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RECOVR Roundup Vol. 29: Social Protection in the Time of COVID-19

In this twenty-ninth installment of our RECOVR Roundup series, we are sharing new findings and analysis from the RECOVR Research Hub and from our partner organizations, as well as links on what is happening in the Social Protection landscape in response to COVID-19. Read the previous installment if you missed it, and sign up for our mailing list if you'd like to receive this roundup series directly to your inbox.

As always, we encourage you to write to our team with ideas for features.

New Findings & Analysis

Bangladesh: How has the pandemic affected youth living in informal settlements?

Young people living in informal settlements face several challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As part of the Gender and Adolescence: Global Evidence (GAGE) study, researchers Sarah Baird, Nicola Jones, Jennifer Seager, and Salauddin Tauseef conducted three rounds of surveys among 780 adolescent boys and girls in three urban slums in Bangladesh. **The results showed out-of-school adolescents, especially those from poor households, worked more during the pandemic. However, young people looking for jobs reported a lack of adequate employment, possibly due to business closures and stagnant economic activities.** The researchers also note that the shift to digital learning resources may be passing these youth by and merits special attention. **Read more here.**

Global: Supporting Women-led Businesses in Low- and Middle-Income Countries through the COVID-19 Crisis and Beyond

With women-led businesses disproportionately affected, governments can prioritize equity-based policies to assist female business owners

Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) around the world have been hurt in the COVID-19 pandemic, with women-led businesses suffering disproportionately. A gender-intentional approach to short-term mitigation and long-term recovery could address some of the gender-specific dimensions of these shocks and protect gains made on gender equality in recent years. In a recent brief, IPA has compiled key policy-relevant findings for the short- and long-term recovery from the COVID-19 crisis of women-led businesses in low- and middle-income countries. Policies such as **flexible credit products, targeted information campaigns, facilitating access to large buyers, and soft skills training programs** can help to address long-standing gender imbalances and intrahousehold dynamics while facilitating economic recovery for women-led businesses. These insights may help inform the design of programs and policies to support female entrepreneurs in the context of the current pandemic and beyond. **Read more here**.

What We're Reading & Watching

- Bloomberg Businessweek highlights Togo's experience in building **a fully-digital pandemic stimulus program, Novissi, from the ground up**. Read IPA's recent case study on the program here.

- In response to California's recent $35 million set-aside for a guaranteed income pilot, New America Foundation highlights the evolution of guaranteed income programs across the US. Among lessons learned: **providing qualitative stories alongside "hard data" is a powerful tool for addressing cultural stigmas and redefining the narrative around cash assistance.**

- Many social assistance programs in low- and middle-income countries were originally designed to support the rural poor. **How should these programs be adapted to meet the needs of poor individuals in urban settings?** A recent working paper from ODI explores this question with case studies from Madagascar, Nigeria, and Peru.

- If you'd like to do a deep dive into the key challenges of social protection responses to COVID-19, this recent edition of Policy in Focus from the International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth covers topics including **gender-responsive social protection, inclusion of disabled people, financing options for universal programs, and microsimulation as a tool for studying policy change.**

- India has invested heavily in biometric ID systems, partly in order to streamline the distribution of social protection benefits. However, a recent data leak which exposed the personal information of 31 million people in Tamil Nadu highlights **the need for governments to build in strong protections for data security and data privacy.**