



Freetown City Council COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Plan

*Working in support of and in collaboration with National
Government*

March 2020



Objectives of document



Context of COVID-19 outbreak

Key lessons from Ebola response

FCC preparedness and response plan

Specific challenges for Freetown



COVID-19 is a virus with mainly respiratory symptoms that spreads via droplets

What is COVID-19?

- Coronaviruses (CoV) are a large family of viruses that cause illness ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases
- COVID-19 is a new strain that was discovered in 2019 and has not been previously identified in humans

How is it spread?

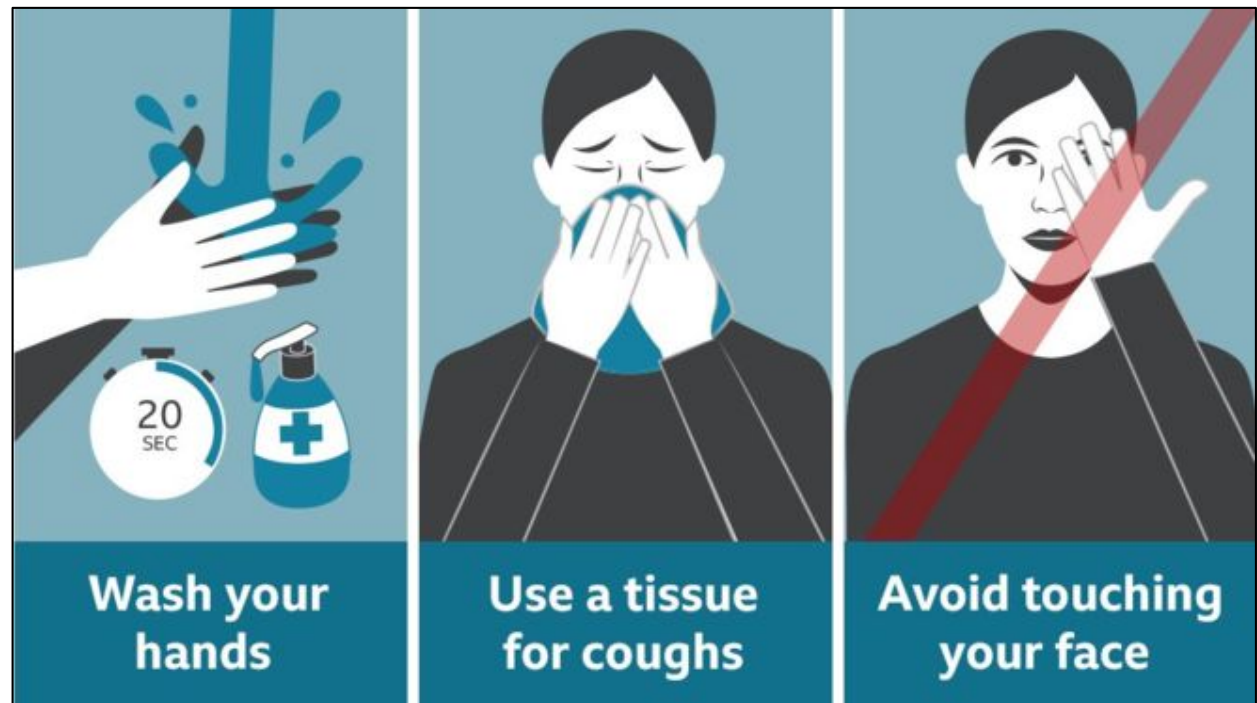
- The virus is thought to spread mainly via droplets between people who are in close contact with one another, and via touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching one's own mouth, nose or eyes

What are the symptoms?

- Common signs of infection include fever, dry cough, shortness of breath and breathing difficulties. In more severe cases, infection can cause pneumonia, severe acute respiratory syndrome, kidney failure and even death

How can I stay safe?

- Washing your hands with soap and water or using alcohol-based hand sanitizer kills viruses that may be on your hands
- Covering your mouth and nose with your bent elbow or tissue when you cough or sneeze – then dispose of the used tissue immediately





Current status of COVID-19: worldwide and in West Africa

Timestamp: 6pm, March 21, 2020

Global COVID-19 cases,

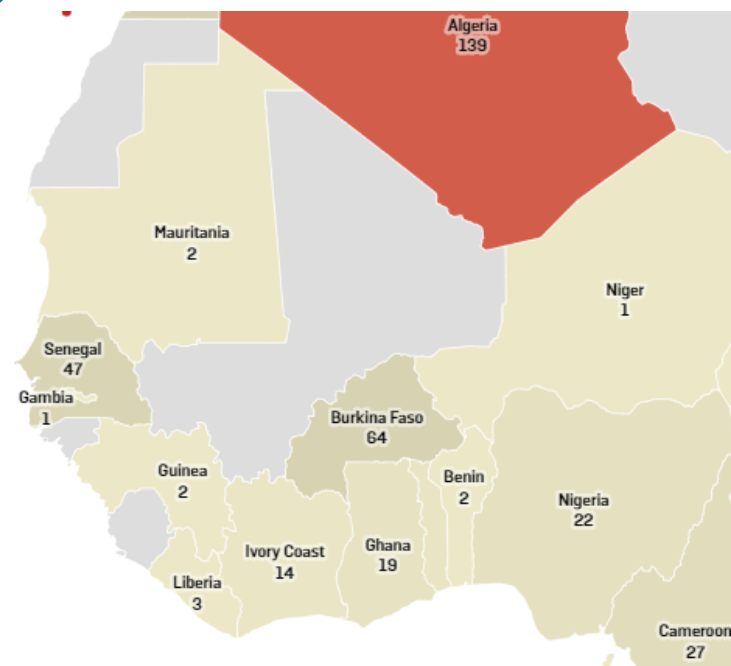
Country, Other	Total Cases	New Cases	Total Deaths	New Deaths	Total Recovered	Active Cases	Serious, Critical	Tot Cases/ 1M pop
China	81,008	+41	3,255	+7	71,740	6,013	1,927	56
Italy	53,578	+6,557	4,825	+793	6,072	42,681	2,857	886
Spain	25,496	+3,925	1,381	+288	2,125	21,990	1,612	545
USA	24,207	+4,824	302	+46	176	23,729	637	73
Germany	22,364	+2,516	84	+16	209	22,071	2	267
Iran	20,610	+966	1,556	+123	7,635	11,419		245
France	14,459	+1,847	562	+112	1,587	12,310	1,525	222
S. Korea	8,799	+147	102	+8	2,612	6,085	59	172
Switzerland	6,863	+1,248	80	+24	131	6,652	141	793
UK	5,018	+1,035	233	+56	93	4,692	20	74
Netherlands	3,631	+637	136	+30	2	3,493	354	212
Austria	2,992	+343	8	+2	9	2,975	15	332

For up to date information click [HERE](#)

Source: Foreignpolicy.com; Worldometers.info



West African COVID-19 cases,

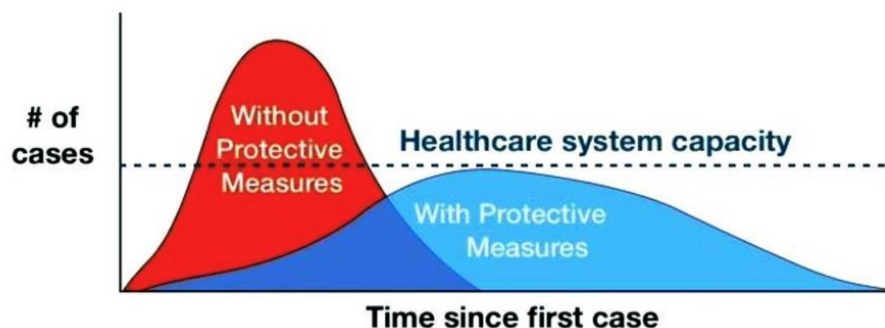


For up to date information click [HERE](#)



Quick detection, contact tracing and strict quarantine measures have proven successful in containing COVID-19 in other countries

Goal of COVID-19 interventions



- Interventions to slow the **spread of the disease** are critical to ensure the healthcare system capacities are not over-burdened
- Interventions adopted to date include a variety of **protective measures** and can vary strongly in their **level of restrictiveness**
- Interventions include, among others, promotion of **handwashing** and **social distancing**, wide-spread **testing**, **travel bans**, **lock-downs** etc.



Examples of successful containment strategies

South Korea:

- Extensive testing
 - Make-shift test centres near areas with many infections
 - COVID-19 drive-through testing facilities
 - Establishment of laboratories that can perform up to 20,000 tests a day
- Social distancing
 - School closures and cancellation of large events (though no lock-down)

Singapore:

- Quick detection and diagnosis
 - Tracking detailed GPS data from phones
 - For each new case, specific contact tracing teams were deployed
- Strict quarantine
 - Including home quarantine, with location checks 2x/day through a phone message
 - Breaches attract stiff penalties, including jail terms
- Government transparency
 - Daily phone updates on new cases, recoveries and health advisories



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Key lessons from Ebola response have informed the development of the Freetown COVID-19 preparedness and response plan





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The Mission of the FCC COVID-19 preparedness & response plan..



To ensure that the cases of transmission of COVID-19 in Freetown remain at minimum and that Freetown City Council interventions are aligned with national government guidelines, interventions and restrictions for COVID-19

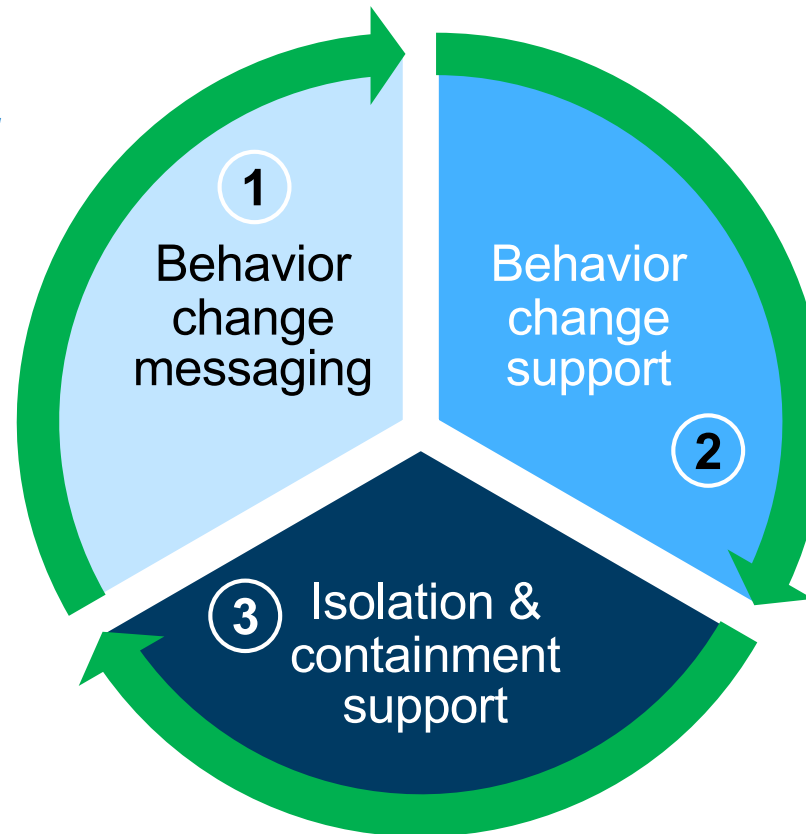




FCC COVID-19 preparedness & response plan consists of 3 strategic elements that support the National Government response

Supporting Social Mobilisation Pillar...

- Ensuring Freetonians are **swiftly informed** about risks and symptoms of COVID-19
- **Raising awareness** of preventive and response measures to be taken by Freetonians – adoption will require widespread **Behaviour Change**
- Disseminating messaging through **significant influencers to engender community ownership**



Supporting Logistics Pillar...

- Ensuring provision of **resources** (e.g. water in markets) and **enactment of policies** to support adoption of preventive and response measures
- Engaging with **civil society and private organizations** to build coalition of financial, logistical and moral support for implementation required measures

Supporting Case Management, Surveillance & Quarantine Pillars...

- Collaboration with **government authorities** to ensure alignment with government response plan and transparency re Freetown confirmed and suspect cases and contact tracing
- Identifying additional facilities to ensure **adequate response capacities** in place as contingency planning



Swift and effective behavior change messaging is crucial to ensure preparedness for COVID-19

Strategic elements

1

Behavior change messaging

FCC actions taken to date

- Production and dissemination through social media of video featuring Mayor to raise awareness of COVID-19 symptoms and preventative measures
- COVID-19 sensitization meetings held with >300 school heads, >35 market chairladies and chairmen and 72 Freetown's PHU in-charges
- COVID-19 sensitization meeting held with 48 ward councilors and FCC management staff to measures to take



Further activities to be conducted at scale

- **Using approved MOHS messaging**, production of **content (visual & audio) in Krio**, with animations on transmission of virus, handwashing and social distancing
- Fostering **community ownership** via dissemination of content through **significant influencers**
 - Ward councilors, ward development committee (WDC) members
 - Inter-religious council and local religious leaders
 - Market chairpersons, Youth leaders, Mammie queens, CBOs, tribal heads and sub-chiefs
 - Private sector organizations and unions
- Dissemination of message to more Freetown residents through **traditional and non-conventional media**
 - FCC parrot (loudspeaker vehicle) to do daily rounds
 - WDC criers walks with megaphones in all 322 zones
 - Audio content shared via whatsapp, radio, commercial vehicles, and in small gathering venues (e.g. ataya bases, hairdressers etc)
 - Visual content shared via whatsapp, LED billboards etc
 - Appropriate mapping and information sharing apps



To ensure that behavior actually changes in Freetown, hand washing and social distancing must be enabled via practical interventions

Strategic elements FCC actions taken to date

2

Behavior change support

- **Distribution of 700 Veronica buckets** to >300 primary & JSS schools, >35 markets & 72 PHUs, public toilets and cemeteries to facilitate hand washing
- Engagement with Traders Council to confirm **market & street trading restrictions effective 23rd March 2020**: 7am to 7pm daily; no night trading except “cooked food vendors” which will close at 10pm **to minimize social interactions** and **improve safety for FCC staff**
- Request submitted to GOSL to **make Sewa Grounds Market available** as this space can accommodate >1000 traders which will facilitate **social distancing** in the currently highly congested Central Business District



Further activities to be conducted at scale

- Purchase and distribution of **additional Veronica buckets and soap to markets, PHUs, public toilets, cemeteries and other FCC managed public spaces** such that multiple handwashing stations are available at each location. **Effective handwashing** requires adequate handwashing stations for the **1000s of people using FCC’s facilities daily**
- Confirmation of water supply constraints and **provision of regular water supply to markets, PHUs, public toilets etc** to ensure that the Veronica buckets provided can be used for hand washing. This will involve **installation of water tanks** (where required) and scheduling and paying for **water bowser deliveries**
- Ensuring **FCC staff & operations are prepared and act as role models**
 - Suspend FCC processes that require the reuse of instruments (e.g. morning sign-in register) until further notice
 - Identify specific FCC staff who will be act as trained points of contact to call 117 and ensure compliance with protocol steps if there are any potential cases on FCC premises
 - Provide gloves and hand sanitizers to FCC market, bailiffs and other external teams

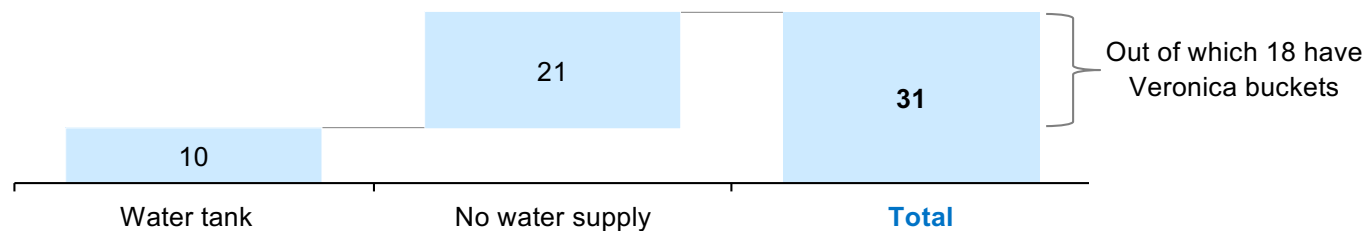


Freetown water availability report gives clear indication of where investment is required to enable hand washing

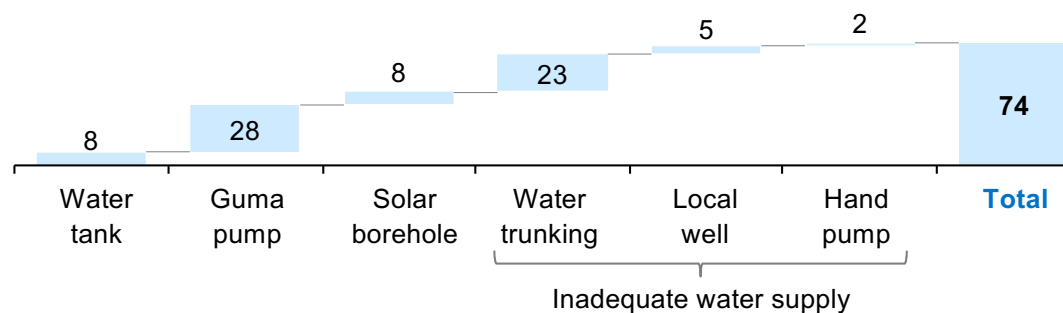
Public facilities

Water availability at public facilities,

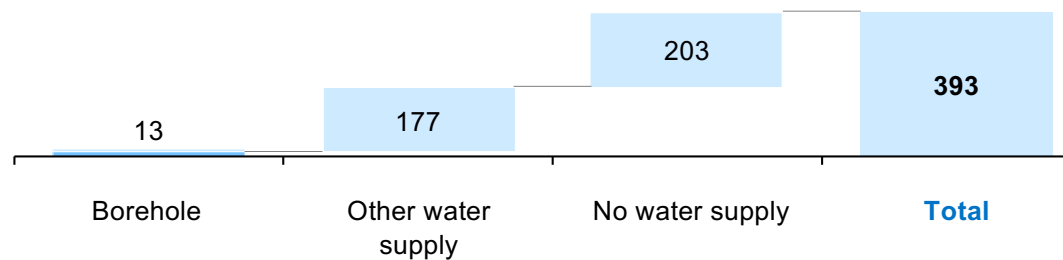
Markets



Public Health Facilities (PHUs)



Schools





Tracking, isolating and containing the virus within communities, and potentially during burials, is essential to ending the outbreak

Strategic elements

Main activities

3

Isolation & containment support

- Through the DHMT and in collaboration with EOC, ensure that **enhanced community intelligence** is collected and collated to inform and support MOHS **contact tracing and surveillance teams**
- Establish **joint DHMT/community teams** to monitor and report to EOC surveillance teams on people entering Freetown through **official and non-official wharfs**
- Provide **sanitation support (particularly focused on biowaste)** to health facilities (including but not limited to PHUs) and the **general public** to reduce risk of community transmission from poor waste management
- Provide PPE support to PHU and other medical staff by coordinating the **local production of masks** using available and appropriate fabric
- If deemed necessary, in collaboration with MOHS, ensure all FCC cemetery staff are adequately **trained and equipped to perform COVID-19 burials**
- Contingency planning: in collaboration with MOHS begin process of identifying **suitable land to locate a COVID-19 burial site** in the event that fatalities exceed already stretched available cemetery plots in Freetown
- Contingency planning: in collaboration with EOC identify **standby managed quarantine facilities** for non-symptomatic contacts and positive cases with plans for food, power, water and surveillance
- Contingency planning: in collaboration with EOC begin plans for the **provision of food to Freetown's most vulnerable** in the event of a lockdown or similar action as part of a national government intervention



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Freetown has existing challenges that adversely impact implementation of recommended COVID-19 preventive measures

Freetown by numbers

1.2m Population of Freetown based on 2015 census; home to >15% of national population but represents <0.1% landmass. Population is growing at 4.2% per annum fueled by rural migration

8,450 People per square km; similar to Varanasi, India and one of the most crowded cities in the world¹. Increasing population growth has placed significant pressure on the environment, housing and sanitation infrastructure

68 Informal settlements in Freetown, housing approximately 35% of population that live and trade in very dense conditions making social distancing more challenging

47% Of population live without direct access to running water increasing existing vulnerabilities in an outbreak which requires handwashing

<1 \$/day Available family income per day for about 30% of population, with over 60% of youth unemployed or underemployed

Consequence in context of COVID-19

- Main guidance for preventive measures against COVID-19, i.e. handwashing and social distancing, is very hard to follow for large part of population in Freetown, due to densely populated communities, markets and public spaces and the lack of access to water
- The reserve capacities of Freetonians (i.e. available savings and/or food stocks) are very limited or non-existence, which would make enforcing a lockdown of the city more difficult than in other contexts

¹ Freetown: Options for Growth and Resilience, Urban Sector Review (2017-8)



A recent survey indicates demand for strong government action and need for support to implement precautionary measures

Results of Institute for Governance Reform survey¹

Action	Agree	Disagree
<i>Institute hotline</i>	91%	6.9%
<i>Stop all flights from coming into Sierra Leone</i>	75%	18.5%
<i>Close borders with Guinea and Liberia</i>	87.4%	11.3%
<i>Ban all music concerts</i>	69.3%	21.4%
<i>Ban all crusades</i>	44.69%	42.7
<i>Ban all church/mosque worship sessions</i>	20.25%	71.6%
<i>Close schools and colleges</i>	31.8%	58.3%
<i>Two-week lockdown</i>	27%	61%

Action taken	Respondent %
<i>I wash my hands regularly</i>	77.04%
<i>I avoid going to church/mosque</i>	10.37%
<i>I have spoken to family and friends about how to avoid being infected</i>	84.94%
<i>I avoid attending meetings with more than 50 people</i>	45.93%
<i>I avoid travel to neighboring countries or Europe/US</i>	67.41%
<i>I have installed a handwashing bucket outside my home</i>	32.35%
<i>I avoid touching people like through handshakes, hugging</i>	84.44%
<i>I have stopped my kids from going to school</i>	8.40%



Conclusions

- Freetown citizens demanded strong and decisive actions from government
 - Actions demanded were especially regarding overseas travel
 - Information dissemination is seen as a key element and could be implemented on local government level, through WhatsApp information service
 - Residents want to avoid drastic measures, such as lockdowns in Freetown
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- Ensuring Freetown residents remain vigilant and follow strict safety precautions against the spreading of the virus is critical. The Government has as at 21st March 2020 instituted measures that include:
 - 14 day quarantining of all individuals entering SL from high risk countries (i.e. >50 cases)
 - All in- and outbound flights are suspended for 90 days from Sunday, March 22, 2020
 - Prohibition of all gatherings with >100 persons
 - School closures effective 31st March 2020

¹ Institute for Governance Reform (IGR) Survey in March 2020. The survey was conducted in Freetown, Western Rural and Lungi with key segments of the population identified as communities of interest. These include workers at Lungi Airport, Okada riders, public sector workers, students, traders, and frequent travellers at Guinea and Liberia boat harbours and lorry parks. A total of 500 interviews were conducted using electronic data capture.



For more information contact FCC on info@fcc.gov.sl

The FCC COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Plan is an evolving document and will be updated on a regular basis as guidance is provided by the Government and as the situation in Freetown changes.