Food for the Hungry COVID-19 Response

1 April 2020

On March 11, 2020, The World Health Organization declared the spread of the coronavirus a pandemic. The virus which causes COVID-19 has spread to most of the countries, regions, and territories around the world and it currently places a significant threat on areas with weaker healthcare infrastructure and fewer social safety nets. Food for the Hungry is aware of the catastrophic potential of the disease in the places we work. This includes people in refugee and displaced persons camps; countries ravaged by conflict; regions of extreme poverty; and women, children, people living with disabilities and the elderly who will be disproportionately affected by these types of emergencies. FH is not new to responding to public health emergencies or the secondary effects of similar disasters. Our community-level programming in Africa, Asia and Latin America places the organization and its staff in a unique position to pivot quickly to the needs of vulnerable communities who will be deeply affected by the spread of the virus.
Our Response

FH’s response plan is shaped by four pillars:

1. **Ensuring staff and community safety as existing programming is adapted:**
   The safety of staff, partners, and participants is a priority. FH is adapting programming to ensure all stakeholders are able to abide by WHO and national governments’ guidelines to reduce the spread of the virus. This includes creative programming in education, agriculture, and livelihoods, and the use of technology to share health and WASH messages. Staff support also includes Duty of Care and adapted security plans.

2. **Essential lifesaving services:** FH remains committed to its mission, and will continue implementing lifesaving services in health and WASH. Also, programming will be scaled up to include response activities such as food distributions.

3. **Active reduction of the spread of COVID-19:** FH is working with and through partners to scale up WASH programming and preventative education, and support the acquisition of personal protective equipment.

4. **Early Recovery:** The impacts of COVID-19 on the most vulnerable communities will extend far beyond the individual and public health consequences, resulting in new and heightened educational, social, economic, and political challenges. FH is working to understand, prevent and mitigate these challenges while simultaneously preparing for early recovery programs.
The Global Response

1. Leveraging our strong community networks to educate and inform people about COVID-19 and to combat the spread of misinformation and rumors.
2. Ensuring all staff are familiar with the basics of humanitarian response practice, the Core Humanitarian Standard and the SPHERE Standards.
3. Continuing to ensure that gender equity and inclusivity considered through all projects and activities. This includes continuity of medical care for vulnerable groups, especially for women of reproductive age and pregnant and lactating women.
4. Remotely deploying trained staff to participate and be represented in humanitarian cluster meetings to increase coordination and partnership in the response.
5. Developing, compiling, and sharing materials and resources including pamphlets, videos, radio broadcasts, phone messages, and posters to promote community awareness around COVID-19 prevention and best hygiene practices.
6. Postponing activities that involve large gatherings such as community training sessions. We are also exploring innovative ways that we can still share messaging and training materials through technology.
7. Working with partners to acquire and equip field staff with personal protective equipment (PPE) and hygiene and sanitation supplies.
8. Providing guidelines and recommendations for COVID-19 response best practices at healthcare facilities including effective WASH measures to ensure that they become places where the disease stops, not where it spreads.
9. Continuing to work on critical existing programs, such as WASH projects, that play an important role in helping communities protect themselves against the spread of infectious disease.
10. Positioning supplies and forming plans to distribute critical NFIs to ensure supplies of important items like soap and other hygiene products are maintained.
11. Leveraging our longstanding, trusting relationships to coordinate responses with government, health authorities, schools, churches, and local partners.
Regional Responses

Below are some highlights of current actions that we are taking in our regions of operation.

Africa

In Mozambique, FH is working with UNICEF to provide lifesaving WASH emergency response to the pandemic in the districts of Pemba, Mecufi, and Metuge which were heavily devastated by cyclones in 2019. The work includes construction of WASH facilities at health centers, rehabilitation of community water supply systems, promotion of COVID-19 prevention practices through hand-washing, social distancing, and home-based isolation. Food voucher distributions are being conducted and doubled in Sofala Province to ensure families who are still recovering from the impacts of Cyclone Idai are prepared for potential shortages. In Ethiopia, FH is working with partners to scale up COVID-19 education programming. In northern Kenya, FH is working with the local government to procure PPE.

Asia

In the Rohingya Refugee Camps in Bangladesh where we operate six healthcare facilities with our partner, Medical Teams International, we are prioritizing and strengthening those facilities to cope with an increased caseload; improving infection, prevention and control; and expanding capacity specifically for isolation and treatment of COVID-19 cases. PPE is also being distributed to staff and partners on the ground. In Cambodia, FH will be working closely with UNICEF and health centers to distribute hygiene kits.
Latin America and the Caribbean

Lessons learned during the recent conflicts in Nicaragua and Bolivia have prepared FH to respond quickly to the virus in the region. In Bolivia, we have included COVID-19 materials provided by the Ministry of Health in cascade group lessons related to hand washing and acute respiratory infections. In the Dominican Republic, FH staff is preparing COVID-19 training materials and provision of hygiene kits to mother leaders and other vulnerable community members. In Haiti, FH staff was trained by the Health Ministry and provided with materials related to COVID-19 response. A workshop was held in Port au Prince and, following this training, these materials will be distributed to cascade groups and schools.

“As challenging as the consequences of coronavirus have been for those in developed economies, without our collective attention and assistance, they will be absolutely catastrophic in countries with fragile infrastructure, economies, and medical services.” - Mark Viso, CEO

To support FH’s COVID-19 Response, please visit FH.ORG or email the Relief & Humanitarian Affairs Unit at RHA@fh.org

For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline. 2 Timothy 1:7

ABOUT FOOD FOR THE HUNGRY

Food for the Hungry is a Christian humanitarian organization ending all forms of human poverty by providing life-changing development programs, disaster relief, and advocacy. Since 1971, Food for the Hungry has been going into the world’s hardest places with an exit strategy: to respond to human suffering and graduate communities of extreme poverty into self-sustainability, all within a decade. By creating context-specific solutions in education, agriculture, health, livelihood, clean water, and disaster risk reduction, the nonprofit focuses on transformational development, investing in children as the key to lift entire communities out of poverty. With 98% of staff working in their country of origin, Food for the Hungry works side-by-side with local leaders, churches, and families to implement innovative solutions. The organization currently serves more than 14 million people in over 20 countries worldwide. For more information, follow @food4thehungry or visit www.fh.org.