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WFP Global Update on COVID-19: November 2020

Growing Needs, Response to Date and
What's to Come in 2021

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Introduction

WFP estimates that 271.8 million people in countries where it operates are acutely food insecure – or directly at-risk of becoming so – due to the aggravating effect the protracted COVID-19 crisis is having in areas affected by conflict, socio-economic downturn, natural hazards, climate change and pests. The latest estimate marks an increase in acute food insecurity from the earlier June projection. This November update of WFP's Global Response Plan to COVID-19 takes stock of efforts by regional bureaux and country offices to continue to sustain and scale-up operations to assist vulnerable communities and to support governments in their health and hunger response.

Since the last update in September, WFP has further extended its reach to assist nearly 97 million people with critical food and nutrition assistance as of the end of the third quarter. This is up from nearly 85 million as at the middle of the year, demonstrating an ability to adapt programmes and mitigate risks posed in the complex operating environment. WFP has expanded its continuous monitoring (mVAM) from 15 countries in 2019 to 39 countries today to track real-time evolving needs. Meanwhile, WFP assistance continues at pace with more people receiving unconditional food assistance in the first nine months of 2020 than in all of 2019, nearly 69 million and 61 million people respectively. More than 13 million schoolchildren have benefited from WFP school-based programmes amidst closures, and more than 12 million women, girls and boys received malnutrition prevention and treatment. WFP continues to invest in asset creation and livelihoods, reaching an estimated 7 million people in the first nine months of the year while enabling communities to retain their means of income and cope with the compounding effects of COVID-19. Cash-based transfers exceeded US\$ 1.7 billion in 67 countries as of the end of October 2020 – up from 61 countries last year.¹

WFP is grateful to 24 donors who have come forward with US\$ 403 million since the September appeal, and for flexible funding which has allowed WFP to disburse more than US\$ 168 million from its Immediate Response Account to kickstart life-saving response and preparedness measures in 57 countries. Today however, food security partners still do not have the funding required to implement operations at the level required to prevent catastrophe. Needs-based plans developed by WFP country offices for the next six months stand at US\$ 7.7 billion through April 2021, half of which is still to be resourced.

Food assistance is a lifeline for populations facing a multitude of risks now aggravated by the pandemic, but many country offices must implement ration cuts or reduce the number of beneficiaries due to funding shortfalls. In the Democratic Republic of Congo refugees receive some 75 percent of their required food needs and similar or more severe reductions are in place in Cameroon, Central African Republic and across East Africa. In Syria, where real-time monitoring shows a steady deterioration in food consumption since January, beneficiaries already receive reduced kilocalories and WFP may be required to further reduce rations and beneficiary coverage from next month.

WFP has scaled-up to reach 97 million people in the first nine months of 2020 – nearly as many people as all of 2019 combined.

Extreme hunger is a major concern: ongoing conflict and widespread insecurity in Burkina Faso, Nigeria, South Sudan and Yemen is resulting in crisis levels of food insecurity. Many communities are assessed to be in Integrated Phase Classification (IPC) 4 and, in some locations, Phase 5. Urgent and large-scale humanitarian action is required alongside increased access, while stronger advocacy is needed to hold those responsible for creating famine conditions and subjecting communities to starvation.

As the impact of economic losses due to COVID-19 is expected to continue through 2021, compounding structural and acute vulnerabilities, sustaining crisis response while contributing to building back better is essential. WFP is leveraging its expertise and assistance to help develop, adapt, and deliver national social protection systems, basic education and nutrition services, and food systems, all the while prioritizing climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction. Improved early warning, analysis and preparedness actions will be critical to avoid wide-scale detrimental impact when the next shock or pandemic hits.

¹ 2020 data represents preliminary estimates. Final reporting will be done through Annual Country and Performance Reports in 2021.

Increasing the ability of organizations like WFP to work in conflict and high insecurity settings is equally necessary, through enhanced conflict analysis and dynamic access and acceptance strategies. Working more fully with local actors to inform humanitarian responses and improved coordination amongst humanitarian actors in urban settings will be essential to maximize appropriate efficient response in 2021.

While the world continues to adjust to the difficulties posed by COVID-19, commercial transport sectors have begun to recover. Accordingly, WFP has been phasing down its common services where possible in line with its mandate to fill gaps in commercial capacity. However, given the unpredictable nature of the pandemic, WFP will retain the strategic infrastructure and capacity necessary to step up these services again if and when needed.

Economic losses due to COVID-19 are expected to continue through 2021, aggravating pre-existing vulnerabilities and compounding conflict and climate shocks.

RESPONSE IN NUMBERS



96.6 M

PEOPLE

Received direct WFP food assistance in the first 9 months of 2020 – nearly the same as in all of 2019



US\$ 1.7B

DISBURSED

To WFP direct beneficiaries through cash-based transfers in 67 countries – up from 61 countries in 2019



844,000

METRIC TONNES OF FOOD

Procured locally for WFP direct food assistance programmes since January for a value of US\$ 548 million



50

NATIONAL SOCIAL PROTECTION SYSTEMS

Receive technical assistance and services to from WFP to adapt social protection in response to COVID-19



171

COUNTRIES

Benefit from WFP's global common service platform for the health and humanitarian response, 88% of the world's nations



US\$ 168M

INTERNAL FUNDS

Allocated from Immediate Response Account to 57 emergencies since January



US\$ 281M

FROM IFIS

Sourced so far in 2020 and additional US\$ 120 million pending approval – compared to US\$ 21 million in 2019



39

COUNTRIES

With continuous real-time monitoring – more than doubling from 15 countries in 2019

I. Needs

EARLY PROJECTIONS CONFIRMED: ACUTE FOOD INSECURITY CONTINUES TO RISE

As the pandemic disrupted economies, jobs, and remittances, in June 2020 WFP projected an additional 121 million people could fall into acute food insecurity in 2021 in 79 countries where it operates.² This pushed the number of people acutely food insecure in these countries to 270.2 million people (an 82 percent increase compared to pre-COVID needs). The unpredictable global crisis meant these early projections would require close monitoring, so WFP scaled up its continuous monitoring (mVAM) from 15 countries in 2019 to 39 countries today and leveraged technology to implement web-based surveys in 44 countries.

Eight months into the pandemic, new data on the economic impacts of the COVID-19 crisis and recent food security assessments are available, and WFP's earlier projections have been updated. Today, WFP estimates that 271.8 million people in these 79 countries are acutely food insecure – or directly at-risk – due to the compounding effects of COVID-19, an increase from the June projection. At a regional level increases are observed in the Middle East, Asia and, in particular, Latin America and the Caribbean where hunger has quadrupled in countries where WFP operates and the region is experiencing the worst recession in 100 years. In West and Central Africa projections remain significantly higher than 2019 food security needs. While in Southern Africa, latest indications show a slight decrease from earlier worst case projections of June. For detailed country-level food security information, see Annex.

PROJECTED NUMBER OF PEOPLE IN ACUTE FOOD INSECURITY (IN MILLIONS)

REGIONS	JUNE	NOVEMBER	TREND
Asia and the Pacific	49.6	51.4	↑ 3.6%
Middle East, Central Asia and North Africa	53.0	54.5	↑ 2.8%
West and Central Africa	57.6	57.4	↓ 0.3%
Southern Africa	52.4	50.1	↓ 4.4%
East Africa	41.6	40.1	↓ 3.6%
Latin America and the Caribbean	16.0	18.4	↑ 15%
TOTAL	270.2	271.8	0.6%

² Iran and DPRK not included due to limitations in data availability.

³ Countries with updated representative assessments are Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Colombia, DRC, El Salvador, Eswatini, Guatemala, Honduras, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Somalia, Sudan, and Togo.

WFP's early analysis of a significant deterioration in food security levels over 2020 has been validated by newly available assessments and Integrated Phase Classification or compatible joint analyses in 16 countries.³ In June WFP projected the number of people in acute food insecurity in those countries could increase from 44.5 million to 71.6 million due to the compounding impact of COVID-19. New assessments and joint analyses as of November confirm the negative trend, with the number of people in acute food insecurity now reported to be even higher, at 73.2 million people.

The worsening trend is further corroborated by the Global Report on Food Crises (September 2020 update) where food insecurity is observed to have deepened in most of the 27 analysed countries.

As the COVID-19 crisis becomes protracted, it is increasingly challenging to separate the food security needs generated by a single driver – COVID-19 – from the aggravating and compounding impact that the crisis is having in areas that face multiple and overlapping drivers of vulnerability, such as conflict, socio-economic downturns, natural hazards, climate change and pests.

While 2020 marks the most severe uptick given the global nature of the crisis, impacting vulnerable households in every country, the deterioration is occurring within a broader context of increased hunger in recent years, driven by conflict, climate and economic shocks: since 2015 the world has witnessed an overall steady growth in chronic and acute hunger.

REAL-TIME MONITORING: VISUALIZING A DETERIORATING FOOD SECURITY SITUATION

WFP's continuous real-time monitoring (mVAM) collects information on household food consumption and other key food security indicators through phone surveys, allowing to track evolving situations even when access is most restricted. With continuous monitoring established in 39 countries today, WFP has much greater real-time information to drive operational planning.

Where longer term data is available, the continued downward trend in food security over the course of 2020 is more visible than ever.

The tables below chart the number of people (in millions) with insufficient food consumption. The data presents a rolling monthly average, covering the period from January to November 2020.

In Yemen and Syria, with the exception of a slight improvement in food consumption around Ramadan, a continued and sharp increase in the number of people consuming insufficient quantity and quality of food is observed over the course of 2020. This is especially worrisome as WFP and food security partners have not received the funding required to address these growing food

security needs – nor to sustain current operations at the level required to improve household food consumption.

In Mali and northeast Nigeria, similar continued trends over 2020 are observed. Following a peak of seasonal food insecurity during the lean season, some slight improvement is observed in northeast Nigeria with the harvest. However, both countries continue to report higher levels of insufficient food consumption compared to the start of the year – abnormal at this point in the season and a worrisome indication for the months ahead.

REAL-TIME MONITORING: NUMBER OF PEOPLE WITH INSUFFICIENT FOOD CONSUMPTION (IN MILLIONS)

JANUARY – NOVEMBER 2020

FIGURE 1: YEMEN

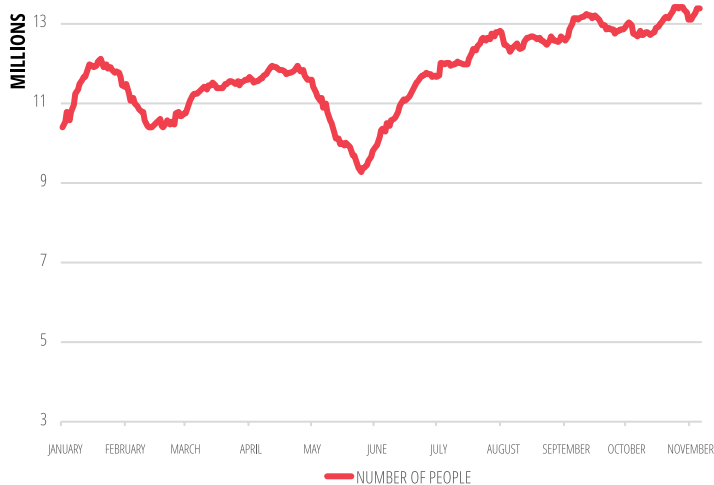


FIGURE 2: SYRIA

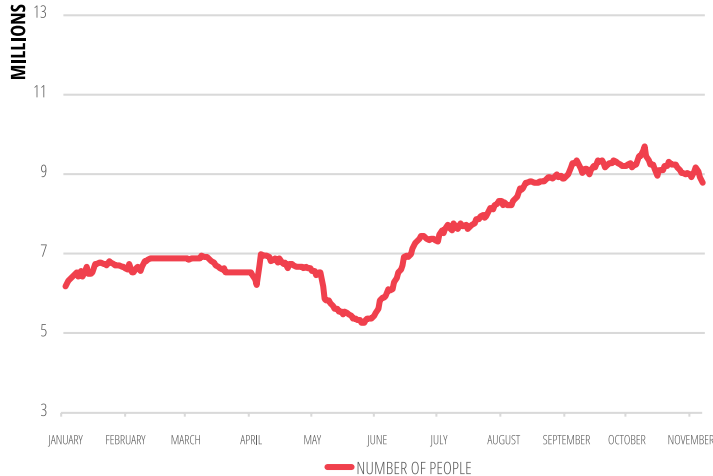


FIGURE 3: MALI



FIGURE 4: NORTHEAST NIGERIA



LOOKING TO 2021: COVID-19 WILL CONTINUE TO COMPOUND VULNERABILITIES

While there are some early signs that the global economy is starting to recover from the depths it reached earlier in 2020 following widespread lockdowns and the near halt of global supply chains, the return to a level of normalcy is expected to be slow, uneven, and uncertain. Both 2020 and 2021 are expected to be lost years in terms of economic growth and the global economy is unlikely to return to pre-COVID-19 levels before 2022.

Medium to longer-term effects of the global crisis will be felt well into 2021 and poorer countries and vulnerable households will be disproportionately affected. Unemployment, wage loss, and reduced remittances will continue to drive increased hunger throughout this period. The World Bank estimates that up to 150 million additional people could fall into extreme poverty by the end of 2021 due to the pandemic – the worst setback to poverty reduction in at least three decades.

Updated ILO estimates indicate that 495 million full-time jobs were lost during the second quarter of 2020. Poor informal workers in urban areas, many of them women or young workers, have been particularly affected by loss of income: of the 2 billion workers in informal sectors, 76 percent have been significantly affected by the COVID-19 crisis. Of particular concern are the more than 164 million migrant workers in the world and other status-vulnerable groups, most of whom rely on the informal sector. In turn, the 800 million people worldwide who rely on remittances are at risk:

remittance flows are projected to decline by 14 percent by 2021 (World Bank) and a recent [WFP/IOM study](#) estimates that by 2021 nearly 33 million people could be directly at risk of acute food insecurity due to the loss of remittances.

Despite initial assessments that the pandemic would require a rapid emergency response, the longer-term socio-economic fallout and other compounding factors are leading to a slower onset and protracted crisis that will require sustained attention for months and years to come.

These medium to longer-term lingering economic impacts will compound pre-existing vulnerabilities and emerging risks in 2021. The [Early Warning Analysis of Acute Food Insecurity Hotspots](#) published jointly by FAO and WFP (November 2020) identifies 20 countries that are likely to face potential spikes in high acute food insecurity in the next three to six months due to expanding conflict, macroeconomic crises exacerbated by COVID-19 measures, weather extremes caused by the ongoing La Niña event, and desert locusts.

In Burkina Faso, northeast Nigeria, South Sudan, and Yemen - parts of the population are facing a risk of famine. While these areas differ in context, they are marked by the expansion of conflict, rising food prices, flooding, challenges for populations to access basic services and assistance, and insufficient humanitarian funding to respond to and mitigate a hunger catastrophe in 2021.



La Niña is likely to persist through the first quarter of 2021, affecting rainfall patterns in many parts of the world and increasing the risk of heavy rainfall and flooding in some areas, while also giving rise to drought in others. East Africa is expected to face significant reductions in rainfall, risking back-to-back poor agricultural and pastoral seasons. Afghanistan, Iran and parts of Pakistan are likely to receive below-average rainfall during their main season risking crop yields. In the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, la Niña has resulted in an intensified storm season still underway with supertyphoons and multi-country hurricane damage reported in both regions in November, destroying homes, assets and harvests. Across most of southern Africa and south-east Asia, above average rainfall will increase the risk of flooding.

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