

Key Messages

FOOD SECURITY

2020-2021

IASC Results Group 3
on Collective Advocacy

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(OPAG)

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As acute food insecurity levels appear to be reaching new highs globally, also as a result of the socio-economic fallout of measures imposed to contain the spread of COVID-19, starting from already significant levels of acute food insecurity in early 2020. The pandemic has exacerbated the pre-existing and on-going drivers, mainly by causing economic activities to decline, which in turn led to income loss and reduced household purchasing power, and a multitude of food-system wide shocks. While the socio-economic impacts of it are differentiated and not equally severe in all contexts, the latest evidence shows that between March and September 2020, high acute food insecurity has deepened in most of the 27 countries analysed in the updated Global Report on Food Crises.

WFP estimates that the number of acutely food-insecure people could increase to 270 million by the end of 2020. More recent analyses point to a further deterioration in already concerning contexts, including in northeastern Nigeria and Afghanistan. Some 22 million people in the Democratic Republic of the Congo alone now face acute food insecurity, the highest number registered for a single country.

The Early Warning¹

- **A toxic mix of conflict, economic decline, climate change extremes and the Coronavirus pandemic's socio-economic fallout are driving people into deepening levels of poverty and high acute food insecurity.**
- In the coming months, **famine may become a real risk in parts of four countries - Burkina Faso, (Northeast) Nigeria, South Sudan and Yemen - if conditions continue to deteriorate for populations partly or totally cut off from humanitarian access.** Without immediate, urgent action, the world could experience its first famine since it was last declared in 2017 in parts of South Sudan.
- **In the next three to six months, 20 countries** (Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Haiti, Lebanon, Mali, Mozambique, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, The Central African Republic, The Democratic Republic of the Congo, The Niger, The Sudan, Venezuela, Yemen and Zimbabwe) **are likely to face potential spikes in high acute food insecurity and require urgent attention.** How the situation evolves will depend on a range of factors from potential upticks in conflicts and food prices, to rainfall and harvest outcomes, to the myriad fallouts of the pandemic and levels of donor funding.

Upcoming trends in high acute food insecurity: focus on 20 hotspots

- **A further expansion and intensification of violence**, displacing more civilians and disrupting food systems and markets is likely to drive more people into high acute food insecurity in parts of Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mozambique, the Niger, northern Nigeria and South Sudan. As of October 2020, some have already over one million people in emergency acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 4): Afghanistan (3.3), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (5.7) and South Sudan (1.7). In addition, there are more than 11 000 people in IPC Phase 5 (Catastrophe) in parts of Burkina Faso. Due to violence, in Cameroon the number of people in high acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 and above) has doubled from last year reaching 2.1 million between June and August 2020.
- **Macroeconomic crises further exacerbated by the socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19-related measures** are going to be particularly concerning in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and for Venezuelan migrants in neighbouring countries, as well as Haiti, the Sudan, Lebanon and Zimbabwe. A combination of economic shocks and the effects of irregular rains is projected to

¹ These messages are based on *The Early Warning Analysis of Acute Food Insecurity Hotspots*, published jointly by the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization and the UN World Food Programme in July and again in October 2020.

IASC Food Security Key Messages (2020-2021)
IASC Results Group 3 on Collective Advocacy

push the number of people in high acute food insecurity in Haiti to over 4 million through February 2021.

- **The effects of worsening economic conditions, inflation and long-term conflict are combining** in Yemen and in the Syrian Arab Republic: in the Syrian Arab Republic, the number of people in emergency acute food insecurity has already doubled over the last year; in Yemen, a pre-COVID-19 analysis found that people in high acute food insecurity are expected to exceed 17 million this year, up from the 15 million in 2019.
- **Weather extremes** in several parts of the world, caused by the ongoing La Niña event, are likely to lead to erratic rainfalls and below-average, short rainy seasons in East Africa, affecting in particular Somalia and Ethiopia. In Ethiopia, people in high acute food insecurity are projected to reach 11 million (IPC Phase 3 and above) by June 2021, which could be further exacerbated by ongoing violence in Tigray Region.
- Above-average rainfall and possible floods will affect southeast Asia as well as parts of southern Africa including Mozambique.
- In the Sudan, the impact of floods amidst economic crisis is likely to aggravate projections of 6.4 million people facing a food crisis or emergency (IPC Phase 3 and above). In Sierra Leone, erratic rains combined with economic shocks are driving a further deterioration in food security, with latest (pre-COVID-19) estimates indicating 1.3 million people in IPC Phase 3 and above – a situation ten times worse than in the past three years.
- **Transboundary threats such as desert locusts** are threatening to exacerbate food insecurity and further undermine livelihoods across East Africa and Yemen, in particular where control measures are affected by access issues. In Southern Africa, a recent African Migratory Locusts outbreak has been reported.
- Crisis-affected populations are not getting the humanitarian assistance they need due to **access constraints**, with Yemen and the Syrian Arab Republic facing the highest challenges. Constraints remain very high in parts of Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, while Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Ethiopia, the Niger and the Sudan experience high constraints.

Countries of highest concern: factors leading to a risk of famine

Within the hotspot countries, in some areas of Yemen, South Sudan, northeast Nigeria and Burkina Faso, parts of the population are experiencing a critical hunger situation with extreme depletion of livelihoods, insufficient food consumption and high acute malnutrition. These areas are characterized by a high percentage of the population classified as facing emergency acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 4) and, in the case of Burkina Faso, households already in IPC Phase 5 (Catastrophe), who are experiencing famine-like conditions.

Although each context is different, such conditions usually form in areas of countries with high pre-existing structural vulnerability and high levels of acute food insecurity where a ‘perfect storm’ of factors or drivers combine such as conflict, socio-economic shocks, breakdown of markets and livelihoods, natural hazards and limited or high constraints to access to humanitarian assistance. Over the coming months, these factors may further aggravate the situation in these areas, causing widespread deaths, acute malnutrition and starvation, and an irreversible loss of livelihoods. Urgent humanitarian action is needed to avoid further deterioration and a risk of famine.

IASC Food Security Key Messages (2020-2021)
IASC Results Group 3 on Collective Advocacy

Access is a critical issue, since humanitarian assistance is often the major mitigating factor in such acute hunger contexts. In parts of Yemen, South Sudan, northeast Nigeria and Burkina Faso, populations are partially or completely cut off from humanitarian assistance.

How the situation will evolve in these areas of special concern will depend on a number of key factors which need to be closely monitored.

In Yemen, the expansion of conflict and related access issues, the deepening economic crisis and rising food prices could further exacerbate an already critical food security situation, particularly in Al Jawf, Marib, Amran and Al Mahwit governorates where a significant part of the population entirely depends on humanitarian assistance for survival.

In South Sudan, the latest IPC analysis projected around half a million people in IPC Phase 4 (25 percent of the population) in Jonglei State by July 2020. Critical factors which will determine how the situation will evolve include conflict dynamics and humanitarian access especially in the most concerning flood-affected areas, further rainfall from October onwards as well as continued commitment of donors to support life and livelihood saving humanitarian assistance.

In northeast Nigeria, the currently ongoing main harvest is crucial to improve access to food in the most food-insecure areas. While there are indications of good production perspectives, concerns remain for conflict-affected areas, and in particular parts of Borno state where access to humanitarian assistance is heavily constrained.

In Burkina Faso, the latest Cadre Harmonisé analysis from July 2020 confirmed two provinces (Soum and Oudalan) in Emergency (IPC Phase 4), with over 11 000 people already in Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5), against a background of a significant deterioration of food security and fast and widespread conflict-related displacement and access issues. Factors which will determine how the situation evolves include humanitarian access to conflict-affected areas, further displacement in response to violence and insecurity, harvest outcomes and further possible COVID-19-related restrictions among others.

Socio-economic impacts of COVID-19- related measures on acute food insecurity

Following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the global recession and disruptions to food supply chains have been impacting livelihoods and food security, raising particular concerns in countries already facing food crises and for the most vulnerable population groups including women, IDPs, refugees, migrants and asylum seekers and others. The world economy is projected to contract by 4.4 percent in 2020. This is the result of a combination of factors including a global reduction in working hours (estimated by the International Labour Organization to be equivalent to 495 million full-time jobs); a large drop in remittances; a steep fall in demand for goods and services; and the strain put on government resources by the need to support the most vulnerable and lift economies.

However, the impact is not equal across regions, with East Asia and the Pacific projected to see a relatively limited 1.7 percent contraction, and Latin America and the Caribbean facing a forecast contraction of 8.1 percent.

The World Bank estimates that an additional 88 million people will be pushed into extreme poverty in 2020 under a baseline scenario of a 5 percent contraction of global growth. This would amount to setting back poverty reduction by around three years, the worst reversal on the path towards global poverty reduction in at least the last three decades. Strained government revenues and high debt levels are raising concerns about the sustainability of social protection programmes.

While the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) expect a gradual recovery of the world economy to begin in 2021, (forecasting

IASC Food Security Key Messages (2020-2021)
IASC Results Group 3 on Collective Advocacy

global growth at 5.215 and 5.016 percent respectively) a few features of the pandemic-induced economic downturn are likely to persist in the long term.

In terms of food availability, while markets and food supply chains worldwide have largely stabilised after the initial disruptions caused by the effects of COVID-19-related restrictions, structural impacts on agricultural production and other parts of the food supply chain. The impacts vary in intensity across contexts and depend on factors such as timing of the cropping cycle in relation to the timing of restrictions as well as the degree to which countries rely on other countries for labour, inputs and the sale of crops. Concerns over production prospects in some of the main cereal-exporting countries also contributed to recent increases in global food prices. The FAO Food Price Index had increased for four consecutive months as of September, when it recorded a 5 percent increase compared to its value in the same month of 2019.

Finally, the political stability and national security implications of the pandemic have also surfaced in the second half of 2020, with potential negative repercussions on food security, particularly where governments are fragile or in transition, or where there are ongoing peace talks or recent peace agreements. The pandemic has affected electoral calendars worldwide. As of October 2020, at least 73 countries had postponed national and subnational elections or referendums due to COVID-19-related restrictions.¹⁹ In numerous countries, new restrictions are likely to generate increased potential for unrest and instability, particularly in contexts with long-standing political, economic and ethnic fault lines.

Strategic recommendations

1. Preserve and scale up critical humanitarian food, nutrition and livelihood assistance

The immediate priority will be to ensure that critical ongoing humanitarian assistance to vulnerable populations, especially those facing acute food insecurity, is maintained and scaled up to ensure lives are saved and address the immediate and long term impact of COVID-19 impacts. This will be particularly important in the most vulnerable contexts, such as fragile conflict settings, where access constraints persist, and high-risk congested areas such as refugee and internally displaced sites. New food-insecure populations are also emerging, particularly in urban areas. Local purchases of food and agricultural inputs for humanitarian purposes should be exempt from restrictions, and the establishment of efficient and effective humanitarian food reserves should be considered. Food and cash assistance should be scaled up (aligned with national social protection programmes where possible). Cash-based transfers, distributed through contactless remote solutions such as mobile money and electronic payments and determined based on clear market and risk assessments, are effective mechanisms that can also help stabilize markets. **Support the provision of nutritious foods to the most vulnerable people** through agricultural inputs and food assistance, animal health interventions, social protection and community programmes, in both rural and urban areas.

2. Adapt assistance to the COVID-19 operational context and promote flexible financing

It is necessary to adapt assistance programmes in order to safeguard the health and safety of beneficiaries, as well as humanitarian staff. This includes using more physical distancing for food and other distributions, adopting digital alternatives for cash and input provision and scaling-up provision of fortified foods to vulnerable groups. All of these should be delivered in a gender responsive manner, taking into account, for instance, the gendered digital divide and proactively addressing it. Assistance must also be delivered with COVID-19 sensitization and prevention messaging. Digital technologies for providing assistance and protective equipment to reduce transmission along the food chain should be employed where possible, and flexible financing should be encouraged to channel funds where they are most needed. Specifically, this means that existing funding must be flexible enough to be rapidly reprogrammed to address priority needs, and that new

IASC Food Security Key Messages (2020-2021)
IASC Results Group 3 on Collective Advocacy

funding is disbursed through fast-track provisions that allow humanitarians to respond in a timely and agile manner.

3. Guarantee access and promote conditions of peace in conflict-affected hotspots

Today, the overwhelming majority of people facing a food crisis or emergency (IPC/CH Phase 3 and above), and indeed the highest levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phases 4 or 5), are in countries with protracted insecurity and conflict. Conflicts devastate agricultural production, market functionality and livelihoods, undermine resilience and directly impact household income, food consumption and access to food. Concerted effort by all relevant partners is needed to ensure the full protection of affected populations and allow humanitarian workers not only to safely reach those in need, but to stay and deliver.

Securing access, safeguarding civilian infrastructure essential for the survival of populations, and expanding humanitarian action is critical for all conflict-affected hotspot countries (Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Lebanon, Mali, Mozambique, the Niger, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen) and is of particular urgency in the four countries with areas identified as at risk of famine (Yemen, South Sudan, northeast Nigeria and Burkina Faso), where humanitarian assistance is a lifeline for millions of people.

It is imperative that:

- humanitarian actors are granted protection and space to negotiate with all actors in line with international humanitarian law and humanitarian principles, to secure safe access to reach populations, stay and deliver;
- dialogue with armed groups and security forces is strengthened to safeguard humanitarian response and to facilitate access to food, medical care and other critical means of survival by civilian populations;
- capacities of humanitarian actors are reinforced in context analysis and actor mapping, and in community-based acceptance approaches to secure and maintain access;
- risks of exceptional measures be assessed collectively, to ensure the principle of humanity; and
- supply corridors for the movement of essential needs into and within a country are unimpeded.

In turn, preventing food crises requires conflict resolution and supporting prospects for peace. Ensuring activities that protect and promote livelihoods, community assets and market functionality are conflict-sensitive and designed through proven community-based participatory planning approaches, is essential to doing no harm and contributing to prospects for peace and stability in affected communities.

4. Promote anticipatory action, proactive preparedness and in areas affected by or at imminent risk of climatic shocks, through strengthened partnerships and support to government systems including national disaster management.

Anticipatory action systems are designed to systematically link forward-looking risk analysis with rapid financing and action protocols to ensure that once early warning 'triggers' are reached, actions can be taken to protect people ahead of impacts. Such systems result in much earlier interventions and lessen humanitarian costs.

Key anticipatory actions include, among others: the distribution of specific agricultural inputs to prevent and mitigate foreseen climate shock impacts on food production; cash transfers to ensure that vulnerable populations can protect themselves ahead of shocks; livestock protection activities, in particular ahead of drought; strengthened and continuous surveillance, early warning and control of

IASC Food Security Key Messages (2020-2021)
IASC Results Group 3 on Collective Advocacy

pests and diseases. Further vital preparedness measures may include confirming operational capacities, acting early to address operational gaps, beneficiary pre-registration or integration with national social protection systems, prepositioning of food especially if increases of displacement are foreseen, updating joint baseline assessments and analyses, and ensuring that the resources required are identified and seized.

Anticipatory actions are a priority for the Horn of Africa to mitigate the impacts of desert locusts and forecast below-average rains for the October-December season. This would include providing short-cycle and drought-tolerant seeds as well as fodder to smallholder farmers in drought-prone areas; animal health services to pastoral and agropastoral communities; and supplementary livestock feed to pastoral communities who lost their grazing reserves to desert locusts.

Across Southern Africa, it is critical to ensure a timely distribution of agricultural inputs, such as seeds and fertilizers, to support vulnerable farmers during the main cropping season starting in October/November.

This is particularly important in Zimbabwe, where more than half of the farmers face difficulties in accessing seeds due to high prices and unavailability in the local markets, both linked to the shortage of foreign currency which hampers the import of agricultural inputs.

In both the Horn and Southern Africa, providing food security assistance alongside agricultural inputs can maximize impact. Ensuring access to predictable markets for farmers will remain a priority, especially amidst COVID-19 economic fallout which could impact demand.

In other regions, La Niña conditions are expected to lead to higher than average rainfall and risk of flooding, for example in Southeast Asia. Furthermore, north-east South America and parts of southern Africa are at risk of flooding during the next months. Anticipatory actions for flooding include, among others, cash distributions to allow people to evacuate their families and livestock, early harvest of crops, and the provision of storage containers to safeguard seeds and agricultural assets.

In Haiti, a country prone to shocks such as hurricanes, earthquakes, floods and landslides, it remains crucial to strengthen government capacity and increase partners' contingency food stocks as available stocks cover food needs for one month only. Continuous surveillance of the desert locust pest, with rapid control operations as required, is a priority for hotspot countries such as Ethiopia, Somalia, the Sudan and Yemen.

5. Promote recovery, resilience and inclusivity through systems-based approaches including investing in food and social protection systems for the most vulnerable

As the impact of COVID-19-related measures on the global economy contributes to increasing food insecurity, it is crucial to invest in flexible, shock-responsive national social protection systems to protect the most vulnerable and mitigate additional medium and longer-term needs.

Social protection cushions the impact of hunger, poverty and vulnerability on the most at-risk population groups by enabling them to absorb and adapt to risks and by preventing the adoption of negative coping strategies (i.e. selling productive assets or disinvesting in human capital) that would push them into more extreme poverty. In turn, inclusive and effective social protection systems can promote conditions and prospects for stability.

Therefore, it is crucial to strengthen national social protection systems by ensuring continuity in service delivery and the possibility to expand coverage on the basis of early warning signals, as well as to build on national social protection systems to improve the targeting and delivery of anticipatory actions. More broadly speaking, the complex challenges highlighted in this report can only be effectively and sustainably addressed with further investments in food systems that ensure that the most vulnerable populations are prioritized.

IASC Food Security Key Messages (2020-2021)
IASC Results Group 3 on Collective Advocacy

FAO and WFP are adopting a more integrated approach to strengthening food systems, supporting national governments and partners in identifying and addressing food system risks and disruptions to protect and sustain their function.

Alongside actions identified under Strategic Recommendation 2, opportunities to recover and stabilize food systems include promoting linkages between local production and markets (especially relevant in hotspot countries affected by economic risks, conflict and reduced access to fuel), advocating that borders remain open (especially relevant for import-heavy landlocked countries), and where possible leveraging the humanitarian footprint to help stabilize and recover food systems through local food purchases and cash transfers. Regular and predictable cash-based transfers may be especially relevant given the impact of COVID-19-related restrictions on the flow of remittances and on urban communities.

Investing in food and social protection systems is relevant for all the countries covered in this report. For example, in Afghanistan, it is vital to support women farmers, smallholders and sharecroppers to access unconditional assistance and cash for work to rebuild their livelihoods. In addition, it is recommended to extend social protection systems to IDPs who cannot return to their communities of origin due to conflict.

In Nigeria, there is a need for strengthening and expansion of the federal and state-level social protection system to ensure households have access to food and basic needs while supporting workers, farmers and agri-businesses to resume activities and foster productivity following COVID-19-related restrictions, with a particular focus on vulnerable population sub-groups such as women, youth (65 percent of the population), persons with disabilities and displaced persons who are disproportionately affected by the socio-economic impact of the pandemic.

In order to address the impacts of COVID-19-related restrictions and to anticipate the expected needs outlined in this report for Somalia, it is recommended to scale-up, horizontally and vertically, unconditional cash transfers to rural households to cover their immediate food needs.

6. With real-time food security monitoring already covering most of the hotspot countries, it will be important to highlight the need to sustain these investments also over time and beyond the current crisis situation.

In highly volatile and emerging risk contexts, close and continuous monitoring including through real-time and remote modalities is crucial to ensure a better common and shared understanding of food security contexts and the factors contributing to vulnerability, to inform evidence-based anticipatory action and preparedness.

Investing in data collection, sharing and utilization should be prioritized to ensure that risk factor changes are rapidly identified, measured against commonly agreed trigger levels, and anticipated through concerted efforts.

This includes strengthened mechanisms for monitoring the agricultural season and production. Data collection and analysis of food security, including key supplier and consumer markets, should be carried out regularly and disseminated widely to ensure risk-informed decision making, and the continual alignment between preparedness and investment levels and the evolving nature of key risks in the context.

This requires a strengthened collaboration by all stakeholders and a joint approach to analysis, programming and monitoring that builds a greater recognition of the multi-dimensional nature of hunger. Setting up and enhancing existing risk monitoring is a priority in all hotspot countries.

This is especially valid for countries showing a critical deterioration, for example Yemen and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and for those approaching the key agricultural production seasons

IASC Food Security Key Messages (2020-2021)
IASC Results Group 3 on Collective Advocacy

which may be impacted by La Niña-induced adverse weather conditions, such as in East and Southern Africa. While nationwide continuous real-time monitoring has been expanded in 2020 in a number of the countries highlighted in this report, there is an opportunity to extend this vital data platform in Lebanon, South Sudan, the Sudan, and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and surrounding countries.

To this end, securing dedicated resources to deliver on this strategic recommendation is a continuous challenge. For example: of the USD 10 million requested under the COVID-19 Global Humanitarian Response Plan for real-time food security monitoring, funds allocated currently cover only USD 4.2 million.

7. Ensure adequate, timely and flexible funding to enable anticipatory action preparedness and sustain critical humanitarian assistance

As states and partners invest in social protection systems, livelihood and food assistance for the most vulnerable, they are faced with increasing difficulties in securing necessary resources amidst the global COVID-19 crisis.

Meanwhile, more than 10 months into the year, funding against humanitarian response plans (HRP) globally is as low as 36.4 percent, and among the 20 hotspot countries and situations identified in this report, the average level of funding is even lower.

Insufficient funds have a devastating impact on the food security of the most vulnerable, affecting not only the livelihood interventions required to mitigate hunger and promote stability, but also life-saving food assistance and livelihood programmes.

For example, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where the latest IPC shows the world's largest burden of hunger, the 2020 HRP is covered at only 26 percent, and refugees receive only some 75 percent of their required food needs. Wherever possible, flexible funding should be encouraged to support food security partners in channelling funds where they are most needed, including to anticipate rapidly-evolving needs identified through early warning and real-time monitoring.

8. Minimize interruptions to critical food supply chains and ensure the functioning and resilience of agri-food systems

Measures should be established to ensure the steady flow of food between and within countries, as well as between rural, urban and peri-urban areas. Adaptive food, agriculture and trade policies should be advocated for and supported to allow for trade corridors to remain open. Support to local food systems is critical, including protecting assets and ensuring access to critical inputs, as well as assistance to ensure the continued functioning of food supply chains through support for food storage, processing, conservation, marketing and transport, while advocating for trade corridors to remain open as much as possible. These include targeted measures such as financial support, access to credit, land, natural resources and technology to safeguard the livelihoods of small-scale producers, especially women.

9. Support governments to reinforce and scale up gender-responsive social protection systems and strengthen basic service delivery

Provide a comprehensive relief package by creditors to avoid a debt crisis so as to address immediate food and other basic needs to protect vulnerable people and lay the foundations for recovery. Governments must be at the centre of the response and supported in strengthening national capacities, particularly in the areas of social protection, basic service delivery and food systems. Some governments will need support to rapidly scale up or adapt their social-protection measures. Access to adequate and nutritious food must be inclusively ensured for all people, particularly by reinforcing incomes and purchasing power among the most vulnerable. This may mean expanding and scaling up

IASC Food Security Key Messages (2020-2021)
IASC Results Group 3 on Collective Advocacy

existing social protection schemes, especially to people often neglected by such programmes, including rural producers, women and displaced populations. Critical nutrition and school-based programmes need to be safeguarded in order to serve as a safety net for children and households, and to build a foundation for recovery.

10. Reach excluded groups and take into account existing inequalities

Close attention should be paid to populations already in crisis or worse levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phases 3+), in particular those not receiving assistance due to access or resource constraints, including pastoralists, women, youth, refugees, the displaced and migrant populations who rely on the informal sector for income and are often excluded from national social-protection schemes. Women make up a large majority of informal workers in food production, processing and sales, and overwhelmingly bear the burden of caring for family members and providing food for the household.

11. Prioritize locally-led, gender-responsive humanitarian relief efforts

In some food crisis contexts, many families are de facto headed by women, as men have migrated in search of employment. These women rely on remittances that have almost completely stopped during the pandemic. They may be faced with reduced health services and increased unpaid care burden and exposure to gender-based violence. Women play significant roles in food systems from production through provision at the household level and must be active players in the response. In addition, response efforts should take account of women and children's specific dietary needs and vulnerability to malnutrition.

12. Promote innovative sex- and age-disaggregated data collection, monitoring and assessment for evidence-based programming

Given the unprecedented nature of the crisis, creating a better understanding of the potential impacts of the pandemic on food security and related vulnerabilities is of paramount importance and urgency. Data is required on all populations including refugees and forcibly displaced. In food crisis and highly exposed contexts, data collection and sharing modalities should be adapted to help anticipate COVID-19-related shocks and the deterioration of food security, avoiding on-the-ground collection modalities and promoting remote options. Such data collection and analysis must be frequent, sex-, age-, and "vulnerability-" (disability-) disaggregated, and shared in order to inform programming and enable relevant actors to pre-empt deteriorations and reduce levels of acute hunger and malnutrition.

13. Adapt interventions to ensure inclusion and minimize social tensions

The design and implementation of interventions must be informed by local context analyses, including a gender analysis so as to do no harm and reduce the possibility of social tensions and stigmatization. Interventions should be accompanied by clear and factual messages as per WHO guidelines on the pandemic, crafted and delivered through appropriate channels. Moreover, all stakeholders involved in the response should monitor the protection environment, use existing conflict-incidence reporting and displacement-tracking mechanisms to develop possible scenarios and put in place adequate livelihood-support interventions. Particular attention should be paid to the specific risks and heightened vulnerabilities of IDPs and refugee populations.

14. Step up coordination and partnerships

Reducing the impact of the pandemic and halting the projected rise in acute hunger cannot be done in isolation. Government sectors should be supported in their efforts to strengthen national response capacity – particularly in the areas of social protection and basic service delivery – and to adopt policies and make investments in agricultural production and in maintaining critical supply chains that strengthen food systems. Regional institutions, such as the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, or the Food Crisis Prevention Network in West Africa, play a fundamental role in

IASC Food Security Key Messages (2020-2021)
IASC Results Group 3 on Collective Advocacy

providing member countries with the necessary analytical support. Strong partnerships are needed between national institutions, International Financial Institutions, United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), farmers' groups and all other relevant stakeholders, including coordination structures, such as national coordinating sectors, the Global Network Against Food Crises, the Global Nutrition Cluster and the Global Food Security Cluster. Explicit effort is required to ensure a seat at the table for women.