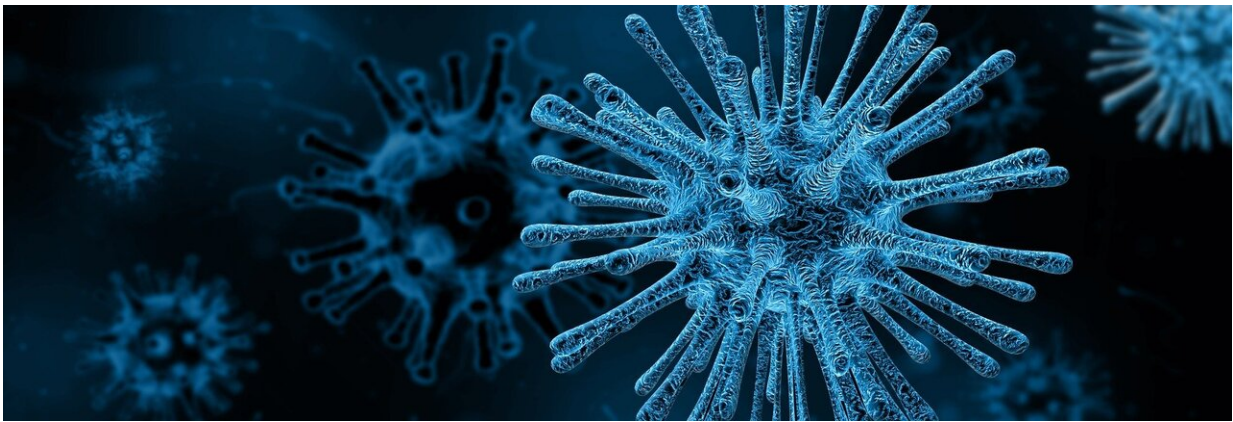


In Africa, six nations seem so far to be spared coronavirus

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Credit: CC0 Public Domain

Six of Africa's 54 nations are among the last in the world yet to report cases of the new coronavirus.

The global pandemic has been confirmed in almost every country, but for a handful of far-flung tiny island states, war-torn Yemen and isolated North Korea.

In Africa authorities claim they are spared by god, or simply saved by low air traffic to their countries, however some fear it is lack of testing that is hiding the true impact.

South Sudan

The east African nation is barely emerging from six years of civil war and with high levels of hunger, illness and little infrastructure, observers fear the [virus](#) could wreak havoc.

Doctor Angok Gordon Kuol, one of those charged with overseeing the fight against the virus, said the country had only carried out 12 tests, none of which were positive.

He said the reason the virus has yet to reach South Sudan could be explained by the low volume of air traffic and travel to the country.

"Very few airlines come to South Sudan and most of the countries affected today they are affected by... people coming from abroad."

He said the main concern was foreigners working for the large NGO and humanitarian community, or people crossing land borders from neighbouring countries.

South Sudan has shut schools, banned gatherings such as weddings, funerals and sporting events and blocked flights from worst-affected countries. Non-essential businesses have been shuttered and movement restricted.

The country can currently test around 500 people and has one isolation centre with 24 beds.

Burundi

In Burundi, which is gearing up for general elections in May, authorities thank divine intervention for the lack of cases.

"The government thanks all-powerful God who has protected Burundi," government spokesman Prosper Ntahorwamiye said on national

television last week.

At the same time he criticised those "spreading rumours" that Burundi is not capable of testing for the virus, or that it is spreading unnoticed.

Some measures have been taken, such as the suspension of international flights and placing handwashing stations at the entrances to banks and restaurants in Bujumbura.

However several doctors have expressed their concerns.

"There are zero cases in Burundi because there have been zero tests," a Burundian doctor said on condition of anonymity.

Sao Tome and Principe

Sao Tome and Principe—a tiny nation of small islands covered in lush rainforest—has reported zero cases because it is unable to test, according to World Health Organisation representative Anne Ancia.

However "we are continuing preparations," with around 100 people in quarantine after returning from highly-affected countries, and the WHO keeping an eye on cases of pneumonia.

With only four ICU beds for a population of 200,000 people, the country is desperate to not let the virus take hold and has already shut its borders despite the importance of tourism to the local economy.

Malawi

Malawi's health ministry spokesman Joshua Malango brushed aside fears that Malawi might not have registered any Covid-19 cases due to a lack of testing kits: "We have the testing kits in Malawi and we are testing."

Dr Bridget Malewezi from the Society of Medical Doctors told AFP that while "we may not be 100 percent ready", government was gearing up for the arrival of the virus.

She suggested it may only be a matter of time before the pandemic hits Malawi.

"It's only been in the past few weeks that it has been rampantly spreading across Africa so most people feel it will get here at some point....," she said.

Malawi has asked people coming from hard-hit countries to self-quarantine, which Malawezi said had helped "safeguard the country from any possible spread of the virus".

Lesotho

Tiny Lesotho, a kingdom encircled by South Africa with only two million inhabitants, went into national lockdown on Monday despite registering zero cases.

Until last week the country had no tests or testing centres, and received its first kits thanks to a donation by Chinese billionaire Jack Ma.

Authorities had reported eight suspected cases which they had not been able to test and the first results are expected soon.

Comoros

The Indian Ocean island nation of the Comoros, situated between Madagascar and Mozambique, has yet to detect a single case of the virus, according to the health ministry.

One doctor in the capital Moroni, Dr Abdou Ada, wonders if it may not be because of the wide use of the drug Artemisinin to treat malaria.

"I believe that the mass anti-malarial treatment explains the fact that the Comoros are, at least for now, spared from Covid-19. it is a personal belief that needs to be confirmed scientifically."

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