



Introduction

This note summarises the directives promulgated (either written or verbal) by the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) and Federal Member States (FMS) aimed at mitigating the spread of COVID-19; and identifies the impact of the restrictions on the general population and humanitarian operations.

Background

The FGS and the FMS continue to take necessary measures to mitigate the spread and impact of COVID-19 in Somalia. Since 16 March 2020, a total of 48 COVID-19 related directives/statements have been issued, either in writing or verbally.

The newest directive, issued on 30 April in South West State (SWS), suspends evictions in Baidoa town during the COVID-19 period. The directive from SWS is the first application of the Moratorium on Evictions, which is a proposed nationwide policy promoted by the Protection Cluster¹, further complemented by advocacy by the Humanitarian Coordinator² and the National Commission for Refugees and IDPs (NCRI) at both the national (FGS) and state (FMS) levels.

As of 2 May 2020, 46 out of the 48 directives are in place while two have been rescinded. Of the rescinded directives, one related to closure of mosques in Puntland and was rescinded on 26 March 2020, and the second was an amendment to the curfew start time in Mogadishu and was rescinded back to the original directive on 25 April 2020 following public protests. Twenty-five of the 46 directives relate to social distancing, closure of academic institutions and restriction of population movement. Five impose suspensions on international, domestic passenger flights and restrict land transportation while seven relate to border closure. Six directives impose night curfews, two direct tax exemption on basic food items and two relate to registration of burial activities and deceased persons.



Face masks are key for COVID-19 control. Credit: Mercy Corps

Impact

General across all states

- Humanitarian partners reported a reduction in field activities and adaptation of humanitarian interventions in order to respect movement restrictions. Specific adaptations to nutrition activities such as Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) response activities from daily to bi-weekly basis, Moderate Acute Malnutrition (MAM) activities changing to monthly instead of weekly to limit gatherings. To offset the reduction, mothers have been trained to monitor their children's status by use of Middle Upper Arm Circumference (MUAC) measurements in Puntland, Hirshabelle, South West State and Jubaland.
- Galmudug, Hirshabelle, Jubaland, South West State and Puntland have reported increases in prices of basic commodities in markets due to COVID-19 restrictions.
- The reduction in business activities and closure of markets, hotels and restaurants continues to impact daily-wage workers, casual labourers and low-income people. Imports and exports have been negatively affected.
- The majority of UN and NGO international staff are in alternate working arrangements outside the country, while national staff from the UN and partners are working in a restrictive environment, thus reducing the humanitarian footprint.
- The Education Cluster estimates that 1 million school children are out of the physical classroom due to closure of schools. However, some states have reported alternative learning through different means such as radio, TV and internet.

¹ Evictions Advocacy Brief: Constant risks, looming disaster: the urgent case for a moratorium on evictions, April 2020

² RCHC (2020)009 Eviction Moratorium Letter to PM: Recommendation of Moratorium on Evictions in Somalia 1

Impact by location

Somaliland:

- An April 2020 report by Somaliland Ministry of Finance Development (MoFD) on fiscal and economic impact of COVID-19 estimated a drop in revenue in Somaliland by 30 per cent in the second quarter of 2020, mainly in customs duties and business activities, and a five per cent shrink in the economy due to COVID-19 instead of the previously projected two per cent growth³.
- Authorities in Somaliland have enhanced security patrols along the Djibouti border to enforce the border closure initiated because of increased COVID-19 cases in Djibouti, according to a WFP report⁴. They also report that normal port operations are ongoing in Berbera; in addition, more activities are expected in the coming weeks due to resumption of livestock exports. The authorities in Somaliland confirmed agreement with UAE and Saudi Arabia to resume export of livestock from 24 April 2020.
- On 26 April, an education programme for grades 7 and 11 started being broadcast via television, radio and internet in addition to grades 8 and 12. School closures have left some 222,000 children aged 6–17 out of class.
- As of 30 April, Ethiopian Airlines has reduced flights between Addis Ababa and Hargeisa to irregular flights based on passenger demand.

Puntland:

- WFP⁵ reports that the supply of imported food items from the international markets to the main supply markets is normal and that Puntland authorities postponed the proposed new taxation measures mainly on imported goods introduced last month. Banks are working normally, and cash is available despite reported decreased remittance from the diaspora.
- Bossaso port operations are ongoing and the government has reportedly increased working hours in the port to respond to resumption of livestock exports to Saudi Arabia, UAE and Oman markets.

Galmudug:

- Due to school closures, private and informal school teachers reported loss of income which was based on payment of school fees. Public school teachers reportedly continue to receive incentives. Some 43,344 students remain out of school due to the suspension of learning activities.
- Food Security and Livelihood Cluster reported traders in Hobyo District demanding trade in US Dollars instead of local currency (Somali Shilling). This has disadvantaged people receiving wages in local currency and reduced purchasing power of some families.
- In Cadaado, prices of imported food items such as wheat flour increased by 50 per cent and pasta by 20 per cent. In Dhuusamareeb, both wholesale and retail prices of imported food items (rice, sugar, wheat flour and vegetable oil) increased by 3 to 10 per cent. Price of livestock such as camels also increased by an average of 6 per cent in Cabudwaaq town⁶.

Hirshabelle:

- WFP reported an increase in wholesale prices of imported food items such as pasta, sugar and flour by 12, 7 and 11 per cent, respectively⁷. Meanwhile, retail and wholesale prices of most food commodities (local and imported) remain the same as last week.
- COVID-19 measures such as social distancing to 2 metres and limiting people to 20 at a time, are being applied in clinics and feeding centers.

Banadir:

³ 'Fiscal and Economic Implication of COVID-19' - Ministry of Finance Development (MoFD), Somaliland (April 2020)

⁴ WFP Somalia Joint Markets and Supply Chain Weekly Update, W4 21 – 28 April, April 2020

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

- Protection partners expressed concerns about internally displaced children out of school due to COVID-19. They are vulnerable to join gangs and child soldier recruitment. Some 27,000 children (14,000 boys and 13,000 girls) from IDP sites have been out of school since 18 March.
- WFP⁸ reports that in the Mogadishu (Bakara) Market, wholesale prices of both white maize and white sorghum increased by 9 per cent. Due to Saudi Arabia lifting the ban on livestock exports from Somalia, increased activity has been reported in Mogadishu port.

South West State:

- Evictions of IDPs are expected to reduce in Baidoa in the coming weeks based on a directive by the Baidoa District Administration Office on 30 April that called for suspension of evictions in Baidoa. The directive warned of impeachment and legal action for landowners who disobey the directive. As of 26 April, some 14,000 evictions have been recorded in Baidoa district in year 2020 alone.
- Protection Cluster reported an increase in gender-based violence incidents in April. Specifically, there was an increase of 14 per cent (36 cases) compared to 218 cases in March. This may be associated with the encouragement of social isolation due to COVID-19. However, Women and Girls Safe Spaces in IDP sites are still reportedly operational.
- According to WFP⁹ in Baidoa, the prices of imported food items (vegetable oil, sugar and pasta) are stable with the exception of rice which increased by 25 per cent. In Waajid and Huddur markets, retail prices of both local and imported food items remained unchanged.

Jubaland:

- According to WFP¹⁰, retail and wholesale prices of imported food items such as rice, wheat flour and dates in Kismayo increased by 11 to 25 per cent whilst prices of pasta and vegetable oil remained stable. Similarly, both wholesale and retail prices of imported food items such as rice, wheat flour and dates increased moderately by 9 to 25 per cent with the exception of vegetable oil and pasta in Gedo markets (Doolow, Belet Xaawo and Luuq). Reduced activities have been reported at Kismayo port.
- WFP also reported the depreciation of the local currency in Kismayo with the exchange rate of local currency (Somali Shilling) to US Dollars increasing from 24,000 to 27,000 SOS.

Application of directives

- Efforts to scale up and implement prevention measures remain a challenge due to living conditions, social practices and the socio-economic considerations associated with preventive measures.
- Currently, 11 out of 12 airports, one out of eight seaports and 17 out of 21 land borders are closed. However, all ports that were operational and utilised for humanitarian pipelines pre-COVID-19 such as Mogadishu, Kismayo, Berbera, and Bossaso remain operational and all airports remain open for cargo flights. Hargeisa airport continues to operate Ethiopian Airlines flights to and from Addis. Land borders remain porous and cross-border movement has been observed. State-level restrictions have not yet had an implication on road transport across internal borders.
- On 19 April, Saudi Arabia lifted the ban on livestock exports from Somalia¹¹, and increased activities have been noted in Mogadishu, Berbera and Bossaso ports. (See interactive map on <https://covid19som-ochasom.hub.arcgis.com/>). Port fees and taxes on imports represent a significant portion of income for the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) and Federal Member States (FMS). According to the World Bank, trade taxes accounted for an average of 69 per cent of domestic revenue over the past six years, representing an average 1.8 per cent of Somalia's Gross Domestic Product (GDP)¹². The closure of seaports and land borders for a long period presents significant loss in domestic revenue and contraction of GDP.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ WFP Somalia Joint Markets and Supply Chain Weekly Update, W4 21– 28 April, April 2020

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Somalia Economic Update Edition 4, August 2019, The World Bank – available at <https://bit.ly/3cNp86V>