

THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND FOOD SYSTEMS


The right to food is a fundamental and universal human right. Food must be:

AVAILABLE, ACCESSIBLE, ADEQUATE

**103
MILLION
+ PEOPLE**
WENT HUNGRY



**3.1
BILLION
PEOPLE**
COULDN'T AFFORD A
HEALTHY DIET

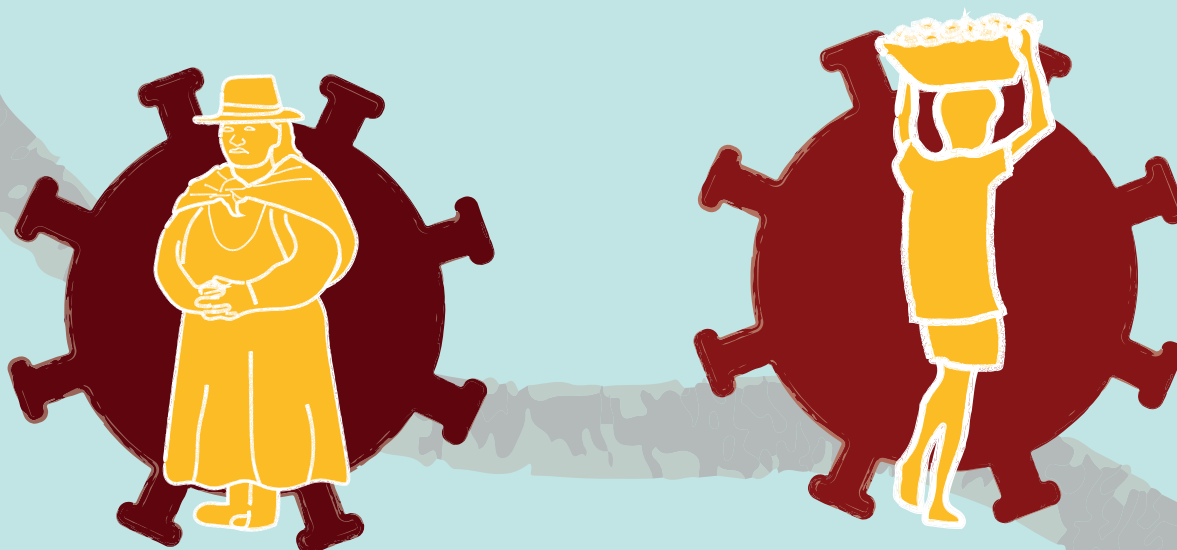


**39%
WOMEN**
MODERATELY OR
SEVERELY FOOD
INSECURE



..... **DURING COVID-19**

Hunger and famine are not the result of low productivity but rather a human-made political problem. As more people went poor and hungry, the wealth of billionaires and corporate profits soared to record levels. The COVID-19 pandemic and policy interventions aimed to stop the transmission of the virus have had major effects on food security and nutrition in almost every country. As a result of strict lockdowns, many individuals were unable to work and therefore lost the income needed to access adequate food and nutrition.



Who became vulnerable?

The COVID-19, and the measures put in place to contain it, disproportionately affected women, girls, persons with disability, non-binary people, displaced people and those living in rural or remote areas, as well as families that depended on remittances from immigrants, or supported through seasonal labour, insecure and informal work. Gender-based violence has also increased. The pandemic has highlighted women's over-representation in more precarious work situations, in the informal economy and in underpaid and invisible care activities. In 2021, the number of children in child labour globally increased to 160 million, the first rise in 20 years. Child labour is concentrated in the agricultural sector, which accounts for 70 per cent of the global total. Indigenous peoples around the world have struggled with unstable access to government financial aid, increases in domestic violence and the exacerbation of disputes and violations regarding land rights.



The pandemic has not only revealed the fragility of food systems but also revealed what worked best in communities. It has underlined **the value of sharing and solidarity**, and the importance of the application of traditional, local knowledge in times of extreme hardship. Resilient solutions included localized markets, public food reserves and associated public food distribution systems, mutual assistance and the sharing of food, as well as agroecology. Mutual aid was crucial for building solidarity and resilience among families, households and communities. In many countries, local authorities, various communities, and the civil society organisations organized the delivery of food parcels, hygiene packs and other resources to people's doorsteps and fostered inclusion social connectivity.

Governments that were flexible, coordinated, and responsive to people's demands developed and implemented effective policies. Many States, local authorities and international organizations deployed shorter term ad hoc measures to cope with the immediate consequences of the pandemic for food security. Some of the most effective measures included direct cash transfers, universal school meals, enforcement of labour laws and enhancement of worker protection, supporting peasants, territorial markets, and expanding social protection measures. Regional and local authorities have also played an essential role in providing people with essential service and care. In some countries, governments worked with civil society organizations to deliver food baskets directly to vulnerable people's homes.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE WAY FORWARD

Recognize the plurality of food systems and strengthen biodiversity

Food systems are inherently linked to different cultural understandings and values and should be understood as a dynamic set of relationships. Agroecology can offer tools for holistic connection between traditional, indigenous and scientific knowledges.

Develop action plans on the right to food

National action plans on the right to food should be developed, based on the principles of solidarity, self-sufficiency and dignity, aiming to strengthen human rights nationally and transform food systems into agroecological systems.

Reform trade policy

To produce fair and stable markets, trade policy should strengthen local, regional, and intercommunal self-sufficiency, protecting local and regional markets and reconstituting public food stocks coming from agroecological practices.

Improve access to land and secure tenure rights

Ensure that people have access to land and protect tenure rights by providing them with the resources and security needed to deal with food insecurity and adapt to climate change.