

POLICY BRIEF

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Citizen's Security and Security Personnel Preparedness to Handle COVID-19 Pandemic

Summary of Recommendations

1. *Development of a safety manual for security personnel engaging directly with citizens in combating COVID-19 Pandemic;*
2. *Routine orientation of security personnel on the newly developed safety manual;*
3. *Provide necessary protective gear to security personnel on duty;*
4. *Recommend collaboration and coordination of efforts between security sector institutions and other national and international institutions in implementing measures to combat adverse effects of COVID-19 Pandemic;*
5. *Recommend immediate establishment of a multi-stakeholder oversight mechanism to regulate and monitor progress and mitigate challenges faced by security personnel on mission to combat COVID-19.*

Highlights

COVID-19 pandemic is and still remains a global threat to all nations and humanity. The current status of infection has reached over 1.5million¹ and is rapidly growing. With confirmed cases in South Sudan, COVID-19 becomes a reality in the Country. Neighboring countries have put stringent measure to contain spread of the virus and case management. The prevalence of infections seems to be more concentrated in the urban areas.

However, the counter argument to this statement may indicate limited focus of screening efforts in rural areas as a factor in concealing the reality of the pandemic in the countryside. Therefore, it is important to consider both sides of the argument in future analysis.

With two cases of COVID-19 patient already confirmed in South Sudan, there is panic and misinformation among the citizens and the authorities in the country.

This has led to frantic efforts being made by different group and mechanisms including security organs. However, it is important to acknowledge that national institutions and mechanisms are making efforts to mitigate the danger of COVID-19 by introducing measures such as, but not limited to night curfew, road blocks, airport lockdown, market closure for non-essential good.

It's important to note that all these measures require involvement of security personnel. Therefore, attention must be paid to the level of **citizen's security and security personnel preparedness to handle responses to COVID-19 pandemic.**

Considering that South Sudan is currently under transition governance², this poses greater challenge to all institutions. Now with COVID-19 pandemic, the situation requires robust operations, coordination and cooperation within and between different institutions, mechanisms, sectors and components of the transitional government.

¹ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1043366/novel-coronavirus-2019ncov-cases-worldwide-by-country/>

² Revitalize Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS)

Analysis

South Sudan currently is undergoing transitions, which calls for reform and transformation of public service institutions; the current country context exhibits fragility, which in itself poses a threat to responsiveness of national institutions including the security sector. The fact that COVID-19 Pandemic has set in at this critical moment when the country is faced with huge challenges, further exacerbates the vulnerability of the nation. It is important to note that security sector institutions are key employers of a large proportion of a country's population, hence it is expected that when disaster strikes or during disease pandemic, security sector personnel take lead and remain in the forefront to rescue and provide security to the citizens, their properties and the nation.

"Armies across the world are temporarily putting down their guns and playing a frontline role in the war against the virus."³ Examples have been seen in other parts of the world such as US, The New York National Guard is helping local officials distribute food.⁴ South Africa, military has been deployed in communities across the country to support efforts to contain the COVID-19 disease, and help save the lives of citizens.⁵, Uganda and Kenya alike. Given the challenges at hand, it is obvious that institutions are making frantic efforts to intervene and mitigate adverse effect of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, these frantic efforts are likely to compromise safety and security protocols and predispose the population to rapid spread of the virus.

Compromising behaviors have been observed in conduct of security personnel implementing the night curfew, maintaining traffic and market closure. In all the above situations, the security personnel have used their usual hands on approach; apprehending violators - coming into close contact with the purported violator. Insistence to take drivers licenses and vehicle logbooks into their hands and verify its validity as opposed to reading from a distance, this may expose the driver or the security personnel to COVID-19 infection. Other concerned groups have also highlighted this fear.⁶

It is therefore important in circumstances such as the case of COVID-19 in South Sudan, to note that there is high likelihood for institutions and mechanisms to copy and paste measures applied in other countries without necessarily taking into account the South Sudan context. Due to systemic weakness of national institutions characterized by meager salaries, which are paid intermittently, if proactive measures are not put in place, the security personnel deployed to mitigate spread of the virus and protect property may themselves become a threat.

From the above analysis, it is evident that South Sudan as a nation is experiencing dire challenges in term of; public service preparedness, responsiveness, personnel capacity and comprehension of the magnitude of the threat posed by COVID-19. Scarcity of basic supplies to facilitate work of the security personnel eg masks, gloves or even magnifying glasses remains a challenge. Inflexibility in swiftly adopting security protocols and routine procedure to the current context is a risk to the nation. It's important to note that all the measures put in place during this critical moment of COVID-19 pandemic is to **stop the spread of the virus and save lives**. Therefore, the following are key recommendations to enhance efforts to mitigate adverse effect of COVID-19 in South Sudan.

³ <https://www.fpri.org/article/2020/03/how-the-u-s-department-of-defense-is-fighting-covid-19/>

⁴ <https://www.defense.gov/Explore/News/Article/Article/2118175/national-guard-ramping-up-covid-19-response/>

⁵ South Africa's military has been deployed in communities across the country to support efforts to contain the COVID-19 disease, and help save the lives of citizens.

⁶ Statement by the South Sudan Civil Society Forum (SSCSF) - April 8th 2020.

Recommendations

1. Development of a safety manual for security personnel engaging directly with citizens in combating COVID-19 Pandemic.

A comprehensive and **Simplified COVID-19 Safety Manual** with graphics illustrating the preventive measures necessary general population and the security personnel themselves. This is a two-way process that requires involvement of different sectors to bring in the multiple dimensions. This remains a matter of urgency.

2. Routine orientation of security personnel on the newly developed safety manual.

This can be implemented by the security sector institutions or with involvement of personnel from other sectors. The initial rollout of such orientation process needs to take into account the interest of wider population and security sector personnel. Therefore, use of media is paramount.

3. Provide necessary protective gear to security personnel on duty

It's important to prioritize provision of necessary protective gear for the security personnel on mission to combat COVID-19. This must be treated as a matter of urgency.

4. Recommend collaboration and coordination of efforts between security sector institutions and other national and international institutions in implementing measures to combat adverse effects of COVID-19 Pandemic.

5. Recommend immediate establishment of a multi-stakeholder oversight mechanism to regulate and monitor progress and mitigate challenges faced by security personnel on mission to combat COVID-19.

Citizen's Taskforce on COVID-19 (Citizen's Taskforce) is a coalition of individuals with diverse background, expertise, experience and skills. Membership of the taskforce is open for individuals (South Sudanese and foreign nationals living and working in South Sudan) and organizations. The Citizen's Taskforce continues to accept volunteers to join the cause through out this difficult moment when the entire world is battling with COVID-19. The initiative is designed to complement existing efforts such as the High Level Taskforce on COVID-19 by conducting continuous situation analysis, providing responsive recommendations to inform/enhance policy decisions and actions of key actor's, awareness creation, advocacy and social mobilization among other activities.

For more information, please contact The Citizen's Taskforce through Email: citizentaskforce0@gmail.com Phone: +211 924 664 431 Facebook: The Citizen's Taskforce on COVID-19.

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