

## 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 posing fundamental threats to how people will provide for themselves and feed their families—even long after the pandemic subsides.

### IMPACT ON FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION

Efforts to curb the spread of COVID-19, such as movement restrictions, are not only disrupting access to food and compromising nutrition, but also erasing jobs and shutting down entire sectors of economies, including agriculture. Without intervention, these threats could increase extreme poverty by 20% worldwide. This is equivalent to a devastating loss of seven 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 that COVID-19's impacts on emerging economies will increase humanitarian assistance needs by 25%. Food security is inextricably linked to economic growth, and carries serious implications for the global economy. Hunger can lead to civil unrest and instability. When experienced early in life, hunger and the malnutrition it brings rob children of meeting their potential.

#### Economic Impact at a Glance

Full impact yet to be seen in developing regions, but will hit areas already experiencing hunger, poverty and malnutrition hardest.

**20% increase in global poverty** (148 million people). Majority in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.\* \$110 billion downturn in remittances.\*\*

Source: \*International Food Policy & Research Institute, \*\*World Bank.

**These consequences—though considered secondary impacts of COVID-19—are a primary concern.** Without immediate action, this health crisis will turn into a food crisis. Delays in anticipating and mitigating food security and nutrition impacts may lead to increased humanitarian assistance costs and consign a generation of children to underachievement. What's more, it will weaken the economic basis on which to rebuild once the pandemic subsides. 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 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 impacts, mitigate where they can, and protect development gains.

## 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 impacts on food systems and nutrition.

Priorities include:

- **Helping governments create and adopt trade and policies** that bolster food security 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 continuation** of supply chains, markets and cross-border trade
- **Continuing production of nutrient-rich foods** by helping farmers get access to seeds and supplies

**EXPANDING NEW PROGRAMS:** Supplemental funding from Congress through the Economic Support Fund account has enabled Feed the Future to expand its capabilities in some of the key priority areas listed above and undertake new analytical work to better understand COVID-19's evolving impacts on food security and nutrition in developing countries.



*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 rapidly expanding scope of the pandemic and its long-term impact, additional efforts will be necessary to meet the full scope 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 mitigate long-term harm and to 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 and building resilience for the long term.

**Ending global hunger remains one the greatest challenges and opportunities of our time.** As Feed the Future reaches its 10th year in 2020, this imperative remains as pointed as ever as the global community copes with this unprecedented pandemic.

*Last updated: May 5, 2020*