

RECOVR Roundup Vol. 3: Social Protection in the Time of COVID-19

By [Luciana Debenedetti](#), [Jeff Mosenkis](#), and [Rachel Strohm](#)

In this third 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 [first](#) and [second](#) installment if you missed them, and [sign up for our mailing list](#) if you'd like to receive this roundup series directly to your inbox.

New Findings & Analysis

Peru: Assessing the reach and effects of COVID-19 among rural people in the Peruvian Amazon

Survey finds social assistance to rural areas is limited

The COVID-19 pandemic hit the Peruvian Amazon in mid-March and sparked international concern about the well-being of the indigenous and non-indigenous peoples of the region, with [reports of places with 60 percent of tests being positive](#). The data the Peruvian Government has are still tilted towards more urbanized communities—those with some health facilities—but most rural communities have none, lack reliable means of communication, or are too remote to get good data from. Researchers Yoshito Takasaki, Christian Abizaid, and Oliver Coomes have embarked on an ambitious phone survey among 470 rural communities to understand how they are coping with the pandemic and whether government assistance has reached them. **[Their July 2020 baseline survey revealed that respondents have received limited assistance from the government and, worryingly, some communities reported that they believed residents had contracted the virus in traveling to cities to obtain government subsidies.](#)** Results from subsequent survey rounds will be released soon.

Mozambique: Community perceptions and norms around COVID-19

Initial data finds high support for social distancing, uneven knowledge about COVID-19

Results are out from [the first wave of a phone survey](#) led by University of Michigan researchers Arlete Mahumane, James Riddell IV, Tanya Rosenblat, Dean Yang, James Allen IV,

Patricia Freitag Faustino Lessitala, and Hang Yu of 2,405 households across 76 communities in Mozambique. Respondents in the July 17-August 16 round reported stark consequences from the pandemic and associated restrictions, with **reports of household income drops of 33 percent and 72 percent of households experiencing high levels of food insecurity. Households also reported they were following major COVID-19 health recommendations, but many people believed false information**, such as in the protective effects of spraying alcohol or chlorine on the body, and weren't practicing preventive behaviors, such as meeting up with friends despite social distancing recommendations. The survey, implemented in partnership with the Beira Operational Research Center (National Institute of Health, Mozambique), will help inform continued messaging around virus containment and mitigation measures. Results from subsequent survey rounds will be released soon.

Mexico: Do COVID-19 lockdowns increase domestic violence?

Calls for legal services decreased, while an alcohol ban did little to prevent violence

COVID-19 stay-at-home orders may increase intimate partner violence due to financial stress and prolonged confinement with the potential assailant. Researchers Adan Silverio-Murillo, Jose Roberto Balmori de la Miyar, and Lauren Hoehn-Velasco parsed data from the *Línea Mujeres* domestic violence hotline and official police reports in Mexico City to understand if and how domestic violence changed in recent months. **They find that, during Mexico City's lockdown, while domestic violence calls for legal services decreased, calls for psychological services were constant and increased in certain weeks. In assessing assistance programs implemented by the government, they also find that providing food assistance and support to micro-entrepreneurs mitigated domestic violence, but an alcohol ban did little to prevent violence.**

How are small businesses in the U.S. and Latin America weathering the pandemic?

SMEs report layoffs, closures, and pessimism regarding economic recovery

At the outset of the crisis, micro, small, and medium enterprises in the U.S. and across Latin America were some of the hardest-hit businesses, and economic strain has continued several months later. Governments have enacted relief programs to aid small firms, which include special credit lines, forgivable loans, and job retention schemes. Combining survey responses collected from more than 50,000 small business owners in the region and the randomized provision of information on small business relief programs, researchers John Eric Humphries, Christopher Neilson, and Gabriel Ulyssea shed light on whether business owners have successfully enrolled in relief programs and how they are making ends meet. The results paint a dire picture: for example, 71 percent of SMEs in Colombia reported having to lay off workers during the first months of the pandemic, and almost half of U.S. respondents did not expect to recover within two years. As pillars of local economies and key employers, the survival of SMEs has ripple effects for unemployment and social insurance, tax revenue, and economic growth.

What We're Reading and Watching



In case you missed it, the above image depicts the key topics from this year's SocialProtection.org conference. Credit: Ugo Gentilini via socialprotection.org.

- Researchers at the Center for Global Development [scraped the World Bank's site](#), collecting half a million lending transactions for 11+ years up to 2020, to estimate how good their COVID response will be at meeting the urgent needs. Their conclusion? **Lending priorities have not shifted the way they did during the 2008-9 financial crisis, and are providing very modest benefits compared to the urgent need in low- and middle-income countries.**
- **And [strong language from Larry Summers on the lack of global action](#)**, particularly considering how intertwined developing economies are with the global economy.
- We mentioned a few weeks ago the big SocialProtection.org conference that was happening. Ugo Gentilini's blog [has a long post with summaries, presentations, and recording links for 40+ panels and presentations there.](#)
- Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO) published a [series of policy briefs](#) outlining **how to better protect informal workers during COVID-19**, including cash transfers and digital transfers, increased dialogue spaces between state institutions and workers, and expanding the scope of established organizations (e.g. industry associations) to deliver emergency assistance.
- You've surely heard that the World Food Programme won the [Nobel Peace Prize](#) for its work promoting food security in conflict-affected settings. But did you know that **almost 40% of its support is now provided in the form of cash transfers** rather than food aid?

- The Transfer Project has [an interactive website](#) and [an infographic](#) **busting common myths about cash transfers**, such as “cash transfers create dependency” and “cash transfers increase inflation.”
- In rural India, [new research](#) finds that **unemployment among rural households is slowly dropping as lockdowns are lifted**, but that wages remain low, and people have less money to invest in their farms.

October 22, 2020