



**THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA  
MINISTRY OF HEALTH**

**PRESS STATEMENT**

**MANDATORY COVID-19 PCR TESTING AT ENTEBBE INTERNATIONAL  
AIRPORT**

**29 October 2021**

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**29 October 2021** – The Ministry of Health would like to update the public on the mandatory PCR COVID-19 testing for inbound passengers at Entebbe International Airport.

As you may recall, Uganda had been testing incoming travellers with support from the private sector. The testing which was at the Peniel beach started in the month of May 2021 up to 21<sup>st</sup> October 2021 and covered ten (10) countries categorized as high risk. The categorization took into consideration the presence of variants of concern, high rate of transmission of the disease, number of deaths reported, and vaccination coverage of at least 60%.

At a Cabinet sitting of 13<sup>th</sup> September 2021, a decision was taken that Government should carry out mandatory testing of all incoming travelers at their own cost of USD 30 at Entebbe International Airport and all other points of entry as a means of preventing importation of new variants into the country.

In preparation for this, the Ministry of Health, under the guidance of the Rt. Hon Prime Minister and with support from the Ministry of Finance, Civil Aviation Authority, the National Planning Authority, NITAU, POSTBANK and the UPDF Engineer's Brigade set up sample collection facilities, testing laboratories, client flow processes, online payment systems and all the necessary infrastructure at Entebbe International Airport to facilitate the mandatory COVID-19 testing.

Categorized testing of the original 10 countries began on the 22<sup>nd</sup> October, 2021 following the official launch of the testing facility by H.E The President. However, mandatory testing commenced at 9:00am on 27<sup>th</sup> October 2021





when the 48-hour international Notum requirement matured. However, like any new intervention, the procedure faced some challenges which a few sections of the media portrayed as messages of frustration from passengers who experienced some delays as they went through the various processes.

With this feedback from the passengers, we responded promptly by visiting Entebbe International Airport to understand the issues and put in place mitigation measures. Present to address the issues were; the UPDF brigade, Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), National Information Technology Authority Uganda (NITA-U), Post Bank Uganda, the National Planning Authority and other key stakeholders.

The challenges identified include:

### **1. Results Dispatch System**

This was cited as the biggest challenge which caused the uproar yesterday morning. Travelers were not able to access their results which were being printed and read out manually. The public address system was not audible and there was congestion at the Results Dispatch Desk

The above challenge has since been resolved as follows;

- a) Results will no longer be given out manually but through an online system which includes e- mails, WhatsApp messages and display of names on the available screens mounted on the walls for those who do not have smart phones or laptops.





- b) Results will be linked to passports or travel documents to enable QUICK scanning and verification
- c) Adequate portals for charging of electronics will immediately be made available to support those who run out of battery during flight
- d) Free WIFI has been made available immediately
- e) Exit was made easier through scanning of QR CODES using tablets.
- f) The waiting area was beefed up with additional ushers to support comfortable seating of passengers
- g) The turnaround time for results takes between 45 minutes to 2 hours' maximum.

## **2. Communication**

The airport infrastructure in the new terminal does not favour the use of Public address systems and we do apologize for this. Communication will be through the numerous screens mounted on the walls available including display of names of travelers whose results are ready and also provide entertainment. In addition, 5 Public relations officers have been deployed to support all forms of communication promptly

## **3. Online registration and Payments**

A new updated link for the online registration has been shared and publicized through all communication channels including the CAA and MOH websites and social media platforms.

<https://arrivals.healthdesk.go.ug>

All incoming travelers are required to fill this form and pay online to quicken the process of sample removal, testing and receiving results upon arrival. Once the form has been completed, a QR code will be





generated. The traveler is required to show this code to the sample remover at the point of sample collection.

An online payment system has been activated to enable travelers pay via credit/debit card or mobile money. <https://covidpay.postbank.co.ug>  
Those that are unable to use any of these options can pay by cash (UGX or USD) upon arrival.

All travelers are requested to provide their WhatsApp phone number or email address when filling in the online registration form.

#### **4. Sample Collection**

There are 30 sample collection booths, with the capacity to collect 30 samples every 5 minutes. Passengers are encouraged to cooperate to make the process as smooth as possible and as quick as possible.

#### **5. Tourists**

No tourist was involved in the confusion of yesterday and it is not true that tourists are cancelling their scheduled visits to Uganda. What appeared on social media yesterday was old information. Tour companies are encouraged to register incoming tourists with the Uganda Tourism Board (UTB) for easy identification on arrival.

Tourists have separate testing booths and are allowed to continue to their hotels in Entebbe where they wait for their results before proceeding to their designated destinations. Their results are shared via email. This procedure only applies to tourists that are registered with Uganda Tourism Board. In the event that a tourist tests positive for COVID-19, they will be isolated in their designated hotel at their own





cost and after 7 days, they will be tested again for free at a Government laboratory.

#### **6. Management of Positive cases**

Travelers who test positive will be counselled and transferred in vans to either a public or a private facility depending on the preference of the traveler. Those who opt for private facility will meet the costs of their treatment, while those admitted to public facilities will be treated free of charge.

#### **7. Testing of outbound passengers**

The Ministry of Health wishes to clarify that it is no longer working in partnership with the Private Laboratories that had set up at the Peniel Beach. However, we have been informed that the Laboratories (Safari Lab, Case Clinic, Test and Fly, and Same day lab), on their own initiative entered into contracts with different airlines like Emirates, Air Uganda, Fly Dubai, Uganda Airlines and Air Arabia etc to test outbound passengers with a time line of 2 <sup>hours</sup> before departure. The private laboratories decided to hire Peniel beach as their venue for testing.

In conclusion, I would like to appreciate all the teams who have been working around the clock to ensure that the mandatory COVID-19 testing at the airport is implemented effectively. The entry of new variants is a major threat to the success of our COVID-19 control measures. Mandatory testing is aimed at preventing the entry of new variants in the country.



We regret what happened at the airport yesterday and we pledge to continuously identify the challenges and correct them in a timely manner. We appreciate all those who provided very analytical feedback to enable us rectify some of the teething problems.

Lastly, I wish to encourage all incoming travelers to embrace the mandatory COVID-19 testing at Entebbe International Airport. It is being done to protect you and your loved ones.

For God and my Country.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jane Ruth Aceng Ocero'.

Dr. Jane Ruth Aceng Ocero

Minister for Health

29 October 2021