

GOVERNMENT OF THE KINGDOM OF ESWATINI



PRIME MINISTER'S STATEMENT

PROGRESS REPORT ON REOPENING OF SCHOOLS

Following the decision to reopen schools on the 6th July 2020, Government has continued to monitor the safety of schools in the midst of the Coronavirus pandemic and implement stringent mitigation strategies.

The situational analysis emanating from these inspections indicate that schools are, by and large, a safe place for learning even at this time of the COVID-19 pandemic. Preventative measures such as screening, wearing of face masks, cleaning using disinfectants, regular washing of hands and continuous learning about COVID-19 are implemented on a daily basis in schools. In addition, Government is providing meals for learners within the confines of the COVID-19 regulations and guidelines to minimize risk of transmission.

The Ministries of Health and Education are working closely with schools and have developed tools, operation procedures and guidelines on how schools can cope and continue operating under the prevailing COVID-19 situation. Continuous training is being conducted for all stakeholders to increase safety in schools.

Health teams have been deployed in all four regions to monitor and attend to all schools' concerns with regard to the pandemic, and a National Schools Health team which consists of doctors is in place to assist all schools.

In view of the current stable situation as observed with the Form 5 and completing classes at Tertiary institutions, Government has decided to open more levels with effect from Monday 24 August 2020. The phases will be as follows:

Level	Status	Term 2	Term 3
Form 3	Open	24 th August 2020	27 th October 2020
	Close	23 rd October 2020	18 th December 2020
Grade 7	Open	1 st September 2020	2 nd November 2020
	Close	30 th October 2020	18 th December 2020

The return of learners on these dates will give them adequate time to prepare for their examinations whose dates will be announced by the Examinations Council of Eswatini in due course.

Similarly, more levels at Tertiary institutions will be allowed to return to class and resume face-to-face instructional learning from Monday, 24 August 2020. They are as follows;

- Second year students to finish content and practical subjects - 24th August – 4th September, 2020
- First year students to finish content and practical subjects- 14th September – 25th September, 2020

The new Academic year 2020/2021 for Tertiary Institutions begins on 5 October, 2020

It is worth noting that tertiary institutions are similarly inspected to ensure that they comply with safety precautionary measures and guidelines for COVID-19 prevention and control.

Tertiary institutions will adopt blended-learning, that is face-to-face and E-Learning approaches, in order to avoid huge gatherings and congestion in classes. We appeal to Internet Service Providers to offer reasonable internet rates to enable students to cope with this learning approach.

It is however disheartening to learn from the situational reports that a noticeable number of learners have not returned to school mainly due to pregnancy. Other learners have taken illegal and informal jobs. We kindly encourage these learners to prioritize their education. It is no secret that education provides a strong foundation for a better and successful future for themselves, communities and the Kingdom. The school environment still provides a safety net for students to refrain from immoral and illegal activities.

Government recognises that education remains critical to the realisation of our development objectives as a country. We will therefore continue to prioritize education and closely monitor the situation in schools and tertiary institutions to ensure safety of both learners and teachers.

His Majesty's Government is grateful to all teachers and education stakeholders who are committed to helping students achieve their educational aspirations despite the nagging challenges and threats of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Government continues to upscale its fight against COVID-19 with an increased door to door campaign in, especially, hotspot areas. We are grateful to His Majesty King Mswati III whose efforts have allowed a number of our international friends and partners to help

the Kingdom in this fight. Just yesterday we received a team of very experienced doctors from the Republic of Cuba who are here to aid our COVID-19 interventions, especially to prevent deaths.

We are proud that our current health teams consist of 12 newly graduated Emaswati doctors who returned late last year from different countries such as South Africa, Russia and Ukraine. They are already on the ground working in the COVID-19 response.

This year, we have received an additional 23 Emaswati doctors who recently graduated from Taiwan and Cuba. We welcome them home and are looking forward to their valuable expertise in helping us improve our health system.

We continue to appeal to all Emaswati to remain vigilant and never allow complacency to creep as we intensify our COVID-19 response and engage on an accelerated drive to revive our economy.

Thank you.

Ambrose Mandvulo Dlamini
PRIME MINISTER
KINGDOM OF ESWATINI

20 AUGUST 2020