

SAVING
LIVES
CHANGING
LIVES



WFP Global Response to COVID-19: June 2020

29 June 2020

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Introduction

This June 2020 update provides a snapshot of the measures WFP has put in place to sustain its operations amidst an unprecedented COVID-19 crisis. It provides up-to-date projections of food security needs due to the economic impacts and measures taken to contain the virus, WFP's scale-up plan to address needs, and how WFP is partnering with governments in this joint effort.

With the declaration of the pandemic, WFP immediately put in place measures to safeguard its assistance to 100 million people. WFP reduced congestion at distribution sites, retail shops and banks; developed health mitigation measures and alternatives to biometric verification, face-to-face assessments and malnutrition screening; adapted cooked meal programmes to take home rations, vouchers and home delivered food kits; diversified its food procurement and financial service base to mitigate supply risks; and re-purposed human resource capacities to address more than 475 surge requests required to implement WFP's response.

Amidst these country-level efforts to continue to deliver, at a global level COVID-19 was disrupting supply chains and risking operations. On 23 March WFP launched an urgent appeal of USD 1.9 billion against its pre-COVID-19 programme of work to pre-position resources and safeguard operations. **Three months later, WFP has received USD 1.7 billion against the appeal** – enabling the organization to procure an immediate buffer for critical operations. More than half these resources were earmarked to 5 operations (Yemen, Syria, Somalia, Bangladesh, South Sudan), and 26 countries received the equivalent of less than one-month of requirements. WFP also leveraged its multilateral funding and Immediate Response Account (IRA), disbursing USD 445 million as of mid-June to sustain underfunded operations and meet new, unforeseen needs such as in El Salvador where COVID-19 lockdowns and tropical storms left thousands in need of immediate food assistance in June. **With limited available balance, there is a risk the IRA – WFP's lifeline for rapid response – will reach critical levels by end July.**

The global crisis is placing significant stress on food security, especially in low- and middle-income countries and fragile states. **The UN Secretary-General has warned of an impending global food emergency that could have long term impacts** as COVID-19 challenges food systems, flattens the informal sector, and impacts economies – pushing millions more into extreme poverty and acute food and nutrition insecurity.

Early WFP projections have been refined and complemented with continuous real-time food security and market monitoring. As of end June 2020 **WFP estimates that the number of acute food insecure people in its countries of operation could increase from 149 million pre-COVID-19,¹ to 270 million before the end of the year.**

The timing could not be worse: countries are entering their annual lean season when access to food is most constrained; the hurricane and monsoon seasons loom; new spikes in internal conflict are displacing families; and a plague of locusts threatens livelihoods.

This June 2020 update presents a **snapshot** of WFP's response and additional requirements (July-December 2020) based on latest analysis, in line with asks from governments and in coordination with country-level food security and humanitarian partners.

WFP is appealing for USD 4.9 billion across its 83 operations to mitigate and respond to the immediate consequences of COVID-19 on the most vulnerable – structured around three pillars:

- a. Sustain critical assistance to WFP's 100 million** pre-COVID targeted beneficiaries through alternative means of assistance;
- b. Scale-up to support up to 38 million** additional people on the brink of acute food insecurity due to COVID-19 compounded impacts; and
- c. Support governments and partners** in their COVID-19 response through provision of technical assistance, tangible assets and services, and complementary support.

As outlined here, WFP with governments and partners has put in place the response required to meet growing food security needs and mitigate more severe impact. **Delivering on these plans is contingent upon sufficient and timely resources: initial requirements peak over the next three months (July-September).**

The evolution of COVID-19 and changing containment measures remains dynamic and unpredictable and the medium and longer-term impacts of the crisis are yet to be fully understood. WFP plans will continuously be updated over the next months in collaboration with governments and partners.

¹ Updated baseline: The Global Report on Food Crises (GRFC) estimated 135 million people in acute food insecurity in 2019 in 55 countries; WFP's June 2020 baseline is updated with latest assessment data for up to 79 countries.

Implications of COVID-19 on Food Security

IMPACT CHANNELS AND RISING NEEDS

The COVID-19 crisis unfolds at a time when the number of acutely food insecure people in the world had already risen nearly 70 percent over the past four years, largely due to man-made conflicts, climate change and economic downturn. The spill-over effects of COVID-19 will further increase the number of people facing acute hunger as jobs are lost, the flow of remittances slows, and food systems are under stress or disrupted. Low and middle-income countries will be disproportionately affected by these three primary “impact channels”:

LOSS OF JOBS

305 million jobs could be lost by mid-2020. Job losses are particularly severe in the informal economy – upon which the vast majority of WFP beneficiaries rely. The International Labor Organization estimates that **earnings for informal workers will decline by 82 percent in low and lower-middle income countries**, with Africa and Latin America to face the largest decline. Women and young people will be disproportionately affected.²

DECLINE IN REMITTANCES

While remittances normally serve as an important informal safety net in times of hardship, they typically slow down during a global economic crisis. The World Bank estimates **remittances globally will fall by 20 percent in 2020**.³

DISRUPTION OF FOOD SYSTEMS

Border closures and suspension of weekly open-air markets in many countries throughout Sub-Saharan Africa have led to reduced regional trade and prevented farmers selling their produce, sometimes leading to localized food scarcity and increased prices. Since the pandemic declaration, restrictions imposed by several exporting countries have put pressure on food import-dependent countries. Meanwhile, plummeting primary commodity prices, containment measures and weak economic activity have already led to depreciating currencies and contributed to domestic price increases in Nigeria as well as several countries in Southern Africa and the Middle East.

In March, WFP released initial estimates that as many as 265 million people across all low and middle income countries could be acutely food insecure by the end of 2020.⁴ Three months later, using an adapted baseline, up-to-date country-level assessments, and latest projection modelling integrating new job loss and remittance estimates, **the number could be even higher when just considering countries where WFP has presence**.⁵

If no action is taken, the number of acutely food insecure in countries with WFP presence will reach 270 million people by end of the year – an 82 percent increase compared to the number of acutely food insecure pre-COVID⁶.

The following groups are expected to be among the hardest hit:

- Households already in acute food insecurity pre-COVID-19 [149 million people; updated baseline]
- Nutritionally vulnerable groups and people with chronic illness at risk of inadequate nutrition
- Households dependent on income from the informal sector – including many in urban areas
- Households with migrant workers and dependent on remittances and/or seasonal migration
- Small farmers and informal workers in rural areas affected by COVID-19 movement restrictions
- Migrants and displaced populations likely to be left out of national social protection systems and often living in densely populated conditions.

Additional groups will face punctual food security challenges, including persons in quarantine or under lockdown prevented from accessing their regular sources of income and food.

² [ILO Monitor: COVID-19 and the world of work. 3trd and 4th editions](#).

³ [World Bank](#):

⁴ Included: 135 million people in food crisis or above in 2019 in 55 countries (GRFC, 2020), and additional 130 million at risk of becoming food insecure by the end of 2020 in all low and middle-income countries based on initial WFP projections.

⁵ The June 2020 updated analysis included three steps: (1) Update and expand acute food insecure baselines to all countries where WFP operates (where data is available); (2) estimate additions using refined methodology; and (3) finetune with country-level assessments where data is available. Note: the situation is highly dynamic and regular updates will be required.

⁶ The updated June analysis covers 79 countries (all countries with WFP presence, except for DPRK, India, Pacific, Iran and Morocco). The projected 270 million is comprised of 149 million people acutely food insecure pre-COVID and 121 million additional people at risk to become food insecure before the end of the year. The baseline was updated to reflect all newly available data for 2020 and expanded country coverage to all WFP countries where data on acute food insecurity was available.

FOOD INSECURITY BY REGION

ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Pockets of extreme poverty, natural hazards, conflict, and migration within and across borders are some of the root causes of food insecurity and malnutrition in Asia and the Pacific. The spread of COVID-19 and domestic restrictions left a large share of the region's workforce under lockdown early on. The pandemic has the potential to increase the number of food insecure people by more than 80 percent as the incomes of already economically stressed populations fall further. The crisis strongly affects those who work in casual, informal labour in vulnerable sectors like tourism (e.g. Cambodia, Pacific Island Countries), the garment industry (e.g. Bangladesh), and who rely on remittances (e.g. Nepal). The increasing frequency and severity of natural hazards (monsoon floods, cyclone, drought), a new locust invasion (Pakistan, Afghanistan), and gender-based inequality exacerbate the situation.

EAST AFRICA

Food insecurity is mainly caused by conflict, recurrent natural disasters and economic shocks. The region hosts 3.3 million refugees and asylum seekers, and 6.2 million IDPs. Access to affected populations can be a challenge. Heavy rains, floods, and the worst desert locust outbreak in decades will have devastating impacts in 2020. The region has not seen sustained lockdowns, thus leading to a more slow-onset impact; nevertheless, COVID-19 is expected to drive the number of acutely food insecure up by 73 percent. Half of the population in larger urban areas is estimated to live in slums or informal settlements. Working poverty is extremely high, nearly 45 percent, as is dependency on remittances. COVID-19 measures by some countries in the region have impacted trade; in South Sudan, the supply shock is driving up local market prices, curtailing purchasing power of the growing urban population. Refugees and IDPs in the region have limited alternative means of survival.

LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

The region suffers from consecutive drought, the second largest migration crisis, and political and economic instability which prompted widespread social unrest in 2019. The intense spread of COVID-19 – outpacing the capacity of the health system – has been met with sustained confinement measures, curtailing livelihoods. Especially vulnerable are those who rely on daily wage labor, informal business, petty commerce and/or remittances. Daily workers in rural areas and smallholder farmers not yet recovered from cyclical drought in the Dry Corridor and Haiti have been unable to sell produce due to movement restrictions. The region projects the highest relative increase in food insecurity (269 percent). Compounding the situation: an above average storm season already observed in June, could drive needs further.

ACUTE FOOD INSECURITY IN NUMBERS

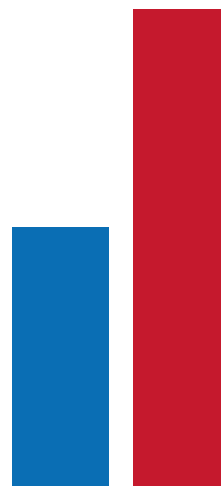
 **83%**

PRE-COVID

27.1 million people

PROJECTED IN 2020

49.6 million people



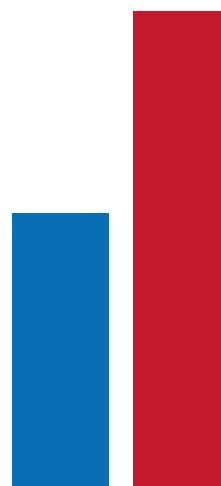
 **73%**

PRE-COVID

24 million people

PROJECTED IN 2020

41.5 million people



 **269%**

PRE-COVID

4.3 million people

PROJECTED IN 2020

16.0 million people⁷



⁷ Baseline and projected numbers include moderately and severely food insecure Venezuelan migrants in Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru.

MIDDLE EAST, CENTRAL ASIA AND NORTH AFRICA

Conflict and violence are main drivers of food insecurity in the region which hosts a large number of refugees, migrants, and IDPs and the highest number of people in acute food insecurity pre-COVID. Today, movement restrictions, lockdowns, trade barriers and unusual consumer behavior are resulting in changing price levels and inflation. Loss of income is reducing households' purchasing power, affecting access to adequate diets. This combined with previous socio-economic shocks is threatening food security in all countries, with particular concerns in Lebanon, Sudan, Syria and Yemen.⁸ The region's heavy dependence on oil and gas exports and on food imports leaves it sensitive to price fluctuations and trade restrictions. Remittance losses will be particularly pronounced in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan where remittances account for 30 percent of GDP.

SOUTHERN AFRICA

The region experienced normal rainfall only once in the last five cropping seasons. In 2019, repeated extreme climatic shocks resulted in the highest peak acute food insecurity of the past decade. The situation is aggravated by widespread poverty, chronic malnutrition and macro-economic shocks in countries like Zimbabwe, where food inflation stands at 950 percent. Conflict continues in Eastern DRC and northern Mozambique. COVID-19 will deepen and increase poverty and food insecurity. Constrained government resources could lead to a curtailment of public services and diminish response capacities. Pending the outcome of 2020 official assessment results, an initial WFP analysis at regional level projected 42 million people in 12 countries with WFP presence will be food insecure. Should a worst-case scenario materialize (widescale economic disruption, declining remittances, severe deterioration in terms of trade, health impacts) this figure could rise to as many as 52.4 million.

WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA

Weather and climate variabilities have historically been the main drivers of food insecurity notably in the Sahel where recurrent drought leads to chronic food production deficit and pasture failure. In coastal countries, above average rainfall causes regular flood events. In recent years, conflict in the region has escalated – disrupting livelihoods and forcing families into protracted displacement. Pre-COVID estimates of acute food insecurity already indicated an important increase from 2019 linked primarily to conflicts in Central Sahel, northern Nigeria, Central African Republic, and Cameroon. COVID-19's compounded impact could drive a further increase of 135 percent. Working poverty is high, and commodity market volatility and supply chain disruptions will impact access and availability of food. COVID-19 unfolds at the peak of the lean season when hunger and malnutrition are most severe.

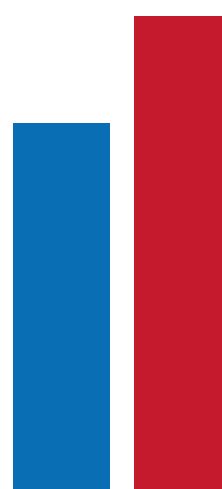
 **29%**

PRE-COVID

41.1 million people

PROJECTED IN 2020

53 million people



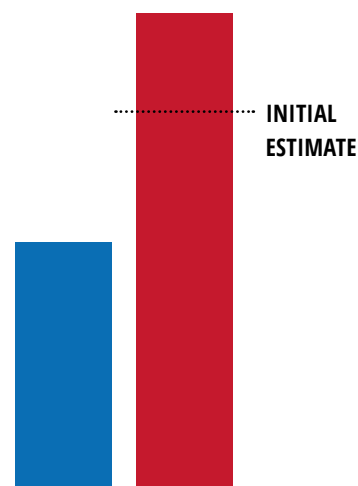
 **90%**

PRE-COVID

27.5 million people

PROJECTED IN 2020

42 million; up to 52.4 million people [worst case scenario]



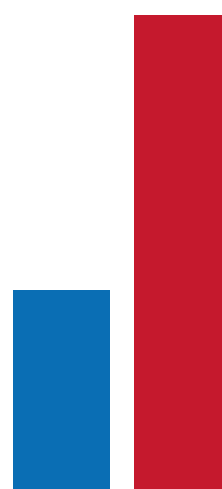
 **135%**

PRE-COVID

24.5 million people

PROJECTED IN 2020

57.5 million people



⁸ At the time of writing, a nation-wide IPC is ongoing in Yemen; the increase in food insecure may be significant.

HORIZON SCANNING

Looking six months ahead, as COVID-19 intensifies already increasing vulnerabilities and drives additional groups into acute food insecurity, the crisis and containment efforts will reinforce pre-existing economic instability (such as in Haiti, Lebanon, and Zimbabwe), aggravate risk of potential rise of political and social unrest, and risk exacerbating conflicts. The pandemic and its consequences are not the only risks facing fragile communities in the remaining months of 2020.



Poor Rainfall

Central America and Haiti, parts of South East Asia, and West Africa coastal countries are expected to have below average rainfall thru the agricultural season, resulting in reduced crop yields. For some, this will be a consecutive year(s) of reduced production.



Locusts

The worst desert locust upsurge in decades threatens food security and livelihoods in the Greater Horn of Africa. Ethiopia, Somalia and Kenya are biggest concerns but the locusts have spread throughout the region and could continue to grow in Yemen and South-West Asia. There is a risk of the pest's expansion to the Sahel belt and Southern Africa by end July.



Wet Season: Hurricane, Monsoons, and Floods

The second half of the year are the peak of the tropical cyclone seasons and rainy seasons. The Caribbean and Central America expect an above average season (60 percent likelihood). There is a 70 percent likelihood of above-average rainfall in parts of East Africa, leading to flooding.



Armed Conflict

COVID-19 has not slowed armed conflict – and the spread of COVID-19 and economic repercussions in conflict-affected areas could hinder peace processes and aggravate conflict. There is the risk that recruitment by non-state armed groups could increase in countries where the economic recession results in large job losses.



Socio-economic grievances

COVID-19's impact and containment efforts triggered protests in all regions including in Mali, Senegal, Burkina Faso, Lebanon, Sudan, Tunisia, Palestine, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Bolivia, Haiti, Colombia, Guatemala, and Ecuador. As the focus of protests shifts from discontent over lockdowns to broader socio-economic grievances, this trend is likely to continue.

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https://www.yunbaogao.cn/report/index/report?reportId=5_3473

