

IFRC COVID-19 Emergency Decree Pro Bono Research: Burkina Faso

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

There are ongoing discussions with the World Health Organization (“WHO”), Doctors without borders and the ministry of health to support the response to COVID-19.¹ WHO has also provided guidance to countries on the community management of mild cases at home and on isolation of cases. As a result of this, telecommunication companies including national broadcasters are supporting the dissemination of prevention and control practices in Burkina Faso.²

WFP (“World Food Program”), the food-assistance branch of the United Nations, has also been in consultation with Burkina Faso’s government.³ It has expressed concerns about the potential impact on humanitarian supply chains because of restrictions imposed in response to the pandemic, stating that it has been working with its supply chain colleagues as well as with UNICEF to look into locally available enriched foods to address the possibility of rising food insecurity levels.⁴

Though it is unclear the extent to which the following non-state actors have sought guidance from the state, it is clear that there are nonetheless non-state actors working across the region to mitigate the spread of COVID-19.

As of 6 April 2020, the West African Health Organization (“WAHO”) has already purchased and dispatched 30,500 diagnostic test kits, 10,000 Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) (Coveralls, Aprons, gowns, gloves, goggles, boots) and 740,000 prescription tablets (Chloroquine and Azithromycin) to its 15 Member States, of which Burkina Faso is one. On behalf of its Member States, it has also placed orders for diagnostic kits, extraction kits, viral sample transport

¹ Preparation is key for COVID-19 pandemic in Cote d’Ivoire, <https://www.msf.org/preparation-key-covid-19-pandemic-c%C3%B4te-divoire>.

This link and all other links referred to in this memo were last accessed on 2 April 2020.

² WHO COVID-19 Situation Update for the WHO African Region – 25 March 2020
https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/331587/SITREP_COVID-19_WHOAFRO_20200325-eng.pdf

³ WFP Burkina Faso Emergency Response Situation Report #10 27 March 2020,
<https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Sit%20Rep-%20BF%20%2310.pdf>.

⁴ Burkina Faso crisis and COVID-19 concerns highlight pressure on Sahel food security – 2 April 2020,
<https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/04/1060942>

equipment, PPE, ventilators, masks for medical personnel and alcohol gel and disinfectants. It is also working in close collaboration with the specialized services in Member States to deploy personnel and epidemiological surveillance and data collection tools, strengthen the capacity of reference laboratories and train technical personnel.⁵

UNICEF has stated that it is formulating response plans for countries with weaker health systems, focusing on improving water access programs, promoting handwashing and raising awareness of the pandemic on the radio and via mobile phones. It claims to have reached 3 million people in Burkina Faso through radio, television and the written press with messages relating to the health crisis and its impact on education, health and hygiene.⁶

Oxfam and its partner AGED have stated that they are providing humanitarian assistance to internally displaced people and host communities in the region by supplying clean water, sanitation and hygiene equipment. The two organizations are seeking resources to provide 107 water points and hygiene measures for 287,000 people in Burkina Faso.⁷

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

The International Committee of the Red Cross (“ICRC”) is running radio spots within information on COVID-19 and how it can be prevented. ICRC is continuing its efforts to improve access to clean water and soap in areas affected by violence, distribute soap and gel in places of detention and train guards in infection prevention and control.⁸

Doctors without borders is providing training and water and sanitization activities in Bouake, located on the northern road that connects to the border of Burkina Faso and Mali. Doctors without borders has also set up six health centers.⁹

The International Organization for Migration (“IOM”), concerned about the impact that COVID-19 could have on the country already affected by the current humanitarian crisis, has provided emergency shelters to internally displaced persons.¹⁰

The World Food Program (“WFP”) has also been adjusting its operational framework to respond to the COVID-19 situation, adopting several measures such as entering into discussions with CONASUR for the provision of food assistance to families confined to home due to suspect cases of COVID 19.¹¹

⁵ ECOWAS Communiqué N° 02 of 6 April 2020 on the fight against the coronavirus disease – 6 April 2020, https://www.ecowas.int/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/uk_Communique%CC%81-n%C2%B02_COVID19.pdf

⁶ COVID-19: face à la pandémie, que fait UNICEF? – 31 March 2020, <https://www.unicef.fr/article/covid-19-face-la-pandemie-que-fait-unicef>

⁷ “Faced with coronavirus, a water engineer tries to work miracles in Burkina Faso” – 3 April 2020, <https://www.oxfam.org/en/faced-coronavirus-water-engineer-tries-work-miracles-burkina-faso>

⁸ COVID-19 coronavirus response pandemic ICRC, <https://www.icrc.org/en/document/covid-19-coronavirus-pandemic-icrc#gs.244u7w>.

⁹ Preparation is key for COVID-19 pandemic in Cote d’Ivoire, <https://www.msf.org/preparation-key-covid-19-pandemic-c%C3%B4te-divoire>.

¹⁰ Coronavirus – Burkina Faso: International Organization for Migration (IOM) Calls for Increased Support for Displaced Amidst Deteriorating Humanitarian Crisis, Emergence of COVID-19 in Burkina Faso, <https://www.cnbcfrance.com/apo/2020/03/27/coronavirus-burkina-faso-international-organization-for-migration-iom-calls-for-increased-support-for-displaced-amidst-deteriorating-humanitarian-crisis-emergence-of-covid-19-in-burkina/>

¹¹ WFP Burkina Faso Emergency Response Situation Report #10 27 March 2020, <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Sit%20Rep-%20BF%20%2310.pdf>.

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?

Burkina Faso has adopted the following travel restrictions which may restrict RC/ humanitarian relief teams:

1. Full border closure (air, land, sea) except for freight and emergencies¹²; and
2. Suspension of international air travel including travel to/from high-risk countries for non-citizens and non-residents.

As at the time of writing, there do not appear to be express exceptions for humanitarian relief teams. It is unclear if the exception for freight and emergencies on the border closure will extend to the RC / humanitarian relief. Doctors without borders noted that travel restrictions and other measures to stop movements of people, may limit their ability to deploy experienced staff to Burkina Faso.¹³

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)?

Burkina Faso has implemented the following restrictions on movement, which may restrict the RC/ humanitarian relief teams accessing vulnerable populations:

1. established a curfew from 7pm to 5am.¹⁴
2. ban of gatherings of more than 50 people¹⁵;
3. quarantine of the following cities, Ouagadougou, Bobo-Dioulasso, Boromo, Banfora, Houndé, Dedougou, Manga and Zorgho; and
4. shutdown of educational / religious institutions and entertainment venues, banning of mass gatherings.

As at the time of writing, there do not appear to be express exceptions for humanitarian relief teams to access vulnerable populations. Doctors without borders has noted that many vulnerable populations are inaccessible as there is intense military activity and therefore cannot assess and set up an appropriate response.¹⁶

A UNHAS (United Nations Humanitarian Air Service) assessment has taken place from 3 – 18 March.¹⁷

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?

¹² COVID-19 and Public Health Policy Update, <https://www.cnbcafrica.com/apo/2020/03/24/covid-19-scientific-and-public-health-policy-update-march-24-2020/>.

¹³ Four questions on the unprecedented humanitarian emergency in Burkina Faso, <https://www.msf.org/unprecedented-humanitarian-emergency-burkina-faso>.

¹⁴ Gendarmerie Nationale du Burkina Faso, facebook page.

¹⁵ <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-burkina/four-burkina-faso-ministers-have-coronavirus-as-cases-rise-to-64-idUSKBN2180V4>

¹⁶ Four questions on the unprecedented humanitarian emergency in Burkina Faso, <https://www.msf.org/unprecedented-humanitarian-emergency-burkina-faso>.

¹⁷ WFP Burkina Faso Emergency Response Situation Report #10 27 March 2020, <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Sit%20Rep-%20BF%20%2310.pdf>.

As at the time of writing, there do not appear to be express legal exemptions.

Doctors without borders have noted that the medical supply system in Burkina Faso may be disrupted for weeks or even months.¹⁸

WFP (World Food Program) has been in consultation with Burkina Faso's government to facilitate and prioritize access of humanitarian cargo in the country, although delays and additional costs are expected to occur due to COVID-19 measures affecting the Lomé Corridor (Togo).¹⁹

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?

As at the time writing, there do not appear to be any categorization of "essential" or "emergency" services in relation to business operations and opening hours specifically in relation to COVID-19. There is ongoing humanitarian operations (United Nations²⁰, Doctors without borders²¹ and World Health Organization) in Burkina Faso, which have begun to provide humanitarian relief in response to COVID-19.

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

The Government of Burkina Faso has implemented (to take effect from the 24 March 2020) the following additional measures to combat COVID-19:

1. Full border closure (air, land, sea) except for freight and emergencies²²;
2. Suspension of international air travel including travel to/from high-risk countries for non-citizens and non-residents;
3. Ban of gatherings of more than 50 people²³;
4. Shutdown of educational / religious institutions and entertainment venues, banning of mass gatherings; and
5. Curfew has been established from 7pm to 5am.²⁴

On March 27 2020, the government has implemented a two-week quarantine in the following cities where there have been confirmed cases of COVID-19: Ouagadougou, Bobo-Dioulasso, Boromo, Banfora, Houndé, Dedougou, Manga and Zorgho. Transportation and public services including schools and government offices are closed.²⁵

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

¹⁸ <https://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/what-we-do/news-stories/story/west-africa-preparing-coronavirus-while-protecting-most-vulnerable>

¹⁹ WFP Burkina Faso Emergency Response Situation Report #10 27 March 2020, <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Sit%20Rep-%20BF%20%2310.pdf>.

²⁰ United Nations Joint Steering Committee on Burkina Faso, <https://www.un.org/jsc/content/burkina-faso>.

²¹ Four questions on the unprecedented humanitarian emergency in Burkina Faso, <https://www.msf.org/unprecedented-humanitarian-emergency-burkina-faso>.

²² COVID-19 and Public Health Policy Update, <https://www.cnbcafrica.com/apo/2020/03/24/covid-19-scientific-and-public-health-policy-update-march-24-2020/>.

²³ <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-burkina/four-burkina-faso-ministers-have-coronavirus-as-cases-rise-to-64-idUSKBN2180V4>

²⁴ Gendarmerie Nationale du Burkina Faso, facebook page.

²⁵ Health Alert: Burkina Faso, Government Implements Quarantine In All Cities With Confirmed COVID-19 Cases, <https://www.osac.gov/Country/BurkinaFaso/Content/Detail/Report/7d8e66cc-0ed8-4b73-8136-184ca1407a17>.

As at the time of writing, it would appear that there are no such restrictions.