



## The Impact of COVID-19 on Rural Poverty and Hunger

Whenever crisis strikes, it is invariably the poor and the vulnerable who are most at risk. The lives and livelihoods of rural people are being turned upside down as the COVID-19 pandemic spreads into the rural communities of developing countries, where more than three quarters of the poorest and hungry people live.

Over **140 million people** globally could fall into **extreme poverty** (measured against the US\$1.90 poverty line) in 2020 - an **increase of 20 percent** from present levels according to the International Food Policy Research Institute<sup>i</sup> - and the first time that we see poverty increases globally in 30 years.

Restrictions on trade and movement and the availability of labour are making it difficult for small-scale farmers to access markets, purchase seeds, harvest crops and sell their products. COVID-19 could push an **additional 130 million people** to the brink of starvation **by the end of 2020**. This could bring the total number of people experiencing **acute food insecurity to 265 million**, according to World Food Programme analysis<sup>ii</sup>.

## IFAD's Response to the COVID-19 Crisis

### The Rural Poor Stimulus Facility

IFAD launched the [Rural Poor Stimulus Facility](#) (RPSF), an emergency relief fund, and seeded it with a \$40 million grant. It is a multi-donor fund to help the most vulnerable and marginalized people sustain themselves through the crisis. It will accelerate the recovery of rural communities. The goal is to secure an additional \$200 million from governments, the private sector, foundations and philanthropists.

### Repurposing Programs Without Jeopardizing Quality

**Malawi:** The [Programme for Rural Irrigation Development](#) (PRIDE) will support farmers by expanding storage facilities to maintain sufficient food stocks during the upcoming lean period (following the recent harvest). PRIDE will also scale up support to connect farmers with food processing facilities to ensure local supply-chains keep running.

**Burkina Faso:** The [Agricultural Value Chains Support Project](#) is repurposing US\$390,000 to protect agricultural production from the effects of COVID-19. Specific activities will include

procuring seeds and fertilizer; and assist with land preparation. The goal is to provide livelihood support that complements the humanitarian relief effort ongoing in the country.

**Bangladesh:** IFAD has supported a microfinance apex organization to negotiate with the Microfinance Regulatory Authority to defer microenterprise loan repayments, thereby protecting the microenterprise sector from financial collapse in the immediate term. This will ensure that small-scale producers and small and medium-sized agribusinesses have sufficient liquidity to maintain their livelihood activities during the crisis.

**Ecuador:** The [Project to Strengthen Rural Actors in the Popular and Solidary Economy](#) is working with rural associations in the Morona Santiago province to set up a network that will keep the local food supply chain active by financing transportation and storage facilities.

**Tunisia:** IFAD is reallocating US\$2.7 million to support a government cash transfer programme in response to COVID-19. As well as helping those affected to meet urgent basic needs, the transfers help avoid asset depletion and enable households to prepare for the future growing season by gaining access to agricultural inputs.

Find more on IFAD and COVID-19 [here](#).

## Learning, Sharing and Raising Awareness

As COVID-19 spreads around the world, IFAD staff are gathering information to report on impacts in IFAD-supported projects, countries and regions. Here are a selection of some of the blogs featured on IFAD's [corporate website](#), social media channels and in media reports over the last few weeks.

### Small-scale farmers can help build resilient food systems in a post–COVID-19 world

By [Marie Hagg](#), Associate Vice-President, External Relations and Governance Department  
Before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, more than 820 million people were living in hunger. [Read more.](#)

### Long-term development supports quick action in a crisis: an update from Asia and the Pacific

By [Nigel Brett](#), Director, Asia and Pacific Region  
It has been really inspiring to receive updates from the field over the past two months illustrating how IFAD-supported projects are continuing to deliver much-needed support to farmers and vulnerable rural communities in spite of the disruptions from the COVID-19 pandemic. [Read more.](#)

### Protecting health and protecting livelihoods: a delicate balance in the era of COVID-19

By [Ulac Demirag](#), Country Director, Ethiopia  
Development encompasses a wide range of actions, from short-term emergency relief to mid- and long-term infrastructure and resilience building that enables people, communities and nations to thrive even after projects have ended. [Read more.](#)

## **Recovery, reactivation and resilience: Confronting COVID-19 in Latin America and the Caribbean**

By [Rossana Polastri](#), Director, Latin America and the Caribbean

With half of the planet's population locked down, the global economy brought to a halt and the number of cases reaching into the millions, it is clear that the COVID-19 pandemic is the biggest crisis of our time. [Read more.](#)

## **Serving the rural poor in the time of physical distancing: *Staying safe, well – and connected***

By [Khalida Bouzar](#), Director, Near East, North Africa, Europe and Central Asia Division

It has been three weeks since COVID-19 has drastically altered the daily lives of IFAD staff headquartered in Rome and stationed around the world. [Read more.](#)

## **COVID-19: An opportunity for the road not taken?**

By [Margarita Astralaga](#), Director, Climate, Gender and Social Inclusion Division

Amidst the suffering and economic hardship caused by the COVID-19 emergency, one silver lining has emerged: an interruption to the greenhouse gas emissions and environmental degradation stemming from human activity. [Read more.](#)

## **Re-imagining our economic choices: *For decades, human beings have chosen profits over lives. The time has come to jettison this approach***

By [Kaushik Barua](#), Portfolio Manager, Cambodia

The COVID-19 pandemic will reshape all our economic choices. Nations have made a crucial choice in recent weeks, choosing human life over economic growth. [Read more.](#)

Find more IFAD blogs [here](#).

For additional stories on IFAD's response to COVID-19 see [here](#).

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<sup>i</sup> It is based on a downturn in global economic growth of 5% in 2020.

<sup>ii</sup> Source : WFP David Beasley's address to the UN Security Council on April 21 : « 821 million people go to bed hungry every night all over the world, chronically hungry, and as the new Global Report on Food Crisis published today shows, there are a further 135 million people facing crisis levels of hunger or worse. That means 135 million people on earth are marching towards the brink of starvation. But now the World Food Programme analysis shows that, due to the Coronavirus, an additional 130 million people could be pushed to the brink of starvation by the end of 2020. That's a total of 265 million people. “ : <https://www.wfp.org/news/wfp-chief-warns-hunger-pandemic-covid-19-spreads-statement-un-security-council>