

RECOVR Roundup Vol. 5: Social Protection in the Time of COVID-19

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In this fifth 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](#), [second](#), [third](#), and [fourth](#) 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

Uganda: Updates from the Kiryandongo Refugee Settlement

Residents report security concerns, household and community disputes

We'd [previously featured](#) IDinsight's work on COVID-19 in the 10,000-household Kiryandongo refugee settlement in Uganda. They've released [a new update](#), finding that food consumption was roughly the same between households who'd previously received a US\$1,000 cash transfer during February-May 2020, and those who hadn't. Compliance with mask-wearing guidelines was slightly higher among cash transfer recipients. As the virus lockdowns continue and food rations have been reduced, tensions are running high: half of the respondents reported experiencing either quarreling, intimidation, or damaging of personal property among adults in their household, and burglary and water disputes are key community security concerns. [Learn more here](#).

Ghana: COVID-19's Impacts on Business and Employment

Findings suggest centering workers and SMEs in social and economic relief can help mitigate further job losses

IPA [conducted phone interviews](#) with 1,357 respondents in Ghana in mid-May 2020, 71 percent of whom were working before the pandemic hit. Of those employed before the pandemic, 30 percent were working fewer hours or had stopped working and 66 percent earned less or no income compared to pre-pandemic times. A new IPA policy brief (link below) highlights more business and employment findings and recommends strategies for job creation and economic recovery, including sector-specific wage subsidies and cash transfers

for youth.

Mexico: Citizen Security and Policing Amidst COVID-19

Police are stepping in to support the response, but citizen mistrust persists

One non-obvious government function that's been affected by COVID-19 is policing. On the [IPA blog](#), Rodrigo Canales (Yale), Julia Madrazo, and Jessica Zarkin talk about two complementary studies in Mexico, where the public and police have a historically strained relationship, and trust is low. But COVID has forced police to start helping with essential public health services, like facilitating public testing. Other areas, like breaking up large gatherings, begin to blur the lines between public health and law enforcement. The researchers look at police and public perceptions for the situation, and find a lack of understanding and discuss the importance of bridging the gap.

Social Protection Databases

Many databases have been tracking social protection long before the pandemic

For researchers and policymakers alike looking for comprehensive datasets, we suggest taking a look at the [Atlas of Social Protection: Indicators of Resilience and Equity](#) (the World Bank), [Social Assistance in Low and Middle Income Countries](#) (University of Manchester), [Social Security Programs throughout the World](#) (U.S. Social Security Administration), [HelpAge Social Pensions Database](#), and the [Global Social Protection COVID-19 Response Database](#) (World Bank). This list is certainly not exhaustive, and we'll provide future updates.

What We're Reading and Watching

- In an op-ed, Sharon Wolf (UPenn) and Elisabetta Aurino (Imperial College London) talk about findings from their study with IPA-Ghana showing that [even short spells of hunger can have lasting consequences on children's academic and socio-emotional development](#). With experts warning of a looming "[hunger pandemic](#)," they call on governments to ramp up efforts now to curb food insecurity.
- Justin Sandefur (Center for Global Development) and Arvind Subramanian (Ashoka University) [warned early on](#) that forecasts from the World Bank and IMF on COVID-19's economic impacts were far too optimistic, particularly for poor countries. **The [estimated number of "new poor"](#) has more than doubled since April, from approximately 62 million to 131 million as of October.**
- In Senegal, heavy rains recently led to flooding in Dakar. But the World Bank-funded [Sahel Adaptive Social Protection Program](#) had built the infrastructure for the government to prepare for seasonal floods ahead of time and [rapidly offer cash transfers to people affected by them](#).

- India's lockdown threw millions of workers in the informal sector out of work in March 2020. The state government of Bihar, which has many residents working informally in other parts of India, responded to this challenge by **designing a cash transfer program specifically for informal workers outside their home state.**
- Jamie Cooke, Jurgen De Wispelaere, and Ian Orton argue that the COVID-19 pandemic is **opening up a new window of opportunity for countries to implement universal basic income programs.** IPA's own research on universal basic income in Kenya shows that these payments have helped people to mitigate the economic impacts of the pandemic.
- GiveDirectly just released a comprehensive database to **help policymakers and researchers make the case for cash.** Explore more than 300 studies, across outcome, analysis method, country, recipient characteristics, and other aspects here.
- We mentioned the big socialprotection.org conference a few weeks ago. On Duncan Green's fp2p blog, Larissa Pelham offers her 4 quick takeaways and what she'd like to see for the field.

Upcoming Events

New Directions in Graduation Research Conference

December 3-4, 2020

Innovations for Poverty Action, the Trinity Impact Evaluation Unit, the Gender Innovation Lab at the World Bank, and Concern Worldwide will hold a two-day virtual conference to cover the latest findings in research on multifaceted poverty reduction programs. Learn more and register here.

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