



# Covid-19, Conflict, and Governance Evidence Summary No.27

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*11 December 2020*

This fortnightly Covid-19, Conflict, and Governance Evidence Summary aims to signpost the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) and other UK government departments to the latest evidence and opinions on Covid-19 (C19), to inform and support their responses.

This summary features resources on: how C19 is [catalysing global civil society](#), [C19's impact on borderlands and cross-border conflicts](#), and [new data on the socioeconomic impacts](#) of C19.

Many of the core C19 themes continue to be covered this week, including: the disproportionate [impact of C19 responses in fragile and conflict affected contexts on women and girls](#); [inadequate financing](#) of humanitarian protection work; and [widespread corruption](#) issues related to C19-relief systems.

The summary uses two main sections – (1) literature: – this includes policy papers, academic articles, and long-form articles that go deeper than the typical blog; and (2) blogs & news articles. See the end of this email for details on the method taken for this rapid summary. It is the result of one day of work, and is thus indicative but not comprehensive of all issues or publications.

# LITERATURE

## GOVERNANCE

Title/URL	Name of author; publisher; publication type	Summary
<p>Coronavirus as a Catalyst for Global Civil Society</p>	<p>Richard Youngs (ed); Carnegie; Paper</p>	<p>How is C19 shaping civil society? Drawing on 12 case studies on different regions and countries, this paper finds that C19 has sharpened and intensified the importance of organised civil society action. In all regions of the world, demand for civic activism has risen and new spaces have opened for civil society organisations (CSOs). In some countries, civic activism has had to assume stronger defensive strategies as regimes use C19 to attack critical civil society voices.</p> <p>There are three levels of new, C19-related civic activism: (1) CSOs have stepped into emergency relief roles, filling in the gaps left by governments. In some countries, these gaps are due to government negligence. In others, the gaps reflect the scale of the crisis, with governments taking measures in constructive cooperation with civil society. This strand of civic activism has seen many CSOs assume new functions and identities. This has, in many places, helped CSOs gain greater prominence and even a renewed legitimacy. Not all CSOs have adjusted, but in many countries they have shown themselves more attuned with local communities than for many years.</p> <p>(2) A more confrontational form of civic activism has gained force as CSOs have increased their role as watchdogs over state authorities, this is evident in nearly all the cases studies in the paper. While the emergency powers that executives have appropriated have infringed on many basic freedoms, they have also triggered a wave of new civil society monitoring initiatives. This has also focused on the governance effectiveness of crisis responses and on the</p>

economic impacts of C19. Governments that have scored badly on this have faced sharper critical pressure.

(3) The crisis has galvanised global civil society into pushing harder for radical change to social, economic, and political models, as C19 has magnified political and economic inequalities. As many governments have reacted in restrictive and ineffective ways, civil society has pushed back, mobilising more proactively and with vibrancy for major reforms. This is, so far, the least widespread and least prominent of the three levels of modified activism; yet, it could prove to be the most significant over the long term.

Civil society is gaining importance in many contrasting ways. The balance between cooperative and conflictual dynamics differs across states, depending on government policies. Those countries in which regimes have downplayed the virus or resisted wide-ranging responses have seen the most game-changing, crisis-like civic activism. In some states, the powerful dynamic is one of conflict, contention, and political crisis, while in others, governments have contained turbulence. In some countries, incumbent regimes have doubled down on their assaults against civil society, while elsewhere, CSOs have found ways to participate more cooperatively and consequentially in key government decisions.

An important question is how these different levels of civic activism sit in relation to each other—both in the immediate crisis and in the longer-term recovery period. Many CSOs now face the challenge of cooperating with authorities on C19-relief while trying to retain their more critical agendas on political issues.

COVID-19 High-Frequency Monitoring Dashboard	World Bank; Data site	What are the socioeconomic impacts of C19 on households and individuals? The World Bank's High-Frequency Monitoring Dashboard has been updated to include new countries, surveys, and indicators. It's data is based on high-frequency surveys carried out between April to August. Some new findings include: analysis which shows that poorer countries faced greater food insecurity during the C19 crisis; and analysis which shows there are signs of improvement in food security.
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### ***Extra papers – without summary***

Title/URL	Name of author; publisher; publication type
Biological Risks in India: Perspectives and Analysis	Shruti Sharma; Carnegie; Paper
Obstruction and Denial: Health System Disparities and COVID-19 in Daraa, Syria	Justine McGowan; Physicians for Human Rights; Report
Bridging the Gap: Emerging Private Sector Response and Recovery Measures for Gender Equality amid COVID-19	International Finance Corporation; Report
From Fieldsite to 'Fieldsite': Ethnographic Methods in the Time of COVID	Thomas Chambers; Studies in Indian Politics; Journal article
'The End of Globalization? - Resurging Nationalism, Authoritarian Constitutionalism and Uncertain Futures of Democracy'	Günter Frankenberg, William Partlett, Jiri Priban, Benedikt Reinke & Peer C. Zumbansen; TLI Think!; Paper
Compulsory COVID-19 Vaccination? Only as a Policy of Last Resort	Guy Moorthy; Voices in Bioethics; Journal article
Covid-19 Pandemic: Impact of restriction measures in West Africa	World Food Programme; Report

## CONFLICT

Title/URL	Name of author; publisher; publication type	Summary
<p>Peripheral Vision: Views from the Borderlands – November 2020</p>	<p>Asia Foundation; Semi-annual Bulletin</p>	<p>What are the short- and medium- term impacts of C19 on cross-border conflicts in fragile and conflict-affected states (FCAS) in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East? This bulletin finds:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In contested borderlands, weak states with fragmented authority have had to confront C19 amid conflict, population displacement, and political violence. While the impact of the virus—and local responses—has varied, common challenges have emerged.</li> <li>• In some contested borderlands, state and non-state actors have exploited C19 for military and political advantage, as emergency measures such as controlling the cross-border movement of people and goods have been co-opted into existing cross-border and conflict-related regimes.</li> <li>• Although C19 has intensified conflict in some locations, it may also offer a point of engagement with armed groups who see themselves as legitimate alternatives to the state. Where armed groups have no stake or interest in local governance, on the other hand, the crisis is more likely to lead to escalation than accord.</li> <li>• Even when they are remote, borderlands and peripheral areas often feel global economic changes most acutely, because of their dependence on trade, labour migration, and other cross-border movement. International anxiety to control C19's spread at border checkpoints and transit corridors has had unintended consequences.</li> <li>• C19 has further strained the fragmented international order, which was already struggling to coordinate efforts to prevent and resolve conflict. But by exposing gaps</li> </ul>

		<p>and barriers in cooperation, not least in conflict-affected borderlands, this global crisis could lead to new ways of working.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• C19 has also shown how prevailing economic structures and political relationships depend on the movement of people, goods, and ideas through formal and informal networks and supply chains. External actors who want to reduce conflict and promote positive change in contested borderlands must look beyond conventional, state-based models to understand these rapidly developing systems and new social geographies.</li> </ul>
<p>Breaking the glass ceiling: A smarter approach to protection financing</p>	<p>Damian Lilly; Norwegian Refugee Council; Report</p>	<p>What is the status of humanitarian protection financing amidst the C19 crisis? This report updates analysis on protection financing trends and finds that the protection sector remains chronically underfunded but concerted action can fill the gaps. There are entrenched barriers to increasing the levels of protection funding. And the humanitarian community is failing in its commitment to the centrality of protection.</p> <p>Related to C19, it finds that C19 has exacerbated protection concerns and exposed vulnerable populations to new threats. Protection clusters are reporting an increase in cases of violence, with attacks on civilians, including internally displaced people. These have increased by 2.5% since the pandemic began. Another disturbing consequence is the “shadow pandemic” of a dramatic rise in gender based violence (GBV) cases. Child protection risks have also worsened with increased reports of child marriage and child labour, and children also at risk of recruitment into armed forces. The pandemic is disproportionately affecting people who were already vulnerable.</p> <p>Amid the public health and economic crises with which the world has had to contend with in 2020, C19 looms as a long-term, far-reaching global protection emergency. People in nations with pre-existing conflicts</p>

and disasters are now grappling with crises on top of crises.

### ***Extra papers – without summary***

Title/URL	Name of author; publisher; publication type
Women Peace and Security, and Covid-19 In Asia-Pacific	UN Women; Brief
Categorising the Gendered Harms to Caregivers During Humanitarian Emergencies: An Analysis of Law and Practice During Ebola Crises	Sharifah Sekalala; Social & Legal Studies; Journal article
Lebanon: Health Workers' Safety Neglected during Covid-19	Human Rights Watch; Brief
Violence against children and adolescents in the time of COVID-19	CEPAL & UNICEF; Report

## BLOGS & NEWS ARTICLES

### GOVERNANCE

Title/URL	Name of author; publisher; publication type	Summary
<p>Figure of the week: Sub-Saharan Africa shows resilience to the effects of COVID-19, according to high-frequency phone surveys</p>	<p>Chris Heitzig; Brookings; Blog</p>	<p>How is C19 affecting socioeconomic development in Sub-Saharan Africa? Drawing on the World Bank’s High-Frequency Monitoring Dashboard’s survey data, this blog finds that Sub-Saharan Africa is showing resilience to the effects of C19, e.g.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Employment security - people in sub-Saharan Africa have been generally less susceptible to losing their jobs, whether formal or informal, than those in other regions (except for East Asia and the Pacific).</li><li>• Food security - In all countries surveyed in the region, at least 45% of households reported being worried about running out of food in the last 30 days. This varies substantially by country.</li><li>• Methods to cope with job loss and income shocks – these varied across the region, and include: reducing consumption of essential or nonessential goods; and using emergency savings.</li><li>• Health - Despite the tendency for economic shocks to limit access to services like health care, however, a large majority of households across the continent reported that they received medical attention when they needed it.</li></ul>

### ***Extra blogs & news articles – without summary***

Title/URL	Name of author; publisher; publication type
Ensuring Covid-19 relief reaches Sri Lanka's people	Transparency International; Blog
What Can COVID-19 Tell Us About Pacific Resilience?	Joanne Wallis & Henrietta McNeill; Australian Institute of International Affairs; Blog
Coronavirus: five ways some states have used the pandemic to curtail human rights and democracy	Rachel M Gisselquist & Durgesh Solanki; The Conversation; Blog
De-mystifying the effects of COVID-19 on remittances	Tamara Mughogho; Commonwealth Secretariat; Blog

### **CONFLICT**

#### ***Blogs & news articles – without summary***

Title/URL	Name of author; publisher; publication type
How Indo-Pacific tensions reflect a post-coronavirus new world order of conflict and contradiction	C. Uday Bhaskar; South China Morning Post; Blog
Forced displacement passes 80 million by mid-2020 as COVID-19 tests refugee protection globally	UNHCR; Blog

### **EVENTS**

16 December 2020 - 13:30–15:00, *Macro-economic impacts of Covid-19: growing public debt in emerging economies*, Institute of Development Studies. This event explores: growing public debt in lower-income economies, its composition, and associated risks; the need and recent initiatives for debt relief, to promote sustained recovery; and the socioeconomic impacts of C19.

## DASHBOARDS, TRACKERS & RESOURCE HUBS

K4D - Covid-19 Resource Hub

Global Voices - Covid-19: Global voices for a pandemic

ICNL - COVID-19 Civic Freedom Tracker

ECPR Standing Group on Organised Crime - Controcorrente (dedicated Covid-19 blog series)

The Syllabus - The politics of Covid-19 readings

Political Settlements Research Programme - Conflict, development and Covid-19 resources

IDS - Covid-19: the social science response to the pandemic

GI-TOC - Covid Crime Watch

CGD - Coronavirus preparedness & response

ODI - Reforms, initiatives and campaigns on migrants' contributions to the Covid-19 response

OECD - Tackling coronavirus (COVID-19) Contributing to a global effort resource hub

The New Humanitarian – Coronavirus news, data, and policy response tracker

ACLEED – Covid-19 disorder tracker

Various - Crowd-sourced cross-disciplinary coronavirus syllabus

African Arguments - Coronavirus in Africa Tracker

Insecurity insight – Covid-19 and security monitoring

Council on Foreign Relations - Peace, Conflict, and Covid-19

KPMG – Covid-19 tax developments

European Council on Foreign Relations - European solidarity tracker

Westminster Foundation for Democracy - Pandemic Democracy Tracker

ACAPS - Covid-19 ACAPS Resources

ReliefWeb – Covid-19 Global Hub

The Economist – Covid-19 news

IPA - RECOVR Research Hub

Dalia research - Democracy Perception Index 2020

V-Dem Institute - Pandemic Democratic Violations Index

Gender and Covid-19 - Gender and Covid-19

University of Oxford - Coronavirus Government Response Tracker

UNDP - COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker

K4D - COVID-19 Evidence Search

ACAPS – Secondary impacts of C19

OECD States of Fragility - Covid-19, Crises, and Fragility

International IDEA - Global Monitor of COVID-19's impact on Democracy and Human Rights

International IDEA - Global overview of COVID-19: Impact on elections

COVID-DEM – COVID-19 and democratic governance information hub

COVID-19 Humanitarian - COVID-19 and Humanitarian Crises

COVID-19 High-Frequency Monitoring Dashboard – World Bank

## Suggested citation

Herbert, S. (2020). *COVID-19 Conflict and Governance Evidence Summary No.27*. K4D Evidence Summary. Brighton, UK: Institute of Development Studies.

## Methodology

Due to the emerging nature of the Covid-19 crisis, this rapid weekly summary includes blogs, and news articles, in addition to policy and academic literature. The sources included are found through searches of Google and ReliefWeb with the keywords:

("COVID-19" OR "coronavirus") AND ("developing countries" OR "Africa" OR "Asia" OR "Middle East" OR "Latin America" OR "Pacific") AND ("conflict" OR "peace" OR "violence" OR "resilience" OR "fragility")

("COVID-19" OR "coronavirus") AND ("authoritarian\*" OR "democracy" OR "corrupt\*" OR "transparency" OR "state legitimacy" OR "non-state actors" OR "state capacity" OR "state authority" OR "politic\*" OR "state institutions")

Plus searches of Google Scholar with the keywords:

("COVID-19" OR "coronavirus") AND ("developing countries" OR "Africa" OR "Asia" OR "Middle East" OR "Latin America" OR "Pacific")

("COVID-19" OR "coronavirus") AND ("developing countries" OR "Africa" OR "Asia" OR "Middle East" OR "Latin America" OR "Pacific") AND ("conflict" OR "peace" OR "violence" OR "resilience" OR "fragility")

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The searches are restricted to articles published in the previous seven days, in English. This is complemented by: a focussed Twitter search (using just the pages of a small selection of research organisations, and key

scholars/thinkers, including those funded by the UK government's FCDO; and through email recommendations from FCDO advisors and leading experts. This is trial and error approach, which will be refined and changed over the coming weeks. If you have literature to include in the weekly summary, please email – [s.herbert@bham.ac.uk](mailto:s.herbert@bham.ac.uk)

Thanks to Professor Heather Marquette for expert advice.

## About this report

*This two-weekly COVID-19 conflict and governance evidence summary is based on 1 day of desk-based research. K4D services are provided by a consortium of leading organisations working in international development, led by the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), with Education Development Trust, Itad, University of Leeds Nuffield Centre for International Health and Development, Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine (LSTM), University of Birmingham International Development Department (IDD) and the University of Manchester Humanitarian and Conflict Response Institute (HCRI).*

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