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**Somalia COVID-19 Impact Update No.1**

**As of 12 April 2020**

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**Highlights**

- 107 Tests done in Somalia
- 20 People in Quarantine
- 21 Confirmed Cases
- 1 Reported Fatalities
- 1 Recovered Cases
- 14 Isolation Facilities

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**Situation Overview**

Somalia confirmed the first case of the global coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on 16 March 2020. Since then, 21 cases (19 males and two females) have been confirmed as of 11 April 2020, including cases with no travel history thereby signifying human-to-human transmission. Humanitarian agencies are concerned that further spread of the virus could have a devastating impact in Somalia given the lack of capacity to prevent, detect and respond to such a pandemic. Less than 20 per cent of health facilities have the required equipment and supplies to manage epidemics.

A full-scale outbreak would also disrupt the ability of humanitarian agencies to respond to existing humanitarian needs, thus compounding the situation. Before COVID-19, an estimated 30 per cent of the population (5.2 million people) required some form of humanitarian assistance; this number will sharply increase if the virus spreads.

**Millions of people are vulnerable**

Within the Somali population, the risk of illness and death is significant due to pre-existing illnesses and malnutrition. Internally displaced people (IDPs), who are estimated at 2.6 million, and the urban poor face the greatest risk given crowded living conditions, insufficient hygiene facilities and lack of access to medical care.

The other vulnerable groups are the elderly, who represent about 2.7 per cent of the population. The pandemic could also hurt communities that are already...
food insecure or live in areas with high malnutrition rates, as well as the 35,000 refugees and asylum seekers mostly living in Somaliland and Puntland, as well as returnees.

Covid-19 Impact

Economy

- **Commodities:** As Somalia heads into its third week of school closures, social distancing and flight restrictions, the economic and social impact is beginning to be felt. With the Somali economy relying heavily on imported commodities, the lock down of key supply markets (India, Thailand and the UAE among others), reduced imports, the closure of borders (notably Ethiopia and Kenya) and restrictions on domestic transportation corridors is beginning to have an impact. As retailers begin to stockpile, most particularly in the lead up to Ramadan, rising prices on key imported commodities (rice, sugar, wheat flour and vegetable oil) are already impacting low-income earners, particularly IDPs and rural communities. However, the price of locally produced foods (maize, beans, fish, meat, and sorghum) remains stable.

- **Remittances:** Reports indicate that there have been very significant reductions in remittance transfers. In the event of further spread of COVID-19, remittances will slow down due to layoffs and delayed salary payments in Europe, the Middle East and USA where many Somalis live and work.

- **Unemployment:** Small traders and others dependent on daily labour have reported the loss of business, jobs and livelihood opportunities. These include miraa (khat) dealers, tea kiosks, flight agents/crews, and cross-border drivers. In Mogadishu itself, the restrictions are affecting hundreds of construction workers, taxi operators, shop keepers, restaurant operators and others who provide services. Overall, the most severely affected will be the poor and vulnerable and day-labourers who engage in odd jobs for daily wages.

- **Livelihoods:** Due to COVID-19, Somalia’s borders with Ethiopia and Kenya have been closed, halting cross-border trade and movements of people between Doolow in Gedo region in Somalia, Dollo Ado in Ethiopia and Mandera in Kenya. The restrictions will impact the 300,000 beneficiaries of the cross-border Building Opportunity for Resilience in the Horn of Africa (BORESHA) project that is being implemented in Doolow Somalia, Dollo Ado of Ethiopia and Mandera, Kenya

Humanitarian Operations

- Humanitarian operations could be affected if supply chains are significantly disrupted by lockdowns or limited availability of stocks on the global market. Already, the shipping of equipment for locust response, including vehicles and sprays, has been delayed for at least 1–2 weeks as a result of restrictions in the countries of origin.

- While the Somali Government continues to facilitate the import of humanitarian supplies, on 2 April, an UNHAS cargo plane carrying cargo for WHO, UNHCR, WFP, IOM and FAO was impounded by Airport Customs with an unprecedented demand for a tax exemption letter.

- Cash programming might also be impacted if commercial markets lack key goods required by beneficiaries or if commodity prices soar rapidly.

Education

- Following the closure of school and universities as directed by the Federal Government on 18 March, there have been calls for exams to be delayed. The Government has also now ordered the closure of religious schools for an initial period of two weeks.

Government Response to Covid-19
The Federal Government of Somalia has prepared a plan on the “Socio-Economic Impact and Required Response for COVID-19”. On 26 March, the Ministry of Health and Human Services launched a National Preparedness and Response Plan. To coordinate responses, a multisectoral committee including the UN and an Inter-Ministerial National Coordination Committee were established. The Federal Ministry of Health has received COVID-19 testing equipment, additional testing kits and other essential medical equipment. As a result, tests are now conducted at the National Laboratory in Mogadishu with 107 tests done since 9 April. Before that, all samples from suspected cases in Somalia were being sent out of the country for testing, which delayed the results for several days.

The Government got a boost on 25 March when it received a donation of COVID-19 testing kits and other preventive products from the Chinese billionaire and Alibaba co-founder Jack Ma. The donation included 20,000 testing kits, 100,000 face masks and 1,000 protective suits and face shields, which the Government is distributing to various states.

Both the federal and state authorities have instituted a raft of control measures including closing schools, banning domestic and international flights, screening people at all points of entry still in use, community awareness activities, training health workers and enhanced disease surveillance. The Federal Government has established a 24-hour COVID-19 hotline (449).

**Humanitarian Response to Covid-19**

WHO is leading the health response and is supporting federal and state authorities. To reinforce the ongoing efforts to contain COVID-19 at the federal and state levels as well as limit the possibility of further spread of the virus, the UN has established system-wide operating, medical and support procedures. A task force has been established to ensure business continuity and agencies have developed a detailed preparedness and response plan in support of the Government’s efforts.

Individual agencies have activated their business continuity plans and begun reprioritising or reprogramming activities. The priority is to continue operations while limiting the spread of the virus in Somalia. Health agencies led by WHO have enhanced surveillance, rapid response and testing to enable identification, diagnosis and tracing of suspected cases. They are also training and deploying health workers, raising awareness and establishing isolation centres, among other activities. WASH partners have escalated hygiene promotion. WFP plans to distribute two-month rations to mitigate any potential deterioration of the situation. All measures and information have been captured in a ‘COVID-19 Response in Somalia’ website. [https://bit.ly/COVID19SOM](https://bit.ly/COVID19SOM)

On 31 March, the UN and NGO partners finalised the humanitarian component of the Somalia COVID-19 Country Preparedness and Response Plan (CPRP). The plan focuses on maintaining critical programmes and activities in the 2020 HRP while mitigating the immediate humanitarian consequences of the pandemic. It also aims to scale up specific COVID-19 related interventions and to support the Federal Government’s preparedness and response plan and national coordination mechanisms.
Useful information on the COVID-19 pandemic is available at:

**Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC)**

**UN agencies and partners**
- The latest information on COVID-19 from WHO: https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus#tab=tab_1
- WHO daily situation reports: https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/situation-reports/
- Consolidated information from Reliefweb on COVID-19: https://reliefweb.int/topics/covid-19

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