



The **Global  
FoodBanking**  
Network®

# POWERING COMMUNITIES FOR ZERO HUNGER

*Hunger Relief Now. Resilience Tomorrow.*

**COVID-19 RESPONSE: IMPACT REPORT**  
AUGUST 2020



## OVERVIEW

Food banking organizations worldwide are on the frontlines of COVID-19 relief efforts. With them, The Global FoodBanking Network (GFN) is on the ground—rooted in the community—to power a rapid response to this crisis. Our unique partnership model supports food bank entrepreneurs in scaling fast to meet heightened demand while creating stronger, long-term capacity to fight hunger.

Between March and June 2020, **GFN supported food banks provided critical food relief in 51 countries on six continents in response to COVID-19.** Food and hygiene products were delivered to an estimated 22+ million people facing hunger, up from 16.9 million pre-crisis. Carefully attuned to the unique needs of vulnerable populations, GFN member food banks launched targeted efforts to reach children who were missing meals at school, daily wagers suddenly left without income, and those at risk of severe illness such as seniors and immune-compromised populations. Thanks to vital support from our partners, GFN continues to mobilize a humanitarian response that both addresses the immediate crisis and builds critical infrastructure in communities for a more resilient future.

## A CRISIS LIKE NO OTHER

Efforts to limit the spread of COVID-19 have created an economic and humanitarian crisis in virtually every country in the world. In April 2020, an estimated 94% of the global work force resided in countries with shelter-in-place orders. An estimated 365 million low-income children were missing meals at school. Approximately half of the world's

population is estimated to have no access to social safety nets, and many of those who do have access find these benefits are insufficient to meet basic needs. For millions, food banking organizations have been the only place to turn during this difficult time.

## FOOD BANKS PLACED UNDER ENORMOUS STRAIN

GFN conducted two pulse surveys in the first three months of the pandemic to learn more about the impact of the crisis. **Survey results uncovered that:**

100%

of GFN food banks reported an increase in demand for emergency food

93%

reported an urgent need for food

85%

reported an urgent need for funding

74%

reported an urgent need for transportation and logistics support

74%

reported that government policies have impacted, limited, or harmed operations

Placed under enormous strain due to restrictive lockdowns, rising demand, and a critical loss of food and fund donations as well as volunteers, food banks were in dire need of assistance. Ongoing supply chain disruptions and rising food costs further complicated the situation.

“We are used to responding to typhoons, earthquakes, floods, fire and landslides, but I have never seen a disaster similar to COVID-19.”

- Jomar Mariano Fleras, Executive Director, Rise Against Hunger Philippines



## A PROACTIVE RESPONSE

GFN began monitoring the COVID-19 situation in East Asia in January 2020. Food bank members in Shanghai, Hong Kong, Taipei, Korea, and Singapore were among those first affected, and responded swiftly and effectively. Their experiences, combined with GFN's observations of how shutdowns were affecting access to food and other resources, informed the organization's COVID-19 Emergency Response Plan, which was completed by mid-February. By the end of February, nearly all food banks in the East Asian region faced critical funding and food donation shortfalls and GFN deployed its first round of COVID-19 emergency response grants to affected members.

In early March, GFN formed an international knowledge-sharing hub to allow for quick dissemination of emerging practices specific to providing food relief during the crisis. Strategies were shared throughout the network, including with partners in Europe, the United States, and Japan. By mid-March, GFN had re-programmed budgets and staff resources to focus entirely on COVID-19 relief.

**In the following weeks, through a combination of knowledge sharing and technical assistance from GFN, food bank members were able to:**

- Quickly obtain authorization to maintain food relief in the midst of government lockdowns
- Effectively serve children missing meals at school, especially girls
- Immediately institute hygiene and safety measures to ensure the health of staff and clients
- Leverage partnerships with multinational companies and multilateral institutions to access additional food and funds in-country
- Re-engineer supply chains toward zero-contact distribution
- Expand service to aid newly stricken families and individuals
- Source nutritious, high-demand food staples despite supply chain disruptions
- Advocate for government resources to support those out of work and school

Between March and June 2020, GFN partnered with nearly 50 global companies to expand access to food and fund resources and invested more than US\$11 million in COVID-19 relief grants. These financial resources, complemented by technical support, enabled food banks to purchase key staples, hire additional staff to cope with rising demand and the loss of volunteers, and expand service to new communities and hard-to-reach populations.

## WIDESPREAD IMPACT

GFN is a catalyst and lynchpin designed to accelerate the impact of hunger relief efforts across the globe. Its program model combines knowledge sharing, technical assistance, and funding to help food banking organizations more effectively tackle hunger in their communities.

Between March and June 2020, the GFN network provided meals to an estimated 22+ million people facing hunger. On average, each GFN member food bank served an additional 107,000 people each month through their distribution channels. Most food banks in emerging and developing markets doubled their capacity.

“A food bank operating alone will alleviate hunger in a small, yet mighty way. A food bank that is connected to a global network has access to a blend of technical support and resources to accelerate their reach and develop efficiencies necessary to scale, all while meeting needs in their local context.”

- Lisa Moon, President & CEO



When India's lockdown left hundreds of millions of daily wagers and migrant workers without the means to purchase food, GFN supported Zomato Feeding India in providing 600,000 hunger ration kits – equal to 65 million meals – to affected workers and their families in 150 cities throughout the country. “At this crucial time of need, GFN has come forward to help us, connecting us to food banks across the world, and offering us insights so that we can serve our people locally even more effectively,” said Ankit Kawatra, Co-Founder, Zomato Feeding India



In South Africa, GFN is working with FoodForward SA to reach those experiencing severe food insecurity, specifically orphans and vulnerable children, seniors, and those living with HIV, AIDS, and TB. As a result of COVID-19, FoodForward SA has expanded its capacity to more than 1,000 beneficiary organizations, reaching 500,000 people directly and 1.5 million through an emergency food parcel program—a 100% increase. FoodForward SA was also able to add distribution routes in Limpopo and Mpumalanga, two of the country's poorest provinces. “We would not be able to scale up without the critical financial and technical support of GFN. Thank you GFN for supporting FoodForward SA,” said Andy DuPlessis, Managing Director, FoodForward SA.



Pre-COVID, Bancos de Alimentos Colombia (ABACO) served 651,000 people annually. By May 2020, ABACO had already served nearly two million people, delivering more than 15 million kilos of food. The network was also able to target relief to highly vulnerable populations in the Amazon and internally displaced people crossing the Colombian border from Venezuela.

## NEXT STEPS

If we have learned anything from COVID-19, it is the incredible capacity that comes from connecting and powering community-based hunger relief organizations. Thanks to our partners, GFN is able to ensure access to food for millions of individuals and families who would otherwise go hungry.

As the full weight of this humanitarian crisis continues to unfold, we remain steadfast in our commitment to scale, accelerate and strengthen community-based solutions to hunger using a variety of capacity-building strategies. GFN will continue to take a leading role in providing COVID-19 response funds, technical assistance, food sourcing support and knowledge sharing to our global network.



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“Never before had we experienced a situation of this magnitude, even though in Honduras we’ve always been surrounded by much need. It’s heart wrenching when we see people and families, knocking at the doors of food banks, asking desperately for help so they can take a plate of food to their children. Without GFN’s support, we would not be able to do what we are doing now. From the bottom of our hearts, thank you GFN.”

- Vanessa Caballero, Executive Director, Banco de Alimentos Honduras

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GFN is dedicated to supporting hunger relief today and working toward a hunger-free tomorrow. It is because of partners like you that food banking organizations worldwide have been able to mount a powerful localized response to COVID-19.

**Thank you for rapidly mobilizing life-saving resources to make this work possible. The crisis is not over, and your support remains vital to achieving widespread impact. Together, we can achieve zero hunger. One community at a time.**

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