



THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA

MINISTRY OF TOURISM WILDLIFE AND ANTIQUITIES

**STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES FOR THE TOUR AND TRAVEL ENTERPRISES
DURING THE COVID '19 PANDEMIC**

JULY 2020

1.0 Introduction

The global outbreak of the Covid '19 pandemic has had a profound impact on the tourism industry. In the case of the Tour and Travel sector, the initial measures to curb the spread of the virus necessitated a closure of all services.

As the Covid '19 situation evolves and the government lifts the restrictions on the operation of these enterprises, there is a need to guide the enterprises on measures to ensure the safety of guests and workers during and post this pandemic.

The Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities (MTWA) and the Uganda Tourism Board (UTB) have designed a protocol on the preparedness and response for Covid-19 pandemic for the tourism and hospitality industry in Uganda.

The guidelines were produced in consultation with the stakeholders and aim to support private sector to recover from an unparalleled crisis with public health as the primary concern.

These protocols are based on the current guidelines of the Ministry of Health and industry best practices in regard to health and safety standards. They will continuously be revised and updated as new information and guidance is received from the health authorities.

2.0 OBJECTIVES & APPROACH FOR THE TRAVEL & TOURISM SECTOR

OBJECTIVES

2.1 Have the sector lead the definition of industry best practices as Travel & Tourism moves from crisis management to recovery.

2.2 Put the safety, health and security of travelers and the Travel & Tourism workforce at the core of the protocols.

3.0 APPROACH

- Ensure coherence through a coordinated, and transparent approach, supported by medical evidence, within the Travel & Tourism sector.
- Share harmonized and consistent protocols which are outcome driven and practical across destinations.
- Rebuild trust and confidence with travelers through effective communication & marketing; letting them know the protocols implemented and assurances available to keep them safe.
- Advocate for the implementation of enabling policies to support the recovery and demand regeneration for the sector.

For the purpose of alignment across industries within the Tours and Travel sector, the protocols are in four pillars, namely:

- I. Operational and Staff Preparedness
- II. Ensuring a Safe Experience
- III. Rebuilding Trust & Confidence
- IV. Implementing Enabling Policies

3.1 OPERATIONAL AND STAFF PREPAREDNESS

Tour operators may achieve operational readiness for reopening by having a documented a COVID-19 prevention plan including an action/checklist for infection prevention and management as well as a special cleaning and disinfection plan

Implemented guidelines for staff safety and health, including health checks for staff.

Consider expedited revision of existing or implementation of new technologies to enable automation such as contactless touch points and payment as well as accelerating the implementation of biometrics where possible.

Consider implementation of support processes that help reduce tourist' touch points such as the use of self-check in kiosks and bag drop, home-printed bag tags, off-airport processing.

Implement guidelines for food safety in restaurants, cafes and kiosks relating to supply chain control, food handling and preparation, hygiene, sanitation, disinfection, digitization and queue management.

Request key stakeholders such as airlines, concessionaries, and transport partners to have implemented likeminded protocols

Explore using protective screens for staff and use of personal protection equipment (PPE) such as masks and gloves.

3.2 OPERATIONAL AND STAFF PREPAREDNESS

As tour operators restart their operations, they should ensure they can optimize operational quality and delivery and have trained staff to prepare and execute on the operational plans. Tour Operators may achieve operational readiness for reopening by having:

- a) Develop a COVID-19 prevention plan including an action/checklist for infection prevention and a special cleaning and disinfection plan
- b) Implement protocols and guidelines for staff health, including health checks for staff. Reflected physical distance in office layout and limiting the number of staff in common back-of-house areas where possible
- c) Implemented protocols to minimize physical contact.
- d) Implement physical distancing protocols
- e) Personal protection equipment (PPE) available to staff, such as masks, as long as required as per risk-based approach

- f) Integrate technologies to enable automation such as contactless payment. If contactless payment is not possible, consider using gloves and hand sanitation.
- g) Establish with suppliers and partners including restaurants, hotels, parks, transport partners and venues that they follow likeminded health and hygiene protocols and guidelines to protect guests.
- h) Identify and adopt appropriate cleanliness and disinfection best practices validated by health authorities
- i) Explore different options for operations, where possible, such as advanced tickets, timed entries, and smaller groups.

Tour Operators should train all their staff to prepare and execute on operational plans by:

- a) Creating and implementing staff protocols and guidelines, including tour guide, coach/drivers and local specialists, and operations.
- b) Provide their staff with the tools and information necessary regarding infection control, physical contact, sharing of food and utensils, appropriate attire, and enhanced hygiene measures, the use of masks and gloves as recommended by MoH
- c) Request that key stakeholders such as partner venues, hotels and transport partners have trained their staff on the basis of likeminded protocols to enable consistent approach across sector
- d) Regular monitoring of well-being of team members by leadership, encouraging them to following MoH guidelines

3.3.0 DELIVERING A SAFE EXPERIENCE

3.3.1 As tour operators work to deliver a safe experience for their staff and their guests through enhanced cleanliness and hygiene best practices, they should have:

- a) Worked with suppliers to understand what additional measures have been introduced
- b) Implemented or confirmed with suppliers' processes focused on enhanced sanitation, disinfection, and deep cleaning practices for coaches and other vehicles used as well as increase their cleaning/disinfection frequency:
- c) Selected disinfecting products approved by health authorities
- d) Revisited guidance to cleaning team with a specific focus on high-frequency touch points, including handrails, door handles, tables, board toilets, air conditioning filters, overhead lockers and headsets if applicable. Enhance cleaning frequency as appropriate
- e) Allocated seating plans with **no rotation**. Implement seat spacing
- f) Explored providing best waste management practices; bins with liner bags and regular disposal

3.3.2 Established with transport partners that they have likeminded processes for sanitation, disinfection and deep cleaning practices

- a) Implemented customer processes including guest information and minimizing physical contact:
- b) Implemented guest health checks and testing
- c) Limited physical contact and queuing where possible
- d) Make masks available to guests
- e) Developed online check-in and contactless check-out tools and procedures where appropriate and possible
- f) Plan staggered timing when possible of access to venues, hotels and restaurants among others

- g) Established with partners and suppliers, including shops, showrooms, venues/shops, museums, shows, theatre, concert halls, factories & farms, that they follow likeminded health, sanitation, disinfection and hygiene protocols aligned with local regulation

3.3.3 Established that partner restaurants follow likeminded health, sanitation, disinfection and hygiene and food safety protocols to protect guests, such as:

- a) Approved disinfecting products made available at entrance to guests in the form of alcohol-based hand sanitizer as appropriate.
- b) Established with restaurant that restaurant staff are trained and adhere to likeminded health, hygiene, and physical contact guidelines
- c) Avoid guest own handling of food at buffets
- d) Regular cleaning of coffee/drinks machines operated by staff member
- e) Enhanced cleaning, including disinfecting of tables and chairs after guest has left and using dishwasher over hand-washing
- f) Minimized physical contact through table spacing and guest seating
- g) Considered minimizing what is placed on guest tables and provide mono-packaged items if feasible
- h) Reviewed payment method to prioritize contactless and pre-payment methods
- i) Considered having longer opening hours to reduce the number of guests served at any given time and facilitate the implementation of the new measures

4.0 GENERAL HEALTH AND SAFETY PROTOCOLS

The following measures that have been communicated by the Ministry of Health, Local Health Authorities and World Health Organization should be strictly adhered to all times:

Social distancing measures together with frequent hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette are the main measures to prevent transmission of COVID-19. Although it is probable that guests are already familiar with these measures, they should be reminded as a form of hospitality.

4.1 Social Distancing

Social distancing includes refraining from hugging & shaking hands with guests as well as among fellow staff. It involves maintaining a distance of at least 1m (3 ft.) and avoiding anyone who is coughing or sneezing.

4.2 Hand Washing

Hand hygiene means regularly and thoroughly cleaning hands with an alcohol-based hand rub or washing them with soap and water. Also avoid touching eyes, nose, and mouth. Hand disinfection is indicated after exchanging objects (money, credit cards) with guests.

4.3 Respiratory Hygiene

Respiratory etiquette means covering mouth and nose with bent elbow or tissue when coughing or sneezing. The used tissue should be disposed of immediately in a bin with a lid.

4.4 Disinfection

All indoor areas such as entrance lobbies, corridors and staircases, escalators, elevators, security guard booths, office rooms, meeting rooms, cafeteria should be mopped with a disinfectant (1% sodium hypochlorite or phenolic disinfectants).

For metallic surfaces like door handles, security locks, keys etc. 70% alcohol can be used to wipe down surfaces where the use of bleach is not suitable

4.5 Health and Safety Communication

Communication should be maintained between Management and staff in charge of the different departments in order to pre-define an information policy for guests as well as to rapidly provide and obtain information on incidents that may arise in the establishment and to know the status of the situation at all times.

Providing guidelines to the staff on how they should communicate the action plan to guests and other stakeholders can ensure alignment consistency.

Short documents or informative posters can amplify the key messages among guests and staff, including:

- a) Promoting of hand washing
- b) Respiratory hygiene
- c) Basic Hygiene practices
- d) Coughing etiquette
- e) Contact information of key staff personnel
- f) Emergency Telephone number

Official leaflets on basic hygiene practice and COVID-19, in different languages, could be useful information tools.

It is useful to have an up-to-date list of the contact information of the staff, including emergency telephone numbers.

4.6 Health and Safety Training

Management should inform all staffs of the measures to be adopted and the measures that could protect their health and that of others including the recommendation to stay home and seek medical attention if they have respiratory symptoms, such as coughing or shortness of breath.

Management should organize information briefings that should cover all the basic protective measures against COVID-19 and the signs and symptoms of the disease. Training may be needed for specific procedures.

5.0 SECTOR PROTOCOLS FOR THE NEW NORMAL

5.1 Tours and Travel Agencies

The tour operators and their service providers shall be required to comply with the general provision under of this protocol;

5.1.1 Have valid covid-19 free certification for core staff not more than 14 days old from a recognized government approved facility at the first time and subsequently maintain Covid-19 prevention guidelines prescribed by the Ministry of Health (MOH) and relevant agencies

5.1.2 Have documented Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for guest Management in line with these protocols and MOH Covid-19 preventive guidelines as appropriate.

5.1.3 Guest/visitors register shall be kept and updated daily and should include mobile contact & physical address for ease in tracing.

5.1.4 Establish and maintain a register of all staff, drivers and guests handled.

5.1.5 Whenever possible, minimize walk-in clients and encourage online bookings

5.1.6 Ensure tour vans and transfer vehicles are properly cleaned and sanitized during and after each trip/transfers

5.1.7 Provide packed lunches for long drive to avoid stop-overs. Staff while serving food and drinks shall observe the guidelines similar to catering and accommodation facilities provided herein

5.1.8 Ensure drivers and guides use suitable communication gadgets for vehicles carrying more than 7 passengers to communicate with guest to avoid turning or shouting to enable them to be heard by guests

5.1.9 Ensure disposable headrests covers are replaced after each trip

5.1.10 Have Vehicle air-conditioners modified to include air purifiers where applicable, which will reduce the ability of the virus circulating inside the vehicle especially for larger and luxury vehicles

5.1.11 Encourage open windows when weather permits, to allow air circulation.

5.1.12 **Develop creative personalized group tours and packages to incentivize domestic tours, excursions, short trips and visits to nearby destinations in the short term.**

5.1.13 Limit the number of staff accompanying guests in every trip

5.1.14 Ensure information provided is stuck on the back of the chairs or the body of the vehicle to minimize contact.

5.1.15 Promote use of smart/automated doors to minimize touching contaminated surfaces where applicable.

5.1.16 Integrate technologies to enable automation, such as contactless payments platforms such as online money transaction and tour information where possible and discourage cash payments

5.2 Travel agents' operations and services

The travel agents and their service providers shall be required to comply with the general provision prescribed in this protocol and in addition;

5.2.1 **Have valid covid-19 free certification for core staff not more than 14 days old from a recognized government approved facility at the first time and subsequently maintain Covid-19 prevention guidelines prescribed by the Ministry of Health (MOH) and relevant agencies**

5.2.2 Minimize walk-in clients and encourage online bookings.

5.2.3 Promote use of smart/automated doors to minimize touching contaminated surfaces.

5.2.4 Develop a Covid-19 Travel Risk Assessment Plan to assess any potential risks. The risk assessment plan shall help provide question and answer —questions relating to health, safety and hygiene measures in the destination in response to guests' queries and specific needs.

5.2.5 Install physical barriers/transparent screens to provide special separation between customers and employees, especially for travel agents located in shopping malls, airports, or in areas with direct public access.

5.2.6 Encouraging physical distancing of at least 1.5 meters and providing signage to ensure proper separation in common areas, discouraging congregating in crowded areas, limiting the number of employees and customers in the travel agent's shop.

5.2.7 Educating both employees and customer about their shared responsibility to help protect each other in a Covid-19 environment

5.2.8 Enhanced Sanitation by customized procedures to suite each agents operating environment and the expectations of its customers

5.2.9 Implement touch less technologies or low-touch solutions, where practical, such as e-ticketing, e-visa solution, online check in services, e-payment or mobile payment services, customer, passenger tracing services and travel agents' airport transfers to limit the opportunity for virus transmission while also promoting a safe and enjoyable travel experience for customers

5.3 Professional Safaris & Services, Photographers, Tour Guides/ Leaders and Tour Site Operations Services

All professional safari providers, guides and beach operators shall comply with the general provision under this protocol and in addition;

5.3.1 Have valid covid-19 free certification for core staff not more than 14 days old from a recognized government approved facility at the first time and subsequently maintain Covid-19 prevention guidelines prescribed by the Ministry of Health (MOH) and relevant agencies

5.3.2 Safari guides shall carry sanitizer at all times and its regular use encouraged.

5.3.3 Guides and guests shall wear appropriate PPES at all times

5.3.4 Additional disposable PPEs shall be made available in the vehicle for use at all times

5.3.5 Waste bins shall be available for the disposal of used PPEs

5.3.6 A contactless thermometer for checking temperature shall be made available for use in the vehicle at all times

5.3.7 Maintain good personal grooming and ensure clothing properly cleaned and ironed on a daily basis

5.3.8 Ensure Vehicles used in guest transport are cleaned and sanitized after every passenger /group tour

5.3.9 Each Site Management /Operator shall appoint a Safety Officer responsible for temperature screening of beach operators and clients before their interaction

5.3.10 Maintain a register of clients transported or who have interacted with the tour guides/Tour Site operators.

5.3.11 Maintain appropriate and reliable list of emergency contacts for rapid assistance in case of health and safety related instances.

5.3.12 Handling of cash shall be minimized or eliminated and online mobile payment or credit/debit cards encouraged

5.3.13 Guide books shall be provided on request

5.4.0 Tourist Mobile Service and Transport Providers– Local Air Charters, Tourist Vehicle Service & Boat Operators

5.4.1 Tourist Service Vehicles

Tourist Service Vehicle/Boat Operators shall be required to comply with the general provision this protocol and in addition;

5.4.1.1 Have valid covid-19 free certification for core staff not more than 14 days old from a recognized government approved facility at the first time and subsequently maintain Covid-19 prevention guidelines prescribed by the Ministry of Health (MOH) and relevant agencies

5.4.1.2 Ensure TSVs/Boats are sanitized before the start of each trip and this will include cleaning and disinfecting of all surfaces (handrails, door handles, tables, seats etc.) at regular times in the course of trip

5.4.1.3 Ensure vehicles/Boats are sanitized between uses by different guests/clients

5.4.1.4 Have hand sanitizers freely available on board for the guests to use throughout the journey.

5.4.1.5 Provide approved quality facemasks to guests on all trips on need basis.

5.4.1 6 Tourist vehicles/boats shall not be allowed to make stopover at any other place apart from the prearranged designated point or areas

5.5.0 Carrying Capacity of Tourist Service Vehicles/ Safari Vehicles and Boats

Carry a capacity that ensures social distancing between guests travelling together, **the maximum recommended capacity to be observed for each class of vehicle are as follows;**

5.5.1 For Minibuses, Land cruisers and similar vehicles the carrying capacity shall not exceed half the capacity including the driver

5.5.2 Ensure that all tour arrangements consider the needs of persons with disabilities

5.5.3 Choose partners that are confirmed to comply with existing Government directives for the safe handling of their guests

5.5.4 Keep a record of emergency contacts for rapid response services in case of Covid-19 suspected instances from designated Authorities.

5.6.0 Maintenance of Cleanliness of the Vehicles / Boats on trips

5.6.1 Vehicles/boats are sanitized frequently. Particular attention shall be paid to disinfecting frequently touched areas and surfaces both internal and external such as door handles and arm rests.

5.6.2 Third party cleaners and car washers shall be encouraged to wear appropriate PPEs

5.6.3 Guests are encouraged to bring their own water bottles.

5.6.4 Any provided water bottles or items shall be labelled with each guest name to avoid sharing or use by another

5.6.5 Reusable food containers shall be sanitized regularly.

5.6.6 Binoculars, telescopes and cameras shall not to be shared and shall be sanitized regularly.

5.6.7 Blankets or ponchos are discouraged, however, where provided for guest use, they shall not be shared, and be disinfected/sanitized regularly.

5.6.8 Particular attention shall be given to luggage disinfection before and after handling

5.6.9 All used PPEs (Gloves, masks, Tissues) and any other disposable material should be disposed of in a covered bin

5.7.0 Homestays, Community/ Cultural Villages and Informal Attractions Sites

Homestays and community/cultural villages tourist owners, service providers shall be required to comply with the general requirements outlined this protocol herein and;

5.7.1 Guests shall inform the host homestay, community/ cultural village of their intended visit and book in advance to allow hosts to ably prepare for their visits.

5.7.2 Homestay/ host families conducting guest hosting shall be required to have valid covid-19 free certification not more than 14 days old from a recognized government approved facility at the first time and subsequently maintain Covid-19 prevention guidelines prescribed by the Ministry of Health (MOH) and relevant agencies

5.7.3 Guest shall only be allowed at specified homes or communities that enable guest and host keep the required physical distance and practice safe hygiene.

5.7.4 Vulnerable persons, children and elderly members of the host family/community shall not be allowed to interact with guests.

5.7.5 Guest shall not share sanitation facilities and items used by members of the hosting family or community/cultural village

5.7.6 Unregistered/unlicensed homestays shall not be allowed to receive and/or accommodate guests overnight within hosting community/cultural village

5.7.7 Guest shall only be allowed to touch souvenir items that they purchase

5.7.8 Food preparation and service demonstrations by community/cultural villages shall not be allowed

9. Informal attractions such as Valley viewpoints and curio shops along tourist routes shall provide hygiene and sanitation facilities including running water and soap for hand washing and encourage social distancing.

5.7.10 Great care shall be taken when using equipment to avoid sharing items such as boats life jackets among others or sanitized.

5.7.11 Where a safari guide stops at any informal attraction's sites, they shall ensure strict hygiene protocols are followed including face covering essentials and sanitization before and after stopover at the sites.

5.8 Shops / Curios and General Vendors

Shops/curio vendors shall comply with the general provision under part two of this protocol to ensure minimum contact with guest and;

5.8.1 Have valid covid-19 free certification not more than 14 days old from a recognized government approved facility at the first time and subsequently maintain Covid-19 prevention guidelines prescribed by the Ministry of Health (MOH) and relevant agencies

2. Sanitize or wash hands before and immediately after entering the work premises and after touching items or surfaces

5.8.3 Guest hand sanitizers/hand wash facilities shall be provided in strategic locations within and around the premises or entrance of the premises

5.8.4 Credit card machines where used, shall be wiped with alcohol wipes before and after use by each guest

5.8.5 70% alcohol sanitizer spray can be sprayed thinly on all items that had been touched and then allowed to evaporate (no wiping needed).

5.8.6 Guests shall be required to properly sanitize and/or wash their hands-on initial arrival before entry to the shop.

5.8.7 Goods/items shall be packed, cleaned and sanitized and delivered to guest's pick-up tray/trolley or table designated for the purpose.

5.8.8 Staff delivering packed goods/items shall stand back two meters until the guest has retrieved the goods/ items delivery.

5.8.9 There shall be zoning of general vendors operating in a certain locality to ensure social distancing is maintained.

5.8.10 General vendors shall be encouraged to belong to an association which will ensure these protocols and MOH guidelines are followed.

5.8.11 A register of general vendors operating in a certain locality shall be kept by local associations or local authorities for ease in tracing.

5.8.12 Unlicensed vendors shall be barred from operating on the sites and venues as they may pose problems in tracing

6.0 HANDLING COVID-19 CASES

6.1 General Recommendations

If a guest or staff develops symptoms of acute respiratory infection, efforts should immediately be made to minimize contact of the ill person with all guests and staff. Management should follow the procedures in the action plan for the situation when a guest develops signs and symptoms indicative of COVID-19 as they contact the responsible health professionals.

- a) Separate the ill person from the other persons by at least 2 m (6 ft) in a designated isolation area.
 - a. Request the ill person to wear a mask and practice respiratory hygiene when coughing and sneezing. If the mask cannot be tolerated by the ill person, provide tissues to cover mouth and discard the tissue immediately into a biohazard disposal waste bag or place it into an intact plastic bag, seal it, and consider it "biohazard" waste; wash hands with soap and water or alcohol-based hand rub.

- b. In case the ill person cannot wear a mask, direct contact with the ill person should be avoided unless wearing at least disposable gown, gloves, a mask, and eye protection.
- c. When attending to an ill guest or staff coming from an affected area who displays fever, persistent cough, or difficulty breathing, always use additional protective equipment, including mask, eye protection, gloves, and a gown.
- d. Remove PPE carefully to avoid contaminating yourself. Remove first gloves and gown, do hand hygiene; next remove the mask and eye protection, and immediately wash hands with soap and water or alcohol-based hand rub.
- e. Properly dispose of gloves and other disposable items that had contact with the ill person's body fluids in biohazard bag or a secured plastic bag, which will be considered as "biohazard" waste.

6.2 Case of an affected worker

If a member of the staff reports respiratory symptoms, the staff must immediately stop work and seek medical assistance. The staff should stay isolated in a suitable room while the medical services are being notified.

Staff who report from home that they are ill with respiratory symptoms should be advised to stay at home and seek medical attention.

Staff who report from home that they have been diagnosed with COVID-19 should follow the instructions received from the health authorities, including the recommendation of self-isolation at home until fully healed.

6.3 Case of an affected guest

If the person affected is a guest, continued stay of the sick person in the establishment is not recommended. The person can be isolated in a room on a temporary basis until the intervention of local health authorities, and provided the room is not shared with other guests. No visitors should be permitted to enter the room occupied by the affected guest.

Depending on the availability of rooms, accompanying persons, if any, should be moved to a different room

Measures for the management of contacts can be referred to the health authority interim guidance on Home care for patients with COVID-19 presenting with mild symptoms and management of their contacts.