Guidance for country offices: coronavirus

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Aim

This guidance is for country programmes to use flexibly to suit local environments to help manage the coronavirus outbreak.

The coronavirus outbreak looks set to become widespread for several months. We encourage country offices to consider all scenarios and have plans in place before they are needed.

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Background

Novel coronavirus is a new strain of coronavirus first identified in Wuhan, China, but cases have been reported in many other countries. The virus can be transmitted between people and symptoms may not be apparent for up to 14 days.

Generally, coronavirus can cause more severe symptoms in people with weakened immune systems, older people, and those with long-term conditions like diabetes, cancer and chronic lung disease. Currently, no vaccination is available.

Monitoring

We will continue to monitor the situation from Teddington, but you should monitor local sources for news, information and instructions about the virus in your country.

WHO advice is available at: Advice for public.

The key recommendations relate to hand and respiratory hygiene, and safe food practices.

Communicating

General advice about our response to the coronavirus is on the Corporate Hub. Country offices should ensure that all staff are familiar with the Travel Alert page on the International Safety & Security Hub.

You may want to consider holding a regular meeting with staff to inform them about how Tearfund is responding to the virus and to understand staff concerns.

Further information

If you need further information or advice on Tearfund’s response to the coronavirus contact: coronavirus@tearfund.org.

For medical advice:

- Staff covered by Cigna (International staff only): contact Cigna directly on +32 3 217 68 82
● Those covered by RSA (Local staff travelling to another country), UK staff travelling overseas, volunteers, consultants, Inspired Individuals, Tearfund Supporters and Donors, Guests of Tearfund) should contact RSA directly on +44(0)20 8763 3155
● Local staff should use their normal local health care arrangements.

Reporting

Report any medical or coronavirus incidents using the standard procedures.

To enable us to care for our staff and monitor our team capacities, we will be creating new categories in SelectHR for staff to indicate impacts of coronavirus on their working situation:

● Self-isolating (non-working)
● Self-isolating (working from home)
● Sick leave (coronavirus)
● Carer leave (coronavirus)

If your staff are affected in any of these ways, please ask them to enter this in their SelectHR absence record. If you know they are affected but they are unable to access SelectHR, please enter the absence for them or notify your HR Business Partner who will enter it in SelectHR for you.

Basic protective measures

WHO recommends:

- Frequent handwashing (with soap or gels where soap/water is not available)
- Keep your distance (1 metre+) from anyone who is coughing or sneezing
- Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth
- Practice respiratory hygiene: cover your mouth and nose with your bent elbow or a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Then dispose of the used tissue immediately
- If you have fever, cough and difficulty breathing, seek medical care early
- Stay informed: check the hub daily for updated information on coronavirus.

There are posters on hygiene available to download on the WHO website.

We recommend checking your first aid kits are fully stocked and items are in date.
Facemasks

The science around the effectiveness of facemasks is inconclusive and they are not a WHO recommendation. Viruses are not airborne, and the coronavirus is transmitted as a droplet or smear infection.

But in some countries the use of facemasks is widespread and there may be a case for Tearfund staff to use them. Country teams should review the local situation and judge whether they may foreseeably be needed, and, if so, local sources should be identified.

Precautions whilst travelling

International travel

From Monday 16 March at 12 noon (GMT) we are stopping all non-essential international travel.

This includes travel between countries within the same cluster.

This is a change from our previous policy which only stopped travel for Global Gatherings and Guests.

More details are available in the Q&A which are being updated regularly.

We are continually reviewing our policy, so there is the potential for more travel restrictions to be applied at short notice.

If traveling to a country where the number of cases is on the increase, consider the possibility of a further escalation resulting in flight restrictions. So, decide if your trip is essential, and if so, what your personal contingency plans should flight restrictions be imposed, including having sufficient medication for any pre-existing conditions.

If you need advice or support please contact: International Safety and Security Team (ISST)- safety.security@tearfund.org.

Tearfund are unable to test staff or provide certificates to confirm staff members do not have coronavirus. If this is a requirement for you to travel, you will be unable to travel.

To reduce the likelihood of infection whilst travelling:

- check in advance for any travel restrictions or advisories.
- avoid travelling if you have a fever or a cough.
- avoid close contact with people with a fever or a cough.
- frequently wash your hands and avoid hand to mouth/nose/ear contact.

Local travel
If you have an outbreak of coronavirus locally, consider how staff get to work and whether there are options to avoid peak commuting times on public transport.

Managing staff who may be infected
It can be difficult to differentiate between coronavirus and common cold or flu. The guide below may help, but if in doubt seek medical advice.

**Common coronavirus symptoms can include:** acute respiratory illness, fever, dry cough, aching muscles and fatigue.

**Less typical coronavirus symptoms:** phlegm buildup, headache, coughing up blood, diarrhea.

**Symptoms atypical for coronavirus:** runny nose and sore throat. These are more typical signs of upper respiratory infection. Therefore, those who have bouts of sneezing or get the sniffles likely have the flu or a common cold.

Staff who show signs of sickness should avoid contact with others and seek medical help. If staff have been in an infected area, it may be advisable for them to be isolated for the 14 day period.

In some scenarios it may be necessary for staff to work remotely. Consider the practicalities of connecting with staff should this be necessary, including IT and HR support.

Please monitor any absences on SelectHR and encourage staff to login to their Select HR account and update their confidential records: contact details, emergency contact, next of kin. The following are also useful, but optional: doctor, blood group, medical conditions and medication. View step by step instructions on how to update records.

Business continuity
We are currently encouraging staff to maintain their normal patterns of office working, however please be aware that you may get requests to work from home e.g. if staff are caring for someone at home or have underlying health conditions themselves.

Staff may also be required to self isolate in line with local government recommendation if they have been in contact with people who have had coronavirus or are showing symptoms. You will need to keep up to date with your local government guidance. Please keep records of staff who are:
- Self-isolating (non-working)
- Self-isolating (working from home)
- Sick leave (coronavirus)
- Carer leave - caring for a relative with coronavirus (coronavirus)

Should you need to close the office, working from home should form part of your business continuity planning.

*Home working should only be at the approval of the Country Director.*

We appreciate that this may be difficult to arrange so please speak to your Cluster Lead for guidance on home working. General guidance includes:

- Be clear on how you will communicate with each other while you are unable to work from the office
- For meetings that can be held remotely, ensure everyone knows how to connect to and use Google Hangout, which is Tearfund’s primary and universal conferencing tool.
- Check in with staff on a regular basis to see if they are ok

If there are any specific items you may need for the office or your programmes that you think may not be available due to coronavirus, you may wish to think about alternative ways to source these items, or pre-positioning key supplies.

Contingency Planning for Covid-19

We have developed a specific [contingency planning template for Covid-19](#). We recommend that countries use the ‘Tearfund Escalation Levels’ detailed below and develop a contingency plan once they are at the second level ‘Prepare’.

These contingency plans focus on the anticipated impact of the virus on the country and on Tearfund programmes, reviewing what programme activities will need adjusting and if additional support is required for the possible scale up of activities in response to the virus.

*Please adjust the template as necessary, to take into account your specific country context. If you have already developed your own contingency plan, please share it with your cluster leadership.*

Escalation levels

Within Tearfund we will use three escalation levels to provide guidance for local preparations:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Plan</td>
<td>No or very few cases of coronavirus identified, no special measures recommended by local authorities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Prepare</td>
<td>Some cases of coronavirus identified, or likely that they exist but have not been formally notified, potential for local authorities to recommend special measures or travel restrictions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Action</td>
<td>Coronavirus considered a significant public health issue and or travel restrictions imposed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Escalation checklist

Use this checklist as a guide for escalating country preparations between the levels.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Options</th>
<th>Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Brief</strong></td>
<td>Staff, partners, visitors and encourage them to brief family and friends.</td>
<td>1 Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inform ISST</strong></td>
<td>About incidents, change in level etc.</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hygiene</strong></td>
<td>Maintain handwashing regime for all staff and visitors</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Facemasks</strong></td>
<td>Identify source and purchase</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Medical</strong></td>
<td>Identify local providers for diagnosis and treatment</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Medical</strong></td>
<td>Liaise with and visit local providers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Medical</strong></td>
<td>Use</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Quarantine/Remote working</strong></td>
<td>Brief staff on procedures.</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Quarantine/Remote working</strong></td>
<td>Test quarantine and remote working protocols</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Visits</strong></td>
<td>Essential visits only. Limit interaction</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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