Digital Green

Our proven approaches in supporting farming communities during COVID-19

Digital Green's assets and capabilities uniquely position us to help mitigate the effects on COVID-19 on farming communities globally, as well as other ongoing crises, such as pest infestations (locusts, Fall Armyworm), and risks caused by climate change. Digital Green is a global development organization that empowers smallholder farmers to lift themselves out of poverty by harnessing the collective power of technology and grassroots-level partnerships. We have reached over 2.3 million farmers across 17,000 villages in 9 countries, primarily in India and Ethiopia, since 2008.

The impact of COVID-19

COVID-19 threatens both the health and livelihoods of rural communities. Agrarian economies are affected by shutdowns of rural markets and transportation restrictions, disrupting supply chains and markets for 80% of consumers[1] in Africa and Asia and putting at risk nutrition[2] for the most vulnerable. COVID-19 has already been a large shock to smallholder farmers, beyond their ability to cope for now and recover in the long term; 14-23 million people could fall into poverty[3] as a result.

Our solutions to help farmers survive, thrive, and build resilience

Digital Green is supporting farmers by establishing new ways of delivering advisory services and strengthening market linkage, building on the potential of a more connected society, with 47% of the global society now connected through mobile internet. At the same time, we also leverage offline solutions due to key gaps in digital access, with rural populations 40% less likely to use mobile internet than urban populations, and women 23% less likely than men.[4] Our proven approaches include:

1. Developing customized and relevant content

Digital Green customizes content based on farmer feedback. We are working with government partners to develop locally-relevant video(s) with COVID-19 awareness messaging, to supplement videos on agronomic topics. Digital Green has developed **more than 6,000 localized videos in 50 languages and dialects, with 57 million views** on our YouTube channel demonstrating the demand for this advisory information.

[1] How COVID-19 may disrupt food supply chains in developing countries, IFPRI, April 2, 2020
[2] The COVID-19 nutrition crisis: What to expect and how to protect, IFPRI, April 23, 2020
[3] Will COVID-19 cause another food crisis? An early review, IFPRI, April 10, 2020
[4] The State of Mobile Internet Connectivity 2019, GSMA Connected Society, July 2019

2. Strengthening digital behavior change communication

As in-person extension is interrupted, Digital Green is reimagining the future of digital extension. The videos produced by Digital Green and its partners have reached **over 2.3 million farmers (77% women),** primarily in India and Ethiopia, to **increase uptake of practices by 50% & yields by 46% compared to traditional approaches.**[5] In addition to screening videos in smaller groups to comply with social distancing requirements, we are also repacking and redelivering content via **digital communication channels** such as radio, IVR, and SMS. We are strengthening online digital communities (on platforms like WhatsApp and Telegram) to enhance peer-to-peer learning and use integrated channels to reinforce messaging (for example, by combining videos with IVR).

3. Managing farmer feedback and data

Digital Green is developing new methods for **farmer-centered data sharing** to respond to immediate and changing needs. Digital Green's system for tracking farmer- and agent-level data, Connect Online Connect Offline (COCO), collects and analyzes data on message content, dissemination, and adoption of promoted practices, generating a dashboard with views by geography, gender and practice. We are also developing an open **interoperable data sharing platform** called FarmStack which will provide the data standards and technology architecture for multiple organizations to build their own data-driven applications on top of it. Digital Green is also conducting farmer surveys in India and Ethiopia to collect feedback on emerging needs related to the crisis and working with government partners to build a database of farmer phone numbers.

4. Improving market linkages

To help farmers overcome market disruptions. Digital Green has launched a supplier directory connecting buyers and farmers, as an alternative to traditional approaches (such as farm visits and collection centers) that may be restricted during lockdowns. Buyers discover local produce, assess quality via photos and connect directly with farmers to purchase. This directory builds on Kisan Diary, an online smart ledger to maintain, analyze and improve farming using financial records. Digital Green also facilitates transport services and logistics for farmers via Loop, an application that aggregates farmer produce to improve their negotiating power to lower transport costs and increase income from sales.

5. Building extension system capacity

Digital Green supports government partners by building their capacity and helping support policies and programs. As we do with farmers, we seek to be both responsive to immediate needs of our partners and proactive in planning for the future. In India, we work with the National Rural Livelihood Mission and its state counterparts; and in Ethiopia, we work closely with the Ministry of Agriculture's Agricultural Extension Directorate and the Regional Bureaus of Agriculture and the Agricultural Transformation Agency. With in-person training on hold, we are now building extension capacity via our online training courseware. We already have a track record of training **21,800 frontline workers (42% women).** With our Development Local Extension Capacity program, we are a thought leader in strengthening extension by creating and sharing learnings.

[5] A peer-reviewed RCT conducted by Innovations for Poverty Action and Jameel Poverty Action Lab in Bihar, India, demonstrated 50% higher practice adoption rates compared to the state extension provider's traditional approach, and 46% yield increases among those adopters.