

# Vulnerability to COVID-19 containment measures

## Key factors which will shape the impact of the crisis

Thematic report – 21 April 2020

Countries across the world are enforcing a range of measures to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. These include, but are not limited to, closures of non-essential businesses, schools and borders and other restrictions aimed at enforcing social distancing. As of mid-April an estimated 2.6 billion people are living under a partial or full lockdown<sup>1</sup> (We Forum, 9/04/2020).

Containment measures have related health, social, and economic goals. Slowing down the virus means that health services are less likely to be overwhelmed and are protected, enabling them to respond to both COVID-19 and other health concerns. This should result in a reduction in loss of life.

For the economy the impact of containment measures is more complex. The immediate shock is great, and the long-term impact not understood; however, the alternative may be unprecedented levels of sick leave, which is thought to have greater negative impacts on the economy over the medium term. Tight containment measures were first imposed in industrialised, high-income countries where the imperative to contain the virus has been considered the priority, despite significant immediate economic losses. Containment measures have also been enforced in lower to middle income countries; however, in these contexts it is more difficult to ascertain whether the benefits of such measures outweigh the potential economic costs, both at national and household level (Financial Times, 07/04/2020; Foreign Policy, 10/04/2020).

ACAPS selected **eight underlying factors** that will influence the extent to which containment measures impact a country, both in the short to mid/long term:

1. Scope and adaptability of social protection programmes
2. Reliance on informal economies
3. Commerce and international trade
4. Remittances
5. Cross-border dynamics and migration
6. Rule of law
7. Standard of essential services
8. Social and cultural behaviour and the level of community adherence

### Limitations

This report provides an overview of how eight factors will shape the impact of containment measures in low and middle-income countries. In reality the impact felt in one country may differ significantly in another. Analysis of the nuances between regions and countries is beyond the scope of this report; rather this document is intended to provide a starting point that encourages humanitarian actors to engage with how these issues will interact with containment measures.

This report does not provide analysis of the many different ways in which governments are responding to the crisis. It refers to containment measures and government policy broadly but assumes that in most cases these include attempts to enforce social distancing, and in many cases partial or total lockdown.

The eight factors highlighted in this report are broad and comprise various components. Again, it is beyond the scope of the report to provide a comprehensive breakdown of the different aspects. This report presents these factors separately in order to focus on the main characteristics of each. In reality they do not occur in isolation and there is considerable overlap and interplay among them.

While the focus of this report is on low- and middle-income countries, (these being the contexts where humanitarian and development actors are most likely to operate), and the examples given are from such contexts, the issues highlighted are also features of high-income countries.

<sup>1</sup> Highly populous countries including Brazil and China are not currently under lockdown.

# VULNERABILITY to CONTAINMENT MEASURES

Key factors which will shape the impact of the COVID-19 crisis...

Scope & adaptability of social protection programmes

Reliance on informal economies

Commerce & international trade

Importance of remittances

Cross-border dynamics & migration

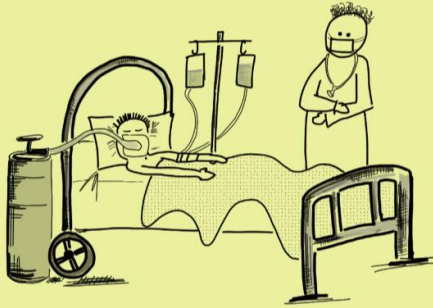
Rule of law

Social & cultural behaviour & level of community adherence

Standards of essential services

Because of their interaction with all parts of society

## Health



## Living conditions & essential services



## Social cohesion & protection



Robust & flexible social protection schemes have the best chance of responding to the massive needs.

As more households lose livelihoods, needs increase, social protection is required.

HOW MANY COUNTRIES HAVE SOCIAL PROTECTION SYSTEMS THAT WILL COPE?

PEOPLE IN LOW INCOME COUNTRIES ARE HEAVILY DEPENDENT ON INFORMAL ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES.

- ↓ Social distancing
- ↓ Limited informal economic opportunities
- ↓ Reduced income
- ↓ Food insecurity
- ↓ Housing problems
- ↓ Increased health vulnerabilities

"Invisible workers" are not entitled to social protection.

Disproportionate impact on female workers.

DISRUPTED INTERNATIONAL SUPPLY CHAINS

Export markets dry up  
Unemployment increases

Problems for countries reliant on imports  
No income from international trade routes

No income from tourism

REMITTANCES: biggest source of external funding for recipient countries.

Travel & movement restrictions impact migrant workers — INTERNATIONAL RURAL-URBAN

If they go home =

- loss of income
- potential COVID-19 spread

If they stay =

- loss of income
- increased cost of living

CLOSED BORDERS will —

- limit some livelihoods
- stop people seeing relatives

If the motivation to cross is strong, people will look for alternatives.

Unofficial crossing risks:

- These are the routes of illegal activities (trafficking & smuggling)
- Protection threats
- Dangerous terrain
- Facilitation of COVID-19 spread

The reasons people seek safety haven't disappeared. People will still flee danger and seek asylum.

It's likely they will be less successful —

- Forced back to danger
- Held in transit centres

Containment measures & states of emergency mean some RIGHTS & FREEDOMS could be limited.

COVID-19 + weak rule of law + poor human rights = increased risk of...

- Legitimized aggression of authorities
- Human rights violations
- Abuses of power
- Threats to marginalized groups.

Governments may try to extend restrictions beyond when they are needed.

\* SOCIAL DISTANCING is harder to do in (most) low income countries.

\* Sometimes people will choose livelihoods over safety.

\* Sometimes social & cultural pressures are hard to resist.

\* If there is pre-existing low trust in governments people may not believe the advice & ignore guidelines.

HEALTH SYSTEMS will be stretched. If capacity can not increase, regular services will suffer.

EDUCATION: school's are closed for 50% of the world's children.

GIRLS & BOYS OUT OF SCHOOL = Risks

- SEGV
- Child marriage
- Child labour
- Recruitment (armed groups)
- Not returning to school (drop outs)

DISPROPORTIONATE impact on WOMEN

- 67% of health workers
- Main carers for sick, children, elderly
- Increased domestic violence

## About this report

The impact of COVID-19 containment measures on a country will differ depending on current living conditions and access to essential services, as well as social cohesion and standards of protection available to the population.

ACAPS' analysis is focused on how low- and middle-income countries are vulnerable to containment measures. This is a first-step analysis product, which will shape ACAPS country and regional case studies that will look into some of these issues in greater depth.

The analysis in this report is based on secondary data review. It also takes in to consideration data retrieved from [ACAPS Humanitarian Experts Network](#) and [ACAPS Government Measures dataset](#).

### A one-size-fits-all approach to containment is not the answer

The benefits of containment measures must be weighed against the economic costs and potential risks imposed on a given society. For example, in countries with a high proportion of the population engaged in informal labour<sup>2</sup>, people are more vulnerable to the shocks caused by a lockdown on movement. There are rarely support structures in place to help informal workers and so if people are unable to access their regular source of income, some families and communities will be pushed beyond their financial capacity to cope. In turn this may reduce the level to which people adhere to the rules enforced. Without adapting efforts to mitigate the spread of the virus to suit different contexts, the damage caused by containment measures may result be more severe in the short and long term (Foreign Policy, 10/04/2020; London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, 03/2020).

## Scope and adaptability of social protection programmes

Social protection is a set of policies and programmes designed to reduce and prevent poverty and vulnerability during our lives. **COVID-19 has created an unprecedented need for social protection programmes to protect households, national and international economies.** Within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, containment measures will result in a large proportion of a country's population being unable to access their regular livelihood activities and there will be significant losses of income. Consequently, households and individuals will struggle to meet their needs and the demand for additional financial support will grow exponentially. Even in high income countries,

containment measures are exposing weaknesses of existing and newly formed social protection programmes, and there will be population groups that fall through the cracks, such as migrant workers or stateless people who do not appear on any government register (The World Bank 28/03/2019; 04/2020; 08/04/2020; Yale University, 02/04/2020; ILO, 18/04/20; Foreign Policy, 10/04/2020; New York Times, 12/04/2020).

A country's ability to adapt existing social protection mechanisms and set up new ones, will be an important factor in reducing and responding to expected humanitarian needs. In lower to middle income countries a relatively robust social protection programme will increase the chance of mitigating economic damage at the household level caused by the containment measures. **Existing systems can potentially be utilised in order to quickly identify the most vulnerable and distribute additional financial support** from international organisations or funding bodies. There are efforts to learn from experiences of linking social protection and humanitarian cash from contexts such as the Nepal earthquake response in 2014 and in the Philippines during the Hurricane Haiyan response in 2013, Dominica and the British Virgin Islands Hurricanes Irma/Maria 2017. The Global HRP calls for the increase of the use of cash assistance, linked, where possible, to social protection systems, in line with the Grand Bargain commitments (CALP, 02/2016).

**The COVID-19 pandemic has led to a rapid expansion and creation of new social protection programmes.** The pace is quick and the implementation of these proposals must continue to be monitored. It is very likely that in some lower income countries, existing social protection programmes will be unable to cope with the rise in demand. Significant hits on the national economy, may in fact result in governments having to reduce current levels of financial support. Where existing social protection programmes rely on donor support, reductions in ODA flows may even see decreases to pre-pandemic social protection programmes. The role of international and regional financial institutions will be critical in meeting humanitarian needs, as debt relief and concessions will directly impact a country's ability to protect not just the most vulnerable but large swathes of the population (ACAPS HEN, 14/04/2020, IMF, 18/04/20 The Brink, 04/2020).

<sup>2</sup> Informal labour is broadly categorised as employment that is hidden from monetary, regulatory, and institutional authorities. Informal labour often includes work centered around the provision of good and services (OECD; The World Bank).



## Reliance on informal economies

In lower income countries there is high reliance on informal economies. **The World Bank estimates that around 70% of people living in low and middle income countries rely on informal labour**, half of which are self-employed. Around 95% of the world's total informal employment is in low and middle income countries. While overall there are more men involved in informal employment, the percentage of women (92%) engaged in informal employment in lower income countries, is higher than that of men (87%) (ILO, 2019).

Informal employment means that people depend on daily or weekly wages and are paid in cash. There is no formal contract, nor protection from labour laws, and there is no tax declaration. There is often no government record of informal workers, and therefore even in contexts where there may be some level of social insurance policy in place, identifying everyone in need of support is challenging and open to huge inaccuracies as well as misuse. Even in high-income countries some groups of 'informal workers' are often not recognised at all and as a result, are not entitled to any social or economic assistance from the state. This is for instance the case of sex workers in many European countries. In many high-income countries there are those who are registered with the state but do not necessarily qualify for assistance, for example those who are self-employed, or on 'zero-hour' contracts. (The World Bank, 04/2020; New York Times, 30/02/2020; Foreign Policy, 10/04/2020; Yale University, 02/04/2020; Euronews 16/04/2020).

**To implement social distancing policies is to limit access to livelihoods for millions of people.** In contexts where many people are living hand to mouth, the inability to generate an income means no access to food. For households already facing situations of food insecurity, their needs will be increased as a result of containment measures. FAO data shows that between 16% and 37% of households in lower-income countries were food insecure before the pandemic (FAO 04/2020; Foreign Policy, 10/04/2020).

For people living in rented accommodation, a loss of income means **not being able to pay landlords and can result in a loss of housing**. Depending on how long containment measures are kept in place, a potential drop in access to food and shelter risks exacerbating longer-term problems such as malnutrition and other chronic health problems. The medium-term impact of this will then be an additional burden on already strained health systems. (Foreign Policy, 10/04/2020; Yale University, 02/04/2020).

An additional point of concern is that should people find that containment measures result in the inability to pursue usual livelihood activities, they may be forced to seek an income via **illegal and more dangerous lines of work**, usually out of sight of the authorities. This might include sex work, organ transplants, or engagement with illicit trade networks.

The ability to focus on preventing something from occurring weeks down the track is likely an unavailable luxury for those without weeks' worth of savings, or stores of food and medicine. Extended family, neighbours, and friends are typically the main sources of support during difficult times (such as periods of unemployment, agricultural failures, and other household economic shocks). Strict containment measures will make it more difficult, and in some cases prevent entirely, these normal support systems from functioning (BBC, 15/04/2020; Oxfam, 01/07/2015; Foreign Policy, 10/04/2020; Yale University, 02/04/2020; ACAPS HEN, 14/04/2020).

### Informal economies shape the impact of containment measures:

- Following the lockdown imposed across India in April, there were reports of migrant workers in cities being out of work, unable access food and shelter, and attempting to walk back to their homes in rural areas. In addition to highlighting the precarious livelihoods many people in low income countries contend with, this risks potential spread of COVID-19 to otherwise unaffected areas as they move through the country. It also illustrates the compounding risks individuals and the broader population face as one event leads to another. Similar patterns could emerge in other countries where people leave their normal residences to find work (Financial Times, 15/04/2020; Al Jazeera, 14/04/2020).
- A study in Bangladesh and Nepal revealed how the most vulnerable communities were more concerned about the impact of containment measures on their livelihoods and access to food, rather than on the spread of COVID-19 and their own health (Foreign Policy, 10/04/2020; Yale University, 02/04/2020).

## Commerce

The global economy is highly integrated. Manufacturing is dependent on international supply chains. International tourism, including intercontinental tourism has expanded exponentially. Beyond staple commodities, food is now also internationally traded on an unprecedented scale. The most socio-economically disadvantaged people are generally employed in manufacturing and service sectors on relatively low wages. The forced closure of businesses and all non-essential services is having a widespread impact on national economies and impacting availability and access to goods and compromising employment in many sectors across the globe.

Living standards are affected by a country's ability to produce or import basic foods and other goods. In the event of shocks to the global economy, **countries with higher self-sufficiency are better able to mitigate the impact of a reduction in trade**. While all states

are affected by a global economic downturn, those most dependent on imports will suffer disproportionately if domestic production cannot compensate for shortages. For example, the United States and the Russian Federation alone represent one-quarter of the world's cereals exports. Adding exports from India, Argentina, Australia and Ukraine, these six countries comprise more than half of the world's total cereals exports (UNCTAD). Many countries are reliant on these countries to supply their markets and will be severely impacted if there is a drop in production. Should containment measures prevent or significantly disrupt the international cereals trade, producer countries will suffer economic loss while many others will face food insecurity.

**Alongside the disruption of imports due to supply problems, exports are also disrupted by a fall in demand.** Should lower income countries find their export markets drying up, their cash availability to support their populations will be compromised. The textile and garment industry represents a significant source of income in China and many countries of East Asia, representing an economic growth driver for example in Vietnam and Cambodia (The Asean Post 02/04/2020). Cancellation of orders for imports of clothing to Europe have already started and will continue. Furthermore, countries that receive income from trade routes will suffer economic setbacks as the routes become significantly less active, such as the Suez Canal in Egypt.

**Tourism is a major factor in the availability of cash and for many countries is the primary industry.** Around 9% of Africa's GDP is represented by tourism and travel. For example Tanzania and Tunisia are significantly reliant on the hospitality and tourism sector (respectively 14% and 10% of GDP). Countries reliant on tourism will be heavily affected by restrictions on movement as part of COVID-19 containment measures. Furthermore, as demand from international markets declines, unemployment rates will increase as the drop in revenue means businesses can no longer afford staff wages.

### Trade relations and level of country self-sufficiency shape the impact of containment measures:

- 90% of Yemen's food supply is imported and so the country is highly vulnerable to the disruption of exports. The temporary halt of exports from Russia is affecting the already dire food security situation of many Yemeni households (Mercy Corps 31/03/2020).
- Countries across Africa that are highly dependent on generating revenue from natural resource sales to international markets are already experiencing a downturn in their economy. This includes Democratic Republic of Congo, Nigeria, Ghana, and Zambia, among others. China is the biggest receiver of exports from Africa and since the COVID-19 outbreak emerged, China's demand for African commodities has

decreased. Meanwhile as fewer goods are being imported, the price of basic commodities is increasing as well as the price of essential medical supplies such as face masks (Baker McKenzie, 03/2020; Mercy Corps 31/03/2020).

- In Bangladesh the garments and textile industry is the primary driver of the country's economy, and has been hard hit by the drop in international demand. Millions of people are at risk of losing their jobs as clothing factories have been forced to close. While in some cases the closures will be temporary, in others the economic damage may be so great they will be unable to recover and reopen. (VOX EU 05/04/2020; CGWR 27/03/2020; Al Jazeera, 01/04/2020).

## Remittances

Globally financial remittance flows have steadily increased since the 1990s. In 2017, migrant workers sent an estimated USD 466 billion to families in low- and middle- income countries. This increased in 2018, and in 2019 remittances grew to \$550 billion - making remittances the single biggest source of external funding for recipient economies. Excluding flows to China, remittances to low- and middle-income countries in 2018 were significantly larger than the USD 344 billion in total foreign direct investment that year. Money sent home from abroad is shown to be more stable than private debt and several times larger than international development aid (WeForum 06/2018, 10/2019).

International travel restrictions and social distancing measures will have a marked **impact on remittance flows from international migrants as well as in-country rural-urban migrants.** Thousands of workers in cities have returned to their home places. For many households, family members returning home from urban areas means loss of income while at the same time increases exposure to COVID-19 in rural areas.

Where migrants do not return home, it is likely they will be exposed to a loss of income. This will most likely lead to a reduction in remittances as the migrant's living costs remain constant or increase. In addition, **transaction costs, already high at around 10% in some contexts, may increase due to volatile exchange rates and higher operating costs** faced by money agents. Picking up the cash is also harder because of lockdowns. Mobile and online payments are faring better, but they make up only about 15-20% of remittances; switching to digital is not always easy, since opening an account can require identity documents, proof of address, and in many European countries a work permit or residence visa. (IFPRI 01/04/2020 ISPI 09/04/2020 Economist 04/2020).

As soon as containment measures that prevent migrants from earning are relaxed, remittances can be expected to rise again so long as people are able to resume work. (WEForum 10/2919, WB 04/2020).

## Reliance on remittances shape the impact of containment measures:

- So far, eight countries have enacted policies that cite a forecasted plunge in remittances, according to International Monetary Fund's policy tracker. Countries such as Bangladesh, Haiti, and Sri Lanka already saw the negative effect of COVID-19 measures on outward and inward remittances.
- Remittances are falling sharply across Africa. At one payments company, transfers from Britain to East Africa may have fallen by 80%. Another has seen flows from Italy to Africa drop by 90%. Bankers in Somalia, where remittances are worth 23% of GDP, say they are running out of notes. (*Economist* 04/2020)
- In Bangladesh, remittances represent around 5% of the country's GDP. Most migrant workers are based in the Gulf states. However, in many Gulf states migrant workers live in labour camps that have been entirely shut down or put in quarantine following COVID-19 containment measures, not allowing many migrant workers to continue their activities (*Reuters* 14/04/2020). On other hand, in order to restrict capital outflows as a result of COVID-19 measures, since early April the Sri Lanka authorities have suspended outward remittances (*IMF* 10/04/2020).

## Cross border dynamics and migration

The extent of prevention of cross-border movement will vary from region to region, depending on the capacity of authorities to enforce restrictions. In rural areas, with limited government or security presence, borders will for the most part remain unaffected. In more developed areas or where it is well known that crossing points are regularly used, the authorities will be more able to prevent movement. While for some this will result in a loss of access to income or inability to visit relatives, others will continue to try to pursue cross-border activities despite restrictions. This is likely to result in an increase in the number of people using unofficial border points. Increased use of irregular routes carries a number of risks: irregular routes are commonly used by trafficking and smuggling networks, presenting a protection threat; the terrain is often dangerous; and increased movement may facilitate the spread of the virus itself (*Al Jazeera*, 22/03/2020; *VOA News*, 03/04/2020).

People living in conflict affected regions will continue to attempt to cross borders in search of safety. As borders close, there is an increased risk that migrants will find themselves stuck in remote areas with limited or no access to essential services. Alternatively, people may find themselves held in transit centres, unable to move onwards or return home, as authorities curtail further movement in attempt to contain the spread of the virus. In some cases people fleeing situations of conflict will attempt to cross into

neighbouring countries to seek asylum, but will be denied access and immediately turned away and sent to face dangerous circumstances in their country of origin (*UN Africa Renewal*, 02/04/2020; *TNH*, 25/03/2020).

## Cross-border movement shapes the impact of containment measures:

- Venezuela and Colombia have enforced strict quarantine rules, and the border between the two countries is officially closed. Official border points are guarded by additional security forces on both sides, and authorities announced plans to arrest anyone attempting to cross the border unauthorised. Since the border closure there has been an increase in the use of irregular crossing points (*trochas*), as people continue to cross into Colombia daily, mostly in search of basic goods. Meanwhile, Venezuelan migrants in Colombia have been hard hit by the economic impact of the lockdown as they usually rely on informal work for income. Furthermore, their access to healthcare and other essential services is dwindling. As a result, thousands are now returning to Venezuela (*ICG*, 15/04/2020; *The Lancet*, 28/03/2020; *El Tiempo* 16/03/2020).
- In Niger a nationwide lockdown was enforced in March, however migrants from over 15 different countries continue to arrive daily including pregnant women, children, and people with injuries. Several thousand migrants are being held at IOM transit centres and repatriation or relocation is currently not possible due to movement restrictions (*IN Africa Renewal*, 02/04/2020).
- Following the closure of Europe's borders, migrants prevented from reaching Italy and Malta from North Africa are stuck on NGO rescue boats in the Mediterranean Sea without clear instruction on how they will be supported (*TNH*, 13/04/2020).
- South Sudanese trying to seek asylum in Uganda have been turned away by authorities in a move that undermines Ugandan refugee policy. Uganda has closed its transit and reception centres in attempt to limit the spread of COVID-19 (*TNH*, 25/03/2020).

## Rule of law

As containment measures are enacted, it is accepted that certain rights and freedoms will be limited. Law enforcement agencies are tasked with ensuring that the rules are respected and granted additional powers to prosecute those who do not adhere (Council of Europe 08/04/2020). In countries with weak rule of law and poor human rights records, there is particular cause for concern that the enforcement of tight controls on a population and **unethical interpretations of the state of emergency legislation by political groups risks legitimising aggressive behaviour from authorities**, which could manifest in human rights violations.

The manipulation of the rule of law is not specific to low-middle income countries, rather it is more likely to occur in countries where a regime has a history of using authoritarian approaches to stay in power the current situation risks providing an opportunity for security forces, including the police, armed forces and other para-military groups to abuse their position of power. There is a risk that **certain population groups already discriminated against, will be subjected to further scrutiny or abuse** under the guise that security forces are ensuring containment measures are respected. In contexts where heavy-handed control mechanisms are often the status quo, there is likely to be a rise in the use of violence against the population including a spike in the number of people being summarily arrested and detained, as well as people being unlawfully forced to pay fines (HRW, 03/04/2020; New York Times, 30/03/2020).

There is a **risk that state of emergency legislation will be used to pass laws and decrees that go beyond the purpose of preventing, mitigating, or responding to the spread of COVID-19**. Likewise, in some countries, containment measures such as physical distancing might be used as an expedient to continue forbidding protests and political gatherings (e.g., of the opposition) also after the end of the pandemic.

### Standards of rule of law shape the impact of containment measures:

- In Uganda an additional security body has been created to enforce containment measures. There are reports that the group has used excessive force against civilians, meanwhile people detained in hotels were forced to pay their own bill (Human Rights Watch, 25/03/2020; 02/04/2020; Al Jazeera, 01/04/2020).
- Emergency legislation in the Philippines, enabling the President to permit law enforcement officials to shoot anyone violating quarantine measures (La Prensa Latina 02/04/2020).
- In Kenya police forces violently cracked down to enforce a curfew resulting in the death of a child (Human Rights Watch, 25/03/2020).

## Standards of essential service

The standards of the education and health sectors available in a country will determine the extent to which these services can adapt in order to continue to deliver some level of service despite containment measures.

### Health

In most higher-income countries the ability to provide primary health care will largely continue, with social distancing measures being enforced inside health care facilities. In lower income countries, where health systems are already under immense strain this is more challenging. Firstly because of the additional pressure caused by a likely rise in the number of people needing treatment for COVID-19, and secondly because of a pre-existing lack of resources and personnel to practically enforce social distancing at health facilities.

In some countries there is **a risk that health services deemed non-essential will be forced to close or reduce operating hours**. In part due to an attempt to minimise person to person contact, but also to bulk capacity to attend to COVID-19 patients. Two health services at risk of being deemed non-essential include sexual and reproductive health care psychosocial support. Both must be regarded as essential services and exceptions to containment rules. According to a survey conducted among its members by the Planned Parenthood Federation, over 5,000 mobile or community-based clinics providing sexual and reproductive health care have been forced to close in at least 64 countries around the world. There has already been an increase in reported incidents of domestic violence from countries across the world as more and more people are forced to stay home. Opportunities to seek assistance, either from law enforcement or health support including psychosocial care, will be even more restricted than usual (Oxfam, 01/07/2015; UNDP 2015; Centre for Global Development 16/03/2020; IPPF, 09/04/2020).

Treatment for other illnesses is also at risk of not being maintained. This is of particular concern in countries where there are high caseloads of diseases that lead to hundreds of thousands of deaths annually, including malaria, TB and HIV (Forbes, 29/03/2020). Furthermore, policies of social distancing and movement restrictions are impacting vaccination campaigns in low-middle income countries (The Lancet, 17/04/2020).

**The health service may be further strained in its ability to operate if many health workers are forced to stay home** to take care of family members including children who are out of school as well as for older and extended family members. Globally women comprise around 67% of healthcare workers, although this percentage is higher in lower- and middle- income countries. More than 79% of nurses are female in all regions except Africa (65%) (WHO, 03/2019; UNDP 2015; Centre for Global Development 16/03/2020; The Lancet, 16/03/2020; Davies SE and Bennett B, 2016; Harman 2, 2016; Smith, 2019; WHO 03/2019; IPPF, 09/04/2020).



## Education

In over 140 countries, schools have been closed rendering at least half the world's children currently not in school (ACAPS Government measures data set, April 2020). **In some contexts, education services have been able to adapt** by having the capacity to provide either home or remote learning. In the vast majority of contexts home learning will not be a possibility, due a combination of reasons including the employment status of the child's carer, the level of educational attainment of the carer and the home environment in general as well as the ability of the schools to provide take home learning packs. Similarly, remote learning is a luxury available in only a few contexts because it assumes access to technology hardware (computers and tablets) and internet connectivity (Forbes, 03/2018).

School closures create risks for girls in countries with limited or non-functioning child protection services. Girls who are forced to stay out of school for long periods of time are vulnerable to sexual and gender-based violence, including rape. There may be an increase in the number of adolescent pregnancies and early marriage following the outbreak. Boys are at higher risk of being forced in to child labour, including illegal work, and in situations affected by conflict become more at risk of recruitment by armed groups. **If children are out of school for too long, especially adolescent girls, the likelihood they will return to school decreases** (Centre for Global Development 16/03/2020; World Bank, 19/03/2020; Quartz Africa, 06/11/2015; UNDP, 26/10/2015; HRW, 03/04/2020; Baytiyeh, 2018).

## Socio-cultural behaviours and the level of community adherence

Community Mobility Reports published by Google show **widespread adherence to social distancing guidelines in high-income countries but in lower-income countries adherence is seemingly less** (Google, 04/2020; Foreign Policy, 10/04/2020; Scroll.in, 14/04/2020). While in lower income countries the pursuit of livelihood options may take precedent over protection from the spread of the virus, there are certain social and cultural elements that may also influence community behaviour and the extent of adherence to the rules.

Separate to authoritarianism and law enforcement, **the level of trust that civil society places in its government will impact adherence**. In contexts where trust for the government is high, populations are more likely to believe that the measures put in place have been done so with correct intentions. However, in situations, where trust in the government is low there is more likely to be a perception that the government is manipulating the situation to its own advantage, for example choosing to delay an election.

In some cultures, **familial ties are particularly strong and therefore staying away from relatives is less likely to be maintained**. Similarly, it is often the case that people depend on their extended family members to provide them with necessary support and in many cases three different generations may reside in the same home, thus also making physical distancing less feasible.

The toll that social distancing or situations of lockdown and quarantine can take on individual mental health is a universal phenomenon, however there may be certain cultural factors that might exacerbate the psychosocial impact of such circumstance. In some countries religious events hold highly important cultural significance and **the psychosocial impact of not being able to attend such events may be particularly profound**. In some instances, continuing to attend such events may take precedent over the decision to adhere to containment rules.