

The COVID-19 pandemic is evolving rapidly and is likely to affect most countries where CRS and its partners work. Because relationships continue and deepen even in this time of emergency, we want to offer our support in navigating the many new challenges we are all facing. None of us has all the answers, but together we can and will find solutions.

First and foremost, we should understand and comply with all COVID-19 protocols, recommendations and/or mandates instituted by our own local and/or national governments and health authorities. In addition, CRS offers the following list of good practices that we and our partners around the world have learned through many years of responding to infectious disease outbreaks (such as Ebola and cholera), natural disasters, civil conflict and other crises that have significantly impacted operations. While the COVID-19 emergency is an unprecedented global emergency, our shared experience offers a foundation of knowledge and support for our staff, our organizations, and the people we serve.

HUMAN RESOURCES

- ▶ Share critical and vetted *COVID-19 prevention messages* with staff and ask them to share with all their family members and friends. In addition, identify COVID-19 referral, treatment and management centers in your country or area and provide your staff with clear guidance on the process to follow and what support they can expect in case of exposure or infection.
- ▶ If any staff are exposed to and/or test positive for COVID-19, their *privacy and anonymity should be maintained*. Work with them or through local health authorities to identify with whom they have been in contact (including other staff, project participants, other partner staff, etc.) and ensure those persons are informed and recommended measures taken.
- ▶ Consider identifying *staff care and psychosocial support resources*, if this is possible in your context.
- ▶ Consider establishing (or reminding staff of) a *phone tree for emergency alerts to all staff*; possibly provide regular updates to your staff, if this is possible with zero or minimal cost/burden to them.
- ▶ Consider *reviewing staffing plans for a partial or full office closure*, including if any staff can and plan to work remotely (telecommuting). If a staff member cannot work from home and cannot access the office/field, verify whether they will be eligible for paid leave based on your organization's leave policy and/or local labor law. Consider whether some policies could be modified to provide more flexibility during the period of the pandemic. Consider consulting with your local legal counsel (or CRS HR managers) for clarification of local labor laws.
- ▶ Consider creating a *remote work policy* that includes clear schedules and guidance on whether any supplies, equipment and services are available to establish a remote office. Where applicable/possible, consider evaluating whether your organization can support staff working from home with internet access, computers, printers/scanners, phone airtime, transportation (e.g., office vehicle support to avoid public transport systems, for staff required to travel), early release of staff salary, releasing staff salary online, cash advances.
- ▶ Ensure measures are in place to *prepare staff payroll*. Uncertainty in this area creates a lot of anxiety and negatively affects engagement and possibly productivity.

Communicating that management is working to ensure timely or early payroll release may be reassuring.

► For any staff who do not receive funds electronically (e.g., day laborers), ensure there are *options for them to access their paychecks safely*.

► Consider *emergency provisions to process staff payroll*. For instance, since most of the value of liquidations is payroll, discuss with your donors/primes/partners if payroll could be processed separately from all other liquidations and advances. Donors/primes might be able to process payroll based on the previous month's salary sheet (i.e., no new staff added) and collect supporting documentation (timesheets) after the fact (assuming many/most staff are salaried, not hourly, and reconciling differences after the fact as needed).

► *Signatures and approvals*: if your organization practices working from home and/or telecommuting, consider establishing a clear approval procedure via email.

► *Business travel*: travel restrictions are likely to occur and/or increase in the near future. Ensure staff is aware of such restrictions and, where necessary, establish self-quarantine guidelines.

GOVERNANCE, RISK, AND COMPLIANCE (GRC)

► *Increase frequency of communication and coordination* with your organization's board (or other governance bodies) on key areas such as operations (including finance), staff management and care, donor relations, programs and beneficiaries.

► As necessary, consider temporary *adjustments to your organizational policies and procedures* for the period of social distancing. Document changes and communicate internally and externally (as applicable).

► Consider temporary *adjustments to administrative and programmatic (risk) assessments and monitoring for third parties*, for instance using virtual risk based modalities. Document the adjustments and communicate internally and externally (third parties, primes and/or donors).

► Consider *adjustments to risk management and compliance activities* that are affected by social distancing. Identify affected activities and temporarily prioritize those 20% that will generate 80% of the problems (risks).

► *Assess the current and potential impacts of the changing operating environment* and your organization's capacity to implement your project agreements. Obtain approvals and/or consent from primes or donors on both administrative and programmatic activities that need to be put on hold or adjusted. See Program Implementation section below.

► Consider developing a strategy with CRS (and other partners and primes) to *manage risk and risk transfer*, ensuring risk is not entirely or always transferred to local actors.

► Consider developing a strategy with CRS (and other partners and primes) to *cover indirect costs that can support risk management*.

► Consider *reviewing project risk management plans and reevaluate the emerging threats* caused by economic repercussions and social distancing. Reevaluate the Character and the Appetite of the emerging and existing risks.

► No matter what you do, remember the *Seven Pillars of Compliance*.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

- ▶ *Banking relationships*: if not already using electronic banking, determine whether it is feasible for your organization. Electronic banking platforms can ease the disruption of limited movement, which is necessary for paper-based documentation.
- ▶ *Use of financial systems*: if possible and sustainable, consider ensuring that finance managers, their supervisors and directors have secure access to financial software online. Depending on the pace of continued operations, ensure that the financial data is updated daily in the system.
- ▶ *Financial reporting*: ensure that there is a process in place to support timely submission of financial reports. Communicate with primes and/or donors if you believe it might be difficult to meet deadlines.
- ▶ *New purchases*: consider reviewing and adjusting procurement processes, which may include a temporary reduction in purchases to reflect a slow-down in operations. Or consider adopting an emergency procurement policy to facilitate more agile approvals and expedite procurement of life-saving supplies.
- ▶ *Monitor and comply with local and national ordinances* related to COVID-19. If you have a scheduled meeting and it is cancelled due to local/state/national government order, you should reimburse any costs that participants have incurred.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND DATA MANAGEMENT

- ▶ If you have an intranet, consider *creating a new page to house all resources and materials* on how to safely operate during this emergency and securely work from home (as applicable).
- ▶ Consider *developing and sharing guidance on monitoring COVID-19 phishing scams*.
- ▶ Consider *adding surge capacity in your IT unit* to support distributed work environments, implement security measures and support users.
- ▶ *Ensure anti-virus protections are enabled and up to date* on all computers. Offer IT support as possible to assess and protect personal equipment being used to access organizational resources. Consider granting licenses to anti-virus software for home use.
- ▶ Consider *developing a guide for telecommuting/working from home*. Good resources for this include the SANS Security Awareness Work-from-home Deployment Kit (link) and USAID Learning Lab (link).
- ▶ Consider *reviewing and introducing in your organization ways to share data responsibly* in a digital environment (link).

PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

- ▶ Consider engaging with CRS (and other partners and primes) in a *contingency planning exercise* (both programmatic and continuity of operations). In this exercise, consider what lifesaving and life-sustaining activities (e.g., COVID-19 response, ongoing health or food security activities, etc.) could continue and what activities could be suspended, ensuring that no staff will be infected with the virus. Provide necessary

arrangements (including issuing cash advances) to vendors and staff responsible for implementation.

► *Establish regular communication with CRS* (and other partners and primes) regarding services and staff available, clarification of possible programming delays (within your organization, CRS, other partners and primes), and possible extensions/waivers that will be needed and allowed.

► Consider *adjusting program activities to reflect the COVID-19 situation* and ensure the health, safety and security of your staff and the communities that you serve. For example, for distribution-related activities this could include adjusting existing distribution SOPs to align with country-specific guidance shared by relevant health authorities and partners (e.g. Ministry of Health, WHO, WFP), where available.

► *Seek donor approval* (e.g., no-cost extension, re-alignment of activities, etc.) as needed before making COVID-19 related adjustments to programming, to ensure that activities and expenditures incurred are allowable and reimbursable.

► Consider engaging with CRS (and other primes) to *discuss what part your organization would like to play in the COVID-19 response*. Monitor (or ask CRS or other primes to help you monitor) local calls for COVID-19 related funding from OFDA, UNICEF and others. These are often communicated through the cluster/task force listserv in addition to formal channels. Make sure your organization's contact information is on the listserv and reach out to the donors to discuss opportunities.

► Consider asking CRS (or other primes) to provide your organization with *business development support to pursue direct donor funding for COVID-19 related activities*, especially if there is a pause in large procurements. Consider reviewing resources that can prepare your organization to do business directly with donors (e.g., USAID).

► Consider having a frank discussion with CRS (and other primes) about *your organization's absorptive capacity*. With upcoming travel restrictions, staff and community health safety concerns and potential staff shortages, INGOs may be less able to deliver. Additionally, active awards may receive supplemental funds for COVID-19 or reallocate existing funds to new activities that could be managed by local implementing partners. This may happen at the same time that new funding opportunities targeting local implementers are released. CRS could provide coaching on how to anticipate the administrative and programmatic burden of these additional funds.

► Consider *supporting local and national civil society actors as important auxiliaries* to governmental efforts and as key communication channels on COVID-19 messaging to local communities.

► Consider *accessing and using CRS' COMPASS project management standards and the Institute for Capacity Strengthening* at any time for information/programmatic guidelines to support your operations.

► Consider *postponing less critical MEAL activities and adapting necessary and time-sensitive MEAL activities* where possible. Listen to people on the front lines and be open to pivoting programming and MEAL activities as needed.

► Consider *contacting local CRS colleagues* for any clarification or support.