

## Impact Story 9:

# GAIN's Response to COVID-19 – Keeping Food Markets Working



## THE OPPORTUNITY

In late 2019 in a wet market in Wuhan a coronavirus was jumping from animals to human. Being new to humans, the world was not armed with the knowledge and tools needed to contain the virus and mitigate its severity. The mortality rate was so high that lockdowns in March of 2020 were one of the first public responses to the virus, restricting the movement of people, and hence food commodities. Food systems crawled along as farmers, businesses, workers and markets faced new barriers to operation. People's diets and nutrition suffered.<sup>1</sup>

## THE SOLUTION

Immediately after the lockdowns were put into place, GAIN went into action on 4 fronts. First, we wanted to hear what was happening to food from around the world. Second, together with the Micronutrient Forum, we founded the [Standing Together for Nutrition](#) coalition of researchers and analysts to develop estimates of the impacts of COVID-19 on malnutrition rates. Third, given the absence of real time data monitoring on the challenges facing SMEs providing safe nutritious food to local populations in Africa and Asia, together with the Scaling up Nutrition Business Network we conducted 3 rapid surveys of SMEs in the second quarter of 2020. Fourth, together with our donors we set up a multi-donor COVID-19 Fund to keep food markets working. It had three goals: protect the nutrition of food system workers, provide support to the food SMEs so critical to supplying markets where poor people shop and third making wet markets safer for vendors and customers by improving food safety infrastructure and protocols.

## THE IMPACT

We set up a blog series on the platform Nutrition Connect, COVID-19 blog series: Opportunities for building back better food systems and nutrition. Six months later, over 40 bloggers from around the world had told their stories about what was happening to the food systems where they lived, providing decision makers with information, inspiration and incentives to act to protect food security and nutrition in their locales. The UN Global Crisis Response Group, established by the UN Secretary General is now interested in doing something similar in the context of the Ukraine crisis.

Inspired by the collaborative and collective efforts of epidemiologists around the world we brokered new collaborations between these researchers and produced estimates of the impact of COVID-19 on child undernutrition.

### COVID-19 blog series: Opportunities for building back better food systems and nutrition

Lawrence Haddad, Jess Fanzo and Corinna Hawkes are curating this blog series to shine a light on the threats and opportunities for nutrition and food systems.



**43. Young people can play a role in building food systems during crises like COVID-19**

Mike Nkhombo Khunga  
In this blog, Mike Nkhombo Khunga - a Global Youth



**42. No Regrets, No Excuses. Helping policymakers make decisions to transform their food systems for healthy diets**

Corinna Hawkes, Stephanie Walton, Lawrence Haddad and



**41. The two fast tracks of COVID-19**

Peiman Milani and Daniel Skavén Ruben  
In this blog, Peiman Milani and Daniel Skavén Ruben of the



**40. Private sector accountability is more important than ever: Supporting positive action and holding the food industry to account**

Figure 2: The COVID-19 [blog series](#) on Nutrition Connect

#### FROM BAD TO WORSE

The COVID-19 pandemic has already sharply increased the estimated\* number of children with wasting, meaning their body weight is low for their height.

#### Under fives with wasting



\*Estimates made in 2021 by the Standing Together for Nutrition Consortium.

enature

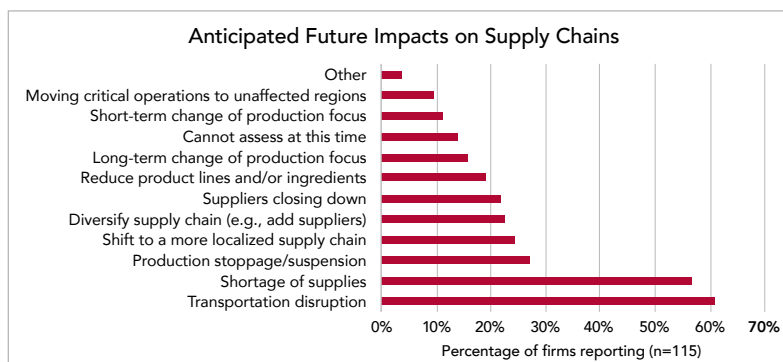
The Standing Together for Nutrition coalition were used by nutrition champions in governments, donor agencies, philanthropies, and the UN to maintain and raise resources for nutrition. These estimates were published in Nature and used in the December 2020 start to the Nutrition for Growth Summit in Japan 12 months later.

Figure 2: Estimates from the Standing Together for Nutrition Coalition showing sharp rises in the numbers of children with wasting due to COVID-19 restrictions

1. <https://www.nature.com/articles/s43016-021-00319-4>.

The rapid surveys helped SME technical assistance, finance and network service providers gear their support to what SMEs needed.

Figure 3: SME survey responses in the 10 GAIN countries, May 2020



Our multi-donor COVID-19 Fund had huge impacts across countries:

**In Tanzania:** The huge Buguruni market was rebuilt inside (vendors stalls, floors and drainage) and outside (rooves). A canteen area was organised for the market vendors, the slaughter area was upgraded to ensure adequate food safety, and the live poultry area was appropriately ventilated. A new toilet area was installed, and the whole market was equipped with rain water run-off storage and solar lighting to improve sustainability. All stages of the design and implementation were co-created with the local management committee and local authorities, and appropriate governance arrangements were put in place to ensure maintenance in the future.

Figure 4: Burungi Market, Tanzania, before and after GAIN-assisted upgrades spurred by COVID-19 concern



**In Ethiopia:** Market infrastructure was improved to support the clean and fresh marketing of fruits and vegetables in two informal markets of Addis Ababa. In the Lafto marketplace sanitary facilities were improved.

Figure 5: New sanitary facilities at the Lafto market in Addis Ababa



**In Bangladesh:** GAIN helped transform 2 wet markets in South City Corporation of Dhaka: new floors, drains, breastfeeding rooms, toilets for women, face masks, and signage were introduced – all in partnership with the local market development committee, helping promote the sale of safe and nutritious food.

Figure 5: Signage from the South Dhaka wet market that GAIN helped to upgrade to help prevent the spread of COVID and improve food safety