

THE UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA  
MINISTRY OF HEALTH, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, GENDER, ELDERLY AND CHILDREN



CLARIFICATION OF THE REPORTS OF PRESENCE OF ZIKA DISEASE  
WITHIN THE COUNTRY

On the 15th of December, 2016, several newspapers and radios quoted a statement made by the former Director General of the, National Institute for Medical Research (NMR), on the presence of Zika disease in the country.

The Ministry would like to make clarification on these reports, and explain the status of our country regarding Zika disease. As you might remember, on February 2016, the Ministry did release a statement, explaining that as a country, we were yet to confirm presence of a case of Zika, and as a country, we were putting measures in terms of preparedness as well as putting response measures in case the country confirmed a case. Since the last Ministry's Press Statement, the country has continued to strengthen surveillance in all health facilities as well as Points of Entry. To date, that is the 17th of December, 2016, there are no confirmed Zika cases. This has also been reiterated by World Health Organization (WHO)'s December 17<sup>th</sup> 2016, statement confirming that there is no Zika disease in the country.

You may have heard in the various newspapers and blogs which quoted results from a research done by NIMR. We would like to explain that the primary aim of the said research was actually to evaluate the performance of a new test (diagnostic kit) that had been developed for the detection of a group of viruses such as Chikungunya, Dengue and Ebola. This is a normal procedure for any new laboratory diagnostic kit, and it is not proper to rely on such initial findings in ascertaining presence of the disease. This diagnostic kit, was received by the country from a South Korean Company which had an interest to test the kit in the field, as a normal procedure, before the kit could undergo a pre qualification procedure by the WHO. The Ministry of Health, Community Development, Gender, Elderly and Children (MoHCDGEC) will continue to work with various Institutions within and outside the country to embark on research activities including further strengthening of surveillance in all health facilities and Point of Entries, so to ensure appropriate measures are in place just in case the country gets a confirmed case. Surveillance for Zika disease and other notifiable infectious diseases is on going through the Integrated Disease and Surveillance System (IDSR), and there are procedures which are in place to notify these diseases under the International Health Regulations, 2005 It is

also the responsibility of the MoHCDGEC to appropriately notify and inform the community using appropriate channels if and when a case of Zika is confirmed..

The Ministry would like to assure the community at large that, the country is well prepared and has in place a Zika Contingency Plan, which is being implemented countrywide, using the same mechanisms which have been put in place for Dengue control, a disease which the country experienced outbreaks in 2014.

The Ministry believes that this explanation will allay the health scare which has been exaggerated and the Ministry recommends tourists and any other person who wishes to travel to Tanzania to come, while putting in place personal preventive measures against mosquito bites as a general precautionary measure.

**Released by**  
**Ministry of Health, Community Dvelopment, Gender, Elderly and Children**  
**17/12/2016**