

Media Update

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FAO

PRESS RELEASE

Countries in Asia-Pacific convene virtual UN FAO conference to plan responses and recovery work on twin pandemics of COVID-19 and hunger

01/09/2020, Bangkok/Thimphu – As COVID-19 continues to threaten lives and livelihoods across many countries of the Asia-Pacific region, it has led to setbacks in the fight to end hunger and malnutrition, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) announced today.

The Asia-Pacific region is home to more than half of the world's undernourished, and with COVID-19 the number of hungry people in Southern Asia is projected to rise by nearly a third to 330 million by 2030, the Sustainable Development Goal deadline set by the global community to eliminate hunger and malnutrition in all its forms.

In response, Government representatives from 46 FAO Member Nations in Asia and the Pacific have convened a four-day virtual conference to closely examine the present situation of the region's food security, with a particular emphasis on implications linked to the spread of the coronavirus and its impact on food systems region-wide.

More than 400 delegates are participating in a virtual meeting of the [35th Session of the FAO Asia and Pacific Regional Conference \(#APRC35\)](#), hosted by the Royal Government of Bhutan. Their numbers include Government Ministers, private sector, civil society, academia and technical experts in the food and agriculture sectors. All sessions of the conference can be followed [live via Webcast](#). The [Timetable can be found here](#) and the [Annotated Agenda is here](#).

Twin pandemics require new thinking and actions

From Afghanistan and Iran in the west, across populous South and East Asia, and far out into the Pacific Islands, new ways and approaches will be needed to battle back from these twin pandemics. Climate change is another aggravating factor menacing efforts to increase resilience across our food systems.

“We must come to terms with what is before us and recognize that the world and our region has changed. We must find new ways to move forward and ensure sustainable food security in the face of these twin pandemics, as well as prepare for threats that can and will evolve in the future,” said Jong-Jin Kim, Assistant Director-General and FAO Regional Representative for Asia and the Pacific. “This virtual conference brings together the people and ideas to chart a true course of action for the benefit of all.”

The conference will highlight FAO’s recently launched comprehensive [COVID-19 Response and Recovery Programme](#) designed to provide a flexible and coordinated global response that aims to ensure access to nutritious food for everyone. The programme includes the mobilization of all forms of resources and partnerships at country, regional and global level. The main aim is to mitigate the immediate impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic while strengthening the longer-term resilience of food systems and livelihoods.

The conference will also consider new marketing channels (such as e-commerce) and new technologies (including better storage facilities) that will help reduce food losses, as these are critical to ensure the flow of nutritious foods and to generate improved incomes for those who work across the entire food and agriculture sectors.

Equally critical is enabling smallholder and family farmers – those who produce most of the food we consume – to become more dynamic, entrepreneurial and competitive through continual innovation. Smallholders will need much greater access to financial resources, technology and innovation.

Bringing all players together will be crucial to realizing these gains and FAO is in the process of implementing the Hand-in-Hand Initiative to enable that. The conference will have a special session to examine the progress made in the region through this initiative.

The conference (#APRC35) will continue until Friday 4 September.

<http://www.fao.org/asiapacific/news/detail-events/en/c/1305669/>

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UN-Habitat

PRESS RELEASE

Thousands of residents in Pakistan's urban slums flock to UN-Habitat's handwashing stations

Rawalpindi, Pakistan, 13 August 2020 - UN-Habitat Pakistan has joined forces with [Pakistan's Ministry of Climate Change](#) to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 in urban slums and ease the economic impact on the vulnerable residents.

A pilot "Pakistan COVID-19 Urban Slums Response Programme" was launched in two urban slums, Dhok Hassu and Dhok Mangtal, in Rawalpindi, a city adjacent to Federal Capital Islamabad.

Hand washing stations designed according to WHO guidelines, were installed and are being used by over 800 people a day including children, sanitary workers and the business community

Mr. Amjad, a local shopkeeper said: "We had no place to wash hands in the markets before the pilot. We thank UN-Habitat for installing the handwashing stations in the markets. They help to protect us from COVID-19."

To raise awareness on COVID-19 and disseminate information, a whatsapp group was created involving 10 percent of the target population. In addition disinfectant sprays are being used in hotspots, streets and markets and there are frequent temperature checks, distribution of sanitizers, masks and gloves and environmentally safe collection and disposal of solid and hazardous waste.

The local community was engaged to to produce masks and gloves and other related activities providing employment.

Rukhsana Majeed who lives in Dhok Hassu, staid: “We are happy that this project has helped us to earn a living by introducing this source of income generation of stitching of masks.”

A rapid assessment of conditions in the pilot area looked at the socio-economic vulnerabilities, existing capacity and community concerns. It showed that residents have no access to adequate sanitation facilities or water for drinking or hand washing. In addition over a third of respondents - 37 per cent - said they had lost their jobs after a lockdown was imposed.

UN-Habitat is preparing to launch the Pakistan COVID-19 Urban Slums Response Programme (PCUSRP) at country level and invites other UN Agencies and donors to participate.