



COVID-19: IPC TECHNICAL GUIDANCE NOTE

GUIDANCE ON HOW TO BUILD ASSUMPTIONS FOR IPC ACUTE FOOD INSECURITY PROJECTIONS (CONSIDERING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC)

This document intends to provide guidance to IPC country Technical Working Groups on preparation of assumptions for projection analyses. This document does not include the assumptions per se, but rather the guiding questions analysts can consider when preparing assumptions for food security projections.

Many agencies have been developing hypotheses on the impact of COVID-19. Links to the hypotheses and guidance documents that are currently available are provided below for further information. In addition, there are several websites tracking the evolution of the pandemic in different countries, with some also providing forecasts on the expected future situation. These sources may also be useful for countries developing assumptions for projection analyses.

SELECTED DOCUMENTS AND WEBSITES CURRENTLY AVAILABLE:

- FAO: Questions and answers on impact of Covid-19 on food and agriculture <http://www.fao.org/2019-ncov/q-and-a/en/>
- FAO: COVID-19 and Food Supply: A Four-Pronged Battle Plan for Countries [https://maximotorero.com/2020/03/23/covid-19-and-food-supply-a-four-pronged-battle-plan-for-countries/?ct=t\(C2025_newsletter12_03152017_DO_NOT_DELETE3_15_2017_\)](https://maximotorero.com/2020/03/23/covid-19-and-food-supply-a-four-pronged-battle-plan-for-countries/?ct=t(C2025_newsletter12_03152017_DO_NOT_DELETE3_15_2017_))
- CARE: Gender Implications of COVID-19 in Development and Humanitarian Settings [https://www.care-international.org/files/files/Gendered_Implications_of_COVID-19-Full_Paper.pdf?ct=t\(C2025_newsletter12_03152017_DO_NOT_DELETE3_15_2017_\)](https://www.care-international.org/files/files/Gendered_Implications_of_COVID-19-Full_Paper.pdf?ct=t(C2025_newsletter12_03152017_DO_NOT_DELETE3_15_2017_))
- Food Security Cluster COVID-19 site with resources provided by different partners: <https://fscluster.org/coronavirus>
- WHO: Coronavirus information hub with situation reports, briefings etc: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>
- WHO Africa: Coronavirus Africa Dashboard, situation reports: <https://www.afro.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus-covid-19>
- WFP: COVID-19 -related publications and situation reports: <https://www.wfp.org/emergencies/covid-19-pandemic>
- Imperial College London: COVID-19 Scenario Analysis Tool for 137 countries: <https://covidsim.org/v2.20200602/?place=Afghanistan>
- Our World in Data: Coronavirus Country Profiles for 207 countries: <https://ourworldindata.org/coronavirus>
- Johns Hopkins University: Coronavirus Resource Center: <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/map.html>

Based on the information that has already been made available, the COVID-19 pandemic is having at least the following consequences on the economy and food supply chains:

- As of now, COVID-19 has not impacted the global supply of food. Global prices of major staple food items are stable and global levels of food stocks are high. As a result, at least at the moment, no similar global price increases are expected as what took place in 2008-2009 during the global economic crisis, although the situation continues to require monitoring.
- Due to the global economic downturn, demand for goods and raw materials (such as oil and textiles) produced in developing countries has decreased, impacting revenue from exports. Tourism has also decreased substantially, and is likely to remain very limited for months to come. At the same time, currencies of developing countries have been depreciating against the dollar, and this trend seems to be continuing. This impacts negatively the capacity of countries to purchase goods, e.g. staple food items, at global market level, and may increase the prices of imported goods.
- With the pandemic and potential movement restrictions taking hold, food supply has become affected in many areas, not only in import-dependent countries, but also in countries where local transport networks are disrupted. This has also led to local-level price increases, especially when households resort to panic purchases and hoarding of food items. Potential hoarding is likely to impact especially food stuffs that are long-lasting, i.e. cereal products, canned goods and frozen goods/food items that can be frozen (in countries with good electricity supply).

- Urban areas are expected to be particularly affected for several reasons: COVID-19 is likely to spread faster in urban contexts, especially in the densely inhabited informal settlements, and any measures restricting movement are likely to have more pronounced impacts on economy and household income in urban areas than in rural areas.

- The group that is most likely to be impacted is the urban poor; many have already been experiencing income reductions as movement restrictions and reduced demand impact casual labour opportunities and informal trade, while at the same time food prices have increased in many locations.

- Overall this crisis is leading to an impact on food security at household level for most household groups. The severity of the impact, however, primarily depends on the severity of the measures taken to limit the spread of the virus at national and local level, as well as on the overall vulnerability of the household to food insecurity in terms of livelihood strategies and assets.

Considering that the impact on households' food security is likely to vary significantly depending on the exposure of different household groups to the measures that are put in place, the IPC GSU has developed guiding questions for analysts to review when developing assumptions.

Scenarios can be different, depending on the country. Analysts should assess whether there is currently or likely to be in the future:

A. Lockdown, either total or partial, or

B. Global economic and food supply implications.

Based on the answers to these questions, the TWG should identify the **most likely scenario** for the projection analysis regarding what are the most likely policy measures that will be put in place, and consequently what are the most likely impacts of the measures at area level. Analysts should keep in mind that whereas the projection analysis classification and population estimates are based on the most likely scenario, analysts can also develop other scenarios that can be communicated in text form to decision-makers (without producing additional classification maps or population tables).

GUIDING QUESTIONS

IPC analysts should consider the indirect impact of COVID-19 on food security, not the consequences on health outcomes or the health sector, as that is outside the scope of IPC acute food insecurity analyses. Analysts should, however, review the most likely COVID-19 scenario in the country and in the countries around (severity of outbreak and policy measures) prepared e.g. by the country's health officials in collaboration with WHO, when developing their assumptions.

Developing the scenario: start from the macro level (country's food balance, imports/exports, what kind of impact is COVID-19 likely to have at macroeconomic level, etc.), then proceed to the local level/unit of analysis.

Identify the likely continuation or implementation of measures to contain the spread of the virus: if there is likely to be a complete lockdown in the country/analysis areas, or perhaps less severe movement restrictions, or if potential lockdowns are in place or might take place in countries from where food is imported/exported to. Partial or total lockdown scenarios (and whether they are enforceable or not) have impacts on movement of people and possibly also that of goods and services. For example, transport of food might be disrupted, as well as typical or seasonal movement of migrant workers (or even that of livestock). Partial or complete lockdowns have unequivocally negative effects on food security: the key is to develop assumptions on the magnitude of the negative impacts depending on characteristics of food supply chains, livelihoods, urban-rural dynamics, specific coping mechanisms that might be put in place and possible mitigating measures (remittances, safety nets, assistance programmes etc.).

If possible, it is advisable to make specific assumptions in order to enable more detailed estimations regarding potential improvement/deterioration of the situation in the projection period. For example, if it is foreseen that movement restrictions will be discontinued in the projection period, analysts should assess if this would be enough to bring the level of economic activity back to pre COVID-19 situation and if so, what are the likely effects on food access and food consumption especially in the areas most affected by movement restrictions. Conversely, if analysts assess that economic activity is not likely to return to pre COVID-19 level in the projection period, which sectors and population groups are likely to be most affected by continued hardship, and how severely is this likely to impact food access and consequently food consumption?¹

-Vulnerability and Shocks:

- Food system analysis: how is food produced/procured in the country, are markets vulnerable to disruptions?
- Rural vs. urban dynamics, e.g. are there areas that are dependent on food imports and/or prone to ruptures of current food transport networks?

¹ Analysts may peruse different reports and forecasts prepared by Government agencies and research institutions e.g. on economic repercussions of the COVID-19 measures when preparing their assumptions.

- Is the country a net food producer or importer? If it's an importer, how is the pandemic affecting the exporting countries supplying the analysis country/areas?
- Potential movement of people to rural areas if urban livelihoods are disrupted (reverse rural-urban migration with potential spread of disease, loss of income and loss of remittances)?
- Different impacts on rural vs. urban areas: movement restrictions and lockdowns are more likely and more severe in urban areas, with potential consequences e.g. on small businesses, casual laborers and urban poor in general.
- If current food systems become dysfunctional due to movement restrictions, do different household groups have alternatives for procurement of food? Would the situation be different in different parts of the country?

Food Availability:

- What are the main staple food items consumed? Are they produced locally or imported?
- If the country relies on imports, are there measures in place or foreseen that affect imports/exports at macro level (border closures and impact)? Which commodity might be lacking in the country? Is this an important staple food commodity? Are there alternatives for importing this food commodity from another country? Are there alternative food commodities produced in the country/area that could be consumed instead?
- Are there potential impacts on food production in the country? For example, in the case of movement restrictions are farmers able to access inputs, cultivate, and sell their produce?
- Are local markets likely to remain open for purchasing food? Is there buying and selling at the local level?
- Are food stocks sufficient at an area and national level?
- What is the impact of any measures taken against the pandemic on normal seasonal activities related to food production (i.e. typical seasonal calendar)?
- What are the potential effects on programme delivery (seeds, pesticides, fertilizers, animal vaccinations, food distributions, etc.) in terms of logistics and maintaining social distancing?

Food Access:

- Potential effects of movement restrictions on commodity sales and prices.
- Potential effects on employment (daily work), income and remittances.
- Are there population groups that are more affected by problems in food access?
- Will market supplies be disrupted? By how much?
- Level of household food stocks?
- Effects on programme delivery: will restrictions affect creation of safety net programmes or registration to cash programmes, food distributions (movement restrictions and increased risk of infection created by large gatherings of people)? Are there options/plans for reprogramming assistance?

Food consumption:

- Depending on the analysis of the food security elements above, the food consumption situation is likely to be impacted. For example, movement restrictions, increasing prices, hoarding of food supplies and difficulties importing some food items may lead to changes in food consumption patterns.
- What are the implications on dietary and caloric intake?
- If there are likely to be gaps, how large are the gaps expected to be based on answers to the guiding questions regarding food availability and access?
- It's important to assess how the food consumption of different household groups might be impacted (rural vs. urban, or different livelihood and socio-economic groups).

Livelihood Change:

- Based on the assumptions developed for hazards and vulnerabilities, food availability and food access, there's a need to assess the likely implications on household livelihoods and assets:
- For example, urban poor groups may lose casual labour opportunities, and the flow of remittances from urban to rural areas may decrease. Migration from urban to rural areas may also take place.
- Other sectors likely to be affected by the potential movement restrictions are transport and trade.
- Reduced income may result in sale of assets and use of other negative livelihood coping mechanisms that are likely to differ between urban and rural areas. Analysts should consider the existing livelihood and assets, and the types of shocks induced by COVID-19 measures to gauge the potential impact in terms of expected type and severity of livelihood coping.

Acute Malnutrition:

- UNICEF has developed assumptions concerning the likely impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the malnutrition situation: With potential movement restrictions or lockdowns, health seeking behaviour of households is going to change with less households seeking services and treatment. The pandemic will also mean that no vaccination campaigns are likely to be carried out, and CMAM programmes as well as supplementary feeding programmes are suspended.

- SAM treatment is likely to continue, but the demand for these services will probably decrease, with a possible impact on decrease in treatment (and increased mortality).
- Hygiene practices (hand washing, access to water and soap/hand sanitizer) might not be feasible in developing countries and there are likely to be difficulties in reaching all population groups to raise awareness of suitable practices.
- Maintaining social distancing, particularly in densely inhabited urban areas, will not be practically feasible.

DATA SYSTEMS AND IPC PROCESSES

With the COVID-19 situation being extremely volatile, the TWG should be ready to provide situation updates when needed (with a data collection system that allows that).

-There is a need to set up surveillance systems rather than one-stop surveys. Use and scaling up of mVAM and other CATI² surveys is highly recommended in absence of face-to-face surveys. It is suggested to include at least two outcome indicators in mVAM and CATI surveys, e.g. rCSI and HDDS or FCS - or HHS in more severe crises.

- If possible, the country should strive to have a long validity period for projection analyses that can be updated frequently when the situation changes (with set triggers), which can be debated with the TWG at country level.

- In case of mVAM/CATI, there is a need to review phone coverage in analysis areas. If coverage is less than the recommended minimum of 60%, consult with the IPC GSU on data reliability and feasibility of use for IPC analysis.

- In the absence of recent outcome evidence collected in the field (e.g. through mVAM/CATI), the countries have different options:

- > Protocols on using historical evidence collected over the past five years;
- > Protocols on using evidence collected over the past 12 months in unimodal areas, and 6 months in bimodal areas;
- > Protocols on using HEA outcome evidence;
- > Protocols on areas with no or limited access.

² CATI = Computer-assisted Telephone Interviewing