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# Coronavirus Contingency Plan Guidance

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## Introduction

As your organization develops your own contingency plans for the Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV, or SARS-CoV-2), and its resulting disease, COVID-19, it is often helpful to review recommended guidance. That’s not to say that you should simply copy and paste your way to a policy. Involving your organization in conversations and discussions regarding capabilities, scenario planning, roles and functions of staff, etc. are still necessary. But drawing inspiration from best practice examples and resources from WHO, CDC, etc., can be very helpful.

Please note that this guide is non-exhaustive and does not cover all situations. This guide should be read in conjunction with the latest relevant advisories issued by WHO, Ministry of Health and Sports and other relevant health agencies. Where applicable, users of this guide are advised to seek guidance from their respective country, regional or HQ counterparts for help on specific information relevant to their particular organization.

The objective of this guide is to help INGO Forum members in their own contingency planning and highlight recommendations for operational continuity in response to COVID-19.

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### 1. What is the Novel Coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2 or COVID-19)?

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses found in both animals and humans. Some infect people and are known to cause illness ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). The Novel Coronavirus (CoV) is a new strain of coronavirus that has not been previously identified in humans. The new, or “novel” coronavirus, now called SARS-CoV-2, and its associated disease, COVID-19, had not previously detected before the outbreak was reported in Wuhan, China in December 2019.

#### Symptoms

Symptoms of the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) are similar to that of regular pneumonia. Typical symptoms include fever, runny nose, sore throat, cough and shortness of breath.

#### Illness Severity

Both MERS and SARS have been known to cause severe illness in people. The complete clinical picture with regard to COVID-19 is not fully understood. Reported illnesses have ranged from mild to severe, including resulting in death.

### 2. Risk Assessment

Outbreaks of novel virus infections among people are always of public health concern. The risk from these outbreaks depends on characteristics of the virus, including how well it spreads between people, the severity of resulting illness, and the medical or other measures available to control the impact of the virus (for example, vaccine or treatment medications).

The potential public health threat posed by COVID-19 virus is high, both globally and to Myanmar. The fact that this virus has caused illness, including illness resulting in death, and sustained person-to-person spread in China is concerning. It’s unclear how the situation will unfold, but risk is dependent on exposure. At this time, some people will have an increased risk of infection, for example healthcare workers caring for COVID-19 patients and other close contacts of COVID-19 patients.

### 3. Exposure Risk Management

The following steps are recommended good personal hygiene practice for staff in order to prevent the spread of the flu, respiratory viruses, etc.

- Cover your mouth with a tissue paper when coughing or sneezing, and dispose the soiled tissue paper in the rubbish bin immediately; and vii. Seek medical attention promptly if you are feeling unwell Maintain good indoor ventilation
- Avoid sharing food, crockery, utensils and other personal hygiene items
- Avoid physical contact such as shaking hands and avoid touching your face or rubbing your eyes
- Practice frequent hand washing with soap (e.g. before handling food or eating, after going to the toilet, or when hands are dirtied by respiratory secretions after coughing or sneezing) or the use of alcohol-based hand rubs
  - Proper hand washing requires soap and water. The constant rubbing action helps soap break down the grease and dirt that carry most germs. Washing your hands for at least 15 to 30 seconds with soap and water does not just make your hands smell fresh but also reduces germ count by up to 99%
- Avoid close contact with people suffering from acute respiratory infections such as with fever, cough and difficulty breathing.
- While sick, limit contact with others as much as possible to keep from infecting them.
- If you have fever, cough and difficulty breathing do not go to work but seek medical care early and share previous travel history with your health care provider.
- Avoid contact with live animals including poultry and birds, and consumption of raw and undercooked meats

### WHO Guidance on the use of facemasks

- If you are healthy, you ***only*** need to wear a mask if you are taking care of a person with suspected COVID-19 infection.
- Wear a mask if you are coughing or sneezing.
- Masks are effective only when used in combination with frequent hand-cleaning with alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water.
- If you wear a mask, then you must know how to use it and dispose of it properly.
- Before putting on a mask, clean hands with alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water.
- Cover mouth and nose with mask and make sure there are no gaps between your face and the mask.
- Avoid touching the mask while using it; if you do, clean your hands with alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water.
- Replace the mask with a new one as soon as it is damp and do not re-use single-use masks.
- To remove the mask: remove it from behind (do not touch the front of mask); discard immediately in a closed bin; clean hands with alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water.

## 4. Organizational Continuity Plans

Organizations are encouraged to plan and implement operational continuity plans to minimize disruption to their operations and ensure that services remain viable during the virus outbreak and duty of care to staff is provided. Organizations can take the following steps to ensure adequate preparation for operational continuity.

### Key Considerations (Human Resources)

- A safety or staff health focal point should be appointed to ensure that staff are familiar with relevant contingency plans and comply with them during this period. Important to keep staff informed without being alarmist.
- Review or develop a plan for continuity of leadership in the event of absence of key decision makers and executives.
- Consider flexible work arrangements for high-risk employees, as well as employees who need to stay at home due to other reasons relating to COVID-19, e.g. to take care of family members who have travelled to known affected countries or regions.
  - Designate triggers for switching to work from home modalities.
  - Designate triggers for Hibernation, Relocation and Evacuation.

- Review employee management policies such as leave of absence, absenteeism, sick leave, overseas travel, workplace closure and recall of non-critical employees from postings away from normal duty station.
  - Review what, if any, impact of airlines stopping flights if staff are already overseas.
  - Review plan for reduced staffing should absenteeism increase.
- Adhere to all travel and health advisories issued by WHO or Myanmar Ministry of Health and Sports. Refer to the WHO and MoHS websites (<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019> & <https://www.mohs.gov.mm/>) for the latest updates so that an informed decision can be made on whether to proceed with prearranged travel plans.
- Review pre-existing medical emergency response plans and ensure facility evaluations are up to date.
- Review health insurance policies for staff.

### Key Considerations (Operations)

- Identify critical operations (prioritize activities) and identify essential staff. The following should also be considered:
  - Cross-training staff or creating guidance documents to minimize disruptions.
  - Prepositioning of supplies.
- Educate staff on the latest available information on the virus. Brief them on the need for good personal hygiene and the preventive procedures that have been set in place.
  - Put up notices in washrooms and kitchens on proper hand washing techniques.
- Collate updated contact information of all staff, i.e. home address/ mobile phone number. Make sure all staff have contact numbers of safety or staff health focal point. Employees are to contact the focal point if they are admitted to hospital with suspected infections.
  - For larger organizations there may also be a need to update and test a communication tree.
- Educate staff on steps to take should they think/are infected with the virus (Annex 1)
- Ensure adequate supply of appropriate (PPE) and medical equipment (e.g. thermometers, disposable gloves, soap, disinfectants, hand sanitizer, N95 respirator) and undertake training to familiarize employees on their usage.
  - Respirators are not needed for everyday use of healthy individuals. Most often, spread of respiratory viruses from person-to-person happens among close contacts (within 2 meters). Rather everyday preventive actions are recommended to prevent the spread of

respiratory viruses, such as avoiding people who are sick, avoiding touching your eyes or nose, and covering your cough or sneeze with a tissue.

- Clean and disinfect offices and guest houses on a regular basis. Especially important if areas were exposed to suspected or confirmed case(s).
  - Ensure common areas e.g. pantries, washrooms, meeting rooms are disinfected daily.
- Designate a room/area in the office with nearby toilet facilities as the isolation room/area for the employee(s) with fever to use. Identify the isolation route (a route that is not commonly used by employees/visitors) that leads to an area where the employees with fever can be brought to the flu clinic/hospital.
- Identify hospitals/clinics that staff with fever can be brought to.
- Devise workflow for;
  - Managing unwell staff at the office.
  - Managing unwell staff outside the workplace
  - Contact tracing and staff communication

### **Key Considerations (Communications)**

- Identify a key focal point within the organization who will disseminate communications regarding the virus, related plans and response.
- Ensure staff have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities before a virus outbreak occurs. For example, staff should be informed of the contingency and continuity measures that will impact them and be kept updated on the policies and progress on the measures to be implemented in the event of a virus outbreak. Consider setting up a communication channel for staff to report their status and to make enquiries.
- Identify the relevant stakeholders such as local partners, service providers and beneficiaries, and key messages for each stakeholder group; and begin a dialogue with them on potential contingency measures during a virus outbreak.

### ANNEX 1

#### Recommended Guidance for staff with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 Infection

##### **Stay home except to get medical care**

You should restrict activities outside your home, except for getting medical care. Do not go to work, school, or public areas. Do not use public transportation, ride-sharing, or taxis. Inform your supervisor or HR manager.

##### **Separate yourself from other people in your home**

As much as possible, you should stay in a specific room and away from other people in your home. Also, you should use a separate bathroom, if available.

##### **Call ahead before visiting your doctor**

If you have a medical appointment, call the healthcare provider and tell them that you have or may have COVID-19 infection. This will help the healthcare provider's office take steps to keep other people from getting infected or exposed.

##### **Wear a facemask**

You should wear a facemask when you are around other people (e.g., sharing a room or vehicle) and before you enter a healthcare provider's office. If you are not able to wear a facemask (for example, because it causes trouble breathing), then people who live with you should not stay in the same room with you, or they should wear a facemask if they enter your room.

##### **Cover your coughs and sneezes**

Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw used tissues in a lined trash can and wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, immediately clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol, covering all surfaces of your hands and rubbing them together until they feel dry. Soap and water should be used preferentially if hands are visibly dirty.

##### **Clean your hands**

Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol, covering all surfaces of your hands and rubbing them together until they feel dry. Soap and water should be used preferentially if hands are visibly dirty. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.



### **Avoid sharing personal household items**

You should not share dishes, drinking glasses, cups, eating utensils, towels, or bedding with other people in your home. After using these items, they should be washed thoroughly with soap and water.

### **Monitor your symptoms**

Seek prompt medical attention if your illness is worsening (e.g., shortness of breath or difficulty breathing). Before seeking care, call your healthcare provider and tell them that you have, or are being evaluated for, COVID-19 infection. Put on a facemask before you enter the facility. These steps will help the healthcare provider's office to keep other people from getting infected or exposed.

### ANNEX 2

#### Resources on Coronavirus

- [World Health Organization](#)
  - Technical guidance and daily situation reports
- [Metabiota](#)
  - Live map of epidemics including Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19).
- [Johns Hopkins University](#)
  - Mapped data and information on COVID-19 cases around the world.
- [European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control](#)
  - Situation updates and risk assessment for COVID-19.
- [Global Guardian](#)
  - Travel advice regarding COVID-19.
- [US Department of State](#)
  - Travel advice regarding COVID-19.
- [International SOS](#)
  - News, travel advice, FAQs and useful links.
- [ASEAN Briefing](#)
  - The Coronavirus in Asia and ASEAN – Live Updates by Country
- [The Republic of the Union of Myanmar Ministry of Health and Sports](#)