

17 March 2020

Africa Humanitarian Action (AHA) on Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19)

Africa Humanitarian Action (AHA) has been keenly following the developments in the spread of the global pandemic, the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19). Although over the past few weeks, there has been a steady decline of new cases in the People's Republic of China and South Korea, more countries have seen an increase.

In Africa, according to the Africa Center for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC), 30 countries have reported cases of COVID-19 with 12 countries reporting local transmission. By March 17, 2020 there were 443 confirmed cases and 10 deaths. While these are official numbers, experts warn that actual infection rates and fatalities may be higher. AHA advocates that public health emergency responses must include all members of the public, including forcibly displaced populations such as refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants.

Building on its experience in providing emergency and long-term health services in displacement settings, as well as its first-hand knowledge of responding to prior outbreaks in the continent such as Ebola, measles and cholera, AHA is preparing to leverage its existing partnership with local and national authorities and communities in order to provide expertise, training, equipment and treatment services.

Accordingly, throughout its operations AHA is taking necessary first steps such as participating at coordination meetings, ongoing information sharing and attending consultation workshops on COVID-19 to prepare for the outbreak. AHA is also scaling up its readiness plan in line with plans of national authorities and in close collaboration with partner organizations such as UNHCR to prevent the spread of the disease in any of its current operation areas.

Specifically, AHA is undertaking the following preparedness measures:

- ✓ Prepare COVID-19 specific emergency preparedness and response plan;
- ✓ Activate outbreak coordination mechanisms in the country and field offices;
- ✓ Prepare list of drugs, supplies and equipment needs for COVID-19 infection prevention, control and patient care;
- ✓ Initiate discussion within its governance structure and external supporters on resource mobilization;
- ✓ Initiate contact with health care providers in AHA's internal and external emergency roster system;
- ✓ Develop/adopt guidelines for COVID-19 prevention and control;
- ✓ Alert all AHA country programmes to start preparing for possible outbreaks and identify isolation centers in each AHA operation areas, strengthen the standard infection prevention and control measures etc.; and
- ✓ Collect regular update from AHA country offices on progress, challenges and recommendations.

AHA stands ready to leverage its knowledge and field experience to partner and support in response mechanisms within the continent, especially in forced displacement settings.