

MONITORING
REPORT ON THE
RIGHT TO FOOD
AND NUTRITION
DURING COVID-19

JUNE 2020

1. INTRODUCTION

"Life and death is a ceremony of gratitude to our sacred universe called Earth, 'Mother Earth', where every sprout draws a smile on our face, and where death brings us pain and some tears. Both are requirements to keep us going. This is the ancestral legacy of the indigenous peoples that we are sharing with the identities of this planet. We send a spiritual greeting to those who departed due to the pandemic, we honor their departure, like we honor those who come for the first time to this planet, with births, with fresh sprouts toasting with joy, because the circle keeps turning for centuries in a perfect sequence: the ceremony which speaks to us." Eva Martina Gamboa is a Wichí representative, one of the indigenous peoples of the Gran Chaco, today Chaco province in Argentina.

This is FIAN International's second monitoring report on the impact of COVID-19 on people's human right to food and nutrition (RFN) (the first preliminary report is available here). As the pandemic has now spread across all continents, it is henceforth possible to draw a more complete and differentiated picture of the consequences on the RTFN of the measures taken by states in their efforts to contain and stop the spread of the virus. At the same time, new challenges are being shared by social movements and CSOs worldwide, which were not mentioned in the last monitoring report. One thing has become clear: the demand for systemic change has grown strong.

The information presented in this updated monitoring report is based on the testimonies of people and organizations from around the globe. Those include sources provided by member organizations of the Global Network for the Right to Food and Nutrition (GNRTFN), as well as a collection of online mainstream and alternative news sources. While it results from a collective effort, it does not claim to be fully exhaustive. The report also attempts to offer a more balanced geographical coverage with respect to the preliminary report. All sources mentioned are hyperlinked throughout the report. With the support of the GNRTFN, FIAN International has also elaborated a monitoring guide to support activists, communities and organizations in monitoring states' obligations vis-à-vis the RTFN in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

FIAN International is also keenly interested in listening to people's solutions for the RTFN in the fight against the pandemic. We therefore renew our call to all organizations and individuals to share their experiences or any information or comments with us at monitoringcovid19@fian.org.

Finally, FIAN International wishes to thank all contributing organizations, social movements, FIAN sections, as well as activists and individuals who have made this second monitoring report possible.

2. UPDATES ON THE PRELIMINARY MONITORING REPORT ON COVID-19 AND THE RTFN

The following paragraphs contain some updates on the issues raised in the preliminary COVID-19 monitoring report:

a. School Meals

School meals are an essential source of food for millions of children around the world. Yet, due to the closure of schools, 320 millions of children have lost their access to school meals. In **Brazil**, for example, despite provisions for school feeding programs, as per information received by FIAN Brazil, food is either not provided in some states/municipalities, replaced by cash transfers, or is not sourced from family agriculture. Therefore, the Brasilian Forum for Food Sovereignty and Security (Fórum Brasileiro De Soberania E Segurança Alimentar E Nutricional) joined the National Campaign for the Right to Education (Campanha Nacional Pelo Direito À Educação) of the Landless Movement (MST) to elaborate jointly a Guide for School Food based on food sovereignty and the RTFN. In Colombia, according to FIAN Colombia, food provided as part of the school feeding program is neither nutritious nor healthy, yet often the only food that families have for the entire family. In Spain, according to Coordinación Baladre, although schools are distributing food, distribution takes place far from where families live. Since transportation costs are not provided, some families have no means to physically access food. Even when families can travel to schools, the burden of travelling and collecting such food usually falls on women, which exposes them to health risks. In India, a rapid assessment undertaken by the Centre for Child and the Law (CCL)/ National Law School of India University (NLSIU) revealed that a large number of schools in the Southern State of Karnataka were closed before the formal announcement of the lockdown, thus depriving children of school mid-day meals. Although both central and state governments ordered that dry rations be delivered as a substitute directly to children's homes, this measure has only been implemented in a few cases.

b. Food Assistance and Social Security Schemes

In **Uganda**, according to <u>Katosi Women Development Trust</u> (KWDT), the Government has restricted the distribution of food relief and announced that all support would be pooled through established COVID-19 task forces. The challenges related to the timely distribution of food aid have led many to the brink of starvation and to seek support from local leaders and non-state actors. <u>Masifundise</u> informed that **South Africa** had announced a (South African Rand) R 500 billion (ca. 27 billion USD) economic stimulus package to assist municipalities in providing emergency water services, sanitation of public transport, as well as food and shelter to the homeless. Additional grants are also being provided. For example, R 500 (ca. 28 USD) per month as child support and R 350 (ca. 20 USD) per month to those who are unemployed and do not receive any form of social grant or Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) payment. The Government is also providing food parcels to communities in need through the South African Social Security Association (SASSA). However, the process has been fraught with corruption and nepotism. In **India**, as Phase 2 of containment has begun, the central government has been conducting a <u>survey</u> amongst the most vulnerable sections of society to determine the effectiveness of various existing schemes (such as food, rations, scholarships and pensions). Funds have been provided to the different states for this purpose. However, due to the lockdown, beneficiaries fear that they may not be

able to access it. In **Bolivia**, Fundación Tierra reported that the <u>Municipality of Tomina</u> has provided food baskets to families in need.

c. Food Markets and informal food traders

The closure of all markets including street vendors (except food markets) in **South Africa** has highlighted the ineffectiveness of such a blanket closure. According to Jaap de Visser, author of the Oped "The lockdown regulations are not a ban on all informal food traders", "(I) is unclear whether food provisioning (i.e. the handing out of food parcels) will be sufficient. It is dangerous to assume that food provisioning can replace the existing patchwork of formal and informal food systems that feed millions of people living in townships and informal settlements. It is therefore important to have legal clarity on what food systems are permitted under the Lockdown Regulations".

The Guardian and <u>El Diario</u> have reported on <u>food markets becoming infection hubs</u> in **Latin America**. While some cities on the continent have allowed markets to continue, it is questionable whether required sanitary measures are properly taken. Instead of closing food markets, the authorities concerned should ensure adequate sanitary conditions in food markets.

Why Hunger reaffirms how COVID-19 has exposed deep-rooted <u>racism</u> in **USA**. People of colour face disproportionately higher COVID-19-related hospitalizations, are overrepresented in the jobs most affected by the pandemic and have a higher risk of infection. According to the <u>Center on Budget and Policy Priorities</u>, communities of colour have long struggled to access fresh and unprocessed food, and minority workers, who make up a lopsided percentage of the food industry, have no medical benefits and are inadequately paid. At the same time, traditional cuisines, such as soul food, have taken the blame for the health problems of African-Americans - a critique that overlooks how little obesity and Type 2 diabetes were prevalent in the Black community until processed and fast-food producers started operating in minority neighborhoods in the late 20th century. In addition, <u>stress from racial discrimination</u> impacts on heart disease, hypertension, and obesity.

d. Migrant Workers

In **Italy**, a <u>decree to allow temporary work permits</u> for migrants to work on farms is to be approved by the Government. While the latter argues that such a policy could protect foreign workers by giving them access to healthcare and help undocumented migrants out of labor exploitation, human rights organizations have criticized that <u>migrants are merely viewed as commodities</u> in the policy debate. Similarly, authorities in **Portugal** have granted temporary citizenship rights to all migrants waiting for a <u>residence permit</u>, to ensure their access to health, social security, employment stability and housing, in accordance with statements by the Internal Administration Minister.

e. Deterioration of the Human Rights Situation in Conflict Areas

As mentioned in the preliminary report, COVID-19 has caused deterioration of human rights in conflict areas. As per information shared by FIAN Germany, in B'tselem – **Palestine**, the restriction of public life has led to a situation of considerable isolation, especially in rural areas. The economic basis of <u>Palestinian olive farmers is also suffering massively</u>. In April alone, hundreds of olive trees were destroyed and uprooted by settlers. This will have a disastrous impact on the livelihood of olive farmers.

Not only will there be no direct harvest this year, but the trees will need to be replaced. For a good harvest, trees must be 35 years old and older, which implies that olive farmers will face crop failures for the next 20 years. Only then will the newly replaced trees assume the same capacity as before and contribute to the family income.

f. Economic Measures in Response to the Crisis

Various economic measures are being proposed at national and international levels. Going beyond some suggestions for debt suspensions, African leaders have united in a common front to demand cancellation of their debts in order to better address the COVID-19 pandemic. A statement has been released by CSOs worldwide, calling on the World Bank (WB), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and all bilateral, regional and multilateral development funders of **Bangladesh** to suspend payments on all public debts of developing countries combating the pandemic, so as to avoid aggravating the current crisis. Le Point reported that the co-founders of makesense Africa in Senegal are calling to rethink international cooperation in Africa. In **Colombia**, the Ministry of Defence has accepted a parliamentary proposal to transfer funds from the military budget to cover health expenses.

g. Constitutional Reform

In **Ecuador**, to ensure the accountability of the executive branch during the pandemic, the <u>Constitutional Court issued a Judicial Decision (Decision No.1-20-EE/20)</u> recognizing that, although the President has the power to implement lockdown measures, he must also inform the Court on how the rights to food and health can be guaranteed for people living in extreme poverty. Similarly, to address the lack of access to food caused by the pandemic, a parliamentarian in **Chile** has proposed a <u>constitutional reform to include the right to food in the Constitution</u>.

h. Derogation of Human Rights Treaties

By 11 May 2020, <u>at least 84 states had officially declared a state of emergency</u> through their national laws, yet only 13 states had made official notification to the Secretary-General of the UN regarding the human rights derogation as required by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.



Map realized with MapChart based on UN data

In the Americas, 24 out of 35 Member States of the Organization of American States (OAS) are parties to the American Convention on Human Rights (ACHR). 13 out of 24 parties to the ACHR had notified the Secretary-General about the state of emergency in their respective countries (by 11 May 2020), in some cases explicitly mentioning the articles of the ACHR they derogate from. In the European human rights system, only 10 out of 47 Parties to the ECHR had notified the Secretary-General after declaring a state of emergency in their respective countries.

Those universal and regional human rights instruments allowing for derogation in times of national emergency, such as the ICCPR, are unequivocal in stipulating that States have the obligation to notify any derogation from one or several rights enshrined in the relevant human rights treaty. More importantly, any measure limiting human rights enjoyment requires a real necessity, reasonability and proportionality test. The risk of abuse of power in this context is very high and has become a reality in several countries.

3. THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON WOMEN, PEASANTS, AGRICULTURAL WORKERS, FISHERS & INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

a. Women

Organizations continue to highlight the differentiated gender impact of COVID-19 and lockdown measures. The general analysis focuses on the increased burden of unpaid care work and domestic violence on women. Having to dedicate more time for care work, they often sacrifice their jobs and income, which negatively impacts their families' RTFN. Domestic violence can cause women to eat less, to be the last to eat, or not to eat at all. As women play a key role in food production and provision, their

reduced capacity for working affects negatively their contribution to food systems and subsequently the enjoyment of the RTFN of their families and of many others.

The majority of women and girls in **Africa** work in the informal sector. They are self-employed or work as daily wage laborers. Strict confinement measures with no alternative safety nets compel women to eat last and less. Women and girls often engage in small-scale agriculture in the farming season, but this has been entirely halted and has contributed to food shortages both in the short and medium terms. In **Uganda**, women in small-scale fishing communities have faced enormous pressure due to the closure of fish markets. Women who normally play an unrecognised role in households are now struggling to put food on the table. In **South Africa**, according to <u>Womin</u>, women have been <u>turned away by police when trying to collect water</u>, having to wait until dark to go collect water from distant sources, putting their safety at risk. This situation has compelled families to compromise on hygiene.

In Latin America, the upcoming joint report of FIAN Ecuador, OCARU and other organizations highlights the drastic increase of working hours for women. While men have taken on more house chores, women are still overburdened. In Mexico, people worry that this 'new normality' will impact women negatively since schools will remain closed and women will have to continue with unpaid care work. In Colombia, as already mentioned above, school feeding packages are the only source of food for entire families. Since women are often the last to eat, FIAN Colombia, Redpapaz and other organizations fear that hunger will increase among women. In Ecuador, Rocío Gonzales, a leader of the Fe del Campesino Association (The Peasant's Faith) underlines the impact of peasant women's loss of informal work. The situation of single mothers forced to resort to charity because of food scarcity is particularly challenging.

In **Ecuador**, two indigenous women - Diocelinda Iza from the Indigenous and Peasant Women Cultivating Hope (OMICSE) Organization and Ivonne Macias from the Union of People Affected by Chevron-Texaco (UDAPT)_- highlight the anxiety and stress created by the lockdown, which places a heavier burden on women's bodies and generates more physical and domestic violence. When women cannot sell their agricultural products and feed their families, they feel responsible and suffer. Similarly, in **USA**, Why Hunger reports about the increase in domestic violence during the lockdown, aggravated by the closure or reduced capacity of shelters and other protection spaces for women.

In **Spain**, Coordinación Baladere has raised concern regarding the inability to access information about the situation of women working in red-fruit plantations and currently under confinement. It is feared that women, mostly from Morocco, will be sent home without the required precautions at the end of the harvest season. Reports from **India** point out that women, in the sex industry, are struggling for survival and starving due to the lockdown.

LGBTIQ+ populations are <u>suffering from the impact of lockdown measures</u>. In **Perú, Colombia and Panama**, men and women are allowed to leave their homes on alternate days. However, such discriminatory measures have endangered the lives of transgender, non-binary and queer people.

b. Peasants

As mentioned in the <u>preliminary report</u>, movement restrictions and the closure of farmers' markets are <u>adversely affecting farmers</u>' <u>capacity to sell their products</u>, undermining their right to an adequate

standard of living and threatening their RTFN. Peasants in Ecuador and Colombia are facing difficulties in accessing seeds and saplings. Subsidies to offset the effects of the crisis are mainly intended for the agro-industrial sector, while small and medium-sized cooperatives and peasant enterprises are receiving negligible amounts. At the same time, middlemen are using the crisis as an excuse to pay less to peasants. In Ecuador, peasants are worried about the spread of COVID-19 by those returning to rural areas, possibly infecting elders who have remained in rural areas and where health care is weak or even inexistent. All these problems lie at the core of the present food crisis (see also section 5) and are linked to the dominant corporate power in food systems (more information in section 4). In India, peasant markets have been closed and the use of police brutality towards small vegetable vendors has been witnessed in different parts of the country. Amidst lockdown and market closures, tribal people have been restless in finding alternative ways of selling minor forest produce. In Uganda, Katosi Women Development Trust informed FIAN that the government food relief is limited to the urban poor with challenges to the distribution of foodstuff even to the target people. Small-scale food producers should be able to provide nutritious food for themselves and their communities while ensuring income for other types of food and basic necessities such as electricity and other utilities and expenses. The lockdown restrictions have prevented this from being viable, forcing small-scale food producers to also rely on social grants and food parcels.

c. Agricultural and Food Workers

While workers are essential for the global economy, they have been hit hardly by the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. In a <u>statement</u>, the European Coordination Via Campesina (ECVC) calls for much-needed structural reforms that place human rights above protecting market power as well as bank and corporate profits. It further demands states and European institutions to "first and foremost safeguard the fundamental rights of individuals, ensuring compliance with the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and other people working in rural areas (UNDROP), the International Convention on the Rights of All Migrant Workers and their Families, as well as the relevant ILO conventions, in particular, Convention 184 on Safety and Health in Agriculture". The statement additionally emphasizes how agricultural workers' income and livelihoods have been harshly affected due to border closures and COVID-19 containment measures. The International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations (IUF) demands, inter alia, income protection, social protection, as well as access to health services in order to protect agricultural workers in the fight against the spread of the pandemic.

Immediately after the **German** government's decision to allow the entry of seasonal workers for the harvest season (mainly white asparagus), 40,000 agricultural workers from Eastern Europe arrived in Germany by special planes in April, with a 40,000 due to arrive in May. Already before COVID-19, numerous <u>reports</u> pointed to the appalling working and living conditions of seasonal workers due to low wages (below minimum wages), illegal deduction of accommodation and meals from their pay, as well as a lack of access to health insurance. The pandemic has further exacerbated these problems: seasonal agricultural workers are expected to work under de-facto quarantine conditions, living in quarantine while working and sharing accommodation with half as many workers as usual (about a dozen workers). A systemic problem of <u>wage differential exploitation</u> across borders by employers

continues, with seasonal workers risking their health as the wages they receive in Germany remain higher than what they could earn back home.

In India, the nationwide lockdown has forced millions of stranded migrant workers – men, women and children - to travel back to their home villages. Many have ended up in government camps or have had to walk for several hundred kilometres without money or food. Many workers have lost their lives on their way due to exhaustion or accidents. According to Stranded Workers Action Network (Swan), of those wage laborers interviewed in April, around 82 per cent (out of 12,248) had not received rations from the government and 68 per cent (out of 9,743) had not received any cooked food during the last 32 days since the lockdown. The dire situation of migrant workers in India has prompted Michelle Bachelet, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, to call for more "domestic solidarity" during this crisis. Seasonal agricultural workers belong predominantly to the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe categories, "the most deprived strata of the rural hierarchy". Moreover, female migrant workers, many of whom are daily wage laborers and agricultural workers are bearing the brunt of the aftermath of this pandemic having lost their jobs, daily pay and being unable to purchase or access essential supplies such as menstrual hygiene products. The migrant issue is all the more acute as many of them are Dalits. Out of the 395 million intra-state migrants in India, 62 million are estimated to be Dalits along with 31 million Adivasis. The social distancing measures will outlive the drastic measures of lockdown and curfew as India has a much longer history of social distancing through the institution of untouchability. The Dalits have been structurally alienated in Indian society throughout history with coronavirus only intensifying the slur of the untouchable.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also exposed the extremely precarious condition of food workers, especially those working in industrial meat production. Several industrial abattoirs and meat processing factories in **Europe** and **USA** have become hotspots for coronavirus infections. In **Germany**, several abattoirs have been at the origin of <u>infection clusters</u>, forcing the government to <u>announce stricter rules</u> on working conditions. In **USA**, the <u>federal government ordered</u> meat processing facilities to continue operating while <u>failing to ensure adequate safety measures</u> for food workers. The closure of meat processing plants due to high infection rates has affected industrial livestock farmers even more severely. Media have reported on <u>farmers being forced to kill their hogs and cattle</u> as abattoirs were no longer operating, showing the lack of resilience of the industrial meat production chain.

d. Small-Scale Fishers

The COVID-19 crisis has become a livelihood crisis for millions of fishers and fish workers worldwide. In **India**, news of a hundred thousand fishers and migrant fish workers stranded in their fishing boats off the Maharashtra coast in the Arabian Sea hit the headlines when Prime Minister Modi announced a nation-wide lockdown on March 24. The country's 1,547 fish landing centres are closed with no transport facilities, ice for storage, sellers or markets. This comes in addition to a bad season, especially in the southwest of India. Without being able to land fish, small-scale fishers have no income and are finding it extremely difficult to feed themselves and their families adequately. In a recent press note, the National Fishworkers Forum (NFF) expressed its deep disappointment over the economic stimulus package announced by the central government for the fisheries sector. Instead of providing emergency support to fishers who are trying to make ends meet, the government is focusing on measures to promote prawn farming and fisheries exports. In the same press note, NFF further expressed its

discontent about how the free-ration scheme announced by the central government had bypassed fisherfolk because most of them were listed above the poverty line (APL). As such, NFF urges the government to provide assistance of INR 10,000 to each fisher's family for the next three months, given the suspension of fishing operations due to the pandemic and the impending ban during the monsoon period.

In Sri Lanka, according to the National Fisheries Solidarity Organisation (NAFSO), the situation faced by small-scale fishers due to nationwide curfew and prohibition of inter-state travels vary slightly across the country. Most challenges relate to the disruption of market channels, the issuance of a limited number of curfew passes allowing fishers to fish, the closure of fishing equipment stores and fuel pumping stations, the lack of ice to preserve caught fish, and low fish demand due to decreasing purchasing power. As small-scale fishers are highly affected by seasonality, many of them have had to resort to diverse non-fishing activities (e.g., coir industry (from coconut husks), net mending for the fishing industry, agriculture, husbandry, and tourism activities) to earn an additional income and to smoothen inter-temporal income fluctuations. The majority of these activities have come to a standstill caused by the pandemic, threatening their ability to generate supplementary incomes. Coastal tourism, which provides additional opportunities for coastal fishing communities to find alternative sources of income, is one area that has been hard hit. Women who were engaged in fish drying as a household activity can no longer do so as it is done outside their houses (fish drying sites on the beach or on roadsides). Small-scale fishers are therefore demanding that the process for obtaining fishing permits be relaxed and allow for fisheries cooperatives to obtain a group license for their members. They are also requesting for methods to be developed to allow for fish to be bought at landing sites in times of COVID-19 (without allowing for large-scale gathering), for the provision of free rations to the most affected small-scale fisher families, and to assist fisheries cooperatives. (Note: This information is from March/April 2020. Due to the lifting of curfews and relaxation of some measures, the situation may have changed since then).

Similarly in **South Africa**, the lockdown has exacerbated the RTFN of small-scale fishers. According to information shared by the organization <u>Masifundise</u>, small-scale fishers and other small-scale food producers live on a daily or weekly income and operate within the informal economy. While fishing is recognized as an essential service in the context of COVID-19, the vast majority of coastal and inland fishers have been operating informally (without a permit or using recreational permits) during the lockdown or have had their fishing grounds located in public parks or Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). As a result, fishers have been criminalised for exercising their rights and practising livelihood activities. Although small-scale fishers are now allowed to fish, they have faced challenges in accessing their usual markets, selling their catch and generating an income. The Department of Environment, Forestry, and Fisheries (DEFF) has launched a food relief scheme (provision of 10,000 food parcels) to benefit licensed small-scale fishers who have been identified as the most in <u>need</u>. Notwithstanding, the distribution of food parcels has resulted in conflict within communities, and there is concern that the selection of small-scale fishers to receive food parcels will alienate them from the community and cause more conflict. Furthermore, inland small-scale fishers have not been identified as beneficiaries of this process.

According to KWDT, although farming is one of the essential services allowed to continue in **Uganda**, fishing has been restricted. The majority of people in fishing and fishing-related activities have had no food relief. The army has been reportedly surveying the lake Victoria and beating those found fishing.

In a statement, the <u>World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP)</u> has underlined the failure of government responses in supporting small-scale fishing communities, whilst recalling the values and principles of food sovereignty. WFFP further calls on governments to support localised food systems that provide healthy and nutritious food at affordable prices, with the aim to improve small-scale fishers' working conditions as well as the sanitary and health conditions in that sector, and to collaborate with fisher organizations in strengthening the local democratic control over land and water resources.

e. Indigenous peoples



Kuna painting of traditional treatments

The COVID-19 crisis is highlighting the ongoing human rights violations suffered by Indigenous Peoples, impacting their right to health, to land, and to a healthy environment. High rates of deaths have been reported among indigenous elders who are the "wisdom, language and knowledge holders" of Indigenous Peoples' Nations. Making reference to the Keystone XL Pipeline construction in Canada, the <u>International Indian Treaty Council (IITC)</u> Indigenous Peoples' organization is outraged that the COVID-19 pandemic has been used by some federal and state/provincial governments and corporations to roll back environmental safeguards and fast track development projects that indigenous peoples have long opposed. At the same, attacks on indigenous human rights defenders who defend their territories against deforestation have been increasing. IITC has therefore demanded

that the rights of Indigenous Peoples, such as the rights to environmental and community health, to free, prior and informed consent (FPIC), and the right to participation be respected and has called on the "human family and the governments of the world to respect the rights and knowledge of Indigenous Peoples at this critical time". These demands are supported by the new <u>UN Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples</u>, José Francisco Cali Tzay. In a statement released on May 18, he expressed serious concerns over the impact of COVID-19 on indigenous peoples and current militarization of their territories. Whilst underlining that the indigenous communities who have best resisted the COVID-19 pandemic are those who have achieved autonomy and self-government, the Special Rapporteur further calls on governments to support Indigenous Peoples to implement their plans to protect their communities, to ensure that they have access to information regarding COVID-19 in their languages, and for urgent special measures to be taken to ensure availability and access to culturally appropriate medical services.

Further reading and videos:

Additional reading provided by Why Hunger on the situation in the USA

https://civileats.com/2020/05/22/op-ed-migrant-farmworkers-native-ranchers-in-border-states-hit-hardest-by-covid-19/

Focus on the Global South: Covid-19 Outbreak

Socio-economic Impact on Small-scale Fisher and Aquaculture in Indonesia, April 21, 2020.

A webinar organised by PLAAS Webinar: 'Covid-19: Impact on small-scale fisheries in South Africa and beyond' featuring Charles America (fisher and activist), Rowena Europa (Coastal Links), and Naseegh Jaffer (Masifundise Development Trust) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LyK_pMPcl8A

CEJIL on the risk for indigenous people

https://www.cejil.org/es/covid-19-supervivencia-pueblos-indigenas-riesgo

CIMI on the impact of the pandemic in Guarani Kaiowa communities

https://cimi.org.br/2020/04/em-reuniao-da-onu-sobre-a-pandemia-cimi-denuncia-ineficiencia-do-governo-brasileiro-e-descaso-com-indigenas/

4. THE IMPACT OF CORPORATE POWER GRAB DURING THE PANDEMIC

Movements and CSOs, including the <u>Treaty Alliance</u>, <u>The Global Campaign to Reclaim Peoples Sovereignty</u>, <u>Dismantle Corporate Power and Stop Impunity</u> and the <u>ESCR-NET</u> have denounced the way in which dominant corporate power undermines human rights, including the RTFN and demonstrates our society's fragility in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Agrifood corporations have imposed an industrialized food system, in which small-scale food producers remain marginalized from public policies and continue to be victimized by systematic abuses and discrimination. These same companies push for a corporate-led diet that weakens our bodies and increases our vulnerability to communicable and non-communicable diseases such as COVID-19. In times of crisis, powerful enterprises seek opportunities to further increase their profits. For example, the digital giants in the US and China and big companies have been lobbying the EU "(...) using the crisis to their advantage, and re-packaging old lobby demands: from delaying or killing regulations, to securing public bailouts while avoiding condition". At the same time, governments have been supporting the private sector by designing and implementing pro-business measures that rely on the import and export of food: In Colombia, the government has approved a decree suspending import taxes for soya, maize and sorghum. In Bolivia, the government has approved the use of genetically modified seeds and, in Honduras, organizations have countered the agrarian reforms, which promote greater dependency on food agro-industry. In Cambodia, small-scale food producers have been forced to migrate due to rising debts resulting from microcredits.

For large corporations, even the pandemic period is no exception to continue "business as usual". According to <u>Masifundise</u>, environmental policies in **South Africa** have been relaxed, especially in the mining sector. The Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries (DEFF) has officially approved the doubling of the minimum emission standards of sulphur dioxide, changing the limit from 500mg/Nm3 to 1000mg/Nm3, a decision that will only benefit large-scale industries. South Africa has

witnessed the vast expansion of West Coast beach mining since the outbreak of the COVID-19 crisis, rejecting most of the appeals against last year's approval of vastly expanded beach mining operations ("Tormin mine"). In the **Philippines**, Aliansa Tigil Mina has denounced the operations of mining companies, which disregard the health and welfare of their workers and of the mine-affected communities. Amidst the global COVID-19 crisis, mining operations continue to contaminate communities' sources of livelihood, and pollute water and coastal resources.

Why Hunger has shed light on the interconnection between the agricultural sector and food banks during the crisis. This link is typical of the industrial food system, characterized by overproduction of food, which feeds the 'machinery' before being used for charity or wasted. Due to lockdown measures and in order to avoid food waste, farmers have been left with no other option but to donate their produce to food banks, since the **US** government has not adopted measures to help them commercialize their yields or livestock. This may appear to be an adequate solution as a growing number of people have been seeking help from food banks. Yet, producers and consumers are at the losing end of this model. This 'apparent way-out' obliges them to cover the costs of the crisis, losing their income and having to depend on charity, both against their dignity. Profit remains elsewhere: while farmers are wasting their yields and euthanizing animals, food is scarce and expensive in urban centres; the evidence of a broken system. The same system has been denounced for oligopolistic behaviour and worker exploitation in the meat sector, for instance.

With regards to labor conditions, the ESCR-Net <u>stated</u> that the "heavy-handed enforcement of disease containment laws has functioned to exacerbate existing inequalities in a global economic system that values corporate profit over the safety and security of workers". Equally concerning is the danger of <u>digital companies using the crisis to impose digital technologies</u>, artificial intelligence and <u>elimination of cash</u>, affecting the social and cultural aspects of the RTFN, dismantling in-person human interactions, which disrupts the social fabric of our societies and excludes those without access to technologies.

An additional call to stay vigilant comes from the opponents of multi-stakeholderism. Replacing physical negotiations with virtual negotiations due to lockdown measures would <u>facilitate business participation</u> and corporate capture of the process for a Binding Instrument on Transnational Companies and Other Business Enterprises with respect to human rights. Whereas businesses have access to the required technologies, CSOs, social movements and grassroots communities active in the process may not. Another alarming development reported concerns the preparation by business lawyers of <u>lawsuits against states for their responses to COVID-19 in ISDS (investor-state dispute settlement)</u>, in the context of trade or investment treaties, threatening them to have to spend several million dollars at the cost of social expenditures.

Lastly, there has been also some good news: Some states, such as <u>Denmark and Poland will not give</u> <u>financial aid to companies registered in offshore tax havens</u>. Simultaneously, the African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights has adopted a resolution <u>on the need to develop norms on States' obligations to regulate private actors involved in the provision of social services.</u>

5. FOOD CRISES & EMERGENCIES

Organizations and media have continued reporting food crises and emergencies in diverse regions. Such crises affect food access, adequacy and availability.

Food accessibility remains a challenge for many around the world due to the reduction of income on the one hand, an increase of food prices (triple and quadruple) generated by middlemen speculation on the other, as reported by members of the GNRTFN in Argentina, Ecuador, Uganda, South Africa, France and El Salvador. For instance, in Ecuador, Colombia, Zimbabwe, Senegal, Mozambique and USA, peasants have been adversely impacted by dumping, denial of access to markets, and left with no other choice but to destroy their crops and euthanize livestock, as reported in USA and Kenya. This, together with the loss of income (people losing their jobs and informal workers losing their income) has a major impact on people's access to food. In Colombia, people suffering from hunger have been hanging shirts and rags at their windows as a sign for help. Likewise, there are echoing news about cases of hunger and imminent starvation in Argentina, Paraguay, Indonesia and India. More people have been resorting to food banks even in richer and 'developed' nations like Spain, USA, and Switzerland. In countries where remittances from middle and lower class migrants play a fundamental role in household incomes, the pandemic-induced reduction of these remittances from abroad negatively impacts access to food.

The current crisis also affects **food adequacy**. Whilst peasants have been unable to deliver food to urban markets, governments such as **Colombia**, **Ecuador**, and **USA** have been backing agro-industrial food chains and promoting the consumption of ultra-processed food, which is often cheaper and more accessible to consumers. Diets based on these foods weaken our immune system's capacity to resist diseases. Although the structural problem related to the consumption of non-healthy is pre-existent to the pandemic, the current situation has exacerbated the environment that causes malnutrition.

Food availability is impacted by the disruption of food chains (as well as logistic disruptions). According to <u>FIAN Ecuador</u>, <u>OCARU</u> and others, the closure of borders, lockdowns, and the quarantine measures that have taken place in Asian and European consumption centres have significantly <u>diminished commercial exchanges</u> of agricultural products. This has consequently undermined economies that depend on international market and global trade. The decisions of some states such as **Romania**, **Russia**, **Kazakhstan** and **Vietnam** to limit exports on rice and wheat and to stock food produce have further increased the <u>risk</u> of food speculation. <u>Food shortages</u> are also reported to cause social unrest.

Proponents of the <u>Malthusian approach to food crises</u> - based on the mathematical relation between available food (offer) and population needs (demand) - would most likely deny the fact that there is currently a food crisis. However, the understanding of a food crisis or <u>food emergency</u> from a human rights approach requires going beyond the mere calculation of offer and demand, to pay attention to the constitutive <u>elements of the right to food</u>, such as physical/economic accessibility, adequacy, and sustainability. FIAN therefore strongly believes that, in certain countries and among certain populations

- especially the poor and marginalised -, food crises are already jeopardizing people's ability to feed themselves adequately.

Food Prices in Africa

In Uganda, food prices have been fluctuating depending on what is defined as essential (farming) and unessential (fishing). The lack of refrigeration facilities for food producers, coupled with a reduction in purchasing power of the population, has contributed to plunging down the prices for perishable foodstuffs, resulting in losses for peasants. As an example, in the poultry industry, the prices of eggs have dropped from UGX 12,000 (US \$ 3) to UGX 7000 (US \$ 1.8), demonstrating a 41% drop according to KWDT. In the fishing sector (banned during the lockdown), the price for dried silverfish (mainly for poor households) increased by 23%, rising from UGX 30,000 (US\$ 7.9) to UGX 37,000 (US\$ 9.7) at the outbreak of COVID-19. The price is reportedly fluctuating depending on the availability of fish. In South Africa, although President Ramaphosa has put regulations in place to "prohibit unjustified price hikes", food prices have increased by an average of 0.4% over the lockdown period. According to Statistics South Africa, most essential food products have increased in price during the lockdown period, exacerbating the vulnerability of poor and food-insecure households across South Africa. In rural areas, many communities are experiencing additional challenges as they cannot travel long distances to reach markets where they will be able to stock up on cheaper food and other supplies. This doubly penalizes them as the prices of food and other supplies are even higher in the small shops they can access.

Additional sources:

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UN cautions that if no action is taken, multiple famines of Biblical proportions can be faced in a few months

https://news.un.org/es/story/2020/04/1473162

International rice markets are particularly sensitive to such restrictions by large exporters https://www.cgiar.org/news-events/news/covid-19-related-trade-restrictions-on-rice-and-wheat-could-drive-up-prices-and-increase-hunger

The situation of children is worrying in the US

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6. PEOPLE'S SOLUTIONS TO GUARANTEE THE RTFN DURING THE PANDEMIC AND BEYOND

a. People's solidarity with the RTFN

The sudden lockdowns disrupting local food have sparked diverse solidarity actions in the rural, urban and peri-urban areas. Although states are the main duty bearers of the RTFN, solidarity actions have been key to ensuring people's access to adequate food in many parts of the world.

In **South Africa**, in the face of the <u>enormous food crisis</u>, countless initiatives ranging from soup kitchens and homeless shelters to food parcel deliveries have been assisting those in need during the crisis. <u>C19 People's Coalition</u> is a South African civil-society collective, which has recently emerged to protect vulnerable communities during the COVID-19 pandemic. It has set up a food working group





#TodasSomosTodas campaign visual, informing on the initiative and the support it provides in different municipalities.

which organizes food deliveries to marginalized communities. In addition to immediate relief efforts, the Coalition has mapped small-scale food producers and linked them to urban communities who have had difficulties in accessing food. In **Spain**, numerous solidarity initiatives aim at providing food for people who can no longer access it. In <u>Barcelona and Madrid</u>, networks have multiplied food distribution four times a day. The media has reported on the increase of waiting lines to pick up food in both of these strongly affected cities. A <u>chicken vendor in Madrid</u> has freely supplied customers who

had stopped coming to his shop because they were ashamed of their economic situation. In **Colombia**, women's organizations have been collecting money to support women and their families who have lost their access to food under the **#todasSomosTodas** banner.

In **Brazil**, the MST has reported on <u>solidarity actions from rural poor people towards urban poor</u>. Similar initiatives have been reported by La Via Campesina in <u>Argentina</u> and BASE-IS in <u>Paraguay</u>, as well as by media in <u>Costa Rica</u>, where indigenous communities have donated food to urban communities living in poverty.

b. People's action to advance the RTFN and Food Sovereignty during and beyond the pandemic

Small-scale producer organizations are taking action and disseminating recommendations on how to avoid the transmission of the virus. They are finding appropriate ways to make healthy food available through open-air markets, direct sales and other distribution channels. Together with consumers, they are organizing innovative platforms, often with the support of local governments, to establish new rural and peri-urban territorial food chains. They are participating in local solidarity committees to ensure access to food for the most vulnerable sectors of the population.

COVID-19 infection patterns beat the usual divides between race, class and gender. Their consequences on people's livelihoods and RTFN have fallen along the socially constructed cleavages. A critical look at the impact of the virus on communities in some African countries shows that policy paths out of the crisis need to be carefully crafted from an intersectional approach to ensure that the most affected, namely small-scale food producers and fisherfolks, are not left in a vicious cycle of dependency. Ibrahima Coulibaly, President of the Network of Farmers' and Producers' Organizations of West Africa (ROPPA) shares the hope "that political decision-makers and citizens will become more aware of the need to encourage local production and consumption, which has even more meaning and importance today".

In **Colombia**, a group of CSOs led by RedPapaz in cooperation with FIAN Colombia submitted an advocacy paper to the Ministry of Education, opposing the corporate capture of the School Food Program (PAE) as well as state support to both the agro-food industry and the provision of ultra-processed food in schools. The document (soon available online) summarizes their demands: declaring agriculture as an essential and strategic activity, establishing short circuits for food procurement for PAE, prioritizing healthy and nutritious food distribution, and including people's monitoring and accountability mechanisms for the program. Also in **Colombia**, municipalities have positively <u>initiated a food-exchange campaign of peasant products</u> to face the crisis. FIAN Colombia has elaborated a tool to collect reported food speculation that can serve as a basis for its actions to hold the government accountable. In addition, in Medellin, an <u>app has been created to help people buy peasant food</u>.

Some communities are using the RTFN and related rights mechanisms to claim their access to food. In **Chiapas/Mexico**, 114 people presented a writ of Amparo request (legal action to defend human rights) on behalf of children and teenagers to demand the provision of food because they have not received any support since the government declared a health emergency.

<u>In Uganda, the Centre for Food and Adequate Living Rights</u> (CEFROHT) has demanded food distribution for vulnerable groups.



Invitation to a court hearing in Uganda by CEFROHT

<u>Katarungan</u> in the **Philippines** has called on the government to release the 100 billion pesos coconut levy fund (from taxes paid in the 1970/80s by coconut farmers, that never benefited the latter) to help poor coconut farmers cope with the COVID-19 crisis.

In **India**, the <u>Right to Food Campaign India</u> (RTFC) has issued several statements since the country has been under lockdown, calling on the government to universalise the Public Distribution System (PDS) and ease the confinement as it has caused economic distress especially to the poor who have been unable to earn their livelihood. The state chapters of the RTFC have been similarly advocating for the fulfilment of the RTFN in times of COVID-19. For example, the RTFC Jharkhand wrote a letter to the Chief Minister of Jharkhand, demanding the provision of emergency ration cards to all 80,000 households who had applied for them. The RTFN Jharkhand has also written to the Food Minister, requesting the central government to release more foodgrain to Jharkhand either for free or at National Food Security Act price, so that the PDS can be universalised for a year. Considering the dire need to launch relief work in the slums of Patna during the lockdown, the RTFC Bihar requested the Chief Minister of Bihar to share a study conducted by several organizations on the conditions of people living in the slums. A group of activists, researchers, lawyers and students have come together to launch a website called <u>COVID-19</u>

Feminist organizations and activists have launched a <u>website on feminist responses to COVID-19</u>. It represents an endeavour for a just and resilient recovery from the pandemic by strengthening feminist actions around the world.

The <u>Comité de Veille et d'Action</u> (Monitoring and Action Committee), which fosters engagement and mobilization, recovery of productive capacities as well as better social and economic development models in African countries, has been mobilizing to seek and implement adequate and sustainable solutions to respond to the accumulation of crises, including that of COVID-19, which affect people's RTFN.

Très concrètement le contexte exige une réflexion et des mesures de prise en charge de 3 enjeux majeurs :



a) L'engagement et la mobilisation des différentes organisations socio-professionnelles et des communautés rurales aux côtés des efforts des collectivités locales, des États et des Institutionnels Régionales, pour contribuer à l'arrêt de la propagation du COVID 19 ·



b) La restauration des capacités de production de centaines de milliers d'exploitations familiales agricoles, pastorales, agro-pastorales, halieutiques grâce à la mise en place d'instruments et de mesures appropriées, notamment pour la campagne 2020/2021, qui démarre très prochainement;



c) Le relèvement global dans les terroirs et les pays en mettant en place des mesures et instruments de politiques appropriés, en prenant appui sur des leçons et enseignements tirés de ces crises, pour impulser et, le moment venu, mettre en place et en œuvre un développement économique, social, inclusif et durable dans les terroirs, créer de la richesse et des emplois.

Some captions of the Comité de Veille et d'Action (Monitoring and Action Committee) initiative

Similarly, in Sub-Saharan Africa, solutions for food and agriculture in the context of COVID-19 are being proposed. In Zimbabwe, smallholder farmers have showed resilience by increasing production to meet growing supply shortages. As major large-scale producers cited various reasons for production fall, small-scale farmers ramped up food production right after the country announced the lockdown on March 31. CSO movements in South Africa have made various proposals and requests to the government to support vulnerable communities and small-scale food producers. Concerning smallscale fishing, the proposals contain enabling small-scale fishers to sell fish within their communities and in traditional ways, banning all commercial trawlers that target small-scale line fish species, and including catches from small-scale fishers and products from other small-scale food producers in the government-funded food parcels. In Uganda, KWDT has suspended payment of water and toilet user fees amongst poor fishing communities to ensure access to WASH (water, sanitation and hygiene) services for all. Local initiatives, such as cleaning roster, monitoring water collection and banning children from accessing pumps, have all been established to sustain functionality of basic services. KWDT has also translated information on COVID-19 into Luganda and disseminated it in rural areas by using community radios and mobile speakers, successfully reaching children who were previously left out from all communications. "Children are seen and heard imitating the messages in their games,

holding toy speakers to make the same announcement as they play as well as acting out the messages," reported KWDT staff. KWDT has also received funding to provide food relief supply through cash transfer, benefiting over 2855 persons, the majority of whom are children.

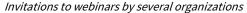
In **Mexico**, after the first person was tested positive, the Municipality of Oaxaca <u>prohibited access to Coca Cola</u>, Pepsi, Sabritas and other junk food and only allowed the consumption of natural food <u>products from local communities</u>.

According to Kuna Yala in **Panama**, with the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and the lockdown, communities reorganized their farms, young people have kept their mobile phones aside and moved to the fields while women have continued cultivating for their families. The communities of Gardi Sugdup, Gardi Yandup, Digir, Magebgandi, Aggwadub have planted manioc, pineapples and maize rice, following their decision to struggle for food sovereignty taken many years ago.

In **Italy**, the <u>FAO</u> informed that efforts have been made to increase food delivery by farmers' associations. Small and medium retailers have adopted simple communications tools, such as WhatsApp, to facilitate purchases and by offering home delivery to their clients. Online platforms, such as Kalulu and Alveare, have put producers in direct communication with end-consumers.

A series of webinars are being held worldwide on the impact of COVID-19 and on how people have been mobilising.









Picture of the #StayHomeButNotSilent form, La Via Campesina

Campaigns like #StayHomeButNotSilent by La Via Campesina show the world that peasants' voices are not quashed by lockdowns and they continue to voice out their rightful claim for justice, including food justice even during lockdowns.

A peasant family in Colombia has <u>created a YouTube channel</u> to teach others about peasants' life and how they produce food at home.

c. People's proposals for food systems transformation

Beyond very concrete actions, <u>movements are proposing a structural system transformation</u> for the so-called new normality. They converge on many topics, calling for food system transformation, which is very much connected to the demand of environmental movements to create a system which puts <u>people and planet first, above corporate interests</u>, and halts climate and environmental destruction.

In brief, small-scale food producers demand immediate measures to respect and strengthen traditional and indigenous food systems and a transition towards agro-ecological food systems, in line with the commitments made in the UNDROP and the Decade of Family Farming. This would enable to move away from industrial animal farming towards circular mobile pastoral systems and extensive livestock production as part of mixed farming systems. The demand for transformation, closely connected to the support for agroecology, also implies shifting to systems that respect the environment and curb climate change. Achieving the vision of food sovereignty is a key element thereof, as clearly explained by the International Planning Committee on Food Sovereignty. Holding corporations accountable and strengthening local governments are other clear elements of the proposal.

In the midst of the confinement, documents outlining the main proposals for food system transformation and voicing the demands of rural social movements were sent by <u>Society for International Develop</u>, ETC Group, Asia Pacific Civil Society Engagement Mechanism (AP-RCEM), The <u>Women's Major Group</u>, FIAN, and the coordinator of the <u>Civil Society Mechanism of the Committee on World Food Security</u> for the thematic discussion on <u>SDG2</u> of the High-Level Panel Forum in 2020. The documents will be published soon and FIAN will provide an in-depth analysis of the proposals in the next monitoring report.

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Statement issued by the Arab Network for Food Sovereignty in the context of the C-19 crisis https://apnature.org/en/statement-issued-arab-network-food-sovereignty-context-corona-crisis