



COVID-19 RISK MITIGATION RESPONSE

The content of this document was developed through a crisis management meeting of an extended National Management Team (NMT) convened on 16 March 2020. It was vetted by the Board Chair and applies to all employees of SOS Children's Villages Rwanda. It aims to define preventive actions and responses measures in order to contain the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Background

As of 27 March 2020, Rwanda has 54 confirmed cases of COVID-19, but no single death.

The first case of COVID-19 was officially confirmed on 14th March. The government immediately formed and implemented a robust nationwide response to further strengthen the country's ability to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 transmission. On top of frequent hand hygiene and social distancing, new preventive measures were put in place the same day. They include closing places of worship, schools and higher education institutions, encouraging employees to work from home, postponing large gatherings such as weddings and sporting events, instituting social distancing (at least 1 meter) in restaurants and businesses, restricting unnecessary movements and overcrowding of public transports etc. But the number of confirmed cases continued to grow. Consequently, tougher measures were taken, including a mandatory lockdown across the whole country effective from Saturday 21st March at midnight, for an initial period of two weeks.

It is worth noting that all new COVID-19 cases reported in Rwanda so far are from people who were put in quarantine automatically upon arrival in Rwanda. They are now developing symptoms as the coronavirus' incubation period expires. According to daily statements from the Ministry of Health, all patients "are under treatment and in stable condition in an isolated health facility". Yesterday, the Minister of Health confirmed that "the first patient will be discharged in the middle of next week".

A special NMT was convened to assess the organisational preparedness and response capacity in the worst case scenarios. An emergency protocol including a series of mitigation measures was adopted, and crisis management teams (CMT) formed both at national and location levels. The CMT's main task is to assess how programme locations implement government's measures to curb the spread of COVID-19, provide up-to-date information and prevention measures to children, young people, caregivers and staff.

Twelve (12) Preventive and mitigation measures being implemented

1. Strict compliance with handwashing and social distancing

SOS nurses, social workers and local leaders in all 4 Locations informed all children, youth, mothers, aunts and staff on the prevention of COVID19. They are aware that high vigilance is required in the location. They know well how the virus spreads, how to protect themselves, and what to do in case of suspected cases etc. Children in Villages and Caregivers remain in the village and avoid moving from one house to another.

2. Strict compliance with the Lockdown

Children and their SOS parents shall remain in the village and strictly avoid any contact with outside people. Only caregivers are allowed to go and buy the needed items (markets, drug stores, etc.) to minimise the risk of contamination. However, in case of planned activities or

specific occasions, children can only interact with other SOS siblings. The security services at must be involved in and support to implement these measures.

All staff (except SOS parents) must work from their homes or take their annual leave to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Workshops, field and home visits, VSLA groups are also suspended for the duration of the government Lockdown.

3. Stocking food and other essential safety gear including first aid kits

All family houses must store sufficient quantity of non-perishable food items (rice, sugar, beans, pastas, etc...). Where SOS medical centers and clinics are still operating, nurses must ensure there is sufficient quantity of essential medical products including face masks, sanitizers, forehead thermometer, etc.

4. Ensure regular medical check-ups, information sharing and reporting

Villages will provide in house preventive services and conduct daily check-ups (e.g. temperature records, and follow up of patients with flu and cold etc.). Suspected cases will be immediately reported to the **official hotline number 114** or transferred to designated Health Facilities in each Location as per the government's instructions.

5. Setting up a quarantine site within the Village

Each village shall identify and set up a quarantine house within the village and ensure it is adequately equipped should there be a confirmed case of COVID-19 infection within the Village community. The Village Director shall ensure the implementation of this preventive measure.

6. Supervising children's cultural and sport activities in the Village

During this period of confinement, each Village shall organise cultural, sports and psychosocial support activities in the Village. These activities will need to be well planned in such a way that children do not feel they are missing anything they could have got outside the Village. SOS co-workers will supervise these activities along with house chores and revising lessons. An adult who supervises these shall ensure compliance social distancing between children. Handwashing before and after the activities shall also continue to be enforced.

7. Information and reporting mechanism

Village Directors are responsible for overall safety of the children and their caregivers. Any suspected COVID-19 case shall be immediately reported to the National Director (ND). The ND shall regularly update the Board Chair and the CVI Rep accordingly as and when the medical reports become available.

8. The use of casual workers in Family Houses is suspended until further notice

The management of the locations shall suspend non-essential outsourced services that bring labourers inside the Village during this period. The few cleaning and security personnel shall undergo regular medical checkup and avoid any contact with children.

9. No new admission of children until further notice

To avoid any risk of contamination and spread of the COVID-19 virus, all new admissions are suspended until further notice.

10. Special consideration for programme beneficiaries outside the Villages



Regular check-in calls with young people living outside the Villages, provision of food allowance, their psychosocial support shall continue. This includes reintegrated children who still receive our support and FS beneficiaries.

Relevant staff both at national level and in Locations are responsible to inform the NMT (through the NMT WhatsApp group) of their status.

11. Handling supply and home delivery of basic food supplies such as milk etc.

Each Location organise a coordinated way for the delivery of food supplies including delivery of milk products at the Location's gate whilst ensuring strict application of the hygienic and safety measures mentioned above.

12. Leave Management and outings for SOS Parents

Village Directors will discuss with SOS Parents how to balance the compliance with the Lockdown arrangement and the need for leave or outings by SOS Parents. Requests shall be treated on a case-by-case basis. Strict medical checkups and safety measures shall be observed before absent SOS parents return to their Family Houses within the Village.
