



HEALTH AND SAFETY GUIDELINES FOR THE TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY IN MALAWI



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Foreword by the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Wildlife

Tourism is one of Malawi's priority sectors in line with the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy MGDSIII. The sector provides jobs and business opportunities for people especially those in rural areas, as well as generating forex and promoting investment.

According to World Travel and Tourism Council, WTTC, an estimated 840,000 international tourists visited Malawi in 2019, generating about 43 Million US dollars in international tourism revenue. In terms of employment, the sector created 188,000 direct jobs and 233,000 direct and indirect jobs. However, the devastating effects of COVID19 pandemic to our industry have led to loss of 35,000 jobs, billions of kwacha revenue losses and businesses closed down, 2020 has been a very unusual and unprecedented year for tourism.

With these effects in mind and as the industry is reopening, there is need for systems that will ensure health and safety of travelers as well as those working in our tourism industry. To that end, the systems have to be packaged and disseminated in a manner that instills confidence in all players, visitors and other stakeholders. In that regard, as a tourism sector, we have developed these guidelines with the aim of ensuring that we mitigate the effects of COVID-19 pandemic to the industry.

Let me therefore call upon all industry players and other stakeholders to adhere to these guidelines so that we can instill trust and confidence that Malawi, The Warm Heart of Africa, is a safe destination to visit.

Michael Bizwick Usi, PhD

Minister of Tourism, Culture and Wildlife

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Tourism is an important sector globally. It creates jobs, business opportunities and uplifts livelihoods of local communities. The sector creates 1 in every 10 jobs and recorded over a billion travelers in 2019 worldwide.

In Malawi, according to the 2017 national tourism report, Malawi received 837,000 visitors and the sector generated 99.5 Billion kwacha in revenue. Further, the sector contributed about 7% to GDP.

However, just like most countries in other parts of the world, travel and tourism in Malawi has been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Health officials in the country have introduced measures aimed at preventing further spread of the virus and these measures coupled with international travel restrictions have had a negative effect on the industry. The sector has lost over 40 billion kwacha in revenue and over 35,000 jobs lost.

Notwithstanding the above, these guidelines have been developed to ensure safety in the country as the sector goes into recovery. They will assure both local and international visitors that Malawi is a safe destination to visit. They will further ensure that all workers in the industry are operating in a safe environment amid this global pandemic.

1.2 Objectives of these guidelines

- I. To ensure safety in the industry
- II. To instill trust and confidence in visitors about the safety of Malawi as a destination amid COVID-19
- III. To provide a common platform for enforcing safety and compliance with global health protocols

2.0 General protocols for all tourism establishments

The purpose of these guidelines is to ensure that all tourism enterprises observe the general protocols for safety of their staff, clients and the general public whom they interact with. These will apply at the workplace and any facility used for tourism business.

All tourism enterprises shall ensure that they are adhering to physical distancing rule, which is the distance between any two persons shall be a minimum of 1 meter.

All tourism enterprises shall provide visible notices and any other sensitization information at the strategic locations/entrance on COVID-19 preventive measures, screening, frequent hand washing and sanitization and mandatory wearing of face masks; "NO MASK NO ENTRY" rule.

If any guest or staff member develops symptoms, they must be taken to a designated quarantine room and all published guidelines must be followed. A call must be placed to 321 or 929 for Airtel and TNM respectively.

All tourism enterprises shall train their staff about COVID-19 prevention measures, develop standard operating procedures for handling any suspected cases and non-complying customers

All tourism enterprises shall create or designate a post of Occupation Health and Safety Officer. For small establishments, the owner or manager shall assume this responsibility. For large establishments, considerations can be made to appoint a dedicated person to the role. The designated officer should have undergone basic training in COVID-19 prevention.

3.0 Specific Guidelines for Accommodation Facilities

3.1 General Guidelines

- 1) Make hand sanitizer available and hand-wash basin with soap accessible in public areas (reception counter, restaurant, hotel entrance, hotel staff rest areas).
- 2) In addition to the mandatory first aid kit, make provision for temperature checking and put in place a no mask no entry general rule
- 3) All COVID-19 information (i.e. posters and leaflets etc.) to be displayed in public areas and in guest rooms ensure that a contact number for a medical person is available.
- 4) Make provisions to enable international guests complete medical and travel declaration form whilst at the point of entry.
- 5) Provide information card for guests to list any symptoms to be observed for the COVID-19 and local telephone numbers to contact authorities or at least inform the reception
- 6) Communicate to the guests clearly about the COVID-19 precautions being undertaken in the hotel/lodge premises
- 7) Make provision for easily accessible centralized platform for information access and dissemination for guests, staff and suppliers
- 8) Make provisions for 1 meter apart distance markings in areas that may have a queue like reception, restaurant and conference rooms
- 9) Ensure public facilities (washrooms, lobby/lounge etc) adhere to physical distancing, frequent cleaning and disinfection and provided with adequate supply of hand washing and sanitizing facilities
- 10) Ensure regular replenishment of sanitary products or facilities

3.2 Guest Check-In/Checkout Process

- ✓ Implement an online check in and check out process
- ✓ Discourage walk in bookings but encourage online bookings
- ✓ All pre-check-in formalities should be done online before arriving at the property.
- ✓ When possible, email guest checkout forms to avoid contact via paper forms.
- ✓ Ask guests to advise of checkout so that billing can be ready and sent timely and electronically where possible
- ✓ Mark areas in front of the reception desk to ensure guests maintain physical distancing while waiting in lines.
- ✓ Install physical barriers such as transparent screens to separate guests and employees where possible
- ✓ Ask visitors to use hand sanitizer. Keep it easily accessible at the front desk and nearby counters.
- ✓ Sanitize elevator buttons and panels frequently daily. Limit the number of guests on elevators.
- ✓ For high-volume areas like lounges , consider adding tape markings as to where groups should stand to distance while waiting in line.
- ✓ Sanitize high-touch front services spaces and equipment, including keys, POS systems, bell desks, luggage storerooms, luggage belts, bell carts on a regular basis.
- ✓ Offices, desks, counters, workspaces, and related equipment (including iPads and radios) should be sanitized regularly and upon a new employee using the equipment.
- ✓ Elderly guests must be allocated rooms that are closer to the reception

3.3 Public Areas Such As Restaurants, Bars, Conference Rooms, And Retail Outlets/Gift Shops

- ✓ Make provision for hand sanitizers in all entry and exit points
- ✓ Reduce seating capacity and distance tables to meet guidelines.
- ✓ Tables should be set at a minimum of 1 meter distance
- ✓ Utilize single-use menus or electronic menus on the hotel app or website where possible. For small and eco-themed lodges, write menus on a blackboard.
- ✓ Reduce self-serve buffet-style food service with alternative service style.
- ✓ Meeting and banquet setup arrangements should distance guests from each other
- ✓ Implement contactless room-service delivery to guests' doors only.
- ✓ Utilize pick-up for restaurant orders.
- ✓ All food handlers and staff servicing these areas should wear face masks at all time
- ✓ Enhancing sanitation, cleaning & disinfecting tables immediately after participants have left
- ✓ Ensure periodic disinfection in all public areas following WHO recommended disinfectants

3.4 Gyms, Swimming Pools, Spas, Guest Transport and Shared Equipment

- ✓ Sanitize before, during, and after each shift or anytime the equipment is transferred to a new employee.
- ✓ Leave hand sanitizer and sanitizing wipes for guests to also wipe down equipment in between sessions
- ✓ Limit the number of guests using the gym at the same time.
- ✓ All outdoor seating areas should have the furniture rearranged to maintain physical distancing.

- ✓ Hotel shuttles have clearly defined cleaning procedures and physical distancing (limited capacity). Hotel shuttles are to be cleaned after every arrival.
- ✓ Hotel shuttles should be available by request only.

3.5 House Keeping

i. Specific cleaning guidelines and protocols for public spaces and communal areas

- ✓ Shift furniture to encourage physical distancing.
- ✓ Add signage communicating physical distancing, health and hygiene reminders, new protocols in place for guest safety, proper protocol to dispose of masks
- ✓ Pay particular attention to high-touch items
- ✓ Regular cleaning of elevators, lobby telephones.
- ✓ Provide sanitisers at various stations
- ✓ Install incineration system to manage waste

II. cleaning guest rooms / bathrooms

- ✓ Adjust frequency of cleaning to guest needs
- ✓ Pay particular attention to high-touch areas
- ✓ Use approved cleaning materials
- ✓ Ensure rooms are sealed or mechanisms/notices are in place so clean rooms cannot be entered between guests.
- ✓ Leave rooms vacant for 24+ hours after cleaning before the next guest occupies them
- ✓ Turn-down service must be removed.
- ✓ Regularly clean AC air filters to maximize clean air.
- ✓ On check-out all furniture, all surfaces, all movable items, wall surfaces close to traffic/seating/lying areas, all floors and bathrooms shall be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected with an effective disinfectant

- ✓ Increase the time between check-out and check-in to ensure housekeeping have sufficient times for thorough deep cleaning of rooms.

III. Laundry

- ✓ Use high-temperature wash following Health guidelines.
- ✓ Bag dirty linens in the room to eliminate unnecessary contact.
- ✓ Avoid piling up of linen
- ✓ Avoid mixing up of guests clothing

IV. Room recovery protocol

- ✓ In the event of a presumptive case of COVID-19, the room should be removed from service and quarantined. The room should not be returned to service until the case has been confirmed or cleared. In the event of a positive case, the room should be returned to service only after undergoing an enhanced disinfection protocol

V. Back of the house

- ✓ Provide physical-distance stations.
- ✓ Implement procedures for routine cleaning and sanitation of high touch points
- ✓ Add appropriate signage on health and safety, heightened cleaning, hand washing, and any others as may be required

4.0 Specific Guidelines For Tour Operators

- ✓ Make provisions for masks, sanitizers for guests and staff and their regular use should be encouraged
- ✓ Ensure a briefing session for guests on all the preventive measures being put in place by the operator during the tour
- ✓ A contactless thermometer for checking temperature shall be made available for use in the vehicle/ boats at all times
- ✓ Make provision for litter bags on tour vehicles

- ✓ Practice physical distancing on the safari vehicle by reducing the number of people on a game drive or boat cruise
- ✓ Ensure that drivers and guests wear masks during tours
- ✓ All equipment must be regularly cleaned and replaced during every tour
- ✓ Tour vehicles/ boats should be given a timed schedule to allow for thorough cleaning and disinfection before taking a different group on the same vehicle
- ✓ Limit the number of guides to attend to each group or accompanying guests on a tour. Families, tour groups and couples shall be allocated to a specific vehicle and a guide for the duration of their stay to minimize exposure to other guests and guides.
- ✓ Ensure that there is no sharing of binoculars and other equipment among guests during a tour (even if they are a family)
- ✓ Enhancing sanitation, cleaning & disinfect vehicles/ boats immediately after each tour
- ✓ Establish and maintain a register of all staff, drivers and guests handled
- ✓ Ensure guests/clients are briefed on these protocols and the expectations during the activities while observing physical distancing

5.0 Specific Guidelines for Travel Agents

- ✓ Make provisions for masks, sanitizers for staff and their regular use should be encouraged
- ✓ Encourage online bookings and make provisions for online payment system
- ✓ Where clients wish to visit the agency, limit the number of people that can enter the office at any given time and they should always have a mask on
- ✓ Desks should have protective screens

- ✓ Ensure that there are adequate physical distancing markings within the office
- ✓ A contactless thermometer for checking temperature shall be made available for use at the entrance to the premises

6.0 Specific Guidelines For Car Hires

- ✓ Encourage online bookings and payment systems
- ✓ A contactless thermometer for checking temperature shall be made available for use in the vehicle at all times
- ✓ Make provisions for masks, sanitizers in all vehicles and their regular use should be encouraged
- ✓ Arrange for briefing sessions for clients before the trip or hiring of services
- ✓ Drivers to also be provided with gloves in addition to masks
- ✓ Make provision for litter bags in the vehicles
- ✓ Practice physical distancing by reducing carrying capacity of the vehicle- in line with the Road Traffic services guidelines
- ✓ Establish and maintain a register of all staff, drivers and guests handled
- ✓ Vehicles should be given a timed schedule to allow for thorough cleaning and disinfecting before taking on new passengers
- ✓ Ensure passengers have all the necessary items prior to departure to minimize stop overs en route to destinations. Only prescheduled stop overs should be encouraged

7.0 Guidelines for outdoor public gatherings

- ✓ Enforce 'No Mask No Entry rule'
- ✓ Reduce venue capacity in accordance with government/ local assembly rules
- ✓ Limit physical interaction and queuing at entry and exit points

- ✓ A contactless thermometer for checking temperature shall be made available for use at the entrance to the premises
- ✓ Assign a team to monitor the people at the gathering for compliance on regular intervals