Socioeconomic Impacts of COVID-19 in Four African Countries

Speakers:
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Talip Kilic is a Senior Economist at the World Bank Development Data Group; a member of the Living Standards Measurement Study (LSMS) team; a core team member for the World Development Report 2021 on Data for Better Lives; and the focal point for the COVID-19 phone surveys that are supported by the World Bank LSMS team. His research focuses on poverty, agriculture, and gender in low- and middle-income countries, as well as survey methodology to improve the quality, timeliness and policy-relevance of household and farm surveys. In the latter line of work, objective measurement, including through sensor deployment; research on policy implications of non-classical measurement error in survey data; and integration with geospatial, census, administrative and mobile data are of interest to him.
Anna Josephson is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics at the University of Arizona. Her core research focuses on individuals in and households around the world, on issues of risk, development, food security, and agriculture. In her work, Dr. Josephson explores the relationships between individuals and their risky environments, and how households and small firms make decisions to survive under challenging conditions.
Socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19 in four African countries

Anna Josephson, University of Arizona
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Feed the Future: AgriLinks

18 November 2020
Introduction and Motivation

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▶ To date, greatest health and economic burden has been felt in the Americas and Europe.

▶ Low- and middle-income countries will face increasing challenges in coming months, exacerbated by limited health systems.
Research on the health impacts in low- and middle-income countries of COVID-19 is rapidly emerging, but evidence on the economic impacts of the pandemic is limited.

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Tracking how peoples lives are affected by COVID-19 can enable governments and policymakers to better understand the circumstances faced by their countries.
Objective

Our goal: Provide near real-time quantitative evidence on the household-level responses to and socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 in Sub-Saharan Africa.
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▶ Combine data from high-frequency phone surveys on COVID-19 with the pre-COVID-19 survey data collected under the World Bank Living Standards Measurement Study - Integrated Surveys on Agriculture (LSMS-ISA) program.

▶ Data from four countries: Ethiopia, Malawi, Nigeria, and Uganda.
Data

- Monthly phone surveys in Burkina Faso, **Ethiopia**, **Malawi**, Mali, **Nigeria**, and **Uganda**.
  - Phone surveys in Ethiopia, Malawi, Nigeria, and Uganda conduct monthly phone interviews for 12 months, with a national sample of households that had been interviewed by the most recent LSMS-ISA-supported national longitudinal household survey.
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Pre-COVID-19 LSMS-ISA data used not only in the analysis of the phone survey data but also in the calculating sampling weights that counteract potential selection bias due to:

- Not being able to interview the LSMS-ISA households without phone contact information.
- Not being able to reach all targeted LSMS-ISA households - primarily due to phones being off and non-working phone numbers.
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- Data and documentation for LSMS-supported phone surveys are available through www.worldbank.org/lsms-covid19.
Individuals’ knowledge of government actions to curb COVID-19 spread are commensurate with government response.
Knowledge of actions to reduce COVID-19 exposure is high, with exceptions in Malawi.
Individuals report that they have changed their behavior to reduce COVID-19 exposure.
Misconceptions about transmission of COVID-19 are quite high.

- Coronavirus is just common flu
- Coronavirus cannot survive warm weather
- Coronavirus does not affect children
- Africans are immune to coronavirus

![Bar chart showing misconceptions in Malawi and Uganda](chart.png)
258 million people - 77% of the population across four countries - live in households that lost income due to the pandemic.
Most respondents report that income remains down, relative with pre-pandemic levels, though there is potential recovery seen over the waves.
Moderate & severe food insecurity affects 62% of adult population across four countries - 102 million adults - with differences across pre-COVID-19 household consumption quintiles.
Findings

Moderate or severe food insecurity is significantly more common in female-headed households.
Findings

Prevalence of moderate & severe food insecurity is higher among those that are concerned about falling ill and suffering financial consequences associated with COVID-19.
There is little heterogeneity across consumption quintiles and moderate food insecurity, by concerns within the household.
Findings

This holds when examining severe food insecurity: there is little heterogeneity across consumption quintiles, by concerns within the household.
Findings

In Nigeria, significant differences exist when comparing pre-COVID and post-COVID levels of food insecurity.
Findings

Households report difficulties accessing medicine and staple foods, and to a lesser degree, soap.
Following school closures, only 48% of households across four countries had a school-age child engaged in an educational activity, with important cross-country differences.
Student engagement in educational activities, especially sessions with teacher, has increased over time during the school closures.
Findings

Food insecurity is higher among households where children are not engaged in learning activities.
Interim Conclusions

- Initial government actions may influence knowledge and behavior of individuals insofar as reducing COVID-19 transmission.

- Most households report income losses since March. Many households are also struggling with moderate and severe food insecurity.

- Households report difficulties with their ability to purchase medicine, staple food, and soap.

- Few students have been able to engage in learning activities since school closures.

- There is considerable cross-country heterogeneity.

- There is a continued need for monitoring of household-level impacts and responses - given the extent of the adverse effects and "negative" coping strategies.
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Thank you!

Q&A...
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