

Synthesis of work by the Covid Collective

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Question

- *What findings emerged across Covid Collective outputs?*

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The Covid Collective helpdesk service provides brief summaries of current research, evidence, and lessons learned. Helpdesk reports are not rigorous or systematic reviews; they are intended to provide an introduction to the most important evidence related to a research question. They draw on a rapid desk-based review of published literature and consultation with subject specialists.

This Helpdesk report was commissioned through the Covid Collective based at the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) and is funded by the UK Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) The Collective brings together the expertise of, UK and Southern based research partner organisations and offers a rapid social science research response to inform decision-making on some of the most pressing Covid-19 related development challenges. The views and opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect those of FCDO, the UK Government, or any other contributing organisation. For further information, please contact covidcollective@ids.ac.uk

1. Overview

This report looked across Covid Collective outputs and grouped findings into three sections. Section 2) Pandemic response; Section 3) Increased marginalisation; and Section 4) Emergent outcomes. Section 4 describes outcomes, both positive and negative, which evolved and were more unpredictable in nature.

Pandemic response

Findings on national response highlight shortfalls in **national government** actions in Bangladesh, Malawi, the Philippines, Yemen, and Syria. Emergency law responses have, in some cases, led states to exert powers with no legal basis. In transitioning economies, state militarisation is having negative effects on constitutionalism and peacebuilding. Lack of trust in state security institutions is identified as an issue in Yemen. Improved consultation between the community, government and security institutions is needed. From a micro perspective, lockdowns were found to hit households close to subsistence the hardest bringing restrictions in to question with regards to welfare choices.

Regional responses had different features (outlined in section 2). It is suggested for future research to look at how regional responses have changed interactions between regional and global organisations. The Islamic Development Bank, for example, helped function as a redistribution pool to improve inequalities between country capacities in the Middle East. The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) supported accurate information reporting.

International response with regard to vaccination is falling short in terms of equality between developed and developing economies. World Bank response is questioned for being insufficient in quantity and inefficient in delivery.

Increased marginalisation

Covid Collective research and reporting highlighted barriers for people living with **disabilities** in the Covid-19 response. Older members of the population with disabilities are particularly vulnerable.

Displaced people were found to be experiencing severe economic impacts as a result of the pandemic and receiving little support. Education has suffered and gender issues worsened for displaced people. Some governments are using the pandemic as an excuse to refuse asylum of forcibly displaced persons.

Businesses in Bangladesh are struggling financially with reduced demand and fixed costs during the pandemic. Female labour-intensive work was hit particularly hard and so increased the gender gap. The need for concrete targeting of enterprises for government stimulus was identified.

Youths are found to be hit harder by unemployment than older population members in a survey in Bangladesh. Young women were hit harder by unemployment than young men.

Poverty monitoring reports were supported by the Covid Collective in Ethiopia, Malawi, Philippines, and Zambia. They describe market disruptions, livelihood losses, increase in food and fuel costs, social relationship disruptions, mental health issues, and other areas.

Emergent outcomes

The research looks at the impact of the pandemic on conflict. It was not possible to represent the complexities of **conflict** situations relating to Covid-19 within the scope of this report. Some top-level findings are reported. Ceasefires since March 2020 are mostly unilateral and thought to have had limited impact on progress towards peace. In Syria, the Covid-19 file was commonly seen by the Syrian government and the opposition governments to gain external funds and international legitimacy according to the Peace and Conflict Resolution Evidence Platform (PeaceRep). Conflict-affected countries had challenges in pandemic response particularly around lack of trust and lack of independent media for messaging. The role of civil society organisations (CSOs) has been critical in managing response.

Grassroots resilience through self-help activities is identified in urban areas in Bangladesh, Kenya, and Yemen. An urban social movement in Kenya produced knowledge to support the pandemic response. Neighbourhood support networks in Ethiopia took turns going to the market for each other and donated to food insecure households.

Lockdowns and travel restrictions have affected **research** and created an opportunity to empower Southern researchers. The rise in online meetings, workshops, and data collection has highlighted the need for improved internet infrastructure in the Global South.

The Covid Collective has supported a large number of tracking platforms to help the pandemic response. **Digital** innovation more broadly has been used by research organisations to communicate up-to-date guidance on Covid-19, to understand the needs of local communities, and to develop tailored government responses. Online business registration forced by the pandemic has made efficiency gains in Tanzania, but risks widening the gender divide for women who are less likely to have access to digital technology.

Covid Collective research has also shed light on **environmental dimensions of the pandemic**, highlighting for example the complexities and contestations associated with actions such as **tree planting as part of post-Covid recovery plans**.

Methodology

This report constitutes a rapid review across the many outputs which had Covid Collective involvement. It was not possible to be comprehensive within the scope of this rapid review. Headlines were extracted from outputs where possible. The topic headings emerged out of the results.

2. Pandemic response

National response

Shortfalls in response/government response

Covid Collective outputs described shortfalls of the pandemic response in addressing the needs of those experiencing poverty. Reporting from a webinar states that in **Bangladesh** only 20.3 per cent of government support funding was directly targeted towards poor households facing the threat of hunger (Staff correspondent, 2021).

Direct food and cash support was inadequate. So too were indirect strategies of livelihood restoration. Beneficiary selection and delivery processes were not accountable. The remaining 79.7 per cent of government support is oriented towards growth. Growth oriented support is seen to favour large industries over small. There is a **lack of trust in the system** with 67 per cent of public questioned thinking the relief process was corrupt.

Another report describes **lack of government response in Bangladesh** in early 2021 (Hoque, Khan, & Islam, 2021). Lower than expected rates in the winter bred **complacency**. The vaccination drive also made people feel safe to move around outside of protocols. Another driver of infection rates was people **choosing livelihoods over health**. The **government acted too late** with past experience of infection rises and the situation for neighbours in India should have been taken into account.

Some instances of **government responses having learned from the past** were also identified in Bangladesh (Hoque, Khan, & Islam, 2021). The government reduced confusion by being decisive over the types of institution that closed, had stricter law enforcement, and postponed elections. However, the improved response was **still considered to be inconsistent and late**.

Further reporting on a webinar on Bangladesh finds a **lack of policy framework and infrastructure** for pandemic response (Dhaka Tribune, 2021). "The pandemic preparation has been centralised, uncoordinated and non-transparent, and public procurement slow and allegedly corrupt." **The government are recommended to prioritise economic policies for people, not just growth.**

A poverty monitoring study in **Malawi** also highlighted shortfalls in government response with no survey respondents identifying Covid-19 relief support. Key informants confirmed there were **no government or civil society measures for reducing the social and economic effects of the pandemic** (CPAN, 2021b).

In the **Philippines**, the government compensated those who lost jobs in the city to repatriate to their home province (CPAN, 2021c). Results of this incentive are not reported.

In **Yemen**, measures from the government were found to be **tokenistic and lacked genuine concern** (al-Hamdani & Transfeld, 2021). Policies were based on theory with a lack of understanding for the local situation, particularly traders. Measures failed as a result of traditions, lack of awareness, and poverty. There was low compliance and inconsistent policing because policies were poorly planned. CSOs and the private sector are seen to be filling the gap to strengthen state institutions. **Clearer mechanisms of consultation and cooperation are needed.**

A review finds mixed experiences with regards to centralised versus decentralised decision-making in pandemic response (Lenhardt, 2021). **Local government is able to be more responsive to communities** where communities are able to provide feedback on local government response.

Institutions and law

A blog looks at emergency law responses. Some states have declared a constitutional state of emergency whilst others have relied on existing legislation (Molloy et al., 2021). In some cases, **states have exerted emergency powers with no legal basis.** There are cases where the pandemic has been used as **an excuse to consolidate power**, such as Sri Lanka. There are also instances in a number of countries where **rights have been infringed upon, such as freedom of expression.** In societies transitioning towards democracy, this can cause tension and conflict.

The blog also discusses the effect of the pandemic on elections in Ethiopia, Myanmar, the Central African Republic, and Sri Lanka (Molloy et al., 2021). With different scenarios playing out in each case the **unpredictability in pandemic impact on transitioning societies** was demonstrated. Different experience with **state militarisation** is described in the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Nepal, and South Sudan with largely **negative effects on constitutionalism and peacebuilding.**

Research in **Yemen** identified a number of factors which inhibited the use of **security institutions** (including the governorate, the district police, and the military) to support the coronavirus campaign, including **lack of resources, historical lack of trust, and diverging interests of different state actors** (al-Hamdani & Transfeld, 2021). There were issues in ensuring public spaces were closed, entrances monitored, and in ensuring those infected stayed in quarantine. Top-down policies were based on theory and not based on the reality on the ground. There was a lack of information and trust. Authors identify the role of CSOs as being “indispensable” in linking state institutions and the community (p. 5). Private sector organisations are also seen as

playing a role in closing the gap. **Clearer mechanisms of consultation are needed to improve links between the community, government and security institutions.** It is suggested that CSOs may be better placed to run quarantine centres with health officials. CSOs have better knowledge of local communities, better strategies, and more resources.

On law, Molloy et al. (2021) recommend: 1) reforming legal frameworks; 2) addressing inter-governmental cooperation between central and sub-state governments; 3) completing devolution of power-sharing arrangements; and 4) actively building trust across conflict lines.

Lockdowns

A working paper from October 2020 looks at the economics of pandemic response in developing countries compared to developed (von Carnap et al., 2020). From a micro perspective, **households close to subsistence bear the largest welfare costs from being restricted in movement** and therefore income generation. The authors conclude that **countries with lower incomes and lower fatality risks have a weaker case for strict lockdowns** compared to richer countries.

Regional response

Regional organisations have a comparative advantage for coordinating resources for the pandemic response (den Boer, 2021). A report maps regional responses to the pandemic. Unique aspects of regional responses were highlighted (den Boer & Nash, 2021). **The Organisation of American States (OAS) focused on safeguarding democratic development and human rights.** The **Central American Integration System brought health ministries together** from across the region for regional collaboration and coordination. **The African Union pushed for greater equality in the international system.** The **Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)** addressed the **impact of the pandemic on religious practice.**

The report identifies important **areas for further consideration and future research** (den Boer & Nash, 2021). This includes exploration of **how regional responses have changed interactions between regional and global organisations.** For example, regional health bodies which have expanded will have an impact on cooperation and competition with similar bodies such as the World Health Organization (WHO). Another area of research should look at whether regional and global bodies will **take forward practices that had to be adapted during the crisis.**

A blog on the **role of the African Union and the OIC in peacebuilding** during the pandemic (Nash & den Boer, 2021) is reported on in the conflict section in section 4.

Organisation for Islamic Cooperation (OIC)

Large **inequalities between country capacities in the Middle East** are noted and **regional organisations can provide support by functioning as a redistribution**

pool (den Boer, 2021). A large sum was issued by the **Islamic Development Bank** group to member countries aiming to **facilitate response and promote recovery**. A separate account was set up under **The Islamic Solidarity Fund for Development (ISFD) to provide urgent short-term assistance to least developed countries**. Efforts were, however, insufficient to cope with the scope of problems and poor health infrastructures.

A regional workshop in the Middle East helped coordinate **vaccine planning**. It gathered medicine regulation authorities, pharmaceutical companies, researchers, and scientists.

The OIC have highlighted **religious considerations** in regards to the pandemic response and the importance of religious leaders in promoting health-seeking behaviours. The OIC used its religious network to support WHO efforts in high-risk areas. The OIC also supported efforts to achieve **accurate information reporting**.

Some countries were making **bilateral donations** to least developed countries rather than using the ISFD. den Boer (2021) recommends **further research** in this area. Diplomatic strategies to assert power could be used where countries have stakes in conflicts.

International response

Vaccine

Commentary from the Center for Global Development discusses **inequality between the developed and less developed world** in relation to **vaccination** (Sandefur & Subramanian, 2021). The authors use data to show an expected peak of **43 per cent difference in proportion of population fully vaccinated between advanced economies and the developing world**. The disparity is predicted to be eliminated by March 2023. The international community have fallen short in making provisions to vaccinate the developing world. **Mismanagement of vaccine response in these countries also contributes to the divide**. The authors propose the Biden administration should convene world leaders and pharmaceutical representatives to formulate a strategy to boost financing and supplies. They suggest incentivising pharmaceutical companies to share their technology via voluntary licensing.

The article also suggests implementation of compulsory licensing for non-replicating viral vector vaccines in middle-income countries such as Brazil, Argentina, India, Thailand, and South Africa. Countries should commit to near-commercial terms for licensing to show that the motive is production not expropriation. **Developed countries have a role to play by making clear commitment that they will not take legal action against compulsory licensing**.

The international community should use the COVAX coalition to fund the extra vaccinations needed in the developing world.

Russel, Wise & Badanjak (2021) argue that **the potential for vaccine ceasefires for supporting the realisation of improved public health outcomes in conflict zones should not be ignored**. Such arrangements are powerful tools for addressing public health needs in areas affected by conflicts, as they can **contribute to the temporary building of trust among warring parties and between armed groups and humanitarian actors**.

World Bank

A **paper on the World Bank response** in October 2020 **questions the sufficiency in terms of amount of support and whether it will be delivered**. Duggan et al. (2020) find disbursements in the past to have fallen short of targets pledged. It was also noted that the World Bank had not shifted its crisis financing. **Disbursements are found to be delivering modest benefits**. Morris and Sandefur (2020) further argue that the Bank pledged support is not enough, with reduction of growth estimated at 4 per cent and World Bank disbursements adding to around one third of a percentage point. After loan repayments, net flows are low, and in some cases negative (Duggan et al. 2020).

World Bank performance was revisited in April 2021 (Morris et al., 2021). The Bank was found to have committed to its target but not disbursed all of that which was pledged. Disbursements also fall far short compared to the magnitude of growth decline. It is considerably lower than fiscal stimulus in high income countries. The authors **question why the Bank seems not to have improved speed of flows through switching away from investment projects to development policy lending (budget support)**.

3. Increased marginalisation

Persons living with disability

A comment published in the Lancet identifies **barriers for people with disabilities** participating in the Covid-19 response (Shakespeare, Ndagire & Seketi, 2021). These include failure to ensure their **safety in congregate living**; failure to include them in **access to food, ICT, testing, and hygiene**; failure to give them evidence-based **priority for vaccines or treatment**; inadequate support for those **living alone**; lack of **messaging**; postponement of medical treatment; and failure to collect disability disaggregated data.

Research in the UK found **older people with physical disabilities were statistically more likely to have anxiety, experience loneliness, and have poor sleep** (Kuper & Shakespeare, 2021). With a narrower margin of health, people with disabilities are more affected by shocks. A 73-year-old man in the UK describes neglect he experienced during lockdown with lack of care (John & Senthilingam, 2021).

Survey analysis on Cameroon, Guatemala, Haiti, India, Nepal, and the Maldives looked at Covid-19 vulnerability for **older members of the population with disabilities**

(Prynn et al., 2021). This portion of the population were found less likely to be working so **economic vulnerability was higher**. They reported greater difficulties in participating in Covid-19 responses. There is a need to prioritise the needs of older people with disabilities.

The Disability and Evidence Portal¹ contains seven briefs with two translated into Spanish. They look at WASH access considerations, summarise evidence on mental health support during Covid-19, considerations for making social protection inclusive, the need for guidance on measurement of disability, and considerations for the double vulnerable people with disabilities who are also refugees.

Displaced

A report gathering evidence on the socioeconomic impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on forcibly displaced persons highlights **economic impacts and lack of support** (Rohwerder, 2021a). Negative social impacts were identified in the areas of **education and gender**. Tensions with the host country increased as the hosts feared resource scarcity.

A working paper identifies **erosion of the rights to asylum** of forcibly displaced persons during Covid-19 and violations of the principle of non-refoulement (Rohwerder, 2021b). The **pandemic is being used as an excuse by some governments to block people from asylum**.

PeaceRep undertook some primary research with Rohingya refugees living in Bangladesh to share their own definitions and concepts regarding four terms: home, justice, rights, and citizenship (Haque et al., 2021).

Business and employment

A working paper published at the end of 2020 looks at the **impact of Covid-19 on small and medium enterprises in Bangladesh** (Islam, Rahman & Nisat, 2020). The majority of enterprises shut down. In the **early stages of reopening, one third of businesses reopened with limited capacity**. Reduced demand and the burden of fixed costs reduced profits. Workers were losing their jobs. **Female labour-intensive work was hit harder**, widening the gender gap.

Enterprises with lower endowment and poor access to government stimulus were more vulnerable. The **need for concrete targeting criteria and support delivery platforms** for the vulnerable was highlighted. **Enterprises which received BRAC's training** on occupational health and safety, business training, and financial linkages, **made twice the profit compared to their counterparts**.

A blog describes significant **lack of concern for the wellbeing of the ready-made garment (RMG) sector in Bangladesh** (Fairooz, 2021). This has led to unrest among

¹ See [Disability Evidence Portal](#)

the labour force. Many workers are being laid-off. The social impact in the RMG sector is underreported.

A BRAC brief recommends 'graduation' for economic recovery from the pandemic in Bangladesh (Whitehead, Shrestha & Popes, 2020).

Youth

Youths in Bangladesh have been hit harder by unemployment (Ahmed & Tabassum, 2020). 15 per cent of youths employed before the pandemic were out of work in survey results reported in June 2020 (compared to 8 per cent of the working population). Youth income and average working hours fell. **Young women suffered greater persistent job losses than young men.** They were working in sectors that were hardest hit.

Only 5 per cent of youths in the same survey reported undertaking training in lockdown. Inequality in skill acquisition is likely to have worsened as those educated and **more digitally active** are able to acquire more digital skills.

Education has slowed or been reversed in Bangladesh (Tabassum, Ahmed & Jahan, 2021). Youths voiced concerns around backlog of academic sessions, reduced study motivation, increase in mental stress, and addiction to social media. A positive attitude to vaccination was reported in a youth survey.

Poverty monitoring

The Chronic Poverty Advisory Network (CPAN) produced **poverty monitoring reports** from Ethiopia (CPAN, 2021a), Malawi (CPAN, 2021b), Philippines (CPAN, 2021c), and Zambia (CPAN, 2021d) which **describe market disruptions, livelihood losses, increase in food and fuel costs, social relationship disruptions, mental health issues**, and other areas.

In Ethiopia, those with **health insurance** cited this as **a crucial benefit** to their household (CPAN, 2021a). In Malawi school closures were linked to school dropout rates and a rise in teenage pregnancy (CPAN, 2021b).

In the **Philippines**, local stores and tricycle services had large falls in income and there were reports of loss of remittances (CPAN, 2021c). **Coping strategies include communing with small community groups, finding casual work** (such as laundry and construction), and **raising livestock or gardening** to supplement food intake.

A case study in the Zambia report describes a man who had to use his business capital for subsistence and struggled to make alternative income (CPAN, 2021d). His wife left him since he could not care for her. He relies on close friends for business and survives by reducing the number and quality of daily meals. Other households reported food rationing and using cheaper sources of food.

4. Emergent outcomes

Conflict

Impact of the pandemic on conflict

Allison et al. (2020) found the UN Secretary General's call for a global cease fire in March 2020 did not produce significant shifts in terms of conflict globally.

A report on ceasefires during the pandemic identifies 25 ceasefires since March 2020 (Wise et al., 2021). Sometime after the Secretary General's call, Covid-19 concerns became part of the context in conflict and peace processes. **Ceasefires may have been limited in effect as they were declared unilaterally without the buy-in from the range of actors required to reduce violence.** Six of the 25 ceasefires were bi-lateral or multi-lateral. Many were dependent on other conflict parties not using the pandemic to advance political goals. **Some ceasefires were reported as humanitarian but did not include references to Covid-19 or have clear mechanisms for supporting with the pandemic.** "There are as yet **few instances** of ceasefires prompted by the Covid-19 pandemic that **have kick-started a new round of wider negotiations**" (Wise et al., 2021, p. 30).

The Political Settlements programme gathered insights from local peace actors to look at the impacts of Covid-19 on conflict and peace. **In Syria the Covid-19 file was seen as an opportunity by the Syrian and opposition governments to gain external funds and international legitimacy** (Beaujouan et al., 2021a). **Lack of mitigation of the impact of the pandemic has further damaged the reputation of the government** within vulnerable communities.

Impact of conflict on pandemic response

A policy brief on Northwest Syria reports official responses to Covid-19 to be highly politicised (Beaujouan et al., 2021b). **Different government actors competing for the Covid-19 file led to inconsistent discourse on the pandemic** (Beaujouan et al., 2021a). Opposition governments were not trusted to deal with Covid-19 (Beaujouan et al., 2021b). The international community did not want to choose between the official government and opposition governments and endorsed local civil society (mainly the Syrian Civil Defence) on opposition-held areas (Beaujouan et al., 2021c).

Lack of independent media reinforced mistrust in information on the pandemic (Beaujouan et al., 2021a). **Reliance on social media accelerated the spread of rumours and inaccurate news. Mistrust prevented solidarity with official mitigation measures. Civil society campaigns attempted to fight misinformation and raise public awareness.**

Local civil society took a central role in pandemic response and were the most trusted actor (Beaujouan et al., 2021b). **Bottom-up government and community engagement were used to coordinate medical provision,** as well as to raise

community awareness. Impacts on social cohesion were not found to be positive or negative.

al-Hamdani & Transfeld (2021) highlight **the role of civil society organisations as a link between state institutions and the community** to be extremely important during the pandemic response in Taiz, Yemen. They identify factors **preventing an effective Covid-19 campaign** to be the same as those inhibiting security institutions from improving public security. Factors such as a **lack of resources, lack of trust in security institutions, differing interests among state actors, insufficient coordination, and unwanted interference**. These led to problems in ensuring closure of public spaces, monitoring city entrances, and ensuring those infected stayed in quarantine. Police were keen to support lockdown restrictions but lacked resources. The importance of group prayer made it difficult to enforce social distancing. There was a distinct lack of information and lack of trust between citizens and the state.

A report from PeaceRep questions whether **ceasefires can support Covid-19 public health responses, including vaccination campaigns**. (Russel, Wise & Badanjak, 2021). The research suggests that there is little historical evidence for vaccination ceasefires to translate into progress in wider peace processes. In best case scenarios, such arrangements may contribute to the temporary building of trust among warring parties and between armed groups and humanitarian actors. The authors suggest that **vaccination ceasefires should be viewed as one of a range of actions that can help to address public health needs in areas affected by conflict**.

In **Yemen**, prior to the arrival of the first Covid-19 case, the economic warfare waged by all conflict parties had destroyed vital infrastructure and left 24 million Yemenis seeking aid (PeaceRep, 2021). **The prolonged nature of the war has given rise to a complex tapestry of official and unofficial armed actors, who are now supporting the official response to Covid-19**. People in Yemen have had to adapt to the many challenges of using virtual platforms like WhatsApp during conflict, such as navigating surveillance by armed groups or access issues in remote or poorer areas. These factors now tie into the mounting issues involved in expecting people to be able to stay at home to participate in remote research, given ongoing conflict pressures and cultural dynamics shaping their capacity to be at home.

Covid Collective support in conflict affected areas

The **Covid Collective supported the strengthening of local voices of civil society at the policy level**. An article looks at the media in Syria, including citizen journalism and the desire from youth to become reporters (Beaujouan et al., undated a). Different forms of expressing knowledge are proving important at this time.

Another article describes reflections of young artists in opposition-held areas in Syria (Beaujouan et al., undated b). Art was found to be a powerful self-healing tool and a way of discharging negative energies. It was also seen as an important way of visualising and sharing knowledge. It is a medium for raising local voices.

Grassroots resilience

Analysis of research in settlements in Bangladesh, Kenya, and Yemen notes that **“urban residents are not passive recipients of political or economic directives”** (Collyer et al., 2021). Resident’s responses were found to be shaped by pre-pandemic contexts with regards to civil society engagement, residents’ trust in government, and wider threats, including conflict. There are examples where **self-help activities, amplified by government assistance, produced outcomes more positive than expected.**

Infection rates in slums overall were found to be lower than expected (Collyer et al., 2021). In **Kenya, an urban social movement produced the knowledge that state agencies needed.** This resulted in more **inclusive policies and legitimacy built for alternative knowledge processes.**

In Ethiopia, **neighbourhood support networks** were set up to **facilitate access to essentials.** Community members **took turns in going to the market** to purchase food and goods for each other (CPAN, 2021a). Households were asked to **donate to** the woreda (neighbourhood) for **food-insecure** households.

al-Hamdani & Transfeld (2021) suggest that **CSOs may be better placed to run quarantine centres** together with health officials in Yemen as they tend to **have better strategies and more resources.** They also have **better knowledge of local communities.** Beaujouan et al. (2021b) recommend establishing an umbrella organisation in Northwest Syria to represent local civil society supporting cooperation and knowledge exchange.

A **Covid Collective project aims to look at the Asian Coalition for Housing Rights (ACHR) community-led responses to the pandemic.**² The project aims to identify how food security strategies and grassroots funding can influence official partnerships or other policy interventions in Indonesia, Myanmar, the Philippines, and Thailand.

Research processes

Travel restrictions and lockdowns created challenges for collecting primary research data (Strachan, 2021a). This has presented **an opportunity to empower Southern researchers.** Peer research, **using community researchers** as the principle source of data, has been found to be successful for a research study conducted in Dhaka, Bangladesh (Hossain & Ahmed, 2021). College students were trained online for this.

² [Towards Community-Led, Inclusive Covid-19 Partnerships in ASEAN Cities](#)

Reduced travel is also more environmentally friendly (Strachan, 2021a). The need to shift to online meetings, workshops, and remote data collection has highlighted and **increased the need for internet access in the Global South**.

PeaceRep research on the Covid-19-peace nexus found reluctance from participants in answering questions given their political and military affiliations (PeaceRep, undated). Research is focusing on identifying individual changes in patterns of engagements with security actors. **Field teams make connections through virtual platforms and phone interviews**.

There is concern that **people living with disabilities are further excluded from research** which uses methods relying on participants having full hearing or psycho-social abilities to respond (Strachan, 2021b).

The nature of the pandemic is reshaping approaches to development research with the **need to react rapidly to the demand for evidence** responding to very specific challenges (Taylor, 2021). Data needs to be both fast and reliable. It has **forced innovations in data collection and presentation such as tracking platforms**.

The impact of the pandemic on research processes will be the focus of an IDS Bulletin due to be published in early April 2022.

Digital

A number of **tracking platforms** were established, with Covid Collective involvement, for pandemic-related information sharing:

- The **Covid Collective library** on the Institute of Development Studies application programming interface.³ Bringing together bibliographic data on social science research publications from both Covid Collective partners and a range of other sources and making it openly available.
- **Covid-19 trackers library**. Developed by PeaceRep the platform, bringing together trackers that trace developments during Covid-19.⁴
- The **Ceasefires in a Time of Covid-19 Tracker**⁵ developed by PeaceRep contains information about ceasefires, their extensions or terminations, and closely related events.
- The **International Humanitarian Studies Association** has a **platform** which collates **blogs** from the humanitarian sector including Covid-related information.⁶

³ See [Curating social science research to support Covid-19 response](#) (accessed 13.1.22)

⁴ See [Visualising the world's response to Covid-19 through online trackers](#) (accessed 14.1.22)

⁵ See [Ceasefires in a time of Covid-19](#) (accessed 28.10.22)

⁶ See [International Humanitarian Studies Association Blog Directory](#) (accessed 13.1.22)

- **GeoConvergence Workshop** hosts a library of talks highlighting current research endeavours and calls for future innovation.⁷

Digital innovation in communication has been used **to share up-to-date guidance** on Covid-19, to understand the needs of local communities, **and develop tailored government responses** (Lenhardt, 2021). These innovations include the use of social media, traditional media, and other technological adaptations.

Tanzania has seen **progress with online business registration making large efficiency gains** compared to the former in-person process (Mwighua, 2021). However, with **women found to be less likely to access digital technology** than men, the digitalisation of business in Tanzania risks widening the gender gap. Mwighua (2021) recommends State provided courses as well as reducing taxes on internet access to improve accessibility.

A report on youth employment highlights the potential for **widening of the digital divide** with greater opportunities for those connected, particularly with respect to access for online trainings (Tabassum et al., 2021).

The digital divide is also a risk for schooling during the pandemic where a single communication channel cannot be relied upon (Kundu & Ambast, 2021). Alternatives identified in India include television, radio, SMS, interactive voice-based communication, and door-to-door contact in some cases. For those that are accessing **online or digital education instead of in-person** there is a **risk of disconnect** with little or no interaction between teachers and students.

Environment

The Institute of Environmental and Development (IIED) are involved in a project seeking to **promote Covid-19 recovery through tree-planting** initiatives (Mayers, undated). They are considering how to get the right trees planted and looked after where they are needed (Mayers, 2021). Economic benefits of tree planting are highlighted. It was found that tree-planting campaigns need to engage with the complexities of local realities. They are envisaged to provide an environmentally aware response to the pandemic. **Sites for tree planting are political arenas with different local interests.**

5. References

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⁷ See [GeoConvergence Workshop Lightning Talks](#) (accessed 13.1.22)

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About this report

This report is based on 11 days of desk-based research. The Covid Collective research helpdesk provides rapid syntheses of a selection of recent relevant literature and international expert thinking in response to specific questions relating to international development. For any enquiries, contact Covid Collective- covidcollective@ids.ac.uk.

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