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PRESS RELEASE

GOVERNMENT OF KENYA KICKS OFF COVID-19 VACCINATION OF WOMEN TRADERS AND LONG-DISTANCE TRUCKERS AT KENYA'S FIVE BORDER POSTS

Busia, 2nd December, 2021...The Government of Kenya through the Ministries of Health (MOH) and the East African Community (MEAC), has today kicked off a vaccination drive targeting cross border women traders and long-distance truck drivers along four border entry points.

The vaccination exercise funded by DANIDA and the European Union through TradeMark East Africa and supported by the Kenya Private Sector Alliance (KEPSA) as implementing partners will start at the Busia One Stop Border Post and roll out to the Malaba, Isebania and Taveta border entry points over the next two months.

The programme aims to administer the Johnson & Johnston (J&J) vaccine to at least 40,500 individuals involved in the logistics and cross border trade sectors along the border regions. It also seeks to encourage positive behaviour change for the adoption of preventative health measures aimed at mitigating the spread of COVID-19.

Dr. Lucy Mecca, the Vaccine Quality and Supply Manager at the National Vaccines Immunization Program, while speaking at the kickoff, reiterated the Government's position on the importance of vaccination against COVID-19 saying it is a priority public health and national safety agenda.

"The vaccines that we are deploying are safe and they are the best bet in preventing severe infection, hospitalization and possible death due to COVID-19. We are cognizant of the exposure that the traders and truck drivers encounter in their daily interactions, and we encourage everyone to get vaccinated and to also adhere to the COVID-19 health protocols of masking at all times, social distancing, as well as sanitizing and washing hands with flowing water and soap as one can still get infected or infect others with COVID - 19" she said.

Patrick Maingi, Head of Public Private Dialogue at KEPSA said it was a huge public health and safety risk for the border communities to remain unvaccinated noting that most of the populace depended on small-scale traders and the transport industry facilitated by truck drivers for their livelihoods.

"The pandemic has had an adverse effect on cross border trade as many critical trade activities were stalled due to the resultant lockdowns and curfews. With the uptake of vaccines, we shall not only protect ourselves and our businesses, but also progressively secure jobs and reclaim normalcy to spur recovery of trade across the borders to pre-pandemic levels," he said.



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Maingi explained that KEPSA was committed to working with the Government and other stakeholders in encouraging COVID-19 vaccinations with an aim to reach herd immunity faster across the nation.

The vaccine drive at the border entry points is expected to ensure that regional trade continues safely to avoid the country going back into the stringent lock-down measures that negatively impacted the economy, general health, and social wellbeing of Kenyans. The MOH has indicated that stopping the spread of COVID-19, will require several measures, and has advocated for vaccination to be included amongst the preventative measures.

“Improved vaccine uptake by cross border traders and truck drivers will ensure that regional trade continues and is safe. As we roll this out, we recognise and appreciate ongoing efforts by different partners to ensure a large number of the population has access to vaccinations. This will greatly alleviate the effects and disruptions of the Covid-19 pandemic on cross border trade as well as transport & logistics supply chains” noted Ahmed Farah, Director, TMEA Kenya.

Morgens Strunge Larsen, Team Lead Sustainable Jobs and Trade, DANIDA added, “Our partnership with Kenya in combating the effects of COVID-19 is critical at this time. It is our interest to see continuation of business, and protection of livelihoods with a special focus on women cross-border traders and the transport and logistics sector. Our aim in supporting this initiative is to help Kenya bridge the access gap for vaccines.”

The kickoff of the vaccination exercise was preceded by an awareness and sensitization workshop for the cross-border business communities among other stakeholders on the importance of the COVID 19 vaccine.

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About TradeMark East Africa (TMEA)

TradeMark (Trade and Markets) East Africa is an aid-for-trade organization that was established in 2010, with the aim of growing prosperity in East Africa through increased trade. TMEA operates on a not-for-profit basis and is funded by the development agencies of the following countries: Belgium, Canada, Denmark, European Union, Finland, Ireland, Netherlands, Norway, United Kingdom and United States of America. TMEA works closely with Regional Intergovernmental Organizations, like the East Africa Community, national governments, the private sector, and civil society organizations.



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About Kenya Private Sector Alliance (KEPSA)

The Kenya Private Sector Alliance (KEPSA) is a limited liability membership organization registered in 2003 as the apex body of the private sector in Kenya. KEPSA's mandate is the voice of the private sector in Kenya. KEPSA therefore is an inclusive and proactive body that provides an institutional framework for Government and private sector partnership; a facilitator for the private sector in public policy dialogue and an umbrella policy and networking institution for the private sector in Kenya; and a promoter of public-private sector partnerships in addressing the challenges of wealth and employment creation in Kenya.

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