



Prepared by: **WHITE & CASE**

IFRC COVID-19 Emergency Decree Pro Bono Research: Cameroon

White & Case Team: Logan Quinn, Mark Gustafson, Ron Gorsich

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

As of March 27, 2020, it does not appear that there is extensive coordination between state and non-state actors. Preliminary coordination efforts are suggested by the below.

- The International Red Cross is partnering with the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and Cameroon’s Ministry of Public Health to inform the population about the COVID-19 pandemic, participating in an awareness event at the Mokolo market in Yaounde.¹
- ALIMA (financed by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation) is working alongside health authorities to support the response to the pandemic, providing technical support and strengthening the capacity of hospitals and medical teams.²

Otherwise, based on the publicly available information we have been able to review, everything appears to be operating through the Ministry of Public Health and other state actors. The Ministry of Public Health has asked all health personnel to present themselves to a “Regional Delegation for Public Health” in order to integrate mobilization.³ It is worth noting (see question 7 below) that the government has expressed its right to requisition private health facilities, hotels and other lodging facilities, vehicles and specific equipment necessary for the implementation of the COVID-19 pandemic response plan, which could potentially impact Red Cross facilities and equipment, though thus far no such impact has occurred.

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

¹ Nicolas Mba, *The Red Cross Carries Information Campaign*, Cameroon Tribune (Mar. 23, 2020), <https://www.cameroon-tribune.cm/article.html/31272/en.html/the-red-cross-carries-information-campaign>.

² *COVID-19: ALIMA alerts on the Critical Situation in Africa*, ALIMA (Mar. 19, 2020), <https://www.alima-ngo.org/en/covid-19-alima-alerts-on-the-critical-situation-in-africa>.

³ Press Release, Ministry of Public Health, Republic of Cameroon (Mar. 23, 2020), <https://www.minsante.cm/site/?q=en/content/communiqu%C3%A9-de-presse-covid19-du-23-mars-2020>.



As of March 27, 2020, it appears that no public information is available regarding the roles and responsibilities of the Red Cross or other humanitarian actors in Cameroon, other than as may be implied by the above.

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?

As of March 18, 2020, Cameroon has closed its borders, with exceptions for cargo flights and vessels transporting consumer products and essential goods and materials, whose stopover times will be limited and supervised. Issuance of entry visas at airports has been suspended. The government has also cautioned that urban and inter-urban travel should be undertaken only “in cases of extreme necessity.”⁴ As of March 27, 2020, there do not appear to be exceptions to any restrictions on movement for members of humanitarian organizations.

At least one NGO has already noted the difficulties that the travel restrictions cause for humanitarian relief teams:

However, border closures and the halt of air transport from Europe to Africa and within Africa are obstructing the mobility of medical experts and the supply of equipment. This situation is seriously paralysing the activities of ALIMA and other NGOs both on COVID-19 and other emergency operations: This crisis is endangering the ability of humanitarian organizations to provide life-saving care to the most vulnerable populations.⁵

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)?

As discussed above, as of March 18, 2020, Cameroon has closed its borders, with minimal exceptions. There are currently no internal restrictions on mobility and Cameroon has denied that a total or partial lockdown is impending.⁶ However, schools,

⁴ *Government Response Strategy to the Coronavirus Pandemic (COVID-19): Special Statement by the Prime Minister*, Secretariat General (Mar. 17, 2020), https://www.spm.gov.cm/site/sites/default/files/declaration_speciale_du_pmcr_riposte_face_a_la_pandemie_du_covid-19_en.pdf.

⁵ *COVID-19: ALIMA alerts*, *supra* note 3. “While the WHO calls on African countries to prepare for the worst in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, ALIMA reaffirms the importance of putting a “laissez-passer”/transport system in place for all NGOs as soon as possible. This initiative would make it possible to support the continent in the fight against this virus, and in general to continue to assist in all health crises and emergencies in Africa.”

⁶ Ariane Foguem, *Cameroon/COVID-19: Gov’t reiterates no total, partial lockdown envisaged*, *Journal du Cameroon* (Mar. 25, 2020), <https://www.journalducameroun.com/en/news-in-brief/cameroon-covid-19-govt->



bars and restaurants are closed, sporting competitions are postponed, and gatherings of more than 50 people are prohibited.⁷ Urban travel is discouraged.⁸ The government has since announced that “big sanctions” will be applied to those not adhering to the governmental measures prescribed to curb the Coronavirus spread in Cameroon.⁹

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?

Though the borders have been closed (see above), presumably medical aid or other relief items will be allowed in under the exceptions for cargo flights and vessels transporting consumer products and essential goods and materials.¹⁰ The Prime Minister has announced that normal trade with other countries will be continued as normal.¹¹ However, as to personnel, as of March 27, 2020, there do not appear to be exceptions to any restrictions on movement for members of humanitarian organizations.

One of the last flights in before Cameroon closed its borders included a large number of individuals that tested positive for COVID-19. Though the government ordered all passengers to be quarantined in a hotel, some ignored the directive and returned to their homes.¹² Earlier, passengers had been urged to self quarantine for fourteen days.¹³

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?

[reiterates-no-total-partial-lockdown-envisaged/](#).

⁷ *Government Response Strategy to the Coronavirus Pandemic*, *supra* note 4.

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ Ariane Foguem, *Cameroon: Sanction awaits offenders of Gov't Coronavirus response measures*, Journal du Cameroon (Mar. 25, 2020), <https://www.journalducameroun.com/en/news-in-brief/cameroon-sanction-awaits-offenders-of-govt-coronavirus-response-measures/>.

¹⁰ *Government Response Strategy to the Coronavirus Pandemic*, *supra*, note 4.

¹¹ Press Release, Secretariat General, Republic of Cameroon (Mar. 18, 2020), https://www.spm.gov.cm/site/sites/default/files/press_release_1_0.pdf.

¹² Moki Edwin Kindzeka, *COVID-19 Spread Provokes Anti-Foreigner, Anti-Diaspora Sentiment in Cameroon*, VOA News (Mar. 23, 2020), <https://www.voanews.com/africa/covid-19-spread-provokes-anti-foreigner-anti-diaspora-sentiment-cameroon>.

¹³ Francis Ajumane, *Cameroon: Gov't urges travellers to self-quarantine after confirming COVID-19 cases*, Journal du Cameroon (Mar. 16, 2020), <https://www.journalducameroun.com/en/cameroongovt-urges-travellers-to-self-quarantine-after-confirming-covid-19-cases/>.



Cameroon has not restricted access to “essential” or “emergency” services at this time.¹⁴ No designations have been made regarding what qualifies as either “essential” or “emergency” services.

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

There are significant restrictions on public life. The following measures are in effect for a period of fifteen days,¹⁵ beginning March 17, 2020 and renewable if necessary:¹⁶

1. “Cameroon’s land, air and sea borders will be closed: consequently, all passenger flights from abroad will be suspended, with the exception of cargo flights and vessels transporting consumer products and essential goods and materials, whose stopover times will be limited and supervised: Cameroonians who wish to come back home should contact our diplomatic representations.
2. The issuance of entry visas to Cameroon at the various airports shall be suspended;
3. All public and private training establishments of the various levels of education, from nursery school to higher education, including vocational training centres and professional schools, will be closed;
4. Gatherings of more than fifty (50) persons are prohibited throughout the national territory;
5. School and university competitions, like the FENASSCO and University games are postponed;
6. Under the supervision of administrative authorities, bars, restaurants and entertainment spots will be systematically closed from 6 p.m.;
7. A system for regulating consumer flows will be set up in markets and shopping centres;

¹⁴ *Government Response Strategy to the Coronavirus Pandemic*, *supra*, note 4. See also Fogueu, *supra*, note 6. But see Ariane Fogueu, *Cameroon: Gov’t announces additional measures to curb Coronavirus spread*, *Journal du Cameroon* (Mar. 24, 2020), <https://www.journalducameroun.com/en/news-in-brief/cameroon-govt-announces-additional-measures-to-curb-coronavirus-spread/>.

¹⁵ The initial period was indefinite. See *Government Response Strategy to the Coronavirus Pandemic*, *supra*, note 4.

¹⁶ Press Release, *supra*, note 11.



8. Urban and inter-urban travel should only be undertaken in cases of extreme necessity;
9. Drivers of buses, taxis and motorbikes are urged to avoid overloading: law enforcement officers will ensure they comply;
10. Private health facilities, hotels and other lodging facilities, vehicles and specific equipment necessary for the implementation of the COVID-19 pandemic response plan in Cameroon may be requisitioned as required, by competent authorities;¹⁷
11. Public administrations shall give preference to electronic communications and digital tools for meetings likely to bring together more than ten (10) people;
12. Missions abroad of members of Government and public and para-public sector employees are hereby suspended;
13. The public is urged to strictly observe the hygiene measures recommended by the World Health Organization, including regular hand washing with soap, avoiding close contact such as shaking hands or hugging, and covering the mouth when sneezing.”¹⁸

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

There are no restrictions included in published government responses. Trade has been ordered to continue as normal and without reference to limiting or banning export of medical equipment.¹⁹

¹⁷ This could potentially result in the requisitioning of Red Cross facilities and equipment, though thus far only health services have been requested. See Press Release, *supra* note 3. Additionally, the Minister of Public Health sent a letter to regional governors directing them to requisition “at least 40 hotel rooms.” See Para Le Jeudi, *The number of coronavirus cases in Cameroon could reach 3800 in one month* (Mar. 26, 2020), <https://www.stopblablacam.com/society/2603-3664-the-number-of-coronavirus-cases-in-cameroon-could-reach-3800-in-one-month-minister-of-health>.

¹⁸ *Government Response Strategy to the Coronavirus Pandemic*, *supra*, note 4.

¹⁹ *Id.*