

Needs analysis informing WFP’s Global Response Plan to COVID-19 – June 2020

Methods and key findings – 6 July 2020

Key findings and results

In countries where WFP operates, COVID-19 could push an additional **121 million people** into acute food insecurity by the end of 2020.

Considering that **149 million** people were already acutely food insecure pre-COVID (including 12 million refugees), this would lead to a total of **270 million** people facing acute food insecurity by the end of the year, an increase of more than 80 percent.

Pre-COVID-19, **the Middle East and North Africa** had the highest number of acutely food insecure people – mainly due to conflict, displacement and economic crisis. Latin America and West Africa are expected to have the highest increase of additional people facing acute hunger due to COVID-19. In **West Africa**, the number of acutely food insecure people could more than double while in **Latin America**, the number of people with acute food insecurity could nearly triple. **Countries of particular concern** are those affected by protracted conflict or faced with other compounding shocks such as economic crisis, locust infestation, droughts or other disasters.

Region	Pre-COVID acute food insecure baseline (millions)	Additional acute food insecure due to COVID-19 by end 2020	Total number of acute food insecure by end 2020	% change
Asia and the Pacific	27.1	22.5	49.6	83%
Middle East, Central Asia and North Africa	41.1	11.9	53.0	29%
West and Central Africa	24.5	33.0	57.6	135%
Southern Africa	27.6	24.8	52.4	90%
East Africa	24.0	17.5	41.6	73%
Latin America and the Caribbean	4.3	11.7	16.0	269%
Grand Total	148.7	121.5	270.2	82%

The increase in acute food insecurity is largely driven by **job losses of already vulnerable populations, loss of remittances and reduced purchasing power**. Already poor and food insecure populations are disproportionately affected as many have no or little income security. Containment measures and movement restrictions will notably challenge the food security and nutrition of people already living hand-to-mouth with no safety net. Many of the ‘new hungry’ are the urban poor who depend on the informal sector.

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

- ✓ Households already in acute food insecurity pre-COVID-19 (149 million people)
- ✓ 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 dependent on remittances and/or seasonal migration
- ✓ Small farmers and informal casual labourer 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.

Coverage and approach

This analysis focused on acute food insecurity in 79 countries with a WFP operational presence.^[1] The list covers the most food insecure countries in the world.

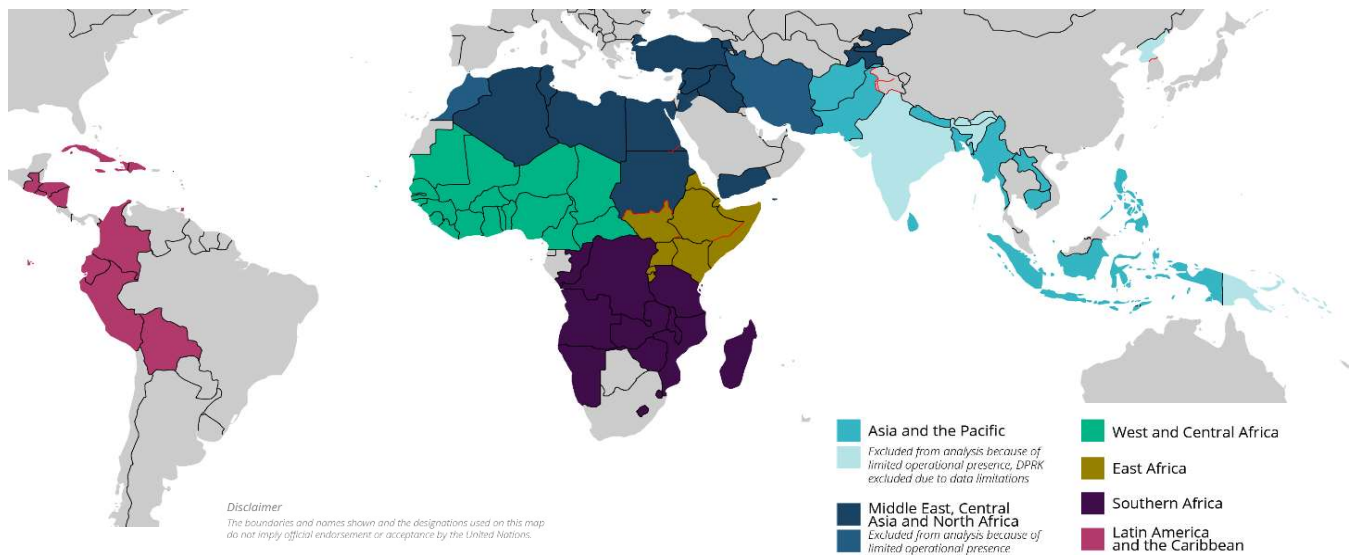
The number of acute food insecure people prior to COVID is based on the latest food security information available for 2020. It also covers refugees who are food insecure or dependent on food assistance.

To estimate additional people at risk of becoming acutely food insecure, a combination of methods was applied: projections and actual data from remote monitoring and assessments where available.

The projection model is based on two impact channels: working poor affected by job losses and a reduction in remittances received. The projections are based on job loss estimates provided by ILO and region-specific declines in remittances published by the World Bank.

All data was vetted and validated by WFP regional and country level food security experts on the ground.

WFP regional presence and countries covered by the analysis*



* DPRK had to be excluded due to lack of data. Countries with limited WFP operational presence were also excluded: Iran, Morocco, India, Bhutan and the Pacific region.

Annex 1: Examples of how countries have been affected

Asia and the Pacific

Afghanistan Food security remains alarmingly high with continuing conflict, widespread unemployment, and price hikes. Around 12.6 million people were estimated to be in food crisis or above (IPC phase 3 and above, April-May 2020, excluding COVID-19 effects). An additional 2.8 million people are expected to become acutely food-insecure due to COVID-19. More than 75 percent of people in urban areas and 35 percent in rural areas rely on income sources that have been disrupted by COVID-19.

Bangladesh Bangladesh is the most densely settled country in the world (excluding city-states), making physical distancing a challenge. Lockdown measures and the economic consequences of COVID-19 threaten the livelihoods of millions of people and places additional strain on access to lifesaving assistance to nearly one million refugees in Cox's Bazar. The groups most at risk to food insecurity include the urban poor, casual day labourers, domestic workers, small business holders, mass transport workers, and garment workers.

Middle East, Central Asia and North Africa

Lebanon Lebanon has been facing dramatic economic and socio-political challenges since end of last year which have been further exacerbated by the outbreak of COVID-19 and related containment measures. The situation continues to be fueled by civil unrest and political instability. Country-wide job losses are affecting both Lebanese residents and refugee populations. According to a recent remote assessment, one in three Lebanese and over half of Syrian refugees have lost their jobs.¹ Food is a major concern for all, but especially for Syrian refugees. Prior to COVID-19, 1.3 million refugees were estimated to be acute food insecure, many of them dependent on external assistance.

Sudan Sudan has been heavily affected by the economic crisis and shortage of foreign currency to finance imports of key commodities. Food prices are hitting new record highs every month. In May, the average national price of sorghum increased by 15.6 percent compared to the previous month, 191 percent compared to the previous year, and 534 percent compared to the 5-year average. COVID-19 related restrictions on border closings, reduced internal movements, and reduced remittances have further reduced the purchasing power of the population. According to the latest IPC, 9.6 million people are currently food insecure (or about 21 percent of the total population).

Syria Since late 2019, a number of events have impacted the Syria affecting the country's food security. While COVID-19 has further compounded the deterioration of food insecurity in Syria especially in contributing to increasing prices and affecting jobs and livelihoods, the Lebanese financial crisis had a deeper and a longer impact on the country. Prices of food items have increased by over 200 percent since October 2019 due to the Lebanese financial crisis. During the peak of COVID-19, lockdowns prices increased by around 40 percent. Through the combined impact of COVID-19 and the Lebanese financial crisis, WFP estimates that an additional 1.4 million people have become food insecure in Syria over the past 8 months increasing the number of food insecure people in Syria from 7.9 to 9.3 million (46 percent of the population). A further deterioration of food security is likely in Syria over the coming months as prices continue to rise unabated.

¹ WFP report: [Assessing the Impacts of the Economic and COVID-19 Crises in Lebanon](#).

Yemen An estimated 69 percent of Yemen's population or 20.1 million people are already food insecure according to the latest published IPC report (2019), of whom around 13 million people receive humanitarian food assistance. The scale, severity and complexity of needs in Yemen are staggering, with over 230 of Yemen's 333 districts in food crisis or worse. There is a high likelihood that the 7 million food insecure people not currently receiving food assistance will suffer further and could end up facing starvation. An interagency need analysis (IPC) is underway for southern the governorates of Yemen, while for northern governorates, analysis may start in August.

West and Central Africa

Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger

Acute food insecurity is at its all-time high in all three countries. The March 2020 Cadre Harmonise (CH) projected that the number of acute food insecure people (equivalent to IPC/CH phase 3 and above) will more than double from 2019, reaching 5.5 million people during the 2020 lean season. This increase is largely explained by climate shocks such as droughts and floods as well as increasing tensions and insecurity. This is resulting in a massive increase of internal displacements, dysfunctional social infrastructures, destabilisation of markets as well as disruptions in population's livelihoods. As a result of COVID-19 which has further exacerbated the drivers of food insecurity, it is estimated that an additional 7 million people could become acute food insecure across the three countries by the end of 2020.

Nigeria

Nigeria faces multiple crises, with a protracted conflict in the north-east, which has uprooted 1.8 million people who are currently internally displaced within the country. Over 7 million people in the north-east are projected to be acutely food insecure during the next lean season (June-August 2020, based on Cadre Harmonise), an increase of 2 million compared to the 2019 lean season. COVID-19 is spreading rapidly in Nigeria, further straining the country's health system and economy, which has already been severely impacted by the fall in oil prices. Overall, 16 million additional people could become acutely food insecure across the country by the end of the year.

Southern Africa

DRC

Already prior to COVID-19, DRC had the second highest number of acutely food insecure people globally (14 million). The country continues to face multiple and large-scale complex crises (e.g. resurgence of Ebola, measles and cholera outbreaks, persistent insecurity and conflict, largescale displacements). As a result of COVID-19-induced price increases and job losses, households in the most affected areas have lost almost 40 percent of their purchasing power. More than 10 million additional people could face hunger before the end of the year.

Mozambique

Destruction caused by back-to-back disasters and the impact of COVID-19 is escalating an already alarming food security situation and is exhausting families' coping capacities. Prior to COVID-19, an estimated 1.6 million people were estimated to be food insecure. Low income urban populations and smallholder rural farmers and fisherman are particularly vulnerable to heightened food insecurity. At the same time, global disruption in trade will affect food supply, resulting in lower production, higher import costs and increased prices of food in the markets. As a result, the number of food insecure people could more than double due to COVID-19 and reach 3.9 million by the end of 2020.

Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe has been facing extreme natural shocks and persistent economic challenges over the past years. The well below average harvest of 2019 is expected to repeat in 2020. Prior to COVID-

19, 6.5 million people were acutely food-insecure, but due to COVID-19 the number could reach up to 7.7 million in 2020. The main drivers for this additional food insecurity are income loss of already poor populations, coinciding with hyper-inflation.

East Africa

Ethiopia

Political and ethnic tensions, social unrest, intercommunal violence, natural hazards as well as the worst locust outbreak the country has seen in 25 years are exacerbated by COVID-19. While COVID-19 induced restrictions have eased, the economic impact continues to affect availability of vital imports as well as prices. The influx of returnees (15,300 people since April) is raising additional COVID-19 concerns. According to the Humanitarian Response Plan, 15.5 million people could become food insecure, of whom 6.3 million are estimated to be due to COVID-19.

South Sudan

Conflict, locusts, and COVID-19 come together at the peak of the lean season, threatening to aggravate already high food insecurity levels. Meanwhile, intercommunal violence continues to cause displacement of people. COVID-19 risks stalling the implementation of the peace agreement and exacerbating political instabilities. As of June 2020, there are concerns of pockets of population in catastrophe/famine conditions (IPC phase 5). Pre-COVID, 6.8 million people were estimated to be acute food insecure. Based on WFP projections, up to 8.2 million people could face acute hunger before the end of the year.

Latin America and the Caribbean

Dry corridor countries

Nicaragua, Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador have been highly affected by movement restrictions, reduction of remittances and loss of income from the tourist sector. The number of severe food insecure has increased from 1.7 to 2.5 million people. At the same time, an above average hurricane season has already affected the region with the first Tropical Storm (Amanda) leaving over one million people affected, with 300,000 people in need in El Salvador alone.

Venezuelan migrants

The situation is dire for Venezuelan migrants in Peru, Colombia and Ecuador, which have been heavily hit by the health crisis. Current estimates suggest that in those three countries, 2 million Venezuelan migrants are moderately or severely food insecure, which corresponds to 65 percent of the migrant population.² More than half of those food insecure migrants are located in Colombia.

² Source:

https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/wfp_remote_assessment_venezuelan_migrants_200604_en.pdf