

Eritrea - Report of COVID-19, 21/03/2020 – 20/08/2020

Eritrea: Brief synopsis of policy considerations and precepts

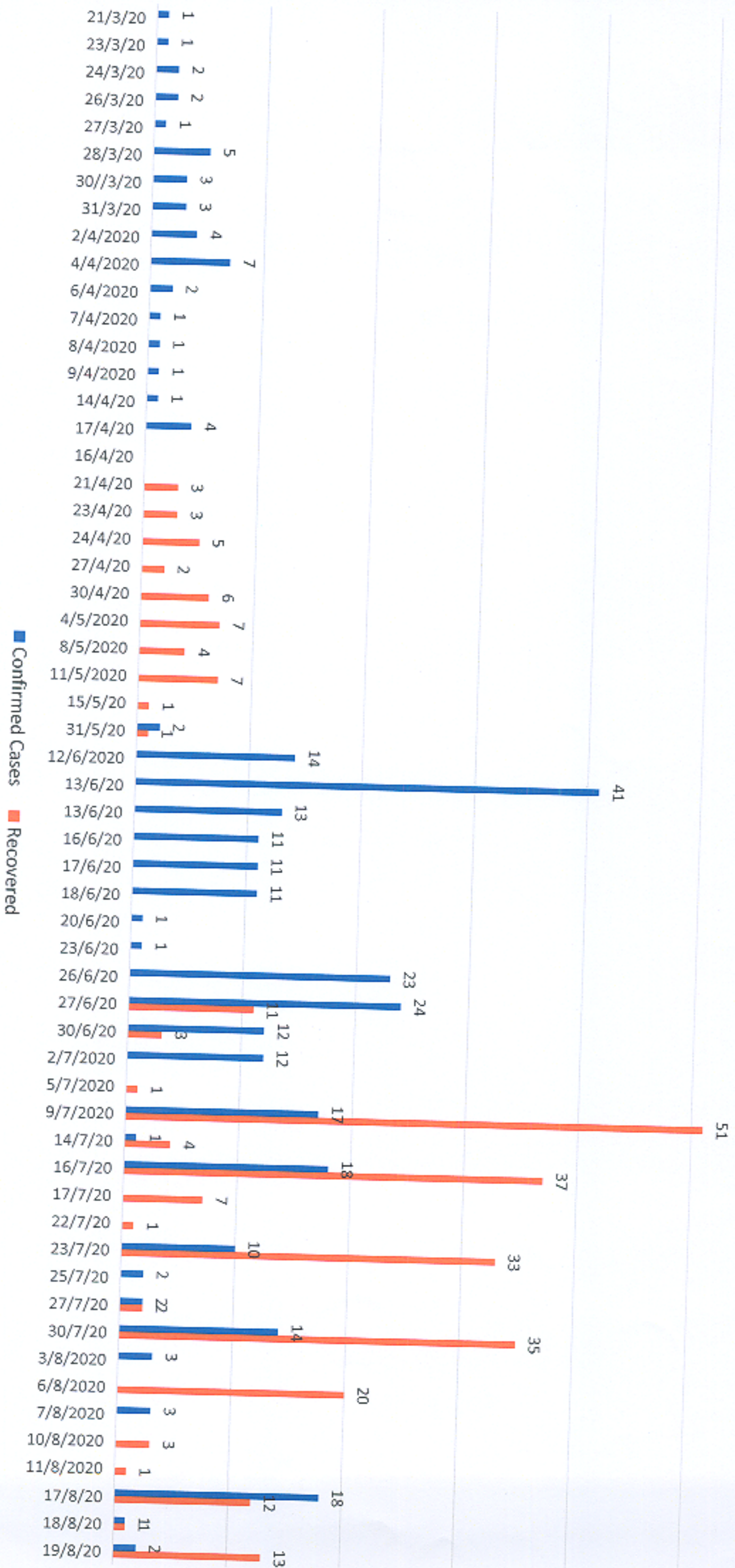
1. The Government of Eritrea's (GoSE) central, two-track policy framework was anchored, from the outset, on a robust preventive strategy that encompassed the full arsenal of standard and customized tools of suppression to pre-empt, and in the case of the first outbreak, cut and abort the transmission of the pandemic. In tandem with this primary approach, a Mitigation Strategy was also mapped out – with all the requisite preparations – to provide effective treatment for those who may contract the disease.
2. Within this framework, calibrated preventive Non-Pharmaceutical Measures (NPHs) adopted by the Government ranged from voluntary foreign travel ban from and to the country in the early weeks (from March 11 onwards) prior to the occurrence of the first case, to rigorous, stay-at-home, policies throughout the country on 2 April, 2020. Appropriate exemptions were made for vital and indispensable economic sectors whose operations were allowed to continue under strict compliance and observance of all standard preventive measures. Some of the restrictive measures have now been relaxed with time – partial opening of secondary and tertiary education etc. – on the basis of rigorous evaluation of the prevailing situation.
3. Comprehensive and mandatory quarantine of all travelers to Eritrea; targeted testing of quarantined individuals, febrile and other patients with COVID-19 symptoms in all clinics and hospitals throughout the country; as well as Aggressive Contact Tracing continue to constitute the three key pillars of the Preventive Strategy. The underlying rationale is palpable as the primary sources of contagion are infected individuals who travel to the country from abroad. (The attached table illustrates the number

- of quarantine centers and total tally of persons quarantined to-date).
4. The targeted and efficient testing policy is moreover bolstered by two additional measures: i) random and representative testing in selected areas of potential COVID-19 incidence and transmission; ii) close monitoring of patterns and trends of out-patient and in-patient services in all the clinics and hospitals of the country as a proxy metric to gauge incidence and rate of transmission of the pandemic.
 5. The first Random Testing was carried out in Asmara from 17 May until June 2nd, 2020. The random sampling and testing carried out fulfilled the standard criterion in terms of size of representative sample, urban density, demographic composition, gender and other determinant variables. The tests covered 4659 households or 15% of the residents with one representative of the household undergoing the actual nasal and throat swab tests. In view of clustered neighborhoods and median family size of seven, the outreach of the random testing in Asmara is estimated as much greater than the minimum required sample size computed on the basis of the standard variables. In any case, the tests in Asmara represent 150,000 per a million population while the figure for the country as a whole stands at 3,000 tests per a million population.
 6. With the enforcement of the ban of commercial Flights, the points of entry remain the long and porous borders of the country with the Sudan, Ethiopia and Djibouti. The GoSE has established numerous quarantine centers (92 at its peak) along or in the environs of these entry points. Rigorous testing routinely carried out in these quarantine centers will be bolstered, in the coming weeks, by random and representative testing in all the border

towns and villages to gauge the rate, if any, of potential transmission of the pandemic.

7. The total number of confirmed cases to-date (18/08/2020) is 306 out of 13,034 tests. In the random and representative tests in Asmara, there was only one positive case out of 4659 tests; i.e. a paltry 0.02%.
8. In terms of GOE's mitigation strategy, the approach involves hospitalization and provision of necessary medicament to all patients. As it happens, the severity of the positive cases has remained invariably mild so far for all patients. And, out of 306 confirmed cases to-date, 274 patients have recovered fully. The median period of hospitalization remains at 21 days. In this respect, the recovery rate stands at 100% so far within the three weeks convalescence bracket while the mortality rate to-date is zero.
9. The GoSE's strategy of prevention incorporates an extensive and comprehensive media campaign (through TV, Radio and mobile telephone platforms) to sensitize the population on the various facets of the pandemic as well as the individual/community measures of social distancing, sanitation and other tools that all citizens ought to observe to enhance the well-being of their communities and the nation as a whole. Local communities – as well as Eritreans in the Diaspora – have and continue to raise funds and resort to other innovative methods of support (waiving monthly rents for tenants etc) – to reduce the economic impact of partial lockdowns and closure of businesses, especially in the service sector. These tools constitute critical components in the GOE's multi-layered strategy of combating the pandemic.

Eritrea, number of COVID-19 Confirmed Cases and Recovered, 21/03/2020 – 19/08/2020



1. Status of Quarantine

Table 1. Number of Quarantine Sites & Quarantined from 01/02-20/08/2020

Region	Number of Quarantine sites	Number discharged after 21 days	Number still quarantined	Total
Central	12	793	3	796
South	19	3,258	252	3,510
Anseba	13	82	3	85
Gash Barka	25	5,674	616	6,290
Northern Red Sea	12	1,824	67	1,891
Southern Red Sea	11	845	37	882
Total	92	12,476	978	13,454

2. Laboratory Tests by PCR

Table 2. Number of Tests Conducted by PCR from 18/03-20/08/2020

Number tested	Total tested	Total negative	Total Positive
Male	6,559	6,426	133
Female	6,475	6,302	173
Total	13,034	12,728	306

*NB. As every COVID-19 positive case is discharged after two consecutive negative PCR results, additional 578 PCR tests were conducted as a follow up.

Table 3. Number of COVID-19 Cases by Age

Age Group	0-4	5-9	10-14	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	50-54	55-59	60-64	65-69	70-74	75-79	80-84	85-89	90-94	Total
Number	2	5	3	7	13	10	17	23	19	33	39	36	27	28	19	18	4	1	2	306

Table 4. Number of COVID-19 Cases Discharged & still on Treatment

	Total Discharged	Still Isolated	Total Cases
Male	122	11	133
Female	152	21	173
Total	274	32	306

3. Patients in Treatment/Isolation Center by Severity

Table 5. Number of COVID-19 Patients by Severity

Status	Mild	Moderate	Severe	ICU	Total
Number	306	0	0	0	306