Informing Policy on COVID-19 with Rapid Data in Sierra Leone and Liberia

Andreas Holzinger, IPA
Shana Warren, IPA
Amara Kallon, Government of Sierra Leone
Anne Karing, Princeton University
Jonathan Robinson, University of California
Fatu Conteh, IPA
Today’s Panelists

Andreas Holzinger, Country Director, Liberia & Sierra Leone, IPA

Amara Kallon, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Political and Public Affairs, Government of Sierra Leone

Shana Warren Research Scientist for Path-to-Scale Research, IPA

Fatu Conteh, Policy and Research Associate, Sierra Leone, IPA

Jonathan Robinson, Associate Professor of Economics, University of California, Santa Cruz

Anne Karing, Postdoctoral Research Associate, Princeton University
A Nobel Prize-Winning Approach
More than just RCTs: A Nobel Prize-Winning Approach

1: Create Stronger Evidence
To deepen knowledge on how to reduce poverty

2: Share Evidence Strategically
To influence conversations & inform decisions

3: Equip Decision-Makers to Use Evidence
To improve the lives of the global poor
IPA at a Glance

- **22 Country Offices**
- **8 Program Areas**
- **700+ Partners**
- **600+ Researchers** in our network
- **850+ Evaluations to date** in 51 countries
- **17 Years of generating evidence and moving evidence to policy**
IPA’s Research for Effective COVID-19 Responses (RECOVR)

- Rapid response surveys to answer critical policy questions (8+ countries)
- A global hub that centralizes research and policy lessons
- A portfolio of IPA studies to generate rigorous evidence (80+ studies)
- Advising 15+ governments on evidence-based approaches
- Research-on-Research to strengthen the quality of remote data collection
Sierra Leone RECOVR: Survey and Policy Timeline

- World Bank Announces $7.5 Million Grant for Health Response
  - Apr 2
- Declaration of State of Emergency for 12 Months
  - Mar 24
- Closure of Educational Institutions
  - Mar 31
- Usage of Face Masks Required in Public
  - Jun 1
- National Lockdown 1
  - Apr 5 - Apr 7
- National Lockdown 2
  - May 3 - May 5
- IPA RECOVR Survey Round 1
  - May 26 - Jun 15
- Closure of land and air borders
  - Mar 24 - Jun 24
Average Respondent Demographics: RECOVR Sierra Leone

Age
32.5 Years Old

Gender
65% Male

Under Poverty Line
24% (Using PPI)

Education Level
22% completed more than secondary school

Average Household Size
5.6 people
RECOVR Survey: Key Takeaways

**Health:** 10% of respondents reported on nascent mental health symptoms

**Employment:** 45% of employed earned less

**Financial Security:** 60% needed to deplete savings to pay for food

**Food Security:** 2 out of 5 had to reduce portion sizes or number of meals

**Education:** 63%’s main concern for children was them falling behind in education
Health & COVID-19 Mitigation
80% of respondents do not feel at risk of contracting COVID-19, mainly due to following preventative measures.

1 in 10 respondents have developed mental health symptoms since COVID-19 reached Sierra Leone.
Respondents report accessing healthcare and sanitation services

- 70% have access to a Veronica bucket in their home/compound
- Over 80% of respondents continued visiting community health centers for vaccinations and antenatal care
- 8% were unable to obtain prescription medications
Economic Activity & Employment
33% say their business/place of work is closed. Of those still working, 36% earned less and 71% worked fewer hours in the past week.
Social Protection & Financial Resilience
Respondents have experienced sharp, adverse effects from the economic fallout of COVID-19 restrictions

54% report shortages in the markets prevent them from buying food

70% report drops in income prevent them from buying food

Nearly 80% report the price of food was too high

More than 40% say they've had to limit portion sizes or reduce the number of meals in the past week
60% of respondents say they have had to deplete their savings to pay for food, healthcare, or other expenses since February 2020.
4

Education
75% of all children are spending time on education at home

Children spend about 2 hours per day on education
At home, children face the following barriers to spending time on education:

- No access to television
- No motivation
- Children need to spend their time doing other...
- No support from teachers & schools
- Lack of supervision from adults in the household
- EDSA issues (No electricity power supply)
- No access to learning materials
- Doing housework
- There is not a good/quiet place to study
- No access to radio
- No access to internet
- No access to educational programs
- Working to earn money
- Taking care of their siblings
Policy Questions
Policy Questions

- How can we make sure respondents have access to and are aware of mental health services?

- Is the government adequately providing support to those who need it most?

- Is the government considering a food ration program or reinstating school feeding programs before school starts?

- How can we ensure students don’t fall behind when school resumes? How can we ensure students have access to distance learning platforms?
Q&A
Partner with us

As a Researcher:
- We connect researchers with partners, assist with research design, implement data collection, and much more.

As a Practitioner:
- We can help answer your questions and support you in using evidence to make your programs or policies as effective as possible.

As a Funder:
- Our funders make it possible for us to generate evidence and inform debates about how to effectively reduce poverty and improve lives.

Get in touch at contact@poverty-action.org
Thank you

Connect with IPA

@poverty_action
facebook.com/innovationsforpovertyaction
linkedin.com/company/innovations-for-poverty-action

https://www.poverty-action.org/recovr