BACKGROUND TO COVID-19

COVID-19 is the infectious disease caused by the most recently discovered coronavirus. This new virus and disease were unknown before the outbreak began in Wuhan, China, in December 2019. Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses which may cause illness in animals or humans. In humans, several coronaviruses are known to cause respiratory infections ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS).

HOW IT SPREADS

When someone who has COVID-19 coughs or exhales they release droplets of infected fluid. Most of these droplets fall on nearby surfaces and objects - such as desks, tables or telephones. People could catch COVID-19 by touching contaminated surfaces or objects – and then touching their eyes, nose or mouth. If they are standing within one meter of a person with COVID-19 they can catch it by breathing in droplets coughed out or exhaled by them. In other words, COVID-19 spreads in a similar way to flu.

Most persons infected with COVID-19 experience mild symptoms and recover.

However, some go on to experience more serious illness and may require hospital care. Risk of serious illness rises with age: people over 40 seem to be more vulnerable than those under 40. People with weakened immune systems and people with conditions such as diabetes, heart and lung disease are also more vulnerable to serious illness.
HOW COVID 19 MIGHT AFFECT BFL NORMAL OPERATIONS

The evolving COVID 19 situation will potentially cause moderate to severe disruption to BarefootLaw, from all fronts of the organisation. These anticipated interruptions, though not exhaustive, are of high significance and are herein planned for mitigation in this strategy.

OUR STAFF

The first responsibility of BarefootLaw is to our staff. The staff are responsible for providing the service we stewarding the decision making and strategy of the organisation (Management) towards survival, in the rapidly evolving environment.

OUR SERVICES

Our core services to our beneficiaries – legal information and support – can /should continue to be available to the public, until and unless such a point at which it is not possible for health, resource or strategic reasons. The services offered to the public, through one-on-ones, business in-person advisory or community outreaches will be affected first, as human contact affects the service level – where if it poses a health and safety risk, these services must be scaled back or completely cancelled.

Services provided without in-person contact can/ should continue to be available, until and unless a resource or strategic reason requires these services to be scaled back or completely shut off. The mechanisms (strategy, resources, timing) to maintain a service without in-person contact are a main priority in the service continuity of BFL.
OUR BENEFICIARIES

Our beneficiaries, for the purpose of this strategy can be classified into the in-person and non-in-person beneficiaries, describing the mode in which they receive BarefootLaw services.

For in-person beneficiaries, we will continue to provide them with a service until and unless it is a health and safety risk to them, the community and to our own staff. In-person services will be scaled up or down in accordance with the advisory from Uganda government on public contact, and our own strategic priorities. We will continue to prioritise and encourage the use of non-in-person services immediately and provide guidance on how to do so.

For non-in-person beneficiaries, our services will remain available, until and unless a resource or strategic decision to scale or cancel the services.

As the COVID19 situation involves transmission of a virus through close contact, the health and safety of our beneficiaries will take very high priority. Our strategic direction is informed by Uganda Government's advisory (through the Ministry of Health), the global health viewpoint (international advisories from the World Health Organisation, CDC, etc) and our strategic priorities.
OUR PARTNERS

Our partners, for the purpose of this strategy are; implementing and non-implementing partners.

Implementing partners are persons or organisations through or together with whom we provide a service to the community. Managing each other’s risk/ exposure to the COVID19 situation is complex if not impossible. For that reason, scaling back all partner engagements (except mission critical engagements) until such a point as there is a return to normalcy.

Non-implementing partners, especially service providers will continue to provide their services, while implementing best practice in public safety emergency situations. This best practice involves operating without the need for in-person contact (through online meetings and service offerings).

Other non-implementing partners, for whom information is critical/ will continue to receive updated situations of our work and our response towards the COVID19 situation as it evolves, including updates on the change/ scale of services offered to the public. Our normal communications channels will continue to be used and amplified to share this information.

OUR SHORT/MEDIUM TERM GOALS

Our 3-year strategy and BHAG will remain in focus, through this strategy, unless and until resources or strategic decisions require a change in goals. This means achieving our goals will strongly hinge on our digital strategy.
PREVENTION

Our first level of control and protection is through prevention. This strategy works with the already existing health and safety guidelines of BarefootLaw in the Operations manual, the recent guidelines shared with the staff recently on the COVID19 Health and Safety and all available guidelines for the Ministry of Health of Uganda, the World Health Organisation and the CDC.

FOR STAFF

All staff are required to adhere to the guidelines as detailed in our existing Health and Safety Guidelines and report any instance of symptoms or sickness to the Human Resource team and their supervisors immediately.

FOR BENEFICIARIES

All beneficiaries must be made aware of our steps and measures being taken, to manage the spread of the COVID19 virus, including adhering to the health and safety requirements of BarefootLaw BEFORE receiving a service in-person, from BFL.

None of the health and safety requirements are optional and a beneficially shall be refused service, on account of failure to accept adherence to our health and safety guidelines.

FOR PARTNERS, SUPPLIERS AND EXTERNAL PARTIES

All partners, suppliers and external parties must be made aware of our steps and measures being taken, to manage the spread of the COVID19 virus, including adhering to the health and safety requirements of BarefootLaw BEFORE offering a service or interacting in-person, with BarefootLaw staff.
MANAGING A POTENTIAL CASE

STAFF
Any staff that exhibits signs/ symptoms of COVID19 will be managed, in accordance with the Ministry of Health Uganda guidelines and in line with the health and safety guidelines of the organisation.

All staff will be notified of the presence of a potential case within the staff and be required to take the mandatory reporting steps (as guided by the MoH of Uganda).

EXTERNAL PARTY
An external party, who at the premises (or for an outreach) presents with the symptoms of COVID19 (or related sickness) the relevant and health officials will be notified, to manage the health and safety situation.

All staff will be notified of the presence of a potential case within the staff and be required to take the mandatory reporting steps (as guided by the MoH of Uganda).
MANAGING AS AN EPIDEMIC

STAFF SAFETY
In line with this strategy, and with guidance from the MoH of Uganda and other global health organisations, in case Uganda is declared a health and safety risk country as a result of COVID19 or, as strategically determined by BarefootLaw— for the health and safety of staff and the public, BarefootLaw will immediately cancel all in person engagements, including services to beneficiaries and obligations to partners and external parties.

BUSINESS/ SERVICE CONTINUITY
Our service continuity will be shifted to providing all our services to beneficiaries and partners through our non in-person channels.

This non in-person service offering will be implemented in two ways; first with all-staff still physically present at the office, and then, as determined by the management, escalated to remote work.

While still working physically at the BarefootLaw offices, all staff will meet the set standards for health and safety, including the protocols to handle a potentially sick staff member.

RESOURCE PLANNING
Resource planning involves making available the technological, operational and consumable resources available to keep the office running while having staff on a higher level of alert. Adequately planning for and stocking essential materials for health and safety must take a priority, as well as expedient purchase/ procurement cycles for other essential resources, including bulk purchasing and paying for items that are routinely used, to avoid frequent contact with supply chains, maximizing the use of delivery services, paying online (banking and utility services) while minimizing over-stocking of non-essential or perishable materials.

In the event that the BarefootLaw service escalates to remote working, the resource planning involves providing staff working remotely with the necessary resources like internet, (where necessary - airtime), software access and the necessary systems security, to efficiently work remotely.
WORKING REMOTELY

If the situation requires BarefootLaw services to be provided by staff working remotely (work from home), our service offer will have to remain non in-person and work mainly through technology.

The core service to beneficiaries will remain and, a work schedule to guide this will be developed and shared.
In case of any suspected coronavirus case, the Ministry of Health (MOH) Uganda numbers to call are: 0800 203 033, 0800 100 066 (toll free), 0782 909 153, 0772 460 297, 0772 469 323

COVID 19 GUIDELINES FOR SAFE MASS GATHERINGS, Ministry of Health, Uganda;
http://www.health.go.ug/content/covid-19-guidelines-safe-mass-gatherings

Corona Virus (COVID-19), Center for Disease Control and Prevention;

Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Outbreak, World Health Organization;
https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019

READ MORE HERE:
- Irregular #Covid19 Insights No. 3, 14 Mar 2020
- Irregular #Covid19 Insights No. 2, 11 Mar 2020.docx
- Irregular #Covid19 Insights No. 1, 9 Mar 2020

-CORONA VIRUS PRECAUTIONS