

RECOVR Roundup Vol. 7: Social Protection in the Time of COVID-19

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In this seventh installment—our first one for 2021—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](#), [fourth](#), [fifth](#), and [sixth](#) installments if you missed them, 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

Pakistan: Religious leaders can help with COVID safety

For imams already convinced of basic information about the virus, individual engagement helped them give better advice to their congregants on COVID-19 prevention

Researcher Kate Vyborny wondered if religious leaders who are respected in their communities could help share COVID prevention messaging. She found that in Pakistan, a simple call asking imams to share public health guidelines with their congregants helped: the proportion of imams who advised wearing masks increased by 25 percent. The study also found that it wasn't necessary to appeal to their religiosity; simply pointing to their importance as community leaders was enough. Read more about this study [here](#).

Myanmar: How has agriculture been affected by COVID-19?

MAPSA surveys show anticipated crop revenue fallout and underscore a need for timely assistance

The Feed the Future Myanmar Agriculture Policy Support Activity (MAPSA) partnered with IPA to conduct household surveys on the impacts of COVID-19. [Survey results](#) shed light on a difficult situation, though there are pockets of progress: for example, **60 percent of rice mills anticipated revenue drops of at least 30 percent in 2020 compared to 2019**,

but at the same time 90 percent of communities received cash or non-food assistance from the government in October. Results from the surveys will continue to assist policymakers in assessing the pandemic's impact and crafting responsive solutions.

What We're Reading & Watching

- For those who've been following, economist Ugo Gentilini has been doing weekly updates of the latest in social protection during COVID (you can subscribe by email in the top-right corner of [his blog](#)). With the new year, he pauses to reflect and [take stock](#) of what we've learned so far, particularly on cash transfers. He concludes that whether the pandemic can be a "game changer" for existing social protection gaps depends on addressing **mindsets and preferences, sectoral priorities, institutions, delivery mechanisms, financing streams, and politics**.
- The World Bank has [updated its global poverty estimates](#) again: economists now expect the COVID-19-induced new poor in 2020 to rise to **between 119 and 124 million** (up from 88 and 115 million from the October estimates).
- Evidence aggregator 3ie launched an [evidence map](#) on the increasing use of **big data to evaluate development outcomes**. At the same time, [experts caution](#) that we shouldn't expect big data to replace traditional surveys "anytime soon."
- How do **cash transfers impact women's empowerment in Pakistan?** A new study in the *European Journal of Development Research* finds that women's likelihood of voting and their involvement in household decision-making both increase **up to eight years after the end of the program**.
- In Vanuatu, [the government is using blockchain](#) to securely record the data of new cash transfer beneficiaries, in a digital-first social protection program which Oxfam claims **is 75% less expensive than traditional humanitarian cash aid**.
- A [new study from WIEGO](#) finds that **less than half of informal workers in 12 cities around the world received any type of financial support** from their governments during the COVID-19 crisis.
- New [survey data from UNICEF](#) shows that **migrant and displaced children around the world have largely been excluded** from pandemic response and recovery.
- [More than 34 million people](#) in the Latin America and Caribbean region are unemployed due to COVID-19. [Among other recommendations for stimulating job creation](#), **the World Bank calls for rethinking the social protection system in the region, for example, by extending social protections to all people**, regardless of their employment status (*Note: Article and report links are in Spanish*).

Events from the RECOVR Webinar Series

In case you missed it, IPA recently held two webinars exploring the **effects of various cash transfer programs** and the role of this assistance during the pandemic. Access the recordings below:

- [The Digitization of Cash Assistance During the COVID-19 Pandemic in Colombia](#)
- [The Impact of Cash Transfers During the COVID-19 Pandemic in Africa](#)

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