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IFRC COVID-19 Emergency Decree Pro Bono Research: Ghana

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- ***Questions to be answered by close of business Friday, 27 March are listed below.***
- ***Please be sure to include English translations of relevant text where possible.***

1. Is there coordination between state and non-state actors, e.g. through a national emergency response mechanism?

The Government of Ghana appears to be developing certain elements of its response to the COVID-19 pandemic in coordination with non-state actors.

For example, following the closure of all schools, the Ministry of Education is working to develop the distance learning resources to allow students to continue their education remotely. To this end, the Minister of Education, Hon. Dr. Matthew Opoku Prempeh, has confirmed that the Ministry is “explor[ing] collaborations [with] non-state actors” and with members of the private sector. In particular, the Ministry intends to partner with telecommunications companies and television and radio stations to ensure that educational content can be accessible to users through multiple platforms and at no cost.¹ Non-state actors such as Scholastic, Plan International, Edmondo, amongst other development partners and telecommunications networks have collaborated with the Ministry of Education on developing distance learning resources for junior high school students.²

The Ministry of Transport is working with transport unions and other public and private transport operators to enhance hygiene standards on transportation systems (i.e. in vehicles used for public transportation and at transport terminals) by providing hand sanitizers, running water, and soap for handwashing.³

President Nana Akufo-Addo has noted the contribution of the Ghanaian entrepreneurs who have responded to the pandemic by producing greater quantities of sanitizers and veronica buckets. The Government has appealed to the pharmaceutical industry to scale up the domestic production of pharmaceutical products.⁴

Further, the Government has emphasized the role that the public and wider society have to play in response to COVID-19. President Akufo-Addo has urged the media to disseminate information approved

¹ “Live: Covid-19 Updates – Ghana’s Coronavirus cases reaches 52 – News Desk on JoyNews (24-3-20)”, MyJoyOnline TV, published 24 March 2020, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=buoOGO56vVw>>, accessed 26 March 2020. See briefing from Minister of Education, Hon Dr. Matthew Opoku Prempeh at approx. 48:50 - 53:10.

² *ibid*, at approx. 53:08 to 55:10.

³ “Akufo-Addo provides latest updates on coronavirus”, MyJoyOnline TV, published 15 March 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l9px8EP_dQM>, accessed 25 March 2020.

⁴ “President Akufo-Addo’s third address to the nation on the coronavirus outbreak”, MyJoyOnline TV, published on 21 March 2020, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m3VpF0XBT00>>, accessed 25 March 2020.



by health authorities⁵ and has generally appealed to the public to cooperate with authorities (particularly, for the purposes of contact tracing).⁶

2. Is there mention of the role of Red Cross (RC) or humanitarian actors? In what areas/sectors? What responsibilities are ascribed to RC?

There does not appear to be any express mention of the Red Cross in the emergency decrees, nor any general mention of humanitarian actors.

However, in a press briefing on 24 March 2020, the Minister of Education mentioned the Ministry's collaboration with Plan International, a development and humanitarian organization, to produce distance learning resources for junior high school students.⁷ (See responses to question 1 above and question 7 below.)

3. Are there exceptions to travel restrictions that will facilitate the movement of RC/humanitarian relief teams and/or aid across borders? What (if any) quarantine requirements or other conditions are attached?

With effect from Sunday 22 March 2020, all borders (land, air, and sea) have been closed to human traffic for a period of two weeks.⁸ There do not appear to be any exceptions to this restriction.

Anyone arriving in Ghana before the travel ban took effect was to be mandatorily quarantined and tested.⁹

Prior to this travel ban, Ghana had restricted from entering the country any traveler who, within the previous 14 days, had been to a country reporting more than 200 cases of COVID-19. Ghanaian citizens and residents were exempt from this restriction. However, all persons entering the country were to undergo a mandatory 14-day self-quarantine, and anyone who was deemed unable to self-quarantine was to be quarantined by the state. Any traveler exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 was to be quarantined and tested upon arrival.¹⁰

4. Are there exceptions to quarantines, curfews and other restrictions on movement that allow RC/humanitarian organizations access to vulnerable populations (including for psychosocial or non-medical aid)?

With effect from 15 March 2020, all public gatherings (including conferences, workshops, funerals, festivals, political rallies, sporting events, and religious gatherings) have been suspended for a period of four weeks. Private burials are permitted with no more than 25 attendees. All schools and universities

⁵ "Pres. Akufo-Addo addresses nation – Joy News Prime (11-3-20)", MyJoyOnline TV, published 11 March 2020, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XpKuJXGfg1g>>, accessed 26 March 2020.

⁶ "Akufo-Addo provides latest updates on coronavirus", MyJoyOnline TV, published 15 March 2020 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I9px8EP_dQM>, accessed 25 March 2020.

⁷ "Live: Covid-19 Updates – Ghana's Coronavirus cases reaches 52 – News Desk on JoyNews (24-3-20)", MyJoyOnline TV, published 24 March 2020, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=buoOG056vVw>>, accessed 26 March 2020. See briefing from Minister of Education, Hon Dr. Matthew Opoku Prempeh at approx. 53:08 to 55:10.

⁸ "President Akufo-Addo's third address to the nation on the coronavirus outbreak", MyJoyOnline TV, published on 21 March 2020, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m3VpF0XBT00>>, accessed 25 March 2020.

⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁰ "Travel Advisory", Ministry of Information, 15 March 2020. See <https://citinewsroom.com/2020/03/covid-19-travels-to-ghana-strongly-discouraged-government/> for a copy of the travel advisory, accessed 25 March 2020. See also press briefing from Minister of Information, Hon. Kojo Opong-Nkrumah, <<https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Government-of-Ghana-announces-travel-advisory-895168>>, accessed 25 March 2020.



have been closed until further notice. Only students preparing for their BECE and WASSCE exams will be allowed to attend school, but they must adhere to the social distancing protocols.¹¹ All beaches have been closed.¹²

Businesses and workplaces are still permitted to operate, but they must observe prescribed social distancing between patrons and staff. Establishments such as supermarkets, shopping malls, restaurants, hotels, nightclubs, and drinking spots should observe enhanced hygiene procedures by providing hand sanitizers, running water and soap for handwashing.¹³

There do not appear to be any express exceptions to these restrictions.

5. Have any special legal facilities or exemptions been put in place for the importation of medical aid or other relief items or personnel (International Disaster Response Law)? What (if any) quarantine requirements or other conditions are attached?

There do not appear to be any special legal facilities or exemptions in relation to the importation of medical aid, relief, or personnel. Ghana has closed its borders for a period of four weeks (see response to question 3); therefore, personnel will not be permitted to enter the country. However, the closure of Ghana's borders does not apply to the importation of goods, supplies, and cargo.¹⁴

6. Is the RC (or humanitarian organizations) categorized as 'essential' or 'emergency' services, for the purposes of exemptions to restrictions on business operations and opening hours?

There does not appear to be any such classification of the RC or humanitarian organizations.

7. What other measures are provided in the emergency decrees? (for governmental actors, for communities, for health workers, etc).

Objectives of Ghana's response

The Government has identified the five key objectives of its response to the COVID-19 pandemic:

- (i) limit and stop the importation of the virus;
- (ii) contain the spread of the virus;
- (iii) provide adequate care for the sick;
- (iv) limit the impact of the virus on social and economic life; and
- (v) inspire the expansion of Ghana's domestic capability and deepen Ghana's self-reliance.¹⁵

Public officials

The Government has suspended international travel for public officials, except in the case of critical assignments authorized by the Chief of Staff and the Office of the President.¹⁶

¹¹ "Akufo-Addo provides latest updates on coronavirus", MyJoyOnline TV, published 15 March 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I9px8EP_dQM>, accessed 25 March 2020.

¹² "GTA Orders Closure of Beaches", Ghana Tourism Authority, 23 March 2020, <<https://www.instagram.com/p/B-E8419JPMH/>>, accessed 25 March 2020.

¹³ "Akufo-Addo provides latest updates on coronavirus", MyJoyOnline TV, published 15 March 2020 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I9px8EP_dQM>, accessed 25 March 2020.

¹⁴ "President Akufo-Addo's third address to the nation on the coronavirus outbreak", MyJoyOnline TV, published on 21 March 2020, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m3VpF0XBT00>>, accessed 25 March 2020.

¹⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁶ "Pres. Akufo-Addo addresses the nation – Joy News Prime (11-3-20)", MyJoyOnline TV, published 11 March 2020, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XpKuJXGfg1g>>, accessed 25 March 2020.



At the Ministry of Education, the workforce has been divided into two groups, and these two groups attend work during alternate weeks in an effort to observe social distancing protocols in the workplace.¹⁷

Healthcare

The Ministry of Health is enhancing its contact tracing program and testing persons who have been identified as having come into contact with an infected person. The Ministry is further procuring personal protection equipment to bolster supplies for frontline healthcare workers. Fifty thousand additional testing kits have been ordered and are shortly expected to arrive in the country. The Ministry of Health is mobilizing both new and retired healthcare professionals to reinforce Ghana's preparedness in dealing with a possible surge in infections.¹⁸

Transportation, markets, businesses, and public spaces

The Government has strongly urged the public to observe enhanced hygiene and sanitation protocols. The Government advises continuous handwashing and the provision of hand sanitizers, soap, and running water in public places (e.g. supermarkets, shopping malls, restaurants,¹⁹ bus terminals, public transportation vehicles,²⁰ etc.). The Ministry of Transport has directed that before and after every journey, the interior and exterior of public transportation vehicles should be washed and disinfected using Ministry of Health approved spray. Further, operators should avoid overcrowding transportation vehicles, and passenger information is to be taken at bus terminals to allow authorities the means to follow up with and trace individuals in case of emergency. These measures are to be reviewed every two days.²¹

Fumigation and disinfection of selected markets in the Greater Accra Region began on 23 March 2020. The Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development intends to implement similar measures in other regions of the country.²²

Schools

The Centre for National Distance Learning and Open Schooling has developed an online distance learning system for senior high school students. This platform offers free access to audio-visual resources, virtual laboratories, notes, exercises, and interactive quizzes. For junior high school students, Plan International is broadcasting educational content and has further made studios available to the Ministry of Education to develop more content.²³ Prior to the outbreak of COVID-19, the National Council

¹⁷ "Live: Covid-19 Updates – Ghana's Coronavirus cases reaches 52 – News Desk on JoyNews (24-3-20)", MyJoyOnline TV, published 24 March 2020, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=buoOGO56vVw>>, accessed 26 March 2020. See briefing from Minister of Education, Hon. Dr Matthew Opoku Prempeh at approx. 48:25.

¹⁸ "President Akufo-Addo's third address to the nation on the coronavirus outbreak", MyJoyOnline TV, published on 21 March 2020, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m3VpF0XBT00>>, accessed 25 March 2020.

¹⁹ "Akufo-Addo provides latest updates on coronavirus", MyJoyOnline TV, published 15 March 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I9px8EP_dQM>, accessed 25 March 2020.

²⁰ "COVID-19 Pandemic: Information Ministry updates nation on outbreak - #LatestUpdates (18-3-20)", MyJoyOnline TV, published 18 March 2020, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BZLtHAUwmOc>>, accessed 25 March 2020. See briefing from Minister of Transport, Hon. Kwaku Ofori Asiamah, at approx. 20:27 to 26:36.

²¹ *ibid.*

²² "Live: Covid-19 Updates – Ghana's Coronavirus cases reaches 52 – News Desk on JoyNews (24-3-20)", MyJoyOnline TV, published 24 March 2020, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=buoOGO56vVw>>, accessed 26 March 2020. See briefing from Minister for Local Government and Rural Development, Hon. Hajia Alima Mahama, at approx. 3:01 to 9:06.

²³ "Live: Covid-19 Updates – Ghana's Coronavirus cases reaches 52 – News Desk on JoyNews (24-3-20)", MyJoyOnline TV, published 24 March 2020, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=buoOGO56vVw>>, accessed 26 March 2020. See briefing from Minister for Education, Hon. Dr Matthew Opoku Prempeh at approx. 53:08 to 55:10.



for Tertiary Education had engaged the Open University UK, which has made an educational portal available to students at Ghanaian universities.²⁴

Public information and education

The Government is also rolling out a public education campaign on COVID-19 and the importance of handwashing and social distancing. These messages are to be disseminated via public announcement vans, commentators and announcers, poster and sticker campaigns, community information centres, vans with digital screens, printed materials, radio, television, and online. The mass media messages have, thus far, been made available in seven Ghanaian languages (in addition to English).²⁵

8. Have restrictions been adopted or put in place that ban the export of protective medical equipment?

There do not appear to be any such measures.

²⁴ Ibid. See briefing from Minister for Education, Hon. Dr Matthew Opoku Prempeh at approx. 56:14 to 57:54.

²⁵ “Live: Covid-19 Updates – Ghana’s Coronavirus cases reaches 52 – News Desk on JoyNews (24-3-20)”, MyJoyOnline TV, published 24 March 2020, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=buoOGO56vVw>>, accessed 26 March 2020. See briefing from Deputy Minister for Information, Hon. Pius Enam Hadzide at approx. 1:04:30 to 1:08:09.