



GLOBAL NETWORK  
FOR THE RIGHT TO  
FOOD AND NUTRITION



**ASIA CHAPTER - JOINT COVID-19  
MONITORING REPORT ON THE  
IMPACTS OF THE RIGHT TO FOOD  
AND NUTRITION**



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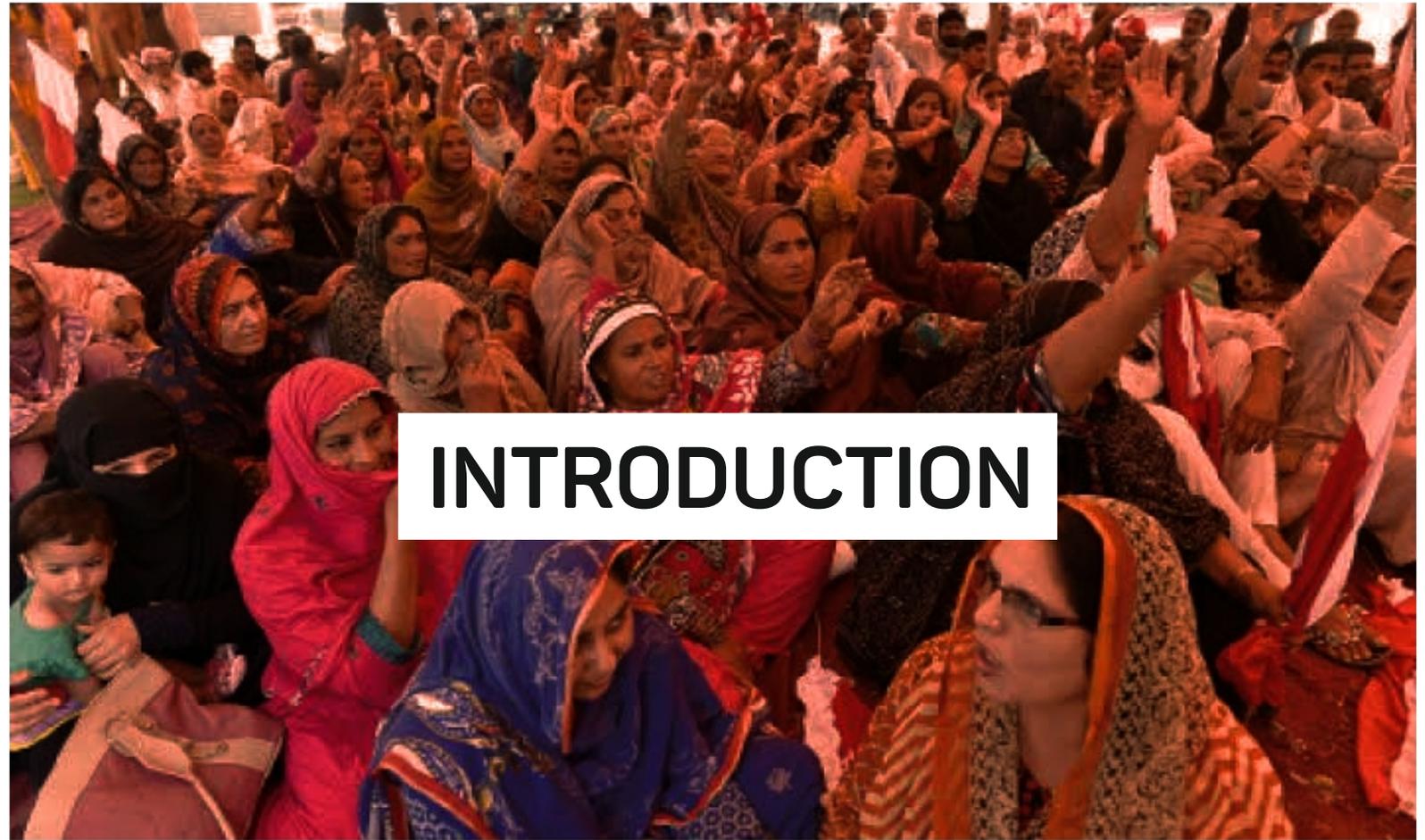
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# INTRODUCTION

The [State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World](#) report, published in June 2020, estimates that the world's hungry will increase in 2020 from 690 million to some 800 million due to COVID-19. Asia is not only home to more than half of the total undernourished (an estimated 381 million in 2019), several countries in Asia are among the worst hit by COVID-19 in terms of deaths and reported cases (e.g., India, Indonesia and the Philippines). The region has also witnessed - amidst the COVID-19 pandemic - the introduction of draconian laws (e.g., Omnibus Law in Indonesia, Anti-Terror Act in the Philippines, and the new Draft Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) in India), offering a pretext for governments to silence opponents and those who criticise the COVID-19 responses, such as inhibiting participation and banning the right to information and assembly.

COVID-19 has also laid bare today's broken food systems, bringing to the fore the vulnerability, fragility, and inequalities on which they are built. Lockdowns and confinement measures continue to impact the right to food and nutrition (hereafter RtFN) of landless people and peasants, small-scale food producers, agricultural workers, indigenous peoples, migrant workers, and the urban poor. These communities have been facing the longstanding challenges of seed and land grabbing, climate change and eco-destruction, criminalisation, and discrimination. Among them, those who are mainly engaged in agricultural activities, including women, children, and other marginalised groups such as Dalits, bear the heaviest brunt of these overlapping crises.

This report is a product of collective efforts of the member organisations of the [Global Network for the Right to Food and Nutrition \(GNRtFN\)](#) - Asia Chapter, as well as supporters of the GNRtFN in the region. The GNRtFN is a network of public interest CSOs and social movements - peasants, fisherfolk, pastoralists, landless people, consumers, urban people forced to live in poverty, agricultural and food workers, women, youth, and indigenous peoples - that recognize the need to act jointly for the realization of the RtFN. Three consecutive online consultations (June - July 2020) preceded the drafting of the report, during which the participating organisations shared the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on vulnerable groups and communities, especially of the small-scale food producers, discussed the immediate responses of their national governments, and collectively agreed to launch an Asian regional COVID-19 monitoring report on the impact of COVID-19 on the RtFN of small-scale food producers and other vulnerable groups and communities. Thereafter, the country inputs were elaborated by members as well as supporting organisations, through the collection of testimonies on the ground, online research, and joint national consultations.

The report looks into how the different governments have responded to COVID-19 impacts and how the measures have contributed to the realisation of the RtFN for the most marginalised groups and communities in the countries of Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Pakistan, the Philippines and Nepal.

All country-input sections are structured as follows: First, a summary of the government's responses to combat COVID-19 impacts are presented, followed by the impacts on the RtFN of small-scale food producers as well as most vulnerable groups in the countries, an analysis of government responses from the RtFN perspective, and some examples of emerging people-to-people solutions. Finally, a set of collective recommendations to the national governments are spelt out, which member organisations will use to lobby their respective national governments and relevant institutions.

The GNRtFN - Asia Chapter consists of the following organisations: Center for Social Development (Manipur/India), FEDO Nepal, FIAN Indonesia, FIAN Nepal, Focus on the Global South (Regional/India), Katarungan (Philippines), KHANI (Bangladesh), Maleya Foundation (Bangladesh), Pakistan Kissan Rabita Committee (PKRC, Pakistan), Right to Food Campaign India and Solidaritas Perempuan (Indonesia). Other supporting/contributing organisations are Human Rights Law Network (India), Centre for Child and the Law/National Law School of India University (NLSIU), Indonesia Global Justice, Asosiasi Ibu Menyusui Indonesia (AIMI - Indonesian member organisation of International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN), a member of the GNRtFN), Henry Simarmata (Senior Advisor, Indonesian Human Rights for Social Justice (IHCS), Pambansang Koalisyon ng Kababaihan sa Kanayunan (PKKK) (Philippines) and YAC Nepal.



# BANGLADESH

Bangladesh announced its first lockdown, termed “general holidays with restriction on movements”, on March 26, 2020. By the end of May, the lockdown was relaxed to some extent, and the situation improved by mid-August. The total number of affected people reached 384,559 and 5,608 deaths were recorded as of mid-October 2020.

## 1. Government's response to COVID-19

By the end of May 2020, the Bangladesh government announced a set of stimulus packages worth over BDT 1 trillion (equivalent to USD 11.90 billion) in COVID-19 shock relief for various sectors of the country. Among the packages, the largest allocation of BDT 300 billion (approx. USD 3.53 billion) was designated for providing capital facilities to affected industries and services sector organizations. The Prime Minister unveiled a BDT 50 billion (USD 590 million) [stimulus package with a 4 per cent discounted interest rate on loans for farmers](#) severely affected by the ongoing lockdown. The government provided [several initiatives for food producers](#), including the provision of harvesting machinery at subsidized rates and continuation of farm product

transportation despite lockdown to preserve market chains. In order to keep food production going, the government motivated farmers to utilise all types of land to cultivate in the upcoming growing season. The government also promised to improve information systems (e.g., radio broadcast) to share advice and services with farmers to help with crop cultivation and advised NGOs giving loans to farmers to suspend repayment during the pandemic. The 2020 “boro” paddy procurement target has increased compared to the same season last year in order to boost reserves. Moreover, the government is distributing rice at subsidized prices to the poor.

The [31 point directives](#) of the Prime Minister paid special attention to “the most disadvantaged people like agriculture workers, day labourers,

rickshaw- and van-pullers, transport workers, beggars, street children, the women abandoned by their husbands, widows and 'hijra' (intersex and transgender) community” in providing relief. Some points (15 and 16) are specifically directed toward agriculture and food supply systems, for example, calling for the continuation of food production and the maintenance of food supply stems.

The government has also taken steps to launch a food assistance program for low-income households that primarily depend on daily wages. They also planned to give direct cash assistance of BDT 2,500 (around USD 30) per family to 5 million poor families who had been hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic.

## 2. Impact of COVID-19 on the right to food and nutrition of small-scale food producers and marginalized groups

[Small-scale farmers are vulnerable](#) due to hindrances to working on their land and lack of access to markets to sell products and buy essential inputs. [Small-scale fishers could not sell their mature fish](#) due to the lack of market access imposed by the lockdown. The lockdown also affected their fish rearing cycle, as mature fish remained unsold, and they had no access to fishlings and feeds. The majority of the fishers also depend on fishing for their livelihoods, further exacerbating the impacts of COVID-19 lockdowns on the right to food and nutrition (RtFN).

As much as the pandemic affects the fishers, the drop in incomes of the public also has a huge impact on their diet diversity, as protein sources become unaffordable. The lockdown period has witnessed a significant reduction in the average monthly earnings of families. According to a recent study conducted by [ICDDR,B](#), 91 per cent of Bangladeshi families consider themselves to be financially unstable, while 47 per cent have recently witnessed their earnings dropping below

the international poverty line of BDT 160 (USD 1.90) per person per day. Due to this drop in wages, many are unable to buy food and thus remain hungry or miss meals.

## 3. Brief analysis of the government's responses from the perspective of the right to food and nutrition

The provision of stimulus and incentives provided by the government are criticised as monetary policies favourable for business with interest rates reduction and loan assistance, while cash assistance to the poor is inadequate to buy essential items as mentioned above. The informal sector has not received adequate funds for the 50 million unemployed day labourers and temporary workers. [Peasant organisations demanded interest-free loans](#) to ensure food security for everyone. Large parts of Bangladesh's farmers are small scale and marginal, without bank accounts to avail a loan. Therefore, the loans and financial stimulus packages did not reach the small and subsistence farmers, but helped only huge producers and facilitating the intermediaries to borrow more.

The [governments food support](#) (mentioned above) is said to particularly target low-income families. However, the villagers are not usually consulted in the identification of recipients, thus many families are left out. Despite the relief program undertaken by the government, on account of several problems created at the field-level, the RtFN of a significant part of the marginalized communities like the Chittagong Hill Tracts (hereinafter CHT) is yet to be realised. Moreover, the inhabitants of the remote areas are not only deprived of relief grants, but they are also deprived of access to electricity, safe drinking water, quality education, governmental healthcare services, along with other state-run services, wholly or substantially. Most of the relief efforts are concentrated in easy to access areas, whereas



**"The loans and financial stimulus packages did not reach the small and subsistence farmers, but helped only huge producers and privileged the intermediaries to borrow more."**

many indigenous communities reside in remote localities, especially in the CHT. Therefore, many poor indigenous families have not received any food assistance at all.

Similarly, the opportunity to buy rice at BDT 10 (USD 0.12) per kilo was availed by families living in the villages and localities in or near the district and sub-district headquarters. However, more than 90 per cent of the families living in remote and semi-remote areas have been deprived of this opportunity - as reported by a group of indigenous civil society organisations in July 2020. Even where emergency food supplies were distributed, families in villages were provided inadequate supplies – merely enough to enable survival for only a few days.

Low-income families such as daily labourers, small business holders, shifting cultivators and garment workers are hard hit in the crisis. The government package makes no provision for other emergency support, such as hand soap and protective masks, thus communities are deprived of these essentials.

The disbursement process of above-mentioned relief and incentive is terribly slow, defective, and did not reach those in need. Apart from poor governance, there are problems with determining beneficiaries, as countless families who are still suffering from food shortages are excluded from recipient lists, with its preparation riddled by bureaucratic hurdles. Lack of coordination and expertise in the bureaucratic administration and corruption further impedes the relief disbursement. For instance, many local leaders and local government officials were found to be involved in the theft of food rations. This year, the boro paddy procurement was far from the government target, raising concerns that efforts to feed the poor amid the COVID-19 crisis might face further setbacks due to inadequate stock.

#### 4. Examples of emerging people-to-people solutions

As the sudden lockdowns resulted in closures of markets and initial transport bans began presenting various challenges to farmers, [farmers launched local collective initiatives](#), making temporary, makeshift vegetable markets to serve the local community with monitoring from the local administration. At the same time, [civil society groups responded to the crisis](#) by raising awareness, coordinating relief work and building capacity to ensure health safety. Many are also

involved, for example, indirect distribution of relief goods and food. Under the leadership of the Chittagong Hill Tracts Citizens' Committee, a group of indigenous civil society organizations including the Maleya Foundation, issued a joint statement calling on the government to take urgent actions in the face of COVID-19 and to end structural discrimination faced by indigenous peoples. [NGOs have also called for the activation of the Disaster Management Act](#), involving the NGOs at national and grassroots levels, as government assistance faced hurdles and food availability became a major concern.



# INDIA

In India, the unplanned lockdown was imposed in an authoritarian way without public consultation, causing chaos and hardships to many sections of society, endangering lives and leading to huge losses, including an exponential rise in hunger and deaths of the most vulnerable people. The lockdown was announced on March 25, 2020, with only a four-hour advanced warning, leading to an unprecedented mass internal migration resulting from suspended transport facilities and a sudden massive loss of jobs and livelihood, particularly for the most vulnerable daily wage workers in the informal sector.

## 1. Government's response to COVID-19

As the lockdown in India set in, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced [free food grains to National Food Security Act \(NFSA\) ration cardholders as part of the ₹1.70 lakh crore](#) (USD 23 billion) relief package a few days after imposition of the national lockdown. The government also announced two months' worth of free food grain supplies for migrants who were not covered under the NFSA or who did not hold a ration card. However, in practice, there have been major implementation gaps due to various reasons, including delays in issuing official guidelines and orders, absence of implementation plans and lack of a proper administrative setup. Secondly, there is little clarity regarding the duration of these

benefits since they were announced only for a limited period and are being extended for short durations, creating perpetual confusion and uncertainty for beneficiaries. As of November 2020, this additional relief is coming to an end and there is no indication from the government regarding extension of the same.

## 2. Impact of COVID-19 on the right to food and nutrition of small-scale food producers and marginalized groups

The right to food and nutrition (RtFN) of the majority of people in India was immediately threatened by the lockdown due to major disruptions to food supply chains, affecting availability and accessibility (due to

**“The pandemic exposed the flaws of the existing food systems and the limits to relief measures.”**

unaffordability) of food. The lack of governance and mismanagement of the situation, which saw [increased inflation threaten the RtFN of the most vulnerable groups](#). As an agrarian nation with the majority of the population highly dependent on agriculture, India is extremely susceptible to small changes in prices of food staples, as most food producers become retail buyers of food. Small and marginal farmers whose crops were ready to be harvested lost revenue as labour and transport were cut off. This situation increased their debt risk, as loans had to be taken out to sustain themselves. Due to the overall fall in demand with the lockdown, perishable commodities suffered the biggest price crashes. The COVID-19 lockdown took away all forms of non-farm income sources on which small producers increasingly rely. Farmers' plight has even worsened since September 2020 with the Indian Parliament hurriedly passing [controversial legislation](#) on farming which is going to have adverse effects on the agricultural economy in the long term. As of end November, there are widespread protests by farmers across the country against these steps which were taken without due deliberation or discussion, and there are reports of the government adopting violent measures to quell these protests.

Small-scale fisherfolks who returned to work after a brief duration of being unable to go to the sea could not find enough customers and markets. Similarly, [forest dwellers and tribal communities dependent on forest products lost access to markets](#). These have all contributed to

the possibility of an impending food and nutrition crisis for rural small food producers and the working-class population.

Immediately after the sudden lockdown that cut off all means to livelihoods for so many, [thousands of migrant workers walked back home](#), some barefooted, making headlines both nationally and internationally. CSOs and concerned individuals have written to the government, raising the public's concerns about the human rights crisis that demands immediate attention and action in providing food, income, and transport.

Daily wage labourers are also largely out of work. The rations provided through fair price shops were limited, and with no income, informal workers are unable to purchase essentials like salt, sugar and oil. Fishing entirely stopped for a few months, resulting in the complete loss of daily income and loss of everyday protein sources from fish. Although fishing finally resumed by the end of April, the RtFN is still not being fulfilled.



Other vulnerable groups like HIV/AIDS patients and sex workers face a manifold increase in the risk of hunger due to the vulnerability of their situation. Many states have also closed Anganwadi centres (rural child care centres), ending the much-needed provision of food to children below 6 years, pregnant women and lactating mothers.

### **3. Brief analysis of the government's responses from the perspective of the right to food and nutrition**

India's national lockdown and the ensuing issues of hunger and livelihood losses highlight the government's lack of preparedness for necessary provisions. Yet, the government remains in complete denial of the severity of the hunger situation. Many urban poor, slum dwellers and those returning to their villages are not part of the support system and continue to miss out on food support from the government. The government response in ensuring the [RtFN through rations was criticised as inadequate](#), as [it did not reach those most in need](#). Although several relief packages were provided for those included under the NFSA (people with ration cards), migrants and others not covered by the Act were unable to receive the support. Only some of the returning migrant labourers received financial assistance under relief measures undertaken by the government.

The loopholes in the food distribution system (Public Distribution System, PDS), with migrants struggling just to get ration cards, is a result of a system unable to account for a mobile migrant population, rendering this vulnerable section even more susceptible to the dangers of the pandemic. The pandemic exposed the flaws of

the existing food systems and the limits to relief measures. Further illustrating the indifference of the government, it declared that [it kept no records of the deaths and plight of the migrants](#).

During the early stages of the pandemic, the Supreme Court of India took notice of the dysfunctional nutritional benefit schemes like the Mid-day Meal Scheme and the Integrated Child Development Scheme, which were potentially worsening malnourishment amongst children and pregnant and lactating mothers. The Supreme Court thereby held that [all States should come out with a uniform policy](#) to ensure that policies aimed at preventing the spread of COVID-19 do not adversely affect these important nutritional schemes. However, these directives are far from being implemented. Eight months later, no mechanism for distribution of nutritional benefits has been produced and enforced by most of the Indian states, while there has been no follow up from the Supreme Court nor the central government regarding these orders.

In addition, the [Supreme Court refused to make a significant intervention to ensure compensation for livelihood losses of the workers](#). The clear mismanagement of the pandemic by the government disrupting transport along with creating large-scale job losses was a double-edged disaster, resulting in multiple deaths of migrants on their home-bound journeys. In May, the Supreme Court finally intervened, ordering the government to ensure the transportation of the migrants to travel safely back to their homes. Several High Courts also stepped in at different stages and instructed local governments to uphold the constitutional right to dignified life by ensuring a range of reliefs and services to its citizens.



#### 4. Examples of emerging people-to-people solutions

Indian civil society almost immediately rose to tackle challenges of the pandemic and lockdown. People's movements and CSOs became actively engaged in direct relief work as well as other advocacy strategies to highlight the constitutional duty of the government to different problems that ensued. Several networks and citizens' groups were formed almost organically to coordinate relief work at different levels. At the state and national levels, efforts were made for arranging transport for the migrants, to distribute food and rations and to provide health services. Appeals were also made to ensure food access and availability by implementing the universalisation of PDS and to activate state-run institutions by initiating and helping independent bodies and agencies tasked with implementation and monitoring of relief

measures. However, [some new regulations](#) brought in by the government to restrict foreign-funding of CSOs have impacted COVID relief measures much adversely and have rendered it impossible for most grassroots to continue their work on issues such as health, food and poverty alleviation.

Civil society groups also organised public campaigns, social media activities and press conferences to highlight issues and extend solidarity to those distressed under the lockdowns. Online discussions and exchanges were held to spread awareness and take necessary actions with regard to the RtFN. [The Right to Food Campaign](#), from time to time, raised the situation of tremendous economic distress and hunger in the country, by [demanding distribution of rice as food](#) instead of ethanol preparation and extension of food entitlements under the government relief package.



# INDONESIA

Instead of a total lockdown, Indonesia only imposed a partial lockdown, coined in various terms in different regions (e.g., “Large-Scale Social Restriction” and “Extraordinary Occurrence”). In the context of the right to food and nutrition, communities' economic access was severely challenged due to lack of money to buy nutritious and adequate food. Approximately [1.8 million workers](#) faced unpaid leave or termination of employment without prior notice and based on unilateral decisions (data per May 27, 2020). Roughly 320,000 informer workers lost their jobs (data per June 12, 2020).

## 1. Government's response to COVID-19

The government allocated a fiscal stimulus fund for the pandemic amounting to Rp. 405 trillion (equivalent to USD 27 billion), with over half allocated for industry and the remaining half for social and health incentives. Various economic safety net programs were provided in the form of social assistance, namely, Village Fund Direct Cash Assistance (BLT-DD), Non-Cash Food Assistance (BPNT), Cash Social Assistance (BST) and the Ideal Family Program (PKH). For the Special Capital City Region Jakarta (DKI Jakarta), the provincial government provided Special Assistance for Basic Staple Materials and Social Assistance of Large-Scale Social Restrictions, with an aim to provide stable incomes and food assistance, particularly to the poor and those affected by COVID-19. For small-scale farmers, there are [several assistance](#)

[schemes](#), including the special social safety net, credit interest subsidies through [instalment payment relief](#), provision of [production capital](#) in both fiscal and non-fiscal stimulus (i.e., seeds, fertilizers, production tools), and policies to guarantee the smooth performance of the production chains, such as connecting farmers with start-up companies engaged in buying and selling.

Despite such measures, several regressive and oppressive measures are witnessed in Indonesia: land-grabbing and peasant criminalization, a strong push for liberalisation of investment regulation (in the omnibus law), and the [removal of the Draft Law on the Elimination of Sexual Violence \(RUU PKS\)](#) from the list of the 2020 Priority of National Legislation Program (Prolegnas) by the House Commission VIII.

## 2. Impact of COVID-19 on the right to food and nutrition of small-scale food producers and marginalized groups

Many workers (both formal and informal) were fired immediately before Eid Al Fitr - a holy day of feasting for Muslims - so [employers could evade their obligation to pay the holiday allowance](#). Worker vulnerability immediately increased overnight, especially for those unaffiliated with labour unions. While the Minister of Manpower issued two policies to support dismissed workers, the policies were taken as a legitimate basis for employers to lay off workers and reduce wages.

Aside from workers, the hardest hit by the pandemic are the urban poor, including [scavengers](#), [migrant workers](#) those residing in urban slums, and otherwise vulnerable or marginalized groups including women, disabled and transgender persons. The burden on women has increased by 75 per cent during the pandemic, as has violence and harassment against them, as reported by [Komnas Perempuan](#). [People with disabilities](#), who are already given limited access to occupations, have similarly lost their incomes. Transgender persons also experience multiple vulnerabilities; due to lack of citizenship documents (e.g., ID Card and Family Card), they could not receive assistance, thus impacting their capability to purchase sufficient food. Socio-geographical restrictions to food are also significant, due to the geographic isolation of particular communities, especially for labour in remote oil palm plantation areas and for small-scale food producers. Rice supplies are inadequate in seven provinces, inducing a looming [threat of food insecurity](#) in the archipelago provinces and the eastern part of Indonesia. Due to restricted operating hours, temporary closure of traditional markets, as well as the stricter inspections at border areas (resulting from Transportation

Government Regulation No. 25/2020), markets could not absorb the harvest produced by small-scale holders at profitable prices. Though food is exempted from inspection and restriction, these obstacles impacted [middlemen](#) who refused to buy harvests from small-scale food producers unless at the cheapest prices. Many small-scale food producers have been forced to leave their harvests to rot, while many fishers can only [let their catch decay or voluntarily give](#) them up. In sum, the small-scale food producers' problems amidst the pandemic reveal the vulnerability of small food producers in long and complex food chains, the dependence of farmers and fishers on middlemen and traditional markets ("pasar tradisional"), along with their inability to handle the distribution process themselves, and the inadequate data collection, logistics and transportation in supply chains.

COVID-19 has also impacted the right to food and nutrition of infants and children. The fear of COVID-19 transmission is casting a shadow over the importance of breastfeeding. [It has been reported that mothers and babies are being separated at birth](#), making breastfeeding and skin-to-skin contact difficult, if not impossible. Meanwhile, the baby food industry is exploiting fears of [infection by promoting, donating and distributing free formula milk](#) and misleading advice, claiming that the donations are humanitarian and that they are trustworthy partners. This situation is aggravated by the fact that health professionals including midwives, whom parents trust for nutrition and health advice, [are in fact the ones promoting food industry products](#).

## 3. Brief analysis of the government's response from the perspective of the right to food and nutrition

The measures implemented by the Government reveal a number of problems. With respect to

social assistance for food provision, there were several cases of data errors in selecting beneficiaries at local levels due to incompatibility with Integrated Social Welfare Data (by the Ministry of Social Affairs), [potentially causing hunger and even death](#) of those excluded who cannot buy food to survive, including the urban poor. Second, the food aid (Sembako) provided consists of low-nutrition food, such as processed and instant foods, and low-quality basic food unsuitable for consumption. Third, while there are measures directed at making marginalized groups target recipients through the distribution of fiscal allocation, the government's support for the private sector (in this case, the entrepreneur) is more pronounced than the funds designated for the poor and marginalized. Fourth, from an agricultural perspective, although the actions and policies from the Ministry of Agriculture appear promising, the facts show that there remain many small-scale food producers whose harvests are not absorbed because of complex and long supply chains. The Pasar Mitra Tani, a farmers' market created by the government, does not absorb the produce of all farmer groups in the area. One example of creating local food availability and selling farmers' crops locally is food storage at the village or sub-district level. Food storage at the local level is

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erected to absorb and purchase local harvest and to store them as food supplies that will be distributed during certain periods, such as crises or drought.

#### **4. Examples of emerging people-to-people solutions**

Indonesia has witnessed the emergence of several 'initiatives from below' based on solidarity actions. For instance, public kitchens, such as the Jogja Food Solidarity or [Solidaritas Pangan Jogja](#) (SPJ) initiative, are offering food for informal workers and vulnerable groups whose livelihoods are affected by COVID-19. Some kitchens are located in vulnerable communities, including sex workers, scavengers and people with disabilities. Apart from SPJ, there are also public kitchens established specifically for disabled people affected by COVID-19, such as DifaBike in Yogyakarta, and for transgender communities including #BantuanUntukWaria in Tambora, Jakarta.

There are also food crop planting initiatives, both in urban and rural areas, involve growing vegetables. Some communities, for instance, Papuans, are specifically planting local food crops. The planting is done on collective land and the harvests are distributed to [a community organization](#) or [unit](#) at the level of village or hamlet.

Producer-consumer partnerships are also on the rise in Indonesia. . At ['Genduli \(Gelanggangs Care for Farmers\)](#), the community sells vegetables from farmers on the slopes of Mount Merbabu to consumers, with a purchase price usually higher than the price of middlemen. Unlike the intermediaries, Genduli provides certainty about the price offered to farmers, as they do not fluctuate.

**“Food baskets by rural communities are further efforts to create “transitional measures” during the pandemic.”**

The Consortium for Agrarian Reform (Konsorsium Pembaruan Agraria) also initiated GeSLA, a farmer program distributing harvests to “priority consumers” in urban areas: labourers, informal workers, and other vulnerable groups. community sells vegetables from farmers on the slopes of Mount Merbabu to consumers, with a purchase price usually higher than the price of middlemen. Unlike the intermediaries, Genduli provides certainty about the price offered to farmers, as they do not fluctuate. The Consortium for Agrarian Reform (Konsorsium Pembaruan Agraria) also initiated GeSLA, a farmer program distributing harvests to “priority consumers” in urban areas: labourers, informal workers, and other vulnerable groups.

A barter system amongst small food producers is also becoming more common. The pandemic has

both hit fishers and farmers, who reaped abundant harvests not absorbed by the distribution chain. In Gebang Village, Cirebon Regency, West Java, a local fisherman purchased fish caught by his fellow fishermen and bartered the commodity with rice harvested by farmers in Kertasamaya (roughly 67 km from Gebang). This initiative has prevented fishers from losing money due to the low purchase price of intermediaries who cannot recover their capital.

Food baskets by rural communities are further efforts to create “transitional measures” during the pandemic. The “food basket” covers key basic or staple food, especially traditional ingredients, with the communities themselves responsible for producing and availing them, as well as mediating processes throughout exchanges. Rural communities have been utilising the provision of law on the village (Law no. 6 year 2014) to develop food basket, with quite diverse variations. By May 2020 (following Eid), rural communities sought to counter the slowing exchange of crops and goods by carrying their own community's food basket through various volunteer networks, community-to-community networks and various price mechanisms.





On November 21, [Pakistan reported over 2,800 new coronavirus cases in 24 hours](#), a clear indication that we have entered a second wave of the virus since Pakistan's first wave peaked at nearly 7,000 recorded cases in a single day in the summer months. In late November the nationwide case count stood at 372,000 and the total fatalities rose to 7,603.

During the first COVID-19 wave, the abrupt lockdown announced by the government in March 2020 created a particularly difficult situation for food insecure households when the state failed to create adequate welfare schemes for those on the margins. As 70 percent of Pakistan's workforce is employed informally according to the International Labour Organisation, it is impossible to assess just how many jobs have been lost during the pandemic. However, estimates indicate that tens of millions of people lost their livelihoods during the spring lockdown, while countless more continue to be subjected to layoffs and pay cuts resulting from business restructuring during the ongoing health emergency. As families endure inadequate income for even the most basic necessities, millions more Pakistanis are being pushed deeper into hunger and malnutrition, exacerbated by the inadequate reach and scale of the government's COVID-19 relief programs.

### 1. Government's response to COVID-19

At the onset, the response of Pakistan's Tehreek-e-Insaaf government of Prime Minister Imran Khan was to totally deny the validity of the pandemic, deeming it just a flu that would go within days. No preparations were undertaken to

combat the pandemic, and although initially refusing to go for a lockdown, the government suddenly announced an unplanned lockdown in the third week of March 2020. Instead of providing immediate support to the most vulnerable agricultural workers, small and marginal farmers, old age pensioners, widows,

people with disabilities, slum dwellers, garbage collectors, and the homeless, the government's Rs. 12 trillion (USD 7.2 billion) stimulus program predominantly allocated [support to industries and banks](#), giving Rs 100 billion in tax refunds to businesses, incentivising the construction industry, negotiating interest and electricity payment deferrals, and subsidising fertiliser, seed and agricultural machinery companies.

Due to pressure from the provincial governments and sustained [lobbying by social movements and CSOs](#), on April 9<sup>th</sup> the government finally announced the [Ehsaas Emergency Cash Program](#), a rebranding of the former government Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) established in 2008. The Ehsaas program gave an extra monthly Rs. 1000 (USD 6.29) for the following 4 months to the 4.5 million beneficiary families of BISP, and extended a [one-time financial disbursement of Rs. 12,000 \(USD 75\)](#) to 5.5 million additional families living below the poverty line, which was supposed to meet their nutritional needs for the 4 month period. Much of the government's response amounted to attempting to source and [facilitate the charitable distribution of food donations directly from the private sector to the poor](#) who managed to make it onto the Ehsaas program lists of those deemed 'deserving' by registering biometric and identity information through an online portal. Rs. 50 billion (roughly USD 315 million) of the government's relief package was announced for farmers, which subsidised companies selling wheat, machinery and fertilisers. The province of Punjab also offered interest-free loans and crop insurance to 250,000 farmers.

## **2. Impact on the right to food and nutrition of small-scale food producers and marginalized groups**

Even before COVID-19, hunger was mounting in

Pakistan. One in five people in the country faced hunger, according to the [National Nutrition Survey conducted in 2018](#), and around two-thirds of households in the country suffer from malnutrition, with a clear contrast between rural and urban child stunting (43 percent and 34 percent, respectively). COVID-19 is exacerbating this worsening situation. The complete shutdown of agricultural trading markets, especially those that purchase products from farmers, led to significant losses for farmers. With the movement of goods suspended, crops ready for harvest, including grain, were left to rot in the fields. The result was millions caught choosing between hunger and disease, and desperation continues to mount across working class neighbourhoods.

The [agrarian economy](#) accounts for 20 percent of Pakistan's GDP and employs 40 percent of the labour force. According to an August 2020 publication of Asia Development Bank, a third of rural households in the province of Punjab reported loss of earnings, while 22 percent of surveyed households had family members return from cities after losing their employment due to the COVID-19 ripples across the economy, increasing the household expenses while reducing their income.

In the face of the public distribution system under threat and prices of essential food items spiralling out of control, millions of unemployed workers, rural poor and landless peasantry were left to fend for themselves. The prices of wheat flour went up from Rs. 35 to Rs. 80 per kilo (from USD 0.20 to USD 0.50/kilo), while the price of sugar has increased from Rs. 60 to 100 per kilo (USD 0.37 to 0.62/kilo). This price increase in food items has not benefited the growers. The wheat bought in April 2020 by the government during the height of the pandemic was purchased at Rs. 1400 for 40 kilo (USD 8.71/40 kilo), and then sold over the next two months at prices up to Rs. 2500 (USD 15.55). The middlemen, hoarders and traders

benefited from the shortage of the food items, as the government took no action to stop the trends of food price hikes to unprecedented levels. The current price-hike in November 2020 accounts for one of the major challenges to the right to food and nutrition (RtFN) and good governance faced by the present government.

**"In light of the government's failures to address the crisis, a great wave of solidarity and mutual aid erupted among civil society, farmer and working class."**

### **3. Brief analysis of the government's responses from the perspective of the right to food and nutrition**

Under Prime Minister Imran Khan, Pakistan is a classic example of a country exercising sovereignty without responsibility as the state abandons the public in the midst of this unprecedented emergency. The government machinery was nowhere to be seen when desperate people waited for government support in the form of food and financial support during the first phase of the pandemic. The fact remains that Pakistan's food system does not work to feed a significant segment of society, and has only further deteriorated under the coronavirus crisis.

While it is assumed that the [Ehsaas Emergency Cash Program](#) reached the 12 million designated poor families by August, we are left to speculate whether this amount of support was delivered in practice. Several government ministers and advisers to the Prime Minister announced contradictory claims, which vary between 2.5 and 15 million people receiving cash payments through smart cards. Even though Pakistan is shamefully already known internationally for stunting of 40 percent of children below the age of 5, the Ehsaas cash assistance was only designated to reach 15 percent of all of the families in need.

Moreover, no further cash has been disbursed to the needy families on the government's lists since the 4 month period expired in August.

The relief package for the farmers was mainly used to subsidise wheat, agricultural machinery and fertiliser companies. No direct cash was provided to small farmers. The economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on small farmers were further amplified by the government's anti-smog measures, which scapegoat and fine farmers who burn crop residue, rather than subsidising the farmer's extra costs in labour or machinery to take out the stubble of the previous season's crop. The small farmers' troubles were further exacerbated by the effect of swarms of locusts on their crops, one of many challenges due to ['Pakistans position as the 5th most vulnerable country](#) in the world with respect to climate change. The [World Bank provided USD 200 million to take on the challenges associated with the locusts](#), however it remains unclear where those funds were disbursed or whether they were used for other purposes.



While the government appealed to the private sector to operate [food kitchens \(langars\) and provide food rations](#) to those in need with a [minimum of Rs. 10 million per company](#), they have not published data indicating how many meals or rations have actually reached those in need.

#### 4. Examples of emerging people-to-people solutions

In light of the government's failures to address the crisis, a great wave of solidarity and mutual aid erupted among civil society, farmer and working class communities. Food was cooked in bulk and distributed by ordinary people among the most needy during the lockdown. Dry food rations were distributed among those at the edge of hunger by many newly formed small associations. Committees were formed by trade unions and farmers organisations to assist those who had lost most of the household

income and arranged food for such families. Pakistan Kissan Rabita Committee volunteered with the Haqooq-e-Khalq Movement's Labour Relief Campaign, an initiative providing solidarity to working class families and peasantry, while demanding that the government provide job security and social welfare. This great show of solidarity among communities not waiting for the government to come forward helped avoid a complete collapse of the food system.

CSOs and NGOs have also stepped in to provide dry food staples to working class and rural poor families throughout the first six months of the intense spread of the pandemic. The Edhi Welfare Foundation provided rations to tens of thousands of needy families across the country. International cash assistance was also welcomed by families who benefited from donations sent from the Asia People's Movement on Debt and Development.





# THE PHILIPPINES

“Makakaligtas kami sa COVID-19, pero mamamatay kami sa gutom” (We can escape COVID-19, but we would die of hunger)

Hit by the [second-highest number of cases](#) in Southeast Asia (359,169 cases as of October 19, 2020), the pandemic continues to have repercussions on the lives of ordinary people, many of whom already lost their jobs and were caught unprepared by the public health emergency and food crisis. As unemployment surges and markets are abruptly cut off, the lockdowns and economic downturn have resulted in a serious situation of hunger, especially for families who have no secure income and food. While the nation continues to be plagued by COVID-19, the [Anti-Terrorism Bill championed by President Duterte was approved by the Congress](#) in July 2020. The Bill's provisions contradict the Constitution, suspend key basic human rights, and adapt the definition of “terrorism” to be so broad that it could be applied to activists and human rights defenders.

## 1. Government's response to COVID-19

At the onset of this pandemic, the Duterte Government mobilised security forces to enforce strict mobility measures, i.e., a travel ban, one quarantine pass per household, curfew hours, window hours for grocery/marketing, among other restrictive policies. This total lockdown dubbed an "enhanced community quarantine" (ECQ), extended across the National Capital

Region and the rest of the Luzon.

Within the first month of the lockdown, which started on March 15, 2020, the Administration-dominated Congress passed a law granting emergency powers and additional budgetary allocation for the COVID-19 response, also known as the [“Bayanihan Heal as One” Law](#) (Bayanihan means “communal work” in Tagalog).

**“Small food producers and land rights claimants have responded to the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and state paralysis through organising alternative systems on one hand, and on the other, intensifying food production.”**

The law granted the distribution of a Social Amelioration Program (SAP) of PHP 6,500 (equivalent to USD 130) to the most marginalized, e.g., farmers with a hectare of land or less. SAP also extended to other poor sectors, for example, the families of senior citizens or those aged 60 years and above, persons with disabilities, pregnant or breastfeeding mothers, single parents, families with a member working overseas, indigent or indigenous people living in ancestral grounds, informal workers, underprivileged sectors and the homeless, informal economy workers, including independent, self-employed and small-scale producers and distributors of goods and services.

The Department of Agriculture (DA) meanwhile inexplicably made [PHP 5,000 \(around USD 100\) assistance for rice farmers available, which was](#) intended to cushion pre-pandemic losses under the rice tariffication law (RTL) as a COVID-19 response. The loan package under the same law was made accessible only to farmers with a hectare or less. The Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) [provided one-time food relief distribution](#) (consisting of three kilos of low-quality rice, 2 cans of sardines and three packs of noodles) targeting farmers owning one hectare or less and those who received their agrarian reform titles under the Duterte Administration.

allowing businesses falling under the classification of essential services to operate. Business and company owners argued that workers have been displaced for too long, as they lobbied for resuming operations and worried about losing their profits. At this time, mass transportation had not fully resumed, thus leaving workers to walk long hours going to their workplaces.

## **2. Impact of COVID-19 on the right to food and nutrition of small-scale food producers and marginalized groups**

The total lockdown presented an immediate problem for the transportation of agricultural and fishery produce, posing the possibility of food shortages in the urban centres and income losses for those unable to transport their products from the rural areas. A [Social Weather Station \(SWS\) survey conducted from July 3 to 6](#) revealed that more than 4 million people in The Philippines have experienced involuntary hunger since the onset of COVID-19. The need for financial assistance is rising, especially for those with medical conditions and those with children. In the Philippines, the estimated income loss among women is around 50 per cent less compared to a 100 per cent income loss for men, as women are still able to continue with their pre-COVID-19 lockdown livelihoods, mainly vegetable growing. Thus, the loss bears heavily on women who worry about the next meal and other household needs. Specific challenges faced by women include: exclusion from social amelioration programs, limited mobility, lack of quarantine passes to conduct their work, high costs of farm inputs forcing them to approach loan sharks, unavailable seeds from government agencies, imminent hunger and gender-based violence. The quarantine passes were mostly assigned to men, preventing females from going out for their own livelihoods

facilitated food passes for delivery trucks and cargos benefit the consolidators, traders and big producers. However, small farmers and fishers had difficulty travelling to their farmlands or fishing grounds. With the average age for farmers and fishers in The Philippines being 57 years, many were not allowed to go out due to risks associated with their age.

### **3. Brief analysis of the government's responses from the perspective of the right to food and nutrition**

The government's response to the pandemic did not alleviate difficulties in accessing food, as they excluded a great majority of the rural poor. Only farmers with a hectare of land or less were included in the distribution of financial assistance from the Social Amelioration Program of PHP 6,500 (USD 130). The DAR's one-time food relief distribution excluded millions of farmers, including more than [4,000 beneficiaries in Hacienda Luisita](#), one of the biggest and most contested landholdings distributed under the National Agrarian Reform Program in 2013 (where each recipient was granted only 6,000 square meters). Moreover, marketing support was not extended to farmers to make sure that food will reach intended consumers in the urban areas, resulting in agricultural produce such as tomatoes and other vegetables being wasted. Similarly, the loan package under the "Bayanihan Heal as One" Law only covered a very small number of rice farmers.

### **4. Examples of emerging people-to-people solutions**

Small food producers and land rights claimants have responded to the challenges of the

COVID-19 pandemic and state paralysis through organising alternative systems on one hand, and on the other, intensifying food production as a safety net against hunger in anticipation of a prolonged lockdown. Female farmers are also cultivating land belonging to others with permission. Many have also commenced communal gardening.

Social movements continue advocating for a food system more gender-responsive to the needs of marginalised people and continue demanding the inclusion of women in the [Registry System for Basic Sectors in Agriculture \(RSBSA\)](#), as women bear the brunt of the lockdown, Grassroots organisers have also called upon the government to make the food system friendly to small farmers and provide necessary support and incentives.

At the same time, in some areas, such as in Coron-Busanga in Palawan, and [Sicogon](#), indigenous peoples, farmers and fishers have initiated land occupations to challenge the profit-oriented tourism with people-centred alternative tourism. Solidarity markets are also starting to emerge as urban-based town hall markets are set up to make food accessible to consumers. Such food-based producer-consumer relations are starting to gain ground (as town hall food markets are established in select areas which provide farmers direct access to consumers and vice versa. The Department of Agriculture has also resurrected in various areas of the country point of sales where accredited farmers may sell their products directly to consumers as a viable alternative to food importation and the current profit-oriented food supply chain.



# NEPAL

The government of Nepal declared a nationwide lockdown on March 24, 2020, which [continued until July 21, 2020](#), aiming to control and prevent the spread of COVID-19. The lifting of the lockdown included conditions, such as not allowing the opening of schools, barring gatherings, and other measures to ensure social distancing. Even though the nationwide lockdown was lifted, localised prohibitory curfew orders were imposed in many places where the COVID-19 outbreak was reappearing and/or reportedly spreading. Out of total RT-PCR samples of 1,690,509, [a total of 226,026 cases have been reported as positive, with 1389 deaths and 207,998 recovered cases](#) as of November 26, 2020. It is clear that the pandemic is having a direct impact on every sector in Nepal. Due to the absence of guidelines and policy measures ensuring access to food in times of a pandemic, crises of food and nutrition for those who depend on daily wages for their livelihood have only deepened.

## 1. Government's response to COVID-19

The government provided immediate emergency food packages containing rice, lentils, oil and salt to daily wage labourers and food vulnerable communities. Several measures were implemented to support the rural population. Emergency relief packages with certain eligibility criteria, such as land entitlement and land size, and lump-sum relief payments (Rs. 750 Nepali rupees (around USD 6) per kattha (338m<sup>2</sup>) of land)

were issued. A [rapid response team](#) was constituted at the ministry level to provide immediate services for maintaining food and supply chains, considering agriculture as an essential service during the lockdown. In addition, the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development declared [five policies](#) to combat the adversities brought about by COVID-19 (e.g., relief packages, loans, awareness-raising through media, insurance on crops and livestock, and minimum support prices for produce).

However, smallholders, tenant farmers, sharecroppers and daily agricultural wage labours, the majority of whom are women, who do not have land entitlement or have land below certain land size, were excluded from these relief packages and payments. After May 2020, the government developed a policy guideline for relief packages, allowing for catering of food stuffs and vegetables in and around settlements of informal labour, agricultural labour and slum-dwellers, in an effort to ensure access to food.

The lockdown was loosened from June 15 onwards to allow workers in construction, agriculture and other classified sectors to work. There were no separate policies or provisions formulated for female workers or pregnant women, nor was any economic support provided to them. There were also no policies made to avoid layoffs during the lockdown, nor any policies to ensure a decent income for people in confinement. The local governments also failed to come up with provisions to support the livelihoods of migrant workers.

## **2. Impact of COVID-19 on the right to food and nutrition of small-scale food producers and marginalized groups**

The imposed lockdown and prohibitory orders (or curfew) have caused severe setbacks in the lives of vulnerable migrant workers and other communities who live on meagre daily wages in ensuring their daily food needs and other livelihoods requirements are met. The rate of food and nutrition insecurity [increased by 8 per cent in one month of the lockdown alone](#).

Sudurpaschim Province was the most impacted province with respect to poor food consumption and weak nutritional diversity. [One out of 10 households lost their livelihoods, while three out of 10 households lost income](#). The highly impacted groups are small-scale food producers,

especially women, migrant returnees, daily wage labourers, women-headed families, disabled people, and Dalits (especially Dalit women). Due to lack of mobility, the routines of harvesting of crops (e.g., wheat, potato, and barley) and planting paddy crops were disturbed. Also because of transportation constraints and unavailability of market, farmers who grow highly consumable products were hit hardest. Poultry, along with fruits and vegetables, were badly impacted, forcing peasants to dump their produce. Cooperative shops that sell at reasonable prices were infrequently open. Standing crops such as banana and maize have also been severely affected, with farmers accumulating a loss of Rs. 10 million (USD 84,050) during the first lockdown period alone (from March 24 until the third week of April), affecting the employment of tens of thousands of local labourers. Smallholders, landless farmers, and female farmers engaging in subsistence agriculture for their livelihoods are ill-affected and their RtFN threatened. Almost all agriculture workers lost their jobs and wages.

Workers in other sectors will also be highly impacted, and it is estimated that between 1.6 and 2.0 million jobs will likely be disrupted, with either complete job loss or reduced working hours and wages, by end of July 2020. Over 80 per cent of Nepal's total workforce (around 5.7 million) are engaged in the informal sector. There are approximately 1.4 million precarious home-based workers in Nepal (the majority of whom are women) producing goods for export. The complete lockdown disrupted the entire supply chain and demand has substantially decreased, thereby affecting these workers at large. Tourism, which contributes to 8 per cent of the country's economy, also suffered, resulting in a loss of jobs of around 13,000 tour, trekking and mountain guides. Loss of wages has severely encumbered people's ability to feed themselves and their families.

Women bear the brunt of the pandemic, especially in rural areas, eating last in the family and dropping out first from education. While men equally suffer psychological stress due to the loss of income, in a situation of emergencies, women are often the ones to sell whatever assets they possess, causing increased incidences of poverty among women and women-headed households. Gender-based violence has also increased. Female smallholder vegetable farmers have been hard hit, since they would carry and sell the vegetables door-to-door, losing their main sources of income. As most of the migrant male workers returned home due to COVID-19, the household and care work relegated to women has increased. For many households, where every day needs for food are covered through daily wage labour or remittances from out-migrated family members, a pandemic such as COVID-19 has direct consequences for the right to food and nutrition and many other related rights because of the immediate cuts in income, restricted mobility and disruption of food production and supply chains.

Most Dalit communities, which subsist on daily wages, are denied access to food, and are discriminated against in receiving relief packages. Due to economic constraints and lack of access to information, many Dalit communities cannot even take preventive safety measures to avoid transmission. The lockdown has heavily impacted the lives of Dalit women with loss of jobs and income, who also suffer caste-based discrimination and domestic violence, as well as are denied access to agricultural inputs (e.g., seeds).

Meanwhile, the price of vegetables was on the rise during two weeks (1<sup>st</sup> week and 2<sup>nd</sup> week of August), despite the government order against price inflation. Demand for food is likely to increase in coming days with national-scale hoarding and with millions of Nepali migrants

returning home from abroad.

### 3. Brief analysis of the government's responses from the perspective of the right to food and nutrition

The food packages (which contained rice, lentil, oil, and salt) provided by the government were insufficient, mismanaged, and did not reach all those who were in need. Moreover, much-needed emergency support, relief packages and payments targeting farmers did not reach smallholders, tenant farmers, sharecroppers and daily agricultural wage labourers, of whom the majority are women and from marginalized and food vulnerable communities.

The Government failed to enact any policies to avoid layoffs during the crisis, nor are there policies in place to ensure decent incomes for people under confinement. Similarly, no provisions were laid down by local governments to support the livelihoods of migrant workers, forcing many to re-enter India in search of jobs. Furthermore, there were no provisions or relief programs to support small-scale food producers and cooperatives, nor was there food management by the government to support the daily wage labourers, food vulnerable communities and small-scale farmers.



#### 4. Examples of emerging people-to-people solutions

The National Human Rights Commission has formed the “Joint Monitoring Committee”, including representatives from Nepal Bar Association, NGO Federation (CSO) and Federation of Journalists to monitor the impacts of COVID-19 on the livelihoods of vulnerable individuals, groups and communities of a number of provinces. Based on the collected information, the Joint Committee handed over “CSO Recommendations” to the concerned local and provincial level governments, demanding RtFN violations be stopped and redressed. The Joint Committee also conducted awareness-raising activities on the impacts of COVID-19 by broadcasting public service messages (PSA) on radio, as well as engaging in media dialogue and interactions through local/national media (FM radio, television, newspapers and online portals).

**“A pandemic such as COVID-19 has direct consequences for the right to food and nutrition and many other related rights because of the immediate cuts in income, restricted mobility and disruption of food.”**





# Joint Recommendations to the National Governments

The Asia Chapter of the Global Network for the Right to Food and Nutrition demands the following from our member organisations' national governments:

1. Immediately provide adequate and sufficient support to those suffering hunger and malnutrition, and compensate for the loss of livelihoods by guaranteeing the right to food and nutrition (RtFN).

2. Conduct human rights impact assessments of COVID-19 on the right to food and nutrition of all vulnerable persons, groups and communities, paying special attention to children, women, elderly, and marginalized groups. Governments, on the basis of the assessment, should engage with concerned persons, groups, and communities to jointly formulate short-term, mid-term, and long-term plans to mitigate food crisis and nutritional deficiencies. Short-term measures should include provision of relief packages and socio-economic recovery for daily wage workers and small-scale food producers, provision of cooking oil, lentils and other essential diversified food items (such as fruits and vegetables), provision of community kitchens for the urban poor, the establishment of Fair Price Shops at community levels. Mid-term and long-term measures must be oriented toward the universalisation of public distribution systems (PDS) for food grain and other staple delivery.

3. Recognize small-scale producers as frontline workers in emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic, by providing immediate and necessary financial and material support for farm production, support for health certification for smooth transport of food produced by peasants and small-scale food producers to local markets, and regulation of prices in support of local producers and consumers. Governments should also effectively implement agrarian reforms to ensure small-scale producers have secure access to land and support services and to overcome obstacles to peasants in making the land more productive. For instance, a leasehold farming policy could ensure access to productive resources for landless and migrant agricultural workers. The Governments must also take appropriate measures to facilitate a rapid transformation to agroecological production

4. Protect workers - both formal and informal - from layoffs, provide assistance for workers that guarantees the right to food and nutrition during unemployment, and support workers with all necessary protection, payment, training and supervision needed in this pandemic. The Indian government should increase the number of days under the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act and bring a similar programme for urban areas. The Indonesian government should revoke the Minister of Manpower Circular Letters and impose strict legal sanctions on companies that discharge workers not in line with the Manpower Law and that pay wages outside the provisions of statutory regulations. The Nepali government should promote employment in the agriculture sector, for example, through the Cash for Work to at least one member of the family who is engaged in the leased farming system until the harvesting of crops.

5. Ensure nutritious, diversified food and essential services are provided to pregnant and lactating women, infants, school children, and adolescent girls. This means, in India, for example, to reopen Anganwadi centres immediately to provide crucial growth monitoring, immunisation, cooked meals, and nutritional counselling services, with adequate safety protocols to prevent COVID-19 transmission between Anganwadi workers, the women and children. Monitoring of delivery of service on the ground should be conducted by respective authorities.

6. Universalise maternity entitlements to all pregnant and lactating women and health and nutrition services for all children without any conditionality or eligibility requirements. Ensure equity and inclusion of all children irrespective of gender, caste, class, ethnicity, rural-urban-tribal geographies, disability conditions, and other differences.
7. Hold TNCs and other businesses legally accountable to human rights abuses which hamper peoples' RtFN during pandemic and beyond, and take stringent actions to regulate the activities of domestic corporations and TNCs that threaten the RtFN of people. For example, the Indonesian government should restrict aggressive market tactics used by the infant formula industry during the pandemic. In this respect, the government must ensure that all health workers are well-informed and adhere to the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes. In the Philippines, the government should review mining concessions and tourism projects that displace people from the land and their sources of food. Furthermore, the government should closely monitor and put on hold the conversion of agricultural lands to non-agricultural uses.
8. Promote the realisation of the RtFN, preventing any future threat of abuses and violations of the right to food and nutrition as laid down in the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). Guarantee the rights laid down in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas. In this respect, the government of Indonesia should immediately repeal the recently approved Omnibus Law and guarantee the rights of people to access natural resources, committing itself to solve agrarian conflicts. In the Philippines, the government should immediately repeal the rice tariffication law, which resulted in huge losses among rice farmers. In Pakistan, the government should elaborate a national agricultural policy that encourages local seed development, seed banking and seed exchanges in alignment with the principles of seed sovereignty.
9. Promote and support people-to-people solutions (for example, by arranging peasant-to-peasant knowledge and seed exchange) that have emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic.
10. Actively support the ongoing process on UN Binding Treaty on TNCs and other business enterprises.
11. Raise public awareness on preventive measures in local languages in order to control and combat the spread of COVID-19 through effective means of communication reaching the most vulnerable groups and communities.