



Islamic Relief Worldwide

Guidelines for field based staff

April 2020

This guidance seeks to assist our staff in operating safely during the coronavirus pandemic. During this time of unprecedented crisis Islamic Relief is encouraging all country programs to adhere to the local government directives at all times. Our earlier advisories made provisions for certain critical functions to continue – indeed it is important for our humanitarian mandate not to be compromised.

We understand that our country programs may have concerns about how they can fulfil our humanitarian mandate safely and at the same time assist local government efforts to prevent the spread of the virus. All employees should be encouraged to work from home unless it is impossible for them to do so. Not every function can be fulfilled from home and not everyone can work from home because of certain circumstances.

Below is a summary of advice for country programs to follow to protect our colleagues and the communities we serve, whilst continuing to fulfil our humanitarian mandate.

Important facts

- The disease spreads from person to person through small droplets with sufficient viral load when a person infected with COVID-19 coughs, sneezes or exhales.
- These droplets land on objects and surfaces around the person. Other people then catch COVID-19 by touching these objects or surfaces, then touching their eyes, nose or mouth.
- People can also catch COVID-19 if they breathe in droplets from a person with COVID-19 who coughs, sneezes or exhales droplets. This is why it is important to stay more than 2 meter away from other people.
- The most common symptoms of COVID-19 are fever and dry cough.

For more factually correct information please refer to the Useful Links section below.

Please remember at all times

- Staff members who are vulnerable, as well as individuals whom they live with, should be supported as they follow the recommendations set out in our earlier advisories and updates (please visit: <https://extranet.irworldwide.org/irsecurity>).
- Where working from home cannot be followed in full in relation to a particular function take all the mitigating actions (please see below) possible to reduce the risk of transmission between the staff and from staff to the communities we serve and vice versa.
- If any function can be postponed without a significant determinant to the country program or our current contextual and general humanitarian mandate then it should be postponed.

- Staff members who are unwell with symptoms of coronavirus should not travel on or attend any IR business.

Physical distancing principles

- Instructions on physical distancing measures apply to everyone and should be followed at all times. Offices, distribution places, possible gathering places need to avoid crowding and minimise opportunities for the virus to spread by maintaining a distance of at least 2 metres (3 steps) between all individuals.
- This instruction applies both to inside the office and when staff may need to interact with the communities we serve.
- Colleagues should be reminded to wash their hands regularly using soap and water for 20 seconds and particularly after sneezing or coughing. Where facilities to wash hands are not available, hand sanitiser should be provided and used.
- Please do your best to remember not to touch your mouth, nose or eyes as much as you can.

If working in and with communities we serve

- Remain 2 metres apart (3 steps distance), use markings on the ground to mark the distance, particularly in the most crowded areas (for example, during distributions).
- Use signs to direct movement into lanes while maintaining a 2 metre distance among the people at all times.
- Regulate entry so that the location does not become overcrowded.
- Use additional signs to ask people not to enter the location if they have symptoms.
- If handing something over to a community member put it on the ground move back and ask the person to come forward and pick up the item while maintaining 2 meters distance at all times.
- If it is not possible to remain 2 metres apart, staff should work side by side, or facing away from each other, rather than face to face.
- If face-to-face contact is essential, this should be kept to 10 minutes or less.
- As much as possible, keep teams of workers of the same age (cohorting), and keep teams as small as possible.

Protective equipment for community facing staff

- There is very little scientific evidence of widespread benefit from the use of face masks outside of the clinical settings (hospital, care homes or caring for someone vulnerable).
- If face masks are available staff should be provided with a face mask however please note that the face mask protects others from you rather than you from the others.
- Staff must be provided with disposable gloves and hand sanitizers every time they are asked to face the community members.

Guidance for religious institutions, events and practices

- This guidance is supported by a number of Muslim organisations (theological and community), and is based on sound theological reasoning. It is intended as advisory to assist local religious organisations in taking decisions in the best interests of their communities.
- Individuals are required (wajib) to take all appropriate measures to prevent transmission – whether relating to hygiene or physical distancing, including self-isolation if medically indicated – and to assist others in doing the same.
- It is the preliminary view of the majority of religious bodies, as well as a number of institutions and international bodies, that the individual obligation to perform Jumua in mosque congregations be temporarily lifted.
- Religious and community leaders have an important role to play in providing factually correct information about the COVID-19 and mobilizing the communities to support the measures to stop the spread of the virus.
- Institutions such as mosques or religious schools have a responsibility to ensure the health and safety of their attendees, and should be supported by the community to discharge it.
- It is recommended to close all the places of worship to stop the spread of the virus.
- Families should be comforted that their loved ones are honoured with the death of martyrs, and that any shortcomings in normal funerary rites will not affect this status.
- Religious institutions advised to use technology to maintain communication with the community.
- For more detailed guidance please use and refer to:
 - The Muslim Council of Britain: https://mcb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/25March_MuslimCommunityToolkit_v4.0.pdf
 - British Islamic Medical Association: <https://britishima.org/covid/>
 - The British Board of Scholars and Imams (BBSI): http://www.bbsi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/BBSI_G02_CoronaVirus.pdf
 - IRW publication in partnership with BBSI: <https://www.islamic-relief.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Islamic-Relief-Religious-Guidance-on-Coronavirus-April-2020.pdf>

Useful links:

1. **World Health Organization (WHO) Advice for Public:**
<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public>
2. **WHO FAQs:** <https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/q-a-coronaviruses>
3. **Country data on COVID19, Prognosis and mortality statistics:**
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coronavirus_disease_2019#Prognosis
4. **Latest NHS guidelines translated into 44 languages:**
https://www.doctorsoftheworld.org.uk/coronavirus-information/?fbclid=IwAR1SvwhYgsKhQuB01ied1jdAQQHkdDD7zEjL1OVmz_3vyL06x9ID3jsirGc

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