

Timeline

June 2020-August 2020

Study Type

Quasi-experimental Analysis

Article Link

<https://parlap.geog.mcgill.ca/page-4/>

Research Implemented by IPA

No

COVID-19 Among Rural Peoples in the Peruvian Amazon: The PARLAP Phone Survey

Researchers

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic hit the Peruvian Amazon in mid-March and sparked international concern about the well-being of the indigenous and non-indigenous peoples of the region. Although the two major urban centers—Iquitos and Pucallpa—received media attention, information about conditions in the many smaller rural communities along the rivers of Loreto and Ucayali regions is scarce. The case and mortality data provided by the Peruvian Government for the two regions is invaluable but reflects conditions in more urbanized communities—those with some health facilities—but most rural communities have none, lack reliable means of communication, and many are just too remote, making it difficult to discern the impacts of COVID-19 in much of the Peruvian Amazon. To remedy this lacuna, and with a concern about the people that the researchers work with, they undertook a large-scale survey by phone among 470 communities in the Peruvian Amazon Rural Livelihoods and Poverty (PARLAP) Project that captures the rural prevalence of COVID-19 and its consequences. Their findings promise to provide policy-relevant insights for health care, poverty alleviation, and conservation during and after the pandemic.

Project Outcomes of Interest

Prevalence of COVID-19, potential cause of spread, protection measures employed, assistance received, people's responses and concerns

Key Findings

- According to government data which capture more urbanized communities, COVID-19 spread throughout the region in two waves (i.e., April-June; August). Our data indicate that mortality rates in rural communities were higher in Ucayali than Loreto, which is opposite to what government data suggests. Similarly, mortality rates were higher in campesino communities than indigenous communities, which is contrary to the impression given by media reports on COVID-19, which focus on indigenous peoples only.
- Gatherings may have caused the spread of the virus initially but were later avoided to reduce contagion. School closure was incomplete, and school re-opening may have led to the spread of the virus during the second wave. People adopted standard protective measures, which helped reduce the spread of the virus. Hand washing and use of masks were more common than social distancing measures, and this difference increased in the second wave.
- With limited access to medical services, people relied heavily on traditional medicine. People also relied more on wild resources such as fishing, hunting, and non-timber forest product gathering, both for food and earnings. Cash and food assistance was received, mostly from the government, but health assistance was practically absent. Travel to the city to collect cash assistance provided by the government may have furthered the spread of the virus.
- Policy implications suggested from our findings include the need to:
 - (1) gather data to better inform policies to reduce contagion and impacts, paying attention to differences across communities;
 - (2) improve communication infrastructure and services for rural communities (especially telephone);
 - (3) correct unintended adverse consequences of assistance policies;
 - (4) tackle the social cost of protective measures; and,
 - (5) consider linkages between COVID-19 and wild resource conservation.

Link to Results

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Impact Goals

- Improve social-safety net responses
- Reduce COVID-19 transmission rates

Results Status

Results

Results

Policy Brief: COVID-19 among Rural Peoples in the Peruvian Amazon