COVID-19 and Global Malnutrition: A Sting in the Tail or a Chance to Remake our Food and Nutrition Systems?

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Gairdner Global Perspectives Panel
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How we Think COVID-19 & Lockdowns Impact Malnutrition

**Economy**
- Job losses
- Income losses

**Food System**
- Disruption to food supplies

**Health System**
- Disruption to nutrition services

Nutritious food becomes less available & affordable

**Diet Quality**

**Illness**
- Prevention
- Treatment
- Hygiene

**Costs to Society**
- Mortality
- Morbidity
- Economic Costs
- Human Capital Formation
- Distress and Pain

Disruption to nutrition services
GDP declines in 2020 will be large

Overview of the World Economic Outlook GDP Projections (% change) (October 2020 Estimates)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>2021</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>-10.3</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin America</td>
<td>-8.1</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-Saharan Africa</td>
<td>-4.3</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>-8</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

IMF World Economic Outlook October 2020
Access to nutritious foods is affected by COVID19 measures

- Production of these foods is labor intensive and more impacted by physical distancing
- These foods are more likely to perish when markets are disrupted
- These foods are more expensive and the first to be dropped from the household menu when incomes fall

**FIGURE 1**
Dairy consumption in Addis, 2020, January-February versus May

Source: Wolle et al. (2020); Hirvonon et al. (2020)
Essential nutrition services are disrupted by COVID and the lockdown

- Nutrition support, pregnant & lactating women (n=48)
- Home fortification with micronutrient powders (n=11)
- Deworming prophylaxis (n=19)
- Vitamin A supplementation (n=25)
- Treat Severe Acute Malnutrition (n=39)
- School feeding (N=42)
- Infant and young child services (n=68)

Number of countries

COVID-19 could result in an additional 6.7 million children with wasting in 2020.

Increase in the number of wasted children under 5 in low- and middle-income countries due to COVID-19 and lockdowns.

Lancet July 2020

https://www.thelancet.com/article/S0140-6736(20)31647-0/fulltext
Wasting is a leading indicator—it is just the tip of the iceberg.

There is a lot more to come, unless we act, now.

Without timely action, 6.7M additional children will become wasted in 2020 as a result of COVID-19.

Stunting, micronutrient deficiencies, overweight, and lives lost will also increase drastically without immediate investments.

THE TIME TO ACT IS NOW.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Threat</th>
<th>Opportunity to Build Forward Better</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Income dropping significantly as jobs lost</td>
<td>Social Protection Programs to promote consumption of nutritious foods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child development in first 1000 days</td>
<td>Ensure ANC, Breastfeeding Promotion, Vitamin A Supplementation, Food Fortification are part of the COVID-19 response to prevent co-morbidities and promote general immunity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nutritious whole foods become more expensive</td>
<td>Symptoms heightens awareness of the need to tackle obesity, diabetes type 2</td>
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## Need to Build **Forward** Better: Food Systems

<table>
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<th>Threat</th>
<th>Opportunity to Build Forward Better</th>
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<tr>
<td>Front line workers in food system</td>
<td>Recognition of the essential role they play by businesses → workforce nutrition programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Their nutrition status worsens due to proximity to customers and need to come to work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small and Medium Enterprises in Food System</td>
<td>New impact investing facilities diverting some of the $200bn industry to SMEs to develop resilient nutritious food systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMEs in nutritious food business are going out of business</td>
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<td>Fresh Food Markets</td>
<td>Protocols and PPE provided to keep markets open raise awareness of need for physical distancing &amp; mask wearing, while raising consumer awareness of food safety</td>
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<td>Closure due to inadequate infection/safety protocols/PPE</td>
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Conclusions

- Unchecked, COVID-19 and lockdowns threaten to reverse 10 years of progress in 10 months

- Need to deny COVID-19 an intergenerational legacy: protect the nutrition of the very youngest

- Need to Build Forward Better: the policy space is fluid—we need to make the case for nutrition as a routine part of the COVID-19 response in Economic, Food, Health Sectors

- Sting in the Tail or a Chance to Remake our Food and Nutrition Systems? Both!