



IOM GUINEA-BISSAU COVID-19 Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan Feb-Dec 2020

CONTEXT

In December 2019, an outbreak of respiratory disease caused by a novel (new) coronavirus was first detected in Wuhan, Hubei Province in China. On 30 January 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) announced that the outbreak known as the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), constituted a Public Health Emergency of International Concern. On 11 March 2020, WHO upgraded the status of the COVID-19 virus outbreak from epidemic to pandemic, thereby signalling its geographic spread across the world.

The spread of COVID-19 in Guinea Bissau could have a catastrophic impact on the entire population, particularly on vulnerable individuals including migrants. Located in West Africa, Guinea-Bissau is one of the worlds' lowest ranking countries in terms of poverty, governance and development. Guinea-Bissau's Human Development Index value for 2018 is 0.461— which puts the country in the low human development category—ranked 178 out of 189 countries in 2019. In this context, an inadequate national response to COVID-19 could have crippling effects on an already weak and susceptible environment.

On 25 March, Guinea-Bissau confirmed its first two COVID-19 cases. Since then, the number of infected people has increased drastically in the country. The most recent results recorded 1790 positive cases, 170 recovered and 25 deaths. (COES – 8th of July 2020). The national authorities developed a National Contingency Plan to respond to COVID-19 supported by all UN entities, international community and implementing partners. Nonetheless, structural fragilities in the response exist as the current pandemic amplified existing challenges for the national healthcare system.

Guinea Bissau is particularly vulnerable to transmission of COVID-19 given the high levels of population movements (particularly with the

onset of the cashew nut collection season) and the social and family structure of households gathering between 7 to 9 people in the same house, weak health infrastructure, compounded by poor health-seeking practices. Urban areas are particularly vulnerable given the high population density and reliance on crowded markets for daily subsistence. These household behaviors and realities make social distancing and isolation challenging. The population's epidemiological profile compounds these vulnerabilities. There is great potential for complications linked to comorbidities for illnesses including malaria, HIV, and acute respiratory infections (ARIs).

The COVID-19 pandemic has an impact that reaches beyond health outcomes for the population. Certain marginalized groups such as irregular migrants or returnees in situations of vulnerability are also at particular risk. Most rely on the informal economy for their livelihoods and have found this source of income hindered by the current restrictions introduced by the State of Emergency, including confinement at home, movement restrictions, restricted hours to purchase essential goods between 6 am and 12 pm, and cessation of circulation of public transport. Furthermore, many foreign nationals are more likely to live in overcrowded households or to be employed in short-term, or precarious work with limited provision for sick leaves highlighted by migrant communities to IOM. Some migrants, both regular and irregular, may have limited access to public health services, or may fear accessing such services due to possible stigmatization.

As assessed in the UN socio-economic impact analysis for Guinea Bissau, diminished incomes and increasing poverty in Guinea-Bissau are the immediate consequences of the pandemic. A poor performance of the cashew campaign was observed. As stated in the report “Aggravated by increased food import dependence and potential

ruptures of international supply chains, food access constraints and an increase in prices will intensify food insecurity in the country and, worse, Bissau-Guineans might face a cycle of poverty. Women are disproportionately affected, and efforts made in the recent past to reduce gender inequality are likely to reverse. Women work substantially in the hard-hit informal sector and confinement measures may increasingly lead to gender-based violence.” (UN, May 2020).

In the past, the country has experienced outbreaks of other epidemics. Most recent outbreaks include a large cholera outbreak in 2008 that was accompanied by humanitarian interventions and health promotion campaigns. During the Western African Ebola virus epidemic (2013–2016), Guinea Bissau did not report any cases.

The country has very limited preparedness capacity according to WHO AFRO COVID-19 readiness checklist and existing preparedness efforts must be reinforced¹.

Given pre-existing structural vulnerabilities in Guinea Bissau, including recent political instability, lack of resources, poor hygiene across the country, and an extremely weak capacity to respond, technical and financial resources will be needed to improve COVID-19 preparedness as

a matter of urgency². IOM has been supporting the Government of Guinea Bissau's response to

address the COVID-19 pandemic by creating essential protocols in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, providing trainings to key actors (rapid response teams, community leaders, medical staff and NGO partners), ensuring Points of Entry (PoEs) and other key locations are adequately equipped, and developing local capacity.

Thus, in coordination and partnership with relevant actors at global, regional and national levels, IOM will contribute to improving capacity for the national response to the COVID-19 pandemic in collaboration with the Ministry of Health.

IOM's response will ensure it is culturally appropriate, integrates a gender analysis, and is responsive to evolving needs.



¹https://www.undp.org/content/dam/rba/docs/C/COVID-19-CO-Response/Guinea_Bissau_SocioEconomicImpact_UN.pdf

²https://www.undp.org/content/dam/rba/docs/C/COVID-19-CO-Response/Guinea_Bissau_SocioEconomicImpact_UN.pdf

IOM GUINEA-BISSAU CAPACITY TO RESPOND TO COVID-19

In Guinea-Bissau, IOM is uniquely positioned to play a critical role in the response to this global pandemic in collaboration with partners given the agency's previous experience on public health preparedness programming and expertise. Notably, in Guinea Bissau, IOM is well positioned to play an important role in the COVID-19 given the following:

- **Partnerships:** IOM has developed key partnerships with UN agencies, NGOs across the country focused on health interventions (including during Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) response, and ongoing migrant protection interventions), and government institutions including close relationships with the Ministry of Health.
- **Leadership:** IOM has been a crucial entity in terms of coordination and support to national and local authorities on the COVID-19 response and other global health preparedness initiatives at the point of entry (PoE) through efforts including its "Expanding efforts in Guinea Bissau to protect and improve public health in response to the Global Health Security Agenda" project.
- **Expertise:** the IOM team currently includes staff with a unique combination of technical expertise in health, use of new technologies to track key indicators, coordination of trainings, and epidemiology (currently a key asset in the country).
- **Experience:** In addition to current initiatives implemented by IOM in Guinea Bissau, the agency has a proven track record in the country helping address public health emergencies including efforts for Ebola preparedness, implementing Global Health Security Agenda in partnership with the United States Center for Disease Control.

Notably, in the past, IOM has played an active role in responding to epidemics in the region and capacity building for disease surveillance. In 2015, IOM supported the preparedness and response effort for the EVD crisis in West Africa, working closely with relevant national counterparts at various levels including coordinating the emergency response inter-agency committee, WHO and other UN entities, as well as actors on the ground including border agents and community health workers. Additionally, since 2015, the Government of Guinea Bissau has worked on the development of protocols for the detection and reporting events that may constitute a public health emergency of international concern (PHEIC). IOM has strengthened the capacities of the authorities of PoEs in the registration of data on the national health platform, District Health Information Software 2 (DHIS2) as relevant trainings to community health workers, and government actors at national and regional levels.

Therefore, given IOM's unique position in COVID-19 response in Guinea Bissau, this appeal constitutes an opportunity to maximize efforts and ensure effective response to COVID-19, to limit the spread of the virus and mitigate human losses and suffering.

IOM GUINEA-BISSAU STRATEGIC AND OPERATIONAL APPROACH

Despite the political challenges in Guinea Bissau, IOM continues to operate and respond to critical needs related to migration and health. Although the operating environment is highly prone to change and unpredictable, particularly in the context of COVID-19, IOM's strong relationships with the Ministry of Health, border agents and partners, WHO and the UN System involved in the COVID 19 response will

be essential in responding to the situation. Moreover, the work previously initiated by IOM through the “Expanding efforts in Guinea Bissau to protect and improve public health in response to the Global Health Security Agenda” project (MiRAC project) will further strengthen the response of IOM to COVID-19.

IOM in Guinea Bissau has an excellent working relationship with the Ministry of Health, WHO and the UN System involved in the COVID 19 response, international organizations various NGOs and other implementing partners across the country. IOM’s response will ensure a continuation of existing efforts by IOM to support International Health Regulations (IHR) capacity building both in Guinea-Bissau.

Given the extensive experience with immigration authorities, government actors at various levels, and NGOs in the country, IOM is uniquely positioned to maximize efforts and ensure effective response to COVID-19 in support of the Government of Guinea Bissau’s efforts to limit the spread of virus, implement the National Contingency plan for COVID 19 response and mitigate human suffering, with operational and technical support in the area of migration and health. IOM’s strategy is in line with IOM’s Global Strategic Preparedness Response Plan aiming at enhancing the country preparedness to epidemiological outbreaks, supporting national coordination efforts and institutional configuration needed to structurally address epidemic diseases, and enabling a quick response and continuous prevention. A special focus will be on supporting surveillance and monitoring systems of potential epidemiological diseases while offering continuous capacity development to relevant institutions linked to the case management of epidemics. The socio-economic impact of COVID 19 is also being addressed with early recovery measures such as cash transfer, delivery of hygiene kits. IOM seeks to expand this support through the promotion and the creation of small businesses with migrants economically affected by COVID-19 and coordination with local actors and partners to address food security concerns and the provision of other necessities for migrants and vulnerable people.

IOM GUINEA-BISSAU AREAS OF INTERVENTION

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1: ENSURE A WELL-COORDINATED, INFORMED AND TIMELY RESPONSE THROUGH MOBILITY TRACKING SYSTEMS AND STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIP AND COORDINATION STRUCTURES ESTABLISHED AT THE COMMUNITY, NATIONAL AND REGIONAL LEVELS

COORDINATION AND PARTNERSHIPS

IOM Guinea Bissau will actively participate in coordination mechanisms at national and regional levels:

- Continue to support inter-agency efforts to implement national preparedness and response plans;
- Support coordination within the country and along borders to ensure that existing protocols for timely referral, treatment and prevention efforts are executed in line with International Health Regulation (IHR) and are gender sensitive;
- Provide capacity building (e.g. epidemic- and pandemic-related training, technical support for coordination and management) for the government to augment national planning and response capabilities to disasters;
- Ensure coherence of care and support for migrant and vulnerable populations through coordination with networks of community health workers and supporting partners NGO.

TRACKING MOBILITY IMPACTS

As movements across borders continue to be affected, IOM's capacity to provide data and analysis on population mobility dynamics remains crucial for a more targeted and evidence-based response. IOM will contribute to providing a comprehensive understanding of the effect of COVID-19 on mobility at country level by:

- Tracking and monitoring the impacts of COVID-19 on migrants and other populations of concern;
- Conducting Mobility Restriction Mapping for points of entry and other key locations of internal mobility to report more in-depth and up-to-date information on the different points assessed (operational status, types of restrictions, duration of restrictions, population categories affected and public health measures etc);
- Enhancing capacities of related government counterparts and key partners on how to use data gathering tools (tablets and smartphones) and provide necessary follow-up to ensure quality control.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2: CONTRIBUTE TO GLOBAL, REGIONAL, NATIONAL AND COMMUNITY PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE EFFORTS FOR COVID-19 TO REDUCE ASSOCIATED MORBIDITY AND MORTALITY.

RISK COMMUNICATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT (RCCE)

IOM will continue to work to:

- Assist in providing migrant and vulnerable populations access to timely, correct, child and gender sensitive information on prevention efforts, risks and guidelines;
- Support capacity development of national authorities, NGOs and CSOs to share key gender sensitive messages and promote prevention measures with the aim of informing at-risk populations of good practices and consequences to promote adherence to prevention measures;
- Raise awareness and actively engage community leaders, traditional healers and other key actors on strategies related to the COVID-19 response;
- Engage migration authorities in RCCE activities at border points to disseminate gender sensitive information, prevention advice and advice on when/how to seek health care for travellers;
- Develop RCCE messages with up to date information about available non-COVID critical services (e.g. medical, PSS, etc.) for GBV survivors;
- Support cross border community-level awareness raising in close coordination with municipal authorities, as well as training of municipality officials and community members on prevention and preparedness measures, using appropriate medical and physical precautions;
- Capacity development of CSOs to raise awareness on key messages and prevention efforts to protect migrant populations as well as host communities;
- Develop and implement an advocacy strategy to prevent stigma towards migrants.

DISEASE SURVEILLANCE

IOM will continue to enhance existing national and regional level gender sensitive disease surveillance systems by:

- Continuing to develop and refine gender and age sensitive data gathering and surveillance efforts for government counterparts and other key partners along borders and at key movement points;
- Strengthening capacities of the national institutions - INASA, COES - and CSOs to ensure community-based surveillance by linking mobility information to surveillance data particularly among border communities;
- Engaging INASA in strengthening data collection and conduct Participatory Mapping Exercise;
- Work with referral healthcare facilities, MOH and POE to develop communication mechanisms for potential contact tracing;
- Conducting participatory mapping exercise to identify high-risk transmission mobility corridors and areas;
- Supporting capacity development in collaboration of MOH to PoE migration authorities and health workers staff on the use of the District Health Information Software 2 (DHIS-2) to collect passengers' data with symptoms of COVID-19;
- Providing and stockpile Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and supplies for screening, including infrared contactless thermometers for health workers and thermal scanners;
- Enhancing national surveillance, data collection systems, information sharing and reporting.

POINTS OF ENTRY (POE)

IOM will support Ministry of Health and other key partners to enhance preparedness of prioritized points of entry (POE):

- Support active surveillance including health screening, referral and data collection at all 15 designated and official PoEs;
- Develop guidelines and provide trainings to support efforts for health screening, provision of gender sensitive health and hygiene information for travellers at border areas, border crossings, and key population movement spots;
- Provide trainings on COVID-19 survivor-centred response and safe referrals to female health staff of each PoEs;
- Develop and disseminate specific Standard Operating Procedure (SOPs) for all Guinea-Bissau designated and official PoEs in collaboration with counterparts for detection, notification, isolation, management and referral including also up-to-date referral pathways for non-COVID critical protection, health, social services for persons with specific care and/or protection needs (e.g. GBV survivors);
- Improve WASH infrastructures and, in particular, hand hygiene infrastructures, water and sanitation facilities and waste management;
- Conduct a mapping of existing POEs and identify next steps for reinforcing capacity at selected POEs;
- Improve border infrastructure including the construction of isolation facilities to manage ill

travellers and provide equipment and supplies for screening in key PoE, including thermal scanners.

INFECTION PREVENTION AND CONTROL

IOM continues to support enhanced national capacity for infection prevention and control through:

- Presence of handwashing stations inclusive of soap in all 15 PoEs, appropriate environmental cleaning and disinfection and waste management;
- Capacity development on correct handwashing techniques, rational use of the Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and on waste management to the authorities and health professionals of the PoEs and border communities (cascading training modality), in alignment with the national/country guidelines on physical distancing;
- Pumping tests in the PoEs where there is no access to water;
- Construction of water wells in the border regions and PoEs where there is no access to water and there is a possibility to install a well;
- Supply of alcohol-based hand sanitizers to the PoEs where the aquifer is unable to provide enough water;
- Provision and stockpiling of hand soap and bleach for equipment and structures' disinfection;
- Support assessments of existing structures/resources and identification of necessary equipment (PPE, thermometer, wash devices, soap, isolation structures) to adequately respond;
- Distribution of hygiene kits (bleach, cleaning detergents and soap) to vulnerable groups in line with national guidelines on physical distancing;
- Training to NGO counterparts related to key messages on prevention, initial communication in case of epidemic event and monitoring mechanism;
- Capacity development of migration and border health staff on SOPs on case management and on infection prevention and control measures.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3: ENSURE ACCESS OF AFFECTED PEOPLE TO BASIC SERVICES AND COMMODITIES, INCLUDING HEALTH CARE, AND PROTECTION AND SOCIAL SERVICES

PROTECTION

IOM will enhance capacities to ensure the protection and access to services of migrants, travellers and local communities by:

- Providing immediate assistance (non-food items, sanitization kits, emergency cash, vocational training) to stranded and returning migrants (individuals and their families) and to the quarantine facilities supporting them;
- Providing reintegration support to the most vulnerable returnees;
- Assisting stranded migrants to access health services;
- Supporting national authorities to develop treatment services for vulnerable populations and vulnerable migrants in the context of the epidemic: i.e. alternative care, emergency support for assistance, social services, support for individuals in quarantine.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 4: SUPPORT INTERNATIONAL, NATIONAL AND LOCAL PARTNERS TO RESPOND TO THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF COVID-19.

ADDRESSING SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF THE CRISIS

IOM will contribute to mitigating the socio-economic impacts of the crisis by:

- Promoting the creation of small businesses with migrants economically affected by COVID-19
- Promoting cash transfer using mobile money and/or food security support for migrants and vulnerable groups (particularly those in quarantine);
- Support vulnerable communities with sanitation and hygiene items to prevent COVID 19 transmission.

IOM'S FUNDING REQUIREMENTS

IOM GUINEA-BISSAU's funding requirement is **USD 1.785.000**.

This amount represents an indicative requirement for IOM Guinea Bissau planned interventions, broken down by activity pillars and is bound to evolve, given the evolving nature of the outbreak and the national priorities.

PILLAR ACTIVITY BREAKDOWN OF FUNDING REQUIREMENT	
	TOTAL REQUESTED AMOUNT (USD)
Coordination and Partnerships ●	100.000 \$
Tracking Mobility Impacts ●	75.000 \$
Risk Communication and Community engagement (RCCE) ●	200.000 \$
Disease Surveillance ●	200.000 \$
Point of Entry (POE) ●	300.000 \$
Infection Prevention and Control ●	250.000 \$
Protection ●	560.000 \$
Addressing Socio-Economic Impact ●	100.000 \$
TOTAL	1.785.000 \$