

# Executive Summary

With Covid-19, the world is being confronted with multiple pandemics rather than just one. Covid-19 has provoked a polypandemic that is undermining development progress, exacerbating state fragility, and potentially further eroding international cooperation. If left unmitigated, the coronavirus pandemic and the pandemics that accompany it, including those of hunger, inequality, and authoritarian rule, will disproportionately hit those populations that were most vulnerable to begin with.

The Covid-19 pandemic is a global and multifaceted crisis. No region of the world has been spared its dire toll on lives and well-being. And no part of the globe has remained unaffected by the socio-economic shock produced by Covid-19 and its grim effects on human livelihoods. Yet, some nations, societies, and people are struggling more than others. In places that already suffered from low development, state fragility, and violent conflict before Covid-19, the pandemic's direct and indirect fallout threaten to be much more severe. Facing weak healthcare systems, frail economies, and tattered state-society relations, many of these contexts lack the capacities to cope with coronavirus-induced shocks.

At the moment, however, there is a huge imbalance between, on the one hand, the human suffering and the threats to international peace and security that the pandemic might provoke in these contexts and, on the other hand, the attention and assistance that Germany, Europe, and the international community have dedicated to them. In this regard, wealthier states' pandemic responses are a continuation of a pre-pandemic trend: one of underinvestment in the safety and well-being of the world's most vulnerable places. By highlighting the consequences, Covid-19 has served as a magnifying glass for the mistakes of the past. It has relentlessly exposed the extent to which insufficient efforts to foster development, curb fragility, and reduce violent conflict have gradually weakened many countries' capacities to cope with significant stress. And it has highlighted the costs of pre-pandemic policies that successively eroded the collective tools for solving global problems and for containing their effects on the world's most vulnerable people.

But the pandemic is not just opening our eyes to troubles that long predate the coronavirus outbreak. It also represents a critical juncture. The international community now has two options: It can either continue on the track of underinvestment, thereby allowing the pandemic to exacerbate existing disparities and vulnerabilities. Or it can finally change course and embrace policies that understand solidarity as self-interest and protection as a strategic investment in the future.

The first scenario is highly worrisome. Without decisive action, the pandemic might well wreak havoc in the most vulnerable parts of the world. Already, it threatens to undo years of progress in global development, potentially pushing millions more into poverty and causing food insecurity in various parts of the world. Democracy faces fierce headwinds as a result of Covid-19 and violent nonstate actors have already begun to exploit the pandemic to extend their own reach. And with the world distracted by Covid-19, some actors have even intensified their involvement in conflict – including in Europe’s immediate neighborhood.

Yet, the damage that could be done by Covid-19 will by no means only impact states. It could also affect the international stage. By aggravating great-power competition inside multilateral institutions and by intensifying nationalist and protectionist sentiments, Covid-19 has already revealed its potential to exacerbate the crisis of multilateral cooperation. For the countries that are hardest hit by the fallout of Covid-19 and that disproportionately depend on global solidarity and effective multilateral solutions, this is particularly dire news.

This gloomy scenario is by no means a given. Decisive action by the international community can prevent this outcome from materializing. By relentlessly exposing the extent to which our well-being depends on the well-being of others, the pandemic could well serve as a wake-up call.

Instead of further dismantling the multilateral architecture, it could induce actors to revive cooperative formats. And instead of turning inward and exclusively focusing on the challenges that confront them at home, Germany, Europe, and other wealthy states could come to understand the urgent need to protect the world’s most vulnerable people, to aid them in resisting and recovering from Covid-19, and to increase investments in development, resilience, and peace.

In a first step, states should fully renounce protectionist measures in the realm of medical supplies and protective equipment. Protectionism is a serious threat to the world's most vulnerable nations and their ability to protect their own people. And if vaccine nationalism prevails, the Global South will be the first to lose out.

Second, saving lives and protecting livelihoods must be the order of the day. To this end, wealthy states need to extend the financial generosity that characterized their own domestic pandemic responses to ongoing humanitarian relief efforts. To date, major global humanitarian initiatives still face considerable funding gaps. To help its most vulnerable members, the international community needs to link short-term aid to meet immediate needs with investments in countries' long-term crisis resilience. Even in light of growing pressure on all governments' budgets, ODA must not fall victim to cuts. Instead, for European and other key players, it is time to (re-)commit to the 0.7 percent target of ODA spending. Furthermore, efforts to limit the pandemic's disruptive effects in the most vulnerable parts of the world will also demand discussions on debt relief. Here, the G20 is uniquely positioned to lead.

Third, as countries help others rebuild and recover, efforts to improve prevention and strengthen resilience should accompany them at every step of the way. Investments in stronger healthcare systems, in resilient economies, and in solid and trusting relationships should be at the heart of such efforts everywhere in the world. But states also have to "build back better" at the international level. They particularly need to strengthen the collaborative institutions and instruments that are crucial for effective global solidarity.

And the pandemic has revealed something else: The relationship between more and less developed parts of the world does not need to be a one-way street. When it comes to fighting infectious diseases, the past months have evinced, the developed West has a lot to learn from many developing states.

Moments of crisis always represent a chance. The poly pandemic might offer many of them. For Germany, Europe, and the international community it offers a tremendous opportunity to support affected countries in their efforts to "build back better" and thereby decrease the global disparities that undermine international peace, stability, and resilience.

# The Polyandemic at a Glance

<b>+100%</b>	<b>The Hunger Pandemic</b> Covid-19-induced increase in the number of people facing acute food insecurity <sup>1</sup>
<b>83–132 million</b>	People that could become undernourished due to Covid-19 in 2020 <sup>2</sup>
<b>828 million</b>	Most drastic estimate by the FAO of the total number of people that could be undernourished by the end of 2020 <sup>3</sup>
	<b>The Inequality Pandemic</b>
<b>30% vs. 9%</b>	Death rate spike until July among People of Color vs. white people in the United States <sup>4</sup>
<b>29 vs. 3</b>	Physicians per 10,000 people in OECD vs. least developed countries <sup>5</sup>
<b>4,200 vs. 74,255</b>	Covid-19 tests per million people in Africa vs. Europe by early July <sup>6</sup>
	<b>The Poverty Pandemic</b>
<b>88–115 million</b>	Additional people in extreme poverty in 2020 due to Covid-19 <sup>7</sup>
<b>1st</b>	Increase in global poverty since 1990 <sup>8</sup>
<b>495 million</b>	Full-time jobs estimated to be lost due to Covid-19 in 2020 <sup>9</sup>
<b>ca. 20%</b>	Drop in remittance flows to low- and middle-income countries expected for 2020 <sup>10</sup>
	<b>The Violence Pandemic</b>
<b>21,000</b>	People killed in conflict in the first three months after the UN Security Council's global ceasefire resolution <sup>11</sup>
<b>21%</b>	April uptick in engagement with violent extremist content online recorded in the United States in areas with confinement measures in place <sup>12</sup>

**30%** **The Authoritarianism Pandemic**  
 Global spike in government repression between mid-March and the end of July<sup>13</sup>

**1 day vs. 3 months** **The Nationalism and Unilateralism Pandemic**  
 Time it took the UN Security Council to pass a resolution on Ebola in 2014 vs. Covid-19 in 2020

**92** Jurisdictions that had implemented export controls on medical supplies as of October 16, 2020<sup>14</sup>

**91%** **The Education Pandemic**  
 Share of students worldwide affected by temporary school closures<sup>15</sup>

**1.6 billion** Children and youths out of school by April 2020<sup>16</sup>

**3.6 million** Children projected to drop out of school in West and Central Africa by the end of 2021<sup>17</sup>

**2 million** **The Health Pandemic Beyond Covid-19**  
 Estimated non-Covid-19 deaths due to health service disruptions<sup>18</sup>

**29** Number of countries that had suspended measles shots by July<sup>19</sup>

**769,000** WHO estimate of malaria deaths in 2020<sup>20</sup>