

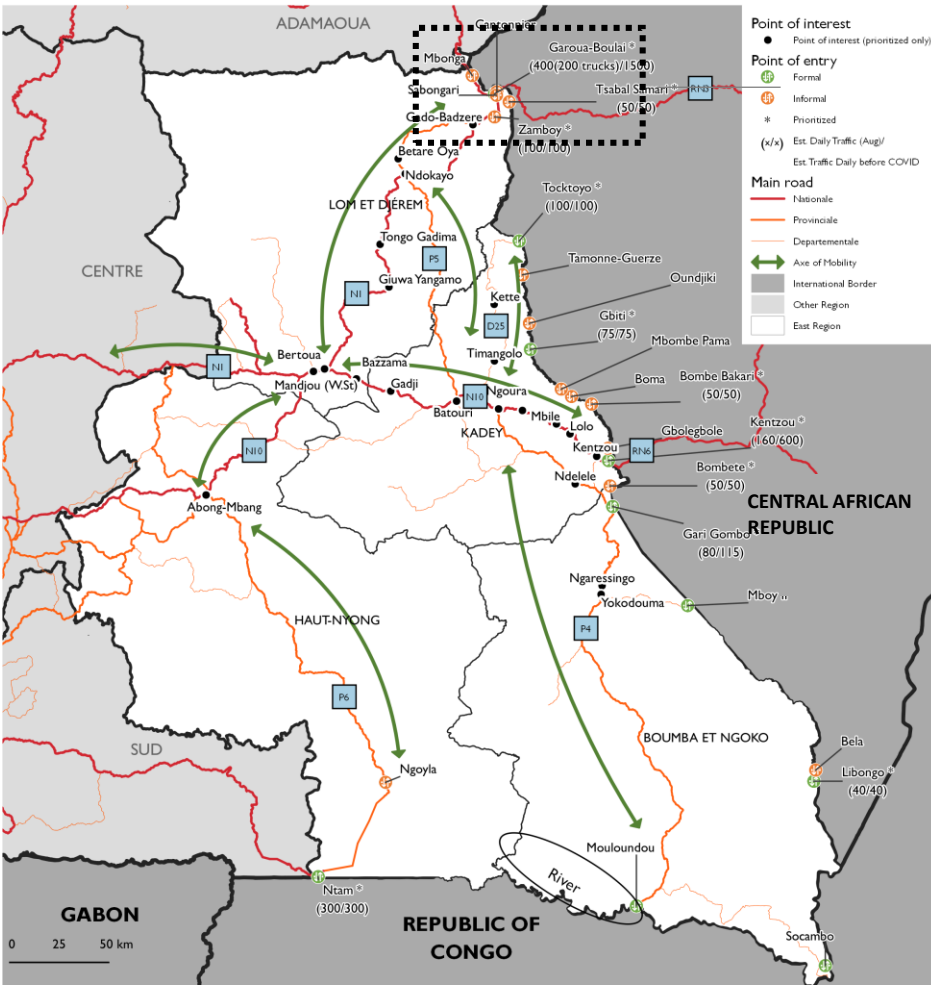


The COVID-19 outbreak has affected global mobility and tested health screening practices at points of entry (PoEs). While restrictive measures on mobility have been partially lifted, health and border staff working at PoEs have continued implementing public health measures such as disease surveillance, screening and testing. To better understand how mobility and health screening is affected at PoEs, IOM developed a **mobility database mapping the location, status and different restrictions imposed at key PoEs**. A first dashboard was published in May and assessed public health measures at all 65 official known PoEs in Cameroon. This report presents information on the operational status, public health measures and direct assistance at Garoua-Boulaï PoE (G-B), to help national authorities, United Nations agencies, NGOs and stakeholders identify best practices and lessons learned, whilst developing adequate pandemic preparedness and response interventions across Cameroon, and to inform future actions of the PoE Working Group.

METHODOLOGY

A participatory mapping exercise was conducted in Bertoua on 25 Aug. to understand how COVID-19 has affected mobility trends at formal and informal PoEs in the East Region of Cameroon. The magnitude and characteristics of flows to and from Chad and Central African Republic (CAR) were assessed, to inform future prioritization of public health measures. Garoua-Boulaï was subsequently identified as the 1st of 7 high priority PoEs for response.

MOBILITY FLOWS



GAROUA-BOULAÏ

Garoua-Boulaï is a strategic PoE situated along the border between Cameroon and CAR (Lom-et-Djerem division, East Region) which travellers cross to travel from Cameroon into CAR, and upwards to Chad using the Route Nationale 1 road. This PoE holds strategic importance in the fight against COVID-19, as well as for preparedness measures towards future health crises, due to its position as the number one PoE and the large number of travellers crossing the international frontier each day, and thus one of the main areas of vulnerability for the continued spread of COVID-19. Maintaining the continuous movement across Garoua-Boulaï of truck drivers and long-distance travellers is also crucial for the Central African Republic, which as a land-locked country with no direct access to the sea, relies heavily on Garoua-Boulaï as a PoE for the importation of essential goods and services.

FACTS & FIGURES



Partially open

Open to freight trucks
3 days/week (Mon. Thur. Sat.)



1,500 daily flows (Feb. 2020)
400 daily flows (Aug. 2020)



134 positive cases in G-B
as of 16/10/2020

74% of which identified thanks to PoE screening



1st of 7 prioritized PoE in East Region for COVID-19 Response

ASSISTANCE PROVIDED

June 2020

- Capacity-building workshop of border and health staff
- Distribution of PPE and infrastructure to PoEs

July-August 2020

- 2,027 persons sensitized to COVID-19 risks

October 2020

- SOP training for border staff
- SOP technical support for CAR border
- Partner mission to G-B.

Nov-Dec 2020

- Distribution of PPE and infrastructure donations

This map is for illustration purposes only. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the International Organization for Migration.

Produced by IOM Regional Office for West and Central Africa, 2020
Sources: OCHA/INM; Participatory mapping exercise and evaluation of PoE 25.08.2020



High levels of mobility in any particular region, particularly in the early stages of a pandemic, can represent an additional risk on the general **spread of communicable diseases**, with added vulnerability stemming from the continued **movement of populations** across international borders without health checks or surveillance mechanisms. Border areas are thus at particular risk due to the high mobility of populations. However, **if appropriate measures are put in place** through a mobility lens that adapts to the practices of mobility in an area, then public health interventions will achieve an overall greater efficiency to limit the spread of a communicable disease. Public health measures taken at Garoua-Boulaï PoE in terms of **coordination** and **Infection prevention and control (IPC)** have enabled to reduce such risks to their minimum and underline the need for proper **political dialogue and border coordination**.



A border post health worker distributes testing kits and results to truck drivers at Garoua-Boulaï, 8 October 2020 (© IOM 2020)

PUBLIC HEALTH MEASURES TAKEN SO FAR AT GAROUA-BOULAÏ POINT OF ENTRY



INFECTION PREVENTION AND CONTROL

Every traveler crossing the Garoua-Boulaï PoE is submitted to a COVID-19 test. Travelers who test negative are given a certificate allowing them to cross the border; travelers who test positive are referred to either the closest district hospital or a the equivalent in the Central African Republic, depending on their side of the border when found to be positive. This systematic testing system led to the identification of 74 per cent of positive cases observed at the PoE in Garoua-Boulaï.

LESSONS LEARNT



BORDER COORDINATION

Prior to 1 July 2020, testing was conducted at both sides of the border, leading to backlogs of **several hundred vehicles and trucks at a time** could be waiting at Garoua-Boulaï to cross the border due to lack of coordination on testing kits, with travellers waiting for test results to arrive from both sides. Since 1 July 2020, coordination was strengthened, and an **agreement signed by the two countries mutually recognizing test results from both countries**. This has since been integrated into the on-going development of SOPs.



COORDINATION

Coordination has been strengthened between the **border post** and **Garoua-Boulaï district hospital**, who are both in **daily contact** with each other. In the event of a positive COVID-19 test at the border post, a vehicle is sent immediately from the district hospital to collect the person and to transport back to the hospital for treatment. As of 16 October 2020, **99 positive COVID-19 cases were thus referred thanks to this collaboration process**. This presents best practice for other PoEs in the region and across Cameroon.



POLITICAL DIALOGUE

The situation in Garoua-Boulaï has underscored the importance of **political dialogue at all levels between states on a bilateral and multilateral basis**, to foster cooperation on common challenges given the transboundary nature of public health crises. Since 1 July 2020, additional political initiatives have been carried out, including more **regular border committee meetings** with both authorities present, and the **joint development of SOPs** for the conduct of officials carrying out public health measures along the border at all PoEs. **These SOPs may be used as a basis for more regional standardization of practices as well.**

For further explanations on the methodology use, please refer to the Methodology Framework, available on the following link <https://migration.iom.int/>