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Ministry of Health and Indigenous Medical services

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**Health guidelines for conducting the Elections amidst the COVID-19
outbreak**

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TO THE POLLING STATION

2020 ජූනි
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June 2020



Ministry of Health and Indigenous Medical Services

Health guidelines for conducting the Elections amidst the COVID-19 outbreak

1st June 2020

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1. General

The purpose of this guideline is to describe the special health measures to be adopted during any election, to protect the general public, election staff and other persons involved in election from possible COVID -19 infection.

The transmission of the disease happens by droplets. Droplets can be produced during coughing, talking, sneezing or even by exhales from infected persons. These droplets can travel up to a distance of 1m.

Transmission can happen in two ways.

- **Direct** - Person to person transmission by direct contact with an infected person. (Eg: hugging, shaking hands). The virus can enter the body through nose, mouth or eyes.
- **Indirect** - When an infected person coughs, sneezes or exhales, droplets of infected fluid may get released and contaminate nearby surfaces and objects, such as desks, tables, telephones, computers etc. An uninfected person may contract the virus by touching these surfaces and then touching their eyes, nose or mouth.

Control of the following situations are important in preventing disease transmission.

1.1 Movement of people between districts before the election

People move from their workplaces to their home towns just before the Election Day. This poses a risk of transmission of the disease. Hence if postal voting or advance voting could be arranged for police, armed forces and government institutions where large number of workers are accommodated and employed, it will prevent such mix-up of people and greatly help to minimize transmission. The Commission may consider offering this facility for large private sector institutions as well. The extension of advance voting/postal voting is recommended only if it does not delay the holding of the election.

1.2 Attendance of staff.

Officer in Charge of any setting (training, polling booths, counting centers etc.) should ensure that any of the following categories of officers are not called or reported for duty/training.

- Those who are under quarantine for COVID-19.
- Those who have not completed 14 days of post quarantine period.

1.3 Practice the following measures in all settings

It is important to practice the following basic measures to protect everyone from this disease

- Wear a face mask
- Keep distance of one meter with everyone.
- Wash with soap and water or sanitize hands as frequently as possible.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes with elbow or tissue.
- Avoid touching the face, nose, mouth or eyes

2. Specific Settings

2.1 Propaganda meetings

2.1.1 It is recommended to use print and electronic media specially television for election propaganda and minimize physical meetings to avoid exposure.

2.1.2 If propaganda meetings are held, the number of participants shall be limited to a maximum of 100 persons.

2.1.3 Processions are not recommended.

2.1.4 Organizer shall inform the area MOH at least 3 days before starting the meeting.

2.1.5 All participants shall wear face masks at all times and chairs shall be arranged in such a manner to maintain one meter distance with each other while seated.

2.1.6 Spacious venue shall be selected so as to maintain required distance. Maintain adequate ventilation in the venue.

2.1.7 Speakers shall also maintain one meter distance with each other.

2.1.8 Distribution of hand bills is discouraged during meetings.

2.1.9 Microphones shall be disinfected between speakers. (Please refer to chapter 04 for disinfection procedure)

2.1.10 Duration of the meeting shall be restricted to 3hours to minimize exposure.

2.1.11 The person/organization who organizes the meeting shall keep the names, addresses and telephone numbers of all persons attended.

2.2 Distribution of propaganda materials to households

2.2.1 It is recommended to limit the number of visitors to 03 persons at a time.

2.2.2 Any person with fever with or without respiratory symptoms shall not participate in this activity.

2.2.3 Everyone participating shall wear masks and maintain one meter distance with each other at all times.

2.2.4 The person distributing the bills shall sanitize hands before and after each session.

2.2.5 Entering into houses by the propaganda team members is not recommended.

2.2.5 A record of the route visited with details of roads and by roads be recorded and kept with the office of the candidate.

2.3 Election offices

Everyone shall follow the guidelines mentioned in section 1.2 and 1.3 above and the following,

2.3.1 Candidates shall limit the number of election offices to reduce gathering of people.

2.3.2 Shall limit the opening hours only to accommodate essential work.

2.3.3 Shall limit the number of persons inside the office to minimum possible at any time.

2.4 Training sessions

2.4.1 Provide hand washing with soap and water/hand sanitizing facilities at the entrance to the training venue.

2.4.2 Running water from a pedal operated sink is preferred.

2.4.3 Invite only the minimum required number of officers

2.4.4 Select and arrange the venue in such a way to maintain one meter distance between participants and adequate ventilation.

2.4.5 All trainers, participants and all other staff shall wear masks. Minimize distribution of printed materials as much as possible and transmit them electronically prior to the training.

2.4.6 Do not serve refreshments while in the training session.

2.4.7 Refreshments be provided preferably in a place with good ventilation and space adequate to maintain physical distancing.

2.4.8 Hand washing facilities with soap shall be available in the area where refreshments and meals are served.

2.5 Checking and bundling of ballot papers at District Returning offices

2.5.1 Select a spacious place for this activity so that physical distancing of one meter could be maintained at all times between officers.

2.5.2 Station officers in a straight line and avoid positioning them in round tables.

2.5.3 All officers shall wear face masks.

2.5.4 Avoid exchange of documents as much as possible between officers.

2.5.5 Supply adequate amounts of consumables (eg. papers, gum, stapler machines, ligature materials etc) to avoid sharing of such things among fellow workers. Each person be provided his own set of materials and consumables.

2.5.6 Thoroughly wash hands with soap and water after each session

2.6 Postal voting

Posting the ballot papers to the certifying officers shall follow the procedure in section 2.5 above.

2.7 Casting postal votes

2.7.1 Arrange postal voting for health staff who are monitoring the COVID-19 control activities during the election if it does not require amendments of the relevant acts.

2.7.2 Consider granting postal voting for all health staff if possible.

2.7.3 Heads of institutions/officer appointed shall ensure that a spacious place (eg. A hall) is selected for casting votes to ensure physical distancing of one meter with each person inside the room.

2.7.4 Reduce the number of agents from political parties to the minimum possible.

2.7.5 All voters shall be informed that if anyone is having fever with or without respiratory symptoms to report for voting as the last voters in a particular session.

2.7.6 Ask the voter to queue at least one meter apart and arrangements shall be made to get them batch-wise to minimize overcrowding.

2.7.7 All officers and voters should wear masks.

2.7.8 Shall maintain one meter distance between voters, officers and any other persons present within the premises.

2.7.9 All voters shall wash or sanitize their hands before entering the voting place.

2.7.10 Identity of the person shall be checked without touching the identity card and if touched the officer should sanitize his hands immediately thereafter.

2.7.11 Voters shall be encouraged to use their own pen or pencil for marking the vote.

2.7.12 Voting cubicle shall be sanitized every hour. (Please ref to section 3.2 below)

2.7.13 All voters shall wash or sanitize their hands after leaving the voting box.

2.7.14 Those voters who have fever with or without respiratory symptoms should be allowed to vote at the end of the session. After such voter(s) cast(s) vote(s),

- All the officers attended to the voter(s) shall remove the gloves and thoroughly wash the hands with soap and water immediately afterwards.
- Disinfect all the furniture tops and other utensils as described in section 3.2 below.

2.7.15 All above instructions be communicated to all voters before starting the postal voting session and also displayed onsite.

2.7.16 Responsible officers shall be appointed to supervise the health measures during the whole process of postal voting.

2.8 Handling of Poling cards

All officers who handle poll cards at district returning officer's office shall follow the guidelines in section 2.5 above

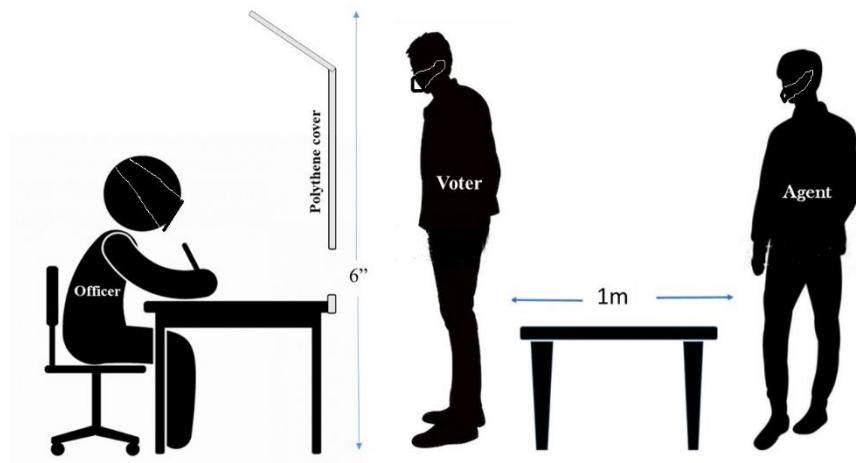
2.9 Polling Booths

2.9.1 Arrange the polling booth in such a way that voters enter from one entrance and exit from another side if possible.

2.9.2 Limit the number of agents to polling booth to the minimum.

2.9.3 Mark one meter distance points in the queue on the floor both in and outside.

2.9.4 Make a transparent protective screen (may be thick polythene) between the voters and the officials with openings below for official transactions.



2.9.5 Keep the maximum possible distance between officers and the voters.

2.9.6 Arrange polling agent area with 1 meter distance among themselves and 1 meter behind the voters queue.

2.9.7 Queue of the voters should be arranged in such a way not to get too closer to officials or other voters.

2.9.8 Voters shall be provided with hand washing facilities at the entrance and all voters shall wash or sanitize their hands before entering the polling booth and wear masks.

2.9.9 All officers shall wear masks and wash their hands before entering the polling booth.

2.9.10 Officers shall not touch the identity card or the polling card of the voter, instead shall ask the voter to show it. If touched sanitize hands immediately thereafter.

2.9.11 If finger marking is practiced ask the voter to hold the fisted left hand with the little finger out without touching the table. Paint the finger with a cotton bud and dispose it to a closed bin. Alternatively a drop of paint could be placed on the finger tip.

2.9.12 Sanitize the voting box each hour including the pen used for voting.

2.9.13 Employ a separate worker to push the ballot papers in to the ballot box with a ruler. If the ruler or the person changes the ruler shall be sanitized.

2.9.14 All hand washing points shall be provided with tissues for wiping the hands.

2.9.15 Provide adequate numbers of bins (with a polythene bag inside the bin) to discard the used tissues.

2.9.16 Medical Officer of Health (MOH) staff shall sanitize the center after the voting is over.

2.10 Conducting election in the quarantine centers

Procedure for conducting the election is the same as that of polling booths (Section 2.9) with the following additional measures.

- All officers shall wear the full protective PPE (surgical mask, gloves, face shields, full body cover and boots) before entering the election hall and remove it only after the session is over.
- Agents shall wear face shields in addition to the face mask and keep 2 meter distance with voters instead of one meter.
- All sides of the ballot box shall be sanitized after the session and then sealed and put in the polythene bag.

2.11 Receiving ballot boxes at counting centers.

2.11.1 Select and arrange the venue in such a way to maintain one-meter distance between every person. It is recommended to rent out a spacious hall so that recommended health measures could be easily implemented.

2.11.2 Limit the number of officers at any time within the area to maintain distancing.

2.11.3 Keep space to maintain one meter distance by officers waiting for handing over ballot boxes.

2.11.4 Provide hand washing/sanitizing facilities at the entrance to the center and each person entering should wash/sanitize their hands.

2.11.5 Remove the wrapping of the ballot box just before entering the receiving center. Separate waste bin shall be provided to discard the polythene.

2.12 Counting center etiquette

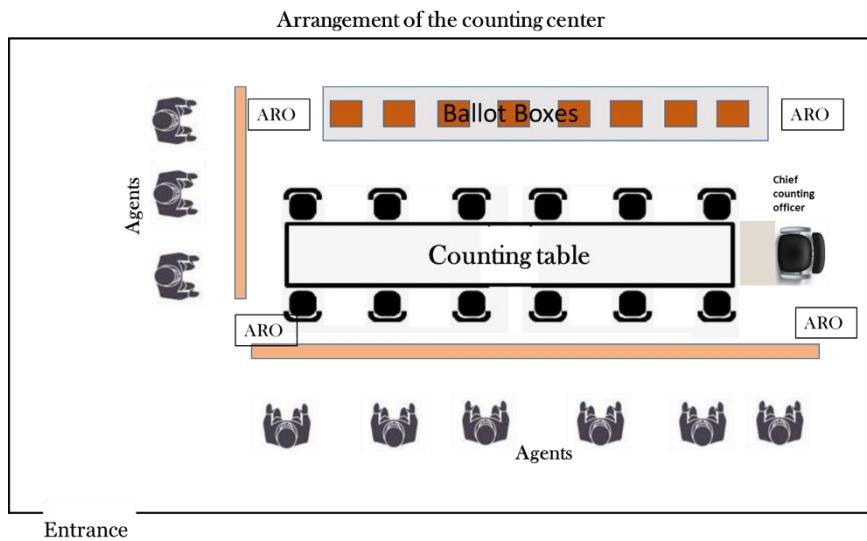
2.12.1 All staff and everyone entering shall wear masks.

2.12.2 All staff and everyone entering the hall shall be checked for body temperature and anyone having temperature above 37°C or 98.4°F shall not be allowed inside.

2.12.3 Select and arrange the venue in such a way to maintain one-meter distance between counting staff and also between counting agents.

2.12.4 Ventilation of the counting center shall be improved with exhaust fans if possible.

2.12.5 Separate the area of counting agents with desks placed 1 meter behind the counting officers in order to avoid close contact.



2.12.6 Provide hand washing/hand sanitizing facilities at the entrance with tissues for wiping hands and a bin (with a polythene bag inside) to discard tissues.

2.12.7 Provide and ensure all officers, agents, security personals and any other person wear masks and wash their hands before entering the counting center.

2.12.8 Provide adequate amounts of masks and one bottle of hand sanitizer for each counting officer. They shall sanitize hands as frequently as possible.

2.12.9 No one should be allowed to enter the counting center without a face masks and washing hands.

2.12.10 Do not serve refreshments in the counting room while the counting is going on.

2.12.11 Refreshments be provided preferably in a place with good ventilation and space adequate to maintain physical distancing.

2.12.12 Unauthorized officials including officers from other centers shall not be allowed into the center at any time

2.12.13 MOH staff shall sanitize the center after the work is over.

2.13 Results tabulation center

2.13.1 Everyone entering the premises shall wash hands with soap and water or sanitize hands.

2.13.2 All officers shall wear masks at all times.

2.13.3 All officers shall keep a distance of one meter with other fellow officers at all times.

2.14 Transport of staff and materials

Following measures apply to transport of officers, ballot boxes and any other persons or materials.

2.14.1 Vehicles should be cleaned and disinfected (the seats, all handles, Interior door panel, windows, locks, exterior door handles, poles, etc.) before the beginning of the trip to prevent possible cross contamination.

2.14.2 There shall be a hand sanitizer at the entrance to the vehicle and every passenger be advised to sanitize hands before entering the vehicle.

2.14.3 Everyone travelling must wear masks during the journey.

2.15 Canteen or meal areas

2.15.1 Meal breaks and tea breaks to be given in a batch-wise manner to prevent over-crowding in the canteen/meal room.

2.15.2 Ensure everyone wear masks inside the canteen/meal room except while eating.

2.15.3 The minimum distance of one meter is to be maintained among persons in the canteen/meal room and the furniture should be arranged to encourage this.

2.15.4 Avoid sharing food, glasses, plates and other utensils during meals.

2.15.5 Meals/food/ beverages served in buffet style must be served by dedicated person(s). Self-servicing should not be allowed as it leads to cross contamination.

3. Special instructions for Police officers

Police officers are allocated for various election settings. Following health measures are issued for strict compliance in all such settings.

3.1 Police officers shall wear face masks at all times.

3.2 They should either wash their hands or sanitize them before entering to any election setting (polling booth, counting centers etc.)

3.3 They shall be provided with individual hand sanitizers.

3.4 Those who are attending the duties of quarantine centers be provided with full protective equipment.

3.5 Individual officers shall always keep the distance of one meter between them.

3.6 If an officer happened to touch individuals (as in protests) wash the hands thoroughly with soap

and water. If the situation is known in advance wear face shields before attending to such duties.

4. Disinfection

4.1 Procedure for disinfecting surfaces.

4.1.1 Disinfection of various surfaces are required to ensure the safety of staff and voters.

4.1.2 Following simple procedure shall be adopted for such disinfection and shall be carried out by the election staff.

4.1.3 After general cleaning or dusting,

- All metal surfaces shall be disinfected with minimum of 70% v/v alcohol solution.
- All non-metal surfaces be disinfected with 0.1% sodium hypochlorite solution.

Procedure for preparation of 70% v/v solution and 0.1% sodium hypochlorite solution is attached to this document.

4.2 Procedure for disinfecting buildings.

4.2.1 This procedure shall be carried out by the Public Health Inspector (PHI) with his team in accordance with this guideline under the supervision of the Medical Officer of Health.

4.2.2 After sweeping the floor, general cleaning or dusting and removing all persons from the building,

- 0.1% sodium hypochlorite solution shall be sprayed to all walls inside and outside the building up to 6ft from the ground level.
- All furniture shall also be sprayed using the same solution.

5. Waste Disposal

5.1 Following procedure shall be adopted for waste disposal in any election setting.

Collect all bio degradable and non-bio degradable wastes in separate bins lined with polythene waste bags and

- Incinerate them in the nearest health care facility or
- Inform the local authority to dispose them properly or,
- Spray 1% Hypochlorite solution over it and bury them in the same premises.

5.2 The PHI needs to ensure proper management of waste in election settings. This has to be done by the area PHI while he comes for the disinfection of the center after the session.

6. After the Election

For all the election officers, agents and other staff

What needs to be done on returning home from election duty

Upon returning home before entering the house,

- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water.
- Remove the clothing and shoes/slippers and leave them outside, and wash them before taking inside or wearing them again.
- Leave all your belongings outside. If any item is taken inside the house, either wash it with soap and water or disinfect with alcohol sanitizer. (This applies to your mobile phone, spectacles, wrist-watch etc.)
- Go to the bathroom without touching anything inside the house and take a bath.

7. Health Administrative structure

The following table shows the administrative structure and work description suggested to ensure effective implementation of this guideline.

No.	Designation	No. of Officers	Duties
01	National Coordinator	01	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordination of all election related health measures at National level. • Develop health guidelines and ensure its implementation during the election • Designing and planning training sessions. • Develop IEC materials. • Any other health related duties assigned by the DGHS or election commission.
02	Assistant Coordinators	02	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist the National coordinator in his duties. • Ensure effective implementation of all election related health measures at all levels. • Organize training sessions. • Develop and distribute IEC materials. • Any other election related duties assigned by the National coordinator. • Translation of all election related IEC and other materials in to Sinhala and Tamil languages.
03	Provincial coordinators (All Provincial Directors of Health services)	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordination of all election related health measures at provincial level. • Ensure effective implementation of all election related health measures in his/her province. • Take action to provide necessary training to all relevant staff. • Distribute IEC materials to relevant election settings. • Any other election related duties assigned by the National coordinator.
04	District Coordinators (All Regional Directors of Health Services) Director NIHS	26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordination of all election related health measures at district level. • Ensure effective implementation of all election related health measures in his/her district. • Take action to provide necessary training to all relevant staff. • Distribute IEC materials to relevant election settings. • Any other election related duties assigned by the Provincial coordinator.
05	Regional Epidemiologists	26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordination of all election related health measures at district level. • Ensure effective implementation of all election related health measures in his/her district. • Organize training sessions to all relevant staff. • Distribute IEC materials to relevant election settings. • Any other election related duties assigned by the District coordinator.
06	Medical officers of Health and AMOHs	350 350	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordination and supervision of all election related health measures in the MOH area. • Ensure effective implementation of Health guidelines in all

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> election settings in the MOH area. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arrange necessary training for the staff under him/her. Distribute IEC materials to relevant election settings Any other election related duties assigned by the District coordinator.
07	Colombo Municipal Council	CMOH 1 MOH 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordination and supervision of all election related health measures in the MOH area. Ensure effective implementation of Health guidelines in all election settings in the MOH area. Arrange necessary training for the staff under him/her. Distribute IEC materials to relevant election settings Any other election related duties assigned by the National coordinator
		PHI 42 PHM 60 PHNS12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in training programs. Ensure all IEC materials are distributed/pasted in appropriate places in time. Supervise all election booths prior to Election Day to ensure all health measures are in place. Visit and supervise the polling booth(s) throughout the Election Day in the area to ensure effective implementation of Health guidelines in all election settings and make corrective actions where necessary. Carryout/organize disinfection activities as directed by the election guidelines. Any other election related duties assigned by the Medical officer of health
08	Kandy Municipal council	CMOH 1 MOH 01	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordination and supervision of all election related health measures in the MOH area. Ensure effective implementation of Health guidelines in all election settings in the MOH area. Arrange necessary training for the staff under him/her. Organize training sessions. Distribute IEC materials to relevant election settings. Any other election related duties assigned by the National coordinator
		PHI 10 PHM 17 PHNS 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in training programs. Ensure all IEC materials are distributed/pasted in appropriate places in time. Supervise all booths prior to Election Day to ensure all health measures are in place. Visit and supervise the polling booth(s) throughout the Election Day in the area to ensure effective implementation of Health guidelines in all election settings and make corrective actions where necessary. Carryout/organize disinfection activities as directed by the election guidelines. Any other election related duties assigned by the Medical officer of health
09	SPHIs	350	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in training programs.
10	PHIs	1600	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure all IEC materials are distributed/pasted in appropriate places in time.

11	PHNS	700	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supervise all election booths prior to Election Day to ensure all health measures are in place. • Visit and supervise the polling booth(s) throughout the Election Day in the area to ensure effective implementation of Health guidelines in all election settings and make corrective actions where necessary. • Carryout/organize disinfection activities as directed by the election guidelines. • Any other election related duties assigned by the Medical officer of health
12	SPHMs	700	
13	PHMs	5800	
	Total	10066	

Dr. Anil Jasinghe

Director General of Health Services