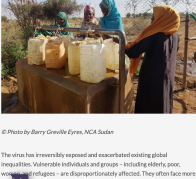


News

ICCO supports people's fight against the coronavirus

Over the last months, the corona pandemic has affected the lives of billions of people around the globe. The virus has challenged the most established and well-funded health and social protection systems, but poses even greater risks for regions and states that lack such services.



© Photo by Barry Greville Eynas, ICA Sudan

The virus has irreversibly exposed and exacerbated existing global inequalities. Vulnerable individuals and groups – including elderly, poor, women, and refugees – are disproportionately affected. They often face more health risks, depend on a day-to-day income for survival, or are unable to carry out social distancing practices. As a result, more and more people are facing precarious situations with unstable incomes and serious food insecurity.

From the first stages of the corona outbreak, ICCO Cooperation has provided support to severely affected populations. Our activities include medical aid, awareness raising, and economic empowerment, which aim to prevent and slow down transmission. In most countries help is offered through local partners. Not only does this ensure a quick and efficient response, but it also allows for a context-specific approach that is respectful of local culture, habits and social norms. Some of the COVID-19 activities that ICCO and partners have implemented in different countries are highlighted below.

Ethiopia, Sudan and Central African Republic

Besides increasing infection rates of the coronavirus, the Horn of Africa is currently also suffering from large swarms of desert locusts. This locust upsurge has resulted in harvest loss and growing numbers of (internally) displaced people throughout the region. In cooperation with our local partners EECMY and Hundee, ICCO offers emergency relief to recover food security in Ethiopia, while also integrating COVID-19 prevention strategies. In Sudan, Central African Republic and Ethiopia, hand-dug wells are repaired and rehabilitated, washing stations are placed, and soap bars are distributed to enhance personal hygiene.

Both in Ethiopia and Sudan, campaigns have been set up to raise awareness about the virus. Local radio channels have allowed ICCO's partners to use airtime for broadcasting information about transmission and self-care methods to prevent COVID-19. These campaigns will ensure that even the most hard-to-reach individuals, including people with disabilities, women, the elderly, and illiterate people, receive hygiene promotion information.

Bolivia and Colombia



© Manja's cooking school students, Bolivia

Besides health activities, the COVID-19 pandemic also requires creative solutions to address the economic dimension of the crisis. In South America, disadvantaged young adults are being trained in Manja's cooking schools to become chefs. However, due to the corona situation and its related restrictions, their small enterprises are hardly surviving and suffering financial losses. In Bolivia, ICCO is supporting these students to keep their businesses running, and is offering them online opportunities to continue their education.

In June, 2,500 meals prepared by Manja's students were distributed to people who have become food-insecure during the corona crisis, including elderly, migrants and people with disabilities. In addition, some 400 highly nutritional lunch meals were cooked for the brave doctors and nurses battling the coronavirus.

Bangladesh



In Bangladesh, ICCO is supporting poor farming households whose food insecurity has reached alarming levels during the corona crisis. Due to the pandemic, the government has imposed travel restrictions, disallowing transportation of products and goods to local markets. However, many rural farmers in Bangladesh are heavily dependent on their agricultural yields, as well as on other day-to-day labor opportunities in nearby villages. Looking at the longer term, the farmers' economic losses will pressurize food insecurity across the entire country.

In order to mitigate the impacts of the coronavirus in Bangladesh, ICCO has reallocated some of its budget to be able to support some 5,000 farmers and their households. Agri-inputs such as seeds and fertilizers are provided to individuals and families most in need to secure their incomes for the next season. In addition, activities and trainings are being organized to raise awareness about the virus and to strengthen agricultural skills. Most recently, the farmers received agri-inputs to cultivate salt-tolerant crops. These are more suitable to the Bangladeshi environment and therefore enhance food security. Through all these activities, the farmers will become more resilient to future shocks.

Nepal

Numbers of COVID-19-infected cases in Nepal keep rising as thousands of Nepalese migrants return to the country. The national health system is falling short on capacities. Therefore, ICCO has diverted some funding reserved for disaster awareness to support the Nepal Army's quarantine station. With this help, new mattresses, pillows, blankets, bedsheets, and mosquito nets have been purchased, enabling the station to host more people in quarantine. This way, more people can enjoy a safe place for self-quarantine, hence preventing further spread of the virus.

These are some examples of recent COVID-19 related activities. However, ICCO and our partners are battling the coronavirus in many other contexts around the globe. For more information on our interventions, [see our news articles](#).

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