

《世行行长警告：疫情或令1亿人重返极端贫困》

世界银行行长戴维·马尔帕斯日前警告说，新冠疫情可能导致1亿人重新陷入极端贫困。马尔帕斯说，如果新冠疫情持续恶化，“这个数字可能会更高”。



People wear protective masks as they wait in line at a testing site for the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) set up for returning students, faculty and staff on the main campus of New York University (NYU) in Manhattan in New York City, New York, US, August 18, 2020. [Photo/Agencies]

The coronavirus pandemic may have driven as many as 100 million people back into extreme poverty, World Bank President David Malpass warned Thursday.

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The Washington-based development lender previously estimated that 60 million people would fall into extreme poverty due to COVID-19, but the new estimate puts the deterioration at 70 to 100 million, and he said “that number could go higher” if the pandemic worsens or drags on.

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The situation makes it “imperative” that creditors reduce the amount of debt held by poor countries at risk, going beyond the commitment to suspend debt payments, Malpass said in an interview with AFP.

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Even so, more countries will be obliged to restructure their debt.

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“The debt vulnerabilities are high, and the imperative of getting light at the end of the tunnel so that new investors can come in is substantial,” Malpass said.

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Advanced economies in the Group of 20 already have committed to suspending debt payments from the poorest nations through the end of the year, and there is growing support for extending that moratorium into next year amid a pandemic that’s killed nearly 800,000 people and sickened more than 25 million worldwide.

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The World Bank has committed to deploying \$160 billion in funding to 100 countries through June 2021 in an effort to address the immediate emergency, and about \$21 billion had been released through the end of June.

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But even so, extreme poverty, defined as earning less than \$1.90 a day, continues to rise.

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Malpass said the deterioration is due to a combination of the destruction of jobs during the pandemic as well as supply issues that make access to food more difficult.

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“All of this contributes to pushing people back into extreme poverty the longer the economic crisis persists.”

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Newly-installed World Bank Chief Economist Carmen Reinhart has called the economic crisis a “pandemic depression,” but Malpass was less concerned with terminology.

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“We can start calling it a depression. Our focus is on how do we help countries be resilient in working out on the other side.”

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Having a clear view of the size of each country’s debt and the collateral involved also are key to being able to help the debtor nations, Malpass said.

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Governments in advanced economies so far have been “generous” in their support of developing nations, even while they take on heavy spending programs in their own countries, Malpass said.

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