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RECOVR Roundup Vol. 9: Social Protection in the Time of COVID-19

In this 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

New Study Shows Pandemic's Toll on Jobs, Businesses, and Food Security in Lower-Income Countries

The study of 30,000 households in nine low- and middle-income countries documents sharp declines in living standards and rising food insecurity

When the pandemic hit, an international coalition of 26 researchers on 3 continents joined forces to rapidly assess the socioeconomic effects of the pandemic and associated lockdowns. Using detailed microdata collected from households representing more than 100,000 people across nine countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, the team documented **immediate and widespread drops in employment and income, and increases in food insecurity**. A large share of respondents reported being forced to miss meals or reduce portion sizes, including 48 percent of rural Kenyan households, 69 percent of landless, agricultural households in Bangladesh, and 87 percent of rural households in Sierra Leone. Across the 16 samples, between 8 and 87 percent of respondents reported a drop in income during the crisis period.

Access the study [here](#), read the policy brief summarizing it [here](#), and download the replication data [here](#).

Joint Statement: COVID-19-induced crises of hunger and poverty require bold, effective international response

26 leading economists and other experts, along with IPA, J-PAL, CEGA, IGC, and Y-RISE, urge global action to combat hunger and poverty caused by the pandemic

The joint statement **urges the international community to take action to combat hunger and poverty brought on by the COVID-19 crisis.** By strengthening safety nets, getting aid to those who need it, and bolstering livelihoods, governments and the international community can mitigate further damage.

Sierra Leone: New RECOVR Survey Findings Highlight Socio-Economic Fallout from COVID-19, as New Restrictions Are Put in Place

Comparatively low virus spread hasn't shielded the country from other stark effects

While official numbers suggest Sierra Leone hasn't seen as high of a COVID caseload as many other countries—as of early February, there had been just over 3,700 cases and 79 deaths reported—the new data reveals the virus' effects in other spheres. On the blog, we report results from the second round of the RECOVR survey, conducted in October, showing that **mental health concerns were on the rise, food insecurity persisted, and informal workers and women were more likely to report adverse economic conditions.** We also discuss how experience with the Ebola epidemic has contributed to the country's health response and can inform its recovery strategies.

For **more recent results & analysis**, visit **IPA's RECOVR Research Hub**, where we feature **papers and primers on state engagement with religious leaders for COVID-19 response (Pakistan)**, **using mobile phone and satellite data to target emergency cash transfers (Togo)**, **the impact of emergency cash assistance during the pandemic (Colombia)**, and more.

What We're Reading & Watching

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- With many social protection programs and emergency subsidies during the pandemic being **delivered through mobile platforms**, researchers and policymakers will find useful lessons (and a lot of interesting background) from VoxDevLit's new primer on Mobile Money by a number of experts. One important note when applying previous evidence to the current situation: government-to-person (G2P) digital payments are not as ubiquitous as person-to-person (P2P) payments, and more research is needed to understand their impacts on financial markets.
 - The Partnership for Economic Inclusion and the World Bank released this year's State

of Economic Inclusion Report, which makes the case for scaling up multidimensional poverty alleviation programs (such as graduation programs) to counter “poverty traps.” **Leveraging existing social protection programs** is one way of achieving this potential.

- Social protection programs have expanded in their scope and visibility during the pandemic. Now, ActionAid International urges the international community to **apply the same responses to the world’s other pressing crisis: climate change.**
- As governments assess their mitigation and response strategies from the pandemic, with an eye toward future crisis events, the World Bank distills **lessons on Disaster Risk Financing:** estimating potential costs of response, pre-planning funding, and investing in effective delivery mechanisms.
- Nearly one year after COVID-19 was declared a global pandemic, what do we understand about long-term economic prospects? Two new blogs from the World Bank highlight the dire, and sustained, **hunger and employment crises affecting much of the developing world.**
- The Inter-American Dialogue has mapped several ongoing surveys in the Latin America and Caribbean region assessing the impacts of the pandemic on **early childhood development and learning.** The various surveys will assist governments in developing targeted responses to support children’s development. *(Note: Report is in Spanish)*

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