

Guidance note to EIB promoters

On environmental and social performance
in EIB-financed operations in response
to the COVID-19 outbreak crisis

Annex 1 – Health and safety

May 2020



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Annex 1 – Health and safety

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About this guidance note

The COVID-19 pandemic is severely affecting promoters, workers and communities in projects around the world. In the immediate aftermath of the spread of the virus, a key focus has been on supporting workers' safety and wellbeing. National governments are constantly updating their regulations and policy and it is expected that workplace safety measures will continue to evolve in the coming months.

During these uncertain times, EIB promoters are required to continue following national laws and regulations, as well as EIB Environmental and Social Standard 9 on Occupational and Public Health, Safety and Security. In line with the requirements of this standard; the ILO Guidelines on Occupational Safety and Health Management Systems; related guidance of international (WHO), EU (EDCD) the EU OSH Framework Directive 89/391/EEC and respective national legislation, promoters are required to ensure that the workplaces, machinery, equipment and processes under their control are safe and without risk to health.

Where applicable and where prevention and response management plans and/or health and safety management plans are in place, these should be updated and adapted to include additional procedures and measures related to COVID-19. Where applicable, procedures and plans on individual communicable diseases including those of relevant contractors should be revised.

This guidance note includes recommendations aimed at supporting promoters in managing health and safety-related challenges during the COVID-19 crisis, bearing in mind that all actors, including businesses, have a role to play in stopping the spread of the disease. Specifically, it focuses on:

1. Effective communication
2. Basic COVID-19 spread prevention measures
3. Additional health and safety prevention measures for construction sites
4. Additional health and safety prevention measures for workers accommodation
5. Employees wellbeing

Each section includes an overview of the issues and relevant recommendations to decision-making, which apply to the whole workforce, including not just formal employees of a company but also contract labour, migrant workers, seasonal workers, and day labourers. EIB promoters may consider sharing this note internally and with contractors working on EIB-supported projects.

1. Effective communication

To minimise the concerns and stress caused by the outbreak as much as possible in both the workforce and amongst the public, the promoter should consider providing information and regular updates to the workforce and other relevant stakeholders on the different measures, policies and procedures put in place.

To this end, the promoter may consider the following actions:

- regularly publish information, in multiple languages and in a culturally appropriate manner, which is easily accessible to all workers (e.g. intranet, bulletin board, massive cellular/mobile messages, etc.);
- assign specific staff to keep track of national regulations or other health-related relevant information; further identify focal points within the company to help spread information;
- set up a dedicated channel of communication (such as an exclusive email or WhatsApp account), that workers can contact to obtain information or ask questions ;
- where there is an impact on surrounding communities, the relevant measures need to be disclosed and communicated to the relevant affected-stakeholders including local and regional authorities;
- put in place a specific grievance process for COVID-19 related issues for both workers and community members.

Useful links

[Printable WHO graphics](#)

2. Basic COVID-19 spread prevention measures

In the context of the COVID-19 outbreak, promoters are required to undertake adequate measures in order to prevent and respond to the infection. These should be an integral part of their health and safety management plans, if applicable.

All health and safety information should be communicated in an accessible way and, wherever feasible, measures should be implemented in a way that is sensitive to the local social, cultural and gender norms.

The following basic infection prevention measures¹ can help the containment of the spread of the disease and protect the workers and the public:

- promote regular and thorough hand-washing by employees, contractors and customers;
- discourage touching the mouth, nose and eyes;

¹ These measures have been defined by WHO.

Guidance note to EIB promoters

- provide and enforce the use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), ensuring that there are adequate facilities to use and dispose safely of it and that staff have been properly trained on how to use and dispose of PPE. Ensure that PPE is suited to both male and female body types;
- promote social distancing: encourage workers to stay at home wherever possible, facilitate teleworking when feasible, ensure a minimum distance of 2 m between persons, no hand-shaking;
- make sure workplaces are clean and hygienic, and regularly disinfect surfaces (such as doors, elevator buttons, floors and desks) and objects (such as telephones, keyboards and machinery);
- enhance air quality controls, especially in the most crowded areas (entrance, elevators, changing rooms...);
- ensure appropriate workers to doctors/nurses ratio;
- ensure that cleaning and disinfecting actions are also applied to food preparation;
- keep non-critical communal areas (gyms, libraries) closed;
- promote shift working where possible;
- require quarantine measures for incoming expatriate workers;
- identify the level of exposure to the virus of workforce, clients, supply chain, visitors, and the community at large, giving special care to minimising the exposure of more vulnerable people (including older workers, pregnant women, employees with weakened immune systems or suffering from diabetes, heart or lung diseases and others);
- ensure that national travel advice and restrictions are followed by both workers and contractors;
- adjust any worker induction training to the new COVID-19 reality.

Promoters are encouraged to develop a **response plan** in case someone becomes ill with suspected COVID-19 at the workplace. The plan should cover putting the ill person in a room or area where they are isolated from others in the workplace, limiting the number of people who have contact with the sick person and contacting the local health authorities. Promoters should encourage any individuals who show symptoms to contact their healthcare provider or the local public health department, giving them details of their symptoms. Promoters should further identify persons who may be at risk, and support them, without inviting stigma and discrimination into the workplace.

Useful links

[WHO Getting your workplace ready for COVID-19](#)

3. Additional health and safety prevention measures for construction sites

For operations at construction phase, additional measures may need to be implemented. Many governments, often in cooperation with national labour unions, are developing specific recommendations for construction sites. Promoters should consider that if the activity cannot be conducted safely due to the lack of staff or inability to maintain the required social distancing, the activity

Guidance note to EIB promoters

On environmental and social performance in EIB-financed operations in response to the COVID-19 outbreak crisis
Annex 1 – Health and safety

should not take place. Promoters should further ensure that (sub)contractors comply with the implemented measures to avoid closure of sites or fines that may put additional stress on the operation.

Furthermore, the promoter may want to consider the following international best practices:

- ensure physical distancing, by:
 - staggering start times;
 - staggering breaks;
 - staggering lunches;
 - restricting the number of people on-site and where they are assigned to work;
 - controlling site movement (by limiting the potential for workers to gather, including personnel in material hoists and site trailers);
 - limiting the number of people who use elevators and hoists at one time;
 - holding meetings in an outside or large space to enable physical distancing;
 - limiting unnecessary on-site contact between workers, and between workers and outside service providers, and encourage physical distancing in these areas (for example, by removing coffee trucks from site).
- focus attention on hygienic conditions of on-site sanitation:
 - access to soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitiser;
 - washroom facilities;
 - prayer rooms;
 - sanitising commonly touched surfaces or areas (hoists, site trailers, door handles, machinery);
 - avoiding the sharing of hand tools and power tools. If sharing is necessary, enable sanitisation of shared equipment;
 - posting signage on hygiene in local language as well as in the majority workplace language so everyone can understand how to do their part.
- maintain entry logs to be able to track any potential infection outbreak.

4. Additional health and safety prevention measures for workers accommodation

The COVID-19 pandemic poses increased risks to workers living in accommodation camps, as close proximity potentially increases the transmission rate. Local communities adjacent to workers camps or communities where demobilised workers return may also face increased infection risks.

Promoters providing workers accommodation to their staff may consider conducting an assessment of existing health and hygienic measures and identifying protocols that should be put in place to minimise the risks of infection. Such protocols should reflect the current requirements of social distancing applicable in the specific territory. This may require:

- reducing the number of employees sharing the same room and ensuring that – as per EIB Environmental and Social Standard 9 – the minimum standards for sleeping space² is exceeded and a 2-metre distance is maintained between workers' heads;

² 4 to 5,5 square metres (surface) per resident, in line with EIB's Environmental and Social Standard 9.

Guidance note to EIB promoters

- ensuring adequate ventilation of rooms;
- adjusting eating schedules ;
- regulating the use of personal hygiene facilities, to ensure increased cleaning and adequate disinfection and avoiding overcrowding;
- providing additional transport to workers so that distance is respected;
- ensuring the isolation of employees showing symptoms of COVID-19 in line with respective national authority guidance.

The assessment should consider aspects that might enhance vulnerabilities and/or require differentiated protocols. Aspects such as gender, age and underlying health conditions should be taken into account to adequately identify differentiated risk exposure of certain segments of the workforce and what specific measures need to be put in place to protect them. For more information on recommended measures to protect potentially vulnerable workers, please consult the [guidance note on labour](#).

Useful links

EIB Environmental and Social Standards

EIB guidance note on labour

5. Employee wellbeing

During these difficult times, it is important that employers support the physical and mental wellbeing of all employees in practical ways. The following measures may be considered, depending on the context:

- providing online counselling to employees;
- encouraging employees to take regular breaks;
- reminding employees of the importance of physical exercise³ and organising online exercise classes;
- ensuring internet access in worker accommodation;
- providing televisions in each bedroom;
- providing additional in-kind benefits;
- including contractors in these benefits.

Additional guidance

- [WHO COVID-19 website](#)
- [WHO Employers and workers](#)
- [Latest information from WHO on where COVID-19 is spreading](#)
- [EU OSHA COVID-19 Guidance for the workplace](#)
- [EU OSH Framework Directive 89/391/EEC](#)

³ The World Health Organization recommends that adults undertake at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity per week.

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