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RECOVR Roundup Vol. 30: Social Protection in the Time of COVID-19

In this thirtieth 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

Mexico: Long-term impacts of a landmark cash transfer program

Life impacts were observable two decades later

One of the biggest sources of evidence surrounding the efficacy of cash transfers has been the landmark program Progresa in Mexico, which offered conditional cash transfers. Critically, the order of geographic areas where it was rolled out was randomized, an early choice that helped researchers better understand the impacts. A paper by [M. Caridad Araujo](#) and [Karen Macours](#) **followed up with children in those families 20 years later**. They tracked nearly 7,000 people who were children (either in utero or the first 1,000 days of life, or transitioning to secondary school) when their families started getting money from Progresa. The early childhood group grew up to earn 16 percent more from labor, were more likely to migrate to the U.S., and delayed parenthood by half a year. The slightly older kids who got it around the time of transitioning to secondary school completed more schooling at all levels, including university. [Read more here.](#)

What We're Reading & Watching

- **Spending on social protection rose nearly 270%** during the pandemic. This was announced at the [60th session of the Commission for Social Development](#) organized by UN DESA, with appeals to make COVID-19 a turning point for humanity, and a focus on making social protection systems universally available.
- If you've been following the **World Bank's global COVID-19 social protection and labor tracker** (Gentilini et al.), you will be pleased to know that **version 16** is out! In it, readers will find a net increase of 523 measures (15.6%). Social assistance continues to dominate, followed by labor market programs (20%) and social insurance (19%). However, the global pace of measures being introduced is slowing down, perhaps in response to the opening of economies.
- J-PAL launched its [new Social Protection Initiative and sector](#), co-chaired by Rema Hanna and Ben Olken and supported by the Australian Government through the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. **The initiative will work to identify and evaluate innovations in social protection. Its first request for proposals (RFP) was launched this month** (the deadline for Expressions of Interest is March 4th).
- If you'd like to do a **deep dive into “cash-plus” interventions across different contexts**, [this working paper](#) from Better Assistance in Crises (BASIC) Research (funded by UKAid) draws out lessons, questions, and challenges for program design and implementation and provides suggestions for future deeper research into cash and livelihoods in contexts of conflict and fragility.
- **How could financial services and social protection programs be designed to enhance women's economic empowerment?** [A recent policy brief](#) from J-PAL explores this question, reviewing 35 randomized evaluations and quasi-experimental studies from 20 low- and middle-income countries.

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