



## 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 for the period 1-15 May 2020. (See interactive map on <https://covid19som-ochasom.hub.arcgis.com/>)

## 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 51 COVID-19 related directives/statements have been issued, either in writing or verbally.

As of 15 May 2020, 48 out of the 51 directives are in place while three have been rescinded<sup>1</sup>. This includes the revocation of the 23 April 2020 directive on suspension on the import of *Khat* into Somaliland on 16 May 2020. Twenty-six of the 47 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.

## Impact

### General across all states

- WFP<sup>2</sup> reported that prices of food commodities sourced from neighbouring countries, such as pasta and sugar, remain high as stocks continue to diminish. Borders with Ethiopia and Kenya have remained closed to people for 50 days so far due to COVID-19, but open to goods.
- The reduction in business activities and closure of markets, hotels and restaurants continues to impact daily-wage workers, casual labourers and low-income people.
- Humanitarian partners reported a reduction in field activities and adaptation of humanitarian interventions in order to respect movement restrictions. Humanitarian partners have also reported limitations in monitoring service delivery at field level due to COVID-19 protocols and reduction of activities to essential services.
- 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.
- The directives for social distancing and limited public gatherings have created tension in the community and stigmatisation of COVID-19 patients. Most people prefer not to go for testing and/or to isolation centres due to fear of stigmatisation.



Credit: UNHCR. Practice handwashing.

## Impact by location

### Somaliland:

- Somaliland authorities reported a number of cases related to confiscation of *Khat* and related arrests prior to the ban being rescinded.

<sup>1</sup> Closure of mosques in Puntland was rescinded on 26 March 2020; Curfew start time directive in Mogadishu was rescinded on 25 April; On 16 May 2020 Somaliland rescinded the suspension of *Khat* trade issued on 23 April 2020.

<sup>2</sup> WFP Somalia Joint Markets and Supply Chain Weekly Update, W 1 28 April – 3 May, May 2020.

- According to local sources, the border closure with Djibouti and consequent restrictions on the cross-border mobility of goods and population have caused a negative impact on people's livelihood in the border area of Zeylac district of Awdal region, especially those of daily wage earners engaged in trade. It is estimated that about 60 per cent of people in the border area are engaged in cross border trade activities as daily wage earners and many of them have already lost their jobs due to the reduced activity at the border.
- Resumption of livestock export has reportedly led to increasing movement of livestock from rural locations in Somaliland, southern Somalia via Gaalkacyo and across the border from Ethiopia to the port areas<sup>3</sup>.
- A rapid survey by OCHA revealed that most humanitarian partners are continuing their field activities albeit with reduced field presence. Of 15 organisations surveyed, 40 per cent had reduced humanitarian presence on the field whilst 33 per cent had suspended/reduced their activities and 60 per cent had suspended/reduced field visits. The suspended/reduced activities include awareness raising of Gender Based Violence (GBV) and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR), community protection, livelihood support, Cash for Work (CFW), school feeding, as well as some non COVID-19 related health activities.

#### **Puntland:**

- WFP<sup>4</sup> reported that public transport cost increased by 25 per cent to 35 per cent due to COVID-19 directive on 29 March 2020 that limits the number of passengers on public transportation.
- Migrants largely from Ethiopia and a few from Eritrea continue to arrive in Puntland through border areas with Somaliland despite the 28 March suspension of travel from Somaliland and Ethiopia. IOM and local authorities have confirmed that about 600 migrants have arrived in Bossaso over the past two weeks. The inward flow of migrants has not changed since the COVID-19 directive. However, according to the authorities in Bossaso, there is a reduction of outward movement by about 50 per cent due to COVID-19 measures in Puntland. Authorities have also reported of an increase in the number of migrants hosted by Ethiopian families in Bossaso but no specific figures have been issued.

#### **Galmudug:**

- According to WFP, the unskilled labour wage rate has increased in Cabudwaaq, Gaalkacyo and Hobyo by 42.9 per cent from US\$7 to US\$10 per working day, due to more opportunities but reduced available labourers; except in Cadaado where the rate remains very low at US\$3 due reduced opportunities but more available labourers.
- Markets and mosques continue to operate as normal and reportedly children have been observed on the streets with schools now closed; despite the directive for social distancing issued since 6 April 2020.

#### **Hirshabelle:**

- Since 5 March, domestic airports in Belet Weyne and Jowhar have been temporarily opened to enable airlifting of emergency supplies and deploy personnel in order to respond to the flash floods that has affected some 240,000 people in Belet Weyne and 98,000 in Jowhar. The airports had been closed since 16 March following the directive by Federal Government of Somalia on the closure of airports.
- Humanitarian partners are applying protocols of social distancing and use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) during the flood response activities.
- According to WFP<sup>5</sup>, stocks of food items such as vegetable oil continue to decrease in many markets within Middle Shabelle as COVID-19 directives have affected the upstream supply chains.

#### **Banadir:**

- The 12 April directive that imposed a curfew from 20:00h has led to a decline in business activities in small urban markets, which are typically active in the evenings, according to WFP<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> WFP Somalia Joint Markets and Supply Chain Weekly Update, W128 April – 3 May, May 2020

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

<sup>6</sup> Ibid

- According to WFP<sup>7</sup>, stocks of food items such as vegetable oil continue to decrease in many markets within Banadir as COVID-19 directives have affected the upstream supply chains.
- Humanitarian partners have reported challenges in getting evidence-based information due to inaccessibility to the field sites due to social distancing and work from home practices, and due to fear of contracting COVID-19.

#### South West State:

- According to WFP<sup>8</sup>, trade flow has been disrupted due to truck drivers operating in Baidoa-Wajid route withdrawing their services due to the fear of contracting COVID-19.
- SWS Incident Management System Team (IMST) have noted that people prefer not to provide samples and/or come to isolation centres due to fear of stigmatisation. These may be related to stigma created by directives and the misconceptions related to COVID-19.

#### Jubaland:

- According to WFP<sup>9</sup>, closure of the Kenya-Somalia border due to COVID-19 has affected trade flow in Elwak town resulting in a demand-supply imbalance and an increase in food prices.
- Ramadan Taraweeh prayers that are usually conducted after Iftar were temporarily suspended in Kismayo on 1 May through a verbal instruction by Jubaland authorities. This was after a member of the congregation in the Guulwade neighbourhood mosque tested positive for COVID-19. However, on 15 May, Jubaland President in a meeting with religious leaders declared that mosques will be closed indefinitely from 19 May 2020 onwards.
- Due to the COVID-19 restrictions, Rural Agency for Community Development and Assistance (RACIDA) reported that an agricultural input distribution for 1,000 farmers targeting fourteen villages was delayed in Doolow district by two weeks to ensure that the distribution can be conducted whilst applying the COVID-19 protocols. The distribution was later completed within three weeks as opposed to the usual one-week timeframe.
- WFP<sup>10</sup> reported that local currency Somali Shillings (SOS) has started depreciating in Gedo markets, the exchange rate of local currency SOS to US Dollars have increased from 25,000 SOS to 26,000 SOS.
- According to WFP<sup>11</sup>, wholesale and retail prices of imported food items such as rice, wheat flour, vegetable oil, pasta, dates and local cereals increased by 10 – 25 per cent in markets in Gedo region (Doolow, Belet Xaawo and Luuq) during first week of May compared to last week of April.
- On 10 May, Ministry of Health and IOM suspended services in a health centre in Marina IDP site in Kismayo, Lower Juba region for 14 days after several staff working in the centre tested positive for COVID-19. The health centre served a catchment of 20,000 internally displaced persons in the area and the next closest health centre is at approximately 3km.

### 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.
- All 12 airports in Somalia are closed. All airports remain open for cargo flights. As of 5 May, domestic airports in Belet Weyne and Jowhar have been temporarily opened to enable airlifting of emergency supplies and deploy personnel for the flash flood response in the area. Since 23 April, ad-hoc humanitarian flights out of Mogadishu have taken place to evacuate humanitarian personnel, however there is no agreement to allow for humanitarian personnel back to Somalia yet.
- Seven out of eight seaports are open for cargo. Ports that were operational and utilised for humanitarian pipelines pre-COVID-19 such as Mogadishu, Kismayo, Berbera, and Bossaso remain operational.
- Twenty out of 21 land borders in Somalia are closed, but remain porous and cross-border movement has been observed. The Government of Kenya issued a directive closing the Kenya-Somalia border on 15 May

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<sup>8</sup> WFP Somalia Joint Markets and Supply Chain Weekly Update, W 128 April – 3 May, May 2020

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

following an increase in cross-border cases. State-level restrictions have not yet had an implication on road transport across internal borders. However, efforts are under way to further restrict movement in light of increasing COVID-19 cases.

- On 19 April, Saudi Arabia lifted the ban on livestock exports from Somalia<sup>12</sup>, and increased activities have been noted in Mogadishu, Berbera and Bossaso ports. Port fees and taxes on imports represent a significant portion of income for the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) and Federal Member States (FMS) of Somalia. According to the World Bank, trade taxes accounted for an average of 69 per cent of domestic revenue over the past 6 years, representing an average 1.8 per cent of Somalia's Gross Domestic Product (GDP)<sup>13</sup>. The closure of seaports and land borders for a long period presents significant loss in domestic revenue and contraction of GDP

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<sup>12</sup> WFP Somalia Joint Markets and Supply Chain Weekly Update, W128 April – 3 May, May 2020

<sup>13</sup> Somalia Economic Update Edition 4, August 2019, The World Bank – available at <https://bit.ly/3cNp86V>