

DIRECTORATE OF INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION

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#AfricaMaskWeek launches to build continent-wide movement for mask-wearing

At a time when COVID-19 cases are increasing in a second wave in many parts of the world and people are fatigued with the public health and social measures, #AfricaMaskWeek is being launched to sustain and increase mask-wearing as a protective measure among populations in Africa.

#AfricaMaskWeek launches today across the continent, from 23 to 30 November 2020. Led by the Pandemic Action Network, in partnership with the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC), the African Union Office of the Youth Envoy, the African Youth Front on Coronavirus, Resolve to Save Lives, and many other organizations, this week-long social media campaign will encourage mask-wearing across the African continent.

Until there is a vaccine or medicine, mask-wearing, handwashing and physical distancing are the best tools available to control the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic.

“The key to controlling the spread of COVID-19 in the absence of a vaccine is to adopt the age-old public health strategy of wearing a mask, washing your hands regularly and keeping a safe distance from others”, said Dr John Nkengasong, Director of Africa CDC. “As we intensify testing and contact tracing to identify and treat infected persons across the continent, you can avoid being infected by simply wearing a mask to prevent respiratory droplets from reaching your nose and mouth”.

In August 2020, the Pandemic Action Network led over 40 organisations across the globe to observe the World Mask Week, which provided a unique opportunity to draw attention to the need for increased use of face coverings in public places and particularly in settings where physical distancing is not possible.

Over 55 partner organizations are currently working together in implementing the #AfricaMaskWeek initiative to help mobilize support and action for increased mask-wearing as an essential measure to prevent COVID-19 infection and ultimately stop the spread of the COVID-19 at the community level in African countries.

The week will feature several activities, including a virtual launch event today at 6.00 pm East Africa Time, which will feature discussions about mask-wearing and its benefits in controlling the spread of COVID-19. There will be social media campaigns

and online events through the week by corporate and private entities and individuals across the continent to promote mask-wearing. Individuals will be able to show their support by sharing photos and messages about mask-wearing using the hashtag #AfricaMaskWeek.

The registration link to join the kick-off event is: [#AfricaMaskWeek23Nov2020](#). Meeting ID 916 5711 1736 and Passcode 072567.

Recent data suggest that mask-wearing in Africa is declining while COVID-19 continues to spread. African leaders and the public must keep practicing what works to stop the spread. More than 40 African countries have enacted policies on mandatory use of masks in public, but there are challenges with compliance to those policies. Implementation has been inconsistent and, in some cases, marred by human rights violations. Furthermore, there are documented rumors, misinformation, disinformation, and stigmatization about mask-wearing. The #AfricaMaskWeek is an opportunity to raise awareness about the importance of consistent and correct mask-wearing, address misperceptions and mobilize compliance.

“Africa has the youngest population in the world. African youth are innovative, resilient and have shown unprecedented leadership before and during the response to the pandemic. The victory of this fight against the COVID-19 lies in the hands of young people that's why I call on youth across the continent to join #AfricaMaskWeek and keep on wearing a mask. COVID-19 is still here and still being spread in Africa. Protect yourself and protect others. Let's save our continent. Mask Up, stand up and don't give up the fight!” said Aya Chebbi, African Union Special Envoy on Youth.

#AfricaMaskWeek reminds us to wear masks consistently and correctly to help reduce the spread of COVID-19 in our communities. “#AfricaMaskWeek is a call to action for leaders and the people of Africa”, said Gabriel Fitzgerald, Co-Founder of the Pandemic Action Network. “Leaders should lead by example by consistently promoting mask-wearing and by wearing a mask in public. We must not rest or stop practicing those things that will help stop the spread of COVID-19, like handwashing, physical distancing and mask-wearing”.

For more information about #AfricaMaskWeek, please visit www.africamaskweek.com and <https://africacdc.org/download/africa-mask-week-23-30-november-2020/>

About the Pandemic Action Network

The [Pandemic Action Network](#) comprises more than 55 multi-sector member and affiliate organizations that drive collective action to help bring an end to COVID-19 and to ensure the world is prepared for the next pandemic. The network's mission is to promote policies that save the most lives and protect livelihoods, both during this COVID-19 crisis and in future pandemics. In August, the Pandemic Network launched [World Mask Week](#), August 7 – 14, 2020, which was kicked off by the #WearAMask social media challenge issued by WHO Director-General Dr. Tedros and engaged more than 40 global partners to reach 3.5+ billion people across 145 countries with positive messages to raise awareness about the impact of wearing a mask and encourage mask wearing.

About the African Union

The African Union leads Africa's development and integration in close collaboration with African Union Member States, the regional economic communities and African citizens. The vision of the African Union is to accelerate progress towards an integrated, prosperous and inclusive Africa, at peace with itself, playing a dynamic role in the continental and global arena, effectively driven by an accountable, efficient and responsive Commission.

Learn more at: <http://www.au.int/en>

About the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention

Africa CDC is a specialized technical institution of the African Union that strengthens the capacity and capability of Africa's public health institutions as well as partnerships to detect and respond quickly and effectively to disease threats and outbreaks, based on data-driven interventions and programmes.

Learn more at: <http://www.africacdc.org>.

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