



## Operational Context

As of October 2021, the COVID-19 outbreak in South Africa was in the twentieth month since the index cluster of imported cases were confirmed on the 5th of March 2020.

The country reacted early and imposed countrywide lockdown as well as a comprehensive public health response. The President also declared a state of disaster in line with the disaster management act. The government developed a risk-adjusted strategy that aligned five levels with the intensity of transmission, level five being the highest level when there is intense community transmission, and a countrywide lockdown is imposed.

Building on its comprehensive emergency preparedness programme and expertise in South Africa, WHO committed to deploying technical experts to support South Africa's COVID-19 response. In March 2020, the country office re-purposed all technical officers to support the COVID-19 response at national level and in four provinces.

In July 2020, when the country was the fifth globally in terms of cumulative cases, the President requested WHO for technical support towards the response.

The additional surge personnel arrived in the country on the 5th of August 2020. The surge team comprised experts in coordination, epidemiology and surveillance, case management, infection prevention and control, operations and logistics and risk communication. The team members have been assigned at the national level and in eight provinces (Gauteng, Free State, North West, KwaZulu-Natal, Mpumalanga, Eastern Cape, Northern Cape, and Limpopo).

## WHO South Africa COVID-19 Response in Numbers



on infection prevention and control/case management through remote and in-person sessions



using the IPCAT to review adherence to IPC measures and recommend plan of action



to 8 provinces to support national COVID-19 response



to facilitate Go.Data rollout and improve quality of outbreak data



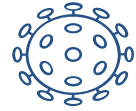
on approaches for targeted risk communication and context specific community engagement



1 national and 8 provincial in-depth review of responses that identified gaps, challenges and made recommendations to improve and sustain best practices



to reduce transmission through effective contact identification and follow-up



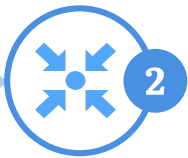
# WHO focus areas and support during COVID-19 response in South Africa

## National strategic support



1. Synthesis of global practices and evidence to guide COVID-19 response
2. Technical support to the office of Director General of National Department of Health
3. Strategic support to Technical Working Groups of the Ministerial Advisory Committee
4. Technical reviews of national response strategy and plans

## Response coordination



1. Intra Action Review
2. Enhanced Incident Management System
3. Supportive Supervision to the districts
4. Developed and updated National Response Plans
5. Development of National Resurgence Mitigation Plan
6. Development, implementation and monitoring of provincial and district resurgence plans

## Epidemiological surveillance, rapid response & contact tracing



1. Strengthened case investigation through on-the-job capacity building
2. Enhanced data quality, harmonization and overall management
3. Intensive technical support with epidemiological analysis
4. Recruitment and seconding of 5 district epidemiologists in Free state

## Infection prevention & control



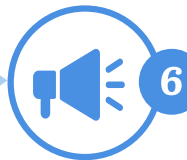
1. Assessment & recommendation for IPC programme
2. Printing and dissemination of national/facility level IPC guidelines
3. Rigorous IPC education and training
4. Supported with HAI surveillance plans, policies, and procedures
5. Orientations on Multimodal improvement strategies for IPC activities
6. Improvement of IPC monitoring, evaluation and feedback mechanisms
7. Surveyed and reviewed of IPC practices for improvement
8. Guidance on immediate needs for IPC policies, resources, equipment and trainings

## Vaccination planning and rollout



1. Facilitated assessment of country readiness for COVID-19 vaccine introduction
2. Technical support to the development of vaccine introduction planning and field guides
3. Capacity building of Vaccine Safety Committee
4. Deployed vaccine experts to support coordination and operational planning
5. Supportive supervision and on-the-job training on immunization practices and safety surveillance

## Risk communication & community engagement



1. Assisted with RCCE strategic direction and evidence based interventions
2. Introduced tools and practices for better risk communication
3. Development of social behavior change communication strategy and tools
4. Mainstreaming of RCCE into the National Response Plan

## Case management



1. Comprehensive Intra Action Review and analysis of case management
2. Transfer of skills and knowledge on clinical COVID-19 pathway
3. Gaps and needs analysis for 62 health facilities using WHO IPC assessment tools
4. Over 200 facility assessments in triage system and mentorship in IPC
5. Case management coordination and rigorous technical support at national and provincial levels

## Data management



1. Data quality audits and harmonization in seven provinces
2. Training for district in 5 provinces on data collection tools, data audit and quality control
3. Developed SOPs for data management and initiated series of trainings to improve processes
4. Engaged data clerks to enhance data management
5. Technical and financial support for Go.Data rollout in 5 districts that has improved case investigation and contact tracing

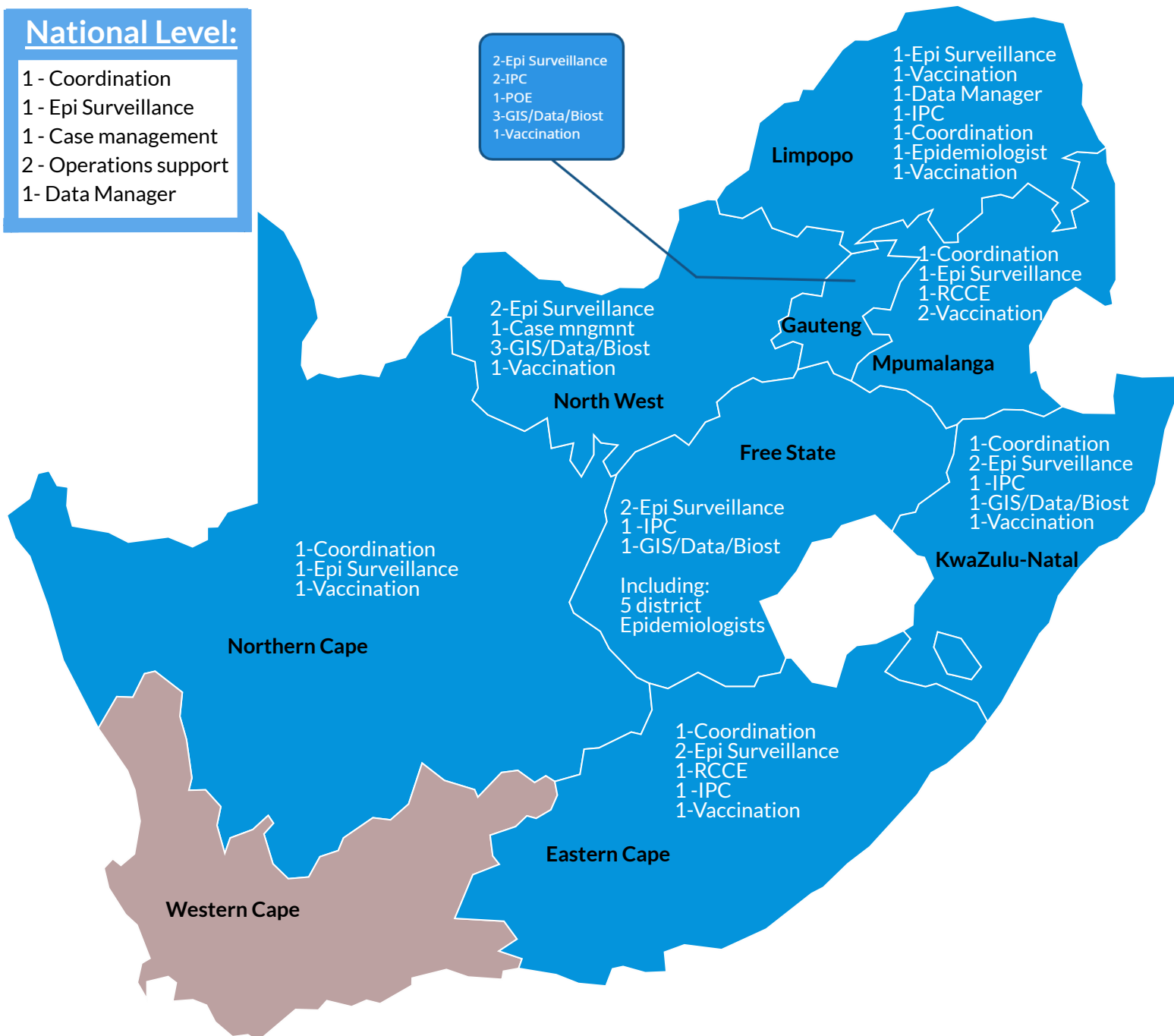


## WHO COVID-19 Response Footprint in South Africa

Since March 2020, the cumulative number of surge support experts, WHO deployed in various areas of expertise in South Africa, stood at 107. In October 2021, there were 58 experts actively working along the government health partners in provinces and at the national level to respond to the coronavirus pandemic.

### National Level:

- 1 - Coordination
- 1 - Epi Surveillance
- 1 - Case management
- 2 - Operations support
- 1- Data Manager



WHO supported provinces and deployed experts in South Africa while providing COVID-19 response

## Call for Action

---

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought about an unprecedented global multifaceted crisis exacerbating humanitarian, socio-economic, human rights vulnerabilities and placing enormous pressure on the healthcare systems. As of October 2021, more than half of all COVID-19 cases in the Africa reported to WHO were documented in South Africa making the country one of the most impacted in the region. As we see the COVID-19 cases decline across South Africa the needs still persist. We call on all contributors, donors and partners to continue their support across COVID-19 response with particular focus on boosting the vaccination efforts and maintain the delivery of essential healthcare services and systems. With the collective efforts and commitments we can address the challenges in the response to the coronavirus disease and help the country to sustainably chart its way out of the pandemic.

## Acknowledgement

---

We would like to sincerely thank all development partners and contributors, who have been supporting WHO to effectively implement the COVID-19 response in South Africa. Some of the many supporters with whom WHO has partnered to deliver the response include:



Germany



European Commission



Canada



China



Isle of Man



United States



United Kingdom



Bill &amp; Melinda Gates Foundation

## Contacts

---

Dr. Owen Kaluwa  
WHO Representative to South Africa  
kaluwao@who.int

Dr. Patrick Ramadan  
COVID-19 Response Coordinator, WHO South Africa  
ramadano@who.int

P.O. BOX 13113, TRAMSHED 0126, PRETORIA, SOUTH AFRICA. TEL: +27-12-3057700,

E-mail: [afwcozawr@who.int](mailto:afwcozawr@who.int) Website: [www.whosouthafrica.org](http://www.whosouthafrica.org)