



Q&A

Friday News, 20 March 2020

1. Questions about operations in France

- **Are you experiencing the same lack of volunteers in the field (because they are often among the most at-risk people) as many other NGOs at the moment? And if so, can employees from headquarters who are in quarantine help?**
- **Donors are putting themselves forward as volunteers. Who should we point them towards, and how?**

Many of you have already volunteered to support operations, and we thank you for that. All the French sites are in the process of communicating their needs in line with their redirected activities. The needs expressed so far mainly relate to medical and paramedical expertise. At the same time, the heads of department are also looking at how to redistribute activities across their teams, based on what can and cannot be continued, and on the new priorities. As soon as we have a comprehensive idea of this, we will tell you how we will proceed (next week). We may call upon non-medical resources to provide, for example, logistical support and translations, or to manage donations.

- **Are we considering going further with regards to requests for distributing food to people who no longer have income-generating activities? Releasing funds, asking donors to redirect funding to grant financial aid, etc.**

Beyond access to healthcare and the rights of people in precarious situations, issues of water/hygiene, housing and food have been identified as priorities by all solidarity stakeholders. Everyone is ready to maintain, adapt and/or redirect their activities according to need and capacity. MdM's regional and national offices are very active in terms of inter-NGO advocacy and coordination, including on these issues, but we are focussing our operations on medico-social activities, including prevention, health monitoring, guidance and support throughout the healthcare process.

- **Can we know which programmes will remain open and which programmes have closed in France? Does MdM plan to participate in the mobile health teams?**

In general, most routine activities have been redirected, and MdM teams are refocusing on mobile activities targeting people in precarious situations in the places they live. Some regional offices have maintained a minimum presence in health centres to inform and refer people with any suspected clinical symptoms. The regional offices are all actively present depending on their resources, local conditions and contexts, and identified needs.

Almost all the regional offices have been approached to contribute to the healthcare measures set up by the Departmental Directorates for Social Cohesion (*directions départementales de la cohésion sociale*, DDCS) with the support of the Regional Health Agencies (*agences régionales de santé*, ARS) with regards to their health activities, aiming to refer symptomatic individuals and/or to protect

vulnerable people. Outreach patrols are one such measure. Depending on the terms and conditions proposed, the conditions of intervention, and the human resources available, MdM will contribute – and sometimes already contributes – to these arrangements.

2. Questions about international operations

- **Which of the countries in which MdM works are currently the most affected?**

Although Europe is now at the centre of the pandemic, all continents are affected.

For Médecins du Monde, the areas in which we work that are most affected by the spread of COVID-19 are Italy, followed by Pakistan, the Philippines, Egypt, Iraq and Lebanon. We are also extremely concerned about the very rapid deterioration of the situation in Africa, with the first confirmed cases in Burkina Faso and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

- **Is consideration being given to returning non-essential expatriates who are working in contexts that may deteriorate?**

Yes, this possibility is being considered. The return of non-essential expatriates will be considered on the basis of several criteria: the epidemic situation, the capacity of the health system, the nationality of the expatriates, and the status of national measures taken regarding the closure of borders or means of travel.

3. Donor issues & collection

- **Are we going to contact donors to find out whether they are following what we are doing and adjusting budgets to enable us to reallocate funds to this crisis, in France and internationally?**

Yes, donors are being contacted and are already reorganising things themselves. Others have already approached us to offer their help. We will have to seize the opportunities presented by this crisis, without weakening our long-term relationships with our financial partners. The priority is operations, we have a healthy cash flow, and we can respond.

- **MdM donors are ready to support us and are starting to make this happen. There has been a ten-fold increase in online donations. However, they are waiting for concrete actions that they can finance ... several appeals from major donors, NGOs and companies. At the moment, we do not have concrete answers, and this is a real issue for us.**

A message has already been sent to donors by Philippe de Botton, to reassure them of our presence with our beneficiaries during this crisis. Communication will take place regularly.

Actions are already underway in France, as presented by Yannick, and initiatives have been launched internationally. Everything is being put in place, and we will be able to make our actions visible in the coming days.

In general, for all questions related to operations in France which haven't been answered, please don't hesitate to contact the DOF Operations Unit pole-ope.dof@medecinsdumonde.net which will get back to you as quickly as possible.

- **Of course, the priority is our operational response, but we will soon also have to provide responses regarding existing contractual processes and donor obligations (external services, consultancy, academic partnerships, etc.) which are also impacted by events, either at the request of the service providers (they are cancelling planned visits to our programmes), or at our request (we are asking them to cancel missions). Are there any criteria/instructions planned for the near future on this subject?**

Yes, as with everything else, we – and all our partners – are adapting to this unprecedented situation. Our organisation has sufficient cash flow to cope with the current turbulence. As usual, we will manage this carefully and are working to make our organisation even more flexible. We are therefore confident that we can meet our contractual commitments.

Already, the process for signing bank payments has been temporarily simplified (only one director's signature is now required for bank transfers and cheques instead of two previously). Once invoices are approved via email by the person responsible for the budget, payment is made as usual.

We will also remind our suppliers and consultants on Monday that they should submit their invoices to the following e-mail address courriers.fournisseurs@medecinsdumonde.net, which will allow them to be processed within the usual timescales. Please pass this information on.

If any of your service providers are still worried, please inform the DFSI, who will send a personalised message.

We will also readjust our expenditure and will get back to your heads of department very quickly to give them the appropriate instructions.