addition, the conservation and maintenance of Kenya's heritage is threatened. NMK has a collection of over 10million specimens within its facilities and these need to be preserved, conserved and taken care of. In addition, the institution has the responsibility of over 370 gazetted sites and monuments and 28 museums across the country. It is therefore urgent that resumption of operations within the Institution be allowed to caution further distress.

Moreover, with the growing mental health, abuse and restlessness of the public due to lack of enjoyment facilities and minimal travel, museums and heritage sites within the country can offer some form of therapy. It is therefore proposed that all museums be reopened to the public beginning July 20<sup>th</sup>, 2020 with the caution and gradualism required to ensure the safest environment for any person wishing to visit as well as workers offering services, while also maintaining the preparedness capacity to face an eventual occurrence of the epidemic at any time. If any occurrence is detected within any of its premises, NMK will be prepared to activate a flexible response measure.

## **Preventive Strategies**

**In order to prevent and or control the spread of Coronavirus, The National Museums of Kenya will ensure;**

- i) Provision of hand washing bays with soap and water at all museums, sites and workplaces
- ii) Provision of sanitizers in the galleries and workplaces
- iii) Provision of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) i.e. masks, gloves, for personnel with direct contact with customers/visitors
- iv) Daily/Routine Washing and Disinfecting of the galleries and workplace
- v) Provision of non-contact temperature recording devices for screening of customers and staff at the entry of the museums/workplace.
- vi) Provision of an isolation room in case of any suspected case in the any of the museums.
- vii) Enforcement of the required prevention protocols which include customers and staff washing or sanitizing hands before entering museums or workplace, keeping social distance, screening at the entrance of museums/workplace
- viii) Sensitization of customers and staff through various platforms of communication at the museums and within the workplaces
- ix) All visitors are appropriately wearing masks, and that at no time shall the masks be removed while on board.

## **Applicable measures for Specific Procedures and respective sections**

### **The Public**

- Only a maximum number of visitors will be allowed into any specific museum as per its capacity and recommendations of Ministry of Health (MoH). This information will be relayed to the public at the entry point
- Only a maximum number of visitors per exhibition room will be allowed and this information will be relayed to the public at the entry point as well as within the gallery (the number will be set in accordance to the size of the gallery per square meters to allow a safety distance of 1.5 m between each visitor)
- Each gallery will have an average visit time to establish time slots
- There will be gradual reopening of exhibitions depending on nature of exhibition. For example, exhibitions which are highly interactive will not be reopened until there is clarity on containment of virus
- As far as possible, a booking system will be set up (online, by phone and/or by e-mail).
- For specific museums, (E.g. Nairobi National Museum an online ticketing system shall be activated. Online tickets can be scanned by visitors themselves at the entrance to the museum
- Cashless payments only to be allowed (M-pesa, Visa cards, online and mobile banking)
- Opening hours will be 8.30am-5pm.
- Specific visiting hours will be considered for special groups e.g. elderly and Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) where necessary
- Details of all visitors including their confirmed contacts to be taken at entry points for any future communications related to their visit
- All visitors to keep within allowed and designated localities within the museum compound.
- Notify the public of context-related restrictions on the institution's website (if applicable) and before entering the museum

### **Public Access – Flow of Visitors**

- Lines and entrance of visitors will be managed
- Consider ground markings for lines to ensure that the recommended distance of 1.5 m is maintained
- Ensuring distance between visitors and reception counters, possibly installing glass to protect staff and visitors
- Avail holding location for visitors if maximum is achieved inside the galleries (Tents and consider social distancing)
- Only one-way tour of the galleries to ensure traffic flows of entrances and exits will be maintained
- There will be limited guided tours and educational tours will be managed through online booking or only provided if a safe distance between participants is respected.
- Group visits will be restricted and will follow MoH guidelines on groupings.



- The openings of common commercial areas (cafeteria, bookshop, shops) are subject to specific national regulations

### **Public Access – Strengthening Health Measures**

- All visitors to wear masks
- All visitors coming in groups or individually will be required to register at the entrance and the register shall be maintained for a period of 1 month. (This will make easier contact tracing in case one person in a group develops signs and symptoms or illness)
- All visitors to wash hands with water and soap for 40-60 seconds. Hand washing facilities will be installed in different localities.
- Hand sanitizer dispensers to be installed in different localities especially the entrances of museums and inside the galleries for visitors to sanitize for 20-30 seconds.
- All visitors to be taken temperatures and if over the specified level of 37.5° c and above, be subjected to MoH guidelines.
- All visitor vehicles to be disinfected and sanitized and held within defined car parking areas.
- Ensure that visitors have access to washing areas including clean toilets (allowing them to wash their hands with soap and water and giving preference to disposable hygienic material in this respect) and adapt this access to the rules of social distancing in force (marking on the ground, etc.)
- Facilities for Differently Abled persons and exposed devices should be cleaned frequently with disinfectants
- All ventilations within the galleries to remain unobstructed for free flow of air

### **Public Access – Restricting Some Access if Necessary**

- Restricting access to rooms and facilities that cannot be fully cleaned or disinfected
- Closing installations (e.g. contemporary art) that involve visitor interaction
- Lifts will be reserved for persons with reduced mobility, ensuring that the distance of 1.5 m is respected between each user. The control buttons must be disinfected after each use
- Establish one-way flow through the museum and within galleries, to facilitate distancing.

### **Baggage holding areas**

- There will be limited access to luggage holding areas. Visitors are encouraged to leave their luggage in their vehicles and any luggage left within the holding area will be sprayed and disinfected. The Baggage holding areas shall be disinfected very often

### **Admission of School Groups (Upon Government's Approval of School Events and Visitations)**

- Ensure that all schools book prior to visit to enhance controlled numbers of admissions
- Admit a specific manageable number of students per day at intervals
- Take temperatures of students and teachers/guardians on arrival
- Designate specific parking area for school buses so as to enhance proper monitoring of school groups on arrival until exit
- Proper briefing of teachers and students on health and safety rules to observe
- Ensure that all students wear masks
- Restrict vendors within the museum compound
- Provide enough hand washing points with enough water and soap where they will wash on arrival and further sanitize at various places within the premises
- Establish smooth traffic flow within the galleries to avoid congestion of groups within galleries
- Control the amount of time spent within a specific gallery
- Ensure proper ventilation and disinfect all surfaces regularly
- Create barriers to avoid contact with show cases and or objects within and outside the Museum
- Audio guides should be used where possible to minimise use of guides
- Promote on- line and outreach programs.
- Maintain a clear register of the students coming in and keep the register for a period of one month.

### **Cleaning and Conservation Measures**

- All areas of the museum accessible to the public will be cleaned and disinfected regularly. This is particularly for toilets and customer care areas. Cleaners will always be at hand to make sure these facilities are cleaned and disinfected more regularly than previously
- Consider closure of premises whenever necessary for the purposes of conservation of museum collections so that it is done by a minimal number of conservators without public access
- Provide the cleaners and conservators with protective gear while undertaking their duties
- Share with the public your cleaning protocols and steps you are taking to ensure their safety— this can be done online in the website, or physically throughout the museum (e.g. main entrance, gallery entrances, bathrooms).
- Provide pedal waste bins with liners to dispose of used masks, gloves, and any other items suspected to be contaminated with COVID-19.

## **Outsourced service providers**

- All service providers shall adopt the protocols set by the National Museums of Kenya in cleaning and provision of services.

## **Staff and Workers**

- There is need for training of all staff on issues related to COVID-19, its effects and protection as well as the protocols required to reopen the facilities prior to reopening. The staff should be in sufficient numbers so as to sustain shift work.
- Ensuring that sick employees stay home or leave the premises immediately. This includes implementing flexible sick leave and supportive policies and practices.
- Identify a room or area to separate anyone who exhibits COVID-19 like symptoms, and immediately sending home or seeking medical attention for anyone with symptoms (e.g., fever, cough, shortness of breath).
- Designate a specific staff person or team to be responsible for responding to COVID-19 concerns. Identify the person or team to staff and let staff know how to contact them.

## **Reception and Security Staff**

- Controlled number of security staff and customer care must be present at the reception desk and in the museum rooms to ensure not only that there is sufficient distance between the visitor and the works on display, but also to make sure there is sufficient distance between visitors themselves.
- Provide staff with adequate protective devices (cash register protection, masks, disinfectants), mandatory condition for opening to the public

## **Curatorial and Office Duties**

- Only have a small number of essential workers on duty each time and on two weeks rotation
- Have all staff undergo testing prior to opening of the facilities?
- Continue re-testing the staff to make sure they are free of the virus
- Temperature control - Any staff measuring a temperature higher than 37.5° will be subjected to the MoH guidelines.
- The areas accessible to staff to be cleaned and disinfected regularly
- Common equipment used by several staff members will need to be disinfected regularly. In the absence of disinfection standards, this equipment shall not be used
- Staff will clean their workplace daily with alcohol-based wipes or paper towels, regardless of the cleaning service in place
- Any employee whose activity does not require an on-site presence will continue to work from home and in accordance with national regulations

## **Communication and Emergency**

- Public announcement and notices on reopening and protocols to be followed to be developed and availed through all forms of media
- Clearly visible similar communications/messages/notices to be posted in several places within each premises including main entrances and within the galleries
- Avail contacts within each premises for communication including duty roasters
- Avail emergency contacts and protocols in case there is any health issue detected within the premises
- Avail a holding area for any health related case for pick up and have this always cleaned and disinfected
- Have emergency protective gear including masks
- Regular monitoring and communication by the Public Relations on the situation and change of any of the protocols
- Avail posters for COVID-19 at reception and other conspicuous areas
- Avail posters for occupancy limits and hand washing at all strategic places.

**Notice Reminders to all Staff & Visitors: If you feel unwell, do not visit museums or any of its facilities.**

**NB: Individual Museums and Stations have tailored their protocols from the above general protocols.**