



CICR

THE ICRC'S RESPONSES TO COVID-19 IN AFRICA

ÉDITION 1 – MAY 2020



© Abel Agblevo/CICR

COMPOUNDING THE EFFECTS OF COVID-19, CONFLICT, VIOLENCE AND CLIMATE

Even as the COVID-19 pandemic brings daily life to a standstill in many parts of the continent, armed conflict and other situations of violence continue exacting a heavy toll on vulnerable communities. In places such as the Sahel, Horn and Lake Chad regions, the COVID-19 pandemic comes on top of an already devastating humanitarian situation brought on by conflicts, climate variability and locust outbreaks.

The ICRC has stepped up its response to the crisis, integrating COVID-19 as an important new parameter in its operations. As it continues to respond to the urgent needs of people affected by armed conflict and other situations of violence, it is shifting its gears to help prevent or slow down the spread of infection and mitigate other risks arising from the pandemic. These responses include hospitals and clinics damaged by fighting or in areas where hostilities are ongoing, places of detention where the ICRC has access and a unique role to play in protecting detainees and prison staff from the spread of disease, camps for internally displaced people or refugees, where social distancing is impossible and access to water and soap is not guaranteed, and hard-to-reach areas, which are often beyond the reach of other aid organizations.

ICRC delegations and regional delegations in Africa are refining and adapting their existing activities to take into account new needs and challenges arising from COVID-19.

These activities aim to help people to meet their basic needs with dignity, help strengthen their resilience, and ensure the delivery of basic services. They constitute the foundation of the ICRC's COVID-19 response today and will be essential to helping communities emerge from this crisis. The ICRC is carrying out these activities in line with national efforts to contain the virus, and in coordination with the authorities, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and other actors, including United Nations agencies.

The ICRC and its International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement partners have also been cooperating with the African Union and its member states, for concerted action to fight and prevent the spread of the COVID-19.

The ICRC has also been actively contributing to the African Union's coordinated continental response to COVID-19, engaging with the Africa Center for Disease Control (Africa CDC), the Peace and Security Council, and the Social Affairs Department.

In a statement to the AU PSC open session held on 28 April 2020 on *"Impact of COVID19 on Vulnerable Populations (IDPs, Refugees, Migrants)"*, the ICRC President, Peter Maurer voiced concerns on vulnerabilities of IDPs, detainees and migrants and called members states to include these groups in their COVID responses. He also pointed out the need to adapt COVID response to the realities in Africa, especially in putting in place restrictive measures.



Mali: delivery of hygiene and medical items to University Hospital Center (CHU) in Bamako

ICRC COVID-19 ACTIVITIES IN AFRICA

SUPPORTING VITAL HEALTH CARE INFRASTRUCTURES

Health services in volatile areas are often overburdened or insufficiently resourced. The ICRC continues to support health-care facilities across the region to help them remain operational and cope with additional needs during emergencies, including those generated by COVID-19.

The ICRC is:

- providing comprehensive material assistance (e.g. donations of medical supplies and intensive-care equipment) to hospitals and clinics in most countries in the region; maintaining contingency stocks in case of further emergencies
- providing protective equipment (e.g. masks, goggles, gowns and gloves), infrared thermometers, and/or hygiene and cleaning items to hospitals and clinics in **Burundi, the Central African Republic (CAR), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Libya, Mali, Mozambique¹, Nigeria, Somalia and South Sudan**
- installing additional handwashing stations for patients and staff in health facilities throughout the region; helping build quarantine areas and disinfection facilities in hospitals and clinics in **the CAR, the DRC and Mali**; setting up a triage tent at a hospital in **Nigeria**
- installing generators to mitigate interruptions to water and electricity services in health facilities in **the DRC and Libya**
- donating ambulances to medical evacuation services in **the CAR, the DRC and Eritrea**, and in **Ethiopia**, to the Ethiopian Red Cross Society's branches in the Somali Regional State
- helping the National Societies in **Burundi and Kenya¹** to run telephone hotlines to offer psychosocial support to community members
- donating hygiene and cleaning materials to authorities and National Societies throughout the region
- helping authorities and National Societies across the region to draft and implement contingency plans for managing mass casualties in connection with COVID-19; ensuring the safe and dignified burial of COVID-19 fatalities by training emergency responders, National Society volunteers, paramedics and mortuary staff in human-remains management; providing them with protective equipment, body bags and other supplies.

PREVENTING THE SPREAD OF COVID-19 IN PLACES OF DETENTION

Detention facilities are often overcrowded, poorly ventilated and with deficient sanitary conditions; health services and washing facilities are not always readily accessible. These factors favour the spread of disease and have catastrophic consequences in such environments, where the rate of transmission is potentially much higher than in other settings. The ICRC visits detainees to check on their well-being and works with the relevant authorities to help improve their treatment and living conditions, including their access to medical care.

The ICRC is:

- donating protective equipment, disinfecting materials, hygiene items, infrared thermometers and/or posters on preventing COVID-19 transmission to places of detention in many of the countries in the region
- building isolation areas for detainees suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19 in **Burkina Faso, Chad, Kenya and the United Republic of Tanzania¹**
- providing penitentiary officials in the region with advice for COVID-19 prevention and management in prisons
- in **Nigeria**, carrying out a vocational-skills programme in one prison, through which detainees learn how to make liquid soap and detergent that are then distributed to other prisons
- including suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19 in existing malnutrition treatment programmes for detainees in **the CAR**



Zimbabwe: Donating hygiene and medical items to detaining authorities

ENSURING COMMUNITIES' ACCESS TO CLEAN WATER AND REINFORCING GOOD HYGIENE PRACTICES

In places affected by conflict and/or other situations of violence, essential infrastructure has either been damaged or fallen into disrepair. Together with the authorities and local service providers, the ICRC implements projects to ensure that people have access to clean water and more sanitary surroundings in order to prevent the spread of disease.

The ICRC is:

- giving material support to the authorities and local service providers in most of the countries in the region for operating and maintaining water-supply and waste-management systems; repairing water infrastructure in **the DRC, Mali, Mauritania, Nigeria and South Sudan**
- building handwashing stations and/or setting up quarantine areas in health facilities, IDP camps and/or assistance distribution sites; providing vulnerable people with soap and other hygiene items
- supporting the region's National Societies in their efforts to increase public awareness about preventing COVID-19 transmission; increasing distributions of hygiene kits (containing soap, towels, sanitizers, etc.) to vulnerable communities



Guinean Red Cross volunteers disinfect premises in Conakry as part of the fight against Covid-19

“We believe the fight against COVID-19 and the continued effort to provide assistance and protection to people caught up in conflict are complementary and mutually reinforcing. We are focusing our COVID-19 responses on conflict areas and locations inaccessible to other actors, focusing mainly on vulnerable populations IDPs, detainees, migrants >>

Peter MAURER,
President of the ICRC



Ethiopia: samples of face shields produced by Dessie Physical Rehabilitation Center with the support of ICRC. Dessie, Amhara Region, 2020

SUSTAINING ACTIVITIES THAT PROMOTE PEOPLE'S RESILIENCE

Communities affected by conflict and other situations of violence are forced to cope with an increased strain on their access to basic goods and services, and to sustainable livelihoods. In coordination with the authorities, National Societies and other local partners, the ICRC works to help vulnerable people cover their daily necessities and protect or regain their self-sufficiency.

The ICRC is:

- giving farming inputs and financial assistance to displaced persons in violence-affected communities in **South Sudan, Nigeria**, including refugees from Cameroon and residents of host communities, to help them preserve their food security and/or rebuild their livelihoods; covering the cost of ploughing to help prepare the land for farming; vaccinating the livestock of herders in **Chad** and **Sudan**.
- providing hygiene kits and/or essential household items to vulnerable people, including those newly displaced in **Burkina Faso, Mali** and **Nigeria**



Burkina-Faso: Beneficiary receives assistance kit in Fada



South Sudan: COVID-19 prevention measures put in place for vulnerable populations in Juba

“ We must work very hard collectively and in solidarity to accelerate COVID-19 responses not just in health terms but also safety nets and given that the economic and social disruption in fragile contexts will be most acute, the international community needs to support the response through dedicated resources to these contexts »

Peter MAURER,
President of the ICRC



International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)
Delegation to the African Union and
International Organizations in Africa

P.O. Box. 3048, Addis Ababa - Ethiopia
T+251 11 667 20 75 F+251 11 667 20 44
E-mail: ado_addisua@icrc.org
Twitter: @ICRC_AfricUnion
Web: www.icrc.org