

FEED THE FUTURE'S RESPONSE TO COVID-19

COVID-19 has fundamentally changed the lives of people in every part of the world. For communities already experiencing poverty and hunger, the pandemic is disproportionately affecting lives by harming how people provide for themselves and feed their families—both today and long after the pandemic subsides.

IMPACT ON FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION

Efforts to curb the spread of COVID-19, such as movement restrictions, have not only disrupted access to food and compromised nutrition, but have also erased jobs and shut down entire sectors of economies, including agriculture. Without intervention, these threats could increase extreme poverty by 20% worldwide—a devastating loss of years of hard-earned progress in helping families move up and out of deep poverty.

Hunger and poverty go hand-in-hand. Analysis by USAID predicts crisis levels of food insecurity will continue to increase. World Bank analysis shows long-lasting hunger and poverty have also risen and will continue to do so in 2021. Food security is inextricably linked to economic growth, and carries serious implications for the global economy. When experienced early in life, hunger and the malnutrition it brings rob children of meeting their full potential. Widespread hunger can also lead to civil unrest and instability.

These consequences are deeply concerning. We have already seen the health crisis turn into an economic crisis in many countries, erasing jobs and income and putting more than 168,000 children's lives at stake due to nutrition impacts. What's more, it is weakening the economic base upon which many countries will seek to rebuild and will slow recovery. As America responds on the home front, we are taking action to prevent widespread hunger abroad that would challenge our own security and prosperity.

LEADING IN A TIME OF CRISIS

America's initiative to combat global hunger, Feed the Future, was born out of a food crisis—the 2007-2008 global food price crisis—the effects of which reverberated around the world, pushing millions of people into hunger and causing instability and unrest. Since then, the U.S. Government and partners across the public and private sectors have worked together to help partner countries strengthen their food systems and respond to one shock after the next, building on what we've learned.

Through development efforts that address the root causes of poverty, hunger and malnutrition, Feed the Future has helped reduce poverty by an average of 23% where it works; this translates to 23.4 million more people living above the poverty line. We are building on this foundation of progress to help countries get ahead of the pandemic's impacts, mitigate where they can, protect development gains, and speed recovery.

Food Security Impact at a Glance

Full impact still unfolding, but has and will continue to hit areas already experiencing hunger, poverty and malnutrition hardest.

124 million more people were pushed into long-lasting poverty and hunger in 2020. 163 million more will be in 2021.*

2.6 million more children will suffer from stunting.**

*World Bank high-end estimates,
**Standing Together for Nutrition

ADAPTING AND EXPANDING TO RESPOND TO COVID-19

FLEXING ONGOING PROGRAMS: In the face of COVID-19, Feed the Future is not only staying the course by ensuring its vital programs continue, but also rising to new challenges posed by the pandemic by adapting programs and partnerships to mitigate and deal with impacts on food systems and nutrition.

Priorities include:

- **Helping governments create and adopt smart policies** that bolster food security, nutrition and markets while maintaining safety
- **Unlocking and maintaining finance** for farmers and businesses, particularly those run by women
- **Keeping small businesses open** by helping them pivot their business models and serve customers safely
- **Promoting the safe and stable continuation** of supply chains, markets and cross-border trade
- **Stabilizing local food prices and supplies** by helping farmers get access to seeds and inputs



Small businesses provide 80% of jobs in Africa. Feed the Future is helping them stay in business. Sylvia Natukunda owns a yogurt company in Uganda. Feed the Future helped her pivot to safely sell directly to customers and market on social media. Photo credit: Fintrac Inc.

THE CRITICAL WORK AHEAD

The economic shocks of COVID-19 are already being felt in the communities in which Feed the Future works—and yet, the entirety of the pandemic’s impact still remains largely unknown. Given the evolving scope of the pandemic and its long-term impact, additional efforts will be necessary to meet the full extent of this challenge.

What we do know from history is that after the peak of a crisis, its implications reverberate for years to come—most directly in countries already experiencing acute poverty and hunger but also across the entire global community. The global community must act now to help communities deal with current shocks, mitigate long-term harm, and prevent backsliding on years of development gains.

Feed the Future is coordinating with humanitarian relief efforts to help vulnerable communities and countries meet immediate needs, while preserving markets, speeding recovery, and building resilience for the long term.

Ending global hunger remains one the greatest challenges and opportunities of our time. This imperative remains as pointed as ever as the global community copes with this unprecedented pandemic and rebuilds in its wake.

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