ipa Innovations for Poverty Action

RECOVR Roundup Vol. 8: Social Protection in the Time of COVID-19

By Luciana Debenedetti, Jeff Mosenkis, and Rachel Strohm

In this eighth 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, fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh 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

Bangladesh: Chores & Child Marriage? A Cautionary Tale on the Pandemic's Effects on Girls in Low-Income Countries

A new paper warns that girls could bear a long-term brunt of the pandemic's fallout in terms of lost study time and marriage expectations

Economists Momoe Makino, Abu Shonchoy, and Zaki Wahhaj surveyed households in Gaibandha, a rural area of Bangladesh, to find out how school closures and lockdowns were changing kids' lives. They found that children spent more time doing household chores, at the expense of study time, with girls impacted more than boys. In a country and region with already high child marriage rates, school closures also appeared to increase the risk of child marriage for girls. The findings are a reminder that this crisis will likely change the course of many kids' lives in poor countries.

What We're Reading & Watching

- **In Sri Lanka, the government moved quickly to implement a cash transfer program** which directly or indirectly supported an estimated 69 percent of the population during the pandemic. However, the program did face some challenges reaching the most vulnerable, as one study estimates that **58 percent of the most**

vulnerable citizens were mistakenly excluded from receiving benefits.

- **Do cash transfers make people happier?** A recent meta-analysis combs through data from 38 studies in 21 low- and middle-income countries, and finds that **cash transfers consistently improved recipients' mental health outcomes**, but more evidence is needed on long-term (5+ years) impacts and effects on non-recipients.
- In Bolivia, a new paper from the IADB finds that **people who became eligible for an old-age pension from the government during the COVID-19 pandemic were 40 percent less likely to go hungry** compared to people who didn't receive the pension.
- If the recent IPA study on UBI in Kenya interested you, you can take a dive into **the history of UBI since the late 1700s** at the Huffington Post, or bookmark the new Center for Guaranteed Income Research at the University of Pennsylvania for future research on the topic.
- A new study commissioned by the International Chamber of Commerce finds that **wealthy countries would absorb half or more of worldwide economic losses, in the trillions of dollars, if poorer countries are largely shut out of vaccine distribution** over the next year. Though many narratives equate vaccine sharing with charity, the study drives home the reality that "equitable distribution of vaccines is in every country's economic interest." (As if there weren't already enough compelling reasons for rich countries to consider how vaccines are distributed globally.)

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