

Guidance note - Construction site safety recommendations

Minimize spread of infections in light of COVID-19

Some critical construction activities such as building health facilities or erecting emergency shelters are likely to continue during the restrictions in place due to COVID-19. Partners overseeing construction sites operating during the COVID-19 pandemic should ensure all possible steps are taken to protect their workforce and to minimize the spread of the infection. This guidance is based on WHO's key messages for infection prevention and control, and illustrates some basic measures and principles to be followed in this scenario. It mostly focuses on construction and repurposing of facilities, appreciating the greater limitations occurring while working on individual shelters. Acknowledging the complex, challenging and fast-paced operating environment, partners are invited to adopt the recommendations when applicable and to the most possible extent, embracing a "good enough" approach. This guidance does not encompass all aspects of health and safety and should be seen a complement of standard health and safety policy in place for all construction projects, rather than a standalone document. It must be updated as the situation evolves globally and specifically in the Rohingya Response.

The main underlying approaches are:

- ✓ Reduce access to site
- ✓ Adapt work plan and activities to reduce close contact
- ✓ Increase overall level of hygiene of the site
- ✓ Prioritize health and safety of staff, workers and their surrounding communities
- ✓ Increase awareness of the workforce

Planning phase

- Plan construction phases avoiding large group of workers and unnecessary overlap of crews. If the work plan was developed prior to COVID-19 outbreak, consider reviewing and adapting when necessary;
- Basic Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) related to construction safety such as gloves and glasses should be provided to workers depending on the tasks they are assigned to. In addition, each worker should be provided with two or more reusable masks (not surgical/medical graded masks);
- Additional hand washing stations including provision of clean water and soap, together with cleaning and disinfection products may be required for construction sites opened prior to the outbreak. For new construction site, plan and budget provision of these items;
- Preferably, every worker should be provided with a basic set of tools needed for the tasks they are assigned to. Using of the same tool by multiple workers should be avoided. If tools are shared or stored for later use by another person, they need to be disinfected/cleaned;¹
- Plan to engage workers coming from the close proximity of the facility been built (possibly from the same block) and avoid involving labour from farther away camps or villages;
- Supervision should be strengthened including COVID-19 prevention principles, and supervisors oriented on their new responsibilities;

¹ More instructions for safe disinfection - Cox's Bazar WASH Sector technical guidance on disinfection procedures for COVID-19 response (non-health settings) - v. 02: <https://drive.google.com/open?id=1gM8OwM4d7Y3ZEXcJiM07wRorVwAetrhD>

- If possible, prior to start construction work coordinate with Health partners to check the site and ensure appropriate measures are adopted;

Prepare your workforce

- An orientation on COVID-19 should be provided to all workers, including description of the disease, symptoms, transmissibility, severity and WHO's key prevention messages to be followed on site, public spaces as well as in their homes;
- Prevention messages should be printed and clearly displayed on site. Consider providing an additional printed copy of the key prevention messages for all workers to disseminate in their families (and communities);
- Workers should be clearly informed on protocols to follow in case they or their family members get sick;
- Workers should be requested to maintain physical distance of 2 meters (6') from others as much as possible and to adhere to the other suggested practices for infection prevention and control, in particular:
 - Wash your hands regularly with clean water and soap for at least 20 seconds, or clean them with a hand sanitizer;
 - Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands;
 - When coughing or sneezing, cover your mouth with tissue and throw it into closed bin immediately. If you do not have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your flexed elbow;
 - Do not spit.
- Working gloves are sometimes worn to protect against injuries during some activities, but they do not offer any protection against transmission of COVID-19 and should be considered as unwashed hands in terms of minimizing touching one's face;
- Workers should not greet each other with handshakes or embraces at any point during the day;
- If workers are operating in an area where sick or suspected infected people are currently or recently transited (in the previous 3 days), they should wear mask and disposable gloves at all times;
- If masks are not available, workers should be encouraged to prepare handmade ones using household items or clothes materials;²
- Advice workers to wash their clothes frequently (daily if possible).

Access to site

- Only essential visitors (workers, supervisors, and managers) should be allowed on site;
- Programme/monitoring visits should be reduced to the minimum and should be planned when workers are not on site (i.e. lunch or prayer time);
- Fence off the construction site to ensure no one can enter or approach the workers without authorization;
- Entry and exit gates should be clearly marked and guarded;
- Body temperature should be measured for all persons entering the site;
- Allow enough space for people to queuing in a safe manner at the entrance of the site while they wash their hands and get screened;

² More instructions can be found at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings.html>, <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public/when-and-how-to-use-masks> and https://drive.google.com/open?id=1Jbl73nC8Q_HwtrTfqCdT5UaE8rzYAgLJ

- A trained staff should be designated to guard the access, checking temperature of workers and visitors and enquiring about overall health condition and vulnerability;
- Ensure there are sufficient hand washing stations at the entrance and that they have water and soap, as well as clearly display signs requesting persons entering to wash their hands;
- Anyone falling in one of the following categories should not be allowed on site:
 - Has a family member suspected COVID-19 patient living in the same household or self-isolating, or if s/he has got in close contact with a confirmed COVID-19 patient in the previous two weeks. S/he should not report on site and self-quarantining at home for two weeks;
 - Is showing one or more symptoms related to COVID-19 (high temperature, new persistent cough, shortness of breath). S/he should not report on site, stay home and self-isolate or seek medical care in case of severe symptoms;
 - Is a vulnerable person (by virtue of age, clinical/health condition or pregnant).
- All persons should wash or clean their hands before entering and leaving the site;
- Workers should be encouraged to reach the site using individual modes of transportation and avoid public transport when possible.

During construction

- To the most possible extent, workers should maintain physical distance of 2 meters (6') from others at all times. Performing activities that must be conducted in close proximity should be avoided when possible. If these activities must take place, workers should wear masks;
- If possible, construction crews should be segregated and tasks allocated so they do not overlap. It is suggested to establish crew shifts to be also applied for break, lunch and pray time;
- If a worker develops COVID-19 symptoms on site, the following actions should be followed:
 - Avoid touching anything;
 - Cough and sneeze into a tissue and put it in a closed bin, or in their flexed elbow in case they don't have tissues;
 - Return home and self-isolate, or seek medical care in case of severe symptoms;
 - All surfaces and tools s/he may have recently touched should be cleaned and disinfected.
- In spaces where queuing may happen (including latrines and hand washing stations), consider marking safe distance of 2 meters (6') on ground or railings;
- Meetings on site should be avoided at all times. Instruction to workers should be given in open spaces and maintaining physical distance;
- If construction activities happen in an enclosed space, the site should be ventilated as much as possible, for example leaving doors and windows open during the working day;
- Due to potential sudden access restrictions, all materials and equipment should be carefully and safely stored before leaving the site at the end of every day;
- When receiving and unloading goods and construction materials, workers should keep distance from the drivers at all times. When possible, drivers should remain in their vehicles. If drivers must unload the goods for safety reasons, they should do so without the help of the workers and they should wash or clean their hands before and after. Any contact between deliverers and receivers should be avoided (including delivery papers and pens for signature, etc.). It is recommend that everyone needing to sign paperwork have their own pen or wash their hands after.

Hand washing, hygiene and cleaning

- Provide adequate hand-washing station with water and soap or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer (min. 60% alcohol). Ensure water and soap are topped up regularly;
- Clean the hand washing facilities regularly during the day, establishing a clear cleaning plan;
- Tools, reusable PPE and frequently touched surfaces should be cleaned and disinfected frequently (at least daily);
- If possible, appropriate latrine facilities should be made available inside the compound and be kept cleaned. In any case, workers should be encouraged to wash their hands before and after using the latrines;
- Dedicated eating, break and prayer areas should be identified on site and access should be staggered to reduce risk of congestion. Workers should keep physical distance while eating, praying and having a break;
- Provide safe drinking water dispensers and one-time cups, or encourage workers to carry an individual cup;
- All solid waste (excluding construction materials) should be put immediately in closed bins or closed bags and not left for someone else to clear up;
- Separate and collect all solid waste that could serve as transmission vector. To avoid contact with waste bags, use double plastic bags (for instance when removing a filled waste bag, cover tightly and wrap with a second plastic bag). Store the waste for at least 72 hours before disposing;
- Store leftovers construction materials for at least 72 hours before disposing.

Upon completion

- The facility should be carefully cleaned and disinfected prior to the handover;
- All waste, construction materials, tools and equipment should be removed from the site and disposed safely.

References

- CDC - "Use of Cloth Face Coverings": <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings.html>
- CwC WG CXB - "Strategy, Key Messages and IEC Materials for COVID-19" (host and Rohingya communities): <https://drive.google.com/open?id=1Wjng-27m9QB5qZo9OKDdcdIAQoltkdl>
- Health Sector CXB – "Infection Prevention and Control measures at non-medical workplaces to minimize the spread of the COVID-19 Recommendations to all humanitarian partner organizations in Cox's Bazar Rohingya Response": <https://drive.google.com/open?id=1u8CtLmEm7YN0WN9KM-iJ4XcnpjBMZISy>
- WaSH Sector CXB – "Technical guidance on disinfection procedures for COVID-19 response (non-health settings) - v. 02": <https://drive.google.com/open?id=1gM8OwM4d7Y3ZEXciM07wRorVwAetrh>
- WHO Bangladesh – "Guidance on wearing homemade cloth masks": https://drive.google.com/open?id=1JbI73nC8Q_HwtrTfqCdT5UaE8rzYAgLj
- WHO - "Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) advice for the public: When and how to use masks": <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public/when-and-how-to-use-masks>
- WHO – "Rational use of personal protective equipment for coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)": https://drive.google.com/open?id=1W6_4fT5FhgFwsjAPZRhVx8Mlv0Z9cC