



The Consequences of COVID-19 on Forcibly Displaced People: A Primer on Research Activities

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FOREWORD

The COVID-19 pandemic has emerged as the most disruptive social event in the last decades. This crisis affects all the sectors of our society and the most vulnerable individuals are likely to suffer even more than others from the consequences of the pandemic.

Forcibly Displaced Persons (FDPs) are certainly among those who are more exposed to both the sanitary and economic effects of the virus-related crisis. Their situation has already attracted the attention of many scholars and practitioners around the world, who have started to analyze how the health conditions, livelihood perspectives and social development of FDPs and host communities have changed in the wake of the diffusion of COVID-19.

The Joint Data Center on Forced Displacement (JDC)¹ recognizes the importance of facilitating the exchange of knowledge on these topics among researchers and practitioners. Therefore, the Center has decided to devote a space for an open and informed discussion on aspects such as research questions, methods, sources of data, analytical techniques, and policy implications of the research findings in the wake of the current pandemic.

To this aim, the JDC has solicited the submission of project descriptions by the researchers within its network. This document, which we have called a “Primer on Research Activities”, summarizes some of these contributions and offers a first overview of these projects, their aims and their (expected) outputs.

We thank all the scholars and practitioners who have responded to our calls. The projects span over many geographical areas, analytical techniques and research disciplines. They provide a very interesting summary of the multiplicity of factors characterizing the way COVID-19 is shaping research activities on forced displacement.

Of all the contributions we have received, in this Primer we have given priority to those which explicitly deal with consequences of COVID-19 on those forcibly displaced and have an important component of data analysis.

¹ For more JDC publications and reports, please visit our website at www.jointdatacenter.org/resources/.

At the end of the Primer, we have included a list of websites that give some indications on the way several institutions are responding to the challenges posed by COVID-19. The list is of course not exhaustive, and it will be updated in future issues.

We hope this Primer can stimulate further research exercises and ultimately, contribute to the improvement of the living conditions of those forcibly displaced.

This Primer is a live document, which we aim to update regularly. We welcome comments and suggestions: please contact us at our email address jdc@worldbank.org.



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NOTE

Some of the contributions have been edited in the interest of brevity and clarity, and to preserve the focus on COVID-19 interventions. The inclusion of a project description in this document does not constitute an endorsement of the project's contents and conclusions by the JDC, the World Bank or UNHCR. Any specific query related to the projects included should be directed to the respective authors.

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EAST AFRICA

Effects of COVID-19 on Refugees: Economic Resilience and Host Attitudes in Uganda

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Project timeline: This project is ongoing. The survey will be launched after the re-opening of Uganda's borders.

(Expected) Output: Academic article.

Description of the project: Refugees, already a vulnerable population prior to the outbreak of COVID-19, may now face new challenges created by the spread of the virus and consequent economic downturn. First, refugees may face higher barriers to recovery, due to differences in access to capital, government assistance measures, discrimination, and social networks. Second, host attitudes may shift against refugees if fear of the virus or job loss results in increased xenophobia. We study these questions in the context of Kampala, Uganda, home to around 100,000 refugees. We have already established contact with around 1,400 Ugandan and 500 refugee tailors and salons as part of a related project. We plan to use this same sample of micro-entrepreneurs to study our questions related to COVID-19 with a round of surveys. The earlier round of surveys, conducted in November, will allow us to document changes in economic outcomes for refugees and hosts, as well as changes in host attitudes toward refugees. Additionally, our separate project included randomized interventions to 1) facilitate contact between refugees and nationals in the form of business mentorship, and 2) increase knowledge in the host community about refugees' effects on the Ugandan economy and support this information with direct cash assistance. The interventions were partly implemented in January and February and may be especially salient given the expected economic hardship. This design will allow us to test whether contact with refugees, information about aid-sharing with refugees, or a cash grant directly linked to refugees prior to the

lockdown affects attitudes during the COVID-19 crisis. Ideally, we would launch a first round of surveys in late May or early June, a few weeks after Uganda has reopened, and complete them over 4-6 weeks.

Sources of funding: World Bank, Innovations for Poverty Action Peace and Recovery Fund.

(Summary published on June 10, 2020)

COVID-19 Response in the Context of the Kamwenge Graduation Study in Uganda

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Project timeline: 2018-2021.

Description of the project: Economic coping with COVID-19 shutdown measures directly influence households' ability to comply with public health policies such as social distancing, which may be especially challenging in a refugee setting. Researchers will collect phone survey data from participants of a USAID-funded [Graduation](#) study with refugees and neighboring communities of the Kamwenge refugee settlement in Western Uganda. The on-going study tests how Graduation-style interventions can help participants in a post-conflict setting of a refugee settlement improve food and nutrition security and self-reliance. The additional data in the context of COVID-19 will allow us to document to what extent the interventions help participants cope with extreme economy-wide shocks. We will also partner with local organizations to include survey questions that will be used directly to inform their local policy response to the pandemic.

Sources of funding: UK Department for International Development.

(Summary published on June 10, 2020)

Kenya COVID-19 Rapid Response Phone Survey for Refugees

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Project timeline: The project was initiated in April 2020 and will be completed before the end of December 2020. Data will be collected for six months, starting in May 2020.

(Expected) Output: The project will produce weekly online dashboards. Over the course of data collection, anonymized micro-datasets will be made available for each of the three waves of the survey. Short briefs specifically on the impact of COVID-19 on refugees will be produced and disseminated in a timely manner.

Description of the project: The COVID-19 pandemic has started to affect Kenya creating an even more urgent need for timely data and evidence to help monitoring and mitigating the impact of the crisis. Timely data must be inclusive and reflect the needs and vulnerabilities of all, nationals and non-nationals. More specifically, data is needed from forcibly displaced populations, namely refugees and asylum seekers, hosts populations and the community at large. However, face-to-face surveys are no longer feasible due to the risk of infection as well as mobility restrictions. Phone surveys can collect data without visiting households. They can be implemented rapidly and at low cost, form a baseline for follow-up surveys and adapted swiftly to changing circumstances. Thus, phone surveys are highly suited for rapid data collection especially in emergencies and under very rapidly changing conditions. They are key in ensuring just-on-time monitoring of the impacts of shocks, reforms and other structural changes. Therefore, the World Bank in collaboration with the UNHCR, the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics and University of California Berkeley are complementing the Kenya COVID-19 Rapid Response Survey with a specific component for refugees to track the socioeconomic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on refugees and provide timely data to inform rapidly targeted response specifically for refugees. The refugee component of the bi-monthly survey covers a sample of 1,250 randomly selected displaced individuals stratified by location (three camps and non-camp settings) as well as the Shona stateless population. The survey

instrument includes information on household composition (gender, age), knowledge on COVID-19 and sources of information, behavioral changes (e.g. self-isolation, social distancing), access to clinics and medicine, schools and financial services as well as food, employment (loss or reduction of work by sector), loss of income including remittances, food insecurity and coping mechanisms including safety nets. The questionnaire has been adapted specifically for displaced populations while maintaining comparability with the resident population. The collected data will be used to produce weekly online dashboards depicting descriptive statistics. The dashboard can be used by stakeholders to track impacts and rapidly address emerging needs created by the COVID-19 pandemic. The data can also be useful to inform a targeting tool for refugees who became particularly vulnerable by the impact of COVID-19.

Sources of funding: World Bank.

(Summary published on June 10, 2020)

Socioeconomic Impacts of COVID-19 on Labor Market Outcomes of Refugee and Host Communities in Kenya

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Project timeline: Ongoing project, expected completion in June 2021.

(Expected) Output: Academic article and working paper (World Bank Policy Research Working Paper)

Description of the project:

Research questions

Refugees are a particularly vulnerable population, differing from host communities in baseline wealth, income, and labor force participation and general resilience to shocks. Moreover, existing restrictions on refugee mobility and employment are likely to aggravate the negative income shock induced by lockdown measures, though refugees benefited from generally higher access to social assistance programs. This study aims to assess the impact of COVID-19 on labor market outcomes of refugee and host communities in Kenya. We document differential impacts on labor market outcomes including employment, changes in hours worked and earnings, layoff trends, workers expectations to go back to previous jobs as well as their abilities to work remotely.

In a second step, we explore to what extent different trajectories for refugees and hosts can be explained by a) differential exposure to the shock due to observable differences in baseline characteristics such as income, wealth or sectoral composition of labor supply, b) differential exposure to COVID-19 related policies and social assistance programs. The current study innovates vis-à-vis previous ones in at least three points: it (i) has a large sample size on refugees and nationals, (ii) uses post-COVID-19 data

collected during a long-time frame (May 2020-June 2021) and (iii) analyzes a more diverse range of labor market outcomes.

Data and methodology

We use the Kenya COVID-19 Rapid Response Phone Survey (RRPS) to capture post-COVID-19 trends among refugees and hosts. This is a panel phone survey which includes five bi-monthly waves conducted between May 2020 and June 2021. The survey is representative of the over 504,854 refugees and asylum seekers residing in Kenya, both in camps, urban areas, and outside camps, as well as the Kenyan population. Four rounds of the survey have been completed between May 2020 and March 2021, and the fifth wave is currently ongoing. Pre-COVID-19 data for nationals are drawn from the 2015/16 Kenya Integrated Household Budget Survey CAPI-Pilot (KIHBS-CP) that can be linked to the RRPS data at the household and individual level. For refugees, we use the 2018 Kalobeyei and 2019 Kakuma Socioeconomic Surveys (SES), again linked at the individual level.² In addition, the Kenya COVID-19 RRPS includes recall questions on hours worked, income, and wealth in February 2020.

Our identification strategy compares the depth of the COVID-19 shock and the speed of the recovery between host populations, refugees residing in camps, and those of urban areas. In our first step, we use a difference-in-differences (DiD) design to document differential impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on refugees and host communities. For each of the labor market outcomes considered including employment, changes in hours worked and earnings, layoff trends, workers expectations to go back to previous jobs as well as their abilities to work remotely, we estimate a wave and individual or household fixed effect model controlling for any pre-pandemic differences between individuals or households.

In our second step, we test for heterogeneous impacts across groups (e.g. poor and non-poor households), defined by baseline characteristics such as sector of employment, the number of hours worked, income and other socio-demographic characteristics including household composition, gender, wealth, or exposure to COVID-19-mitigation policies or social assistance programs, etc. Next, we test what

² Excluding Dadaab and urban refugees as pre-pandemic data does not exist for them.

share of the differential effect on refugees is explained by refugees being different in the dimension captured by the groups. Finally, we calculate the share or the proportional change of the DiD coefficient after controlling for previous characteristics.

Estimates of (1) and (2) include robust standard errors cluster at the individual or household level. These clustered standard errors deal with two issues: correlation of observation in the same group (refugees or Kenyans) and correlation over time of the same group. We exploit time variations to test for the impacts between the baseline landscape and the different waves of the phone survey, as well as the difference across waves.

Our findings provide a clear picture of whether, and to what extent the COVID-19 crisis hit refugee communities particularly hard, and, shed light on the reasons behind this. We distinguish between reasons related to the observable differences in the vulnerability of refugees to begin with, and differential exposure to mitigation policies, respectively.

Expected findings and policy implications

The COVID-19 pandemic has been shown to have substantial negative socioeconomic impacts across low- and middle-income countries, including in Kenya ([Egger et al., 2021](#); [Janssens et al., 2021](#); and [Kansiime et al., 2021](#)). However, while refugees represent a particularly vulnerable population facing extensive mobility restrictions and low labor force participation before the pandemic, an existing aid and social assistance infrastructure may mean that they are better able to absorb the negative shock. Moreover, a higher share of informal jobs may have allowed them to recover more swiftly, as informal enterprises tend to be more flexible in their adaptation to the new context.

Documenting the extent to which refugees were affected differently by the pandemic, and identifying the channels explaining those differences -- from differences in sectoral labor composition to differential policies undertaken in refugee camps -- will be important to guide recovery policies for refugees in this pandemic, and future negative economic shocks. In the short-term, simplifying procedures to obtain documents (working permits, ID, etc.) is vital to ensure refugees can access more job opportunities in addition to being included in national social safety programs, including

cash for work and other social protection programs. In the medium-term, as the economy is preparing for a return to normalcy after the pandemic, programs leading to an inclusive labor market for disadvantaged refugees and hosts will be essential for addressing the negative impact on employment and associated welfare from the COVID-19 shock.

Sources of funding: This work is part of the program “Building the Evidence on Protracted Forced Displacement: A Multi-Stakeholder Partnership”. The program is funded by UK aid from the United Kingdom's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), it is managed by the World Bank Group (WBG) and was established in partnership with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The scope of the program is to expand the global knowledge on forced displacement by funding quality research and disseminating results for the use of practitioners and policy makers. We further thank FCDO for additional funding support through its Knowledge for Change (KCP) program. This work does not necessarily reflect the views of FCDO, the WBG or UNHCR.

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Measuring the Impact of COVID on RefugePoint Refugee Client Households in Nairobi, Kenya

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Project timeline: Research was undertaken Summer 2020, report completed in March 2021

(Expected) Output: Report – link can be found [here](#).

Description of the project: In Summer 2020 RefugePoint assessed to what extent refugee households in Nairobi had been differently affected by the pandemic in terms of their self-reliance, by comparatively analyzing the self-reliance scores of “active core” clients versus “graduated” clients, identifying contributing factors, noting differences in their survival strategies, and highlighting ways in which they can continue to be supported on a path towards increased self-reliance.

This assessment included focus group discussions (FGD) and computer-assisted telephone interviews (CATI), in which interviews were conducted through the phone and data stored in the cloud. A total of four focus group discussions were conducted in three areas where RefugePoint has a high concentration of clients. All interviews were conducted between June and August 2020 with a sample size of 223 households. The collected data was coded and tabulated for analytical insights and conclusions. The data was analyzed, and the results were interpreted based on the objectives of the study. The sampling was done using clustered sampling in which respondents were first clustered according to their status: graduated or active core clients. The active core client category consisted of respondents who were part of RefugePoint’s current caseload and were receiving any form of assistance. The graduated client category consisted of households that were previously part of RefugePoint’s caseload but were exited from case management since 2019, having met self-reliance criteria. Active core clients accounted for 61 percent of the total respondents, while the graduated clients accounted for 39 percent.

The findings indicate that a substantial proportion of both active and graduated core clients have experienced a deteriorating household situation during the COVID-19 pandemic. The data suggests that many of the issues refugees face, especially in terms of declines in household income and economic well-being, have been caused directly by the impact of the pandemic. However, findings also suggest that while some of these issues were exacerbated by the pandemic, others pre-date its onset. Generally, it appears that even in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic, graduated client households were more financially independent, with a significant percentage reporting income from their businesses, casual jobs and self-employment, and the ability to create and utilize some savings. Conversely, active core client households appear to have been much more likely than graduated client households to receive support from an agency or community organization, and less likely to be generating income from a business, casual job or self-employment. That said, this has also meant that core clients have maintained some stability by not having to reduce their food intake and by avoiding falling into significant rent arrears thanks to this support. However, core active clients were more likely to be affected by health conditions, which puts them at greater risk for COVID-19 infection, and limits their ability to engage in income generation.

Source of funding: RefugePoint's work in Nairobi is funded by private foundations and individual donors.

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Anxiety, Information Sources, and Social Perceptions among Refugees in Kenya during COVID-19

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Project timeline: July 2020 – December 2020.

(Expected) output: Academic article and policy brief.

Description of project: Refugee access to information has become increasingly important with the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. As necessary social distancing complicates traditional in-person communication avenues, many must turn to alternative information sources to stay updated on the virus. However, information about the virus varies, causing differences that may be related to information sources. Refugees report receiving information through a variety of sources, including mass media, the internet, international organizations, and friends and family. Differences in information sources may influence anxieties surrounding the virus and perceptions of how others are reacting to it. This project analyzes the effects of information sources on refugee anxiety related to COVID-19 and perceptions of other refugees' adherence to virus prevention measures. To investigate these relationships, we utilize UNHCR's Kenya COVID-19 Rapid Response Survey, which includes around 1,000 refugees living in various settings. These include the Kalobeyei settlement, Kakuma camp, Dadaab camp, as well as other locations throughout Kenya. Our methods include logistic regression classification of others' expected behaviors using demographic variables and interaction effects between information and anxiety sources. The primary contributions of this study are insight into the effects of information source on COVID-19 anxiety and social perception, as well as recommendations for policies and programs to aid local refugee organizations responding to the virus.

Sources of funding: Pennsylvania State University, College of Information Sciences and Technology.

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UN-Habitat Study on Spatial Entry Points in COVID-19 Preparedness, Response, and Recovery Planning in Kakuma-Kalobeyei, Kenya.

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Project timeline: The project is ongoing and will run concurrently with the pandemic and post-pandemic developments.

(Expected) Output: Report and working paper.

Description of the project: The COVID-19 pandemic is an unprecedented “human crisis” that is “unlike any in the 75-year history of the United Nations”.³ Likewise, the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) have noted that COVID-19 is an unprecedented crisis that “has profoundly impacted human capital, including lives, learning, basic well-being, and future productivity”.⁴ UN-Habitat, with its expertise in the sustainable management and development of human settlements, has also stressed in its COVID-19 Campaign the magnitude of COVID-19’s impact on the global economy, leading to “the deepest recession since the second World War”.⁵

UN-Habitat’s Planning for Humanitarian-Development Practice program has initiated a study in Kakuma-Kalobeyei, Turkana County, Kenya, which has hosted refugees and hosts from neighbouring countries for longer than two decades. The study is based on the premise that there are opportunities available in the crisis to “build back better”⁶ and build resilient societies. In the *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015 - 2030*, it is noted that “disasters have demonstrated that the recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction phase, which needs to be prepared ahead of a disaster, is a critical opportunity through integrating disaster risk reduction into development measures, making nations and communities resilient to disasters”.⁷ Furthermore, this is built upon UN-Habitat’s work on programming that strengthens

³ Shared Responsibility, Global Solidarity: Responding to the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19, pg. 1.

⁴ www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2020/04/17/decisive-action-in-an-unprecedented-crisis

⁵ Policy Brief: COVID-19 in an Urban World, pg. 21.

⁶ Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015 – 2030, pg. 21.

⁷ Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015 – 2030, pg. 21.

the humanitarian-development nexus in alignment to the Global Agenda 2030 and Sustainable Development Goals. This is further supported by United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) in *COVID-19: Opportunities for Resilient Recovery*, noting that compared to other disasters, COVID-19 is unique in its “uncertainty in transitioning from the response to recovery stage”.⁸ UNDRR recommends that instead of transiting completely into recovery, recovery interventions should be integrated “into the ongoing responses, prioritising health interventions and preparedness measures, followed by socioeconomic interventions”.⁹

Considering the abovementioned two lenses: (1) The unprecedented nature and (2) Opportunities to “build back better”, UN-Habitat’s spatial study seeks to identify points-of-entry to leverage spatial data and analytics to support ongoing efforts toward the COVID-19 pandemic, specifically in the unique refugee settlement context of Kakuma-Kalobeyei, Kenya. The study will encapsulate two key components: (1) Map spatial data and identify points-of-entry for advisory and technical support to partners, building on UN-Habitat’s expertise in promoting spatial urban function and strategies for mobility and circulation, and (2) Extend measures that strengthen the humanitarian-development nexus into existing responses for COVID-19 and beyond to achieve a more holistic and sustainable response.

Under this study, UN-Habitat has initiated a series of desk reviews and data mapping to identify potential spatial strategies in a pandemic setting, such as strategies to convert existing public facilities into temporary healthcare facilities to bolster the healthcare capacity, and strategies to support contact tracing and outbreak monitoring in settlements. Other ongoing work includes the development of a multi-scalar profile of Kakuma-Kalobeyei. In the context of COVID-19, a rapidly developed and reliable baseline of information to inform targeted and coordinated interventions to combat potential transmission and direct support to vulnerable groups is increasingly essential. The spatial profiling methodology utilises rapidly developed analysis leveraging existing information from platforms and partners to improve coordination of humanitarian response as well as to support in developing evidenced based spatial strategies for longer term legacy scenarios.

⁸ COVID-19: Opportunities for Resilient Recovery, pg. 3.

⁹ COVID-19: Opportunities for Resilient Recovery, pg. 3.

The study is envisioned to be carried out concurrently with ongoing COVID-19 response efforts by partners on the ground. In this manner, findings can be utilised in operations, which will in turn provide data responses to guide the development of relevant strategies for future pandemic resilience in Kakuma-Kalobeyei, Kenya, and other areas.

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IVR use for Interactive COVID-19 Information Dissemination and Collection in Mahama Camp, Rwanda

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Project timeline: May 2020 – August 2021.

(Expected) output: Academic article, system pilot, and policy brief.

Description of Project: The current pandemic has created unique challenges for information dissemination in refugee camps. Typical information dissemination channels, such as house-to-house campaigns, community meetings, message boards, and personal networks, largely have been disrupted, replaced by broadcasting messages via megaphones. This method is problematic for four reasons, including a lack of knowledge of whether or not information was received, whether the message included useful information, the lack of interactivity that helps assess information needs, and the inability to effectively share the information with others. To overcome these obstacles, we are investigating use of a novel interactive IVR (Interactive Voice Response) system. To date, IVRs for health information are used successfully, particularly where established and static messages are delivered to users. In some respects, COVID-19 messaging is relatively static, such as likely symptoms and recommended behaviors. However, other types of information require local tailoring, such as where to find masks or the availability of handwashing stations. Our proposed design provides system administrators two key advantages: the flexibility to easily change messages and the ability to also collect questions from refugees such that the information provided meets evolving needs. The more complex design, particularly for recording questions, typically would call for enhanced face-to-face training. Research has found that even for simple systems, face-to-face training is key for increasing system use and efficacy. Given social distancing requirements, we will test the effectiveness of remote telephone-based training. If successful, the system will provide a low-cost flexible platform for sharing information with refugees as well as identifying and then meeting their ongoing information needs.

Sources of funding: The U.S. National Science Foundation.

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MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

Economic Impacts of COVID-19 Lockdowns on Vulnerable Populations: Evidence from Jordan

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Project timeline: Approximately March 2020 – December 2022. Intermediate outputs are expected in 2020.

Description of the Project: The global spread of COVID-19 has led to unprecedented and rapid policy responses by governments around the world. While these policies are necessary to save lives, their economic impacts are not understood. This is especially apparent in low- and middle-income countries, where high frequency data is lacking and populations such as forcibly displaced persons and informal workers may be particularly vulnerable. Measuring these effects is crucial to inform evidence-based policy.

This project examines the economic impact of COVID-19 lockdown policies in Jordan. It focusses on the distributional impacts across vulnerable segments of society: the rich and poor, formal and informal workers, different occupations and industries, and refugees. It appends onto an existing project studying the determinants of refugees' migration decisions, their assimilation into cities upon arrival and the impacts on incumbent residents.

The methodology is unique in that we are able to merge a bimonthly panel survey with 4,000 respondents with high frequency cellphone metadata. The cellphone dataset provides metadata for all transactions made on one of the largest operators in Jordan from June 2015 until today. Combined with additional administrative data, we are able to oversample from locations with known large refugee populations in order to increase the share of responses from people traditionally hard to reach for surveying.

We will use these datasets to understand the impact of the lockdown and subsequent adjustment on:

Travel behaviour: How the types of trips (to work, shopping, social interactions) change across segments of society before, during and after lockdown.

Worker employment: The impacts on income and employment and how they differ across different types of workers and industries.

Business activity: The impacts on profits and revenues and how they differ across different types of establishments and industries.

Our project creates data products and analytics to be shared directly with policymakers. Short-term outputs include commuting matrices and locational hotspot indicators that inform policy makers about spatial linkages and places and times where people usually congregate. These will help identify points of virus diffusion risk as the economy reopens. Medium-run outputs will include the analysis of mobility and employment impacts outlined above, to inform evidence-based policy that seeks to target those most affected. We are engaged with the World Bank and the IGC for dissemination of these results.

The project will document how forcibly displaced persons, along with other vulnerable segments of society such as poor workers and those in the informal sector, are affected by the shutdown compared to higher SES groups. We will leverage the panel dimension of the data to understand when prior employment relationships are reactivated and when they are destroyed. We will examine whether displaced populations rely differently on prior relationships relative to incumbents. A key methodological contribution is to merge telephone surveys directly with cellphone data – a rare opportunity in the literature that uses these data – allowing us to directly validate measures that are usually imputed (like trips taken and their purpose, locations of workplace and residence, and social networks as seen through call and SMS networks). We will then use this to study the role of social networks in job finding, which may be particularly important for refugees and informal workers.

Sources of funding: Taiwan Business EBRD Technical Cooperation Fund; EBRD SSF; IGC; Weiss Foundation.

(Summary published on September 23, 2020)

Syrian Refugee Life Study (S-RLS)

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Project timeline: August 2019 – September 2021, with a COVID-19 specific timeline between May 2020 and September 2020.

(Expected) Output: Journal article and NRC policy brief.

Description of the project: With COVID-19 spreading across the globe, there is much debate among policymakers and academics on how best to provide for refugees' humanitarian needs while also ensuring the health and well-being of host community populations and the stability of host countries' political and economic institutions. As a result, many non-profits and intergovernmental organizations have quickly mobilized in response to COVID-19 to implement programs that support both refugees and host communities.

The Syrian Refugee Life Study (S-RLS) uses a randomized control trial (RCT) to evaluate the effectiveness of a specific, scalable program — the Norwegian Refugee Council Jordan's Urban Shelter Program— in protecting refugee communities from the shocks of COVID-19 and in facilitating positive outcomes longer-term. This evaluation estimates the direct and spillover effects of shelter assistance on beneficiaries, their children, and their host communities both during and in the aftermath of the COVID-19 crisis. The study will pair this novel RCT with long-term longitudinal data collection in one of the first systematic efforts to survey a large, representative refugee sample and follow that sample over time.

The RCT component will include about 2,400 refugee households—with around 1,200 (50 percent) of these households randomly assigned treatment and around 1,200 (50 percent) control— using a saturation design whereby households in certain randomly selected municipalities will have a higher probability of treatment assignment. Households in the treatment group receive about \$2,000 in rental assistance, paired with physical upgrades to their shelter, which benefit both the Syrian recipient household and the Jordanian landlord.

The end line of the RCT will serve as the baseline for the panel study, utilizing a broad range of outcomes to observe the mechanisms by which providing stable shelter access to vulnerable populations may improve families' economic welfare and mental health. Besides the 2,400 RCT participants, we will survey 2,600 additional refugee households as part of the panel: 2,100 living in Jordanian host communities and 500 from Za'atari and Azraq refugee camps, sampling to ensure a representative sample of Jordan's overall Syrian refugee population on important observable dimensions, including gender, age, and location.

This study will serve as the first long-term panel of Syrian refugees, providing unprecedented spatial and temporal coverage. In addition to capturing economic outcomes (consumption, assets, earnings, savings and credit), the survey will also measure migration history, education, marriage and fertility, physical and mental health, social attitudes (religion, gender, and politics), and behavior and preferences (risk aversion, altruism, and trust). This will allow us to observe and correlate rich outcomes over time with refugees' migration decisions. A newly developed COVID-19 module will allow us to measure health practices, as well as social attitudes and behaviors of refugees during and after the pandemic. While we plan to harmonize the module with that used by other development practitioners for ease of comparison, we will ask additional questions specifically relevant to refugees (e.g. on discrimination by host communities, differential provision of services, social distancing in camps). Among the RCT sample, we will measure causal effects of shelter assistance across these multiple dimensions at the individual level.

Collecting our first round of data during the spread of COVID-19 also presents a unique opportunity to measure a large, universal shock to refugees in Jordan, where we are well-positioned to track the outcomes on this population over time. For the RCT population specifically, it is entirely possible that, in light of such shocks, shelter provision plays an even larger role in fostering stability and long-term benefits than we had originally hypothesized.

Sources of funding: Innovations for Poverty Action, Peace and Recovery Program.

(Summary published on June 10, 2020)

The Impacts of COVID-19 on the Economic Well-being and Migration Intentions of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon

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Project timeline: Data collection ongoing, to be completed within one month.

(Expected) Output: Policy brief covering survey results regarding shelter in place, economic impacts, and migration intentions. We will also publish an academic paper.

Description of the project: How has COVID-19 affected the lives, livelihoods, and migration intentions of Syrian refugees? Building on an ongoing multi-year panel survey to study Syrian refugees in Lebanon and their return choices back to Syria, we propose to expand our survey for rapid-response data collection on the effects of COVID-19. From our survey, we will have nationally representative statistics of symptomatic prevalence, testing, shelter in place, and social distancing for Syrian refugees. We will also use our panel data to examine direct and indirect consequences of the COVID-19 crisis on refugees' economic well-being and migration decisions. Our study population includes Syrians who were living as refugees in Lebanon as of 2019, some of whom have now begun returning to Syria. Our tracing panel allows us to stay in touch with them even as they migrate back to Syria or to third countries. We will interview people during their migration preparations and on their journey, stay in touch with them once they have returned, and study how COVID-19 has impacted their well-being and migration intentions.

Sources of funding: Innovations for Poverty Action, Peace and Recovery Program.

(Summary published on June 10, 2020)

Compounding Misfortunes: Changes in Poverty since the Onset of COVID-19 on Syrian Refugees and Host Communities in Jordan, the Kurdistan Region of Iraq and Lebanon

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Project timeline: Phase 1 of this project finished in December 2020, a second phase aims to elaborate and update the results of the microsimulations.

(Expected) Output: one completed report, one completed short update, upcoming second report and potentially a book chapter

Description of the project: COVID-19 has had an enormous impact on nearly every country in the world. Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon were already facing difficult to extreme circumstances even before the pandemic erupted, making them particularly vulnerable, and compounding the effect. This report looks at the impact of the pandemic, associated lockdowns and economic shocks and other misfortunes which have compounded the crisis, such as sharply lower oil revenues in Iraq and the Port of Beirut explosion in Lebanon, as well as political instability in both.

The report estimates that 4.4 million people in the host communities and 1.1 million refugees or IDPs have been driven into poverty in the immediate aftermath of the crisis, and while this considers all of Lebanon, it only includes three governorates in Jordan and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, due to data limitations. A response commensurate with the magnitude of the shock is needed to prevent further misery. The poverty impact of COVID-19 and the ensuing confinement policies and economic contractions have been felt throughout the world, not least by marginalized communities. However, COVID-19 has compounded existing vulnerabilities or crises in Jordan, the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) and Lebanon. Syrian refugees – most of whom have been displaced for up to nine years – are particularly exposed given their perilous pre-crisis situation. Host communities in these three countries, who have supported and accommodated such large numbers of refugees, have also been heavily affected; all three countries were in strained positions prior to COVID-19,

ranging from economic stagnation and high public debt in Jordan, to a collapse in public revenues due to international oil price shocks in KRI, to complete political and economic crisis in Lebanon.

By March 2020, all three countries had witnessed their first cases of COVID-19 and introduced stringent containment policies ranging from partial closures of schools and shops to full curfew. While these measures were initially largely successful in containing the spread of the pandemic, they also led to a decline in economic activity across most sectors, particularly in the informal market. In Jordan and Iraq, the losses are estimated at around 8.2 and 10.5 percent of 2019's GDP respectively. In Lebanon where the COVID-19 crisis is compounded by economic and political crises the losses are much higher, around 25 percent of GDP. Lebanon has experienced inflation of over 100 percent, largely due to its import dependence and currency depreciation. Unsurprisingly, given the magnitude of these shocks, recent rapid needs assessments and UNHCR administrative data show that refugees, who are highly concentrated in low-skilled jobs in the informal sector, have had to reduce food intake, incur additional debt and in some instances suffered eviction. These conditions exacerbated existing vulnerabilities and increased pressure on social cohesion with their host communities. This joint UNHCR-World Bank study, funded by the Joint Data Center on Forced Displacement, estimates the change in poverty since the onset of COVID-19 among Syrian refugee and host communities in Jordan, KRI and Lebanon. The study employs a simulation exercise using macroeconomic projections on changes in the economy and translates these into shocks to household consumption and therefore poverty. Understanding the effects of COVID-19, and of other compounding crises in the case of KRI and Lebanon, is a crucial step in informing the policies that need to be adopted as the pandemic unfolds and during the recovery period. This study is part of a multi-phase collaboration between the World Bank and UNHCR. Phase I, presented in this report, estimates the impact of the crisis(es) on poverty among host and refugee communities; Phase II aims to calibrate these simulations with new phone survey data reflecting current circumstances on the ground and to delve more specifically into the cost of mitigation and policy options. This study uses dynamic simulations to show changes in poverty on a monthly basis. The impact of COVID-19 is modeled using macroeconomic changes in various sectors of the economy, changes to earnings in formal and informal sectors, and changes in remittances (domestic and international) and inflation. The projections estimate changes in poverty among host and refugee

communities and estimate the poverty-reducing effects of government and UNHCR and other international assistance. In this summary, the main results are highlighted at the Upper Middle-Income Country poverty line of \$5.50 per person per day for cross-country comparability. The full report provides technical details and sensitivity analyses as well as estimates based on the national poverty lines for each of the three countries. A key lesson of this study is that underdeveloped or inaccessible national statistical systems limit the ability to accurately estimate poverty and the impact of crises and policy shocks. In the absence of official and accessible data in two of these countries, the report necessarily relies on non-official data and provides estimates based on assumptions that come with inherent caveats. The report underlines the need for greater efforts to regularly collect, update and publish representative and reliable surveys, including on expenditure and welfare, to inform policy makers adequately. This study relies on the Syrian Refugees and Host Community Survey, undertaken by the World Bank in 2015-16, which uses a harmonized instrument across the three countries. The data are drawn from three governorates in Jordan with a high concentration of refugees (Amman, Mafraq, and Zarqa), and are representative of Lebanon and KRI. The study also uses the most recent projections on macroeconomic aggregates from World Bank country economists, remittances, and information on changes in assistance as underlying drivers.

Source of funding: World Bank – UNCHR Joint Data Center on Forced Displacement (JDC)
(Summary published on June 25, 2021)

Effective Communication and Dissemination of Critical COVID-19 Information with Syrian Refugees in Turkey

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Project timeline: Ongoing, baseline in May, intervention in June.

(Expected) Output: Academic article.

Description of the project: This study examines how to most effectively provide mitigation-related information on COVID-19 to Syrian refugees living in Turkey. Researchers are identifying small and medium-sized enterprise owners who can act as information “seeds” to the broader Syrian refugee community because they are more likely to have access to important resources, such as the internet. The study is testing how trust in the original information source (e.g. a Syrian NGO or a Turkish NGO) and enterprise owners’ autonomy in delivering the information impacts the breadth and depth of information dissemination and subsequent behavioral and health outcomes. Researchers will track sign-ups for an information service and engagement in information dissemination. High-frequency follow-up calls will capture health outcomes, information retention, and self-reported social and health behavior. The study will also track how COVID-19 impacts refugee-owned businesses.

Sources of funding: Innovations for Poverty Action, Peace and Recovery Program.

(Summary published on June 10, 2020)

Confronting the Negative Repercussions Resulting from the COVID-19 Outbreak on Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Tunisia

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Project timeline: [Article published](#) on 28/01/2021 in the COVID-19 Watch space of the University of New South Wales Kaldor Centre for International Refugee Law.

(Expected) Output: An article analyzing the national strategy, and the preventive and protection measures taken to assist refugees and asylum seekers in the COVID-19 crisis.

Description of the Project: The COVID-19 pandemic undoubtedly marks a turning point for public health and the global economy. Affecting all the sectors, the crisis resulting in the COVID-19 outbreak is more acute in countries having asymmetrical and poor health infrastructure. This crisis has affected the socioeconomic situation of vulnerable people, especially refugees and asylum seekers.

According to UNHCR (Tunisia), there are 4,494 registered refugees and asylum seekers in Tunisia (most of them are from Syria —1,719 — then Cote d'Ivoire, 1,274). After classifying COVID-19 among contagious diseases pursuant to the Decree Law No.152 of 2020, published on March 13, 2020, the Tunisian executive power has started to take exceptional measures to face the crisis, including general confinement and extended curfew. This delicate situation has resulted in a difficult social and economic situation for Tunisians as well as refugees and asylum seekers. These forcibly displaced persons, especially those who lost their incomes due to the wide containment in the country, are in serious need of financial assistance and basic services like health, food and accommodation services in order to protect them from the danger of the COVID-19 outbreak.

Using an analytic framework coupled with a synthetic approach, this academic article tries to answer the following questions: How do UNHCR and its partners (from national civil society organizations) as well as NGOs react to protect refugees and asylum seekers from the COVID-19 pandemic threats? What characterizes the national strategy to confront the negative repercussions resulting from the spread of COVID-

19 among foreigners in Tunisia, including refugees and asylum seekers? What are the challenges facing the efforts of governmental actors and different stakeholders in limiting the impact of the pandemic on refugees and asylum seekers in Tunisia?

To answer these questions, the article uses the data presented by UNHCR based on its COVID-19 emergency preparedness and response plan in Tunisia, highlighting the assistance and basic services provided to refugees and asylum seekers from civil society organizations, companies and private citizens, as well as the required funding for these vulnerable people. This article also sheds the light on the valuable partnership and coordination between UNHCR and its Tunisian civil society partners such as the Arab Institute for Human Rights and the Tunisian Refugee Council mainly through advocacy, community outreach, and provision of health, legal, psychological, and accommodation services.

Furthermore, this article analyzes the national strategy used to confront the negative repercussions resulting from the spread of the COVID-19 on refugees and asylum seeker in Tunisia. This national strategy is strengthened by the leading governmental initiatives such as the measures taken by the Tunisian authorities in favor of foreigners; the creation of a committee (composed of different Ministries, national and international organizations and civil society) to follow up the humanitarian situations of foreigners residing in Tunisia by the Tunisian Ministry of Relations with Constitutional Bodies, Civil Society and Human Rights; and launching an online platform for the civil society and international organizations including UNHCR to provide the lists of refugees and asylum seekers needing assistance in order to be included in the national assistance program.

These important governmental efforts are based on coordination activities with the necessary international and civil society organizations working in the field of refugee protection and engaging them in the national strategy to limit the bad effects of the virus-related crisis on refugees and asylum seekers. However, the article unveils the challenges which still exist in this context and should be met, including the emergence of cases of sexual and gender-based violence, the rise of psychosocial distress, and the limited resources to support vulnerable refugees and asylum seekers in Tunisia.

(Summary published on June 10, 2020; Updated on June 25, 2021)

Turkish Civil Society's Response to Refugees during COVID-19

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Project timeline: The report is complete and available [here](#). The project baseline was May 2020 with the report published in August 2020. However, the [Turkey Refugee Response Initiative \(TRRI\)](#), of which the report is a part, is ongoing with new publications, roundtables, and interventions forthcoming.

(Expected) Output: The output was a 15-page report summarizing information collected from qualitative interviews with multiple stakeholders representing local, national, and international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), municipal representatives, and academics devoted to the study of immigration in and around Turkey, and offering recommendations based on the findings.

Description of the project: The COVID-19 pandemic and its economic fallout have exerted disproportionate effects on vulnerable populations across the globe. Hosting around 4 million refugees -- more than any other country -- Turkey has proven to be uniquely susceptible to the difficulties posed by the pandemic. Throughout this period, local civil society organizations (CSOs) have shown remarkable adaptability and creativity in serving Turkey's refugee communities under these difficult conditions.

The primary research question can be summarized as follows:

What risks and challenges have Turkish CSOs faced in serving refugee communities amid the COVID-19 outbreak and what are its potential long-term impacts on social cohesion and access to livelihoods for both refugees and host communities?

The report aims to:

- (i) explore the role of CSOs in serving Syrian refugee communities before and during the COVID-19 pandemic; and
- (ii) draw lessons from the pandemic period to further a more holistic understanding of the implications of the outbreak for future humanitarian and integration efforts

The qualitative data for the report was collected between May and June 2020 through a series of interviews with around 30 stakeholders representing local, national, and international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), municipal representatives, and academics devoted to the study of immigration in Turkey. Interviews primarily revolved

around a set of five questions designed to provide insight into CSOs' operations amid the COVID-19 pandemic, their need for and access to capacity-building programs, their roles in facilitating refugees' access to humanitarian aid, basic services, and employment, and their efforts to ensure long-term social cohesion before, during, and after the pandemic.

The report found that Turkish civil society has shown a remarkable degree of adaptability in the face of adversity and a strong commitment to sustaining and improving communal harmony, even amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Nonetheless, the high degree of overall social acceptance of refugees can still be considered fragile, and as the pandemic has shown, refugees and host communities' economic access may well be the Achilles' heel of Turkey's robust refugee response efforts. Considering this, the symbiotic relationship between gainful employment and social cohesion needs to be emphasized in the design and implementation of international and local humanitarian aid and protection programs.

In terms of policy implications, the findings of the report reveal a need on the part of CSOs and local governments to modify their interventions to move away from a "burden" approach to an "opportunity" approach while addressing social harmonization as a cross-cutting theme across humanitarian aid clusters. This can be accomplished by strengthening the link between humanitarian assistance and long-term development goals and by fostering resilience and self-reliance, which in turn would contribute to greater social cohesion. Some of the recommendations include promoting joint economic ventures between refugees and host communities, creating gender-friendly employment contexts, and establishing micro-business and entrepreneurship trainings depending on the needs of the labor market, focusing on capacity-building and empowerment of CSOs to create a culture of preparedness, and facilitating communication and exchange of ideas and information between high-level actors and stakeholders and grassroots CSOs as well as beneficiaries.

Sources of funding: Self-funded as a part of HasNa's Turkey Refugee Response Initiative (TRRI). HasNa is a Washington, D.C.-based non-profit that receives the majority of its funding from private donations.

(Summary published on September 23, 2020)

Curbing Xenophobia? Assessing the Impact of the COVID-19 Mobility Curbs on Anti Refugee Sentiment in Turkey

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Project timeline: A first preprint draft is completed, will be presented at APSA2021 for comments, and is aimed to be submitted for publication in an academic venue by the end of 2021

(Expected) Output: The current preprint will be published with the World Bank working paper series pending approval of the Social Development Turkey practice, and the revised paper—post APSA 2021—is aimed to be published in a peer reviewed journal as an academic article.

Description of the project: Is COVID-19 increasing or decreasing sympathy for refugees? What are the impacts of COVID-19 mobility curbs on sympathy? What does this tell us about the policies that can be implemented to improve cohabitation between host communities and forcibly displaced populations during pandemics? In this paper, we explore answers to these questions in the context of Turkey by zooming into the effect of physical isolation—as opposed to mobility—on sentiment. We do so by using data from the Google Mobility Report and from Twitter to measure the impact of mobility curbs in Turkey on online sentiment about refugees during the pandemic. We use six measures for mobility in Turkey during the COVID-19 pandemic made available through the Google Mobility Report which we model against a measure of sentiment extracted from 7,988 tweets collected between February 15th to August 31st. Descriptive analysis shows that xenophobic sentiment in Turkey decreased a little during the COVID-19 pandemic—March 2020 onward—as opposed to the month immediately preceding it—February 2020. To explain this decrease, we use statistical tests aggregated at the country and region levels and show that four types of decreased mobility correlate with increased sympathy toward refugees. In sum, the more people stay at home, the less they use transit stations, the less they go to work, or the less they go to retail and recreation areas, the more positive sentiment toward

refugees on that day on Twitter. For policymakers, our findings suggest that when debates over the pandemic remain separated from national debates over refugees, widespread stigma toward forcibly displaced populations currently hosted in a given country can be avoided. This means that efforts must be put in keeping the issue of refugees separated from national debates about the pandemic, all the while fostering a climate of societal bonding against the pandemic. We end this paper with a number of possible explanations for these findings, an expansion on our policy recommendations, and what type of data would be necessary to test the possible mechanisms at hand.

Sources of funding: This work is part of the program “Building the Evidence on Protracted Forced Displacement: A Multi-Stakeholder Partnership”. The program is funded by UK aid from the United Kingdom's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), it is managed by the World Bank Group (WBG) and was established in partnership with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The scope of the program is to expand the global knowledge on forced displacement by funding quality research and disseminating results for the use of practitioners and policy makers. We further thank FCDO for additional funding support through its Knowledge for Change (KCP) program. This work does not necessarily reflect the views of FCDO, the WBG or UNHCR.

We also thank the NLP Crisis Branch of the Qatar Computing Institute—in particular Dr. Muhammad Imran—for their generosity in sharing the dataset of tweets which became central to this paper. Special thanks also go to Audrey Sacks, Stephen Joseph Winkler, and Jose Antonio Cuesta Leiva who all provided substantial comments on many drafts of this paper—any mistake that crept in the final work is entirely our fault.

(Summary published on June 25, 2021)

SOUTHERN AFRICA

Accelerating Changes in Norms about Social Distancing to Combat COVID-19 in Mozambique

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Project timeline: April-July 2020.

(Expected) Output: Academic articles, policy input into Mozambique Ministry of Health's effort to promote social distancing.

Description of the project: Social distancing is one of the most important health behaviors limiting the spread of COVID-19, but people may practice it insufficiently for multiple reasons: they may not believe or realize that community norms have shifted towards support for social distancing, and they may not realize its public health benefits. This project is supporting Mozambique's effort to promote social distancing, in collaboration with the government's health research center for the central region. In a representative sample of 3,000 households across three provinces, many of whom were displaced by Cyclone Idai, researchers are evaluating two different messaging approaches to promote social distancing. One emphasizes that others in the community—either prominent individuals or a high share of other households—support social distancing. The other emphasizes social distancing's public health benefits. Data from high-frequency phone-based surveys will inform the government about how COVID-19-related knowledge, beliefs, and preventative behaviors are changing over time.

Sources of funding: Funding for this project was provided in part by the UK Department for International Development, awarded through Innovations for Poverty Action's Peace & Recovery Program.

(Summary published on September 23, 2020)

SOUTH ASIA

Cox's Bazar Panel Survey Rapid High Frequency Follow-ups: Impact of COVID-19

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Project timeline: The Cox's Bazar Panel Survey baseline was conducted from March to August 2019 on the host and refugee populations in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. The first round of the high frequency rapid phone follow ups was conducted between April and May 2020, during the Bangladesh government lockdowns, on a subset of indicators. The second round is expected to be completed between September and October 2020, with subsequent rounds scheduled at similar intervals.

(Expected) Output: Policy briefs on key welfare indicators (labor market movements, access to basic needs, assistance and coping mechanisms, access to health and other essential services) aimed at providing a representative snapshots of the situation as well as informing programmatic work being conducted in the space by humanitarian agencies.

Description of the project: A rapid phone survey was implemented on a representative sample of recently displaced Rohingya households and their host communities in the Cox's Bazar district of Bangladesh, to track the impacts of the COVID-19 crisis on labor markets, wages, and household coping strategies. This survey built on the Cox's Bazar Panel Survey (CBPS), which is a multi-topic survey that focused on socioeconomic outcomes and access to health services. This first round of the rapid phone survey was conducted from April 21, 2020 to May 20, 2020 (a month into the 2-month long COVID-19 lockdown). A sub-sample of 3,174 out of the 5,020 households surveyed in the CBPS baseline were successfully re-contacted in by this follow-up survey. Future rounds of this series of high-frequency follow ups are planned to continue collecting data on key labor market and wage movements,

assistance programs, adoption of coping strategies, access to basic needs and essential services.

Labor market findings from the first round of the short follow-up survey indicates that relative to the CBPS baseline, rates of temporary absence for work increased from 3 percent to 56 percent, with the majority of these absences being recorded after COVID-19, and two thirds of employed workers reported reduced earnings. The largely informal nature of jobs held by majority of this temporarily absent workers, makes it difficult to predict how much of this employment will translate into active jobs post-lockdown. Among the few Rohingya participating in the labor force, employment has dropped from 64 percent in 2019 to 23 percent, while unemployment has increased sharply from 36 percent to 77 percent. More than half of the working-age male camp respondents have not worked since January 2020, suggesting that this trend is driven by pre-COVID 19 factors such as the government directive circulated in September 2019 (post-baseline) banning the use of cash in camps. A second forthcoming brief will present findings on access to basic foods and assistance among these communities.

Sources of funding: World Bank Budget and The Joint Data Center on Forced Displacement (for future monitoring rounds).

(Summary published on September 23, 2020)

Prevalence of COVID-19 Symptoms, Risk Factors, and Health Behaviors in Host and Refugee Communities in Cox's Bazar: A Representative Panel Study

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Project timeline: Completed, April 11-17, 2020.

(Expected) Output: Academic article, published as a WHO Bulletin, available [here](#).

Description of the project: This project is studying the prevalence of COVID-19 symptoms in refugee and host communities and their correlates with current and pre-COVID-19 living conditions. Researchers administered a phone-based survey to a sample of 909 households in Cox's Bazar which was drawn from a household panel representative of Rohingya refugees and the host population. Researchers conducted a symptoms checklist to assess COVID-19 risk based on the WHO guidelines. The survey included questions covering returning migration, employment, and food security, and asked additional questions on health knowledge and behaviors to a random subsample (n=460). Results find that 24.6 percent of camp residents and 13.4 percent of those in host communities report at least one common symptom of COVID-19. Among those seeking treatment, a plurality did so at a pharmacy (42.3 percent in camps, 69.6 percent in host communities). While most respondents report good respiratory hygiene, between 76.7 percent (camps) and 52.2 percent (host community) had attended a communal prayer in the previous week. Another 47.4 percent (camps) and 34.4 percent (host community) had attended a non-religious social gathering. The presence of returning migrants, respondent mobility, and food insecurity strongly predict COVID-19 symptoms. The results suggest that COVID-19 symptoms are highly prevalent in Cox's Bazar, especially in refugee camps. Attendance at religious and social events threatens efforts to contain the spread of the disease. Pharmacies and religious leaders are promising outlets to disseminate life-saving information.

Sources of funding: Funding for this project was provided in part by the UK Department for International Development, awarded through Innovations for Poverty Action's Peace & Recovery Program.

(Summary published on September 23, 2020)

SOUTH AMERICA

Prejudice towards Refugees during COVID-19: Evidence from Colombia

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Project timeline: Ongoing -- data collection is expected to be completed this summer, analysis and writing is expected to be completed in fall 2020.

(Expected) Output: Academic article, newspaper editorials, policy reports depending on funders.

Description of the project: How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected prejudice and discrimination towards refugees? In fall 2019, we surveyed about 1,000 Colombians about their opinions on Venezuelan refugees as well as about 1,600 Venezuelan refugees living in Colombia. In summer 2020, we plan to re-interview the same respondents. For Colombians, we will assess how their attitudes about the Venezuelan migrants have changed, especially in light of the additional strain presented by COVID-19 on public healthcare systems and other public services. We hypothesize that they have become more opposed to refugees, especially if those refugees are seen as vectors of disease or burdens to society. However, if refugees are seen as helping fight the pandemic, opinions towards them should improve. These effects may be moderated by the respondents' own exposure to COVID-19. For Venezuelans, we will assess their ability to access public health and welfare services. In addition, we will ask if their experiences with prejudice and discrimination have changed, and if so, how.

This project seeks to make two major contributions. First, it will provide evidence on the link between concerns about disease and xenophobia, in the context of a large refugee crisis. Second, it will provide measures of COVID-19 exposure from locals and migrants in a developing country context, which we believe will be useful for future meta-analyses and cross-country comparisons.

(Summary published on June 10, 2020)

Understanding the Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Mental Health and Child-parent Relationships among IDPs and Communities Exposed to Protracted Conflict in Colombia

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Project timeline: Ongoing. Final data will be collected between June and July. Working paper will be in place by the end of the year.

(Expected) Output: Academic article.

Description of the project: We explore the effects of the pandemic on maternal mental health and child-parent relationships among Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and victims of violence in Colombia. Our project is embedded within a larger experimental evaluation of Semillas de Apego, a group-based psychosocial support program that seeks to restore maternal health and protect early childhood development in Internally Displaced families and in communities affected by violence. Since 2018, we rolled out the evaluation of this program through a randomized control trial in Tumaco, a municipality severely affected by the violence in Colombia, targeting both IDPs and victims of violence. Over the course of four sequential cohorts, 1,375 primary caregivers of children 2-5 were randomly assigned to the program or to a control arm. By the end of 2019, subjects in the treatment arm had completed the program, while subjects in the first two cohorts completed the three rounds of assessments (baseline, first and second follow-ups). Unfortunately, the pandemic disrupted the timing of the final follow-up for the last two cohorts of the evaluation. However, this also allows us to understand the effects of the pandemic on outcomes such as mental health and child-parent relationships among displaced families. In particular, we will combine data collected in-person and over the phone and will leverage exogenous variation in the timing at which households completed the assessment (pre and post pandemic) to understand how the pandemic is affecting mental health among primary caregivers and the frequency and quality of the child-parent relationships. In addition, we will leverage the exogenous variation in the assignment to the program, to understand whether subjects who participated in the

psychosocial support group are better able to navigate and respond to this crisis, or whether the crisis attenuated the positive effects that were observed at the first pre-pandemic follow-up. Together, the findings of our study will highlight how displaced families, caregivers, and children are affected by the pandemic, and to assess the effectiveness of the psychosocial support program, not only on its ability to repair the negative effects of violence, but also on whether it allows families to better respond and cope with other shocks. In doing so, we aim to close an existing policy gap and protect women and children exposed to violence who are currently underserved by existing policy frameworks in countries enduring protracted conflicts.

Sources of funding: Saving Brains, Grand Challenges Canada. Fundación FEMSA. Fundación Éxito. United Way Colombia. Coca Cola Foundation.

(Summary published on June 10, 2020)

Impact of COVID-19 on maternal mental health in a fragile and conflict-affected setting: a longitudinal case-control study in Tumaco, Colombia.

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Alicia Lieberman

Project timeline: Completed

(Expected) Output: Academic article: Under review at *The Lancet Global Health*

[Download Pre-Print](#)

Description of the project:

Background: The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on mental health have been understudied among vulnerable and marginalized populations, particularly in fragile and conflict-affected settings. We analyzed changes in mental health and parenting stress among caregivers, many of whom are Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), in a conflict-affected setting in Colombia.

Method: We used longitudinal data from a psychosocial support program in which 1,374 caregivers with children aged 2-5 were randomly assigned to treatment and control groups across four sequential cohorts. At end-line, two cohorts were assessed prior to the pandemic, while two cohorts were assessed two to five weeks into the national lockdown. We estimated the impact of COVID-19 by comparing end-line outcomes between pre- and post-pandemic cohorts using lagged dependent variable models.

Findings: Results showed that the likelihood of reporting symptoms above the risk threshold increased by 14 percentage points for anxiety (95 percent confidence interval: 0.100 – 0.174), five percentage points for depression (confidence interval: 0.005 – 0.091), and ten percentage points for parental stress (confidence interval: 0.046 – 0.146). Impact was stronger for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), and participants with lower education or with pre-existing mental health conditions. Impact was also higher for those reporting food insecurity, job loss, or illness of a relative.

Interpretation: Mental health significantly worsened due to COVID-19. Considering the

vulnerability and pre-existing mental health conditions of this population, the estimated effects are substantial. Policies in fragile and conflict-affected settings targeting IDPs and other vulnerable people will be important to mitigate further mental health and socioeconomic problems.

Sources of funding: Saving Brains – Grand Challenges Canada; Fundación Éxito; Fundación FEMSA; United Way Colombia.

(Summary published on June 25, 2021)

Characterizing Colombian Victims of Forced Displacement for the Delivery of Humanitarian Aid Abroad amidst the COVID-19 Health Emergency

The Unit for Attention and Comprehensive Reparation of Victims¹⁰ (Government of Colombia)

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Project timeline: In progress. The project began in June 2020 and will end in December 2020.

(Expected) Output: A report on the socioeconomic and demographic characterization of the victims of forced displacement who have emigrated abroad as a result of Colombia's armed conflict. In the wake of the COVID-19 emergency, the Unit for Victims has focused on delivering humanitarian aid to said population currently living in Ecuador and Panama.

Description of the project: The Unit for Victims, the government entity responsible for attending to the needs of all victims of Colombia's armed conflict, in the process of servicing the population of victims of forced displacement who crossed borders or emigrated abroad, has identified Colombian families living in vulnerable conditions partly as a result of the socioeconomic crises that have emerged as governments try to tackle the spread of COVID-19. In response, the Unit for Victims has taken up delivering humanitarian aid to those families that needs it most to meet basic needs at this time. Providing this support depends on the collection of information on the family groups (a characterization) as well as on the participation of partners in host countries. In the interest of facilitating the field work for aid delivery, an international cooperation agreement has been signed with the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), an organization that has assisted victims of Colombia's armed conflict located in Panama and Ecuador. Notably, both of these countries, currently affected by the health emergency, have historically provided refuge to victims of the armed conflict. As of

¹⁰ The agency's name in Spanish is *Unidad para la Atención y Reparación Integral a las Víctimas*.

¹¹ This is the English version of the agency's Spanish acronym, *Unidad para las Víctimas*.

today, 9,803 individuals included in the Colombian Government's Victims Single Registry (the majority of them for forced displacement)¹² are located here.

The methodology used to fulfill the objectives laid out begins with identifying the specific needs of the targeted population. Sources of information include requests made directly by the victims and victims' organizations, as well as reports or observations deriving from the daily operations of the Unit for Victims and Colombian consulates worldwide.

Subsequently, lists of people subject to the aid are exchanged with NRC teams in host countries, in this case Panamá and Ecuador, as the two locations selected for the implementation of the project. Next, telephone contact with potential beneficiaries is established. This outreach helps verify personal data, including contact information and location. During the call, legal orientation is provided so that people may freely consent to the treatment of personal data. Finally, a survey is conducted to collect sociodemographic information on the family and identify their specific needs.

Based on the survey's results, the aid is programmed for delivery to those victims who were already included in the Colombian government's Victims Single Registry. The aid is provided in US dollars and is subject to foreign exchange rates. In Ecuador, the beneficiaries can access the aid through bank transfers for up to 90-days calendar. In Panama, the beneficiaries can redeem virtual cards to acquire food, hygiene and cleaning products, clothing and medicine with specific vendors. These cards are usable for up to a year and must be presented along with the person's identification document.

In addition to helping meet immediate basic needs to ease the pressures identified in the context of the COVID-19 health crisis, the information collected through the aforementioned surveys also serves as a characterization exercise that in the long-run may influence policy making and international cooperation on matters of social inclusion and the pursuit of durable solutions to displacement, placing at the forefront the protection of people's safety and dignity. The data collected on the family groups and their socioeconomic and demographic conditions can serve as support for the above, helping governments and partners apply holistic approaches that take into

¹² The Victims Single Registry (*Registro Único de Víctimas* in Spanish) is the government's official repository of information on victims of Colombia's armed conflict. It is in effect since 2011, as a result of national legislation concerning attention, assistance and reparation to victims in a transitional justice framework. Victims included in the registry are those who have declared the violations they have suffered and requested inclusion.

account characteristics such as sex, ethnicity and age groups. For the Unit for Victims this is also an opportunity to measure people's intention to return to the country in order to provide the adequate orientation to victims abroad who voluntarily wish to initiate a return process.

The Unit for Victims continuously oversees the progress of the characterization exercise and the aid delivery in each of the countries mentioned. This monitoring takes place virtually through the cooperation partner's field teams. They are in charge of following-up with the beneficiaries if they received the aid (including timeframe, amounts and conditions). Likewise, representatives of victims' organizations also follow-up through their networks.

As a final product, the Unit for Victims will prepare a written report that will contain updated information from the surveys, the ensuing results of humanitarian aid delivery amidst the demands emerging from the COVID-19 crisis, and the conclusions that derive from the characterization exercise. In addition to documenting the progress made, this analysis ought to guide future actions in terms of international cooperation along the lines of social policy and durable solutions to displacement.

Sources of funding: Agreement 1957 of 2019 between the Unit for Victims and the Norwegian Refugee Council.

(Summary published on September 23, 2020)

Discrimination in Times of Crisis

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Project timeline: Ongoing.

(Expected) Output: Academic article.

Description of the project: The health and economic crisis caused by the COVID-19 is likely to trigger discriminatory reactions, since immigrants are seen as potential carriers of the virus and they compete with natives for limited health care resources. Discrimination not only harms immigrants directly but also contributes to social inequality and may even lead to intergroup violence. We are carrying out an online experiment in Colombia to estimate the discriminatory reactions of natives against Venezuelan forced migrants when primed with the crisis.

Sources of funding: Inter-American Development Bank.

(Summary published on September 23, 2020)

Life Out of the Shadows: Impacts of Amnesty Programs on Migrant's Life

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Project timeline: Ongoing, survey collection 2020.

(Expected) Output: Academic article.

Description of the project: Between 2014 and 2020 over 1.8 million refugees fled from Venezuela to Colombia as a result of a humanitarian crisis, many of them without a regular migratory status. We study the short- to medium-term labor market impacts in Colombia of the Permiso Temporal de Permanencia (PEP) program, the largest migratory amnesty program offered to undocumented migrants in a developing country in modern history. The program granted regular migratory status and work permits to nearly half a million undocumented Venezuelan migrants in Colombia in August 2018. The purpose of this project is to evaluate the impact of PEP on Venezuelan migrants. For this we will collect a household survey with information on labor outcomes, health status, and the integration process of Venezuelan migrants into the Colombian society. The project will evaluate the impacts of the PEP program in interaction with the COVID-19 pandemic by examining the effects of the program before and after the pandemic.

Sources of funding: Inter-American Development Bank, University of Southern California Marshall School of Business.

(Summary published on September 23, 2020)

Fostering Local Communities of Solidarity for Migrants and Refugees from Venezuela

*UNHCR, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees,
IOM, the International Organization for Migration,
UN-Habitat, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme.*

Project timeline: Ongoing, the expected timeline for the project is 36 months, starting from September 2019.

(Expected) output: The Expected Accomplishments (EA) and their related outputs are:

EA1: The host communities have strengthened their acceptance and improved economic and social inclusion for vulnerable migrant and refugee populations in transition and host communities. Furthermore, due to COVID-19 emergency, the target population has been beneficiaries of cash-based incentives, and local authorities and civil society organizations (CSOs) received technical support to address urban and socioeconomic impact during the post-crisis phase in their communities and its effect on refugees and migrants in the short and medium-term. Thus, the project will implement the following outputs:

1. Local governments are better informed and prepared to handle the transition and arrival of migrant and refugee groups in a vulnerable situation. Regarding COVID-19, the project aims to support local governments with information that allows strategic decision making to mitigate the COVID-19 post-crisis phase, especially regarding the strength of social supporting systems.
2. Inclusion of migration and asylum-related challenges and opportunities in urban strategies and planning. The expected outputs are Territorial Intervention Plans (one per city) which will provide technical assistance to urban authorities in designing a response strategy. With respect to COVID-19 emergency, the intervention plans will formulate recommendations and actions of the territorial order that will strengthen local capacities for the prevention and mitigation of this type of emergencies, especially on promoting healthy and resilient cities, governance for healthy environments, multi-stakeholder partnerships, among others.

3. A collection of documents to strengthen the local capabilities and share best practices in the region, including good practices regarding the management of COVID-19 crisis.

EA2: Migrants and refugees' populations are better protected and have improved access to documentation, orientation, and basic rights.

4. Social cohesion and conflict prevention promoted between host communities and migrants/refugees. The expected outputs are the implementation of campaigns and communication initiatives against xenophobia and discrimination to prevent community conflicts with special focus on prevention of stigmatization within the COVID-19 framework, and the implementation of socio-cultural activities for cohesion and conflict prevention between host communities, refugees, and migrants.

5. Strengthened local governments' capacity to respond to the specific needs and challenges faced by migrants and refugees, (including the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic), and the inclusion of CSOs, private sector, and relevant stakeholders in ensuring transparency and inclusion of host communities in decision making. The expected outputs are (i) to provide cash-based incentives (CBI) to migrants, refugees, and host communities to strengthen their capability to satisfy basic needs in the framework of COVID-19 emergency phase, (ii) to improve capacity building for local governments to respond to the specific needs and challenges faced by migrants and refugees, and the inclusion of CSOs, private sector and relevant stakeholders in ensuring transparency and participation of host communities in decision making, and (iii) to facilitate and/or strengthen linkages with market actors to foster migrants and refugees self-employment.

Description of the project:

General context

Venezuela experiences a significantly deteriorating socioeconomic situation, illustrated inter alia by increased unemployment rates, lack of ability of people to earn their livelihood, growing food insecurity, and a massive resurgence of Malaria cases for not having access to medical services. This is linked to political instability, violations of fundamental rights, including the right to peacefully demonstrate, as well as violence and insecurity, notably around mining and border areas. As a result of the emerging crisis, more than 4.5 million Venezuelans now live out of the country, with the numbers growing strongly over the last year. At present (January 2020), more than 3.8 million

have moved to Latin American neighboring countries, generating a humanitarian crisis of regional proportions.

Furthermore, it is necessary to take into account the impacts that the COVID-19 pandemic is having on the integration processes of refugees and migrants with a permanent vocation, with the host communities. According to PAHO / WHO, by April 15 the Region of the Americas presented a total of 645,000 confirmed cases of COVID-19, with 25,600 deaths.

Given the described situation, the overall objective of the project is to reduce vulnerabilities of migrants and refugees and address the impact on host communities to design stable and durable solutions with a medium and long-term vision that improves the lives of host and migrant communities.

Proposed target group / population:

The project has a regional scope, including six countries and a total of nine cities.

Project approach

In regard to COVID-19 response, the project had formulated a response plan aiming to support communities and local governments within the framework of the project. Thus, the following actions have been proposed:

- Baseline construction: support local governments with the inclusion of information on institutional health capacity, population vulnerabilities and access to basic services, in special attention to COVID-19 emergency. Furthermore, participatory assessments with Venezuelan and host community populations will be carried out to identify specific impacts of COVID-19.
- Communication campaigns: messages for the prevention of stigmatization of refugees and migrants and xenophobia will be included, within the framework of the social, economic and cultural effects of the COVID-19.
- Capacity building for local governments: provide technical support (through guidelines, recommendations, training sessions, and systematization of good practices regarding management of COVID-19 crisis) on COVID-19 crisis management to promote healthy cities and environments.
- Capacity building for refugees, migrants, and host communities: provide CBI to migrants, refugees and host communities in selected cities, and distribute them

proportionally according to the number of migrants in each country to support vulnerable target populations, but also to be an instrument to socioeconomic integration of these communities in a post-crisis scenario. Furthermore, strength the capabilities of civil society organizations of Venezuelans for access to goods and services offered by governments and international cooperation, to deal with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and promote self-care.

The implementation modality foresees indirect management as a Multi-partner agreement with UN-Habitat (lead), IOM, and UNHCR (as partners).

Data analysis scope:

UNHCR, IOM, and UN-Habitat are applying their methodologies to collect the information that allows the analysis of the situation of the refugee and migrant population and the state of the prosperity in selected cities. These methodologies are City Prosperity Index (CPI), the Migration Governance Indicators (MGI), and the Protection Monitoring Tool (PMT).

The COVID-19 emergency challenges the project to identify methods for the collection of primary information that will not involve social contact. As a strategy for resilience, the project has proposed the development of interviews using apps for online surveys with focal groups and the development of virtual workshops with local government staff and community leaders. Regarding the online surveys, the main challenge is the definition of an adequate statistical sample which includes refugees, migrants, and host communities in equal proportions. In regard to virtual workshops and interviews, the main challenge is to provide the community leaders and local staff with an adequate internet connection.

Main findings:

The project will present the main findings in the following months as the baseline construction is finalized.

Sources of funding: European Union.

(Summary published on June 10, 2020)

GLOBAL AND MULTI-COUNTRY PROJECTS

COVID-19 and the Lives of Adolescents from Refugee and Host Communities in Bangladesh and Jordan

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Project timeline: The project is currently ongoing with expected completion for phase 1 in August 2020, and expected completion for phase 2 in December 2020.

May 2020	Phase 1 data collection completed
June 2020	Policy brief(s): Real-time emerging findings (phase 1a)
July 2020	Policy brief(s): Real-time emerging findings (phase 1b)
October 2020	Phase 2 data collection completed
November 2020	Data processing and analysis completed
December 2020	Policy brief: Slower onset findings (phase 2)
December 2020	Journal article(s) prepared

(Expected) Output: This project will produce four country-specific policy briefs, two country-specific journal articles and one cross-country journal article. These deliverables will share key findings from the rapid onset virtual interviews on COVID-19 and resulting government responses on adolescents, as well as their knowledge and perceptions of COVID-19 (phase 1). Subsequently, the analysis will aim to inform possible programming and policy responses post-COVID-19 to mitigate long-term impacts of the pandemic on the lives of adolescents (Phase 2).

Description of the project: The unevenly implemented lockdown in Bangladesh coupled with limited testing capacity has meant that the magnitude of COVID-19's spread throughout the country is likely to be underreported. This is further

compounded by news that the virus has reached Cox's Bazar district, home to thousands of vulnerable Bangladeshi host communities and close to a million Rohingya refugees living in overcrowded and critical conditions.

In comparison, the government of Jordan acted decisively to stop the spread of COVID-19 by implementing a mandatory curfew and a nationwide lockdown for the first month and half after confirming the first cases of the virus. The strict regime seems to have worked and the spread of the virus has been stalled (with no new cases over the past five days as of early May). Nevertheless, the lives of many young people have been interrupted by school closures expected to last until at least mid-June, and possibly longer. Public schools, many of which are running double shifts, cannot meet demand and the country faces severe and escalating water shortages, especially in refugee camps, which are expected to be exacerbated by the COVID-19 lockdown. The labor market is also struggling to keep up with the growing population, with most people not able to work or provide for their families.

Measures

In order to inform the government's response and that of its humanitarian and development partners, it is essential to supplement the evidence base with a focus on adolescence, as containment measures will have multi-dimensional effects on young people's well-being in the short- and medium term. The Gender and Adolescence: Global Evidence (GAGE) program has ongoing mixed-methods longitudinal research in both Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh and Jordan's refugee camps and host communities, and it is uniquely placed to capture both short-run impacts and longer-term concerns with its sample of adolescents aged 10-19 years. The mixed-methods data collected will be organized in two key phases: the first phase to understand immediate knowledge, attitudes and behavior vis-à-vis the emerging pandemic focused around the six GAGE capability domains:

- *Education and learning*: disruptions in education (including suspension to the pilot phase of the Myanmar curriculum for Rohingya refugee adolescents in grades 6–9; and suspension of all schools in Jordan and moving to on-line/TV curriculum); ability to study/learn while schools/learning centers are closed, concerns about how COVID-19 will impact education in the longer-term.

- *Health and nutrition*: self-reported health, health symptoms related to COVID-19, impact of COVID-19 on food security, changes in risky behavior (e.g. smoking).
- *Psychosocial well-being*: measures of mental health, worry/fear about COVID-19.
- *Economic empowerment*: disruptions in vocational training and/or paid work, and taking on additional work.
- *Mobility, voice and agency*: movement during the past seven days, ability to remain connected with friends.
- *Bodily integrity*: coping mechanisms by the adolescent and her/his family, changes in violence in the community.

The second phase will assess change across each of the six domains above but pay particular attention to the following:

- Effects on education;
- Coping strategies given the economic fallout, including impacts on nutrition and substance use;
- Effects on age- and gender-based violence, and ability to seek protection and justice;
- Effects on child marriage;
- Adolescent perceptions of gender and generational differences of the impacts of COVID-19 and governmental/humanitarian responses including social protection.
- Ongoing panel data collection will also allow us to assess sustained impacts post-pandemic.

Sample

In Bangladesh in Cox's Bazar, a representative sample of 1,071 Rohingya adolescents living in camps and 1,209 Bangladeshi adolescents living in host communities will be surveyed, and a total of 32 adolescents will be engaged via in-depth qualitative virtual interviews. In Jordan, our quantitative sample consists of over 4,000 adolescents and young adults from camps, host communities and ITS (informal tented settlements) and includes vulnerable Jordanians and refugee populations (Syrian and Palestinian), with

a subsample of adolescents with disabilities and married girls. Qualitative virtual sessions will be carried out with more than 100 adolescents.

Our research will aim to contribute to policy and programming firstly by collecting age- and gender-disaggregated data on the impact of COVID-19, to fully grasp the inequitable losses affecting adolescent girls and boys in both the immediate and longer-terms. We will also contribute to policy discourse on expanding social protection packages and shock responses that consider the specific constraints faced by adolescents, including household economic resilience to circumvent reliance on negative coping mechanisms adversely affecting girls and boys (child marriage, permanent school drop-out and disproportionate roles in informal sectors). We will also contribute evidence to programming surrounding virtual educational resourcing and virtual protection, justice and referral mechanisms (including protection from gender-based violence and domestic violence).

Sources of funding: The Gender and Adolescence: Global Evidence (GAGE) programme is funded by UK aid from the UK government, Department for International Development (DFID). For the COVID-19 related work we are also seeking complementary funding.

(Summary published on June 10, 2020)

COVID-19 Watch: Expert Analysis of COVID-19's Impact on Refugees and Other Forced Migrants

Editor: Jane McAdam, University of New South Wales, kaldorcentre@unsw.edu.au

Project timeline: COVID-19 Watch has been live since April 06, 2020. New contributions will be published on an ongoing basis until further notice.

(Expected) output: COVID-19 Watch is a blog published on the website of the Kaldor Centre for International Refugee Law. Selected blog posts will be revised and updated for a special commentary section in the International Journal of Refugee Law.

Description of the project: The Kaldor Centre for International Refugee Law at UNSW has created a watching brief of the impact of COVID-19 on the world's displaced people. [COVID-19 Watch](#) is a hub for expert analysis on the impacts of COVID-19 on the world's displaced people. Sharing insights from scholars, humanitarians, practitioners and refugees themselves, it is a go-to resource for both policymakers and the general public. COVID-19 Watch is published on the Kaldor Centre website, and features expert analysis and commentary from refugees, scholars, humanitarians and practitioners. Contributions are informed by data drawn from existing scholarship, legal instruments, reports by UN bodies or NGOs, and/or authors' own lived experience of displacement or professional experience in humanitarian settings. Through publication on the Kaldor Centre website and promotion through Kaldor Centre mailing lists and social media channels, the findings presented in each piece of expert analysis and commentary are made available to an international audience of academics, policy makers, practitioners, and the public. By drawing attention to the impact of COVID-19 on displaced people around the world, the COVID-19 Watch project highlights the international refugee and human rights law principles that policy makers should take into account in future pandemics and humanitarian emergencies.

Sources of funding: Not specifically funded – part of general Kaldor Centre work.

(Summary published on June 10, 2020)

The COVID-19 Crisis and International Asylum and Migration Norms

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Project timeline: Ongoing, expected time to completion TBD.

(Expected) output: Academic article.

Description of project: Historically, states have enacted increasingly restrictive migration policies during pandemics that outlast the health emergency (Kenny 2020). Amid the COVID-19 crisis, many states are issuing emergency policies such as closing borders to refugees and asylum seekers, halting asylum registration, and canceling asylum hearings. Some of these emergency restrictions arguably amount to *refoulement* or violate other long held principles of international refugee law such as non-discrimination and access to courts. The strength of the international refugee regime depends, in part, on states' compliance with these principles and state sanctioning of norm violators. If norm violations are more frequent, and do not incur international sanctioning, there is opportunity for norm erosion. This article seeks to examine how COVID-19 affects international asylum norms in the short term, with an eye to additional long-term data collection. Research design is currently in development.

(Summary published on June 10, 2020)

Locked Down and Left Behind: The Impact of COVID-19 on Refugees' Economic Inclusion

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Project timeline: Completed.

(Expected) Output: Report, available [here](#).

Description of the project: Refugees living in low- and middle-income countries are especially vulnerable to the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on data from eight hosting countries before COVID-19, we find that refugees are 60 percent more likely than host populations to be working in highly impacted sectors, such as accommodation and food services, manufacturing, and retail. As a result, COVID-19 will likely lead to widespread loss of livelihoods and an increase in poverty among refugee populations. These impacts will be exacerbated by the fact that COVID-19 has made it more difficult for refugees to access the labor market, social safety nets, and aid provided by humanitarian organizations. Going forward, as refugee-hosting countries face looming economic recession, increasing unemployment, and rising xenophobia, there will be increased skepticism of refugees' economic inclusion. This paper explores these issues and argues expanded economic inclusion is in the best interests of refugees, their host populations, and their host countries. It also provides a series of recommendations for refugee-hosting countries to safeguard refugee livelihoods in the short- and long-term.

Sources of funding: IKEA Foundation and Western Union Foundation.

(Summary published on September 23, 2020)

Targeting Vulnerable Households under Mobility Constraints

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Project timeline: Ongoing, expected completion December 2020.

(Expected) output: Report and a working paper.

Description of the project: The strict mobility constraints imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic prohibit the door-to-door outreach that humanitarian implementing organizations often rely on for accurate targeting of services. Moreover, these mobility constraints are not uncommon during other times of crisis or conflict. We will use a phone survey to apply insights from the information diffusion literature to the setting of information aggregation for program targeting. Specifically, we seek to answer whether individuals identified as central via a “gossip centrality” measure are effective information aggregators and can aid in identifying underserved households. We will further characterize effective information aggregators in comparison to diffusers. Via multiple rounds of phone surveys, we will identify central individuals in refugee social networks, and leverage these individuals to identify overlooked vulnerable community members. By exploring the efficacy of a low-cost targeting methodology, this study will inform the outreach and targeting systems for humanitarian programming under conditions when face-to-face assessments are infeasible.

Sources of funding: World Bank.

(Summary published on September 23, 2020)

Impact of COVID-19 on People of Concern

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Project timeline: Ongoing.

(Expected) Output: Regular updated analytical reports. Four updates published to date. Aim to update on a monthly basis.

Description of project: The purpose of the analysis is to guide advocacy and communication efforts on the global, regional and national level by providing data and evidence on the impact of COVID-19 crisis on the people of concern (refugees, IDPs, migrants and host communities). To this extent the analysis has the objective of determining the needs arising from the impact of COVID-19 as well as reporting on the response being undertaken by Danish Refugee Council (DRC) to COVID-19. The analysis focuses on synthesizing key trends and conclusions based on the available data and analyses coming from DRC country and regional offices. In addition to the general conclusions and synthesis, examples and cases from country operations would be provided. The analysis is DRC specific (i.e. based on internal data), but where possible corroborates findings with external sources.

The analysis explores protection issues such as developments in conflict dynamics, access to health services, stigmatization and xenophobia, gender-based violence, as well as access to information on COVID-19. The analysis also looks into the consequences for livelihoods, economic recovery and basic needs, such as analysing impact on access to income generating opportunities, use of coping mechanism and most pressing humanitarian needs.

To date (22 June) the analysis builds on data from 24 of our 37 country operations including both quantitative and qualitative data. A common rapid needs assessment has been used in six DRC country operations with almost 5,000 beneficiary interviews, which has allowed for cross-country analysis of the impact on needs and income generation. It further builds on protection needs assessment, as well as more than 5,000 interviews conducted by the Mixed Migration Centre with migrants and refugees across Asia, Latin America and Africa.

Sources of funding: DRC Core Funding.

(Summary published on September 23, 2020)

Misinformation about Refugees during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Changing Priorities or New Fuel to the Fire?

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Project timeline: The project is at its early stages but actively ongoing—the first half of the paper is being completed and data analysis is ongoing. A first preprint draft to be published in the World Bank working paper series should be ready for June 31st and a revised version aimed for an academic venue is aimed for the end of 2021

(Expected) Output: The preprint will be published with the World Bank working paper series pending approval of the Social Development Global Practice, and the revised paper is aimed to be published in a peer reviewed journal as an academic article.

Description of the project: What is the impact of COVID-19 on misinformation about refugees? What is the interaction between misinformation movements focused on non-refugee matters, and misinformation about refugees during the COVID-19 pandemic, if any? What does it all tell us about the things we can do to fight misinformation about refugees? In this paper, I explore answers to this question by using Facebook data with a world coverage along with COVID-19 related variables. My aim is to shed more lights on determinants of misinformation about refugees on social media in times of crisis—like the COVID-19 pandemic—and what policymakers can do to better fight them.

Sources of funding: This work is part of the program “Building the Evidence on Protracted Forced Displacement: A Multi-Stakeholder Partnership”. The program is funded by UK aid from the United Kingdom's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), it is managed by the World Bank Group (WBG) and was established in partnership with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The scope of the program is to expand the global knowledge on forced displacement by funding quality research and disseminating results for the use of practitioners and policy makers. We further thank FCDO for additional funding support through its Knowledge for Change (KCP) program. This work does not necessarily reflect the views of FCDO, the WBG or UNHCR.

(Summary published on June 25, 2021)

Joint DRC-IRC-NRC research project on refugee outcomes post Global Compact on Refugees

Staff members at Danish Refugee Council (DRC), International Rescue Committee (IRC) and Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC).

Project timeline: ongoing, publication expected in October 2021

(Expected) Output: Report

Description of the project:

Almost three years after the world agreed to a Global Compact on Refugees (GCR), we still do not know if it has made a difference in the lives of millions of refugees around the world. Lack of refugee data and/or limited data access make it difficult to assess the impact of the agreement on refugee protection and well-being. The COVID-19 pandemic has added a significant layer of constraints in data collection and analysis, particularly in host countries.

Danish Refugee Council (DRC), International Rescue Committee (IRC) and Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) have joined efforts to complement ongoing GCR monitoring work carried out by UNHCR and other agencies. The purpose of the joint research project is to assess the main changes in refugee outcomes in a number of countries, including as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, based on data made available between January 2019 and March 2021 [dates may change depending on available data].

The final report will include a desk review of data released by UNHCR, the World Bank and other international organisations, as well as an analysis of other age and gender-disaggregated data collected by these institutions since early 2019. The research will focus on changes in key areas of refugee well-being, such as protection, inclusion, socioeconomic conditions and additional areas if feasible. Depending on data availability, we will investigate the constraints to and opportunities for improved refugee outcomes in each of these areas, including by taking into account the secondary impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The joint research project aims to contribute to higher GCR accountability in view of the High Levels Officials Meeting in December 2021. It will also help fill data analysis

and knowledge gaps on forcibly displaced populations in support of ongoing efforts by the recently established World Bank-UNHCR Joint Data Center on Forced Displacement. With this study DRC, IRC and NRC hope to promote stronger accountability and transparency towards refugee populations around the world. In addition, the research will contribute to a better understanding of the secondary impacts of COVID-19 on refugee outcomes.

Sources of funding: joint funding by DRC, IRC and NRC

(Summary published on June 25, 2021)

Closing the data gaps to address heightened concerns for children on the move amid a pandemic

International Data Alliance for Children on the Move (IDAC). Jointly supported by UNICEF, IOM, UNHCR and OECD, IDAC is a cross-sectoral global coalition comprised of governments, international and regional organizations, NGOs, think tanks, academics, and civil society. IDAC@unicef.org

Project timeline: April to May 2021

(Expected) Output: Issue Brief and webinar

Description of the project:

The COVID-19 pandemic has confirmed and made more acute the severe data gaps that the international community is facing in determining the actual impact of COVID-19 on some 33 million children (as of 2019) who were living in forced displacement within their own country or abroad. Data that is available on migrant and displaced populations often lacks vital demographic details like age, sex, education level, and country of origin.

Globally, 1 in 5 countries and territories do not have age-disaggregated migrant stock data. 4 in 5 countries and territories with conflict-related internally displaced persons, and 2 in 5 countries collecting data on refugees do not disaggregate the data by age. In many cases, data on children on the move are not regularly collected, shared or analysed, and data quality is often poor.

The International Data Alliance for Children on the Move (IDAC) recognizes that persistent data gaps mean many migrant and displaced girls and boys remain out of reach, unseen and unprotected. They are slipping through the cracks, missing out on vital measures and programmes designed to protect their well-being, especially during pandemic times. As the COVID-19 and its far-reaching impacts push children on the move into even greater danger, IDAC calls upon the international community to address the troubling data gaps at national, regional and global levels. IDAC holds the view that only by relying on solid data and evidence can policymakers and practitioners target and design interventions to address the needs and vulnerabilities of children on the move.

To this end, the IDAC first issue brief, “A Web of Insecurity: How gender impacts childhood migration amid a pandemic,” to be released in April 2021, explains how COVID-19 has exposed and intensified many of the pre-existing inequalities that girls and boys on the move already faced, while also introducing new risks. Available albeit limited data show that infection rates have been disproportionately higher among migrant and displaced populations, many of whom do not have access to adequate testing and health care and have been left out of vaccine roll outs.

Furthermore, lost jobs and rising levels of poverty, disruptions to health care and social services, school closures and obstacles to remote learning, border restrictions and forced returns, and greater levels of xenophobia and gender-based violence are further undermining the already precarious lives of children on the move, who are disproportionately exposed to COVID-19 threats – with girls at particular risk. For example, girls are expected to care for sick family members and pick up additional work in the home. They are less likely to return to school and are more vulnerable to trafficking and gender-based violence. Migrant and displaced girls and boys are prone to engage in more child labour, while those already working may be further exploited, deported, or unable to return home due to travel restrictions.

In this brief, IDAC reiterates the immediate and long-term needs to closely monitor the situation of all children who have left home, by improving data systems to drive gender-responsive plans of action that mitigate the gendered risks and to chart a more secure path ahead. IDAC also outlines in this brief some urgent actions for children on the move during COVID-19.

To provide a multi-stakeholder space for discussion and information exchange on the emerging impact of COVID-19 on children on the move, IDAC has organized in early May a webinar, “Migrant and Displaced Children: Deep in the shadow of COVID-19.” Through the lens of the pandemic, the webinar seeks to gather the experiences, lessons learned, innovative methodologies and good practices from participants on how to strengthen existing data systems and enhance capacities in data collection, sharing and use to meet the material and protection needs of migrant and displaced children.

In the course of 2021, IDAC will also embark on other activities that aim to address data gaps and needs for children on the move in general. IDAC will mobilize 4 working groups led by experts from governments, international organizations and think tanks to produce data-driven outputs, including modules and guidance materials on

identifying and solving gaps in national data ecosystems, improving data collection methods, as well as data availability and quality. IDAC will also produce a thematic report in the fall to provide an update on the status of children on the move and to offer recommendations based on good practices – e.g., policies and programs, partnerships, academic initiatives, etc. – in improving overall data availability and developing indicators and data for children on the move at national, regional and global levels.

IDAC also plans to hold high-level events later in the year to raise awareness about the imperative to improve statistics and data systems from the national to the global level, if the global community were to live up to the spirit of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development to leave no one behind, and to deliver on commitments under the Global Compact for Migration (GCM) and the Global Compact for Refugees (GCR).

Sources of funding: The IDAC Secretariat is funded by UNICEF, with support from UNHCR, IOM and OECD. IDAC is currently looking for funding opportunities to support the implementation of its work plan for 2021-2023.

(Summary published on June 25, 2021)

COVID-19-RELATED PROJECTS BY SAMUEL HALL

The following section provides a short summary of current and upcoming research projects related to forced displacement and the COVID-19 pandemic designed by researchers from Samuel Hall.

COVID-19: Impact on Child Protection Needs in Afghanistan

*Nassim Majidi, Samuel Hall, nassim.majidi@samuelhall.org
Marion Guillaume, Samuel Hall, marion.guillaume@samuelhall.org*

Project timeline: Completed.

(Expected) output: Research brief, available [here](#).

Description of the project: Unaccompanied children on the move have become more common. This demographic shift calls for a transition to child-sensitive return programmes and policies – yet despite increased returns and deportations, support has decreased over the last decade in Afghanistan. COVID-19 has increased the risks of returns, and the response to the pandemic remains insufficient to meet the needs at the border - especially for children and women. This research was conducted by Samuel Hall for War Child UK and UNICEF to assess the impact of COVID-19 on minor deportees and returnees. It provides actionable learning to inform more effective and relevant design, implementation, and adjustment of future interventions targeting minor deportees.

(Summary first published on June 10, 2020 and updated on September 23, 2020)

Access to Education for COVID-19 Emergency-affected Children in Afghanistan

Marion Guillaume, Samuel Hall. marion.guillaume@samuelhall.org

Project timeline: planned.

(Expected) Output: Report, research or policy brief; blog/article.

Description of the project: Like elsewhere in the world, COVID-19 has led to school closures all over Afghanistan, with dire consequences particularly for the most vulnerable. Save the Children International is currently rolling out inclusive, participatory, back-to-school campaigns, in anticipation of school reopening, with an emphasis on re-enrolling children who have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19 and may be engaged in negative coping mechanisms such as child labour, early marriage, and other forms of exploitation and abuse. SCI are entering into a holistic, whole-of-community partnership approach to education response. Samuel Hall will serve as a learning partner for these efforts: Once schools reopen, SCI and its partners, with ongoing technical oversight from Samuel Hall, will conduct a baseline and ongoing assessment to understand and respond to remediation needs, a refined approach to 'catch-up' classes. Samuel Hall will conduct specific research around contributing and mitigating factors to drop-out and retention in the current context, building on the findings from our landmark Out-of-school Children study (conducted in collaboration with UNICEF).

(Summary published on September 23, 2020)

Rapid Assessment of COVID-19's Impact on Afghan Women and Children in Conflict

Marion Guillaume, Samuel Hall, marion.guillaume@samuelhall.org

Project timeline: Ongoing.

(Expected) output: Research or policy brief; blog/article.

Description of the project: Using our random dialer technology, Samuel Hall is conducting phone interviews with 400 randomly selected women and youth across Afghanistan to ascertain the level of knowledge surrounding, and effects felt due to the COVID-19 pandemic and related lockdown, by this particularly vulnerable cohort.

(Summary published on June 10, 2020)

COVID-19: Impact on Returns from Europe to Afghanistan and Iraq

Nassim Majidi, Samuel Hall, nassim.majidi@samuelhall.org

Project timeline: Ongoing.

(Expected) output: Report, research or policy brief; blog/article.

Description of the project: Samuel Hall is working with DELMI on a research project focusing on returns to Afghanistan and Iraq from Sweden. A module will be added to the research tools to gauge the impact of the current environment on return procedures as well as outcomes. The sample is 120 returnees targeted with in-depth qualitative interviews.

(Summary first published on June 10, 2020 and updated on September 23, 2020)

Designing a COVID-19 Community Vulnerability Index for Afghanistan and Somalia

Stefanie Barratt, Samuel Hall, stefanie.barratt@samuelhall.org

Project timeline: Planned.

(Expected) output: Research or policy brief; blog/article.

Description of the project: Following the example of the Surgo foundation's COVID-19 Community Vulnerability Index (CCVI), the team will design a COVID-19 Vulnerability Index to identify provinces and, to the extent possible, districts, which are prone to particularly high COVID-related vulnerability. In addition, using random dialler, we will conduct a very short adaptive survey inquiring as to COVID-related experiences and practices amongst the general population, which would provide snapshots of the epidemic's reach in real time.

(Summary first published on June 10, 2020 and updated on September 23, 2020)

COVID-19 Impact on Refugee Livelihoods in Jordan

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Project timeline: Planned.

(Expected) output: Report, research or policy brief; blog/article.

Description of the project: The Samuel Hall team is planning with UNHCR Jordan to use the opportunity of Post-Distribution Monitoring of COVID-19 related cash grants to gauge the impact of the shutdown on the livelihood strategies of Syrian refugees in Jordan. The sample for this survey will consist of 800 urban refugees who benefited from the COVID Cash grants but not the unconditional “classic” UNHCR cash grant.

(Summary first published on June 10, 2020 and updated on September 23, 2020)

Impact of the Pandemic on Reintegration and (Re)migration Decision-making in Senegal, Guinea and Morocco

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Camille Kasavan, Samuel Hall, camille.kasavan@samuelhall.org

Project timeline: Ongoing.

(Expected) output: Report, research or policy brief; blog/article.

Description of the project: Samuel Hall is working with the International Organization of Migration (IOM) to assess the reintegration outcomes of certain types of IOM programming (namely, the mentoring approach) in Senegal, Guinea and Morocco. Questions on COVID-19 and impact on reintegration/ migration decision making have been included in interviews across all three countries, with returnees as well as stakeholders.

(Summary first published on June 10, 2020 and updated on September 23, 2020)

Labour Market Impacts of COVID-19 in Ethiopia

Hervé Nicolle, Samuel Hall, herve.nicolle@samuelhall.org

Project timeline: Ongoing.

(Expected) output: Report, research or policy brief; blog/article.

Description of the project: Samuel Hall is currently working with the International Labour Organization on rapid assessments with the host and refugee/IDP communities in four areas in the Somali and Tigray region on the impacts of COVID-19 on local socioeconomic environments, with a particular focus on jobs and livelihoods. Interviews are conducted with 200 members of the host communities and 100 members of the IDP and refugee communities.

(Summary first published on June 10, 2020 and updated on September 23, 2020)

SOME ONLINE RESOURCES

- African Development Bank Group: COVID-19;
<https://www.afdb.org/en/news-keywords/covid-19>
- Asian Development Bank: COVID-19 (Coronavirus) - ADB's Response;
<https://www.adb.org/what-we-do/covid19-coronavirus>
- COVID-19 Humanitarian: COVID-19 and Humanitarian Crisis;
<https://www.covid19humanitarian.com/>
- Danish Refugee Council: COVID-19 Global Updates;
<https://drc.ngo/our-work/resources/covid-19-global-updates/>
- Inter-American Development Bank: The IDB Group in Response to Covid-19 (Coronavirus);
<https://www.iadb.org/en/coronavirus>
- Innovations for Poverty Action: COVID-19;
<https://www.poverty-action.org/topics/covid-19>
- Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre: Coronavirus Crisis – Internal Displacement;
<https://www.internal-displacement.org/crises/coronavirus>
- KNOMAD: Remittances In Crisis - How To Keep Them Flowing
<https://www.knomad.org/covid-19-remittances-call-to-action/>
- Mixed Migration Centre: 4Mi Interactive Platform
<https://mixedmigration.org/4mi/>
- United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs: COVID-19 response;
<https://covid-19-response.unstatshub.org/>
- UNHCR, The UN Refugee Agency: Coronavirus Outbreak;
<https://www.unhcr.org/coronavirus-covid-19.html>
- World Bank: Coronavirus Live Series: Interview with World Bank Group President David Malpass;
<https://live.worldbank.org/interview-world-bank-group-president-david-malpass>
- World Bank Group: World Bank Group and COVID-19 (Coronavirus);
<https://www.worldbank.org/en/who-we-are/news/coronavirus-covid19>
- World Health Organization: ApartTogether Study;
<https://www.aparttogetherstudy.org/>