



## EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN THE REP. OF NAMIBIA EVANGELIES LUTHERSE KERK IN DIE REP. VAN NAMIBIË

!Gâi-#hwa Kerkib Lutheri dib Namibiab !na - Ongerki jEvangeli ja Luther mu Namibia

Ongeleki onkwaevangeli paLutheri moNamibia

### THE OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

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✉ 5069 Windhoek — ☎ +264 (61) 224531/2/3 — Fax: +264 (61) 226775 —  
Email: [keibs@iway.na](mailto:keibs@iway.na) & [bishop@elcrn-nam.org](mailto:bishop@elcrn-nam.org) & [bishop@elcnam.org](mailto:bishop@elcnam.org)

**02<sup>nd</sup> July 2020**

### **RE: Urgent appeal for ELCRN COVID-19 Impact and Response**

#### **Introduction**

We are facing one of the greatest challenges in living memory in our country. It is evident that the impact of COVID-19 situation has moved from worse to catastrophic. It unavoidably calls for the active involvement by all sectors of society to yield positive results and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia (ELCRN) as one of the largest denominations is also most affected and has the moral authority to intervene!

Our public and private health systems are collapsing and unable to cope and deal with the prevailing crisis worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic. Hospitals, clinics and almost all health facilities are overwhelmed. The health workers are in short supply (as some get infected and unable to work). There is a critical shortage of vaccines. The Mortuaries are full to capacity. There are indeed wide spread reports of the short supply and/or the lack of Oxygen at hospitals. As a nation we are at crossroads.

The Pandemic is causing a mental health crisis that might have devastating effects on citizens in the short, medium and long-term. The country has limited capacity to deal with this challenge.

On 14 March 2020, Namibia reported its first two cases of COVID-19. Fast forwarded, the latest reports on 29<sup>th</sup> June 2021, indicate Cumulative Confirmed Cases 89 917 from a total sample tested 529 147, with a Recovery rate of 75% and current Active Cases of 21 055. COVID-19 Deaths were 1 521 till 29<sup>th</sup> June 2021. Namibia with a population of less than 3million inhabitants, the spread of the diseases and the consequent impact is unsustainable!

According to the attached National COVID-19 Briefing of 29<sup>th</sup> June 2021 by President Dr Hage Geingob, the number of new cases per day has more than tripled, since the first week of June, from an average 507 cases per day, to the current average of 1,798 cases per day. Over the past two weeks, a total of fifty-nine-thousand-and-fifteen (59,015) tests have been conducted, with a positivity rate of 41 percent. Expert projections and simulation tools indicate that the rising incidence curve, during this Third Wave, is expected to peak around mid-August and may continue well until mid-September 2021.

### **COVID-19 Response - Vaccination campaign**

The nationwide vaccination in Namibia was launched on 19 April 2021 in all 14 Regions. The Cumulative COVID-19 vaccine 1<sup>st</sup> doses were administered to 119 571 and Cumulative COVID-19 vaccine 2<sup>nd</sup> doses administered to 24 242. Namibia as of 29<sup>th</sup> June 2021, received 197, 200 doses of COVID-19 vaccines. The majority of these doses have been used up and only a limited stock remains, 35 503 doses of vaccines remains in different districts around the country, Of these, 12 195 are AstraZeneca and 23 311 are Sinopharm.

### **The current status of procurement of COVID-19 Vaccines by Namibian government**

<b>Vaccines</b>	<b>Quantity</b>	<b>Supplier</b>	<b>Expected date of delivery</b>
AstraZeneca	40 800	COVAX Facility	Remainder doses, early July, 2021
AstraZeneca	120 000	AZ Europe	Mid July, 2021
Sinopharm	150 000	Sinopharm	Early July, 2021
Sinopharm	100 000	UAE	Early July, 2021
J & J	250 000	AVATT	Early August, 2021

### **Impact of COVID-19 on socio-economic situation**

Economic situation is worsening as more and more people get unemployed, with no new job opportunities. The poverty and hunger are rampant and skyrocketing. People who were marginalized and destitute even before the pandemic are in worse conditions and facing extreme starvation.

Before COVID-19 pandemic, Namibia, although politically stable was already a country in socio-economic crisis! Despite the efforts and achievements after independence in March 1990, food insecurity, malnutrition, overburdened and sometimes inefficient education and health systems, high unemployment rates and low levels of local economic development are still serious challenges. In the absence of economic security for the majority, precarious living

conditions and poverty are still widespread. **This all was made worse by the covid-19 pandemic** and the urgent need to secure livelihoods independent of wage labour became even more apparent. Thousands of jobs have already been lost and the national unemployment rate is likely to reach around 50% by the end of 2021.

Losses of jobs and income were particularly severe in sectors such as hospitality and tourism, construction, work in private households and informal trading where the effects of the lockdown were immediately visible. This affects Namibia's 72,000 household employees (domestic workers) as well as around 100,000 people working in aviation, hospitality and tourism. Hotels, restaurants, tour operators and airlines either had to suspend activities partially or in total. Similarly, construction which employed about 45,000 people in 2018 was severely affected by the lockdown while informal traders experienced huge losses of income.

Social impacts included the trauma experienced by families that were unable to bury their loved ones (especially during limitations of only 10 people per funeral and if cause of death was covid-19 related), or visit the sick in hospital, the increase in Sexual Gender Based Violence cases, teenage pregnancies, rising and increase cases on hunger and starvation is a daily reality for many families. The psychological impact on children due to months of schools closures still has to be accessed. Closer of church services and prohibition of large gatherings also greatly affected the spiritual, and social cultural life of citizens.

On the political front, Namibian government has received positive recognition from World Health Organization(WHO), especially its Africa Office for the leadership and swift action in handling the pandemic. The daily media briefings and stakeholder discussions on various media platforms in particular received praised even from local political opposition and there has been general consensus on Namibia's response to the crisis.

### **Impact of COVID-19 on ELCRN**

President Dr Hage Geingob as part of governments response, declared a six-month state of emergency from March 2020 till September 2020, starting with complete and later partial lock downs in various regions and towns. During this period, most church services were suspended and limited worship services were held online where possible (in less than 15% of Parishes with such facilities). During the state of emergency and to date, social gatherings that includes churches were limited from time to time between 10, 50 and 100 participants and this severely restricted resumption of church services.

ELCRN Parishes derives their income mainly from and during church services and therefore income from offerings have drastically decreased. The above-mentioned socio-economic crisis also had impact of the church members contributions to their Parishes. Most ELCRN Parishes have reported over the past months that they are struggle to cover the most basic cost of their Parishes including the Pastor's salary, payment of municipal services and other

basic running cost of the Parish. This situation has become unbearable as some Pastors have not received their monthly salaries or allowances for months now.

Impacts on the ELCRN Head Offices is even more severe as the 40% contribution that the Parishes are supposed to make for the maintenance of the Head Office has not been forthcoming from Parishes since the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic was felt by the Parishes. The income from 40% contribution is significant to the ELCRN Head Office budget and accounts for about 30% to 40%???. Consequently, ELCRN Head Office is struggling to meet its basic liabilities including salaries of staff and paying for utilities. ELCRN will not be in a position to assist its staff members with monthly salaries without some external assistance to cover the shortfall left by the contribution by member Parishes and other income streams affected by COVID-19.

### **ELCRN COVID-19 Response – 2020 -2021**

*In response to this unprecedented challenge, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia (ELCRN) has launched the ELCRN COVID-19 Response Project, to prevent the further spread of COVID-19 and to mitigate its negative impacts.*

As part of this response, ELCRN has launched awareness raising and education of families and households on steps to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and complimenting and supporting government efforts with screening, referral for testing and management of COVID-19. This was done through the recruitment, training and deployment of 200 community health volunteers throughout the country.

In addition, advocacy activities were launched to popularize the Emergency Income grant of N\$750 launched by the Ministry of Finance to ensure most eligible beneficiaries benefit and also to advocate for a continues basic income to combat the economic impacts of COVID-19 and poverty in general.

The ELCRN COVID-19 Project also assisted with the training of deployment of 100election observers for the Regional and Local Authority Elections on 25<sup>th</sup> November 2020, in particular assisting with COVID-19 compliance and electoral laws.

Currently the ELCRN COVID-19 Response Project has entered into a partnership with the Ministry of Health and Social Services to assist with the Vaccination Campaign (see attached

letter by Bishop Sageus /Keib to Ministry of Health). In this regard, 10 Lead Trainers of ELCRN will be trained (training of trainers) by the Ministry on the Vaccine roll-out to train other volunteers. ELCAP Mobile Health Van will also be utilized to offer basic education and community mobilization and be used as an outreach facility to provide vaccines when they become available.

We are also investigating availing ELCRN facilities to be utilized by government to expand their services to infected and affected persons including our guest houses, church buildings and offices where suitable and appropriate and required.

### **Urgent emergency assistance required by ELCRN**

It is against the background of the above-mentioned reality and emergency that the ELCRN would like to kindly and urgently appeal for spiritual, material, financial and logistical support from our partners locally and internationally. In this regard we require urgent emergency assistance in the following areas:

- Urgent assistance with the Vaccination Campaign by acquiring vaccines to support and compliment government efforts and by advocating with and through international bodies to pressurise G7 governments and their pharmaceuticals companies to deliver the vaccines promised through COVAX and other mechanism. This could also include lobbying with individual governments to make vaccines available.
- Financial resources to support the above-mentioned activities as part of the ELCRN COVID-19 Response Project including support with the Vaccination Campaign, outreach through volunteers and other interventions. This should also include resources for a advocacy campaign to lobby government for a targeted basic income to combat the worse impacts of COVID-19 in particular hunger and loss of income due to job losses.
- Funding to mitigate the impact of the income shortfall on ELCRN budget to cover most basic including salaries to avoid laying off people and other consequences. This could also include allowances and subsidies to cover Pastors salaries and with food parcels where appropriate and required on a needs basis.

- Training of Trainers program for Pastors in psychosocial counselling relating to COVID-19 including on bereavement support for a national roll-out within Parishes in hospitals and quarantine facilities in Namibia.

With the kindest regards,

Right Reverend Bishop S. |Keib

