

Impact of COVID-19 on the Human Right to Food and Nutrition

Preliminary monitoring
report



FIAN
INTERNATIONAL

INTRODUCTION

This document presents FIAN International's preliminary analysis of the impact of COVID-19 and the measures taken by governments around the world to contain the pandemic on the human right to food and nutrition (HRtFN). It is the result of a collective effort to monitor developments around the world over the last two weeks, and it is based on our mandate to support grassroots communities and social movements in their struggles to assert their rights.

This analysis is preliminary and does not reflect everything that is taking place around the world. Together with members of the Global Network for the Right to Food and Nutrition (GNRTFN), FIAN International will continue to monitor the situation and [calls upon all organizations to share information](#).

The current health crisis is of great concern for humanity, causing illness and death in almost all countries. In a context of existing structural inequality and discrimination, the current health emergency is leading the world to a food crisis. The pandemic and the measures taken by states and other institutions to counteract it are having severe consequences for people and communities to produce and access sufficient and nutritious food.

Since the exponential expansion of COVID-19, fears of a potential food crisis have escalated. In a statement issued on March 19, 2020, the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) pointed the following:

“As a result of these shifts and changes both in terms of addressing the disease and the broader economic fall-out, food availability is affected in both the short- and long-term. Food access is also compromised, in particular for those working in sectors that are likely to see job losses due to the recession as well for the poor who are likely to be made worse off. Nutrition is likely to be affected as people shift diets to more affordable as well as more shelf-stable and pre-packaged foods (which may be less nutritious) and as fresh fruits and vegetables become less available due to panic buying and disruptions in food systems. Stability is compromised as the markets themselves are highly unstable leading to a great degree of uncertainty. Lastly, people’s ability to exercise agency over their relationship to food systems is compromised as inequalities are increased.”¹

Just a few weeks later, many of the predictions have come true. For several reasons, the adverse impacts on the HRtFN differ between countries and within population groups. In particular, groups that have already been marginalized and discriminated against due to their socio-economic status, rural and urban location, gender, age, ethnic belonging, among other factors, are facing a high risk of losing their access to adequate food and higher levels of food insecurity - and will generally face more challenges to exercise their food sovereignty.

The degree to which countries are affected also differs according to the ability of authorities to respond to the crisis. Their financial and administrative capacity and the nature and effectiveness of existing public policies— particularly regarding health, social security, food and nutrition – are key factors. Yet, it is the political decisions taken by governments to address the crisis which will

¹ Available at: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1pXiZW267w7n12VXGG-o78Uhl7BPaxGBt/view>.

determine - to a great extent - whether existing inequalities will be exacerbated or the realization for human rights and social justice will be reinforced.

Finally, the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic are intensified by the economic crisis that the world is entering. While this crisis has systemic roots that predate the pandemic, the looming economic crisis is leading to job loss and increasing marginalization of numerous groups of the population. In general terms, the economic crisis is having severe impacts on communities and people as well as **on states' capacity to respond** to the challenges that a pandemic brings.

CAUSES OF THE PANDEMIC & STRUCTURAL FACTORS AGGRAVATING ITS IMPACTS

The causes and the factors that aggravate the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic are closely linked to several structural causes of hunger and malnutrition. These have been denounced by civil society, including social movements, grassroots organizations and CSOs, including FIAN International and the GNRTFN, for decades.

- Land grabbing, financialization and ecosystem destruction: Industrial agriculture and other **extractive industries penetrate “into the last of primary forest and smallholder-held farm land** drive deforestation and development leading to disease emergence. The functional diversity and complexity these huge tracts of land represent, are being streamlined in such a way that **previously boxed-in pathogens are spilling over into local livestock and human communities”**.² As expressed by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the destruction of wild ecosystems increase the risk of diseases originated in animals³ - and all this is exacerbated by climate change.⁴ Land grabbing, often paving way for industrial agriculture and extractive industries, also leads to the dispossession of communities, putting them in a situation of increased vulnerability in their daily lives and also during crisis.
- The extensive use of pesticides: Agricultural workers are all the more vulnerable to Coronavirus and other pathogens because their immune systems are weakened by prolonged exposure to pesticides, widely used in the industrial food system, as reported by banana plantation workers in Ecuador.⁵
- Policies prioritizing agro-industrial food production and distribution by transnational corporations through globalized food chains: These consolidated policies and practices are detrimental to small-scale food producers, agroecological production, local food markets and short supply circuits, which ultimately lead to the vulnerability of food systems. This limits the capacity to respond rapidly to food shortages caused by the closing of borders and/or restrictions on food exports, as well as panic-buying by consumers. Moreover, the power held

² Wallace Rob in <https://www.harun-farocki-institut.org/en/2020/03/15/livestock-production-agrobusiness-travel-corona/> (05.04.20)

³ UNEP. 2016. UNEP Frontiers: 2016 Report. Emerging Issues of Environmental Concern. Available at: <http://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/7664> . (05.04.20)

⁴ <https://www.monde-diplomatique.fr/2020/03/SHAH/61547> and <https://www.thenation.com/article/environment/coronavirus-habitat-loss/> (05.04.20)

⁵ Asociación Sindical de Trabajadores Agrícolas y Campesinos: Statement on the impact of COVID on Banana Plantation Workers (22.03.20)

by transnational food corporations opens the door to speculation on food prices, particularly during times of crisis, unless targeted state regulations are in place.

- The digitalisation of food: The concentration of food retail in the hands of supermarket online platforms and the increased use of electronic payment programs have undermined territorial markets and excluded **large parts of the world's population who do not have access to such technologies**. This digitalisation of food has become an even stronger phenomenon with quarantine measures on the population imposed by governments, as well as the closure of food markets.
- The promotion of ultra-processed and industrialized food: The consumption of this type of food causes overweight, obesity and other non-communicable diseases, thereby putting a large **part of the world's population at risk vis-à-vis the Coronavirus**. Persons with a body mass index of 40 or more are considered to be at high risk of serious illness from COVID-19, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.⁶ Also people suffering other non-communicable diseases as cardiovascular disease, chronic respiratory disease, diabetes, hypertension and cancer, which are also caused – at least partly – by ultra-processed food, are at major risk.⁷
- The privatization and financialization of the health sector: These practices, which follow a profit-driven logic – in some countries imposed by the international financial institutions and austerity policies – has led to the inability of the public health sector to attend all infected by Coronavirus and other people in need in many countries. This ultimately is exacerbating the impact of the disease and leading to increased suffering and fatalities.⁸
- The dismantling of public social security: Together with privatization, it has reduced **states'** capacity to attend the most vulnerable to hunger and malnutrition, including those who already depended on food banks and food shelters, those losing their jobs or informal workers. The fact that in the last decade public food networks have been replaced by charities in a number of countries has created a huge gap. There have been multiple cases where food banks have been closed down during the pandemic to protect the volunteers, who often are older persons and are therefore most at risk.⁹
- The reduction of standards of labor protection, imposed flexibility in working conditions, short-term contracts and increment of informal work: These consolidated practices have increased the risk of loss of income and impoverishment of large parts of the population.¹⁰ With the expansion of the virus, the reduction of mobility and the increasing loss of jobs, these groups will be severely affected.

⁶ Center for Disease Control and Prevention in: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/groups-at-higher-risk.html> (05.04.20), <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/coronavirus-age-sex-demographics/> (05.04.20)

⁷ <https://www.foodnavigator.com/Article/2020/03/24/Coronavirus-and-obesity-industry-urged-to-act-post-crisis> (05.04.20)

⁸ On impact of structural adjustments on public health see: *Journal of the Egyptian Public Health Association* volume 94, Article number:10(2019) at: <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1186/s42506-019-0013-x>. On the impact of privatization of health and COVID 19, see for example the analysis of Italy in: The Lancet: The Italian health system and the COVID-19 challenge, in: [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpub/article/PIIS2468-2667\(20\)30074-8/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpub/article/PIIS2468-2667(20)30074-8/fulltext) (05.04.20)

⁹ Testimonies collected during the last week of March 2020 from Germany. See a similar history on the UK in The Independent: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/coronavirus-uk-food-banks-close-poverty-shortage-a9405351.html>

¹⁰ International Labour Organization: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/briefingnote/wcms_738753.pdf (18.04.20)

- Inequalities and discrimination: Even if the virus can affect every person, the risks and the impacts are considerably higher for those living in poverty.¹¹ This situation of vulnerability comes along with lower access to health and other basic services, as well as reduced resources to cope with the loss of income. Marginalized and disadvantaged people and communities frequently have less possibility for physical distancing and lack of clean water to follow hygienic recommendations. In addition, they cannot afford staying in their homes, as they work on a day to day basis, are homeless or live in conditions where spaces are overcrowded, thus are more susceptible to COVID-19 infection. Malnutrition, lack of access to adequate nutritious food, clean water and sanitation increase the exposure to the disease and cause its proliferation.¹²
- Gender inequality and violence: The vulnerability of women and LGBTIQ+ groups is increasing in the face of the pandemic. The measures adopted by governments in several countries to counter the COVID-19 crisis are exacerbating patterns of discrimination and violence. Media reports have highlighted the way in which the closure of schools and other lockdown measures have incremented the unpaid care work carried out by women,¹³ who have to quit their jobs and income in order to take care of their children. In addition, lockdown measures have been reported to increase domestic violence.¹⁴ Furthermore, female informal workers face disproportionate impact on their daily income, which exposes them and their families to food insecurity, especially if belonging to marginalized groups of society.¹⁵
- Repression and criminalization in a context of increasing authoritarianism: Under the excuse of “state of necessity” or “state of exception” in the context of COVID-19, restrictive measures to tackle pandemic may be used to justify and intensify the criminalization of those who are defending their HRTFN and demanding social justice. There is a risk that such measures will be extended over time, even after the peak of the pandemic. In this context, the unprecedented levels of data collection carried out in many countries in order to monitor and halt the expansion of the virus is of concern, as it may be used for mass surveillance.¹⁶
- Conflict, occupation and war: These put people and communities in situations of extreme vulnerability, including lack of access to safe, nutritious and adequate food, adequate housing and water and sanitation, as well as repression. The current pandemic entails the risk of deteriorating this situation and of leading to mass infections and possible fatalities.¹⁷

¹¹ Data from the USA shows, for instance, that African Americans are being infected and dying at higher rates than White: <https://www.propublica.org/article/early-data-shows-african-americans-have-contracted-and-died-of-coronavirus-at-an-alarming-rate> (03.04.20)

¹² See also Open Democracy: <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/impact-covid-19-all-down-inequality/> (07.04.20)

¹³ The Guardian in: <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/mar/16/womens-coronavirus-domestic-burden> (05.04.20)

¹⁴ Time in: <https://time.com/5803887/coronavirus-domestic-violence-victims/>; La Prensa (Mexico): <https://www.la-prensa.com.mx/metropoli/cdmx/por-aislamiento-aumenta-violencia-familiar-en-la-cdmx-5041182.html> (05.04.20)

¹⁵ Center for Global Development: <https://www.cgdev.org/blog/how-will-covid-19-affect-women-and-girls-low-and-middle-income-countries> (07.04.20)

¹⁶ New York Times: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/23/technology/coronavirus-surveillance-tracking-privacy.html> (07.04.20)

¹⁷ UN Secretary General, in <https://www.euractiv.com/section/global-europe/news/covid-19-worst-is-yet-to-come-in-conflict-zones-un-chief-warns/> (03.04.20)

IMPACTS ON THE hrTFN IN THE FIRST WEEKS OF COVID-19

The containment of the pandemic is a challenging situation for societies and authorities around the world, which requires determined action and clear rules. Nonetheless, the situation also paves way for abuse of power and violations of the HRtFN, as well as other human rights. Particular efforts are needed to ensure accountability and to guarantee that extraordinary measures to address COVID-19 are not used to increase repression and protect the interests of few. In times of crisis, human rights are more important than ever.

Over the last two weeks, FIAN has identified some key measures adopted by national or local governments in the face of the pandemic affecting the HRtFN. These measures can have adverse or positive impacts on the HRtFN, including adequacy, availability, sustainable access to food, and related rights.

- **School feeding programs and other policies to realize children’s HRtFN:** In some countries the closure of schools is reducing the access to food for children, or has replaced school feeding programs with inadequate food provision (Madrid). In India, for instance, many states have closed *Anganwadi centers* (rural child care centers), thereby stopping the provision of food to children below 6 years old, pregnant women and lactating mothers. In response, the Supreme Court has issued an order stating that “it is necessary that all the states should come out with a uniform policy so as to ensure that while preventing the spread of Covid-19, the schemes to provide nutritious food to the children and nursing and lactating mothers are not adversely affected.” The Right to Food Campaign India is advocating for programs that ensure home-delivery of nutritious meals to these groups. In other regions, local governments have ensured families’ access to regular adequate food packages, mainly based on local vegetables and fruits, while always ensuring adequate sanitary conditions (São Paulo and Curitiba in Brazil).
- Social assistance centres and food shelters: While in some countries assistance or charity centers have been closed, thus leaving people and communities without access to food, in others regulations have been adopted to impose sanitary rules to keep access to adequate food in those centers (Rio de Janeiro). In Brazil, the Brazilian Forum for Food Sovereignty and Food and Nutritional Security (FBSSAN) has launched a set of recommendations to the federal state and municipal administration in order to protect the right to food and to fight hunger in the context of COVID-19. Emphasizing that all measures must put life and human dignity center stage, one recommended urgent action is the establishment of *Emergency Committees Against Hunger* and measures that include controlling food storage and prices. On a related note, the introduction of a universal basic income has been recommended in Brazil and in other countries.¹⁸
- Closure of peasant markets: In countries such as Italy,¹⁹ Spain or Switzerland farmers’ markets have been closed and the weekly distribution by agriculture cooperatives has been restricted, while supermarkets have remained open. Peasant movements have highlighted that these

¹⁸ FBSSAN: <https://fbssan.org.br/2020/03/entidades-propoe-medidas-para-garantir-o-direito-a-alimentacao-e-combater-a-fome-em-tempos-de-coronavirus/>; In English: <https://fbssan.org.br/2020/03/human-right-to-food-in-times-o-covid-19/>

¹⁹ In Italy, ARI (ECVC member) has clarified that the government decree does not prohibit local markets. The decision is up to local authorities. These, however, have opted to close, either by ignorance or because they think it is too difficult to control open markets. Here is the link to ARI’s analysis: http://assorurale.it/files/ari_doc_covid_def_30320.pdf (point 4 on p.7)

measures discriminate them and unjustly favor supermarkets. While many shelves are empty in the latter, fresh, good quality food piles up and perishes on peasant farms, diminishing **peasants' income**. In countries such as France and Romania peasant organizations have succeeded in opposing such measures, leading to government guidelines that clarify that local food markets should take place and outline the measures to be taken to ensure sanitary conditions to avoid contagion.²⁰

- Food shortage in supermarkets and price speculation: Panic buying in the context of lockdowns has led to shortages of food in supermarkets. Even if calling for moral and social responsibility may work in some situations, state regulations may be necessary during crisis. This also applies to prevent rising prices of food and other items of basic need. In Argentina and Colombia, the government has introduced measures to regulate prices of essential products.²¹ Media reports have shown that a major supermarket chain in Italy has used the crisis to impose extremely low prices to food producers, even though supermarkets in the country have considerably increased their turnover over the last month.²²
- Closure of informal markets and prohibition of street vendors: In addition to the closure of local food markets, several countries have introduced measures that outlaw informal markets and the selling of goods by street vendors. This has led to loss of income for marginalized and poor households, putting them at risk of food and nutrition insecurity. In South Africa, the government has reacted to social protests against such measures by allowing grocery stores and wholesale produce markets, including informal shops in the townships - called *spaza shops* - and informal food traders to remain open, as long as they have a written permission by a municipal authority.²³
- Food production and harvesting: Peasant and farmer organizations in several countries have warned that they risk losing important parts of their harvest due to a lack of seasonal work force. Seasonal agricultural workers – often migrant workers – cannot carry out the work due to the closure of borders and/or other measures that restrict free movement. In Germany, the agriculture minister has suggested that asylum seekers and unemployed people could carry out the work, in addition to volunteers.²⁴ Such measures risk to exploit already marginalized groups and take advantage of a situation of need – in addition to being an expression of racism in the case of asylum seekers. Moreover, they fail to address core issues related to adequate working conditions, including decent income. Moreover, such proposals do not respond to the needs and rights of migrant workers. The most blatant example is India, where seasonal migrant workers have been “abandoned”, as several sectors of the economy have halted.²⁵

²⁰ Confédération paysanne, France:

<https://www.confederationpaysanne.fr/actu.php?id=9885&PHPSESSID=fllago79tqmb3163v6vc8gmi62>. On Romania: <http://www.ziare.com/economie/agricultura/pietele-raman-deschise-ministrul-agriculturii-samsarii-speculantii-si-falsii-producatori-sa-nu-aiba-acces-aici-1602940> (23.04.20)

²¹ Ministerio de Desarrollo Productivo – Secretaría de Desarrollo Interior, Argentina, Decree 100/2020, in: <https://www.boletinoficial.gob.ar/detalleAviso/primera/227052/20200320> (19.03.20); Ministerio de Comercio, Industria y Turismo, Colombia, Decreto Legislativo 507 del 1 Abril 2020, in: <https://dapre.presidencia.gov.co/normativa/normativa/DECRETO%20507%20DEL%201%20DE%20ABRIL%20DE%2020200.pdf>

²² <https://www.internazionale.it/notizie/fabio-cicone/2020/03/30/coronavirus-discount-cibo-ribasso>

²³ Republic of South Africa, Government Gazette No. 11078 (02.04.20)

²⁴ Das Erste: <https://www.tagesschau.de/wirtschaft/corona-saisonarbeiter-101.html>

²⁵ The Hindu in: <https://www.thehindu.com/specials/lockdown-displaces-lakhs-of-migrants/article31214375.ece>. See also, OHCHR, Geneva: https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25767&LangID=E_2 (10.04.20)

- Confinement of elderly people: Civil society and caretakers have denounced concern due to the impossibility of elderly people to access sufficient and adequate food due to confinement and problems of mobility. In order to respect the current measures, but still prevent violations of the right to food of elderly people, some cities, such as Geneva or Madrid, have created digital portals to gather volunteers to offer support.
- Promotion of digital payments: In some countries, authorities are promoting the use of digital payment systems with the argument that their use avoids physical contact and therefore reduces the risk of contagion. However, such systems may impede the economic access to food for people who do not have the needed resources to access financial facilities - including a bank account - or do not have the needed knowledge and equipment - for example a smart phone or a computer.

WAYS TO protect the right to food during this pandemic

In times of crisis, human rights are more important than ever. States have clearly defined obligations, which they must comply with. According to international law, beyond the specific obligations to respect, protect and fulfil human rights and the general obligations of non-discrimination and international cooperation, states have the general obligation to advance, as soon as possible and until the maximum of available resources, in the implementation of the right to food and other economic, social and cultural rights (ESCR).²⁶ This includes a *prima facie* prohibition of retrogression. This means, that if states take retrogressive measures, they have the obligation to prove that such measures were necessary, reasonable and proportional.

FIAN International's preliminary analysis shows that most of the measures adopted to contain the expansion of COVID-19 are of retrogressive character for the enjoyment of several human rights, including the right to food. In order to ensure that such measures do not contradict their obligations, states have to prove that the adopted measure comply with the following standards, developed through the General Comments of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR):²⁷

- a) The measures were necessary to achieve a goal of public interest;
- b) a careful assessment between the adopted measures and the goal to be achieved has been carried out and proportionality is guaranteed;
- c) the measures are coherent with the nature of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights;
- d) the state has assessed the impact that the adopted measures will have on ESCR;
- e) the state has considered the allocation of all available resources to the achievement of the public interest goal ,
- f) the measures have been adopted by law;
- g) the measures do not have a discriminatory effect, especially for the marginalized and disadvantaged groups of the society, or if the negative impact is not avoidable, affirmative measures were taken to ensure substantive equality;
- h) the affected shall have the right to participate in the adoption of the measures and the possible alternatives;

²⁶ International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, art. 2.1

²⁷ CESCR, General Comments: Nr. 13 par. 45, Nr. 14 par. 32, Nr. 15 par. 19, Nr. 17 par. 27, Nr. 18 par. 21 and 44, Nr. 19, par. 42

- i) the measures shall be subjected to an independent review;
- j) there is a prohibition to adopt measures that negatively affect the minimum essential levels of the right; and
- k) the measures have been subjected to an independent review mechanism.

Over the past 10 years, the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) has developed substantial policy guidance to guarantee the realization of the right to food, which has been approved by consensus by Member States following due consultation with all other participants.²⁸ The current crisis creates an important occasion to implement these policies as effective responses to prevent, or at least mitigate and alleviate, the terrible effects of the upcoming food crisis and the upsurge of hunger and malnutrition around the world.

Our recommendations

Based in this first analysis FIAN International calls upon states to:

- Ensure the respect, protection and promotion of the human right to food and nutrition and all related human rights in all decisions and measures taken to contain the COVID-19 pandemic. This requires to adopt all measures on the basis of an analysis on the impact that these will have on the right to food and nutrition, as well as other human rights - especially on disadvantaged and marginalized groups, in cases of retrogressive measures. If differentiated impact is foreseeable and unavoidable, States are required to take affirmative measures to ensure substantive equality and avoid further marginalization of people in their enjoyment of their human right to food and nutrition and related rights.

Some specific measures to be taken immediately by states should include:

- Adopt social protection mechanisms for marginalized groups and those most vulnerable, such as distribution of food, preferably **of** food produced by local **small-scale food producers** – **such as** peasants, artisanal fishers, pastoralists, indigenous peoples. Support mechanisms for marginalized groups may include basic income programs to ensure the vital minimum and shall take into account the interdependency that the rights to food, housing, health and water have in the basic budget of households. Such measures shall have a gender perspective which takes into account the different forms of discrimination and violence which women face. In this sense, basic income programs shall target, in particular, women who have to carry out increasing unpaid care work due to the closure of schools and other lockdown measures. States shall also provide special shelters for women affected by domestic violence, which has been exacerbated by confinement measures. The digitalization of means for food assistance shall in any case be exclusive and states shall ensure the maintenance of payments in cash to ensure access to food.
- Ensure that small-scale food producers maintain their capacity to produce and provide adequate food, for example through the support to agroecological production, the fostering of short local circuits and supply chains and ensure the adequate functioning of local food markets, as well as other means of provision of food produced by local, small-scale food producers. In order to avoid the risks of contamination, local and national governments should provide guidelines to ensure that local food markets comply with all needed

²⁸ <http://www.fao.org/cfs/home/products/en/>

measures to ensure physical distancing, control of the flow of clients, use of disinfectant and gloves, among others. Measures may also include promoting the distribution of weekly food packages provided by local food producers; especially in cases of needed lockdowns.

- Make sure that containment measures do not result in favoring supermarkets and industrial/processed food over other sources of food provision, including food markets, grocery stores, and informal food vendors.
- Maintain or find appropriate alternatives to school feeding programs, food shelters and banks or other similar institutions in order to ensure access to adequate, fresh food to those people that depend on them, always ensuring adequate means to prevent contagion.
- Take specific measures to ensure access to safe water for marginalized groups to ensure that they can also implement preventive behavior to avoid contagion and have adequate access to food.
- Implement measures to restrain panic buying and food waste, and ensure availability of food in cases of panic waves. This may require specific regulation for supermarkets, to ensure rationalization in selling and/or price controls.
- Provide guidance to workers involved in food production, handling and processing on measures that reduce the risk of getting infected and spreading COVID-19, as well as ensure that labor supervision works to impede abuses by employers. In this context, states shall give special attention to the differentiated impact women or LGBTBI people.
- Ensure the adequate protection of agricultural workers, including migrant workers, avoiding unnecessary restriction of movement and ensuring adequate lodging and other working conditions, which allow keeping the hygienic measures and adequate salaries. In cases where migrant workers cannot access their work place, states are required to ensure access to adequate food, health services and social security. If other marginalized groups are employed to carry out work usually done by migrant workers, states shall to ensure decent conditions of work and full respect of international and national labor standards.
- Introduce measures that redistribute economic wealth and other public goods for the benefit of health.
- Put in place mechanisms to monitor the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and the measures taken to contain it on the right to food and nutrition. Information should be disaggregated by gender, socio-economic status, age and other relevant criteria, and should include testimonies by grassroots communities and affected groups.
- Ensure access to effective recourse mechanisms and remedies for those affected by COVID-19 and the measures to contain it.
- Ensure that national human rights institutions independently exercise their functions for the protection of the right to food in the frame of the COVID-19 crisis, through means that ensure the respect of physical distancing measures.
- Ensure democratic processes and control over measures taken to contain the pandemic and address its impacts, such as consultations and parliamentary legislative process. Adequate participation, public scrutiny and accountability mechanisms need to be put in place in **order to uphold the principles of democracy and people's sovereignty** – always taking into account the specific constraints of the current crisis.
- Ensure that all measures taken to address the economic crisis that has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, such as bailouts and stimulus packages, focus on protecting and

promoting human rights, in particular those of marginalized people and those at risk. Monitoring mechanisms to assess the impacts of the measures shall also be put in place.

At international level, FIAN International calls upon states to:

- Ensure that their actions do not cause foreseeable harm beyond their borders, nor hamper the ability of other countries to honor their human rights obligations.
- Uphold their obligation, individually and as members of international organizations and international financial institutions, to cooperate in order to safeguard the rights of those most at risk and to guarantee an enabling environment for human rights during the current crisis, instead of acting solely based on their own national interests. In the context of food governance, we remind states that the CFS is the most inclusive international governance platform and should therefore take the leading role in coordinating a global response to guarantee food security and the enjoyment of the right to food, in close collaboration with other competent agencies like the World Health Organization (WHO).
- Adopt measures to relieve the debt of all low and middle-income countries, as a means to enable them to mobilize "maximum available resources" to protect those at risk during the pandemic.
- Stop economic sanctions which impede states to protect and fulfil the human rights of their population.

Even though the current situation requires urgent action to contain the pandemic whilst respecting human rights, it lays bare the fundamental, structural problems of our societies, which generate exclusion, violence and injustice. Human rights violations, and the generation of pandemics, go hand in hand with ecosystem destruction and human-made global warming. The current pandemic therefore also calls for public policies that fundamentally change the way in which our societies are organized and the economic system operates.

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