



Republic of Malawi

PRESS STATEMENT

For immediate release

June 2, 2020

Ministry of Education, Science and Technology

Lilongwe

UPDATE BY THE TASKFORCE ON THE RE-OPENING OF SCHOOLS, COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

Following its appointment by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology on 13th May, 2020, the National Planning Taskforce on the Possible Re-opening of Schools, Colleges and Universities has been meeting to come up with strategies and conditions for the safe re-opening.

It is worth pointing out the re-opening of schools, colleges and universities amidst the COVID-19 pandemic that has led to loss of lives globally including four in Malawi, is an attempt to ensure a proper balance between the right to education and the right to life. It is for this reason that the Taskforce, at its inception meeting on 22nd May 2020, resolved to consult various stakeholders including teachers, parents, lecturers, students, policy makers, community leaders, health experts, non-state actors and the media among others, to come up with a common position that ensures safe return to learning. Recognizing that Malawi is not an island, the Taskforce has also been looking at regional and global trends to draw lessons on how safe re-opening is being managed in other countries.

In this regard, the Taskforce has recommended to the Presidential Taskforce on Coronavirus, that all schools, Colleges and Universities be re-opened on 13th July, 2020 with specific details and conditions for the re-opening to be announced later after the Taskforce has finalized the consultations.

In order to achieve its mandate effectively, the Taskforce set up teams composed of representatives of private and public universities and colleges, primary and secondary schools, civil society organizations and development and Cooperating Partners with interest in education into three sub-committees as follows:

- **Logistics:** This sub-committee is looking into operationalizing the tools and services to achieve safe return to schools.
- **Basic and Primary Education:** This sub-committee was tasked to review and come up with detailed and comprehensive recommendations based on facts on how to achieve safe return to school for primary and secondary schools.
- **Higher Education:** This sub-committee was tasked to review and come up with detailed and comprehensive recommendations based on facts on how to achieve safe return to school for institutions of higher learning – both public and private.

Consultations to various stakeholders have already started in earnest with the first press release, and a Consultation Memorandum has been dispatched to various learning institutions and other sectors for their views on safe opening in their various contexts.

The Taskforce further wishes to inform the general public and all stakeholders that it is working in a systematic and fact based way to ensure all its decision making is informed by the best of public health data and global best practices that ensure safe re-opening.

Finally, the Taskforce calls on the general public and all stakeholders to provide their input for the safe return to school as sent out last week. For the benefit of those who may have missed the earlier communication on submission of input for the re-opening of schools, please take note that all written submissions should be made to: **The Secretariat, National Planning Taskforce on COVID-19, Education Sector**, by e-mail to hsnamainja@gmail.com and/or chikondi.chimala@mail.gov.mw or through Private Bag 328, Lilongwe, to be received on or before **10th June, 2020 by Close of Business (COB)**.

The Taskforce calls on the public to continue observing and adhering to all the hygiene messages being given out by the Ministry of Health.

Together, we will defeat COVID-19; Together we can achieve safe re-opening of Schools, Colleges and Universities.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L. Dzimbiri', with a large, sweeping flourish at the beginning.

Professor Lewis Dzimbiri,
CHAIRPERSON OF THE NATIONAL PLANNING TASKFORCE