

FOOD SECURITY RISK COMMUNICATION CONSIDERATIONS AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF THE COVID-19 OUTBREAK: “NOTE”

Background

As COVID-19 continues to spread, the Food Security Cluster (FSC) and its partners are aware of the potential implications of the outbreak for humanitarian and development food security activities. There is need to maintain ability to deliver life-saving assistance as well as communicate the potential implications and mitigation measures to communities.

The FSC partners are advised to:

- Actively engage and collaborate at the regional hubs to ensure that life-saving assistance continues to be delivered;
- Minimize transmission risks for staff, partners and the affected populations;
- Develop contingency and mitigation plans to address any disruption of life-saving activities and/or to cover additional needs if required.
- Increase market price monitoring for staple foods
- Enhance efforts to engage with the communities through various media to ensure they are continuously informed.

The following considerations on risk communication and community engagement aim to support FSC partners in providing timely, relevant and reliable information on COVID-19 to prevent further spread of the pandemic.

Some sections of this document build on WFP guidelines prepared in the first half of March 2020.

Potential impacts of COVID-19 on Food Security

Looking at the current spread of the COVID-19 in Somalia, a series of potential impacts have been identified as outlined below:

→ **Reduced Food Availability**

- Reduced local food production due to agricultural land left uncultivated (because of labour shortage, road blockages, difficult access to seeds and other inputs, etc.)
- Reduced food supply due to import restrictions and interrupted trade.
- Dysfunctional food markets due to production and distribution being disrupted by social/physical distancing measures.

→ **Reduced Food Access (because of reduced purchasing power)**

- Rising food prices because of increase in demand and competition, coupled with reduced production and/or more expensive imports.

- Decrease in livelihood sources due to interrupted in-country economic activity (e.g. impact on transport, unemployment and declining wages because of sluggish economic activity).
- Movement restrictions necessary to contain the spread of the virus simultaneously threatens to disrupt the entire food supply-chain.

→ *Worsened Food Utilization*

- Potential increase in acute malnutrition rates as a result of continuous adoption of emergency and crisis level of food related coping strategies (example: if families switch to cheaper, less nutritious foods as a mechanism to cope with increased food prices)
- Low food utilization due to unavailability and increased food prices.

Risk Communication and Community Engagement

Food security cluster in co-ordination with Risk Communication and Community Engagement Task Force will work with FSC partners in disseminating messages on COVID-19 through engagement with the different structures at the community level. The messaging will include;

1. Checklist for Food Security Cluster Partners and other food security practitioners

- Reduce as much as possible direct face to face contact with stakeholders to avoid escalating the risks associated with the spread of COVID-19.
- Suspend, re-adjust or avoid any activity that potentially enhances the risk of transmission for the communities.
- Maintain physical distancing of 1.5 metres.
- Only provide information coming from official sources. We strongly advise to follow the recommendations provided by the World Health Organization of the United Nations (www.who.int)
- Sensitize the local relief committee members on COVID-19 and provide IEC materials, sanitizers and facemasks.
- At the distribution points;
 - ✓ Ensure soap and water is available.
 - ✓ In collaboration with the local health facility monitor temperatures of those who come into the compound of facility where distribution is taking place.
 - ✓ Place hand sanitizers at appropriate places to ensure availability.
 - ✓ Ensure toilet facilities are clean and appropriate for everyone, including persons living with disabilities and children.
 - ✓ Clean and disinfect equipment and surfaces that are touched by many people.
 - ✓ Use WHO and Government approved liquids for disinfecting surfaces.
 - ✓ Display banners and posters with pictorial or art messages to convey the above-mentioned advice.

2. Checklist for relief committees/local committees

- Wash hands using soap regularly or use recommended sanitizers.

- Maintain physical distancing of 1.5 metres.
- Sensitize local people on COVID-19.

3. Check list for parents/caregivers and community members.

- At the household level parents have a duty to ensure that the family is kept safe to avoid disruptions caused by either a parent or child being taken to hospital or being quarantined. Parents should;
 - ✓ Have, at all times, soap and water strategically placed at the home for regular use.
 - ✓ Constantly monitor the health of children and keep them indoors if unwell to reduce vulnerability.
 - ✓ Monitor the movements of children and restrict such movements as much as possible.
 - ✓ Teach and model hygiene for the children by;
 - Washing your hands with soap and water regularly or using recommended hand sanitizers.
 - Ensuring safe drinking water is available
 - Ensuring that toilet facilities at home are regularly cleaned.
 - Ensuring safe disposal of wastewater.
 - Coughing and sneezing into a piece of cloth or elbow and avoid touching face, eyes, mouth and nose.
 - ✓ Encourage children to ask questions and express their feelings.
 - ✓ Respond with facts coming from official sources like WHO to misinformation and rumors, so to avoid exposing people to further risks due to misinformation.
 - ✓ Increase airflow in the house.
 - ✓ Encourage children to eat nutritious diet

4. Checklist for the elderly people.

The elderly people are more vulnerable because of the weakening immunity. Below is the checklist of messages to the elderly:

- Stay at home, maintain physical distancing.
- Wash hands with soap and water regularly.
- Wear a mask or cover mouth and nose with a cloth when in public

Advocacy and messaging

The FSC should fulfil its advocacy role and in particular:

- Utilize existing community engagement strategies to reach the most vulnerable through different media.
- Communication messages should be language appropriate and considerate of age and literacy levels. They should be widely disseminated to the communities regularly.

- Adopt appropriate, effective and creative channels for communicating with the affected populations to avoid gathering people together and to effectively promote physical distancing. Diversification of non-physical communication channels is encouraged including, helplines, voice calls and SMSs, radio shows etc.
- Through the 15 regional hubs coordinate the dissemination of messaging, management of misinformation, timely response to queries and provision of feedback.
- The FSC should engage with donors to mobilize/allocate resources and capacities to implement contingency / operational plans.

FSC – Business Continuity

Below is a brief guide to support the FSC staff (coordinators and Information Management Officers) to ensure the continuity of some of the core functions of the cluster/sector.

1. Organizing/attending meetings

- Avoid being exposed or exposing others to respiratory viruses:
- Ensure meeting space is organized in such a way to ensure at least 1 meter/3 feet distance between each attendee.
- Avoid touching items that could be contaminated (as it is not yet clear on the duration which the virus remains on surfaces). For instance, avoid sharing pen/attendance sheet which might be contaminated by one participant and transmitted to others. Instead, keep your attendance sheet on your PC and add yourself the names of participants while doing the round of introduction.
- Avoid planning any face-to-face meetings, especially for meetings with more than 5 participants and instead opt to have online meetings (or suggest meeting organizers to do so). Here are some options: 1- Zoom: <https://zoom.us/> • You can easily host your meetings on zoom by sending the link along with the meeting ID and passport to your partners to join a call.

2. Trainings

Planned trainings could be given online using different recommended and approved online options.

3. Function/Criticality of the Food Security Cluster

It is important to ensure the criticality of the cluster/sector presence within a country. Make sure that at least 1 person from the FSC team is on the essential staff list of WFP or FAO (depending on the contract you have). This is crucial to ensure coordination is maintained especially during and in the aftermath of an emergency.

Additional information on RCCE can be obtained from the link below.

<https://covid19som-ochasom.hub.arcgis.com/pages/rcce>



<https://sites.google.com/view/fsc-covid19/home>

<https://sites.google.com/view/fsc-covid19/documents/cross-cutting-issues>

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