THE EFFECTS OF COVID-19 ON AFFORDABILITY OF MINIMUM EXPENDITURE BASKETS: A CASE STUDY OF SIX COUNTRIES

COVID-19 SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS PROJECT

USAID
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iMMAP

Main Implementing Partner
DATA FRIENDLY SPACE

**Better Data
Better Decisions
Better Outcomes**

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About this project

In July 2020, iMMAP launched the Global COVID-19 Situation Analysis Project, funded by the Bureau of Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) of USAID. Implemented in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh,1 Burkina Faso, Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Nigeria, and Syria, this project has produced monthly situation analysis reports that provide humanitarian stakeholders with comprehensive information on the spread of COVID-19 and related humanitarian consequences. Data is identified from humanitarian sources and coded using the projects analytical framework, which is closely aligned with the JIAF framework. Data is stored in DEEP where it can be visualized, disaggregated and aggregated to respond to queries about humanitarian situations.

Based on Lessons Learned for the project, iMMAP commissioned a series of sector-specific lessons learned reports to assess data availability and quality, adaptations, challenges, opportunities that emerged in five humanitarian sectors: education, food security, livelihoods, protection, and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH). Alongside this, seven thematic reports that focus on gaps in data were also commissioned.

The iMMAP Primary Data Collection exercises were contracted to RIWI and Premise under the supervision of iMMAP. Data collection was conducted remotely using digital data collection technologies that require a smart device and internet connection. All efforts were made to increase coverage of data collection, and weighting was applied, however the sample population may not representative of the lowest socio-economic and marginalized groups

"This report is the result of a combination of primary and secondary data review exercises that cross-analyze a number of information sources. The views expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID, the United States Government, the humanitarian clusters or any one of their individual sources."

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Acronyms

ADB	Asian Development Bank
BFA	Burkina Faso
BGD	Bangladesh
CH	*Cadre Harmonisé*
COL	Colombia
CVA	Cash and Vouchers Assistance
CWG	Cash Working Group
DANE	Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadísticas (Colombia)
DEEP	Data Entry and Exploration Platform
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations
FSIN	Food Security Information Network
GDP	Gross Value Product
GFSI	Global Food Security Index
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPC	Integrated Food Security Phase Classification
LEDC	Least Developed Countries
MEB	Minimum Expenditure Basket
MFB	Minimum Food Basket
NGA	Nigeria
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
RQ	Research question
SMEB	Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WFP	World Food Programme

Introduction

Rationale

The objective of the evaluation was to understand the effects of COVID-19 on the affordability of Minimum Expenditure Baskets (MEB) in the six countries: Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Nigeria and Syria.

The report focuses on documenting the cost and drivers of change in the cost of MEBs, the proportion of persons that can afford them, and the proportion of income spent on MEBs.

Research questions

Based on the objective of the evaluation described above, two main research questions were defined in order to guide the evaluation.

These research questions are:

1. What was the effect of COVID-19 on the living conditions of households in Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Colombia, DRC, Nigeria, and Syria?

   - How did COVID-19 affect the affordability of minimum expenditure baskets in these countries?
   - How did COVID-19 affect other variables related to multidimensional poverty in these countries?
   - Are there any common cross-cutting factors among these countries?

2. What has been the response from local governments and multilateral agencies to assist households whose living conditions have been affected by COVID-19?

Methodology

The methodology used for the evaluation is a mixed-methods approach where desk review and quantitative primary and secondary data are combined to address the research questions.

Figure 1 summarizes the methodology used. The data sources are the documents related to livelihoods and COVID-19 available on the Data Entry and Exploration Platform (DEEP)[1] and relevant secondary data.

This information was triangulated to perform two types of analyses: in-country analysis of the effect of the COVID-19 over the living conditions of households in the six countries, and a cross-country analysis to identify common factors of this effect.

Final findings emerged from the data triangulation and focused on answering the research questions proposed.

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[1] DEEP is a collaborative platform for humanitarian analysis and secondary review.

Figure 1. Methodology used for the evaluation

Data sources　　　　Data triangulation　　　　Findings
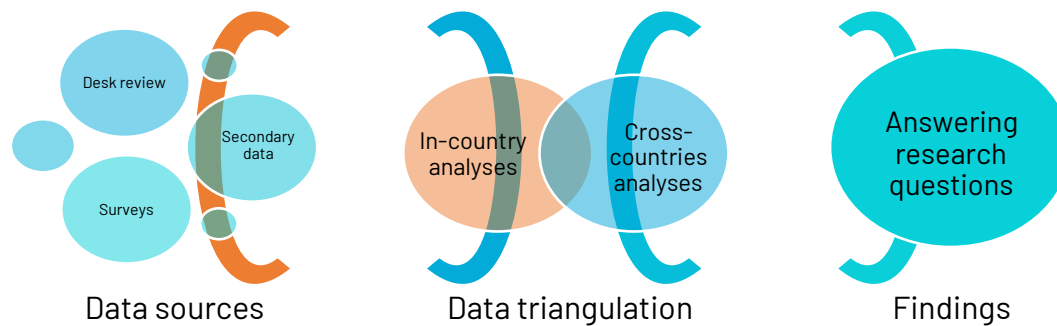
Source: Own elaboration

MEB definition and estimation

The Minimum Expenditure Basket (MEB) is defined as "what a household requires in order to meet basic needs – on a regular or seasonal basis – and its average cost" (ECHO, 2015). It is a tool used by Cash and Vouchers Assistance (CVA) actors to: "support the calculation of the transfer amount of a multipurpose / multisectoral cash grant, contribute to better vulnerability analysis and monitoring, and improve collaboration" (CaLP, 2019).

The MEB concept emerges from the 'Cost of basic needs approach' used by the World Bank to find the value of consumption necessary to meet minimum subsistence needs, which usually involves a basket of food items based on nutritional requirements and consumption patterns, and a reasonable allowance for non-food consumption (World Bank, 2014). It follows the definition of poverty not only as an indicator related to monetary income, but as a deprivation of essential assets and opportunities to which every human being is entitled.

The estimation of MEB can take two approaches: the expenditure-based approach and the rights-based approach. Although the expenditure-based approach is more accurate, it requires having up-to-date information on detailed household food and non-food consumption which is currently not available for 2020 and, therefore, would not be useful to assess effects of COVID-19 (WFP, 2020).

In contrast, the rights-based approach uses a detailed list of the food and non-food items that are part of the MEB reference basket and pricing them using current market prices. This methodology was selected for this study, considering the data limitations explained above.

The following figure presents the procedure used to estimate the MEB based on the rights-based approach methodology. This procedure includes collecting information on prices and validating the food and non-food items defined for the MEB reference basket, for which the iMMAP country teams could contribute.

Figure 2. Procedure to estimate the MEB based on the rights-based methodology
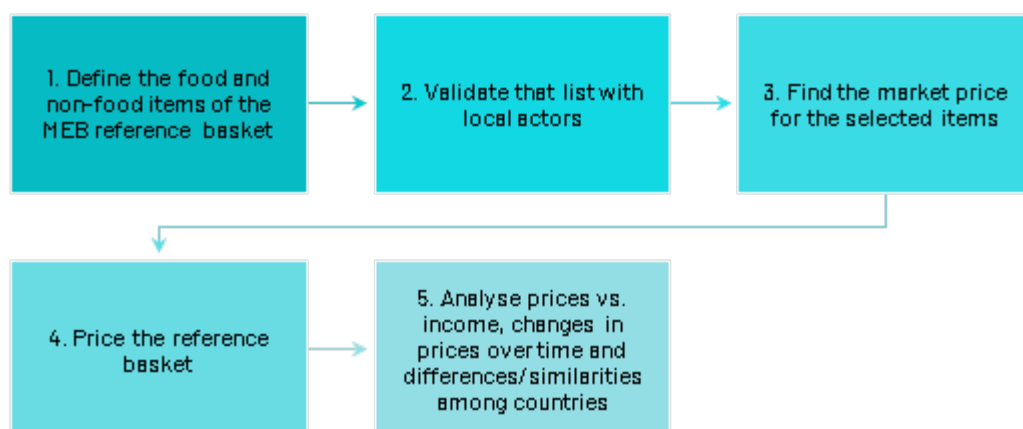
Source: Own elaboration based on WFP (2020). Minimum Expenditure Basket: Guidance notes.
December 2020.

In both approaches, the list of items included in the basket considers minimum standards in humanitarian response, including food security and nutrition, shelter and settlement and water supply, sanitation and hygiene standards (Sphere, 2018).

The MEB estimation is particularly important in humanitarian contexts to assess the affordability of households of their basic needs. For this, different versions of this measure have been developed, for example the Minimum Food Basket (MFB) and the Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket (SMEB) (FSIN and Global Network Against Food Crises, 2021).

Data sources

Table 1 presents an assessment of the availability of relevant documents for the evaluation[2].

Table 1. Relevant documents reviewed

Author	Type of document	Year	Relevant for	
			RQ1	RQ2
WFP	Characterization, diagnosis, and needs assessment of the affordability of minimum expenditure and humanitarian response	2020/2021	x	x
IOM	Characterization, and needs assessment of migrants and IDPs and humanitarian response	2020/2021	x	x
UNICEF	Characterization, and needs assessment of children and humanitarian response	2020/2021	x	x
International NGOs	Characterization, and needs assessment of vulnerable population and humanitarian response	2020/2021	x	x
Local governments	Government's response to COVID-19 crisis	2020/2021		x
Media	Needs assessment of vulnerable population and Government's response	2020/2021	x	x

Source: DEEP platform

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[2] The assessment is based upon the information available at the DEEP platform, which will be carefully reviewed and coded during the evaluation, depending on their relation to the proposed research questions.

Table 2 presents relevant secondary data available to analyze the macroeconomic context of the countries before and after COVID-19, and getting some insights on the effect of the pandemic on livelihoods.

Table 2. Relevant secondary data reviewed

Source	Variable	Year	Relevant for	
			RQ1	RQ2
Word Bank	Economic growth	2018-2020	x	
	Economic growth forecast	2021-2023	x	
	Private consumption	2018-2020	x	
	Inflation	2018-2021	x	
	Food-inflation	2018-2021	x	
	Unemployment	2018-2021	x	
The Economist	Global Food Security Index	2019-2020	x	
WFP	Food insecurity estimates	2019-2020	x	
IMF	General Government Debt	2019-2020		x
	Current account deficit	2019-2020		x

Source: World Bank, The Economists, UNICEF, and the IMF websites

Finally, primary data collected by iMMAP through surveys conducted by RIWI and Premise were included in the data sources analysed. The RIWI survey was conducted in 2021 using a technology that allows for the rapid capture and assessment of large samples of broad, truly randomized opinion and perceptions data on an ongoing basis, through anonymous opt-in surveys to Web users who are surfing online (RIWI, 2021). The target respondents were the general population of internet users aged 18+, it included 20 closed-ended questions and targeted 3,500 respondents in Colombia, 3,000 in Syria and 2,500 in Bangladesh.

The Premise survey was collected in 2021 from a network of contributors living in and near beneficiary communities using a technology platform that combines a mobile application and a cloud-based data infrastructure. The target population were 1,500 respondents in Burkina Faso, 2,000 respondents in DRC and 1,100 respondents in Nigeria (Premise, 2021).

It should be noted that limitations exits with these remote data collection methodologies in that they rely upon users having an internet connection and some kind of smart device. As such, data collected from the RIWI and Premise surveys may not be representative of the most vulnerable members of society in humanitarian settings.

Findings

This section presents the findings from the evaluation considering the research questions described above.

o *What was the effect of COVID-19 on the living conditions of households in Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Colombia, DRC, Nigeria, and Syria?*

Figures 3 and **4** show the evolution of daily confirmed COVID-19 cases and deaths per-million people in the six countries considered for the study. Although cases have been recently decreasing, they soared in the middle of 2020 and 2021, particularly the number of COVID-19 cases in Bangladesh and COVID-19 deaths in Colombia.
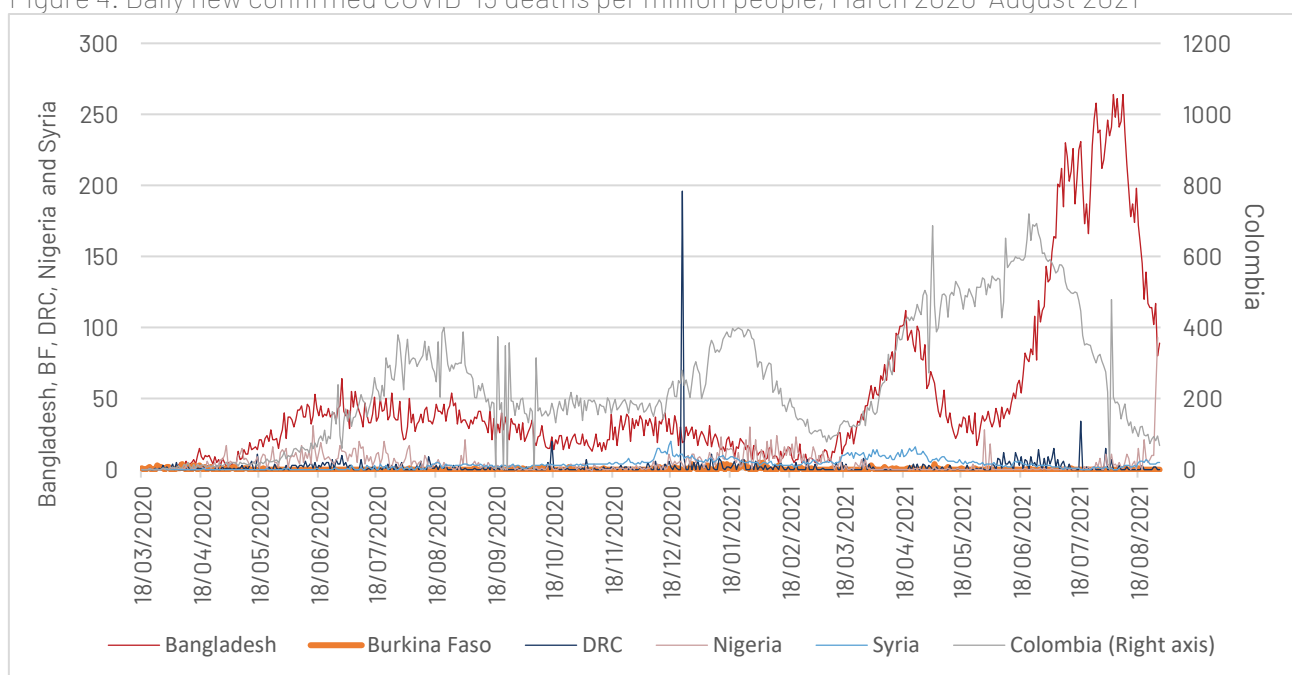
Figure 3. Daily new confirmed COVID-19 cases per million people, March 2020-August 2021
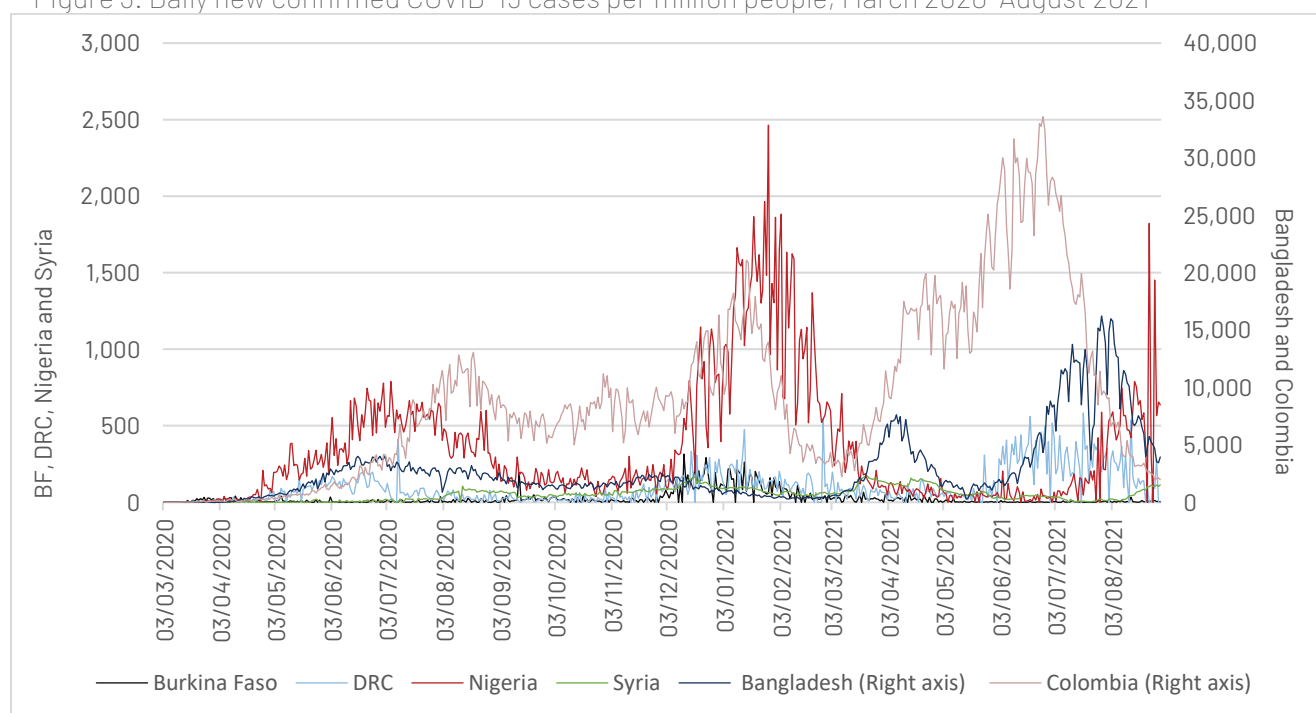
Source: Our World in Data, Johns Hopkins University CSSE COVID-19 Data, 2021

Figure 4. Daily new confirmed COVID-19 deaths per million people, March 2020-August 2021


Source: Our World in Data, Johns Hopkins University CSSE COVID-19 Data, 2021

The lockdown measures had a negative effect on economic growth globally. As **Figure 5** illustrates, GDP per-capita sharply decreased in all six countries throughout 2020. Colombia was the worst affected country in the study, experiencing a 1.86% contraction of the economy. There was a reduction of -1.26% in Nigeria and -1.34% in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Although Burkina Faso and Bangladesh maintained positive levels of economic growth (1.82% and 1.35%

respectively), these figures were lower than the production achieved on the previous year. These figures are also inferior to the economic growth that was projected for 2020, which was on average 1.1% for Low-Income Developing Countries and 1.4% for emerging markets and developing economies (IMF, 2020).

Private expenditure was also affected by the COVID-19 crisis. The final consumption expenditure displayed on **Figure 6** shows that in all six countries, except for Nigeria, demand for goods and services dropped in 2020. Colombia was once again the most affected country, witnessing a -1.07% reduction in its national consumption.

Figure 5. GDP per capita growth (annual %), 2011- 2020
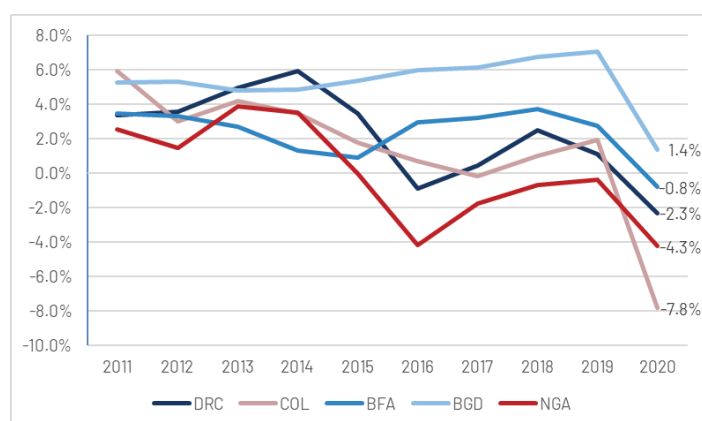
Figure 6. Final consumption expenditure (annual % growth), 2011- 2020

Source: World Development Indicators, The World Bank, 2021
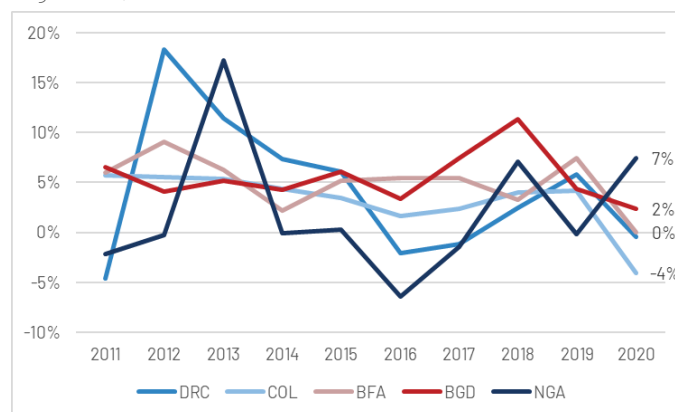
Another negative economic effect of COVID-19 was the change in prices. Inflation data available for 2021 is presented in **Figure 7** (no up-to-date inflation information was found for Nigeria, DRC and Syria). The data shows that the impact varies among the countries. Whilst prices increased in Burkina Faso and Nigeria, they decreased in Colombia and remained constant in Bangladesh.
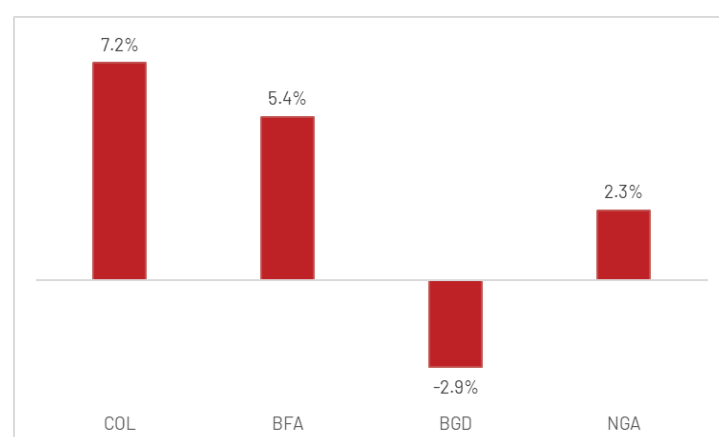
Food prices also were also directly impacted by the pandemic and increased by 1.2% in Colombia in 2020, by 1.4% in Burkina Faso and, 1.3% in Nigeria, whereas Bangladesh witnessed a 1.9% decrease in food prices (see **Figure 8**).

Figure 7. Inflation, consumer prices (annual %), 2011-2020

Figure 8. Food Inflation, 2020
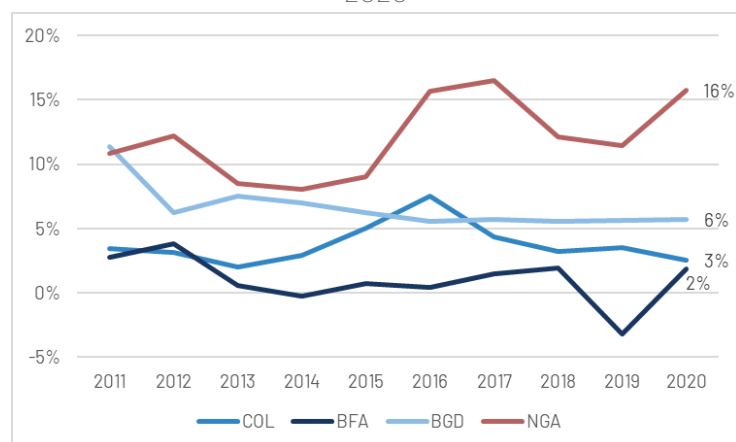

Source: World Development Indicators, The World Bank and iMMAP (2021a)

Source: Global Market Monitor, WFP 2021

In the case of Syria, although there is no up-to-date inflation information, the evolution of food basket prices over the last year shows the increase in food prices, which is leading to affordability being the main barrier to access food (see **Figure 9**).

Figure 9. Evolution of food basket price in Syria, 2020-2021 (in SYP)
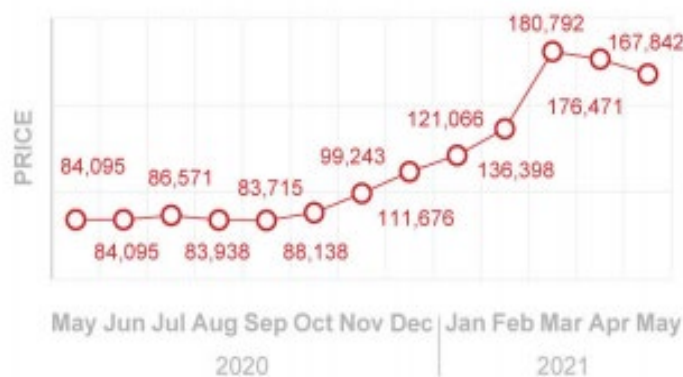
Source: COVID-19 Situation Analysis Syria (iMMAP, 2021b)

o _How did COVID-19 affect the affordability of Minimum Expenditure Baskets (MEBs) in these countries?_

The variation in the affordability of MEBs is an indicator of the effect of COVID-19 over the livelihoods capacity to expand and their well-being. As explained before, there are two approaches to estimate the MEB. The approach used in this report is the rights-based study, due to the fact that there is no food-prices primary data available for 2020-2021, which is the period considered to identify changes over the affordability of the MEB generated by the COVID-19 prices.

The rights-based approach starts from a list of food items that households need to satisfy their basic needs. Recent studies[3] have shown that the basic basket for goods and services of an average household in a Least Developed Countries (LEDC) country should include:

- Cereals
- Pulses
- Vegetables
- Fruit
- Meat (including chicken eggs)

- Dairy
- Fats
- Sugar
- Condiments
- Cooking fuel

Based on this information, a preliminary estimate of the percentage increase in the MEB is presented in **Figure 10**. The figure shows that in 2021, the MEB increased by 19% in Bangladesh, 26% in Burkina Faso, 143% in Nigeria, 14% in Colombia and 97% in Syria. In contrast, it decreased 2% in the DRC.

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[3] See for example: Minimum Expenditure Basket for Northeast Nigeria: Justification and recommendations-Cash Working Group Nigeria (2018).

Figure 10. Increase in MEB, 2020-2021 (in %)
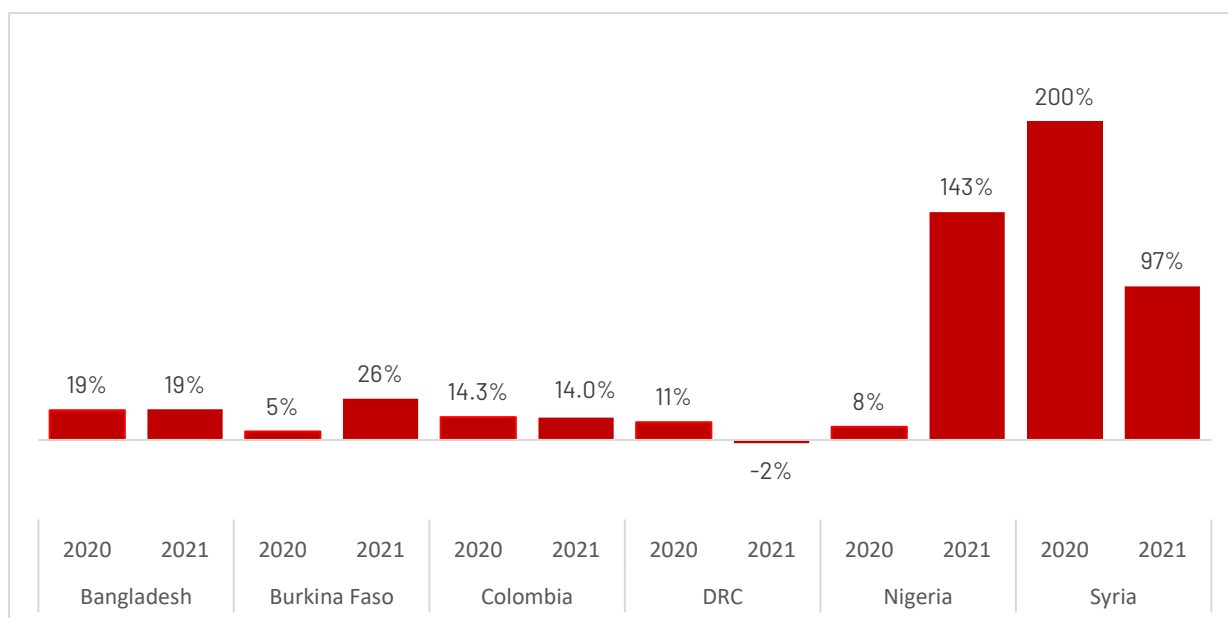
Source: Own estimation based on WFP Databiz and Colombian Department of National Statistics - DANE

The MEB estimation presented in this report is based on data from the WFP Databiz (WFP, 2021). Although this estimation is a useful approximation of the challenges faced by households to afford the MEB, it must not be taken as a final result owing to the following caveats:

● Data on dairy, sugar, condiments, fruits, meat, vegetables and cooking fuel is not available for Bangladesh and Burkina Faso
● The MEB presented in this version of the report does not include non-food prices due to lack of data on these variables.
● Prices of dairy, fruits and chicken eggs are not available for DRC in 2021.

The affordability of the MEB is also related to the capacity of households to purchase basic goods and services. **Figure 11** presents information from two surveys released by iMMAP in the six countries of study[4].

The data shows that income in all countries was affected by COVID-19. The percentage of the sample surveyed that experienced a reduction in their income due to the crisis was 65% in Bangladesh, 45% in Colombia, 50% in Syria, 43% in Burkina Faso and 54% in Nigeria. In DRC, 43% of the population surveyed indicated that their income significantly decreased after COVID-19 and 39% that it slightly decreased.

It is also important to note that not all households were negatively affected by COVID-19. Some had no effect over their income over the last year (28% in Bangladesh, 48% in Colombia, 41% in Syria, 34% in Burkina Faso, 25% in Nigeria and 13% in DRC), whilst for others, COVID-19 represented an opportunity to increase their income (7% in Bangladesh, 8% in Colombia, 8% in Syria, 23% in Burkina Faso, 21% in Nigeria and 1.6% in DRC).

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[4] The methodology used by RIWI and Premise (smartphone/internet-based surveys) are potentially excluding the most marginalised groups who do not have access to these tools/internet thus it might be that the findings are not including these perspectives. It might be also biased towards male respondents, considering the gender access to the internet in some of these countries.

Figure 11. Changes in income during COVID-19, 2020-2021
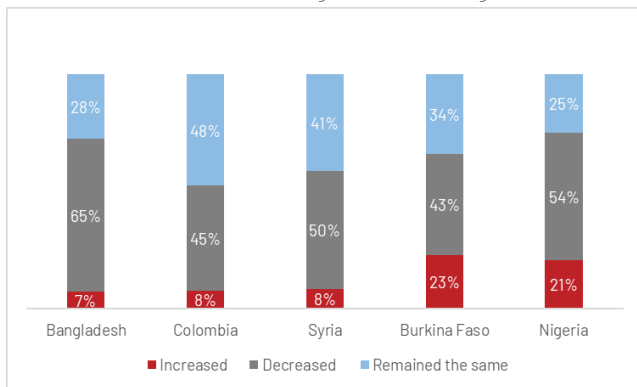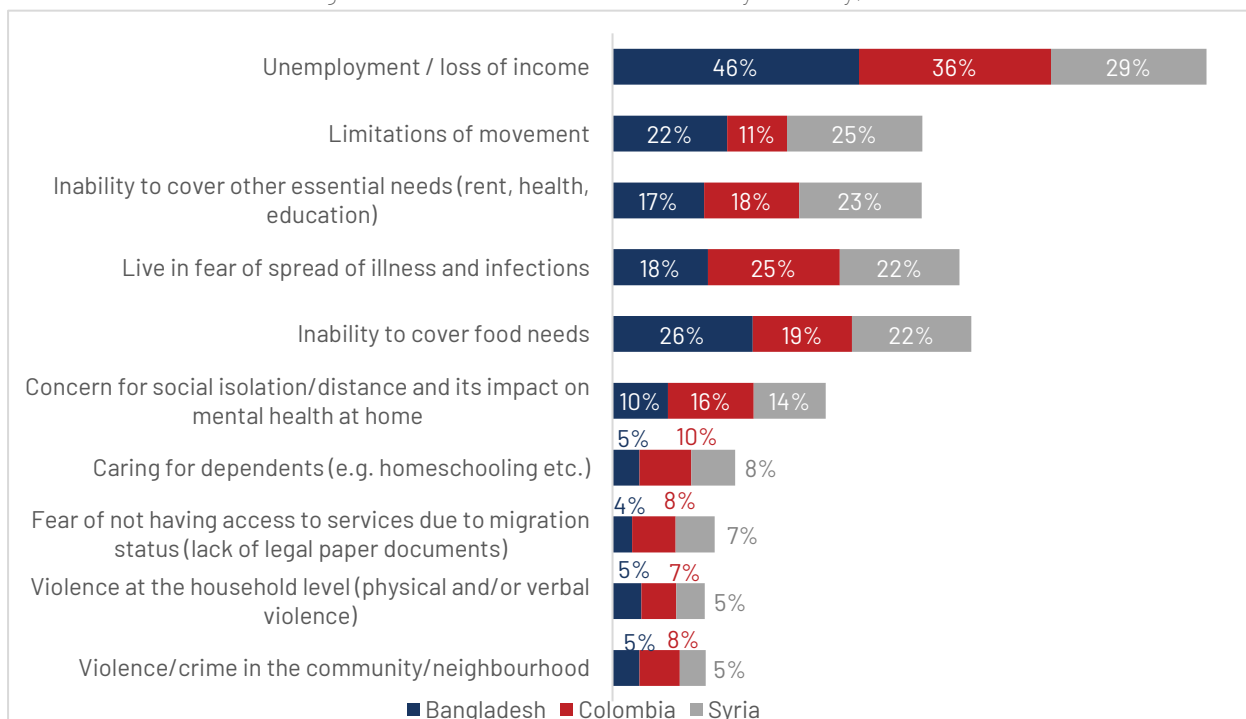

Source: RIWI-iMMAP survey, 2021
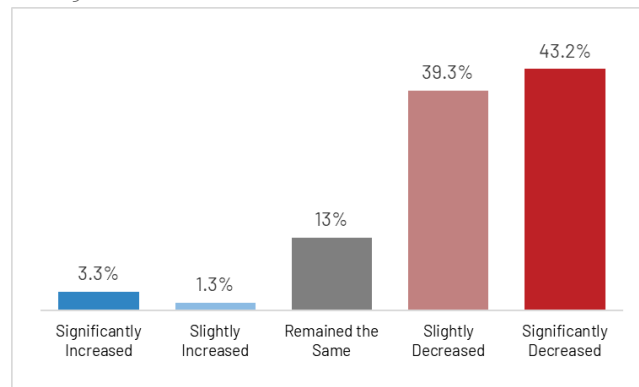
Source: Premise-iMMAP survey, 2021

The surveys conducted by iMMAP also provide information on the perception of households about the main negative effects of COVID-19. The most evident effects in Syria, Colombia and Bangladesh relate to increased unemployment and the loss of income for the countries for which the data is available (29% of the population surveyed in Syria, 36% in Colombia and 46% in Bangladesh)(see **Figure 12**).

Other effects mentioned by more than 20% of households include 'the inability to cover food needs' (22% of the population surveyed in Syria, 19% in Colombia and 26% in Bangladesh), 'inability to cover other essential needs like rent, health and education' (23% of the population surveyed in Syria, 18% in Colombia and 17% in Bangladesh), 'live in fear of spread of illness and infections' (22% of the population surveyed in Syria, 25% in Colombia and 18% in Bangladesh) and 'limitations of movement' (25% of the population surveyed in Syria, 11% in Colombia and 22% in Bangladesh).

Figure 12. The effects of COVID-19 by country, 2020-2021

Source: RIWI-iMMAP survey, 2021

In the case of Burkina Faso, Nigeria and DRC, the factors that most affected people's income were reported to be temporary layoffs, unemployment, mandated closure of workplaces and a decrease in available shifts or overtime amongst casual workers (see **Figure 13**).

Figure 13. The effects of COVID-19 over income by country, 2020-2021
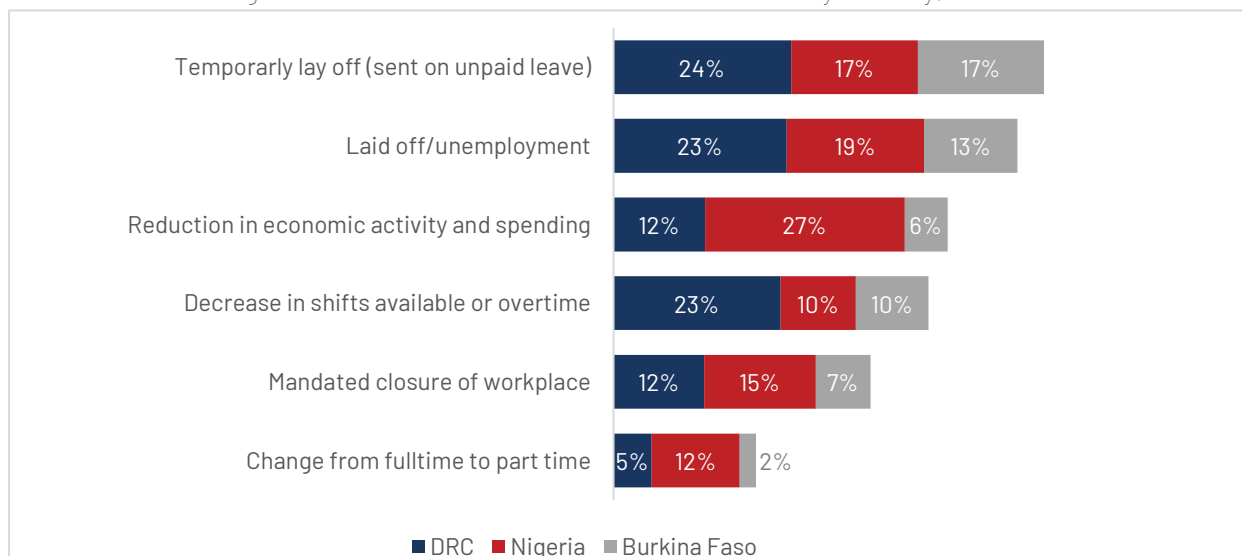
Source: Premise-iMMAP survey, 2021

o   *How did COVID-19 affect other variables related to multidimensional poverty in these countries?*

COVID-19 has affected other variables related to poverty and, particularly, the affordability and access to food and basic services of the six countries considered for this study.

Table 3 presents the Global Food Security Index (GFSI) estimated by The Economist Intelligence Unit. The GFSI considers the issues of food affordability, availability, quality and safety, and natural resources and resilience across a set of 113 countries. It is a dynamic quantitative and qualitative benchmarking model constructed from 59 unique indicators that measure the drivers of food security across both developing and developed countries (The Economy Intelligence Unit, 2021).

The GFSI should be interpreted depending on its score and rank among countries. The methodology is based on a scale where the highest the score, the better the food security performance. This also means that the country with the best performance ranks 1 among the 113 for which the index is calculated.

The country with the best food security performance of all the six countries considered for this analysis is Colombia, ranked 53 out of 113 countries in the world (with a score of 62.1 out of 100). The other countries score lower: with Bangladesh at 84 (50/100), Burkina Faso at 88 (47.4/100), DRC at 98 (40.7/100), Nigeria at 100 (0.1/100) and Syria at 101 (40/100) out of a total of 113 countries.

In addition to the position of the countries in the GFSI rank, it is important to highlight that all countries, with the exception of DRC, ranked lower in 2020 than 2019. In the case of Colombia, even though it is the country with the best score, its position decreased by 4.2% compared to 2019. This decrease was of 1.6% for Bangladesh, 1.3% for Burkina Faso, 1.4% for Nigeria and 1.3% for Syria.

Table 3. Global Food Security Index, 2019- 2020

	2019 Score	2020 score	Score change since 2019	2020 rank
Colombia	67.3	63.1	-4,2	53
Bangladesh	51.6	50	-1.6	84
Burkina Faso	48.7	47.4	-1.3	88
DRC	40.4	40.7	0.3	98
Nigeria	42.5	40.1	-2.4	100
Syria	41.3	40	-1.3	101

Source: Global Food Security Index, The Economist Intelligence Unit

o   *Are there any common cross-cutting factors among these countries?*

This section presents the common cross-cutting factors among the six countries considered for this study, besides the changes on the MEB presented before.

As illustrated in **Figure 14**, the Global Food Security Index has followed similar trends over the last 10 years in all six countries, and decreased in 2019 and 2020 in Colombia, Bangladesh, Nigeria and Syria. In Burkina Faso the index decreased only in 2020 and in DRC it has increased since 2016.
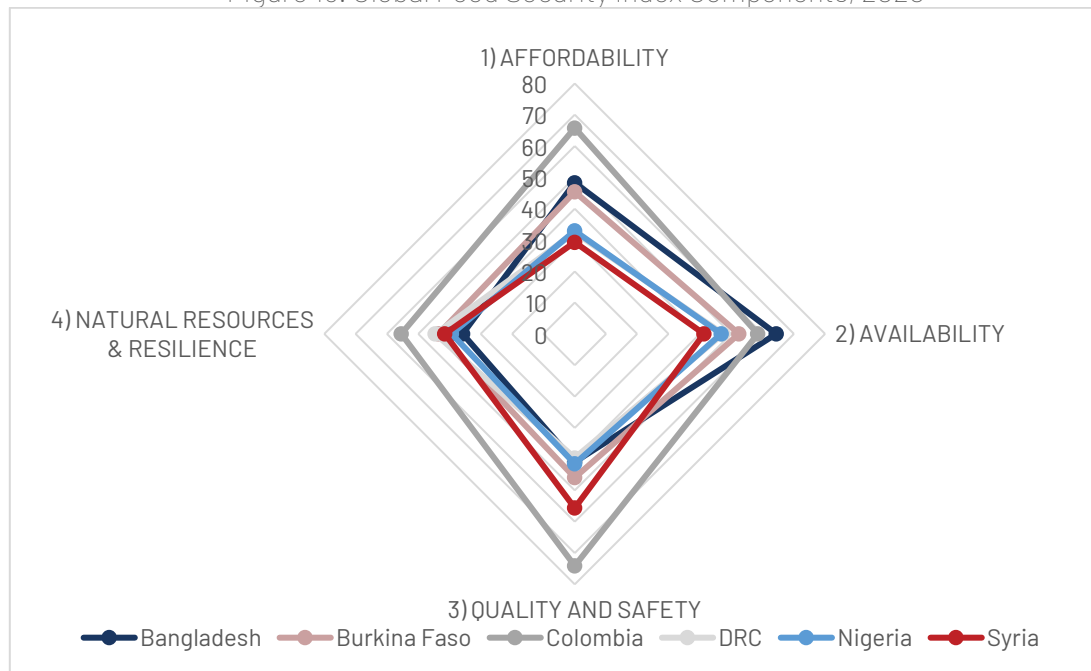
Figure 14. Global Food Security Index 2012- 2020
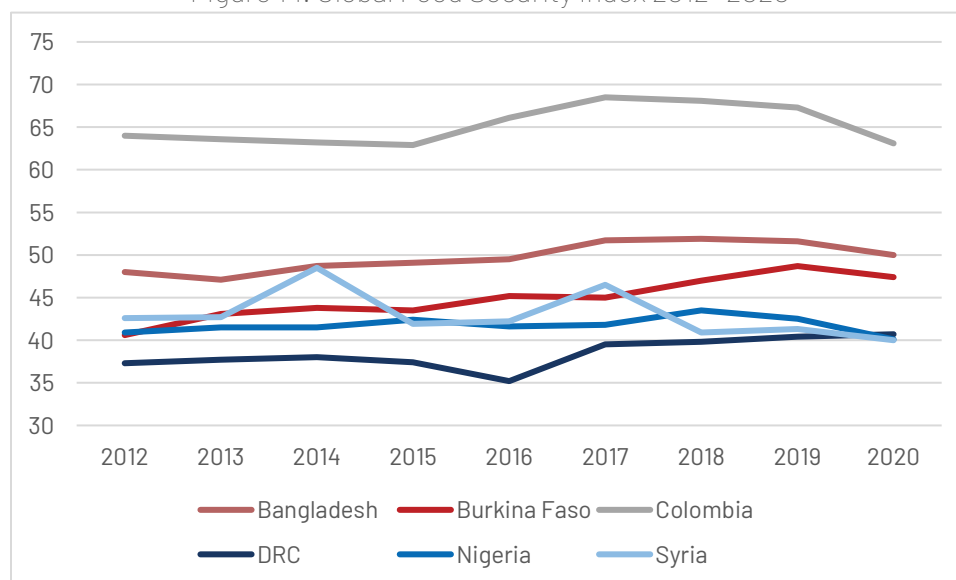
Source: Global Food Security Index, The Economist Intelligence Unit

The GFSI has four components: affordability, availability, quality and safety and natural resources and resilience. **Figure 15** shows the country sub-indexes for each component. Although countries had similar ranks (except for Colombia), their key challenges differ. Whilst for Syria the best performance is on the food quality and safety, for Bangladesh it is on the food availability and in Burkina Faso it is on the food affordability. This is not only reflected in 2020, but also in previous years.

Figure 15. Global Food Security Index Components, 2020

Source: Global Food Security Index, The Economist Intelligence Unit

Another common factor amongst the six countries is that all of them are listed as food insecurity hotspots in the FAO-WFP hunger hotspot as shown in Figure 16.
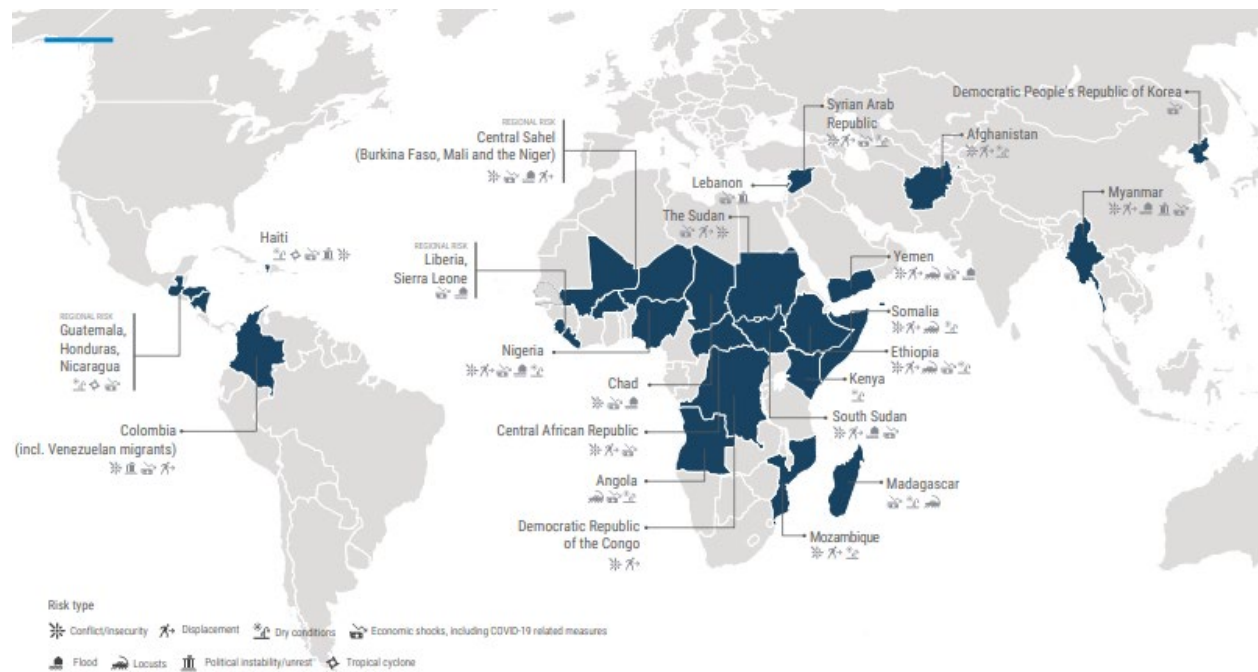

Source: Hunger Hotspots: FAO-WFP early warning on acute food insecurity. August to November 2021 outloo

Similarly, DRC, Nigeria, Syria and Burkina Faso are represented in the 11 countries in the world with the highest number of people in acute food insecurity as presented in Figure 17.

Figure 17. Number of people in acute food insecurity in hotspot countries (most recent projections in millions), 2021
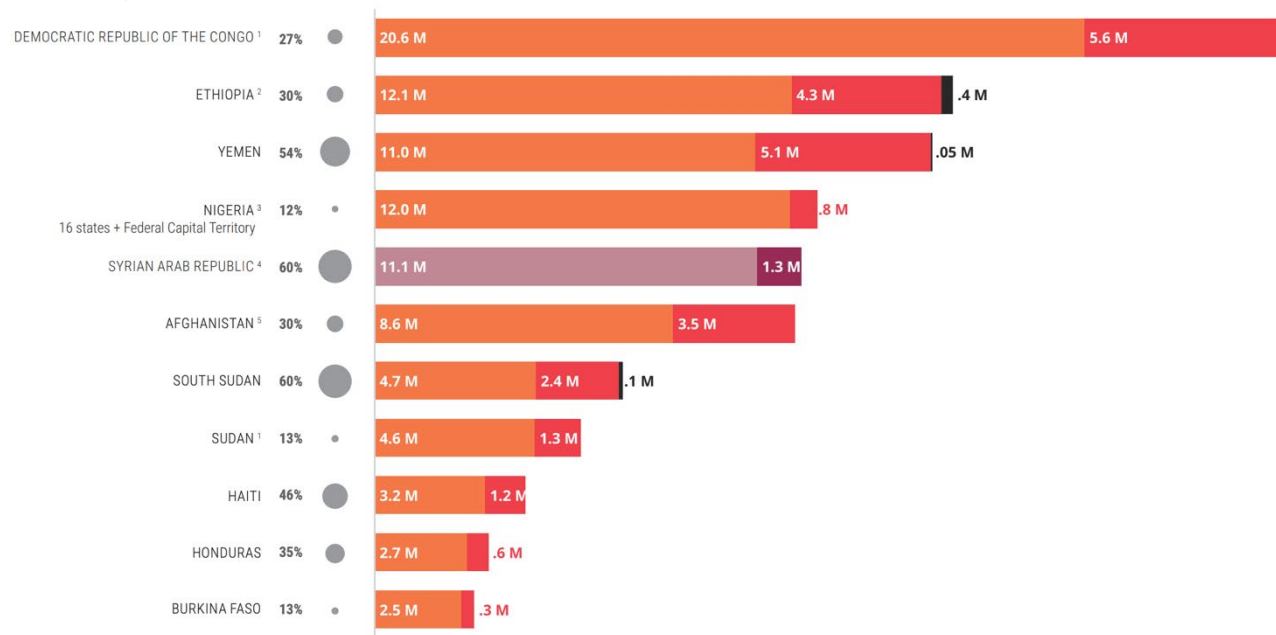

o *What has been the response from local governments and multilateral agencies to assist households whose living conditions have been affected by COVID-19?*

Figure 18 shows current account balance data, which is a record of a country's international transactions with the rest of the world and provides an approximation of the macroeconomic stability of the country. If the current account balance is negative, it means that there is more money going out from the country than the money getting in, which would be reflected in a higher public debt (OECD, 2021).

Data of current account balances as percentage of GDP is not available for 2020 onwards. Data on the current accounts (in millions of dollars) for the period 2016-2020 shows that the fiscal situation has worsened in countries like Nigeria and DRC, in Colombia the deficit remains despite a slight increase in the current account and Bangladesh is the only country that shows a recovery in their current account. There is no data available for this period neither for Syria nor for Burkina Faso.

The current account balance of all the six countries considered for the study was either negative or close to zero in pre-pandemic years, which could threaten the capacity of governments to respond to the crisis generated by COVID-19.

Figure 18. Current account balance

As % of GDP (2012-2019)   In millions of US dollars (2016-2020)
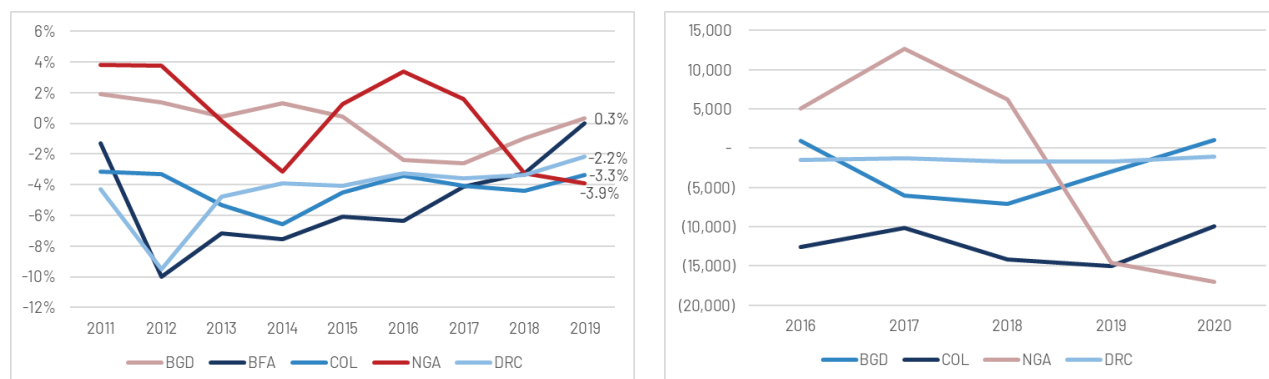
Source: IMF, 2020

Table 4 summarises the public response to mitigate the negative effect of COVID-19 over access to food and income. There has been some cash and food-related assistance to vulnerable households, including assistance to migrant populations in Bangladesh and Colombia.

In the case of Bangladesh, the Government provided temporary nutrition facilities and relocation for refugees, as well as cash assistance for vulnerable groups. In Colombia, the Government delivered food to boys and girls enrolled in school feeding programmes who could not access these supplies while studying at home. It also implemented a monetary subsidy to households in the lowest socioeconomic stratum.

Table 4. Summary of local responses to the affordability of MEB due to COVID-19 crisis

|	**Food**	**Income**	
	Temporary nutrition facilities for refugees	Cash assistance program for the disadvantaged elderly people, widows, and female divorcees	Cox's Bazar refugees relocation
Burkina Faso	No Government response, coping mechanisms from households	No Government response, coping mechanisms from households	
Colombia	House delivery of school-feeding supplies	Monetary subsidies through the *Ingreso Solidario* programme	Venezuelan migrants legalisation
DRC	No Government response, coping mechanisms from households	No Government response, coping mechanisms from households	
Nigeria	13% of the population surveyed in the Premise data collection reported to have received food from the Government. Nigeria was reported as the 10th country in the world in the 2020 Global Hunger Index	No Government response, surging inflation and rising prices have pushed an estimated 7 million Nigerians below the poverty line in 2020 alone	Insurgency generating displacement and threatening households's capacities to access basic needs
Syria	No Government response, high use of severe food-based coping mechanisms from households	No Government response, increased reliance on remittances and humanitarian assistance	Other households' coping strategies to access health, education and water services

Source: COVID-19 Situation analysis Bangladesh April (2021), DRC April (2021), Burkina Faso May (2021), Nigeria June (2021), Syria July (2021)and Colombia June (2021). Premise Survey

Country sections
Bangladesh

Figure 19 shows the evolution of daily confirmed COVID-19 cases and deaths per-million people in Bangladesh. Although cases have been recently decreasing, they soared in the middle of 2020 and 2021.

Figure 19. Daily new confirmed COVID-19 cases and deaths in Bangladesh per million people, March 2020-August 2021
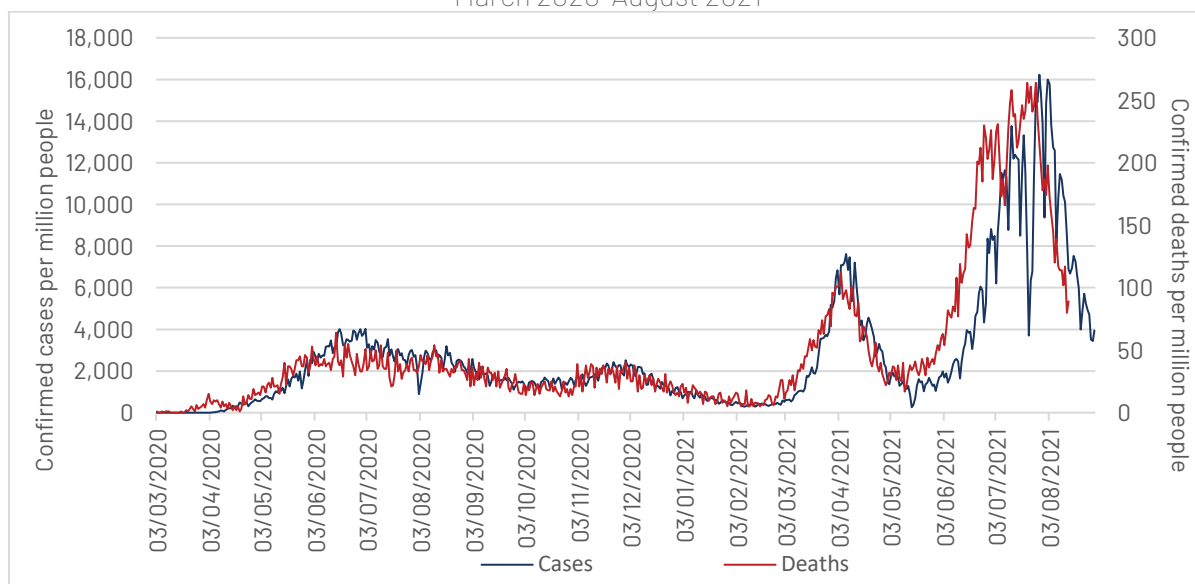

Source: Our World in Data, Johns Hopkins University CSSE COVID-19 Data

The lockdown measures had a negative effect on economic growth globally. As **Figure 20** presents, GDP per-capita and private consumption sharply decreased in Bangladesh. Between 2019 and 2020, GDP growth went down from 7% to 1.4%, and private consumption variation from 4% to 2%.

The reduction in private consumption started since 2018, mainly due to the contractionary monetary policies promoted by the Bangladesh Central Bank, which aimed to tighten liquidity in the market and controlling the devaluation of the currency and reduced the amount of credit allocated to the private sector (ADB, 2020).

Figure 20. GDP per capita and private consumption growth (annual %) in Bangladesh, 2011- 2020
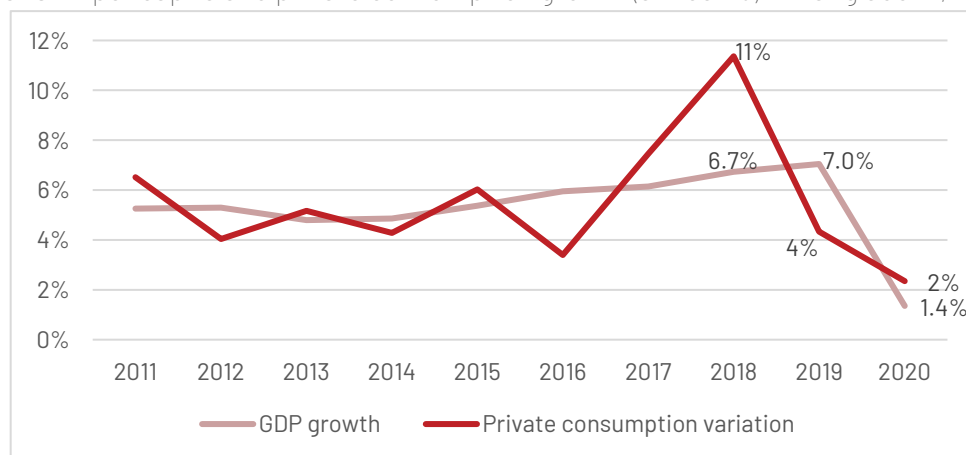
Source: World Development Indicators, The World Bank, 2021

Despite this decline in economic growth in Bangladesh, overall prices have remained stable (Figure 21). However, prices of food decreased 1.9% in 2020, according to WFP (2021).

Figure 21. Inflation in Bangladesh, consumer prices (annual %), 2011- 2020
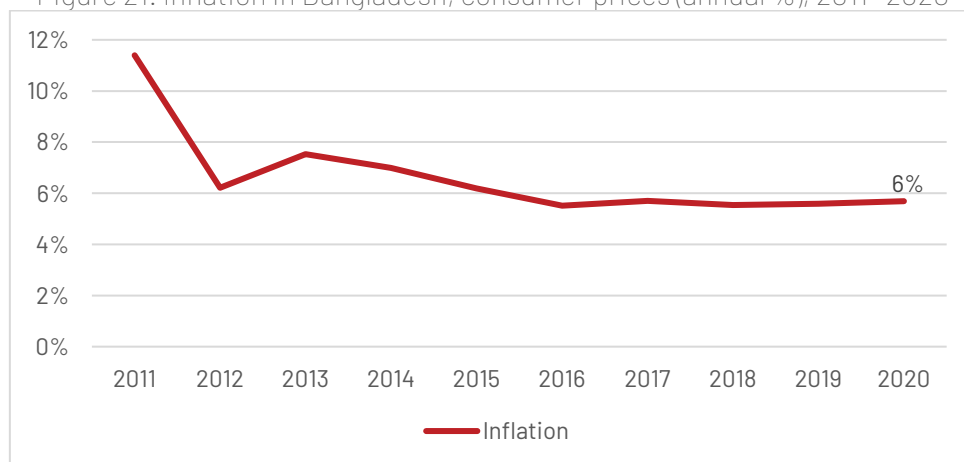
Source: World Development Indicators, The World Bank, 2021

Regarding the variation in the affordability of minimum expenditure baskets – MEB, the items included in the basic basket for goods and services of an average household in Bangladesh for the MEB estimation were:

- Cereals: Rice
- Pulses: Maize and lentils
- Fats[5]

Based on this information, a preliminary estimate of the percentage increase in the MEB is presented in Figure 22. The figure shows that in Bangladesh, between 2019 and 2020 the MEB increased 11.67% and between 2020 and 2021, it increased by 19%.

Figure 22. MEB increase in Bangladesh, 2019-2021 (in %)
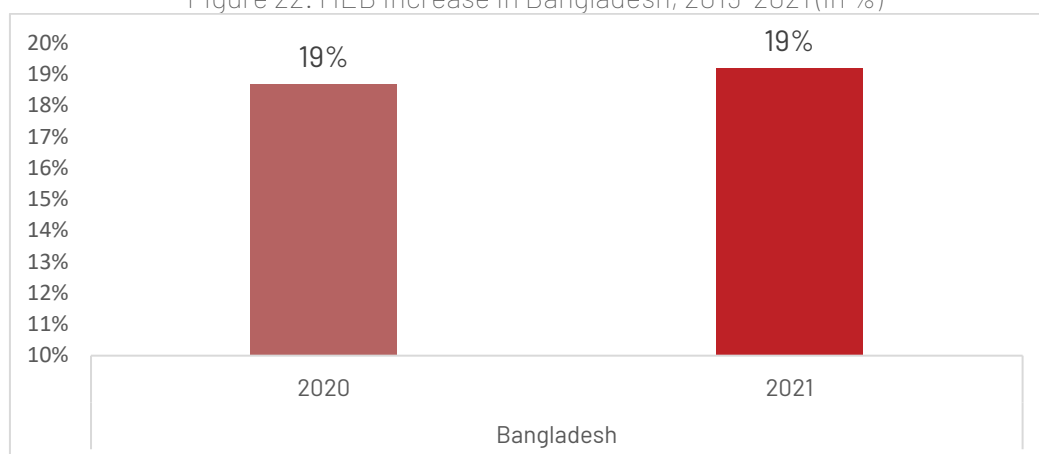
Source: Own estimation based on WFP Databiz, 2021

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[5] Data on changes in prices of dairy, sugar, condiments, fruits, meat, vegetables and cooking fuel was not available for Bangladesh in the databases reviewed

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The affordability of the MEB is also related to the capacity of households to purchase basic goods and services. **Figure 23** presents information from a survey released by iMMAP in the six countries of study. The target respondents were the general population of internet users aged 18+, it included 20 closed-ended questions and targeted 2,500 respondents in Bangladesh.

The data shows that in Bangladesh, 65% of the total population surveyed had a reduction on their income due to the crisis, 7% had an increase on their income and for 28% their income remained the same.

Figure 23. Changes on income after COVID-19 in Bangladesh, 2020-2021
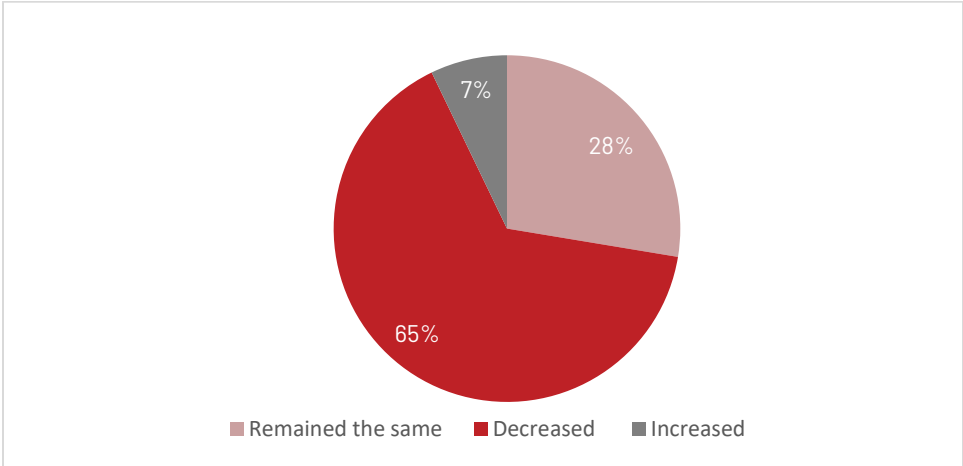
Source: RIWI-iMMAP survey, 2021

The survey conducted by iMMAP also provides information on the perception of households about the main negative effects of COVID-19. The most evident effect relates to increases in unemployment and loss of income (46% of the population surveyed), the inability to cover food needs (26%), inability to cover other essential needs like rent, health and education (17%), live in fear of spread of illness and infections (18%) and limitations of movement (22%) (see **Figure 24**).

Figure 24. The effects of COVID-19 in Bangladesh, 2020-2021
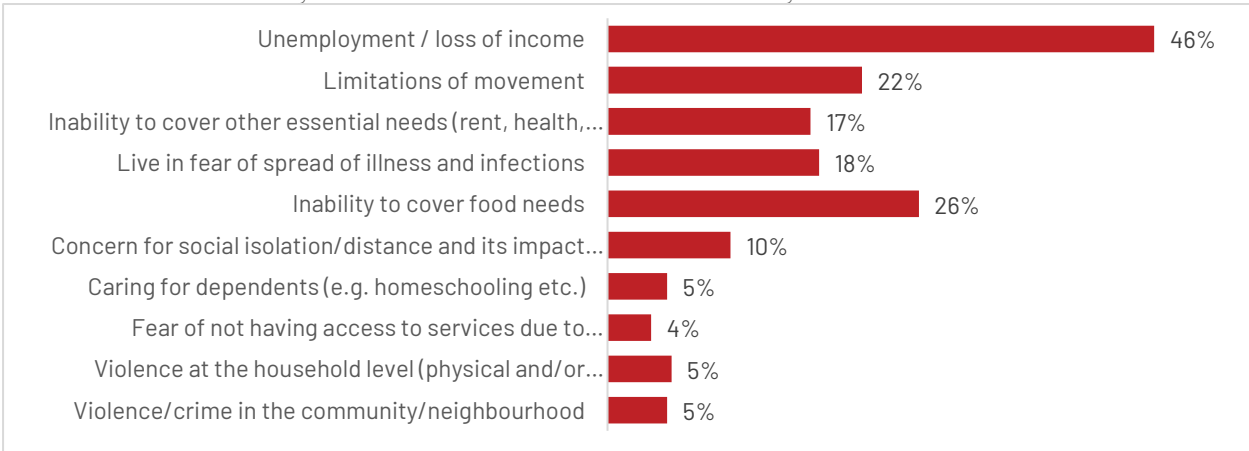
Source: RIWI-iMMAP survey, 2021

COVID-19 has affected other variables related to poverty and, particularly, the affordability and access to food and basic services. **Figure 25** presents the GFSI estimated by The Economist Intelligence Unit. The GFSI should be interpreted depending on its score and rank among countries. Bangladesh ranked 84 out of 113 countries with a score of 50 in 2020 and ranked 83 in 2019 (**Figure 25**). In addition to the position of the countries in the GFSI rank, it is important to highlight that Bangladesh had a decrease of 1.6% in its score between 2019 and 2020 (**Figure 26**).

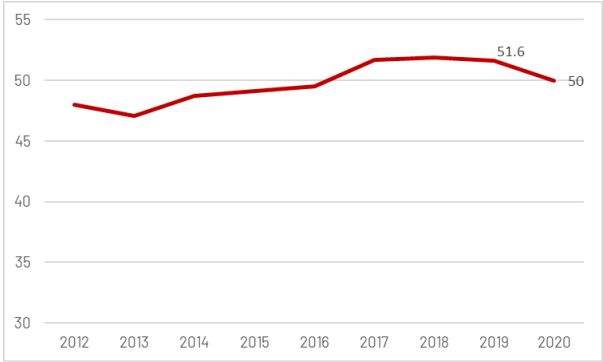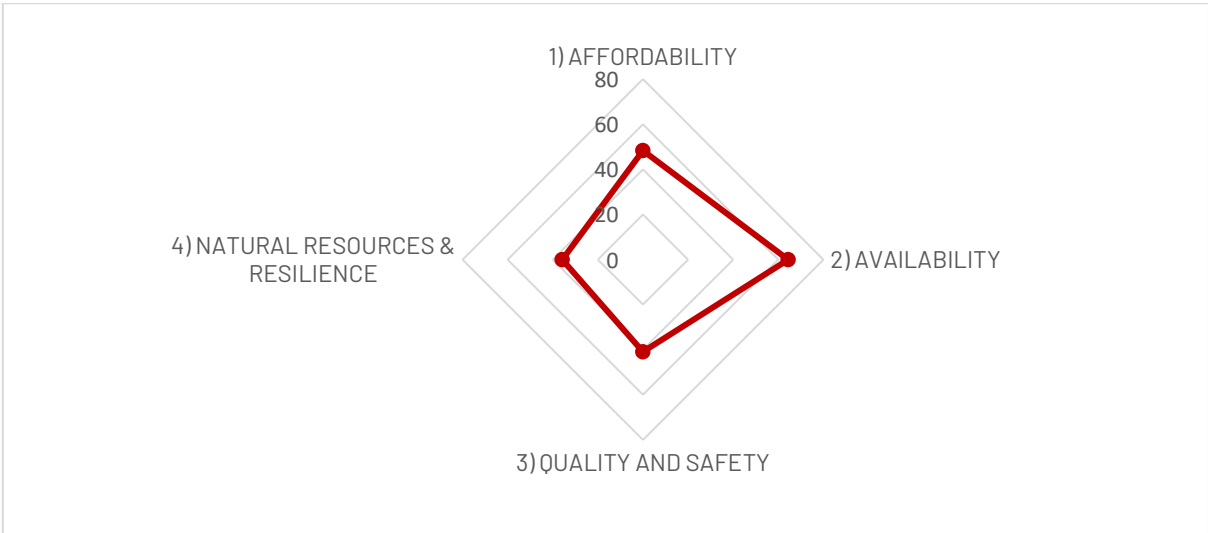Figure 25. Bangladesh Global Food Security Rank, 2019- 2020
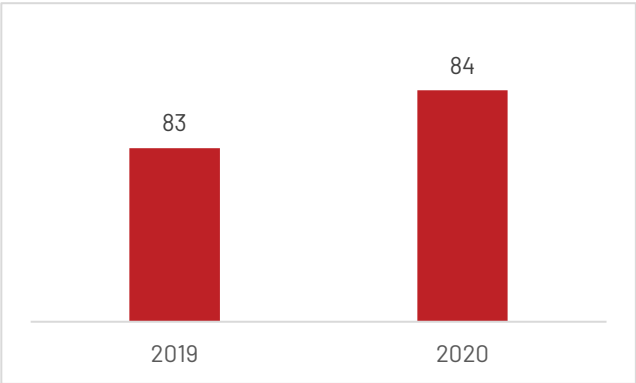
Figure 26. Bangladesh Global Food Security Index 2012- 2020

Source: Global Food Security Index, The Economist Intelligence Unit

The global food security index has four components: affordability, availability, quality and safety and natural resources and resilience. **Figure 27** shows the country sub-indexes for each component. The best performance in the index components for Bangladesh is on the food availability (61.4 score), followed by affordability of food (41.3 score), quality and safety (41.9) and natural resources and resilience (31.8).
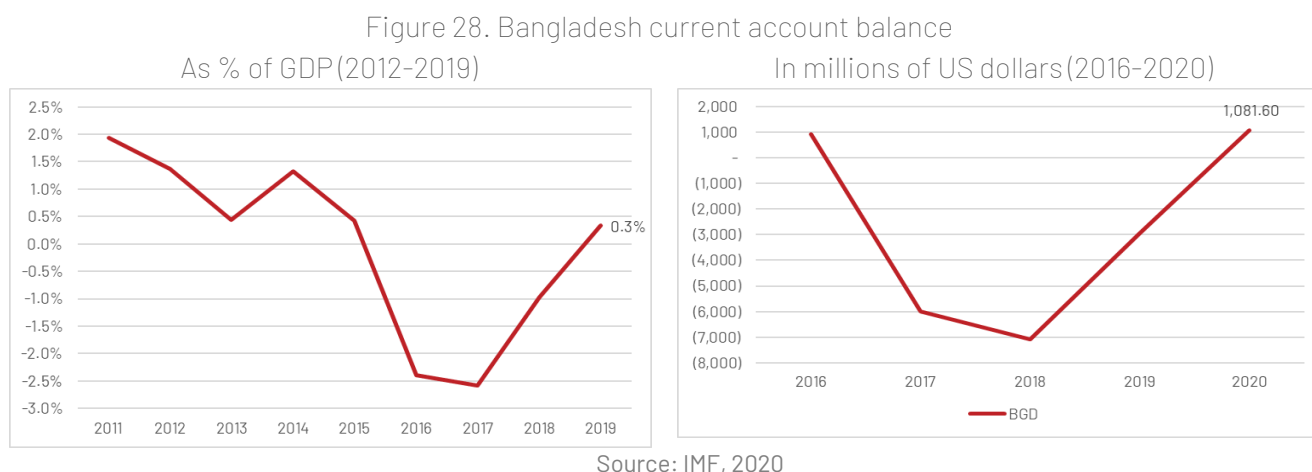
Figure 27. Bangladesh Global Food Security Index Components, 2020

Source: Global Food Security Index, The Economist Intelligence Unit

Finally, regarding the government response to the COVID-19 crises and its effect over the affordability of the MEB. **Figure 28** shows current account balance data, which is a record of a country's international transactions with the rest of the world and provides an approximation of the macroeconomic stability of the country. If the current account balance is negative, it means that there is more money going out from the country than the money getting in, which would be reflected in a higher public debt (OECD, 2021).

The current account balance of Bangladesh is close to zero, which could threaten the government's capacity to respond to the crisis generated by COVID-19 in the long-run. However, recent data shows that that the country is reducing its deficit, mainly due to an increase in exports and a reduction in imports (ADB, 2020).

Figure 28. Bangladesh current account balance

As % of GDP (2012-2019)   In millions of US dollars (2016-2020)


Source: IMF, 2020

Nevertheless, the Government of Bangladesh had promoted assistance aimed to mitigate the effect of the crises over the affordability of the MEB to vulnerable populations during the crisis. According to iMMAP (2021), the Government of Bangladesh has provided temporary nutrition facilities and relocation for refugees, as well as cash assistance for vulnerable groups. In addition, the government has rolled out some 23 stimulus packages involving a total sum of BDT. 1.24,053 crore [USD 15.5 billion], amounting to 4.4% of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (Dhaka Tribune 20/01/2021). The FY21 Budget includes higher allocations for health, agriculture, and social safety net programs, although effective targeting remains a challenge. As a precautionary measure, the government has decided that 25% of budgetary allocations for development projects will be placed on hold, affecting projects deemed 'low priority'. In January 2021, the government increased the COVID-19 Emergency Response and Pandemic Preparedness Project costs by BDT. 56.6 billion [USD 666.7 million] mostly reflecting the procurement, preservation, and distribution of vaccines. The government has announced two additional stimulus packages BDT. 15 billion [USD 176.7 million] for the micro and cottage entrepreneurs and BDT. 12 billion [USD 141.36 million] cash assistance program for the disadvantaged elderly people, widows, and female divorcees (IMF 06/04/2021). The government had initially planned to provide the cash incentives to 5 million families under the cash assistance program valued BDT. 12 billion, only 3.5 million families received them (Dhaka Tribune 13/04/2021).

Burkina Faso

Figure 29 shows the evolution of daily confirmed COVID-19 cases and deaths per-million people in Burkina Faso. Although cases have been recently decreasing, they soared between December 2020 and March 2021.

Figure 29. Daily new confirmed COVID-19 cases and deaths in Burkina Faso per million people, March 2020-August 2021
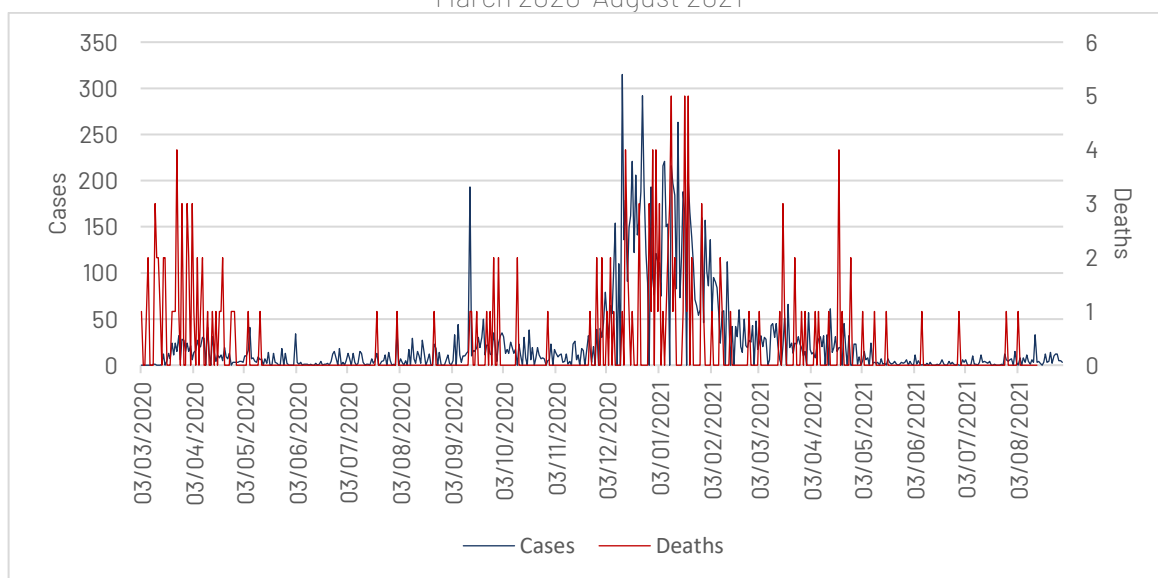
Source: Our World in Data, Johns Hopkins University CSSE COVID-19 Data

The lockdown measures had a negative effect on economic growth globally. As Figure 30 presents, GDP per-capita sharply decreased in Burkina Faso. Between 2019 and 2020, GDP growth went down from 2.7% to -0.8%. This contrasts with pre-pandemic growth projections, when the expected growth for 2020 was 1.0% (African Development Bank, 2019).

Figure 30. GDP per capita consumption growth (annual %) in Burkina Faso, 2011- 2020

Source: World Development Indicators, The World Bank

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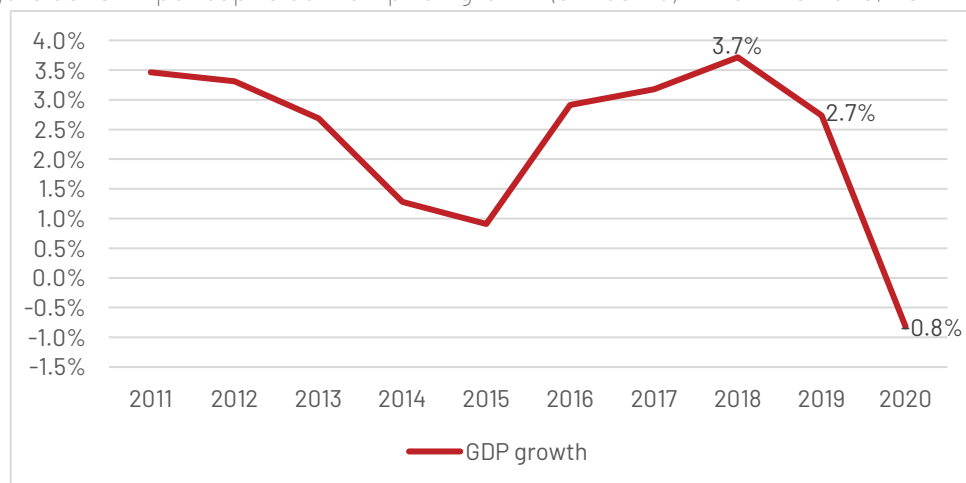
Alongside this decline in economic growth in Burkina Faso, overall prices increased over the same period. Inflation was -3% in 2019 and 2% in 2020 (Figure 31). The situation for food prices followed the same trend, since they increased 1.4% between 2019 and 2020, according to WFP (2021).

Figure 31. Inflation in Burkina Faso, consumer prices (annual %), 2011- 2020
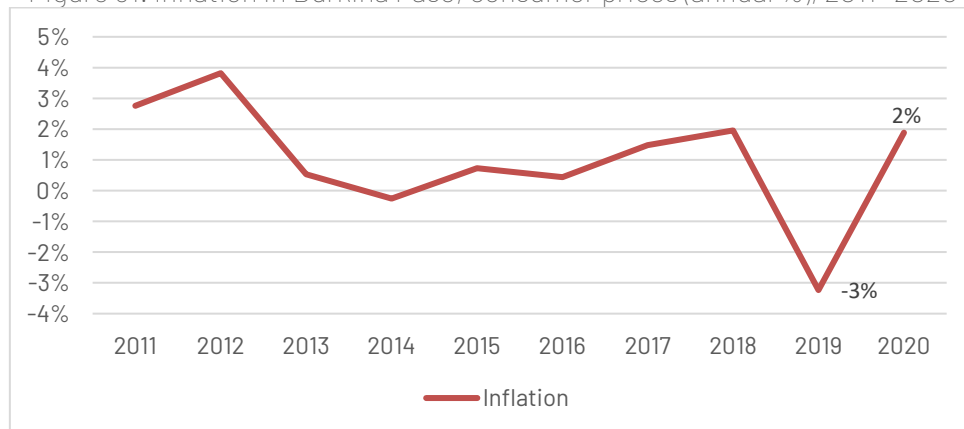
Source: World Development Indicators, The World Bank

Regarding the variation in the affordability of minimum expenditure baskets – MEB, the items included in the basic basket for goods and services of an average household in Burkina Faso for the MEB estimation were:

- Cereals: Rice
- Pulses: Maize and lentils[6]

Based on this information, a preliminary estimate of the percentage increase in the MEB is presented in **Figure 32**. The figure shows that between 2020 and 2021, the MEB increased by 26% in Burkina Faso, compared to an increase of 5% between 2019 and 2020.

Figure 32. MEB increase in Burkina Faso, 2020-2021 (in %)
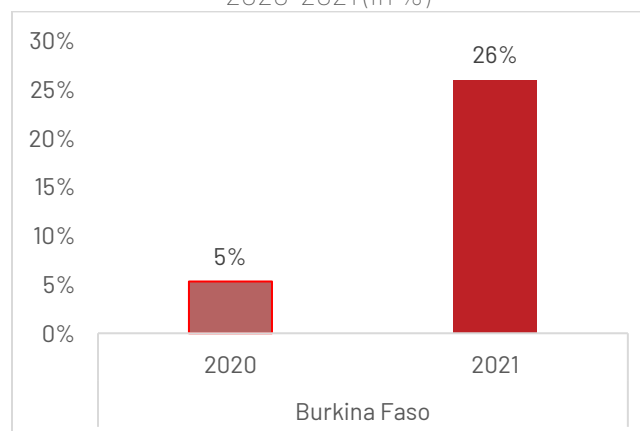
Source: Own estimation based on WFP Databiz

Figure 33. Changes on income after COVID-19 in Burkina Faso, 2020-2021
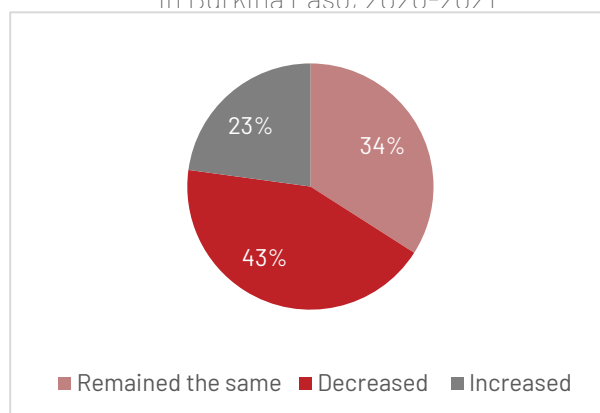
Source: RIWI-iMMAP survey, 2021

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[6] Data on changes in prices of dairy, sugar, condiments, fruits, meat, vegetables, oils and cooking fuel was not available for Burkina Faso in the databases reviewed

The affordability of the MEB is also related to the capacity of households to purchase basic goods and services. **Figure 33** presents information from a survey released by iMMAP in the six countries of study. The data shows that in Burkina Faso, 43% of the total population surveyed had a reduction on their income due to the crisis, 23% had an increase on their income and for 34% their income remained the same.

COVID-19 has affected other variables related to poverty and, particularly, the affordability and access to food and basic services. **Figure 34** presents the Global Food Security Index (GFSI) estimated by The Economist Intelligence Unit. The GFSI considers the issues of food affordability, availability, quality and safety, and natural resources and resilience across a set of 113 countries, both developing and developed countries (The Economy Intelligence Unit, 2021). It is a dynamic quantitative and qualitative benchmarking model constructed from 59 unique indicators that measure the drivers of food security

The GFSI should be interpreted depending on its score and rank among countries. The methodology is based on a scale where the highest the score, the better the food security performance. This also means that the country with the best performance ranks 1 among the 113 for which the index is calculated.

Burkina Faso ranked 88 out of 113 countries with a score of 41.4 (**Figure 34**). In addition to the position of the countries in the GFSI rank, it is important to highlight that Burkina Faso had a decrease of 1.3% in its score between 2019 and 2020 (**Figure 35**).

Figure 34. Burkina Faso Global Food Security Rank, 2019- 2020
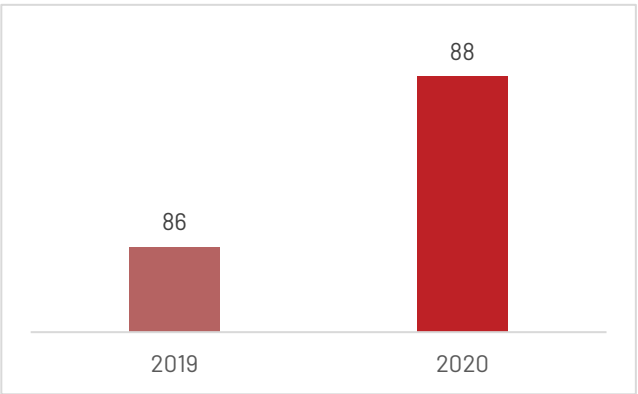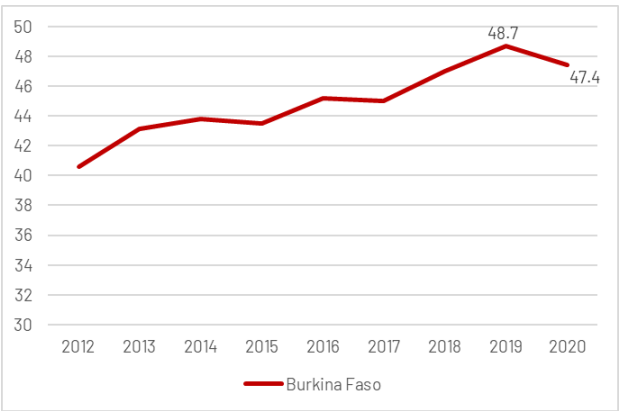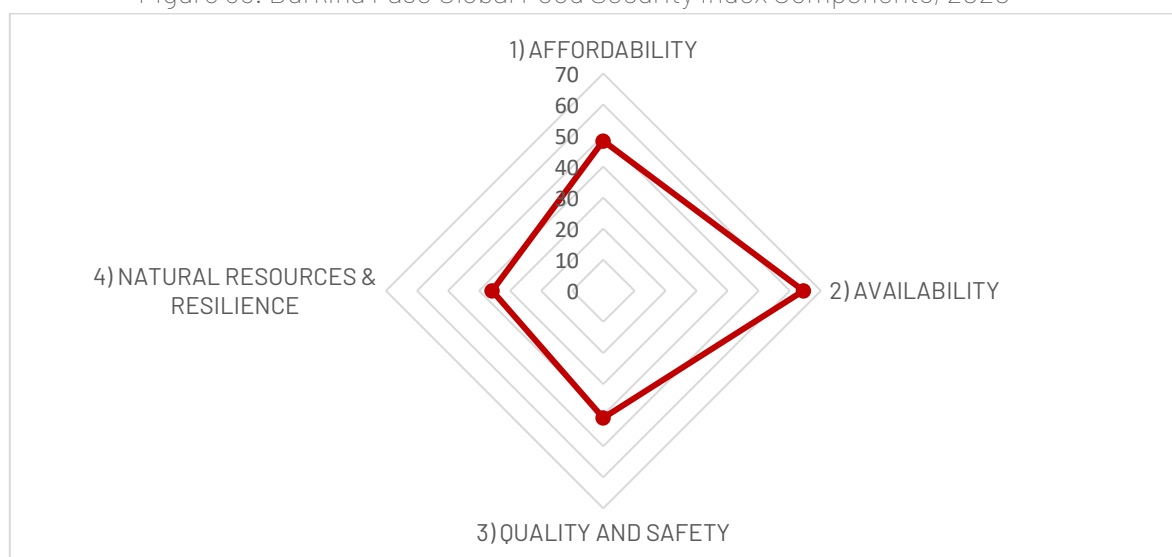
Figure 35. Burkina Faso Global Food Security Index 2012- 2020

Source: Global Food Security Index, The Economist Intelligence Unit

The global food security index has four components: affordability, availability, quality and safety and natural resources and resilience. **Figure 36** shows the country sub-indexes for each component. The best performance in the index components for Burkina Faso is on the food availability (51.5 score), followed by quality and safety (41.9), affordability of food (41.4 score), and natural resources and resilience (41.5).

Figure 36. Burkina Faso Global Food Security Index Components, 2020


Source: Global Food Security Index, The Economist Intelligence Unit

Finally, according to iMMAP (2021), there has been no response from the Government of Burkina Faso to mitigate the effect of the crises over the affordability of the MEB to vulnerable populations during the crisis.

Colombia

Figure 37 shows the evolution of daily confirmed COVID-19 cases and deaths per-million people in Colombia. Although cases have been recently decreasing, they soared in the middle of 2020 and 2021.

Figure 37. Daily new confirmed COVID-19 cases and deaths in Colombia per million people, March 2020-August 2021
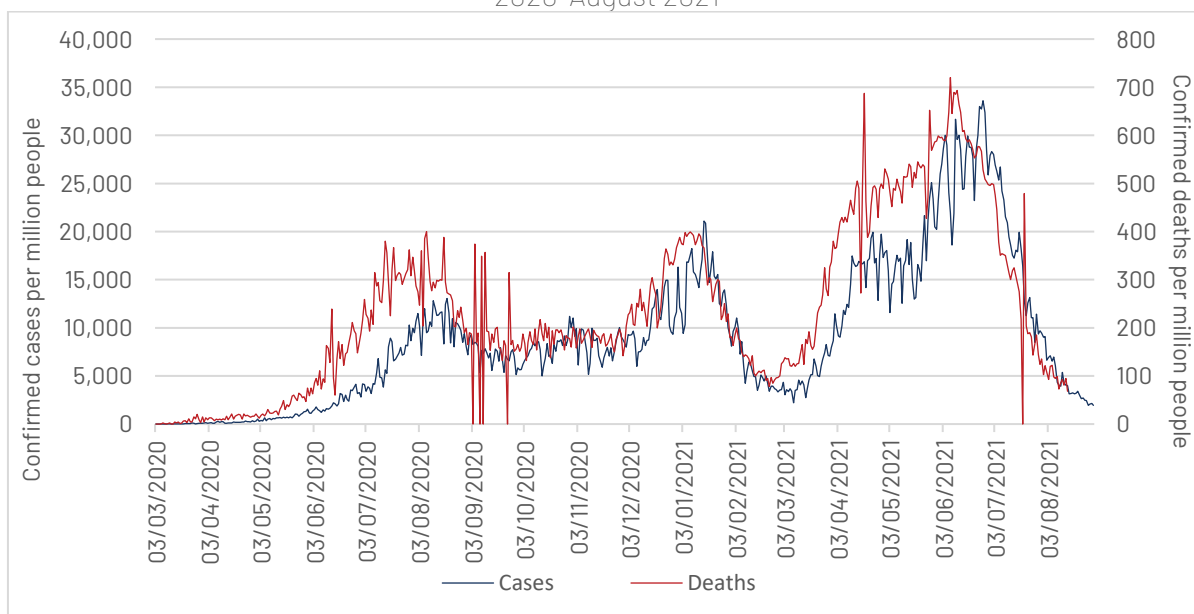
Source: Our World in Data, Johns Hopkins University CSSE COVID-19 Data

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The lockdown measures had a negative effect on economic growth globally. As **Figure 38** presents, GDP per-capita and private consumption sharply decreased in Colombia. Between 2019 and 2020, GDP growth went down from 1.9% to –1.8%, and private consumption variation from 4% to –4%
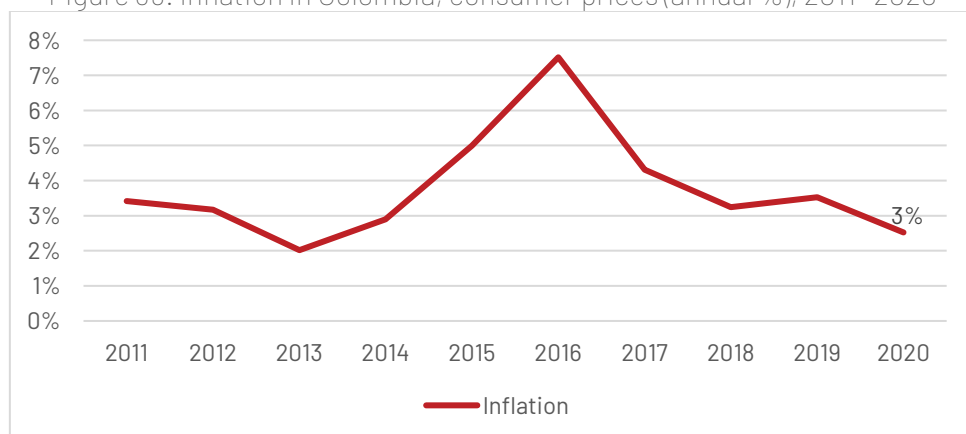
Figure 38. GDP per capita and private consumption growth (annual %) in Colombia, 2011- 2020
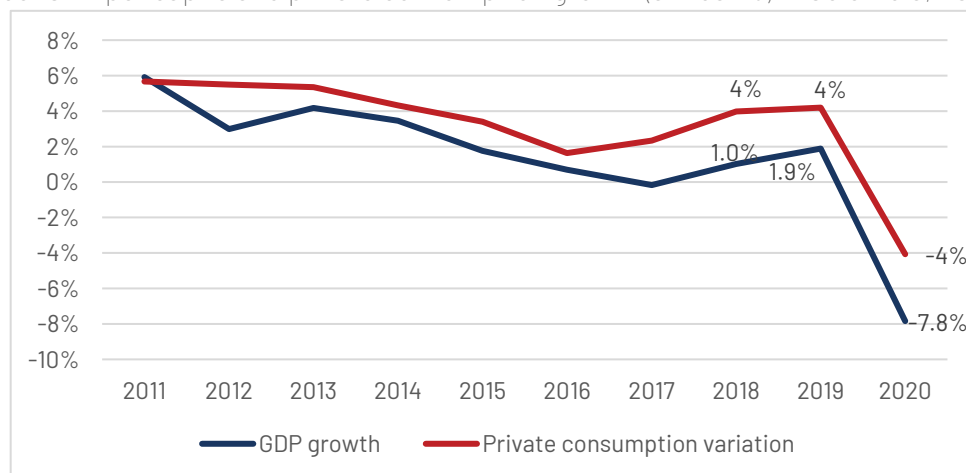
Source: World Development Indicators, The World Bank

Despite this decline in economic growth in Colombia, overall prices decreased (**Figure 39**). However, prices of food increased 1.2% in 2020, according to WFP (2021).

Figure 39. Inflation In Colombia, consumer prices (annual %), 2011- 2020

Source: World Development Indicators, The World Bank

Regarding the variation in the affordability of minimum expenditure baskets – MEB, the items included in the basic basket for goods and services of an average household in Colombia for the MEB estimation were:

- Cereals: Rice
- Pulses: Maize and lentils
- Fats: palm oil
- Dairy
- Sugar

- Condiments: Salt
- Meat: Chicken, meat and eggs
- Cooking Fuel
- Non leafy vegetables and fruits.

Based on this information, a preliminary estimate of the percentage increase in the MEB is presented in Figure 40. The figure shows that between 2020 and 2021, the MEB increased by 14% in Colombia, which is a similar increase than the one observed between 2019 and 2020. This trend is coherent with the overall inflation and food-inflation trend in Colombia, which has remained within the inflation goal of the Central Bank for the last five years[7].
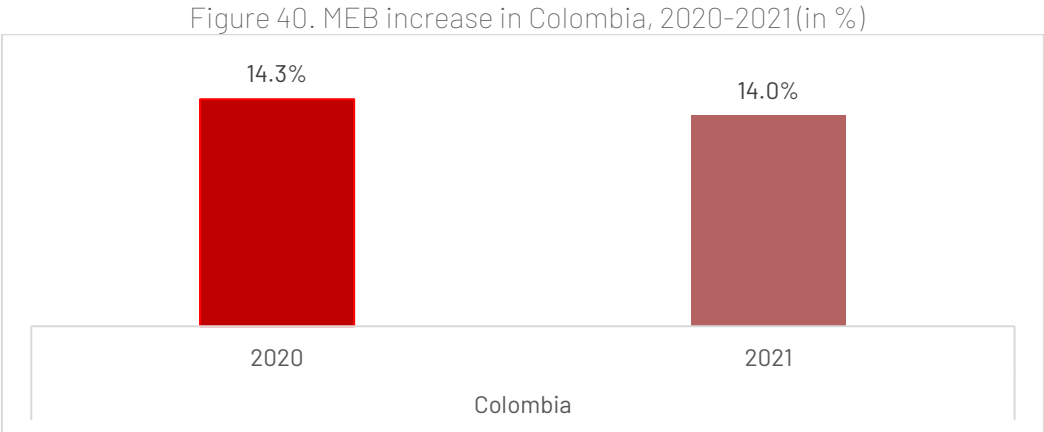
Figure 40. MEB increase in Colombia, 2020-2021 (in %)

Source: Own estimation based on WFP Databiz, 2021

The affordability of the MEB is also related to the capacity of households to purchase basic goods and services. **Figure 41** presents information from a survey released by iMMAP in the six countries of study. The target respondents were the general population of internet users aged 18+, it included 20 closed-ended questions and targeted 3,500 respondents in Colombia. The data shows that in Colombia, 45% of the total population surveyed had a reduction on their income due to the crisis, 8% had an increase on their income and for 48% their income remained the same.

Figure 41. Changes on income after COVID-19 in Colombia, 2020-2021
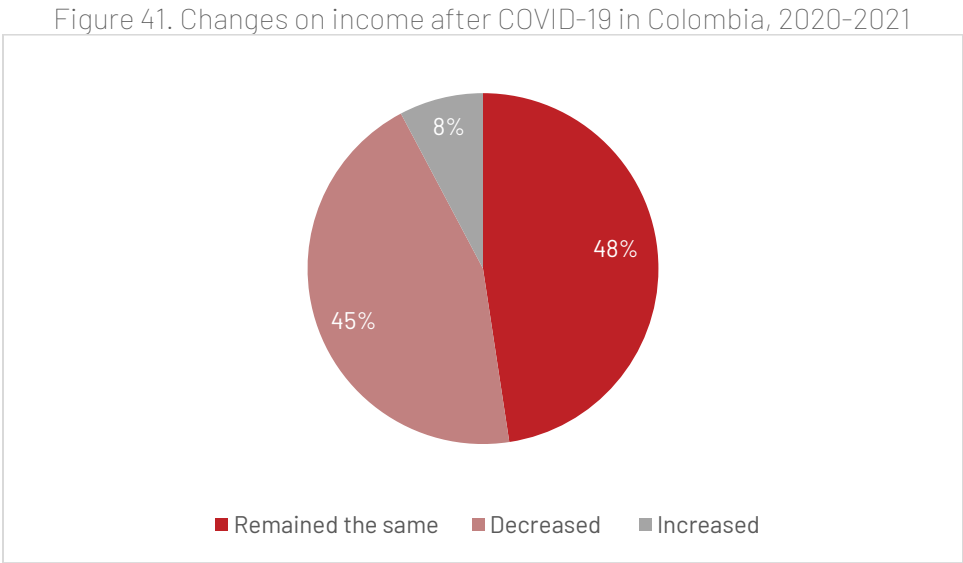
Source: RIWI-iMMAP survey, 2021

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[7] For more information refer to www.banrep.gov.co

The survey conducted by iMMAP also provides information on the perception of households about the main negative effects of COVID-19. The most evident effect has been over the unemployment and loss of income (36% of the population surveyed), live in fear of spread of illness and infections (25%), the inability to cover food needs (19%), inability to cover other essential needs like rent, health and education (18%), and concern for social isolation/distance and its impact on mental health at home (16%) (see **Figure 42**).

Figure 42. The effects of COVID-19 in Colombia, 2020-2021
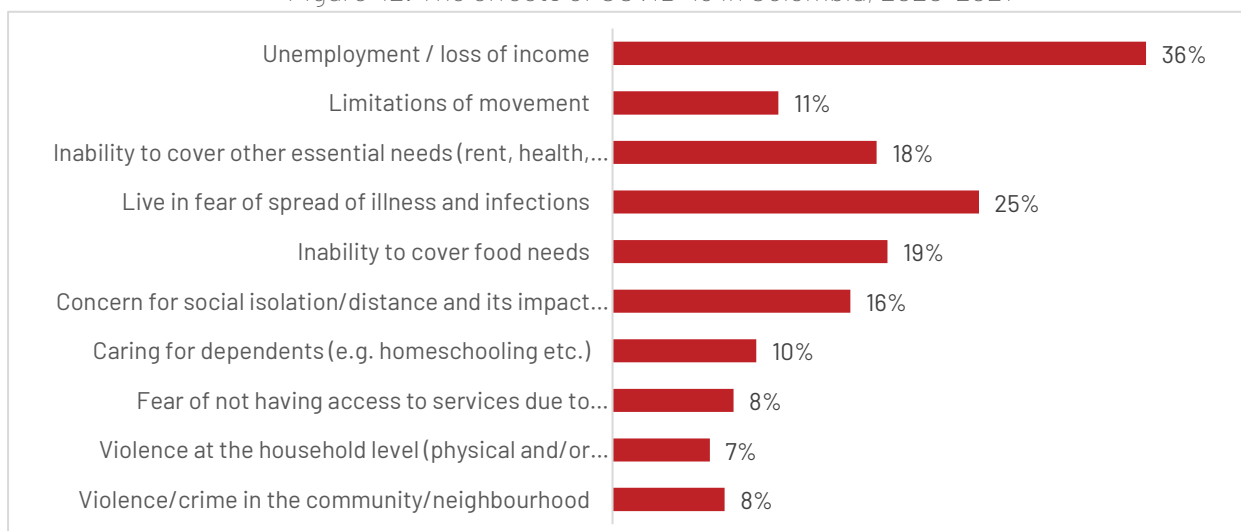
Source: RIWI-iMMAP survey, 2021

COVID-19 has affected other variables related to poverty and, particularly, the affordability and access to food and basic services. **Figure 43** presents the GFSI which should be interpreted depending on its score and rank among countries. The methodology is based on a scale where the highest the score, the better the food security performance. This also means that the country with the best performance ranks 1 among the 113 for which the index is calculated. Colombia ranked 53 out of 113 countries with a score of 61.1 (Figure 43). In addition to the position of the countries in the GFSI rank, it is important to highlight that Colombia had a decrease of -1.2% in its score between 2019 and 2020 (Figure 44).

It is important to note that the GFSI has been decreasing since 2017, showing that the country has been struggling to maintain the important progress it achieved in 2015-2017. This is mainly related to lower rates of economic growth over that period and the reduction in public budget allocated to social programmes, due to the decrease in the Government's income from a lower international oil price, which is the main export in the Colombian economy.

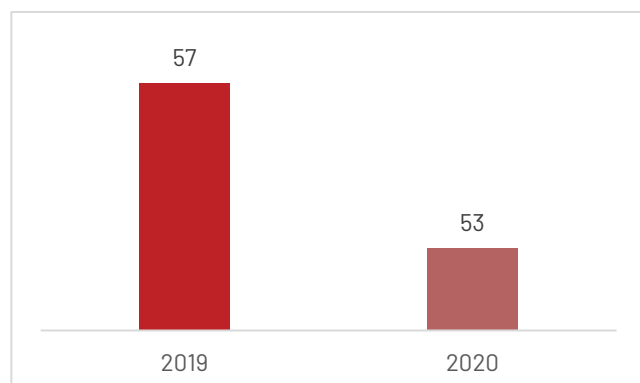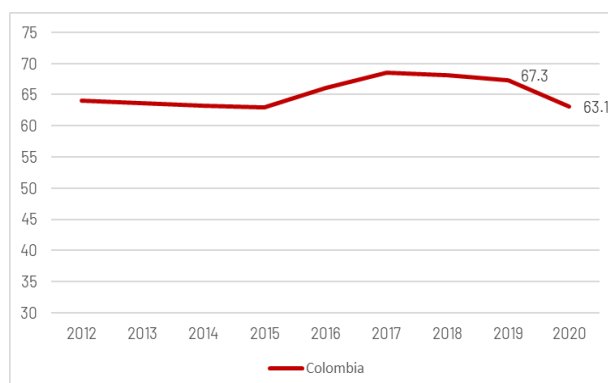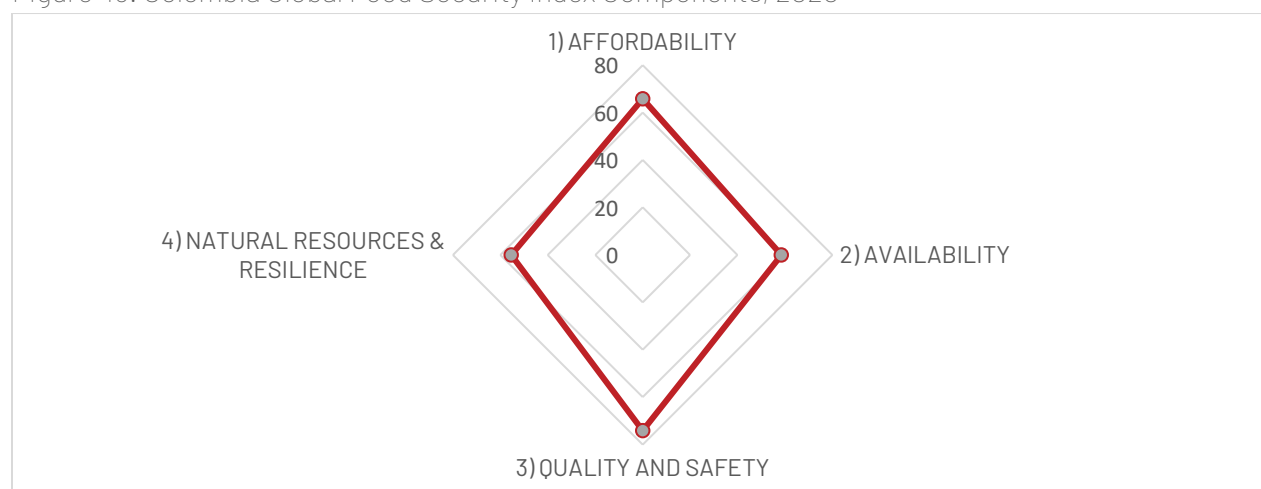Figure 43. Colombia Global Food Security Rank, 2019- 2020

Figure 44. Colombia Global Food Security Index 2012- 2020

Source: Global Food Security Index, The Economist Intelligence Unit

The global food security index has four components: affordability, availability, quality and safety and natural resources and resilience. Figure 45 shows the country sub-indexes for each component. The best performance in the index components for Colombia is on the food quality and safety (71.1) followed by affordability of food (61.8 score), availability (51.5 score), and natural resources and resilience (51.4).

Figure 45. Colombia Global Food Security Index Components, 2020

Source: Global Food Security Index, The Economist Intelligence Unit

Finally, regarding the government response to the COVID-19 crises and its effect over the affordability of the MEB. **Figure 46** shows current account balance data, which is a record of a country's international transactions with the rest of the world and provides an approximation of the macroeconomic stability of the country. If the current account balance is negative, it means that there is more money going out from the country than the money getting in, which would be reflected in a higher public debt (OECD, 2021).

The current account balance of Colombia is negative, which could threaten the government's capacity to respond to the crisis generated by COVID-19 in the long-run. This is reflected on the 1.9% reduction of the public budget for 2021 presented by the Ministry of Finance to Congress, and the recently approved tax reform that seeks to collect resources to reduce the public debt of the country (Portafolio, July 2021).

Figure 46. Colombia current account balance

As % of GDP (2012-2019)   In millions of US dollars (2016-2020)
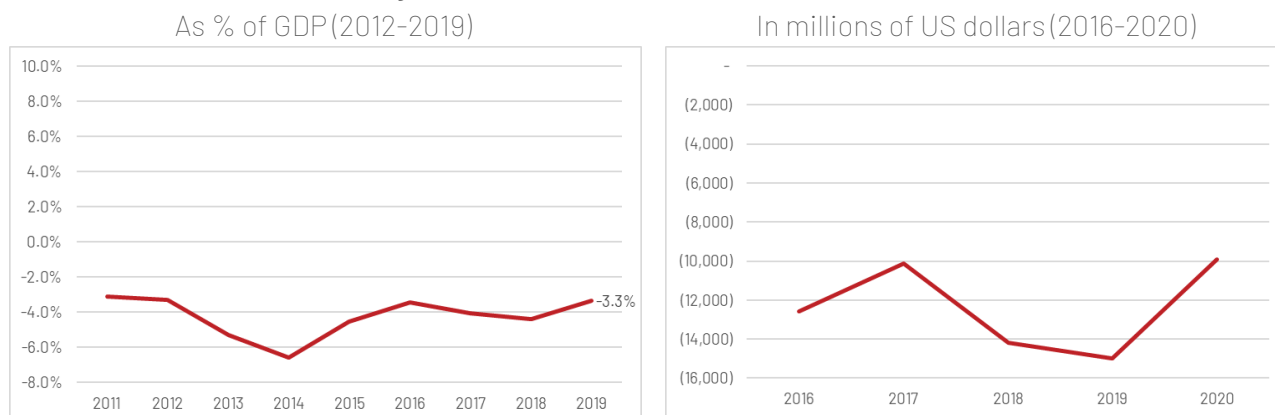
Source: IMF, 2020

Nevertheless, the Government of Colombia had promoted assistance aimed to mitigate the effect of the crises over the affordability of the MEB to vulnerable populations during the crisis. According to iMMAP (2021), the Government of Colombia has provided temporary nutrition for children who cannot attend school and assisted by school-feeding programmes before COVID-19, as well as cash assistance for vulnerable groups.

The largest programme promoted to assist vulnerable households is *Ingreso Solidario*. The Colombian Government secured 10 billion Colombian pesos (approximately USD 3 billion) for implementing the programme in 2020 and 2011, aiming to assist 3 million vulnerable households through cash transfers[8].

DRC

Figure 47 shows the evolution of daily confirmed COVID-19 cases and deaths per-million people in DRC. Cases have recently increased since June 2021, when the country has faced the most important wave since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.

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[8] For more information refer to: https://ingresosolidario.prosperidadsocial.gov.co/

Figure 47. Daily new confirmed COVID-19 cases and deaths in DRC per million people, March 2020-August 2021
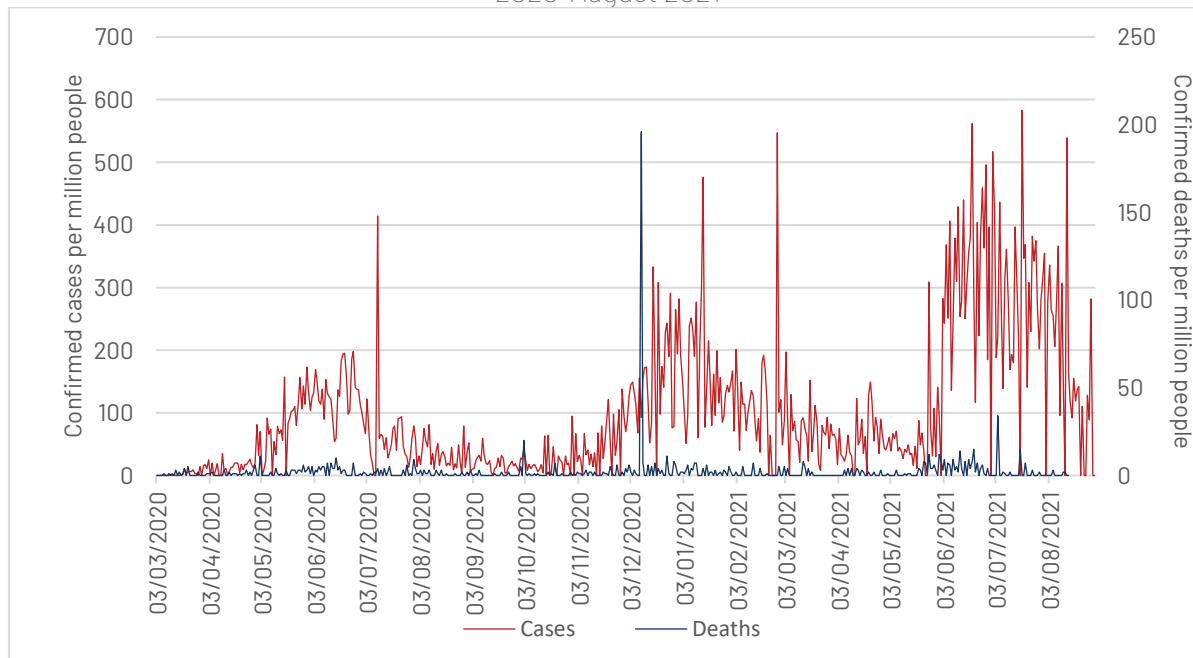
Source: Our World in Data, Johns Hopkins University CSSE COVID-19 Data

The lockdown measures had a negative effect on economic growth globally. As **Figure 48** presents, GDP per-capita and private consumption sharply decreased in DRC. GDP growth went down from 1.1% in 2019 to –1.3% in 2020, and private consumption varied from 6% to 0% over the same period. This contrasts with pre-pandemic growth projections, when the economic recovery that began in 2018 was expected to gain momentum in 2019 with real GDP growth of 1.7% (African Development Bank, 2019).

Figure 48. GDP per capita and private consumption growth (annual %) in DRC, 2011- 2020
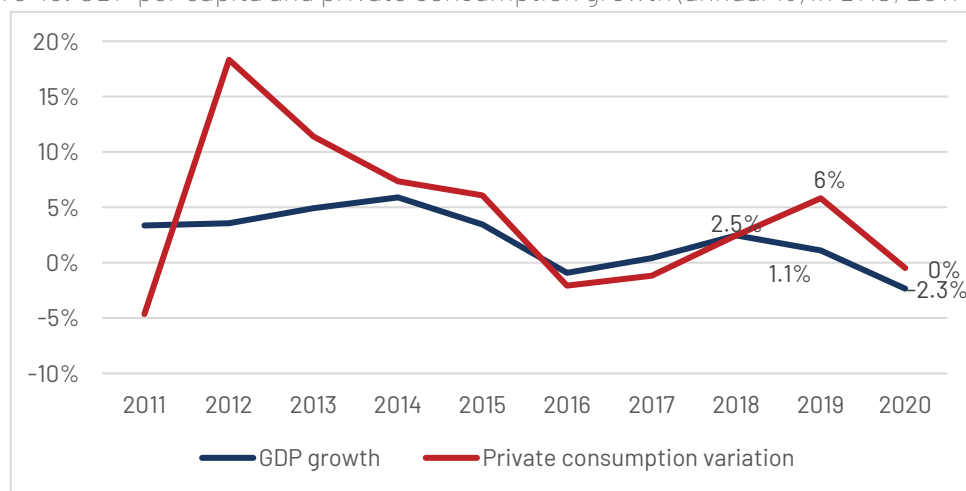

Source: World Development Indicators, The World Bank

Regarding the variation in the affordability of minimum expenditure baskets – MEB, the items included in the basic basket for goods and services of an average household in DRC for the MEB estimation were:

- Cereals: Rice
- Pulses: Maize and lentils
- Fats: palm oil
- Sugar

- Condiments: Salt
- Meat: Chicken, meat and fish
- Cooking Fuel
- Non leafy vegetables[9].

Based on this information, a preliminary estimate of the percentage increase in the MEB is presented in Figure 49. The figure shows that between 2020 and 2021, the MEB decreased by -2% in DRC, while between 2019 and 2020 it had increased by 11%. This could be explained by the effect of the COVID–19 pandemic, which generated the first recession of the country in 18 years. The containment measures and monetization of the budget deficits resulted in higher prices in 2020 (African Development Bank, 2021).

Figure 49. MEB increase in DRC, 2020-2021 (in %)
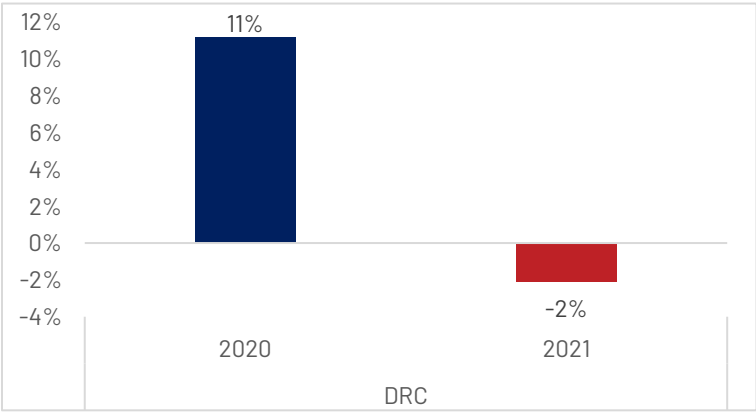
The data shows that in DRC, 43% of the total population surveyed had a significant reduction on their income due to the crisis, 39% a slight decrease, 1.6% had an increase on their income and for 13% their income remained the same.

Source: Own estimation based on WFP Databiz, 2021

Figure 50. Changes on income after COVID-19 in DRC, 2020-2021
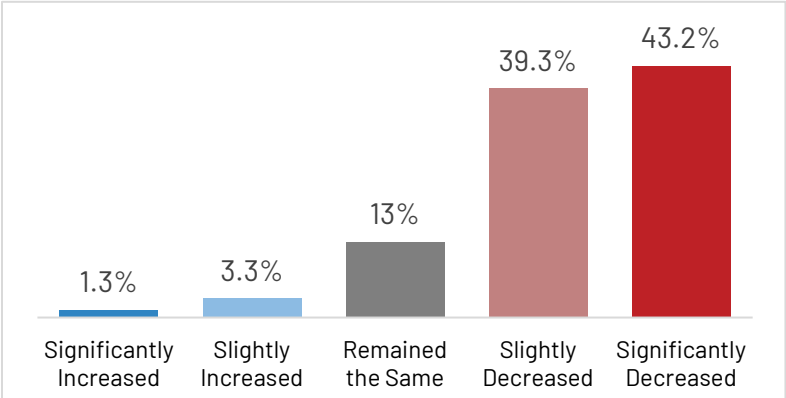
COVID-19 has affected other variables related to poverty and, particularly, the affordability and access to food and basic services. **Figure 51** presents the GFSI estimated by The Economist Intelligence Unit. The GFSI should be interpreted depending on its score and rank among countries.

Source: Premise- iMMAP survey, 2021

[9] Data on changes in prices of dairy, fruits and eggs was not available for DRC in the databases reviewed

The methodology is based on a scale where the highest the score, the better the food security performance. This also means that the country with the best performance ranks 1 among the 113 for which the index is calculated. DRC ranked 98 out of 113 countries with a score of 41.7 (**Figure 51**). In addition to the position of the countries in the GFSI rank, it is important to highlight that DRC had an increase of 1.3% in its score between 2019 and 2020 (**Figure 52**).

Figure 51. DRC Global Food Security Rank, 2019-2020
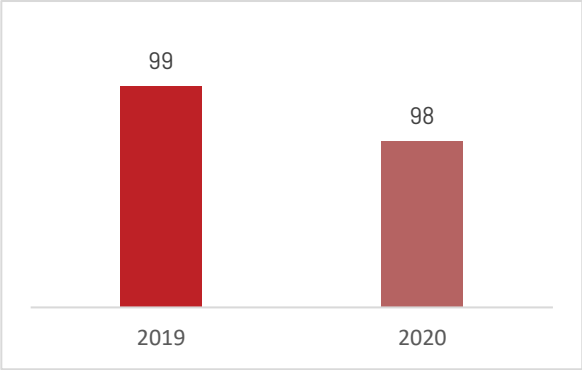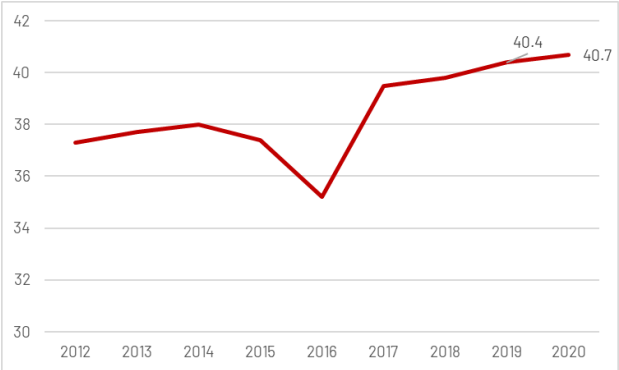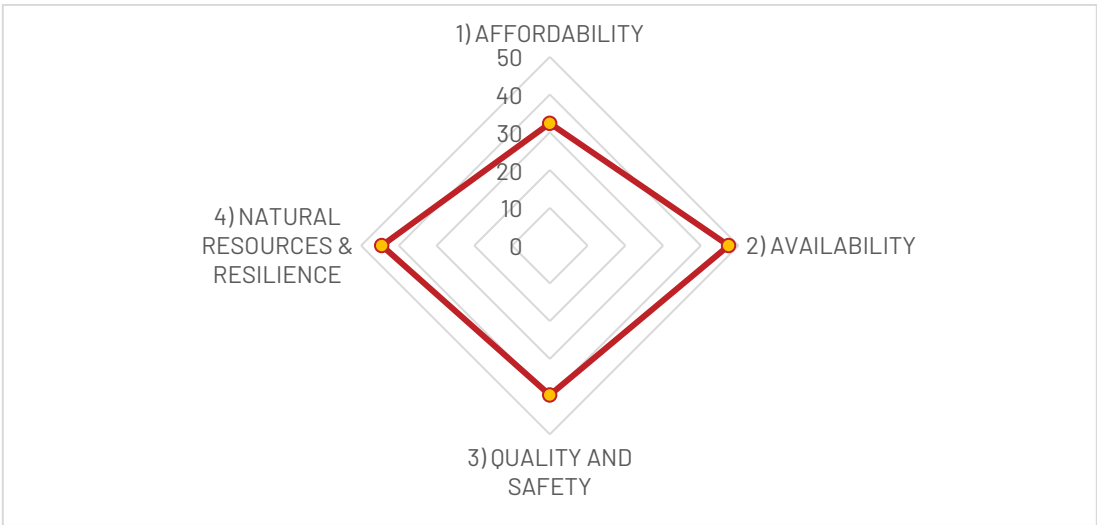

Figure 52. DRC Global Food Security Index 2012-2020

Source: Global Food Security Index, The Economist Intelligence Unit

The global food security index has four components: affordability, availability, quality and safety and natural resources and resilience. **Figure 53** shows the country sub-indexes for each component. The best performance in the index components for DRC is on the food availability (41.4 score), followed by natural resources and resilience (41.5), quality and safety (31.6) and affordability of food (32,4).

Figure 53. DRC Global Food Security Index Components, 2020

Source: Global Food Security Index, The Economist Intelligence Unit

Finally, regarding the government response to the COVID-19 crises and its effect over the affordability of the MEB, **Figure 54** shows current account balance data, which is a record of a

country's international transactions with the rest of the world and provides an approximation of the macroeconomic stability of the country. If the current account balance is negative, it means that there is more money going out from the country than the money getting in, which would be reflected in a higher public debt (OECD, 2021).

The current account balance of DRC is negative, which could threaten the government's capacity to respond to the crisis generated by COVID-19 in the long-run. The DRC is among the least indebted countries in Africa, but it has significant financing needs. The country is currently facing security and socio-political unrest and its economy is vulnerable to falling commodity prices, and declining world demand for minerals (African Development Bank, 2021).

Figure 54. DRC current account balance

As % of GDP (2012-2019)   In millions of US dollars (2016-2020)
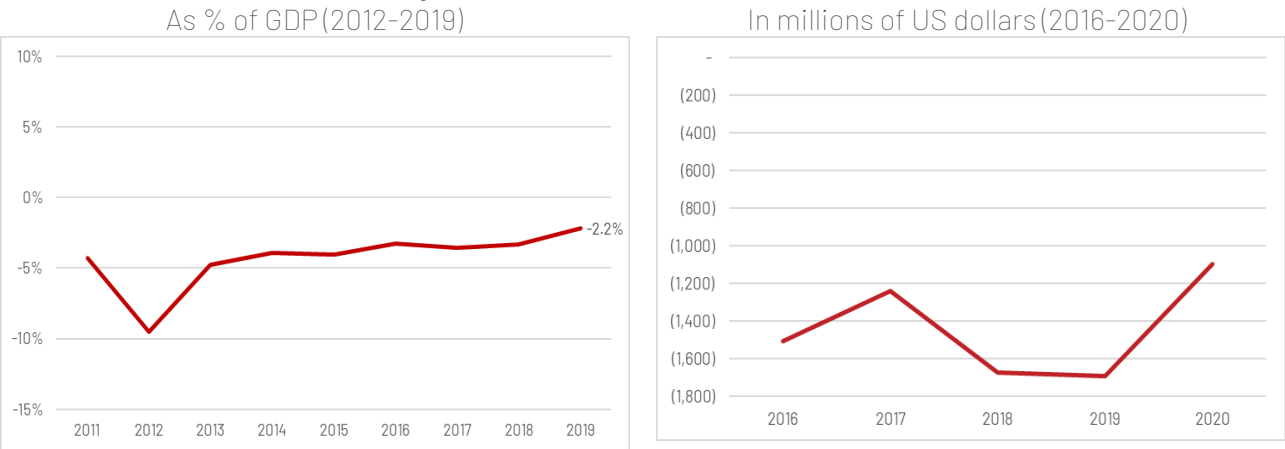
Source: IMF, 2020

Finally, according to iMMAP (2021), there has been no response from the Government of DRC to mitigate the effect of the crises over the affordability of the MEB to vulnerable populations during the crisis.

Nigeria

Figure 55 shows the evolution of daily confirmed COVID-19 cases and deaths per-million people in Nigeria. Cases have been recently increasing, as they did during the first quarter of 2021.

Figure 55. Daily new confirmed COVID-19 cases and deaths in Nigeria per million people, March 2020-August 2021

Source: Our World in Data, Johns Hopkins University CSSE COVID-19 Data, 2021
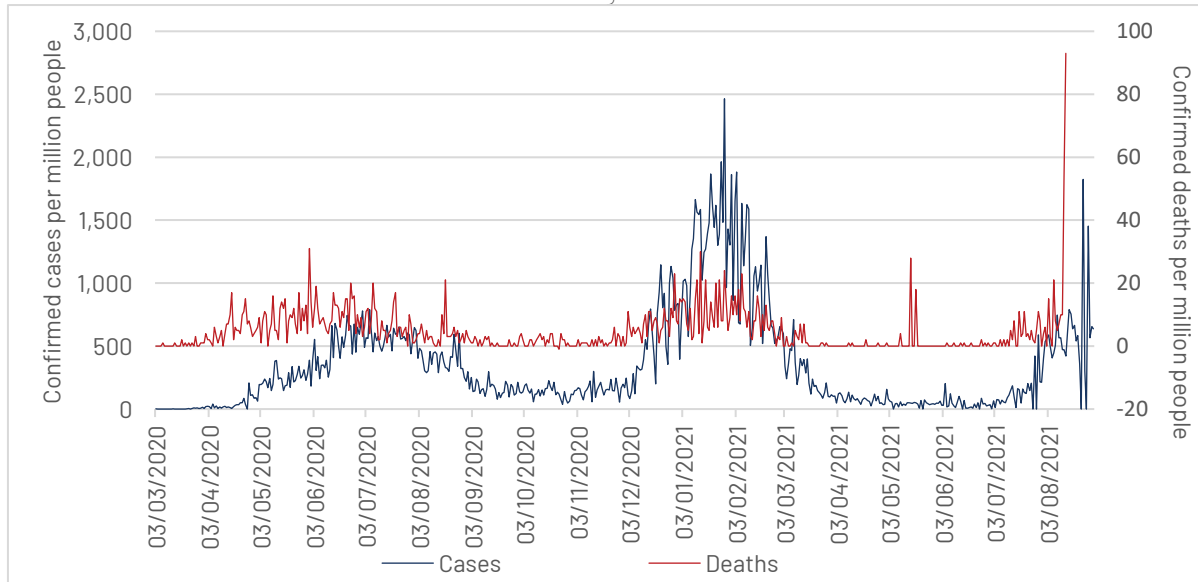
The lockdown measures had a negative effect on economic growth globally. As **Figure 56** presents, GDP per-capita and private consumption sharply decreased in Nigeria. Between 2019 and 2020, GDP growth went down from -1.4% to -1.3%. However, private consumption had a positive increase from 0% to 7%.

The decrease in economic growth was mainly due to the fall in crude oil prices. However, the Nigerian Government released the Economic Sustainability Programme, which prevented the decline from being much worse and contributed to recovering private consumption (Government of Nigeria, 2020).

Figure 56. GDP per capita and private consumption growth (annual %) in Nigeria, 2011- 2020

Source: World Development Indicators, The World Bank
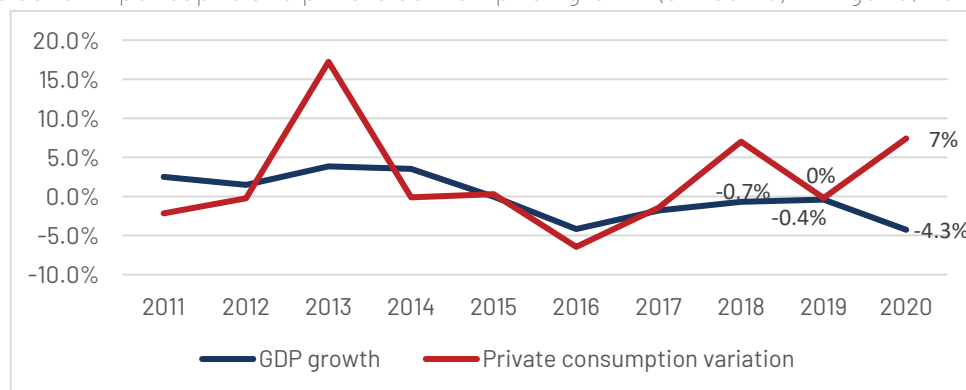
Despite this decline in economic growth in Nigeria, overall prices increased significantly (**Figure 57**). Prices of food increased 1.3% in 2020, according to WFP (2021)

Inflation in Nigeria since 2019 has been fuelled by higher food prices due to constraints on domestic supplies and the pass-through effects of an exchange rate premium that widened to about 24%. The removal of fuel subsidies and an increase in electricity tariffs added further to inflationary pressures over the last years (African Development Bank, 2021).

Figure 57. Inflation In Nigeria, consumer prices (annual %), 2011- 2020
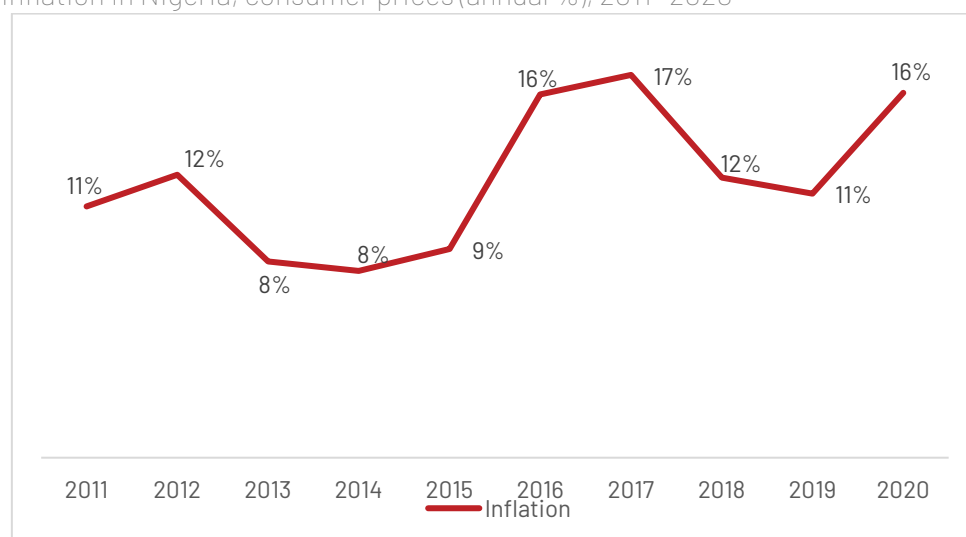
Source: World Development Indicators, The World Bank

Regarding the variation in the affordability of minimum expenditure baskets – MEB, the items included in the basic basket for goods and services of an average household in Nigeria for the MEB estimation were:

- Cereals: Rice
- Pulses: Maize and lentils
- Fats: palm oil
- Dairy
- Sugar

- Condiments: Salt
- Meat: Chicken and meat
- Cooking Fuel
- Non leafy vegetables and fruits[10].

Based on this information, a preliminary estimate of the percentage increase in the MEB is presented in **Figure 58**. The figure shows that between 2020 and 2021, the MEB increased by 143% in all states of Nigeria, which is significantly higher than the increase between 2019 and 2020. Data for Borno and Yobe states suggest that the MEB has increased by around 81% in 2021 (WFP, 2021).

As mentioned before, this increase in prices was triggered by constraints on domestic supplies and the pass-through effect of devaluation over prices of imported goods and inputs (African Development Bank, 2021).

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[10] Data on changes in eggs was not available for Nigeria in the databases reviewed

Figure 58. MEB increase in Nigeria, 2020-2021(in %)
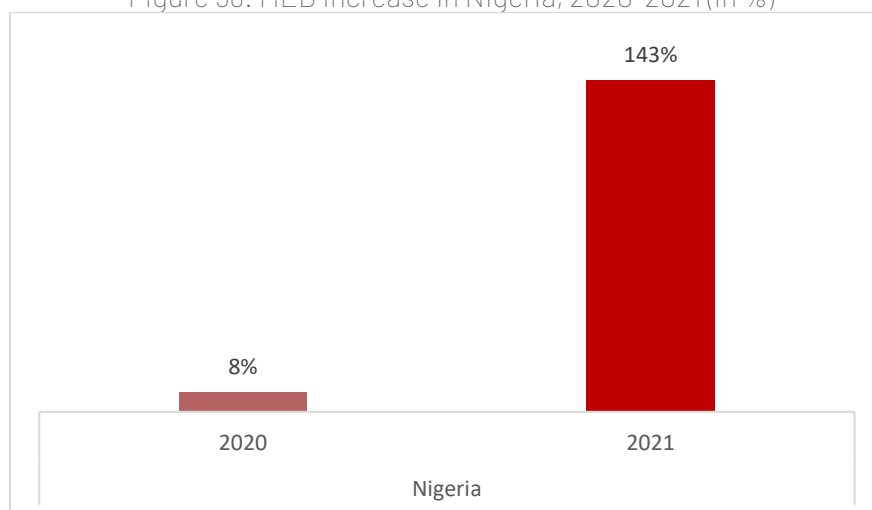
Source: Own estimation based on WFP Databiz, 2021

The affordability of the MEB is also related to the capacity of households to purchase basic goods and services. **Figure 59** presents information from a survey released by iMMAP in the six countries of study.

The data shows that in the sample of households surveyed in Nigeria, 54% of the total population had a reduction on their income due to the crisis, 21% had an increase on their income and for 25% their income remained the same. It is important to note that the sample is not representative of the Nigerian population, since it was collected only from a non-random selection of internet users, and the outcomes might differ for those of the total population, considering that the 27% unemployment in Nigeria remains a challenge and restricts households for securing a minimum income (African Development Bank, 2021).

Figure 59. Changes on income after COVID-19 in Nigeria, 2020-2021
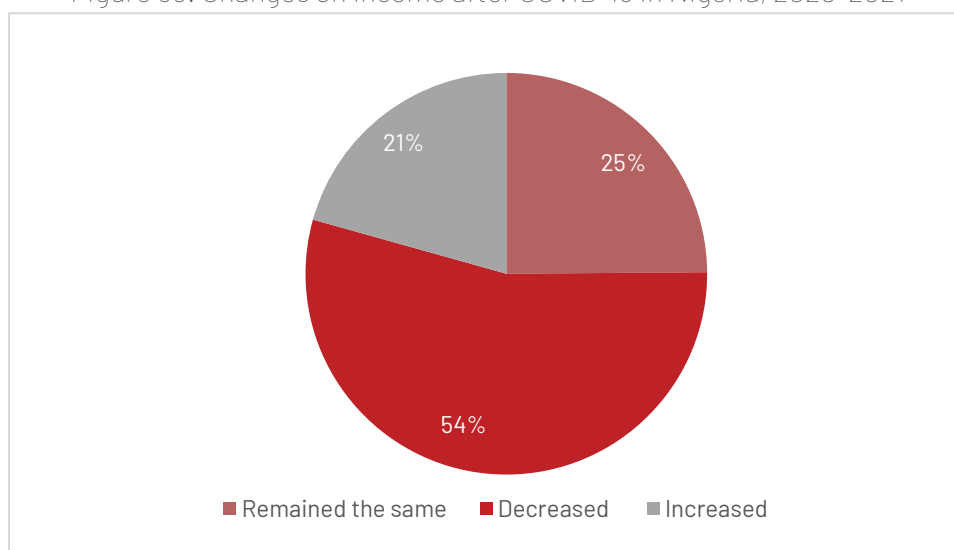
Source: RIWI-iMMAP survey, 2021

COVID-19 has affected other variables related to poverty and, particularly, the affordability and access to food and basic services. **Figure 60** presents the GFSI estimated by The Economist Intelligence Unit. The GFSI should be interpreted depending on its score and rank among countries. The methodology is based on a scale where the highest the score, the better the food security performance. This also means that the country with the best performance ranks 1 among the 113 for which the index is calculated. Nigeria ranked 100 out of 113 countries with a score of 41.1 (**Figure 60**). In addition to the position of the countries in the GFSI rank, it is important to highlight that Nigeria had a decrease of -1.4% in its score between 2019 and 2020 (**Figure 61**).

The decrease in the global security index of Nigeria has been mainly generated by the lack of improvement in variables such as: sufficiency of food supply, food supply adequacy, dependence on chronic food aid, airport and rail infrastructure.

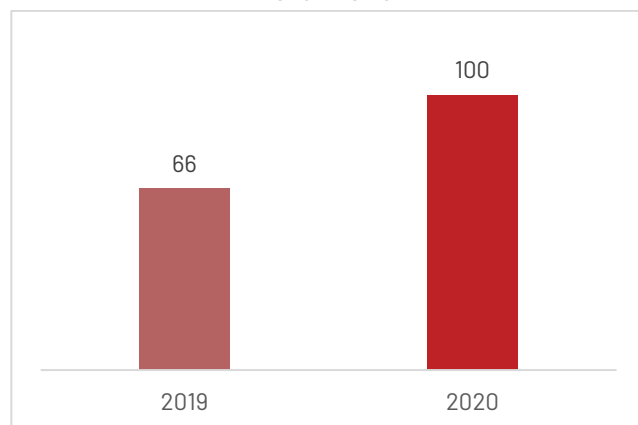Figure 60. Nigeria Global Food Security Rank, 2019- 2020

Figure 61. Nigeria Global Food Security Index 2012- 2020

Source: Global Food Security Index, The Economist Intelligence Unit

The global food security index has four components: affordability, availability, quality and safety and natural resources and resilience. **Figure 62** shows the country sub-indexes for each component. The best performance in the index components for Nigeria is on the food availability (41.8 score), followed by quality and safety (41,5), natural resources and resilience (31.3) and affordability of food (31.9 score).
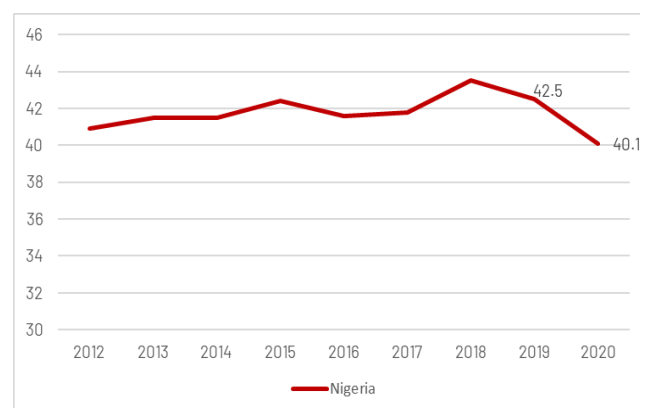
Figure 62. Nigeria Global Food Security Index Components, 2020
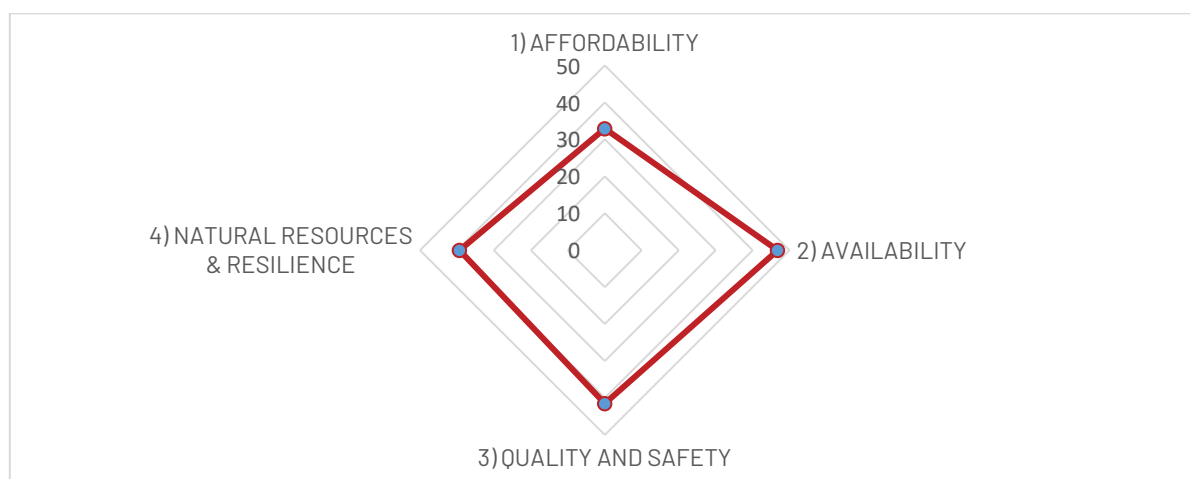
Source: Global Food Security Index, The Economist Intelligence Unit

Finally, regarding the government response to the COVID-19 crises and its effect over the affordability of the MEB. **Figure 63** shows current account balance data, which is a record of a country's international transactions with the rest of the world and provides an approximation of the macroeconomic stability of the country. If the current account balance is negative, it means that there is more money going out from the country than the money getting in, which would be reflected in a higher public debt (OECD, 2021).

The current account balance of Nigeria is negative, which could threaten the government's capacity to respond to the crisis generated by COVID-19 in the long-run. This deficit has increased since 2018 due to lower government revenues from lower-valued oil exports.

Figure 63. Nigeria current account balance

As % of GDP (2012-2019)   In millions of US dollars (2016-2020)
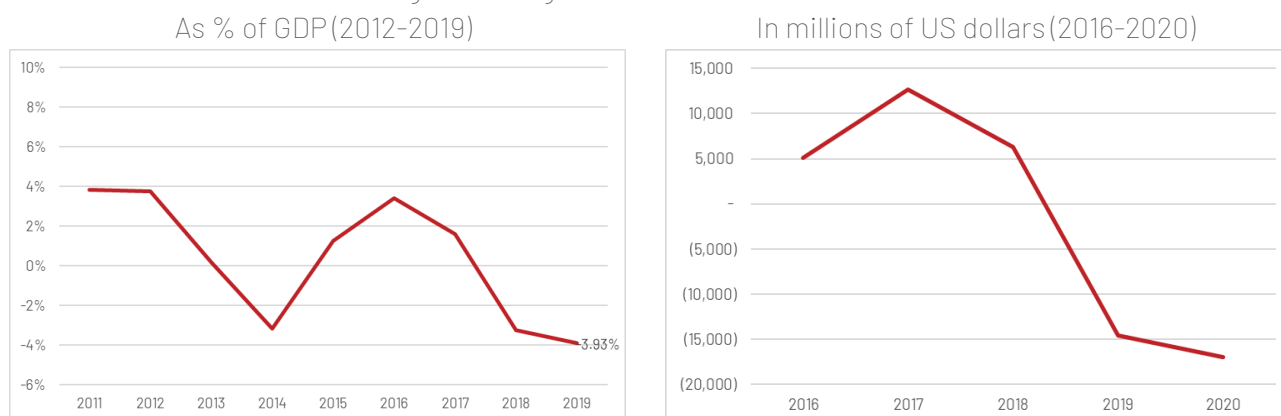

Source: IMF, 2020

Finally, 13% of the people surveyed in the Premise-iMMAP survey conducted in Nigeria affirm to have received food assistance from the government. As mentioned before, some of the programmes promoted by the Nigerian Government as part of the COVID-19 recovery strategy are the Economic Sustainability Plan, which was approved in June 2020 and allocates USD 5.9 billion in

order to stimulate and diversify the economy, retain and create jobs, and extend more protections to the poor. In addition, there is the Nigeria Humanitarian Response Plan, 2021, targeting 6.4 million people in in Borno, Adamawa and Yobe (BAY) states with cash and vouchers programmes (CWG, 2021)

Syria

Figure 64 shows the evolution of daily confirmed COVID-19 cases and deaths per-million people in Syria, where cases have been recently increasing.

Figure 64. Daily new confirmed COVID-19 cases and deaths in Syria per million people, March 2020-August 2021
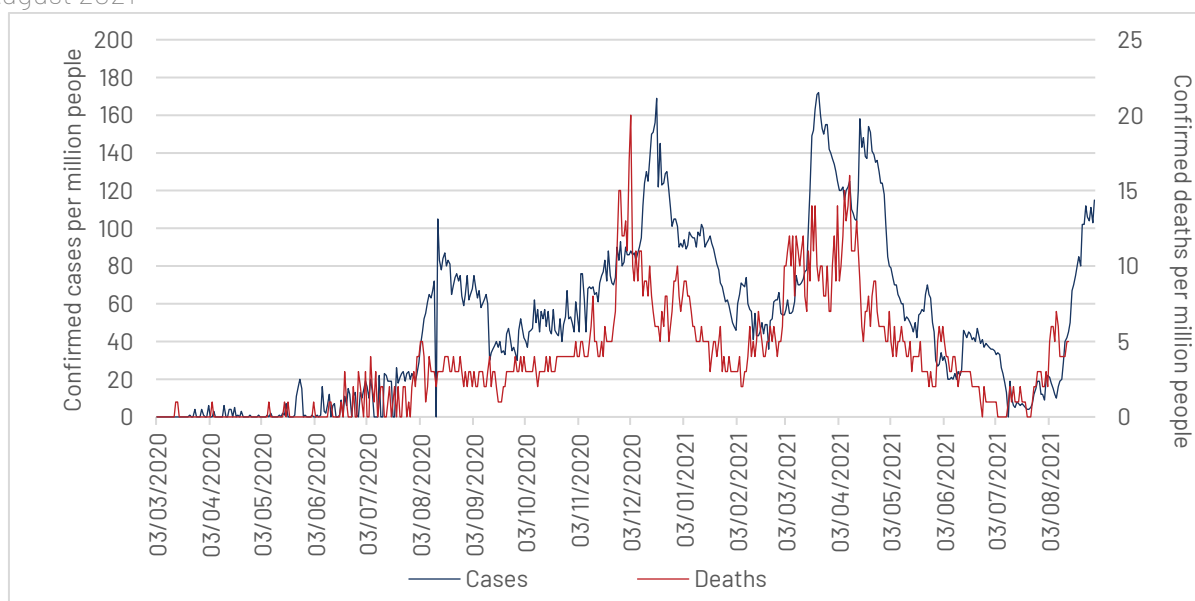
Source: Our World in Data, Johns Hopkins University CSSE COVID-19 Data

In the case of Syria, although there is no up-to-date inflation information, the evolution of food basket prices over the last year shows the increase in food prices, which is leading to affordability being the main barrier to access food (see **Figure 65**).

Figure 65. Evolution of food basket price in Syria in SYP, 2020-2021
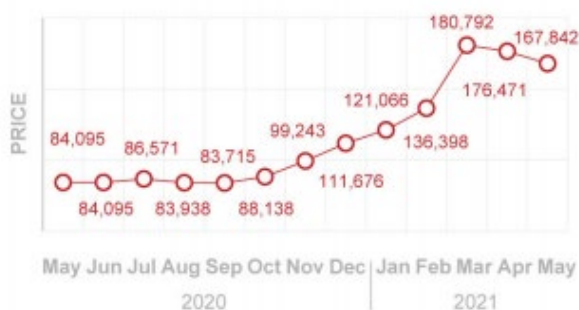
Source: COVID-19 Situation Analysis Syria (iMMAP, 2021b)

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Regarding the variation in the affordability of minimum expenditure baskets – MEB, the items included in the basic basket for goods and services of an average household in Syria for the MEB estimation were:

- Cereals: Rice
- Pulses: Maize and lentils
- Fats: palm oil
- Dairy
- Sugar

- Condiments: Salt
- Meat: Chicken, meat and eggs
- Cooking Fuel
- Non leafy vegetables and fruits.

Based on this information, a preliminary estimate of the percentage increase in the MEB is presented in **Figure 66**. The figure shows that between 2020 and 2021, the MEB increased by 97% in Syria, which is a lower increase than the previous year.
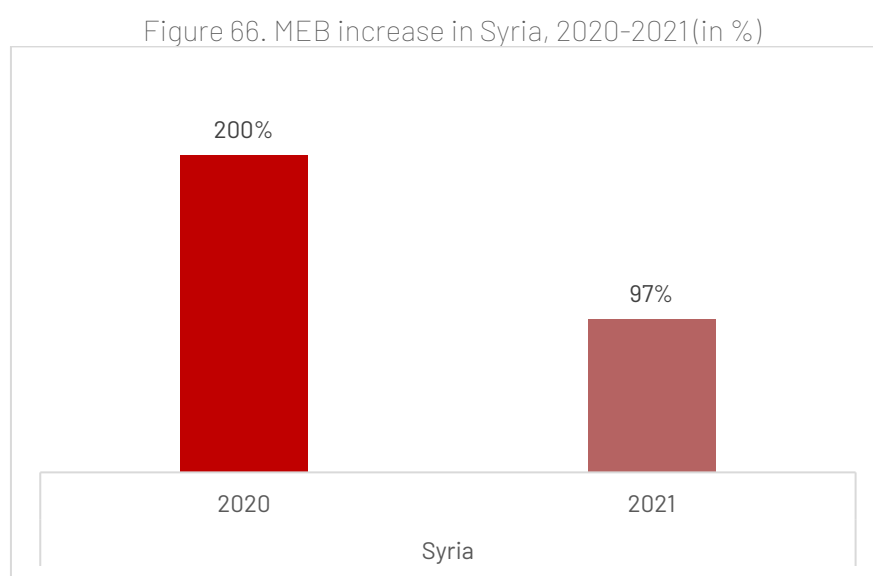
Figure 66. MEB increase in Syria, 2020-2021 (in %)

Source: Own estimation based on WFP Databiz, 2021

The affordability of the MEB is also related to the capacity of households to purchase basic goods and services. **Figure 67** presents information from a survey released by iMMAP in the six countries of study. The target respondents were the general population of internet users aged 18+, it included 20 closed-ended questions and targeted 3,000 respondents in Syria.

The data shows that in Syria 50% of the total surveyed population had a reduction on their income due to the crisis, 8% had an increase on their income and for 41% their income remained the same.

Figure 67. Changes on income after COVID-19 in Syria, 2020-2021
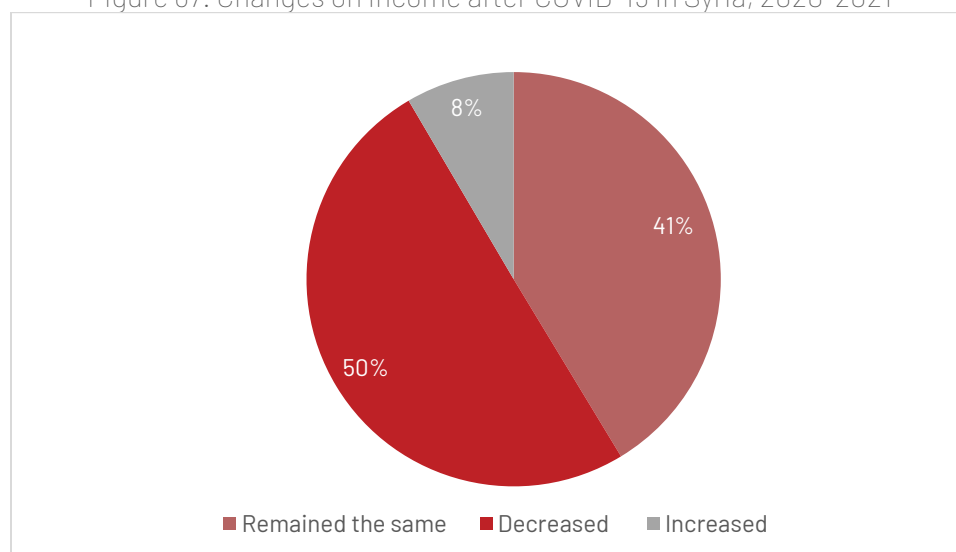
Source: iMMAP survey, 2021

The survey conducted by iMMAP also provides information on the perception of households about the main negative effects of COVID-19. The most prominent effects have been over 'unemployment and loss of income' (29% of the population surveyed), 'limitations of movement' (25%), 'inability to cover other essential needs like rent, health and education' (23%), 'the inability to cover food needs' (22%), 'live in fear of spread of illness and infections' (22%), and 'concern for social isolation/distance and its impact on mental health at home' (14%) (see Figure 68).

Figure 68. The effects of COVID-19 in Syria, 2020-2021
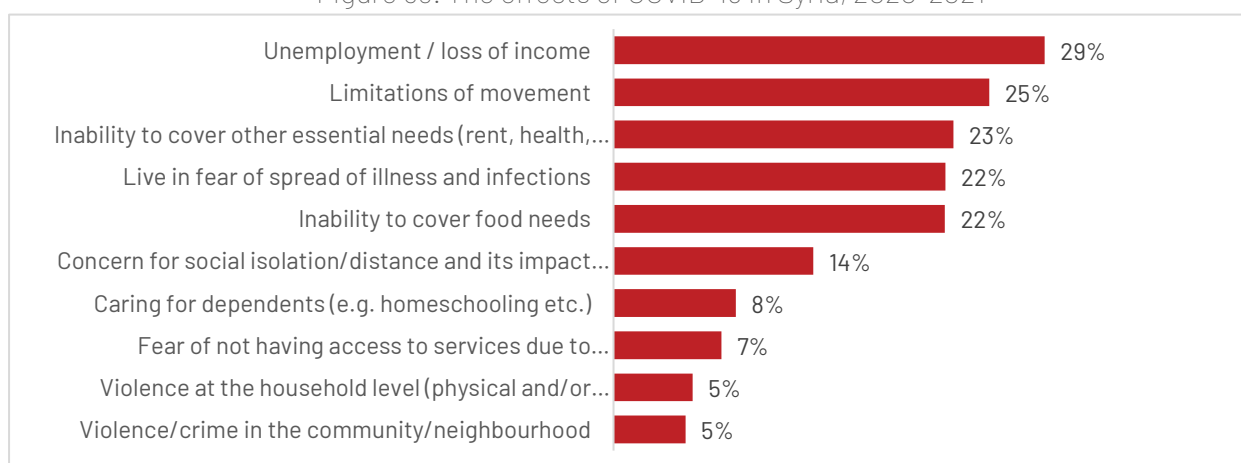
Source: iMMAP survey, 2021

COVID-19 has affected other variables related to poverty and, particularly, the affordability and access to food and basic services. **Figure 69** presents the GFSI estimated by The Economist Intelligence Unit. The GFSI should be interpreted depending on its score and rank among countries. The methodology is based on a scale where the highest the score, the better the food security performance. This also means that the country with the best performance ranks 1 among the 113 for which the index is calculated. Syria ranked 101 out of 113 countries with a score of 40

(Figure 69). In addition to the position of the countries in the GFSI rank, it is important to highlight that Syria had a decrease of -1.3% in its score between 2019 and 2020 (**Figure 70**).

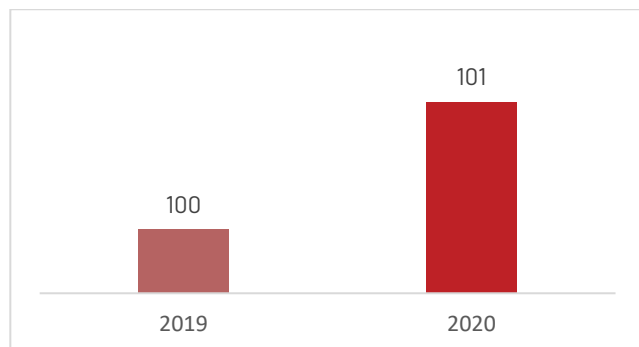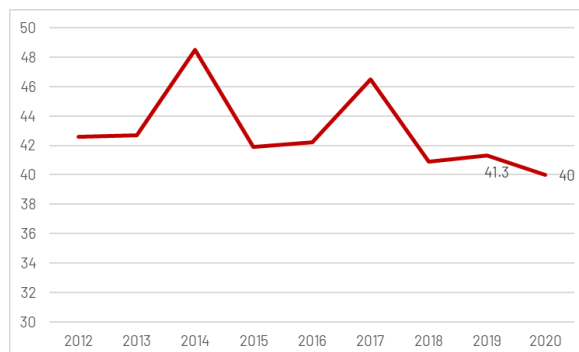Figure 69. Syria Global Food Security Rank, 2019-2020

Figure 70. Syria Global Food Security Index 2012- 2020

Source: Global Food Security Index, The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2021

The GFSI has four components: affordability, availability, quality and safety and natural resources and resilience. **Figure 71** shows the country sub-indexes for each component. The best performance in the index components for Syria is on the food quality and safety (51.6) followed by natural resources and resilience (41.5) availability of food (41.3 score), and affordability of food (21.3 score).

Figure 71. Syria Global Food Security Index Components, 2020
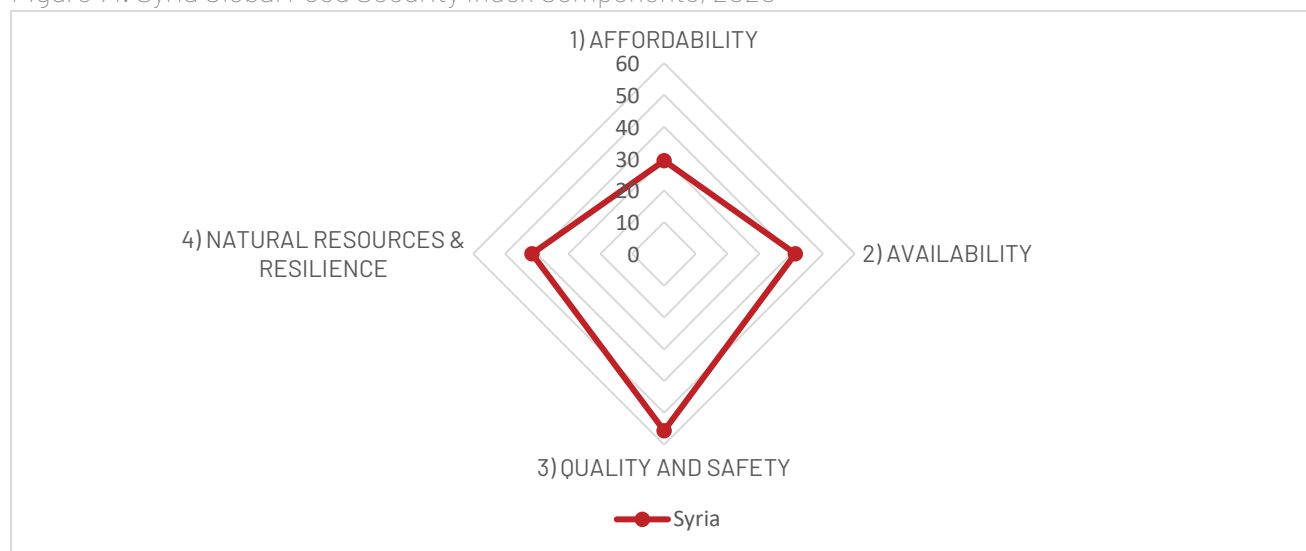
Source: Global Food Security Index, The Economist Intelligence Unit

Finally, regarding the government response to the COVID-19 crises and its effect over the affordability of the MEB, according to iMMAP (2021), there has been no response from the Government of Syria to mitigate the effect of the crises over the affordability of the MEB to vulnerable populations during the crisis.

Conclusions and recommendations

The COVID-19 crisis has had a significant impact on both GDP growth and private consumption in most countries. This has resulted in an increase of overall prices, incluuding food prices. The MEB, which represents the minimum requirements for a family to live on have thus become more expensive and out of reach for millions of vulnerable households living in humanitarian and crisis settings around the world. The growing number of humanitarian crises, coupled with increased vulnerability has the power to undo decades of gains made in lifting millions of people of people out of poverty.

Many of the countries studied also currently suffer from high deficits on their current accounts which could have multiple negative impacts. First off, this could lead to the reduction in subsidies for various necessary goods including fuel, wheat and flour which disproportionately benefit a country's poor. The current deficits also bring into question the sustainability of the programmes currently implemented to assist vulnerable households. This is particularly risky for the analysed countries, considering that they are highly vulnerable to present food insecurity, compared to other countries in the world. Lastly, macroeconomic instability appears to be on the horizon in terms of growing inflationary pressures which may serve to further weaken purchasing power of households.

 The recommendations that emerge from this analysis are:

Consider the collection of primary data to get a more accurate measure of MEB

Complement the analysis with regular attempts to get qualitative information from key stakeholders

Continue analysing up-to-date information to identify key trends and similarities among countries

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Appendices

Data collection instruments

iMMAP	The effects of COVID-19 on the affordability of Minimum Expenditures Baskets: A Case Study of Six Countries'
	Online Survey instrument

Introduction: iMMAP is conducting an assessment on the 'The effects of COVID-19 on the affordability of Minimum Expenditures Baskets: A Case Study of Six Countries, Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Colombia, DRC, Nigeria and Syria', as part of the COVID-19 Situational Analysis project it initiated in July 200, which is funded by the Bureau of Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) of USAID.

Stakeholders interviews and surveys are included among the information to be collected for the analysis. You have been selected as one of the key actors to be surveyed, considering your role in securing adequate living conditions to vulnerable populations in **Country X.**

The survey will not take more than 10 minutes, and all information will be secured, anonymised and used only for the project purposes.

We appreciate your attention to this matter.

CHAPTER 1: CHARACTERISATION

Name:	_____
Organisation:	_____
Role:	_____
Country	_____

CHAPTER 2: THE EFFECT OF COVID-19 ON THE LIVING CONDITIONS OF HOUSEHOLDS

In an scale of 1 to 5, being 1 very low and 5 very high, how would you classify the effect of COVID-19 over the affordability of Minimum Expenditures Baskets in Country X?	Very low	☐
	Low	☐
	Medium	☐
	High	☐
	Very high	☐
Please rank in order of importance, how the following factors (drivers of vulnerable livelihoods) have been mostly affected by COVID-19 in Country X?	Monetary poverty (household's monetary income)	|_|
	Affordability of Minimum Expenditures Baskets	|_|
	Food insecurity	|_|
	Healh conditions	|_|
	Unsatisfied basic needs	|_|

According to your knowledge, what are the		Bangladesh	Burkina Faso	Colombia	DRC	Nigeria	Syria

common cross-cutting factors between Country X and the other countries considered in the study, in the social factors that were affected due to COVID-19?	Affordability of Minimum Expenditures Baskets	|_||_||_|	|_||_||_|	|_||_|	|_||_|	|_||_|	|_||_|
	Poverty	|_||_||_|	|_||_||_|	|_||_|	|_||_|	|_||_|	|_||_|
	Other social factors	|_||_||_|	|_||_||_|	|_||_|	|_||_|	|_||_|	|_||_|

CHAPTER 3: The response from local governments and multilateral agencies to assist households whose living conditions have been affected by COVID-19

On an scale of 1 to 5, being 1 very low and 5 very high, How would you rate the effectiveness of the response from different entities to assist households whose living conditions have been affected by COVID-19 in Country X?		Local governments	NGOs	Multilateral agencies
	Very low	☐	☐	☐
	Low	☐	☐	☐
	Medium	☐	☐	☐
	High	☐	☐	☐
	Very high	☐	☐	☐

What has been the main contribution of your organisation to the institutional response given in Country X to assist households whose living conditions have been affected by COVID-19?	_____
What has been missing in the institutional response given in Country X to assist households whose living conditions have been affected by COVID-19?	_____

CHAPTER 4: Validation of MEB reference basket food and non-food items

Please validate the following food and non-food items, selecting those that you consider are part to the basic basket of goods and services in Country X	Include here the list of the items defined

MANY THANKS FOR YOUR TIME TO TAKE THE SURVEY

Data sources reviewed

Source	Database
IMF	World Economic Outlook data

Johns Hopkins University	Our World in Data
The Economist Intelligence Unit	Global Food Security Index
The World Bank	World Development Indicators
WFP	Databiz
WFP	Global Market Monitor

The outbreak of disease caused by the virus known as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS-CoV-2) or COVID-19 started in China in December 2019. The virus quickly spread across the world, with the WHO Director-General declaring it as a pandemic on March 11th, 2020.

The virus' impact has been felt most acutely by countries facing humanitarian crises due to conflict and natural disasters. As humanitarian access to vulnerable communities has been restricted to basic movements only, monitoring and assessments have been interrupted.

To overcome these constraints and provide the wider humanitarian community with timely and comprehensive information on the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, iMMAP initiated the COVID-19 Situational Analysis project with the support of the USAID Bureau of Humanitarian Assistance (USAID BHA), aiming to provide timely solutions to the growing global needs for assessment and analysis among humanitarian stakeholders.

BETTER DATA | BETTER DECISIONS | BETTER OUTCOMES

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