

SAVING  
LIVES  
CHANGING  
LIVES



# Responding to the development emergency caused by COVID-19

WFP's medium-term programme framework

Summary Note



June 2020

# A looming development emergency

The large-scale economic disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic is threatening to undo decades of development gains and growth, creating a 'development emergency'.

While COVID-induced impacts on income and livelihoods are felt across the world, fragile low and middle-income countries are disproportionately affected. Under-developed and under-resourced systems are less able to contain and treat the immediate health and longer-term socio-economic effects of the pandemic. The projected global depression, integrated nature of economic activity and dependence on volatile global import, export and credit markets will have negative consequences on trade and employment. Limited fiscal space and high debt will restrict many countries' ability to respond to increasing needs.

The effects of the pandemic are projected to exacerbate existing vulnerabilities, with the number of people suffering acute food insecurity likely to almost double from 135 million to 270 million.

The most vulnerable including women, children, refugees, internally displaced persons and marginalized communities are at particular risk of falling deeper into hunger and malnutrition as the impact of the pandemic exacerbates pre-existing inequalities based on gender, age, disability and other factors. Groups that were previously able to meet their own food and nutrition needs could also become food insecure.



## A response that leaves no one behind

Addressing this looming development emergency requires a comprehensive and integrated response which upholds humanitarian and human rights standards and ensures no one is left behind, in the spirit of Agenda 2030.

With almost six decades of experience in crisis and development contexts, an extensive portfolio of programmes that assist and empower vulnerable populations, and an unparalleled global supply chain network, the World Food Programme (WFP) is uniquely positioned to support governments, local organizations and other partners to quickly adapt, design and deliver interventions. Thanks to its presence and capacity in over 80 countries, WFP can also rapidly scale-up and directly deliver complementary programmes where required.

The three areas WFP has identified as crucial to an effective, efficient and equitable response, and where the organization has a proven track record as a valuable partner to governments, UN agencies, International Financial Institutions and other partners, are: 1) social protection; 2) access to basic school-based and nutrition services; and 3) food systems.

Within each of these, WFP and its partners will contribute in three key ways: collecting and analyzing actionable food security and essential needs information to inform the design and implementation of effective policies and programmes; providing technical and policy support and guidance to strengthen national responses; and deploying food, cash and/or capacity strengthening programmes to address gaps and complement national mechanisms.

# A closer look

## Social protection

As the pandemic threatens to deepen existing vulnerabilities and create new ones, countries will need to design, adapt and implement social assistance interventions that address the impacts of COVID-19 and to strengthen existing social protection systems designed to respond to shocks. WFP can support governments to: better understand changing needs and actions needed to address them, including scaling up existing cash-based safety nets and expanding their coverage in urban areas; establish new schemes to reach groups that are not covered by current safety nets; and maintain programmes that protect populations from other shocks that compound COVID, such as climate-related ones.

## Access to basic school-based and nutrition services

Basic social services are the building blocks for societal function and human development. Within crises, their sustained provision is foundational to preserve life and livelihoods, and to enable recovery. As countries work to contain the spread of COVID-19, measures such as the closure of schools and movement restrictions are making it harder for the most vulnerable to access the services they require.



- School-based health and nutrition programmes provide a crucial, widespread safety net that supports

children and their families, helps keeping children – especially girls – in school and contributes to the development of human capital. WFP can advise governments on alternative ways to continue delivering support during school closures; help ensure that children’s access to nutritious meals is restored as schools reopen; and provide guidance and work with partners to ensure context-appropriate physical distancing and to promote proper water, sanitation and hygiene services and behaviours for school children and staff.

- Nutrition services must be maintained to ensure nutritionally vulnerable populations do not bear the brunt of the pandemic. It is anticipated that many countries will have to dramatically shift the way at-risk groups – especially women, infants and young children – receive preventive and life-saving nutrition assistance. WFP can provide supply chain support to deliver essential medicines, pharmaceutical supplies and specialized nutritious foods; facilitate the delocalization of nutrition services from health facilities to communities; scale up nutrition activities and advocate for their continuation; and collect and analyze data on evolving needs.

## Food systems

The COVID-19 pandemic is placing significant stress on all components of food systems (production, trade and distribution, and consumption), threatening the food security and livelihoods of millions of vulnerable people. Sustaining, protecting and improving food systems during the crisis is vital to reduce the risk of people falling into poverty and food insecurity, and to enable a quicker and more inclusive recovery.

WFP can leverage its supply chain expertise to help ensure food remains available; increase smallholder farmers’ productivity by supporting their access to seeds, fertilizers, assets, services and markets, and reducing post-harvest loss; protect the livelihoods of smallholder value chain actors through programmes that create income and job opportunities; and ensure the food and nutrition needs of vulnerable populations are met by linking to social protection and nutrition systems.

## **World Food Programme**

Via Cesare Giulio Viola 68/70,  
00148 Rome, Italy  
T +39 06 65131 [wfp.org](http://wfp.org)

## **Photo Credits**

Cover Photo : WFP/Ismail Taxta  
Photo page 2: WFP/Giulio dAdamo  
Photo page 3: WFP/Antoine Vallas