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## Contact Us

ADMIN@CRWRF.CA  
P.O. Box 85225  
Burlington, ON L7R 4K4



## When "Disaster Response" Hits Closer to Home

**A**s you sit here in the relative peace of Canada, place yourself back in mid-March 2020. The rumours were swirling; there was this disease spreading around the world, devastating areas of China, and then Italy. Could it be true? Could it be as dangerous as the news reports were portraying? It would not also come to Canada, would it? We are an ocean away. Things like this do not happen here.

Take yourself back to the grocery store. Do you remember the first time you looked around and everyone's carts were full, and the shelves began to empty. "Should I also be stocking up?" you might have thought to yourself. "Is there a chance that the shelves will remain bare?"

Take yourself back to when you read that the borders were closing to all non-essential travel, to when your boss called you to tell you that you were laid off, or to when the surgeon's office called to tell you your surgery had been delayed indefinitely. Take yourself back to when you learned that your children's schools would be closed, and planes grounded, or that you could no longer visit your loved ones in the hospital or their care home.

How could this be happening? For many of us who have been richly blessed to have never lived through war, displacement, famine, or a great disaster, we learned something about ourselves. We learned that we are powerless, and we learned about fear. For many of us it was the first time that we felt very afraid for the immediate future.

This is a reality for many people around the world, people like us, who want to care for their families as well as they can. For many people around the world, the prayer "Give us this day our daily bread" means exactly that; "God...today...give me and my family the bread we need to survive."

# CRWRF's Response in the Pandemic, and the Disaster Response Cycle

As the weeks have passed, many of us have learned about how our respective provinces/municipalities are responding in “phases.” In disaster management, there are also several phases that make up the Disaster Response Cycle. Many different governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) use a similar model to prepare for and respond to disasters around the world.

First is prevention, where, for example, trees can be planted to prevent landslides. Next is preparedness, where a known danger or disaster may be coming, so communities or organizations begin creating action plans and preparing things such as supplies, etc. Once a disaster has occurred, the first response is usually quick and carried out by local populations. In the example of an earthquake it can mean search and rescue operations and temporary hospitals, or in the example of a health crisis,

treating disease and providing community education. After this immediate response, organizations and communities enter what we call “recovery phases”, where longer-term initiatives to increase sustainability might occur, and where communities might plan to prevent similar disasters from happening again.

Throughout the past 5 months, CRWRF has been following this disaster response cycle to use your generous donations to support communities around the world as they faced the uncertainty of COVID-19. From the initial disaster response in treating COVID-19 patients, to supporting our partners as they prevent the spread of the virus with hygiene supplies and education, to providing food parcels and famine relief to those experiencing hunger as countries remain in lock-down, and incomes dry up.

The World Food Programme has estimated that global acute hunger will double by the end of this year; meaning more than 265 million people are at immediate risk of starvation<sup>1</sup>. This is not an intangible risk; as it is something that CRWRF’s partners around the world have been sharing with us and seeking support for over the past few months, and we expect this will continue as the world continues to recover from this disaster.



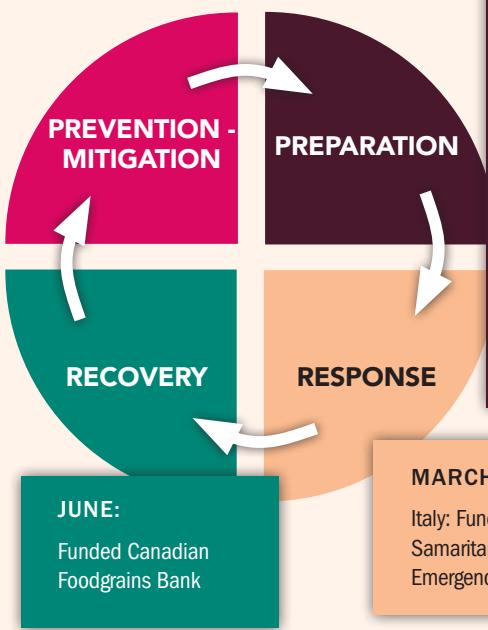
FOOD PARCELS BEING PREPARED & RECEIVED.

## What Happens When the Disaster Never Stops?

In no way are disasters or their responses simple, but they become even more complicated when conflict, such as war, is involved. Rather than moving into what we would call the “Recovery Phase,” countries in war are often stuck in the “Response Phase” - as the instability around trade, livelihoods, food security, and general safety prevent people from receiving and benefiting from opportunities to continue their lives. This is when the Disaster Response Cycle fails as a model; this is where we can become “stuck” in a disaster. This type of situation can be referred to as a protracted crisis. According to the United Nations, protracted crises are some of the most challenging contexts in which to address hunger and poverty<sup>2</sup>. These crises are driven by human-made factors (like war), natural hazards, and breakdowns in job security, food chains, and governance<sup>2</sup>.

Recall the Syrian conflict that began in 2011<sup>3</sup>. This conflict, which set off years of bitter fighting between many different groups, has also resulted in unfathomable suffering for Syrians, and the displacement of over six million people. Since 2014, CRWRF has been working with World Renew and MERATH in Lebanon on a project referred to as the Milk & Diapers Project. More details about this project will be presented in our Fall Newsletter.

## DISASTER RESPONSE CYCLE



### APRIL:

Kenya: Funded food, personal protective equipment (PPE) and emergency medical support for 3 rescue/orphan centres  
Indonesia: Funded food and soap for 300 families  
South Africa: Funded three-month supply of food parcels and soap for families and PPE for volunteers conducting home visits

### MAY:

Senegal: Funded food parcels and hygiene kits (soap, detergent) for 500 families for one month

### MARCH:

Italy: Funded the Samaritan's Purse Emergency Field Hospital

### MAY:

Lebanon: Funded hygiene kits, and health promotion information for Syrian refugees

References: <sup>1</sup> insight.wfp.org/covid-19-will-almost-double-people-in-acute-hunger-by-end-of-2020-59df0c4a8072

<sup>2</sup> fao.org/resilience/areas-of-work/protracted-crisis/en/

<sup>3</sup> bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-12749674