

Brief on Public Health and Social Measures Implementation in Africa

June 2-15, 2020

COVID-19



Aims and Approach

Aims

- This report aims to **inform decision-making about the implementation of public health and social measures (PHSMs)** on the African continent by synthesizing data from multiple sources to identify key trends. These trends are linked to operational recommendations which can support national-level responses.
- The intended audience is decision-makers involved in the COVID-19 response in African countries, including **national task forces and/or emergency operations centers**.

Approach

- The report compiles and synthesizes data on COVID-19 trends in Africa from multiple data sources for the period June 2-15, 2020.
- Recommendations are based on observed trends as well as technical expertise and guidance reflecting the latest scientific knowledge—including social and behavioral science—relevant to the use of PHSMs.

Data Sources

- Data include official reports of cases and deaths, reports of government response measures, analysis of traditional and social media narratives, and reported security incidents. Further details are included in the Annex.
- Data are summarized and analyzed by the five African Union regions.

Methods and Limitations

Analysis

- **Epidemiological analysis** is based on standard surveillance metrics. Descriptions of indicators and methods of calculation are included in the Annex.
- For **traditional and social media analysis**, research is conducted using online, open-source African media, geo-located Twitter sources in Africa, and geo-located Facebook sources in Africa. Article and quote-level metadata are added by Novetta Mission Analytics. Results are culled on the basis of relevance to PHSM implementation, resulting in a sample of 674 media articles (3,199 quotes), 1,046 tweets, and 1,230 Facebook posts from June 1-14, 2020.

Limitations

- Analysis of **public health and social measures** (PHSMs) implementation and **security incidents** are based on publicly available data repositories and may not include all relevant events.
- **Traditional and social media data** are qualitative in nature and reflect the varying media and social media environments of the countries included. The data are not intended to be representative of the views of the full populations of these countries.
- Available data sources cover different date ranges and some are subject to delays and retrospective corrections.
- Findings reflect the latest available information at the time of analysis.

Disease Dynamics

Key trends

- **The Southern region** is experiencing a rapidly growing COVID-19 epidemic, with new cases and deaths doubling when comparing June 2-15 to May 19-June 1.
- This trend is driven by **South Africa** which reported 37,000 new cases and more than 400 deaths during June 2-15.
- Several countries across the continent reached **epidemiological “triggers,”*** signaling accelerating growth in cases (Eritrea, Mauritania, Morocco, Lesotho, Malawi, Cabo Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Niger, Sierra Leone and Togo).
- In addition, many other countries have shown **new cases more than doubling** (Libya, Liberia, Mozambique, Rwanda, Ethiopia, Eswatini, and South Africa).

Key recommendations

- Governments should continue efforts to rapidly scale up surveillance, contact tracing, and care for COVID-19 cases, collaborating with the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention and the [Partnership to Accelerate COVID-19 Testing \(PACT\) in Africa](#).
- Given continued global issues around testing capacity, governments should also closely monitor other key indicators to detect increasing cases—for example syndromic data for Influenza-like illness and hospitalizations. Metrics such as the percentage of tests that are positive and percentage of new cases from quarantined contacts can also indicate public health capacity (see guidance [here](#).)
- Governments should communicate with citizens about the potential need to increase PHSM restrictions in future in areas with rapid transmission or if capacity to treat COVID-19 patients safely is overwhelmed.
- Countries should closely monitor new cases to detect accelerating transmission over the coming weeks.

*Epidemiological triggers = cases doubling in five days or less or 10% growth in cases for three consecutive days during the period of analysis

PHSM Implementation

Key trends

- While some countries have extended public health and social measures (PHSMs), **many are loosening** despite acceleration of case transmission.
- There is **significant negative sentiment** toward PHSMs across the continent, primarily due to the economic burden of lockdowns.
- **Schools are gradually reopening** across the continent.
- Many **teachers and parents are expressing concerns** about safety.
- There have been COVID-19 **clusters linked to school settings** in South Africa.

Key recommendations

- PHSMs should be lifted in a phased manner, reopening essential and low-risk industries first, and leaving some PHSMs in place while closely monitoring spread. Additional mitigation measures maybe needed to reduce economic burden on households. See guidance [here](#).
- As stay-at-home orders are lifted, governments should communicate the importance of individual measures including physical distancing and face coverings; if possible, make supplies available to the public.
- Risk communication (see resource hub [here](#)) should address PHSM burdens and fatigue and emphasize that PHSMs may need to be tightened again in future.
- Adopt clear policies for managing risk in school settings, protecting staff and students, and adapting physical environments. Establish protocols for how reported cases will be handled. See guidance [here](#).
- As schools reopen, perceptions of risk may affect school attendance; there is evidence to suggest that girls will be particularly likely to not return to school, and strategies should be adopted to protect girls' education (see guidance based on experience in past epidemics [here](#)).
- As schools reopen, governments should consider how school settings can be used as a channel for communication about COVID-19 and prevention (for example, how to make and use face coverings), and for the provision of additional relief measures.

Essential Services

Key trends

- There have been media reports of **disruption to non-COVID health services**, for example, access to reproductive health care, and non-COVID patients fleeing hospitals over fears of infection.
- **Isolation facilities in hospitals are limited.** In Nigeria officials estimate that 80% of COVID-19 cases are not handled in isolation facilities.
- There have been a number of **demonstrations** across the continent focused on PHSMs and other issues, despite restrictions on mass gatherings.

Key recommendations

- Prioritize continued access to essential health services while ensuring protective measures for patients and health care workers to prevent COVID-19 transmission.
- Ensure protections for all health care workers including access to appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) and training on infection prevention.
- Invest in adequate isolation facilities in hospitals
- Clearly communicate infection control measures taken to protect patients and health care workers.
- Closely monitor areas with protests for increased transmission.
- Provide health-related guidance for protestors—including about mask wearing and physical distancing when possible, as well as self-quarantine post-protest—to reduce risk of transmission.
- Consider distribution of face masks.

Burden of PHSMs

Key trends

- Citizens and civil society are **demanding greater relief measures** to mitigate social and economic burdens of PHSMs and broader economic fallout from the crisis.
- While **many countries have introduced social assistance** measures including cash transfers, food aid, and utility waivers, in most countries in Africa, **population coverage for these measures is below 10%**.
- There have also been concerns about **poor implementation, politicization and corruption** in programs to date.
- Economic, food, and water insecurity are **disproportionately affecting vulnerable populations**, including internally displaced people, people living in informal settlements, migrants, women and others.
- **Lack of means to adhere to PHSMs may drive transmission** in high-risk communities.

Key recommendations

- Provide clear and transparent eligibility requirements for relief measures, and minimize administrative requirements.
- Consider expanding coverage and value of measures, where feasible.
- Ensure coverage of informal sector workers (see [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#)), while also considering needs of rural households, which may be particularly affected by [declines in remittances](#).
- Develop clear systems for audit and monitoring implementation, as well as grievance and redress mechanisms.
- Consider targeted measures to support vulnerable individuals and communities.
- Engage with civil society groups and local government that can support relief measures and PHSM implementation in high-risk areas.

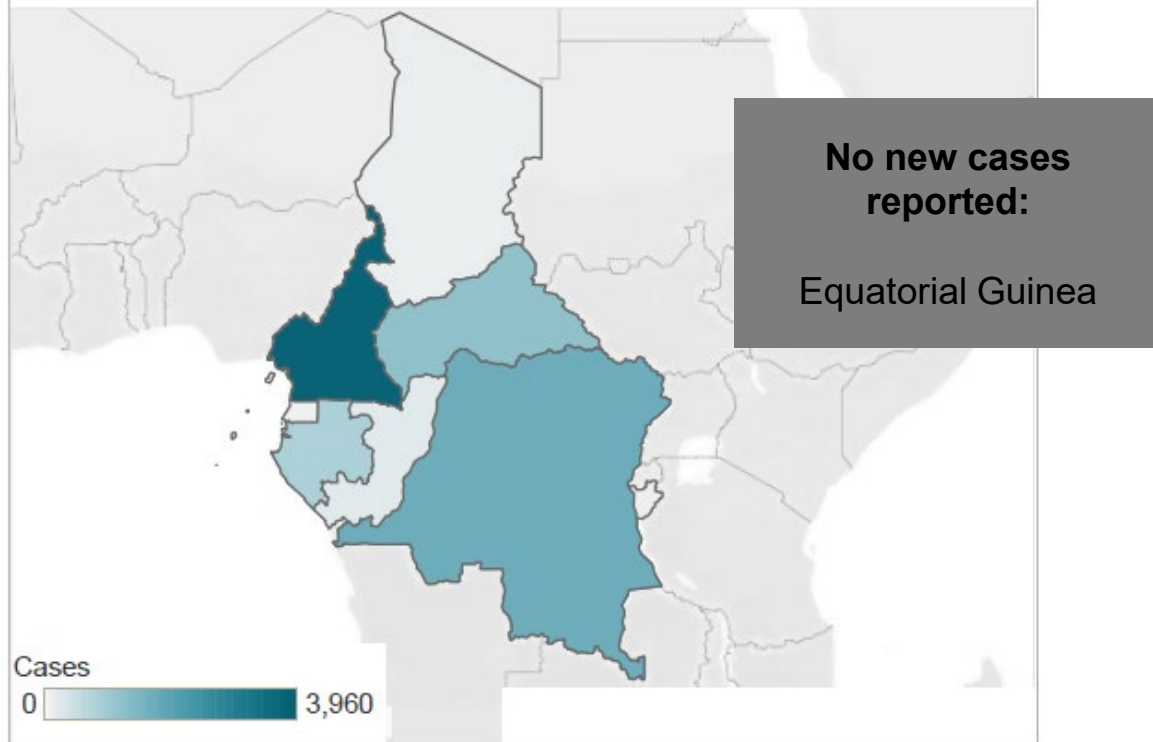
Central Region



Central Region: Disease Dynamics & Countries to Highlight all data as of June 15

Total cases	New cases in past 2 weeks	Total deaths	New deaths in past 2 weeks	Countries with CFR >4% as indicator suggestive of limited testing
24,016	8,156 +6%	535	144 +48%	Chad 8.6%

Number of New Cases Reported and Epidemiological Triggers, Central Africa, 2–15 June



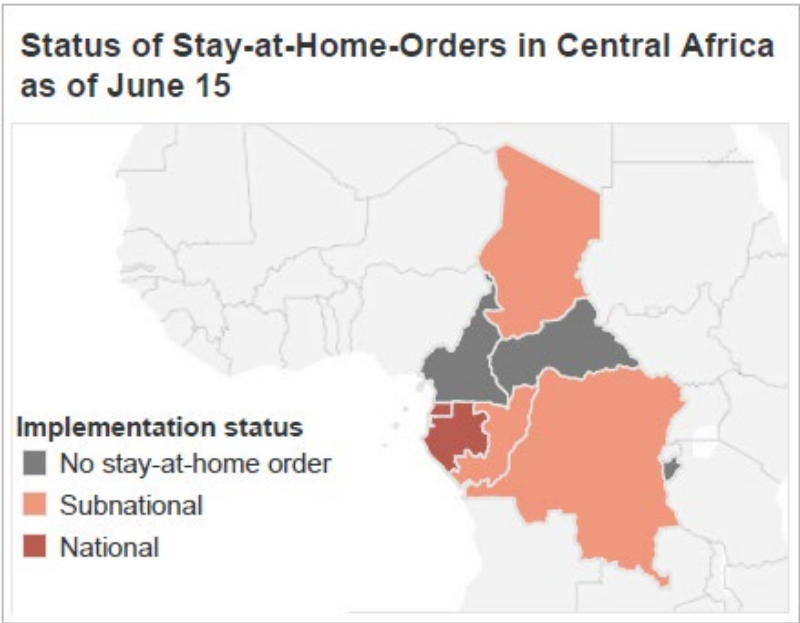
Country	Total cases (per 100,000 population)	Trend in new cases*	PHSM tightening or loosening	Other key trends/issues
Cameroon	9,864 (39.11)	↑	LOOSENING Schools to reopen with strict health measures; gatherings of more than 50 people remain prohibited	Citizens fear schools are reopening too soon; hundreds of hospital patients fled facilities after a spike in COVID-19 cases.
Chad	850 (5.49)	↓	LOOSENING Schools to reopen for exams	High CFR indicating low detection of cases
Congo	779 (14.85)	↓	NO CHANGE Nationwide curfew extended until at least June 20	
DRC	4,777 (5.68)	→	NO CHANGE	Anti-government protests occurring over lockdowns reported; continued violence between government and armed groups
Equatorial Guinea	1,306 (99.77)	↓	LOOSENING International flights resume; secondary schools reopen; 2 million face masks distributed to public; 20 sanitization booths open at airports and ministry buildings	

*Trends are comparing new cases over the previous 14 days (June 2-15) to new cases over the prior 14-day period (May 19-June 1). Red arrows signify an increase in cases (>5%), green arrows signify decrease (>5%), and gray arrows signify less than 5% change.

Central Region: PHSM Developments

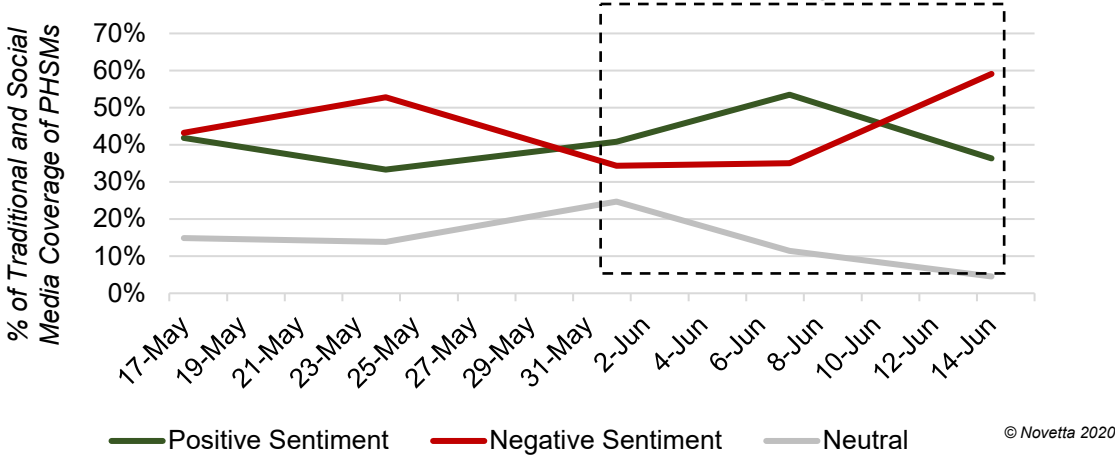
As cases begin to decrease across the region, two countries have maintained national stay-at-home orders.

- Cameroon loosened PHSMs despite reporting an increasing caseload.
- Other countries loosening PHSMs reported a decreasing caseload during June 2-15.
- Criticism of Central Africa governments' COVID-19 response efforts increased significantly over the last two weeks, most apparently in Burundi and DRC.

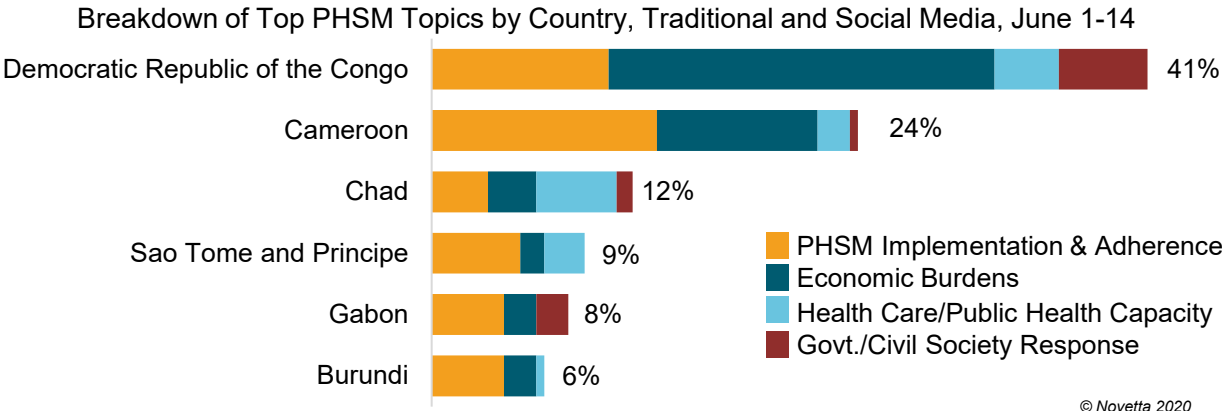


**Focus on stay-at-home orders reflects that these are generally the most restrictive measures; analysis is descriptive and is not intended to imply a recommendation about implementation of stay-at-home orders.*

Negative sentiment toward PHSMs in Central Africa is on the rise, driven by frustration over economic burdens and “employment problems.”



Though there were calls for ending lockdowns due to economic impact, concerns were also voiced that a precipitous loosening of restrictions could lead to an increase in the number of cases.



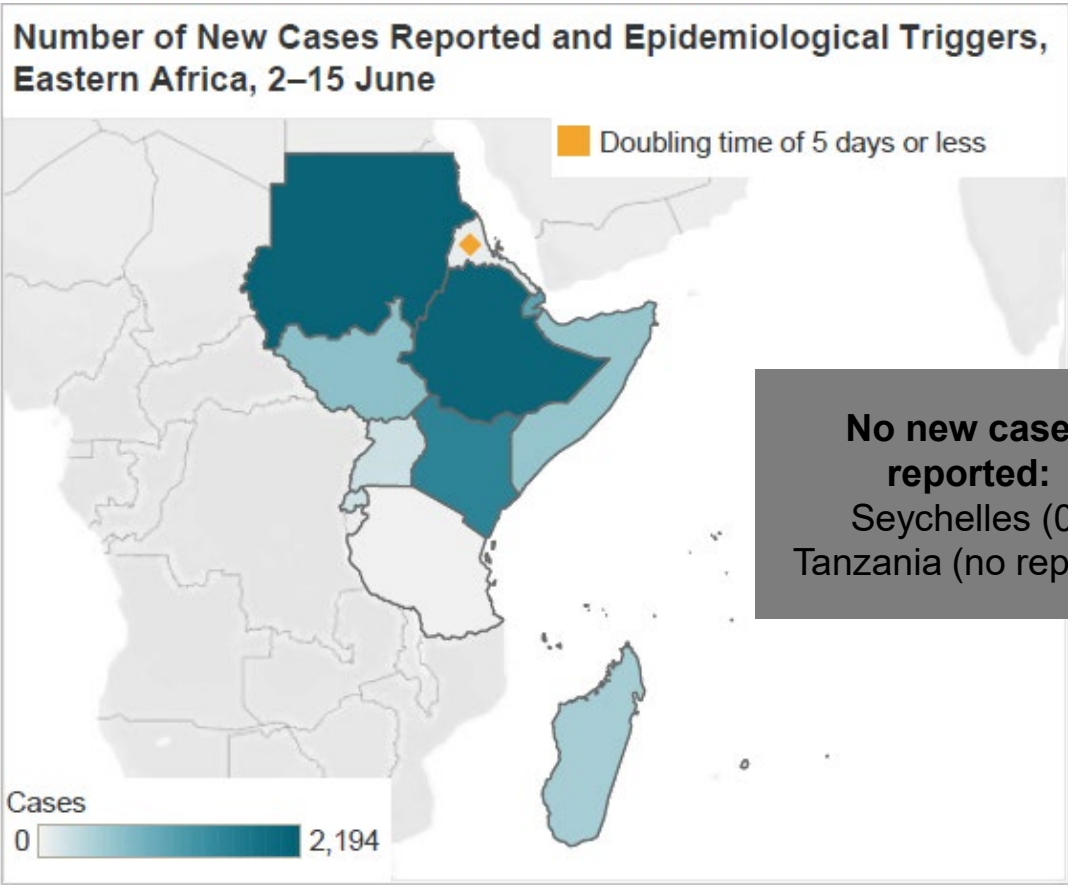
Eastern Region



Eastern Region: Disease Dynamics & Countries to Highlight

all data as of June 15

Total cases	New cases in past 2 weeks	Total deaths	New deaths in past 2 weeks	Countries with CFR >4% as indicator suggestive of limited testing
26,599	9,516 +9%	822	309 +17%	Sudan 6.4%



Country	Total cases (per 100,000 population)	Trend in new cases	PHSM tightening or loosening	Other key trends/issues
Comoros	176 (21.14)	↓	TIGHTENING Mandated face masks in public	
Djibouti	4,465 (465.68)	↓	LOOSENING Restaurants and cafes reopened	
Eritrea	96 (2.78) **trigger	→	TIGHTENING Ban on commercial flights remains	Extensive random testing carried out in Asmara mid-June
Kenya	3,594 (6.99)	↑	NO CHANGE Nationwide curfew, including ban on all gatherings, extended to mid-July	Reports of cases highest in informal camps, slums with cases quickly spreading to rural communities. Reports of police brutality. Public trust in case numbers is low.
Rwanda	582 (4.73)	↑	TIGHTENING Resumption of cross-province transport postponed	
Seychelles	11 (11.36)	→	LOOSENING Reopening after being declared COVID-free in mid-May; some measures remain in place; only travelers from low-risk countries allowed	
Sudan	7,220 (17.27)	↓	NO CHANGE Lockdown extended in Khartoum; closure of airports extended; curfew extended	Spike in deaths at beginning of June
Tanzania	509 (0.90)	No reports since April 29	LOOSENING Schools partially reopened, sports activities reopened June 1	President claims country is "free from COVID"; Public trust in case numbers is low.
Uganda	696 (1.63)	→	LOOSENING Public transport resumed, subject to restrictions	

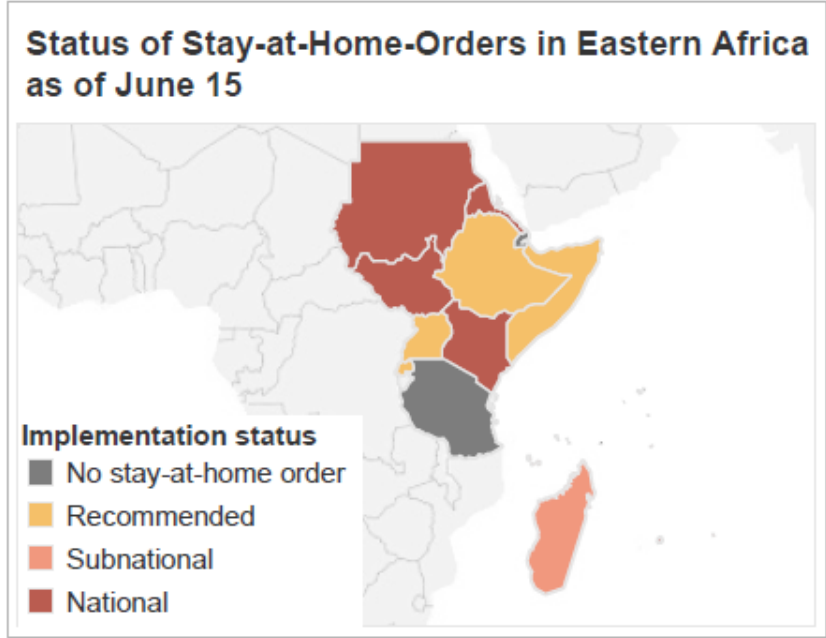
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**Epidemiological triggers = cases doubling in five days or less or 10% growth in cases for three consecutive days during the period of analysis

Eastern Region: PHSM Developments

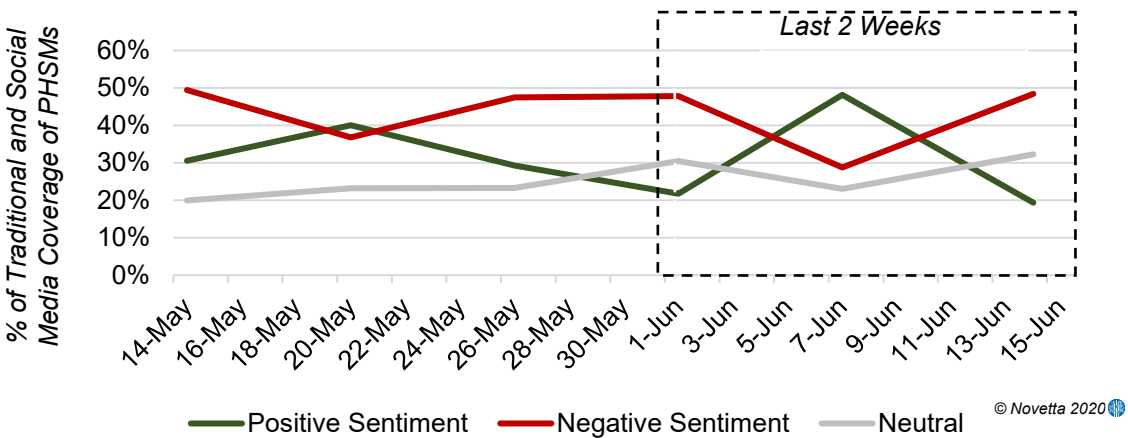
Eastern Africa is seeing highly varying incidence rates across countries, with caseloads highest in Sudan and Ethiopia.

- In Kenya, the president extended the country’s nationwide curfew and ban on mass gatherings; there are reports of economic burden and decreased access to health services.
- Negative sentiment toward governments in Eastern Africa have increased, with public trust in case numbers reported by national governments in Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania markedly low.

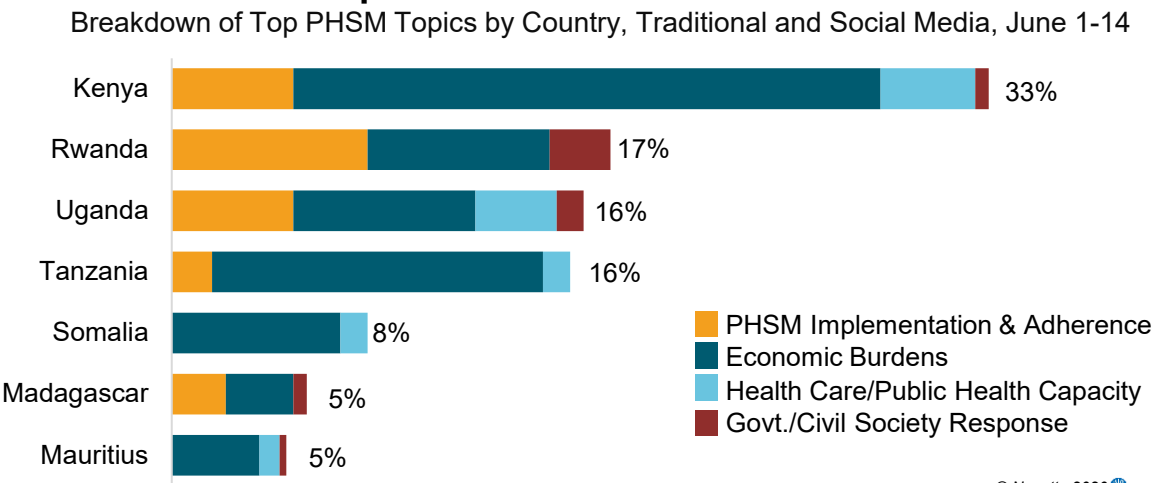


*Focus on stay-at-home orders reflects that these are generally the most restrictive measures; analysis is descriptive and is not intended to imply a recommendation about implementation of stay-at-home orders.

Negative public narratives about PHSMs in Eastern Africa are on the rise, driven by concerns about economic and livelihood burdens



Discussion of PHSMs was highest in Kenya. Economic burdens of PHSM implementation dominated discussion.

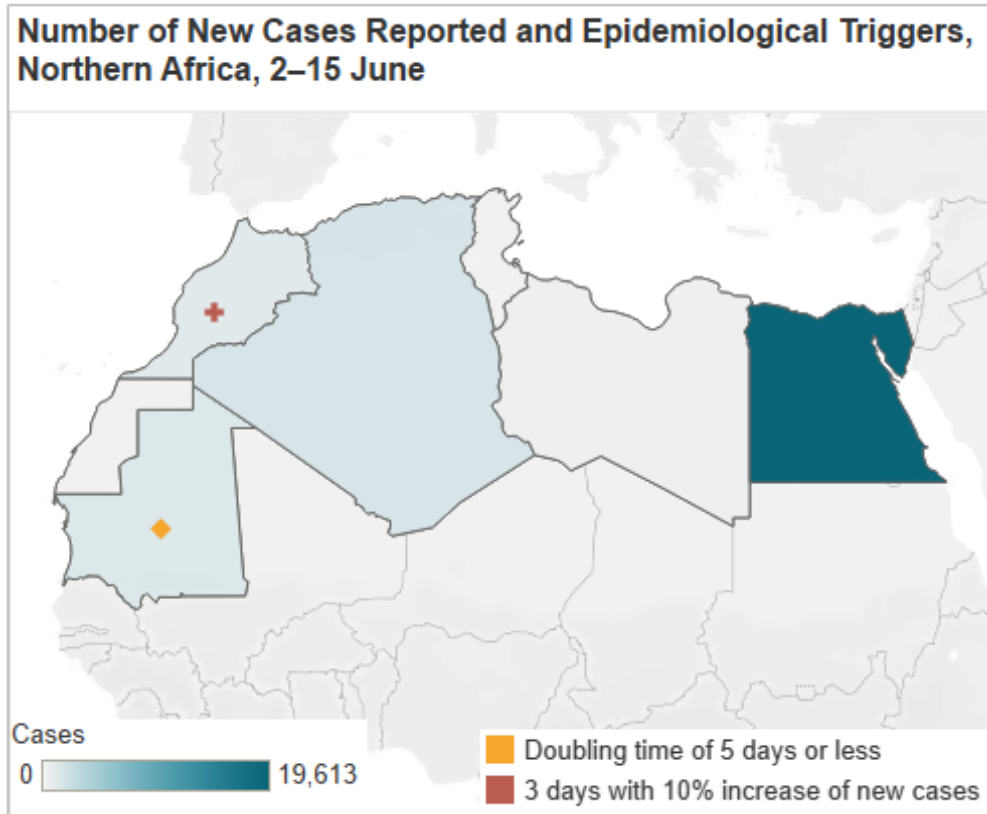


Northern Region



Northern Region: Disease Dynamics & Countries to Highlight all data as of June 15

Total cases	New cases in past 2 weeks	Total deaths	New deaths in past 2 weeks	Countries with CFR >4% as indicator suggestive of limited testing
67,571	23,599 +41%	2,699	805 +71%	Algeria 7.0% Mauritania 4.9% Tunisia 4.5%



Country	Total cases (per 100,000 population)	Trend in new cases	PHSM tightening or loosening	Other key trends/issues
Algeria	10,919 (25.86)	↓	LOOSENING Several industries were permitted to resume operations	Peaceful protests about burden of PHSMs
Egypt	44,598 (45.31)	↑	LOOSENING Hotels can reopen at 50% capacity	Continued significant criticism of the government
Libya	418 (6.26) **trigger	↑	NO CHANGE Curfew extended	
Mauritania	1,783 (40.49) **trigger	↑	NO CHANGE Schools will remain closed until the end of June	Opposition party withdrew from COVID-19 task force
Morocco	8,734 (24.24) **trigger	→	LOOSENING Industries, shops, and independent workers allowed to resume activity	Positive coverage of expansion of testing and easing of lockdown; Peaceful protests in early June
Tunisia	1,096 (9.48)	↓	NO CHANGE	Peaceful protests in early June

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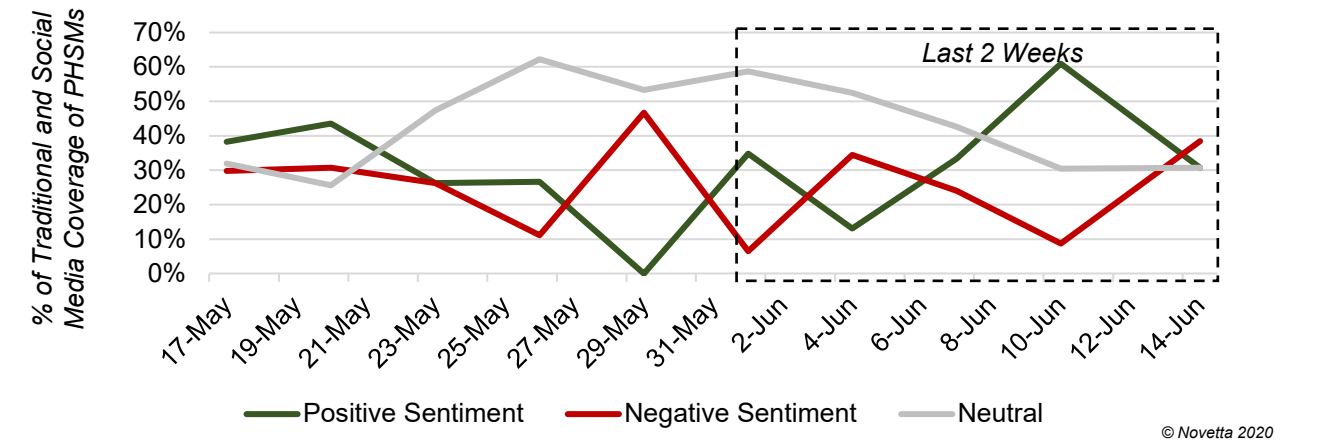
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Northern Region: PHSM Developments

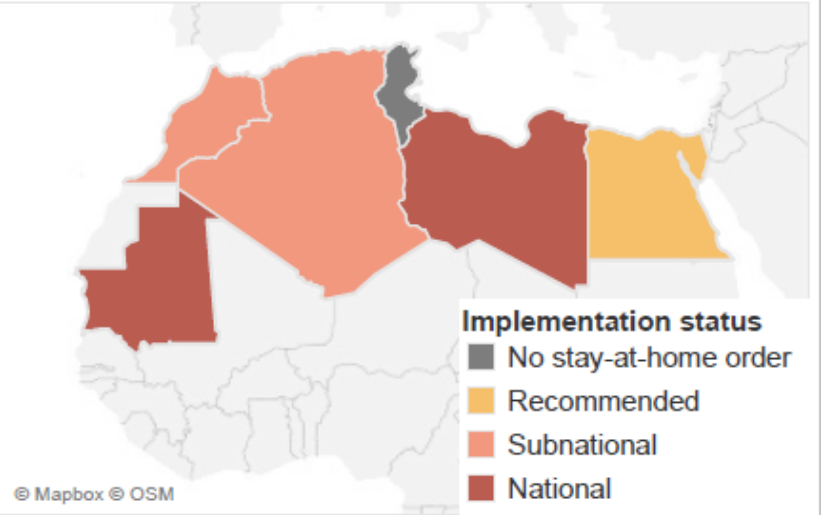
Cases are still rising rapidly in the heavily affected Northern Region. This is driven by Egypt, which reported nearly 20,000 new cases but is gradually loosening restrictions.

- Governments continued to focus their messaging on addressing the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown
- The status of schools, businesses, and public transportation in the region were widely debated and contested
- Food insecurity remains a major concern

Negative sentiment toward PHSMs in Northern Africa was driven by concerns about food insecurity and livelihoods, including disrupted supply chains and rising prices.

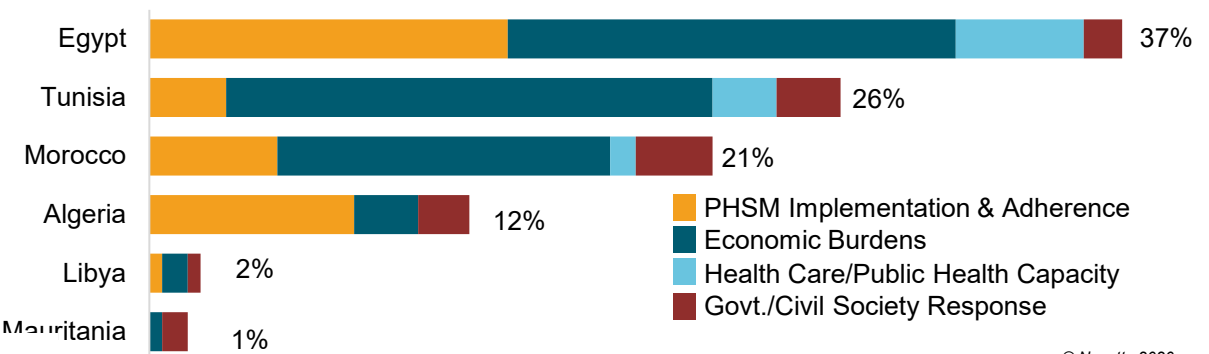


Status of Stay-at-Home-Orders in Northern Africa as of June 15



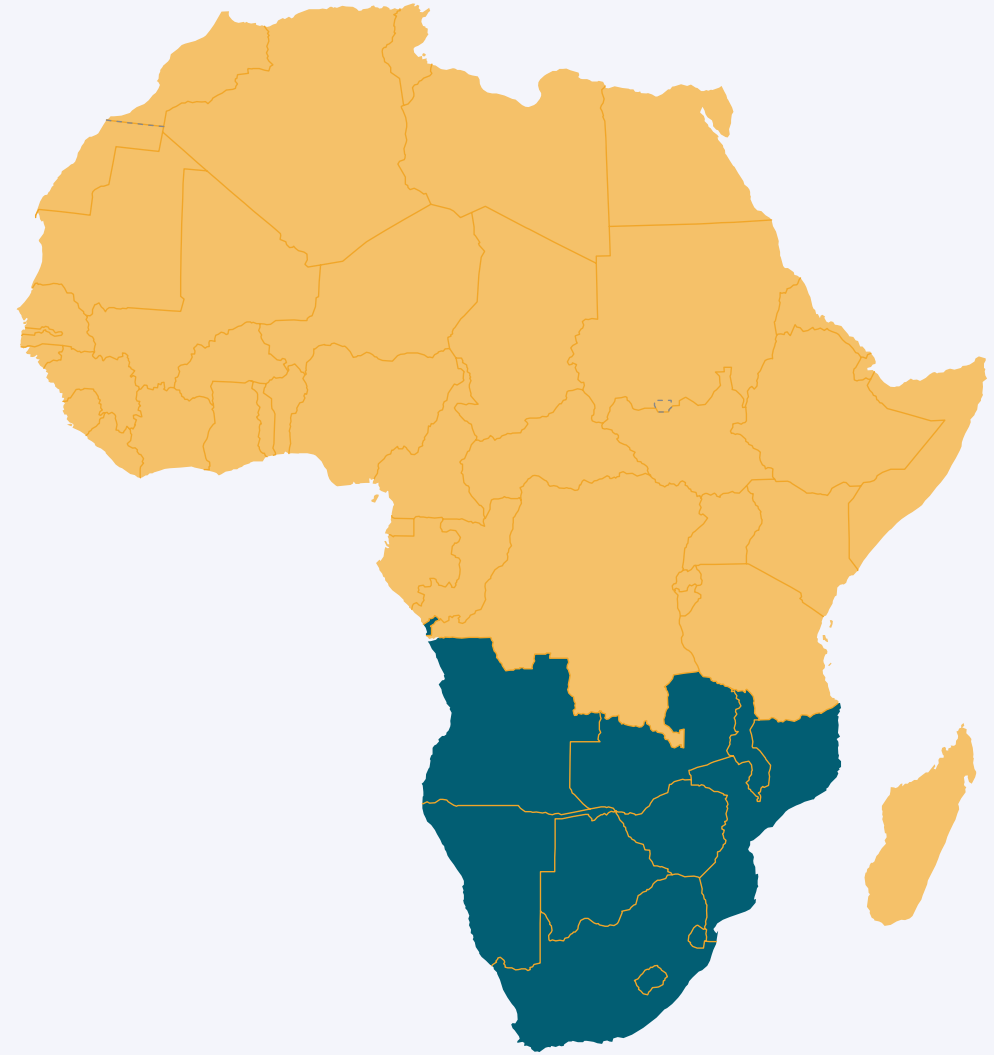
There was significant discussion about measures related to schools, businesses & transportation, as well as discussion of economic burdens

Breakdown of Top PHSM Topics by Country, Traditional and Social Media, June 1-14



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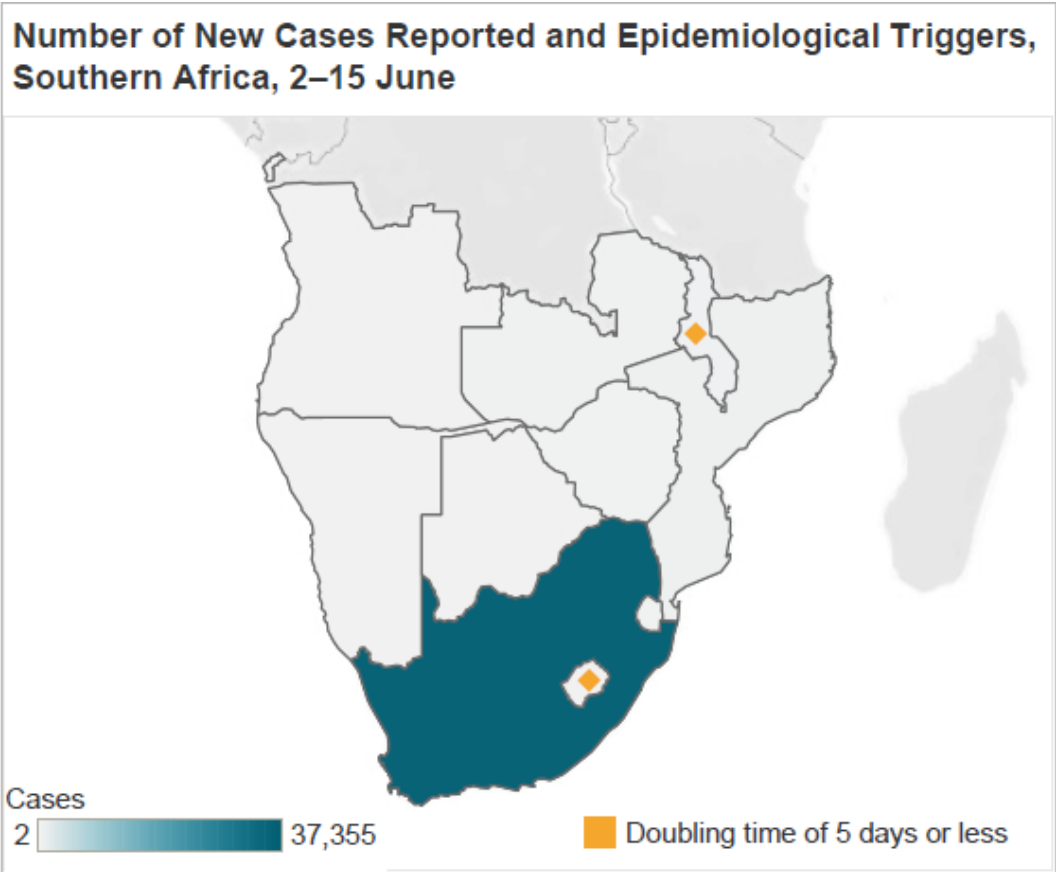
Southern Region



Southern Region: Disease Dynamics & Countries to Highlight

all data as of June 15

Total cases	New cases in past 2 weeks	Total deaths	New deaths in past 2 weeks	Countries with CFR >4% as indicator suggestive of limited testing
73,635	38,744 +114%	1,515	808 +91%	Angola 4.3%



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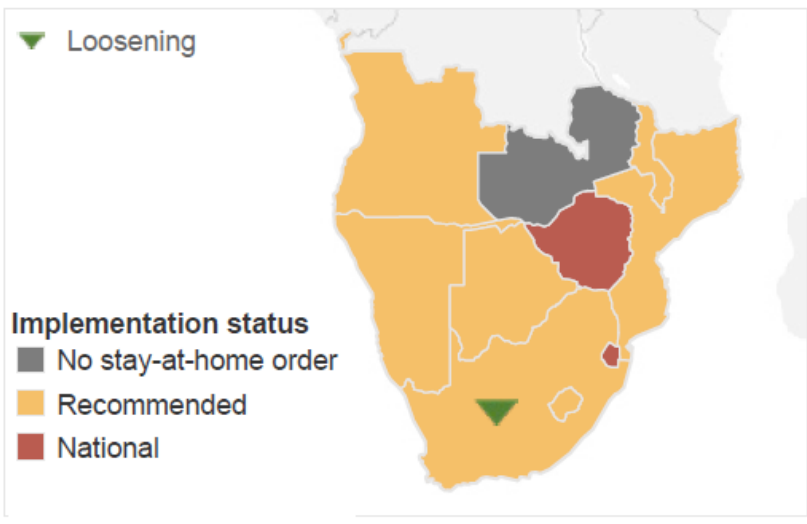
Country	Total cases (per 100,000 population)	Trend in new cases	PHSM tightening or loosening	Other key trends/issues
Angola	140 (0.45)	↑	LOOSENING Rail travel and construction resumed; cultural sites reopening	
Botswana	60 (2.66)	↑	LOOSENING Schools reopened for graduating classes	
Eswatini	490 (35.84)	↑	LOOSENING Select business/retailers reopened	
Malawi	547 (3.02) **trigger	↑	NO CHANGE Lockdown on hold pending rollout of cash transfer program per a court order (concerns on social media about corruption in cash transfer implementation)	Presidential re-run election July 2; opposition leader has claimed government is inventing COVID cases to postpone election
Namibia	32 (1.31)	→	LOOSENING Entered stage 3 reopening	
South Africa	70,038 (121.22)	↑	LOOSENING Lockdown level reduced from level 4 to level 3 on June 1; places of worship opened and funerals resumed	Significant debate around reopening schools continues; alleged corruption in provincial food aid distribution; high court declared some restrictions unconstitutional
Zambia	1358 (7.82)	→	LOOSENING Schools reopened for graduating/exam classes	
Zimbabwe	383 (2.65) **trigger	↑	NO CHANGE	Government has publicly named people escaping from quarantine centers; social media reports of alleged corruption in relief measures

Southern Region: PHSM Developments

The Southern region has experienced rapid growth in cases, driven by South Africa, but countries across the region are loosening measures.

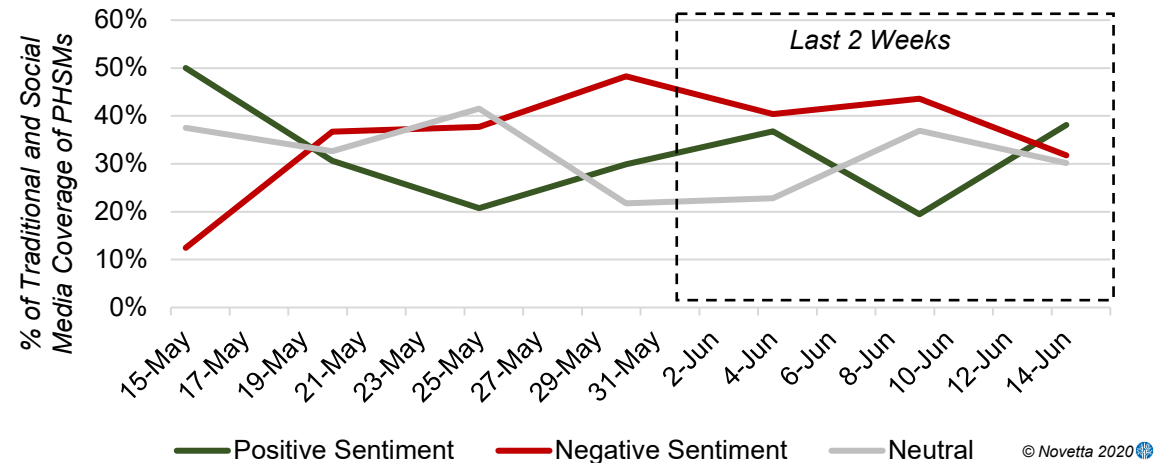
- South Africa has continued to loosen PHSMs despite increasing caseload.
- Other countries in the region still have low caseloads but are concerned about transmission from migrants returning from South Africa.
- There is significant demand from citizens for greater relief measures, and concerns about implementation of current measures.

Status of Stay-at-Home-Orders in Southern Africa as of June 15



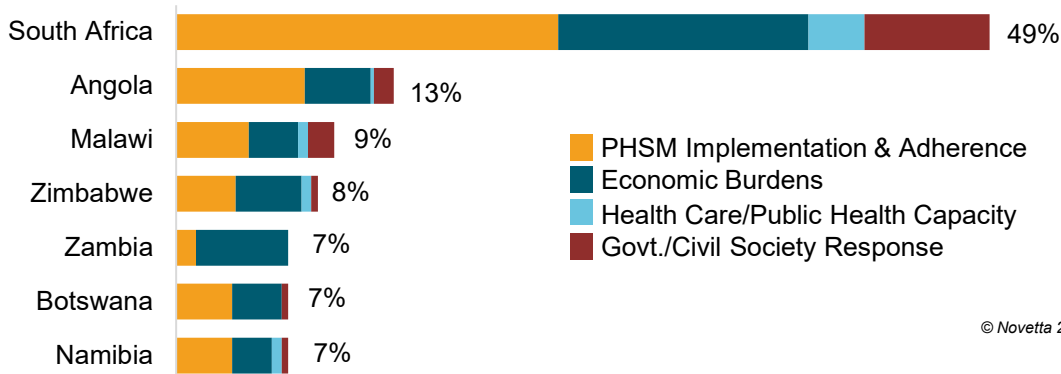
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Negative sentiment toward PHSMs in Southern Africa has fallen slightly, with significant discussion of the reopening of schools.

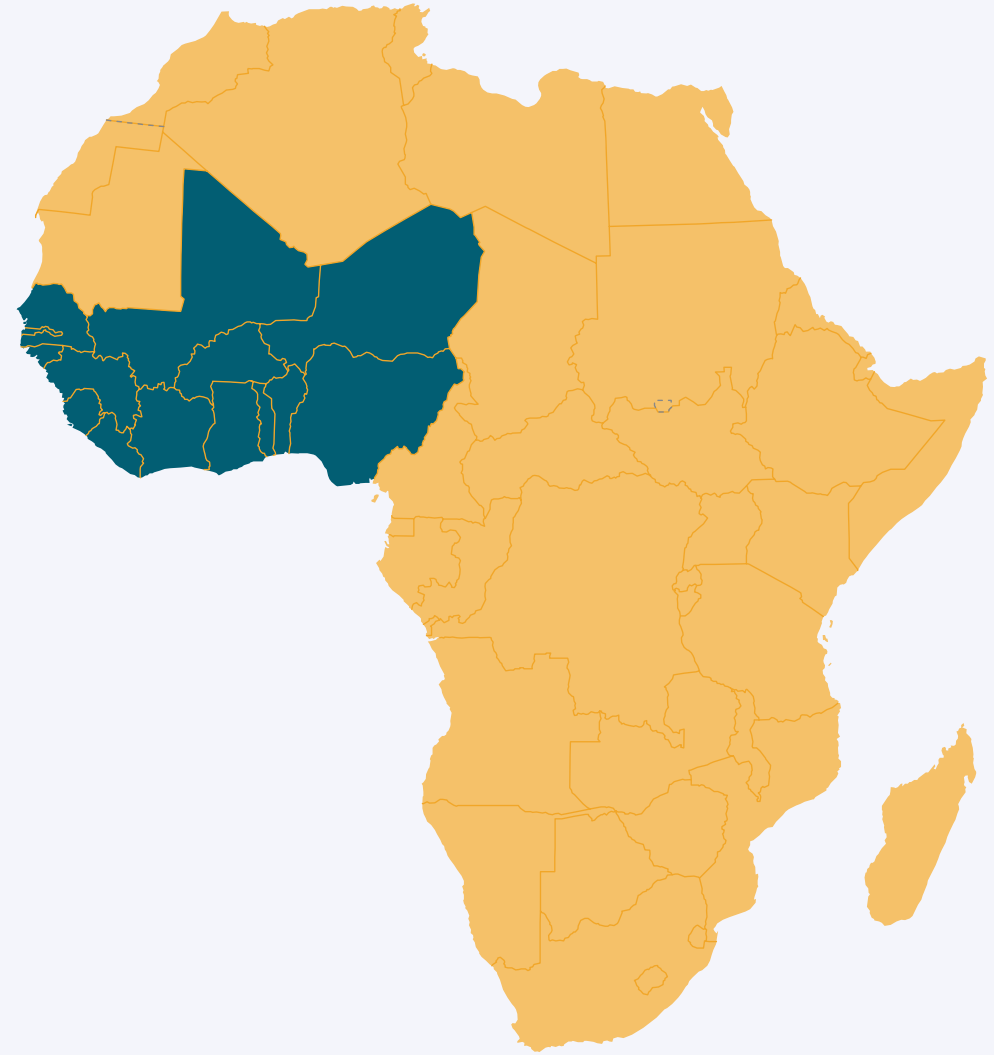


Economic burdens of PHSMs remain a major topic of discussion, with concerns about food insecurity and the insufficiency/politicization of government aid.

Breakdown of Top PHSM Topics by Country, Traditional and Social Media, June 1-14



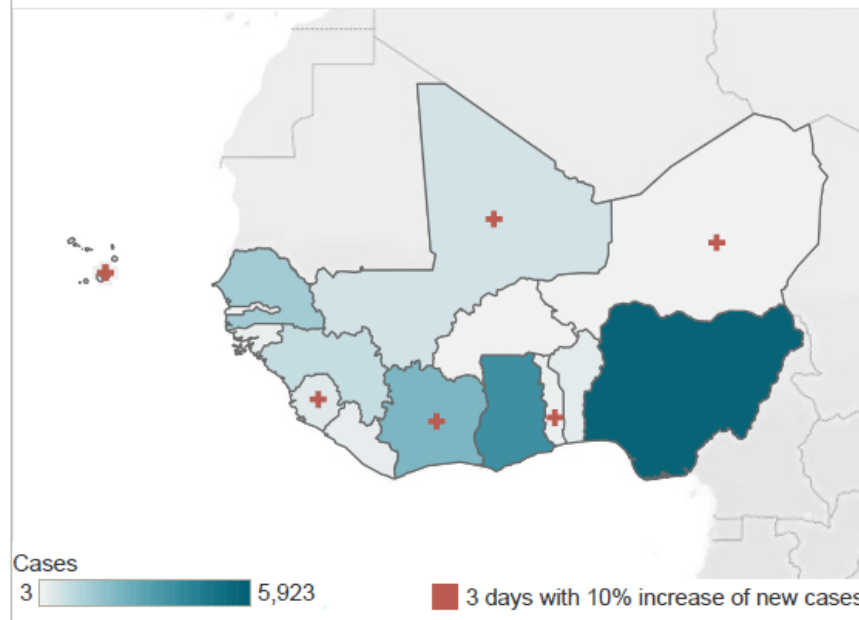
Western Region



Western Region: Disease Dynamics & Countries to Highlight all data as of June 15

Total cases	New cases in past 2 weeks	Total deaths	New deaths in past 2 weeks	Countries with CFR >4% as indicator suggestive of limited testing
51,304	16,114 +47%	952	235 +14%	Liberia 7.0% Niger 6.7% Burkina Faso 5.9% Mali 5.7% Sierra Leone 4.4%

Number of New Cases Reported and Epidemiological Triggers, Western Africa, 2–15 June



Country	Total cases (per 100,000 population)	Trend in new cases	PHSM tightening or loosening	Other key trends/issues
Benin	470 (4.09)	↓	LOOSENING Public transport resumed	
Cabo Verde	750 (137.93) **trigger	↑	NO CHANGE	
Côte d'Ivoire	5,084 (20.27) **trigger	↑	NO CHANGE	
Ghana	11,964 (40.19)	↑	LOOSENING Restrictions loosened on religious gatherings, tourism. Schools reopened for final-year students	A number of protests (not COVID-related) have occurred, risking crowd transmission.
Mali	1,809 (9.48) **trigger	↑	LOOSENING Partial school reopenings for targeted cohorts	Ongoing violence and protests, not COVID-related.
Niger	980 (4.36) **trigger	↓	LOOSENING Schools reopening until July 15 to complete term	
Nigeria	16,085 (8.21)	↑	LOOSENING Began Phase 2 reopening	Uptick in violence linked to separatist groups, mostly non-COVID-related; physicians considering strike; lack of isolation facilities
Senegal	5,090 (32.10)	↑	NO CHANGE	Protests across multiple cities (violent and non-violent) against restrictive health measures, prompted government to relax policies
Sierra Leone	1,169 (15.28) **trigger	↓	NO CHANGE	Ongoing disputes between medical professionals and government
Togo	531 (6.73) **trigger	↓	NO CHANGE	

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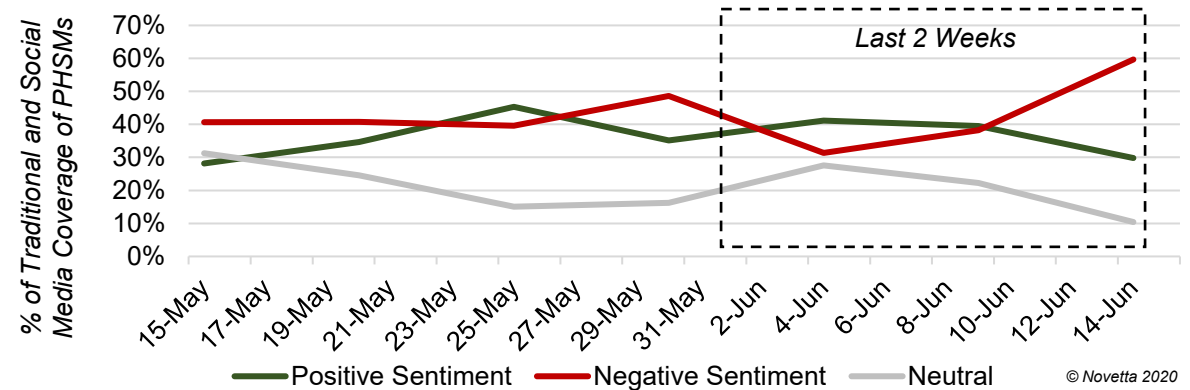
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Western Region: PHSM Developments

Many Western African countries are loosening PHSMs, despite large and growing epidemics in several countries.

- Several countries are reopening schools and public transport.
- Economic burdens and food insecurity are a major concern in the region.
- A doctors strike at public hospitals in Nigeria is a significant development that could affect the COVID-19 response.

Negative sentiment toward PHSMs in Western Africa is on the rise, driven by economic concerns due to lockdowns and business closures.

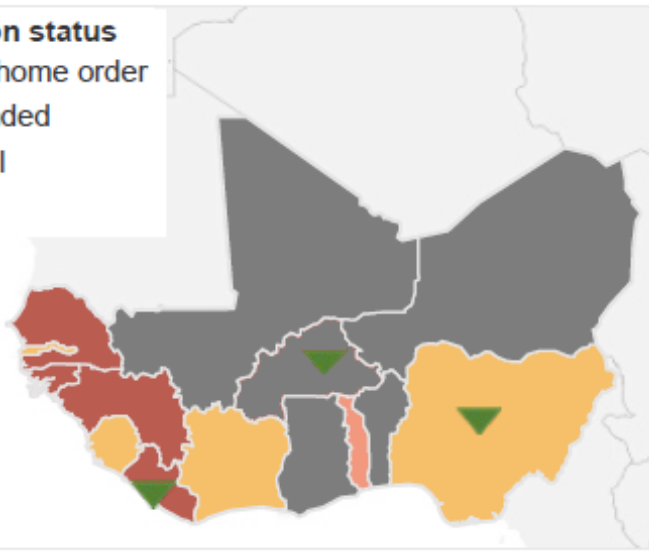


Status of Stay-at-Home-Orders in Western Africa as of June 15

Implementation status

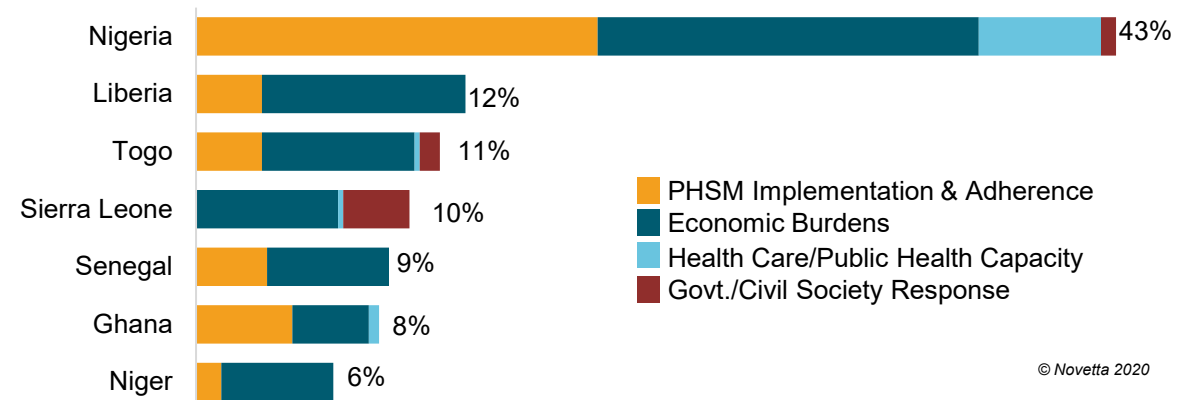
- No stay-at-home order
- Recommended
- Subnational
- National

▼ Loosening



Discussion of PHSMs was highest in Nigeria. Lockdowns, economic burdens, and health care services dominated discussion.

Breakdown of Top PHSM Issues by Country, June 1-14



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Annex

Epidemiological Indicators

- **Regional totals:** Sum of total number of cases/deaths as of June 15 across countries in a given African Union region
- **New cases/deaths in past two weeks:** Sum of daily newly reported cases/deaths between June 2 and June 15 across countries in a given African Union region
- **Percent change from previous two weeks:** June 2 through June 15 regional sum minus May 19 through June 1 regional sum, divided by the May 19 through June 1 regional sum, multiplied by 100
- **Case-fatality ratio:** Country-specific total number of deaths divided by the total number of cases as of June 15
- **Trigger—Doubling time of five days or less:** A country reached the threshold of total cases doubling in five days or less between June 2nd and 15th.
- **Trigger—3 days with 10% increase of new cases:** 10% increase in cases on three consecutive days between June 2 and June 15

Data Sources

Domain	Sources	Methodology and Limitations
Epidemiology	European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) 2020	<p>Data are updated daily and contain the latest available public data on COVID-19. National updates are published at different times and in different time zones. Data are subject to retrospective corrections; corrected datasets are released as soon as processing of updated national data has been completed. This, and the time ECDC needs to process these data, might lead to discrepancies between the national numbers and the numbers published by ECDC.</p> <p>Future reports will use epidemiological data from Africa CDC.</p>
Traditional and social media analysis	Novetta Mission Analytics	<p>Traditional media analysis: Research for this report was conducted using African media, as well as human-curated aggregation of open source content from a variety of key African sources. Article- and quote-level metadata was then added in the framework of Novetta Mission Analytics. Results were then culled on the basis of relevance, resulting in a sample of 674 articles and 3,199 quotes from media outlets in Africa from June 1-14, 2020.</p> <p>Twitter analysis: Research for this report was conducted using geo-located Twitter sources in Africa. Quote-level metadata was then added in the framework of Novetta Mission Analytics. Results were then culled on the basis of relevance, resulting in a sample of 1,046 Africa-focused tweets from June 1-14, 2020.</p> <p>Social media analysis: Research for this report was conducted using geo-located African Facebook sources. Post and comment level metadata was added in the framework of Novetta Mission Analytics. Results were then culled on the basis of relevance, resulting in the sample of 1,230 Africa-focused Facebook posts and comments from June 1-14, 2020.</p>
Public health and social measures	Oxford COVID-19 Government Response Tracker	OxCGRT collects publicly available information on 17 indicators of government responses. Data are collected from public sources by a team of over 100 Oxford University students and staff. Gaps within the latest week are expected as data is captured and retrospective changes may happen as data are reviewed. Most data entries do not receive secondary review.
Public health and social measures	ACAPS COVID19 Government Measures Dataset	The COVID19 Government Measures Dataset compiles all the measures implemented by governments worldwide in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Data collection includes secondary data review. Data are subject to retrospective additions and corrections. Linguistic barriers also might have prevented ACAPS from identifying all available information. Some measures are also extremely nuanced, so ACAPS relies on expert judgement for coding.
Security	Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) Coronavirus-Related Events	The ACLED database catalogs conflict, security and protest activity by location, type (peaceful or non-peaceful), and actors involved. It includes a short description of each event that can be used to determine whether or not it is related to the pandemic.