



Republic of Malawi

Ministry of Youth and Sports

**COVID-19 GUIDELINES FOR SPORTING AND
RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES**

**“Sustaining Sporting Activities, Saving Lives and Restoring
Livelihood of People”**

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1. INTRODUCTION

Sporting and Recreational activities were some of the social and economic activities that were suspended in March, 2020, due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Unfortunately, global trends indicate that the Covid-19 pandemic will still be in existence for a long time and nobody knows when it will end.

The situation has created serious fears in the Sports Sector because the prolonged suspension of sporting and recreational activities will reduce the standard of sports, physical fitness of players and the competence of both players and officials will drastically decline to non-recoverable levels if the suspension continues.

Secondly, the prolonged suspension of sporting and recreational activities has caused more stresses in people, increased un-healthy life styles that can result in increased chronic diseases and danger of increased obesity among citizens.

Finally, the economy of the sport and recreation industry, and the country as a whole, will continue to collapse.

It should be noted that the sports sector is huge and complex since it cuts across both urban and rural settings. Though the economic impact of sport is not quantified due to lack of research based evidence, there is a large proportion of the population that fully relies on earnings from the sporting and recreational activities in the country. The suspension of the sporting and recreational activities has

therefore caused a lot of suffering to most Malawians whose survival depends on sport and recreational activities.

However, realising that the pandemic is still in existence, the Ministry of Youth and Sports in consultation with the Ministry of Health, has developed some measures to be complied with as sporting and recreational activities re-start so that players, officials, spectators, persons with disabilities and all stakeholders are protected. The guidelines will come into effect on the day they will be approved by Ministry of Health.

2. GUIDELINES FORMULATION PROCESS

2.1 The guidelines were formulated based on a Three-Point Plan, namely:

- a) Sustaining sporting and recreation activities;
- b) Saving lives of people; and
- c) Restoring the livelihood of the people.

2.2 The guidelines were formulated through an exhaustive consultative process where all key stakeholders were engaged to give their views and expertise in the guidelines. Among the stakeholders consulted were: Malawi National Council of Sports, Ministry of Youth and Sports, National Sports Associations, Ministry of Education, District Sports Officers, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Justice, Technical Committee on Covid-19, Presidential Task Force on Covid-19, Media Institutions and Players representatives. The Guidelines also incorporated some strategies from the Football Restart Plan by Football Association of Malawi, Ministry of Health Covid-19 Preventive Measures, Public views, lessons learnt from some countries that restarted sporting activities after the decline of covid-19 pandemic such as South Africa and in Europe.

- 2.3 The guidelines have also considered other factors such as variety of stakeholders, different environments, and types of sporting and recreational activities.

2.1 DEFINITIONS

In these guideline, unless the context otherwise requires—

“Organiser” means natural or legal person who is involved in the organization, management and patronizing any sporting and recreation activities; and

“Event” means an occurrence of a particular sporting activity as planned by organiser.

2.2 APPLICATION OF THE GUIDELINES

The guidelines will be applicable to all types and levels of sport and recreational events and all groups of people involved in the organization, management and patronization of sport and recreational events, including operation of gymnasiums.

For the sake of clarity, the guidelines are classified into two categories:

- a. Guidelines for Sport Games and/ Competitions; and;
- b. Guidelines for Sport Meetings and / Conferences.

3. GUIDELINES FOR DIFFERENT LEVELS OF SPORT EVENTS AND STAKEHOLDERS

3.1 General Guidelines for preparation to organize Sport and Recreational Events

Any person intending to organize a sport or recreation event should:

- 3.1.1 Understand the latest Covid-19 preventive measures related to the event they intend to organize before they organize the event. It should be noted that the responsibility of Covid-19 prevention during the event lies in the hands of the event organisers, with

- support from law-enforcers, health personnel and other key stakeholders to be involved.
- 3.1.2 Incorporate Covid-19 preventive measures into the at all levels of the event management.
 - 3.1.3 Submit the Event Plan, at least a month before the date of the event, to Government through Malawi National Council of Sports for approval to organize the event.
 - 3.1.4 Sensitise all stakeholders on the event plan a month before the date of the event.
 - 3.1.5 Provide adequate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for all relevant stakeholders involved in the event, except spectators who should be encouraged to bring their own sanitizers and Masks (- Preferably reusable masks). No Mask No Entry.
 - 3.1.6 Finalize all contractual issues with participants before engaging them in the event. For example, have clear working conditions and obtain consent from parents or guardians of participants below the age of 18.
 - 3.1.7 Engage a named and registered Health Personnel conversant with covid-19 preventive measures.
 - 3.1.8 The Event Plan should clearly show monitoring mechanism of compliance to covid-19 preventive measures.
 - 3.1.9 Sports event organizers should demonstrate capacity and preparedness before being allowed to organize the event.

3.2 Guidelines applicable to training for Sports Games or competitions and recreational activities

- 3.2.1 All sporting activities should start with players training for a period recommended for a particular sport in order to gain fitness to prevent injuries and deaths;
- 3.2.2 One should start training after being tested and issued with a Medical Check-Up Certificate by a registered Health Personnel familiar with Covid-19 pathology;
- 3.2.3 All participants to be tested before participating in the training session;
- 3.2.4 All teams to have qualified Team Doctors assigned by Ministry of Health;
- 3.2.5 Ministry of Health to orient all team doctors and National Sports Associations on Covid-19 pathology;
- 3.2.6 All sports personnel and stakeholders with covid-19 symptoms should not be allowed to participate in sporting and recreational activities until they are treated and certified fully recovered;
- 3.2.7 The organisers should provide training equipment and ensure that all the training equipment and facilities are disinfected before and after use;
- 3.2.8 Organizers to provide water and soap for washing hands before and after training or sanitizer for disinfection;
- 3.2.9 All participants should have their body temperature checked before training sessions;

3.2.10 The organisers should provide Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for participants and relevant officials during training;

3.2.11 Organizers to conduct self-audit inspection at every training venue to ensure compliance before being audited by law enforcers and Event Coordination Team and the coordinating team.

3.3 Guidelines applicable to Sporting Games or Competitions

3.3.1 Before the first main game or competitive event of a particular sport, the organizers should host at least two test or friendly matches to assess compliance with the latest Guidelines on Covid-19 Preventive measures. The Ministry of Health personnel should be invited to be part of the test matches as observers. The invitations should be sent to the Ministry of Health at least two weeks in advance for proper planning. The Ministry of Health will have the final authority to approve/or disapprove continuation of the games.

3.3.2 The date, time and venue of the matches should be communicated to relevant stakeholders together with invitations and to be confirmed at least 72 hours before kick-off.

3.3.3 All Sports Associations should identify and train event Coordinators for their respective sport across the country.

- 3.3.4 The organizers shall set an **Event Coordination Team** comprising of a Sports Association's Delegate (Match Commissioner), a Health Personnel and Security Personnel, which will ensure that all measures and standards put in place are adhered to.
- 3.3.5 The **Event Coordination Team** shall inspect the Venue at least 48 hours before the game to certify if it is in a condition to host a particular event.
- 3.3.6 All facilities and equipment at the venue should be cleaned and disinfected a day before the event, and after that, access to the facilities should be restricted until the time of the event.
- 3.3.7 On the eve of the match, the **Event Coordination Team** led by the Association delegate shall hold an Event Coordination Meeting with all concerned stakeholders to clarify Rules and Regulations governing the event.
- 3.3.8 All players and sports officials to avoid using public transport to and from the games, where possible.
- 3.3.9 Reduce capacity of buses or / cars carrying players and sports officials;
- 3.3.10 All players and their officials should be tested before participating in the sport event and if found positive be isolated;
- 3.3.11 All participants to be tested before participating in the match;

- 3.3.12 All entrances into the sport facility hosting the event should have:
- a. Hand washing facilities (water and soap) and sanitizers but spectators are also encouraged to bring their own sanitizers.
 - b. Infrared thermometer for checking body temperature.
- 3.3.13 Entry into all sports facilities to be allowed only after thorough hand washing with soap or hand sanitising;
- 3.3.14 Matches to be played only in the presence of a designated Match Inspector, Medical and security personnel;
- 3.3.15 Spectators should be encouraged to come with their own sanitizers and putting on face masks;
- 3.3.16 During the sports event, all players (Except those on the field of play), all officials, spectators, guests, support staff and service providers should put on protective face masks and observe all necessary measures;
- 3.3.17 Where possible prefer using outdoor (open space) sports facilities;
- 3.3.18 In order to maintain social distancing during an event, as per latest Covid-19 preventive guidelines, the following measures shall be observed:
- a. Increasing gate charges;
 - b. Printing tickets half of the capacity of the venue;
 - c. Pre-selling tickets;
 - d. Early opening of gates;
 - e. All media personnel to be accredited by organizers;
- and;

f. All invited guests to be given complementary tickets.

- 3.3.19 Each sports facility should have a tent erected outside the facility for isolation of those suspected to be covid-19 positive before they enter the stadium;
- 3.3.20 Any suspected cases to be reported immediately to healthy authorities;
- 3.3.21 Each gate to have a Health personnel to handle issue of screening;
- 3.3.22 Hosting and participating in international sports events to follow all the prescribed measures;
- 3.3.23 All Sports Associations should seek approval from Government through Malawi National Council of Sports before hosting and participating in international sports events until the situation normalizes;
- 3.3.24 All sports facilities and equipment to be disinfected before and after use;
- 3.3.25 Players and officials should not share uniforms and equipment that allow direct contact;
- 3.3.26 Sensitize participants and the general public on Sports latest Covid-19 preventive measures through messages to be disseminated during the event;
- 3.3.27 There should be intensive monitoring and evaluation of implementation of the latest covid-19 preventing measures during sport events;
- 3.3.28 Limit number of people entering change (dressing) rooms;

- 3.3.29 No hand shaking during starting of games and cheering of teams;
- 3.3.30 Complete separation of players from spectators;
- 3.3.31 No reuse of towels and linen on massage beds;
- 3.3.32 Regular sanitising of treatment beds, door handles and key surfaces after use by each athlete/official;
- 3.3.33 Avoid touching of non-essential surfaces;
- 3.3.34 After every event, organizers should convene a post-mortem meeting to analyse the event in order to improve organization of the next events in relation to Covid-19 Preventive measures. Compile and submit a report of the event stating what worked and what went wrong and the recommendations for improvement.

3.4 Guidelines Applicable to Sport Meetings /Conferences and Indoor Sports Events

- 3.4.1 Some of the measures above will apply;
- 3.4.2 Reduce capacity of indoor sports facilities or venues by 50%;
- 3.4.3 Ensure proper ventilation of indoor sports facilities or venues;
- 3.4.4 Participants to be screened before participating in the meeting or indoor games;
- 3.4.5 Avoid sharing of microphone, pens and papers between participants during meetings;
- 3.4.6 Resort to electronic means of communication during invitations and circulation of meeting documents;

- 3.4.7 Participants should sit between 1.0 to 1.5 metres apart;
- 3.4.8 For indoor sport events, regularly clean and disinfect the floor and surfaces of furniture and equipment;
- 3.4.9 Participants to always put on face masks, except for players on the field of play;
- 3.4.10 Wash hands/or sanitize regularly.

4. PHASING OF REOPENING PROCESS

To ensue gradual process of re-opening of sporting activities, the activities will be phased as follows:

- 4.1 PHASE ONE: National Team and Individual Sport Games (Single athlete sports)
 - 4.1.1 Camping from Monday, 21st September, 2020
 - 4.1.2 Test Matches from 5th to 11th October, 2020
 - 4.1.3 Competitions from 9th November, 2020
 - 4.1.4 No spectators during both training and competitions until advised by Health Experts
 - 4.1.5 Matches to be played in approved venues where crowd control is possible
- 4.2 PHASE TWO: Elite Team Sport (All sport disciplines)
 - 4.2.1 Individual training from 17th October, 2020
 - 4.2.2 Test matches from 22nd October, 2020
 - 4.2.3 Competitions from 31st October, 2020
 - 4.2.4 No spectators during both training and competitions until advised by Health Experts
 - 4.2.5 Matches to be played in approved venues where crowd control is possible
- 4.3 PHASE THREE: Lower League Team Sport (All sport disciplines); School Sport; Community Sport and recreation activities

To start when approval will be given by Ministry of Health for the sector to fully open and spectators can be allowed since these games attract large crowds and are played in open grounds. Preferably, this phase would be starting in January, 2020.

This phase will follow the same process like phases One and Two, as follows:

- 4.3.1 Individual training for one week
- 4.3.2 Team training for two weeks
- 4.3.3 Test Matches
- 4.3.4 Competitions with spectators

It should be noted that the Ministry may not be able to regulate community sports. However, the Ministry can sensitize communities on the guidelines to ensure that the activities are done in a safe way.

5.0 ENFORCEMENT MECHANISM

5.1 Stakeholders

The following stakeholders will assist in enforcing the measures:

- a) Security Personnel;
- b) Medical Personnel;
- c) Sports Officials;
- d) Media personnel;
- e) Spectators;
- f) Stadium owners;
- g) Sports Covid-19 Task Force; and;
- h) Government officials.

5.2 Sanctions

Failure to comply with the Sports Covid-19 Preventive Measures will attract sanctions such as ban for organizing or participating in sports event, fines in accordance with the Code of Conduct of individual sport and arrest by law-enforcers in line with the law of Malawi.

Note: Any issue that does not apply in these Guidelines, will be guided by the Ministry of Health Gazetted Laws on Covid-19.

6.0 EXPECTED CHALLENGES AND RISKS FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GUIDELINES

6.1 Claims for risk allowances by officials and players;

6.2 High costs of managing sports events due to extra costs of water, soap, sanitizers, protective wear, intensive monitoring and evaluation exercise, extra security and medical personnel;

6.3 Organizing matches without spectators will suffocate teams financially since revenue will not be generated;

NOTE: Implementation of these guidelines is subject to the written approval by the Ministry of Health.