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RECOVR Roundup Vol. 16: Social Protection in the Time of COVID-19

In this sixteenth installment of our RECOVR Roundup series, we are sharing new findings and analysis from the [RECOVR Research Hub](#) and from our partner organizations, as well as links on what is happening in the Social Protection landscape in response to COVID-19. Read the [previous installment](#) if you missed it, and [sign up for our mailing list](#) if you'd like to receive this roundup series directly to your inbox.

As always, we encourage you to [write to our team](#) with ideas for features.



New Findings & Analysis

Uganda, Nigeria, and Kenya: Digital Fraud Risk During COVID-19

Attempted scams during the first months of the pandemic were widespread

As COVID lockdowns spread and more people were dependent on their phones, [a recent analysis shows](#) online complaints about fraud, scams, and other digital financial services risks grew as well. Now, nationally representative surveys in Uganda, Nigeria, and Kenya have helped IPA shed light on whether digital finance users experienced fraud or scams in the early months of the pandemic (May - June 2020). **Attempted and actual fraud were very prevalent in all three countries, with 47 percent of respondents in Uganda saying they had experienced this, as well as 51 percent in Nigeria and 57 percent in Kenya.** With many governments providing pandemic-related assistance via digital channels, these findings underscore the need to build in fraud monitoring and scam protections. Read more about the [Uganda](#), [Nigeria](#), and [Kenya](#) surveys.

Côte d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso: Lessons for Policymakers on the Continued Impacts of COVID-19

Willingness to vaccinate high, and family planning access improving

On our [blog](#), we highlight insights from the second round of RECOVR surveys in Côte d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso. **A majority of respondents from both countries reported intentions to get vaccinated against COVID-19 (69 percent in Burkina Faso and 77 percent in Côte d'Ivoire)**, providing a strong foundation for immunization campaigns once vaccines are widely available in each country. In Burkina Faso, we also found **access to family planning services has improved since the early days of the pandemic; 11 percent said they had trouble accessing services, compared to 18 percent four months earlier**. Challenges remained with respect to food security and economic damage on livelihoods.

Uganda: The Effects of the COVID-19 Shock on Young Vocational Students

School closures due to lockdowns exacerbated existing inequalities

Vocational training is a widely-used strategy to boost human capital and labor force skills in lower-income countries. [Livia Alfonsi](#), [Sara Spaziani](#), and [Mary Namibiru](#) surveyed 800 students enrolled in the National Certificate Course at five Vocational Training Institutes (VTIs) across central and eastern Uganda three months after lockdowns shuttered the schools. **They found that school closures in March 2020, which forced students back to their family homes, widened existing inequalities: for example, 52 percent reported having less access to the internet and less access to space to study and concentrate**. The authors call for free remedial education to students that have fallen behind, and in the case of future closures to make electronic devices and internet access available to rural students.

What We're Reading & Watching

- Can unconditional cash transfers help young people to **navigate their transitions out of foster care**? Santa Clara County, California is piloting a program that provides \$1,000 a month for one year to people leaving the foster system, so they're better able to pay for housing and education as they switch to independent living.
- How did Mozambique support vulnerable urban and peri-urban households during the pandemic? [This ILO report](#) documents how **the government worked in partnership with community-based organizations to register more than 945,000 new beneficiaries** for six months of cash transfers, provided through the "Post Emergency COVID-19 Direct Social Support Program."
- The Centre of Excellence for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems has produced [a series of case studies](#) examining **how national ID systems can help people access social protection** in [Argentina](#), [Chile](#), [Namibia](#), [South Korea](#), and [Tunisia](#).
- On the flip side, India offers a cautionary tale about how a cumbersome registration process for a social protection program excluded married women. [A new report from](#)

Privacy International documents that married women who moved from their parents' home to their husband's home **often had trouble updating their details to be able to receive subsidized food rations at their new location**, accidentally excluding them from this benefit.

- McKinsey highlights how Pakistan ramped up its existing federal social protection program, Ehsaas, and created a new initiative, Ehsaas Emergency Cash, to **issue unconditional cash transfers to 12 million vulnerable households**. To make this a reality, the government established **more than 18,000 cash-distribution points** at bank branches, shops, parks, and public buildings around the country.
- On the LSE blog, researchers argue that extending the COVID-induced relaxations on conditionality of two flagship social assistance programs in Colombia could **improve young people's life chances**. Redesigning cash transfers to encompass mental health support, they propose, can help break the "vicious cycle" between mental illness and poverty.

May 20, 2021