

**STATEMENT BY
HIS EXCELLENCY, THE PRESIDENT OF
THE REPUBLIC, MR. ADAMA BARROW,
ON THE DEATH OF CHILDREN FROM
ACUTE KIDNEY INJURY
7th OCTOBER 2022**

Fellow Gambians,
Residents of The Gambia,

In July of this year, the Ministry of Health detected an unusual rise in the number of cases of diarrhea and vomiting among children under the age of five within the six health regions of the country, in areas affected by flash floods.

Many of the children infected later developed Acute Kidney Injuries (AKI), resulting in the untimely death of sixty-six (66) children within the last three months, even though they had the best medical attention and care available.

Various laboratory tests conducted on the samples from the victims show that bacteria are the likely cause of their deaths. Doctors noticed a trend among the patients, which indicate that some of them had taken similar drugs. This suggests a link between the Acute Kidney Injuries and the drugs, as detected in some other countries.

Acting on this evidence, the Ministry of Health issued a statement to suspend the use of the suspected drugs. After receiving the first test results, the Ministry also ordered an immediate recall of the drugs from all pharmacies and households.

Fellow Gambians,
Residents of The Gambia,

The Ministry of Health has since been working closely and relentlessly with the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Centre for Disease Control of the United States of America (CDC) on this matter. Investigations are in progress, and we hope that they will get to the bottom of the outbreak soon.

With the support of WHO, the Ministry sent the drug samples to laboratories in Senegal, Ghana, France, and Switzerland for further investigation. The results received on Thursday, 6th October 2022 confirm contamination of four of the samples.

I commend the Ministry of Health for their diligence, particularly for the early detection of the outbreak and their sustained investigative efforts and control strategies. Due to their timely intervention and the support of our partners, the outbreak is now under control, with only two cases reported in the last two weeks.

Fellow Gambians,
Residents of The Gambia,

I must state that the child mortality figure of sixty-six (66) is not at much variance with the recorded data for similar periods in the past. This notwithstanding, my government remains deeply concerned about every death in the country, as well as all causes of premature deaths.

In view of this unfortunate incident, I direct, for immediate action, that:

- the Ministry of Health works with the Attorney General's Chambers to review and update the Medicines and Related Product Act, the Pharmacy Council Act and all other related legislative frameworks and regulations;
- the Ministry of Health collaborates with all relevant partners and stakeholders to strengthen its detection capabilities and establish a quality control national laboratory for drugs and food safety; and,
- in collaboration with relevant partners and stakeholders, the Ministry of Health investigates the source of the contaminated drugs, the circumstances and procedures for importation of medicines into the country and establish safeguards to eliminate the importation of sub-standard drugs.

- Already, the World Bank is supporting the Government, and steps have been initiated to establishing a quality control laboratory at the Medicine Control Agency.

Fellow Gambians,
Residents of The Gambia,

I assure you all that the Government will leave no stone unturned to get to the bottom of this incident. I urge you, however, to be vigilant enough to ensure that all medicines sold or used are safe and effective. We owe it to the nation and to ourselves to protect the lives of every citizen and resident of the country.

In the meantime, my thoughts and prayers are with the families that have lost their loved ones. Loss of life is always a sad moment, especially when it involves tender lives. We regret the loss of each of the sixty-six (66) children and pray that Allah consoles the bereaved families.

I thank you for your attention.