



**COVID - 19**

**“RETURN TO PLAY PROTOCOL”**

**SEPTEMBER 2020**

## INTRODUCTION

The health and safety of everyone concerned with our game – players, staff, match officials, fans and the public at large – is of primary importance to us all, as the Football family, as we navigate our way through the COVID-19 crisis our industry, and every industry around the world, is currently facing.

At FKF, we are actively engaged with all the relevant football stakeholders as well as public health authorities from the Ministry of Health to contribute to football being well-equipped to resume. We find ourselves in a position where most countries across the continent are putting in place protocols to resume training and the playing of official matches.

Whilst FKF is not a medical body, we do want to provide some clarity for you, our member clubs, in a period where many things feel unclear. In no way does this document claim to have all the answers but has been developed as a “best practice” to help those getting ready to play this sport we all love once again. We want to do everything we can to protect those who make our sport what it is.

Minimising the risk to FKF competitions from COVID-19 relies on thorough and robust preparations and on-site organisation, but also to a large extent on the cooperation, behaviour and understanding of the teams, their players, officials and technical staff, as well as the referees, the venue staff and all target groups involved in the matches.

This protocol sets out the framework of medical, sanitary and hygiene procedures together with the operational protocols that are to be applied when staging football matches. The evolution of the COVID-19 situation is dynamic and unpredictable, and while it is impossible to establish a completely risk-free environment, the aim is to lower the risk as far as possible by applying current medical advice and best practices.

This is a document which aggregates the information from existing protocols of various Leagues on the steps that may be considered so that football in Kenya can be safely resumed while keeping the focus on the health and security of the people involved in football activities (e.g. players, coaches, referees, staff members, fans etc.).

## **MEDICAL**

Prior to resuming training or official matches, the following medical areas shall be addressed;

### **1. Awareness**

There's need to continue creating awareness and sensitization on COVID-19 with the aim of providing as much information about COVID-19 as possible, so that everybody is aware how infection and transmission to others can be prevented. Emphasis will be laid on;

- i. Ensuring the FKF Members remain informed of current guidelines from the Government and the Ministry of Health, WHO, CAF and FIFA on the latest developments related to COVID – 19. These include public health recommendations and guidelines for controlling and preventing the spread of the virus.
- ii. Encouraging the observation of social physical distance of at least 1.5m.
- iii. Encouraging and mandating hygiene measures, such as:
  - a) Hand washing: use of soap and water and alcohol based sanitizers;
  - b) Avoidance of touching eyes/mouth nose;
  - c) Covering the mouth and nose with a bent elbow or use of disposable tissue when coughing or sneezing;

### **2. Roles and Responsibilities.**

FKF has further constituted a "COVID Response Committee" to oversee the preparedness activities as advised by the Ministry of Sports. The Committee shall advise FKF on any medical questions related to COVID-19. The Committee may at the request of the teams provide consultation or advice to a team Protocol Compliance Officer and/or Team doctor on questions related to test results, as well as on additional alternative testing practices for players previously affected by the virus, however this is only advisory in nature and any decisions can only be taken by the Ministry of Health.

The Committee Members appointed by the FKF General Secretary are:

- Mr. Michael Ouma – IMOC Chairman and Committee Chairperson
- Dr. Wycliffe Makanga – Member, FKF Medical Committee
- Dr. Jeff Mailu – Orthopaedic Surgeon
- Michael Kamure – Head of National Teams & Projects
- Frank Ogolla – Head of Competitions
- Sports Liason Officer\* - To be appointed by the Ministry of Sports

FKF, through the "COVID Response Committee", shall, in liaison with the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Sports and the Ministry of Transport, organize at least one "Protocol Compliance" workshop to be attended by representatives from all participating teams in the leagues including Clubs Protocol Compliance Officers, Club CEOs/Team Managers, Club Security

Officers, Match Officials, Service Providers E.g. Venue Managers, Ambulance Providers, Kenya Police etc.

The Committee shall evaluate the preparedness/compliance of teams, venues and the different leagues before allowing the commencement of the respective leagues.

Before resumption, each club shall appoint a Protocol Compliance Officer (PCO) and a Response Team who shall be responsible for ensuring the travel, accommodation and general hygiene and social distancing measures are respected at all times during training sessions and league matches/competitions.

## **TESTING**

It is recognised that social distancing or other infection preventative measures may not be possible in all circumstances, not least between the opposing team players during a match as well as between a team's players and technical staff. For this reason, FKF through its members will implement a testing programme to increase security and confidence for everyone involved in FKF matches at the national level.

### **Types of Tests**

For the competitions in the 2020/2021 season resuming after the interruption, a Serological Test shall be conducted on all players in the top tier league, the second tier league and the women top tier league as a minimum to detect infection that might have already occurred.

Negative results from the Serological Tests shall thereafter be subject to SARS-CoV-2-RNA (nasopharyngeal and oropharyngeal swab + PCR) tests.

FKF has designated Pathologists Lancet Group of Laboratories as the entity in charge of sampling and testing. This laboratory should be able to guarantee the necessary requirements to conduct the tests for all the teams and to keep the gathered information confidential.

For the National Teams engaged to participate in Regional and Continental Qualifiers, all players and the technical bench staff will be subject to SARS-CoV-2-RNA (nasopharyngeal and oropharyngeal swab + PCR) tests.

Other target groups including match officials, venue operators, media personal and local support staff e.g. drivers are strongly encouraged to undergo at least one round of pre-screening PCR testing with an accredited testing institute not earlier than a week before resumption of training and/or competitive matches.

## **Test Strategy and Frequency**

The testing strategy and frequency to be adopted by FKF in the different leagues and competitions will be as outlined below;

### **ALL National Teams**

Collection of samples and PCR testing will take place the day the players report to camp for local based players.

International teams, clubs, players and match officials arriving from abroad will be required to take a COVID 19 "PCR" test at least 72 hours before their arrival in Kenya. Upon arrival the aforementioned will be required to submit their Negative COVID 19 certificate to the Kenya immigration and COVID 19 protocol officers at the airport, in order to allowed entry.

Failure to provide a Negative COVID 19 certificate may lead to one being quarantined for Fourteen (14) days in line with the WHO and Ministry of Health guidelines and regulations.

National team players joining the team from abroad will be required to submit their negative COVID-19 Certificate to the National Team Doctor on arrival at the team's camp.

From the Tests conducted on local based players, positive cases from the PCR Tests to be isolated and treatment to be observed in line with the Ministry of Health directives.

An additional test may be necessary 48 hours before a match or before travelling if required by the relevant local authorities in the host country and depending on the period the initial test was taken and the duration the team will be in camp prior to international travel for an away match.

Players and Team officials will be required to possess a negative COVID-19 Certificate during travels for international matches.

The following are requirements for National teams when travelling:

- Use of face masks in all public areas during travel;
- Social distancing with anyone outside the group of players and technical staff who have been tested;
- Regular use of hand sanitiser;
- For charter flights, teams must request that the plane is fully disinfected before the flight.
- All teams to line-up one at time in the tunnel before kick-off during matches.

This shall cover the Senior Men National Team, Senior Women National Team, The Men U23, U20 and U17 Teams as well as the Women U20 and U17 Teams.

## **FKF Premier League, National Super League & Women Premier League**

Serological Test to be conducted on ALL players and Match Officials at least 4 before resumption of training activities.

PCR Tests to be conducted on ALL players with Negative results from the Serological Tests at least 72 hours before resumption of training activities.

Positive cases from the PCR Tests to be isolated and treatment to be observed in line with the Ministry of Health directives.

An additional test may be necessary 72 hours before resumption of Competitive matches if required and as per the Ministry of Health guidance.

Besides the PCR and serological tests, daily health checks shall be performed by the respective team doctors during training sessions and before any League match is played.

The Testing Service Provider will also inform the team's Protocol Compliance Officer, who must be aware of any obligations required by the Ministry of Health that need to be followed either by the team or the person in question, (includes Isolation, contact tracing and re-testing). Teams must ensure that no person testing positive can participate in training sessions or take part in any football match. Test results are not subject to challenge.

Older people (that is people over 60 years old); and those with underlying medical conditions (such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic respiratory disease, and cancer) are at a higher risk of contracting the disease. It's important that all members protect themselves and in turn protect others that may be more vulnerable (the elderly and those with underlying medical conditions).

### **Development of symptoms onsite**

Anyone involved in a match who develops any symptoms indicative of a potential COVID-19 infection must immediately isolate themselves and the must immediately, either by themselves or through the Venue Operators and/or the Protocol Compliance Officers present, contact the public health officers from the Ministry of Health for guidance.

Key indicators of a COVID-19 infection include high fever, dry cough, tiredness, breathlessness, body ache or headache.

A full list of potential indicator symptoms can be found here:

<https://www.health.go.ke/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/FAQs-FOR-PRESS-KIT1.pdf>

## TIMETABLE FOR THE RESUMPTION OF FOOTBALL ACTIVITY

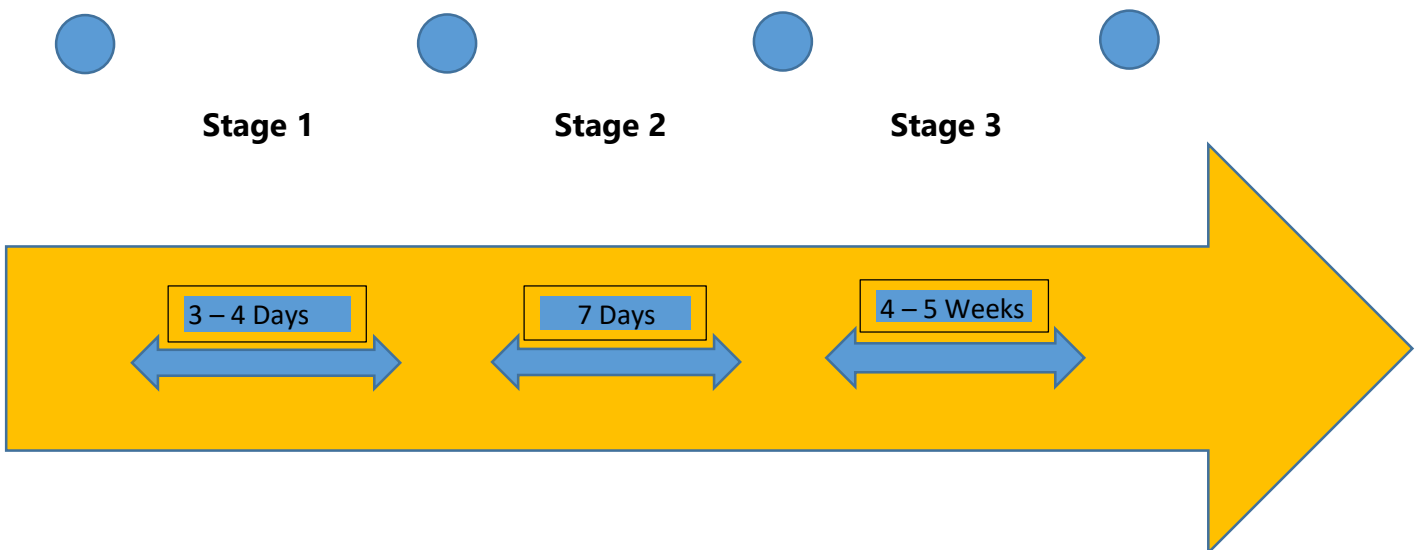
When resuming sports activity, a battery of tests allowing an objective assessment of the player's physical condition is carried out.

There is an appropriate pre-competition period with a training program that includes both aerobic training and muscle conditioning activities

Stage 1: The first period will be dedicated to medical and athletic tests. (3 to 4 days)

Stage 2: Then the players, could resume training individually for 7 days before training in small groups for a week.

Stage 3: Then would come the collective recovery/training before resumption of test matches and/or competitive football. (4 – 5 Weeks)



### Preparation for Training

**Preparation of Training Facilities / Equipment etc.**

In order to guarantee health and security to the people involved in football activity when returning to the football facility, the following are possible (non-exhaustive) measures to be taken into account during the preparation phase:

- Ensure that all necessary supplies are organized (training equipment, food, beverage, etc.)
- Ensure that facilities and equipment to be used are disinfected
- Ensure the disinfection and cleaning of all clothes, equipment and items that are introduced by an external person that enters the training facility, e.g. external suppliers, workers etc.

### **Identification of Persons allowed into training facilities**

In order to guarantee health and security for the people involved in football activities, only persons that are indispensable for the resumption and conduct of the training activities shall be allowed in the training venues. This includes;

- Players
- Coaches
- Team Staff
- Medical Staff
- Facility Management

### **Training phases**

The resumption of training and matches will be as per the guidelines provided by CAF. Training will be resumed in the following phases;

- Individual Training
- Small Group Training
- Collective Training

Depending on specific sporting needs, these phases can of course be modified or split into more detailed separate phases.

#### **1. Individual Training - Ongoing**

Following the Ministry of Health directive banning social gatherings, professional clubs resorted to providing daily/weekly training programs to players who would do their workouts at home and send videos to their coaches.

#### **2. Small Group Training – After Testing**



The small group training phase can be considered as the first point of contact between the players of a team. In order to limit the contact with other team members as much as possible, in this first phase of group training, the following guidelines must be considered:

- Participation shall only be limited to (negative) tested persons only.
- Trainings shall be conducted in groups of six or seven, every other day in the field.
- The other day in the gym with sheathing, cycling, resistance work.
- On the field, they have no right to contact, there is no game, no opposition.
- These are exercises based on passing circuits or ball races.

### **3. Collective Training (incl. Test-matches)**

The collective training phase can be considered as return to normality with respect to the training on the pitch, while still maintaining the hygiene standards and some restrictions in non-training activities.

However, even though a closer contact between the footballers will be possible, it is indispensable that the hygiene standards are maintained until the end of the pandemic.

## **Pre-Competition Guidelines**

### **Event Management Planning:**

Planning meetings shall be convened for purposes of check listing the preparedness of the venue.

A maximum of two (2) physical meetings is recommended and they should last not more than one hour otherwise teleconferencing and virtual meetings are encouraged.

The meetings will be held in line with general government protocols for conducting meetings where only a limited number of participants will be allowed.

### **Local Travel Procedures**

Transportation of athletes to be carried out as guided by the Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure.

Team buses must be thoroughly disinfected shortly before collecting the team.

It is also recommended that for the team bus driver to be tested for COVID-19 before driving the team.

The bus driver should nonetheless be equipped with an appropriate face mask and remain at least 2m from the team members at all times e.g. middle door to be used by all players and staff to enter/leave the bus.

The use of plexiglass to isolate the bus driver may be used as an alternative.

Teams shall use buses that have compliance certificates.

## **Hotel**

All team members MUST be allocated individual bedrooms.

Ideally, an exclusive hotel should be reserved for the sole use of the visiting team during their stay. If this is not possible, the visiting team must make arrangements to prevent any close contact between the team and other guests or staff. This should include

- Private dining area
- Private access routes.
- The teams themselves are solely responsible for handling team equipment and kits.

The PCO should conclude a written agreement with the hotel that includes all the necessary hygiene measures, such as:

- Wearing of masks/ Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) by hotel staff.
- Maximising social distancing by staff.
- Cleaning regime of rooms and public spaces (elevators etc)
- Meal arrangements
- Their policy regarding staff who have symptoms of infection

The team's PCO must check that the agreed hygiene measures have actually been taken by the hotel.

During the teams stay, there should be continuous disinfection and cleaning of the rooms and spaces used by the team immediately before the team checks in.

Food should be served by the team's own staff and/or as few hotel staff as possible, with food placed on a table and collected by the players/coaches/trainers.

No clean-up is to take place until the players have left the dining areas so that the smallest number of hotel staff is present in the dining room during meals.

Team members (both players and technical staff) must not leave the hotel unless it is under previously agreed and organized conditions and does not involve coming into contact with anyone outside of their group.

For longer stays, team excursions may be organised, but these must be strictly controlled to ensure social distancing is respected throughout the excursion and/or that appropriate PPE is used by all members of the team delegation if social distancing is not possible.

The team PCO is responsible for ensuring that the standard hygiene measures are adhered to during any team excursion. For longer stays, visiting teams will also need to make appropriate laundry arrangements with their hotel, ensuring in particular that washed clothing and equipment (bibs etc) are only handled by members of the team delegation and not by hotel staff.

## **In - Competition Guidelines**

During the competitions including, any tournaments, matches, leagues and or games, athletes and all other sports stakeholders are advised to follow the following: -

- i. Inactive athletes, athlete support personnel and officials should be allocated designated sitting areas where social distancing must be observed;
- ii. All but active athletes and event officials will be required to wear facemasks;
- iii. It is recommended that athletes be allowed to take health breaks to allow personal hydration;
- iv. Proper personal hygiene shall be observed at all times. Handshakes, high-fives, hugging shall not be permitted;
- v. All other health and safety requirements must be followed;
- vi. Athletes, athlete support personnel and officials should refrain from sharing water coolers, drinking stations, water bottles and other drinking devices;
- vii. Participants' personal effects to be kept to a strict minimum (e.g. water bottle and towel) and are not to be left just anywhere. Specific are as maybe designated for this purpose;
- viii. Spaced blocks of activities (staggered schedules) should be encouraged. These staggered schedules allow enough time for the staff to clean between groups of participants;
- ix. The venue managers will make provisions for isolation, quarantine and medical rooms;

## **Pre-match warm-ups**

The time spent in the dressing room (if any) should be kept to a minimum. Players may therefore access the pitch to start their pre-match warm-ups earlier than the normal allocated time.

Exact timings must be agreed at the latest at the Pre-Match Meeting in order to avoid any overlap with other activities such as pitch maintenance.

## **Opening/line-up ceremony**

Teams will not line up together in the tunnel as usual before the opening ceremony to avoid congestion in the tunnel area.

Teams must therefore exit the dressing room directly to the pitch one team at a time for the on-field pre-match line-up.

Players and referees must maintain at least 1m distance between each person during the line-up ceremony.

No additional activities may be organised (e.g. player escorts, mascots, dancers, musicians, etc.), nor will there be any handshakes between teams or with the referees.

The coin toss will still take place after the line-up ceremony with the two captains and the referee only, while still maintaining a 1m distance. The coin must be disinfected before use.

Pennants may be exchanged as agreed between the two teams.

At half-time and second half the teams should again avoid congregating in the tunnel and must instead exit directly to the pitch according to the timings indicated in the match countdown

## **Media**

Match photographers are limited to ten at each end of the pitch, five on each side of each goal. They must be in clearly marked positions preferably behind the goalposts. There must be a minimum of 1.5m between each photographer position.

The distribution of media personnel in the stands must allow a 2m distance to be maintained.

No press interviews will be allowed, only flash interviews will be conducted while observing a physical distancing of 1.5 meters.

All media staff must wear their facemasks while working. Non-essential staff should not be allowed to events. Printing and distribution of printed materials should be kept at a minimum to limit the risk of indirect contamination

## **Venue Guidelines**

Venue operators will be expected to ensure that the sporting environment is safe with reference to the following:

- Anyone entering the stadium must have their temperature taken on arrival.

If a person shows abnormalities in their temperature checks, Health Officers will be called immediately and access to the stadium will be denied.

In addition, anyone entering the stadium must:

- Disinfect hands
- Wear a mask
- Maintain social distancing

Face masks covering the mouth and nose must be worn by anyone operating in the stadium at all times on match day.

Failure to comply with wearing masks will be reported and may lead to ejection from the stadium.

Teams and Service providers are responsible for equipping themselves with their own face masks.

Nonetheless for all matches host teams are required to have an additional supply of face masks which can be provided to other stakeholders.

Alcohol based hand sanitiser must be provided at all access points to the stadium, and at the entry points to each of the stadium zones e.g. dressing rooms, washrooms etc.

Hand sanitiser must be used by everyone entering the stadium.

In general, all areas of the stadium that are in use for the match must be cleaned prior to use. These areas include media working areas, seating (depending on use), offices, meeting rooms and sanitary facilities and disinfected continually.

Team benches, technical seats and additional seats Substitutes and coaching / technical staff must remain at least 1m apart on the bench. Solutions must therefore be found to extend the team benches or separate each seat on the bench. Technical seats must similarly be separated. Solutions to adapt this seating may include the use of adjacent seating in the tribunes if accessible possible.

The venue managers must make provisions for isolation, quarantine and medical rooms.

A fully equipped ambulance shall be on standby during all training sessions and on match days.

## **Spectators**

To keep in line with the COVID-19 WHO and MOH guidelines, spectators will not be allowed into the playing fields unless all protocols have been achieved to level 6 of the guidelines provided by the Ministry of Sports for every sport discipline.

Strict adherence to the same will be enforced for the safety of all participants. However, adequate preparations will be made to avail alternative online and live forums for fans to enjoy their sports.

Only officials, people with a working function and accredited media/journalists are permitted to be in the stadium.

The total number of people (teams, officials and working staff) permitted to be on the entire stadium premises at one time may be limited depending on several factors:

- Any local authority restrictions or limits applied to the event;

- The size of the stadium (affects stewarding and technical staff members in particular);
- The space available to media.

The staffing level must be adapted to stadium layout and competition needs. In all cases, the number of staff required to operate the stadium, organise the match and deliver the commercial and broadcast obligations (where applicable) must be limited to an absolute minimum.

The maximum attendance is always subject to any restrictions that may be imposed by national/local authorities.

## **Equipment**

- Given that it is difficult to avoid touching one's face, particularly in the context of physical and sports activities, it is recommended that shared objects and equipment be disinfected regularly.
- Each participant should use his or her own equipment as much as possible. If this is not possible, the equipment should be changed regularly during the activity and washed with hot water and soap or an effective disinfectant between activities (e.g. balls)
- If the players bring their own equipment (e.g. a ball), a person designated by the club must disinfect it before the players take it to the field.
- Hands do frequently touch some objects, such as cones, during training and pre-match warm up activity. Players/Officials should be asked to wash their hands after handling them.
- Individuals should take their own kit home to wash it themselves, rather than have one person handling a large quantity of soiled materials. Where kit absolutely has to be shared or kept together (e.g. last-minute stand-in players, shortage of kit), each person handling it must wash or sanitise their hands immediately after and appropriate cleaning arrangements for the kit must be made

## **Ball Boys**

For competitive matches, 8 – 12 ball boys may be deployed as dictated by the configuration/size of the stadium.

Ball children must:

- Wear masks;
- Keep the ball on the ground at their feet until needed;
- Disinfect their hands before and after warm-up and before and after each half;
- Maintain at least a 2m distance from the players at all times;

In addition, all match balls must be disinfected at the end of the warm-up (if the same balls are to be used during the match) and during half-time.

## **Post-Competition Guidelines**

At the finality of any football match, all athletes and stakeholders be required to observe all existing regulations on public health and social measures to control spread of COVID-19 in the following aspects:

- i. Transportation of athletes to be carried out as guided by the Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure
- ii. Cleaning and disinfection of the used venue and all equipment;
- iii. Collection and proper disposal of waste;
- iv. Post-competition tests for Covid-19 and Anti-Doping will be conducted in line with respective guidelines; and
- v. Post-event meetings to be kept at a minimum. Event organizing co-partners to prepare an event report to be filed with the relevant authorities.

## **Guidelines for Lower Tier Leagues (incl. Div. One Leagues)**

Considering the nature of the grassroots leagues, clubs can resume footballing activity with necessary modifications in place to mitigate the transmission risk of COVID-19.

FKF strongly recommends a phased return to competitive football activity as follows;

- Until 30<sup>th</sup> September 2020 – When ready, you can begin competitive training, with the overall group size (inclusive of coaches) being limited to 30 people;
- From 10<sup>th</sup> October 2020 – Competitive matches to begin, for example pre-season fixtures, test matches and small sided football competitions;
- From 10<sup>th</sup> November 2020 – Grassroots leagues, Men’s Division One League and Women’s Division One Leagues can commence.

A return to competitive football should only happen once clubs and facility providers have completed the necessary risk assessments and comprehensive plans are in place.

**The guidelines to be considered are listed for ease below:**

1. All players, officials, and spectators must undergo a self-assessment for any Covid-19- symptoms. No-one should leave home to participate in football if they, or someone they live with, has any of the following:
  - A high temperature (above 37.8°C);
  - A new, continuous cough;
  - A loss of, or change to, their sense of smell or taste.
  - tiredness, body ache or headache.

- Any Pre-medical condition.
2. This check should be done by clubs before each training session and must be recorded regularly and it is important to note that no training session should take place without this having been done
  3. Clubs and facility providers should ensure that their facility is compliant with current Government legislation and guidance related to COVID-19;
  4. Players and officials should sanitize hands before and after a game as well as scheduled breaks throughout a game or training session and strictly follow all Ministry of Health and Ministry of Sports Protocols.
  5. Ball handling should be kept to a minimum with most contact via a boot and the ball disinfected in breaks of play;
  6. Goal celebrations should be avoided;
  7. Equipment should not be shared, and goalkeepers should ensure they disinfect their gloves regularly in breaks in training or matches and thoroughly afterwards. Where possible, coaches should only handle equipment in training;
  8. Where possible, players, coaches and officials should arrive changed and shower at home. Use of changing and shower facilities must follow government advice on the use of indoor facilities;
  9. Clubs should keep a record of attendees at a match or training session, including contact details, to support The Ministry of Health Test and Trace;
  10. In competitive football activities the Covid-19 Protocol Compliance Officer of each club must ensure a safety briefing is provided before the commencement of any fixture. This briefing will remind both sets of players and officials about their responsibilities in complying with the Ministry of Health guidelines.
  11. Water bottles or other refreshment containers should in no circumstances be shared. Participants are advised to bring their own drinks or refreshments, in a named container.
  12. The sharing of equipment including playing kits must be avoided where possible. Where equipment is shared, equipment must be disinfected before use by another person.
  13. Youth football coaches are encouraged to limit persistent close proximity of participants during match play and training;
  14. Youth football coaches are encouraged to limit persistent close proximity of participants during match play (where young participants may be more likely to cluster around the ball) and provide regular hygiene breaks in activity.



15. Where unavoidable, Supporters, parents, and other spectators should remain socially distanced whilst attending matches.

## **CONCLUSION**

Now that we are able to look ahead to the new season, it's crucial that we continue to do all we can to follow safety measures, both as advised by the Government through the directives from the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Sports.

Protecting the health and well - being of every individual remains of paramount importance. It is important the following measures continue to be advocated: enhanced hygiene, physical distancing, healthy life style choices, eating well, and avoiding non – essential travel. Planning for safe return to football must start now given the health, social and economic benefits.

Every person involved in a football team or game will have a responsibility to prevent the spread of COVID – 19.

FKF expects all parties to adhere to hygiene best practices both in the controlled match environments, as well as in their private day to day lives. It is therefore imperative that all precautions set out in this document, as well as the standard hygiene best practices, will be strictly adhered to by all members of these various groups. Non-respect of such social norms could have serious consequences for the staging of both local and international matches.



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**Barry Otieno**  
**General Secretary/CEO**

