

Family ties: Understanding household labor allocation for mitigating impacts of disasters, conflict, and COVID-19

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Objective

Our Goal

Understand how household income diversification affects welfare outcomes in the face of compounding risks in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Leverage longitudinal survey data from COVID-19 phone surveys and pre-COVID-19 face-to-face surveys in:

- Burkina Faso
- Ethiopia
- Malawi
- Nigeria
- Uganda

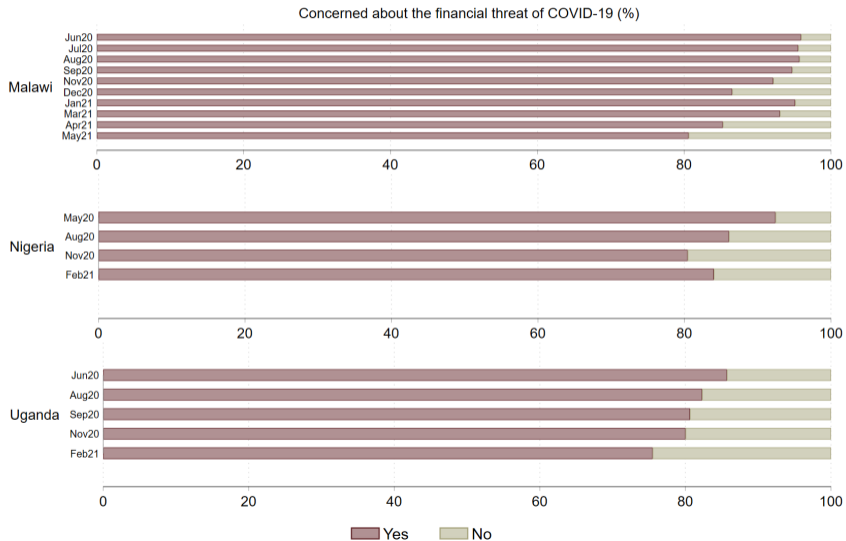
Data

2018-19 LSMS-ISA data serve as a baseline.

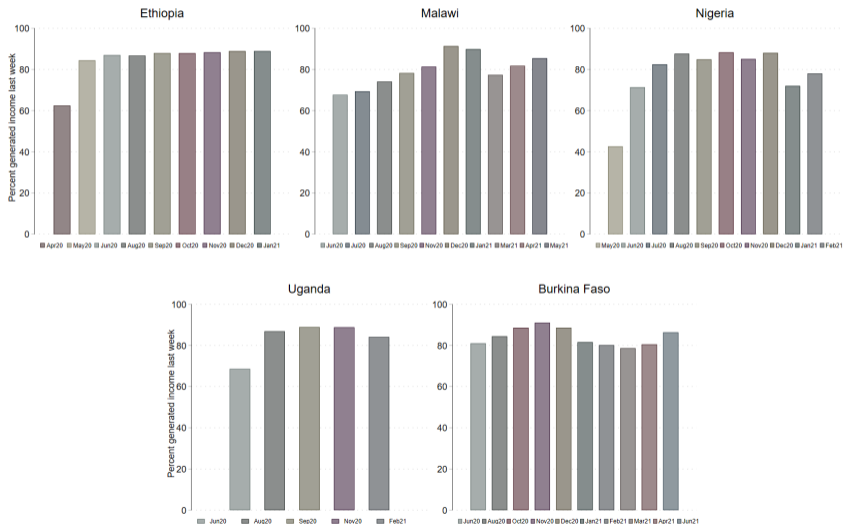
Phone surveys after the onset of the pandemic provide follow-up information.

- Nationally representative samples.
- 12-month data collection cycle.
- 46 survey rounds and 98,000+ interviews across 5 countries.

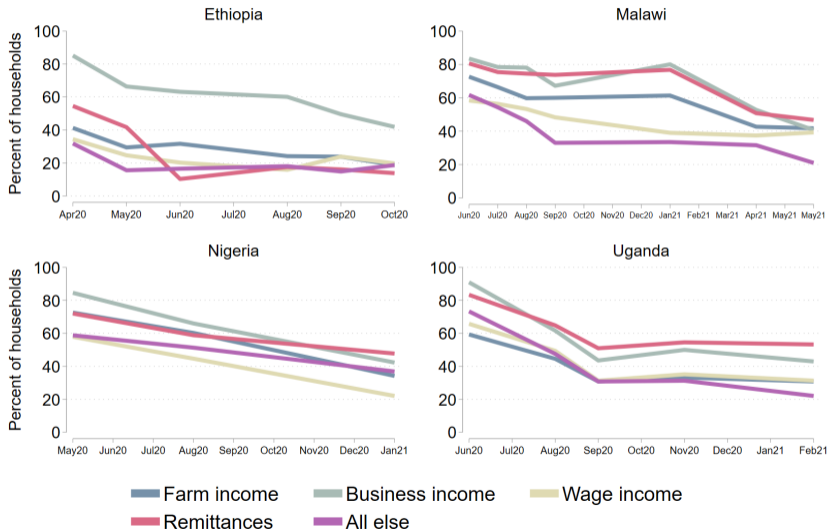
The stressor: Concerns about the financial threat of the pandemic remain high.



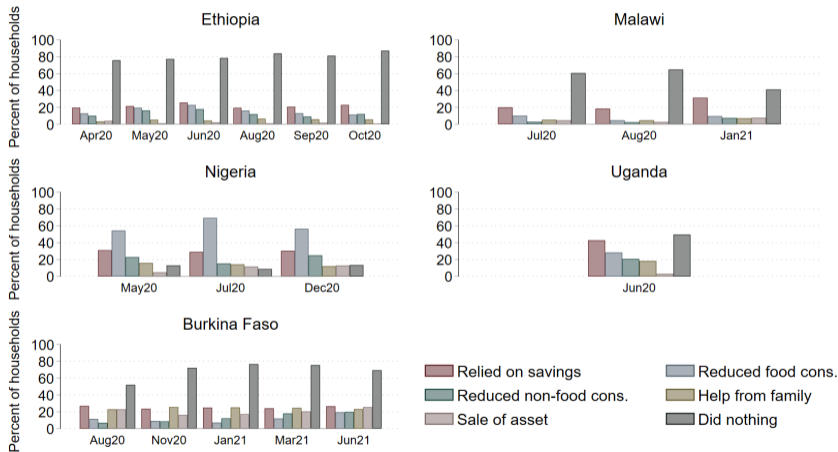
The problem: Share of respondents engaged in income-generating activities has fluctuated.



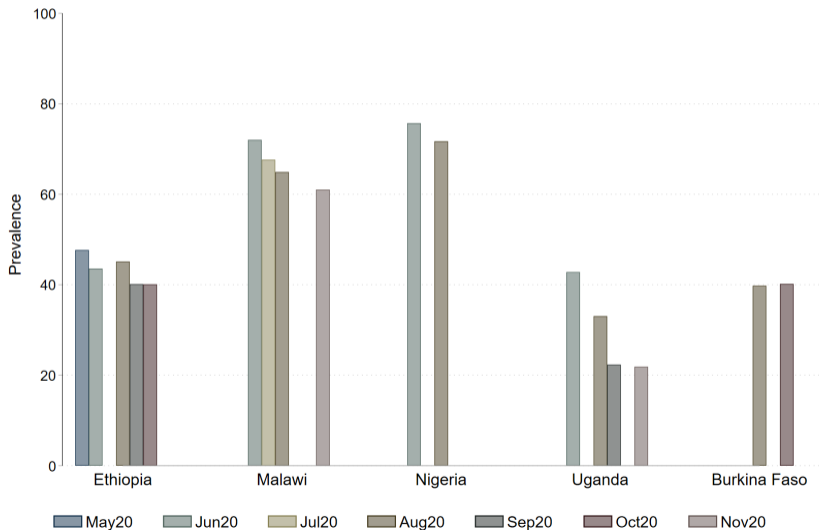
The problem: Share of households reporting income loss has been large, though recovering.



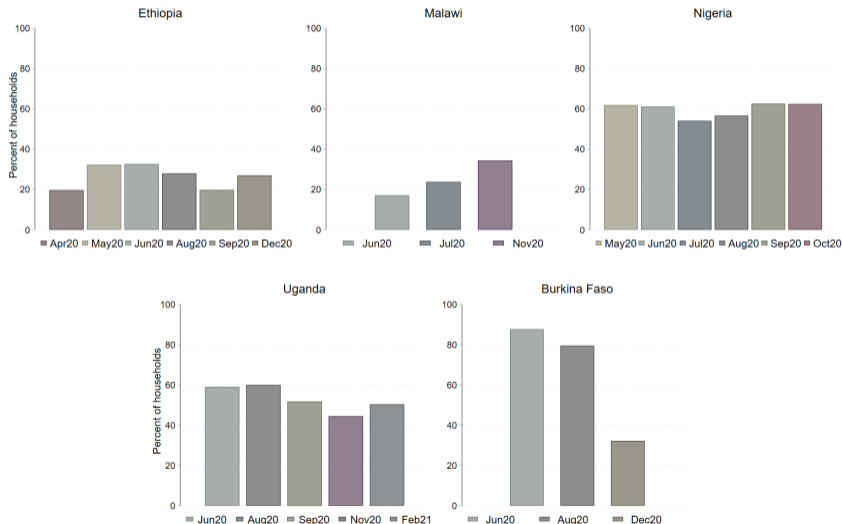
The response: Most common coping mechanisms are relying on savings and reducing food consumption.



The outcome: Food insecurity remains high, particularly in Malawi and Nigeria.



The outcome: Educational engagement during COVID-19 is low.



Next Steps

- Further explore relationship between livelihood diversification and welfare outcomes after multiple stressors.
- Continue progress on rigorous literature review.
- Integrate pre-COVID baseline data.
- Conduct analysis using panel and diff-in-diff methods.

Publications



Socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19 in low-income countries

Anna Josephson¹, Talip Kilic² and Jeffrey D. Michler¹

The emergence of SARS-CoV-2 and attempts to limit its spread have resulted in a contraction of the global economy. Here we document the socioeconomic impacts of the pandemic among households, adults and children in low-income countries. To do so, we rely on longitudinal household survey data from Ethiopia, Malawi, Nigeria and Uganda, originating from pre-COVID-19 face-to-face household surveys plus phone surveys implemented during the pandemic. We estimate that 256 million individuals—77% of the population—live in households that have lost income during the pandemic. Attempts to cope with this loss are exacerbated by food insecurity and an inability to access medicine and staple foods. Finally, we find that student-teacher contact has dropped from a pre-COVID-19 rate of 96% to just 17% among households with school-aged children. These findings can inform decisions by governments and international organizations on measures to mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

SARS-CoV-2 is a major global threat to human health, with 102 million cases and 2.2 million deaths worldwide as of 2 February 2021. Governments have sought to limit the spread of the virus and mitigate the negative health outcomes of the disease through various policy measures that have limited travel, imposed quarantines and lockdowns, and closed businesses and schools¹. In addition to the economic burden of COVID-19-related morbidity and mortality, there have been profound economic impacts, with the global economy projected to shrink by 4%². To date, the greatest health and economic burden has been borne by the Americas and Europe³. However, recent evidence indicates that low-income countries, with their limited health system capacities, are likely to suffer infection and mortality rates similar to or greater than those currently suffered by high-income countries⁴. While research on the health impacts of COVID-19 in low-income countries is rapidly emerging, there is limited evidence on the socioeconomic impacts of the pandemic⁵. The evidence that exists relies primarily on pre-COVID-19 macroeconomic data and simulation models to forecast potential future scenarios on the basis of assumptions about the disease spread⁶. By contrast, we rely on direct measurements of socioeconomic indicators to document the implications of the pandemic for households, adults and children living in low-income countries, as well as the actions that households are taking to mitigate these impacts.

An acute challenge emerging from the global pandemic is how individuals and communities are to strike the balance between the health benefits and the economic costs of managing the spread of the virus⁷. Lives in high-income countries, which tend to be data rich in terms of health and economic information, striking this balance frequently proves politically difficult. By contrast, low-income countries, which tend to be resource-constrained, are data poor in terms of reliable and timely information on the spread of SARS-CoV-2 and on the health and economic impacts of anti-contagion policies. Our objective is to directly measure, at the household, adult and child levels, the socioeconomic impacts of the pandemic and the policies implemented to slow the spread of the virus. While we make no claims of causal identification arising from

our statistical analysis, most of the outcomes we examine arise from survey questions that ask directly about how the pandemic and the accompanying restrictions have affected the respondent and her or his household. Our goal is to learn from how individuals cope with the socioeconomic effects of the virus. This can inform decisions by governments and international organizations regarding how best to mitigate the persisting effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Results

Our findings are based on longitudinal data from high-frequency phone surveys conducted in Ethiopia, Malawi, Nigeria and Uganda with support from the World Bank. Starting in May 2020, and continuing every month thereafter, the phone surveys aim to interview a nationally representative sample of households. They follow up households that had been previously interviewed face-to-face, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Both pre-COVID-19 face-to-face surveys and post-outbreak phone surveys have been supported under the World Bank Living Standards Measurement Study (LSMS)—Integrated Surveys on Agriculture (ISA) initiative.

The pre-COVID-19 LSMS-ISA-supported surveys that serve as sampling frames for the phone surveys were designed to be representative at the national, regional and urban and rural levels. These surveys include the Ethiopia Socio-economic Survey 2018–2019, Malawi Integrated Household Panel Survey (IHPS) 2016, Nigeria General Household Survey (GHS) Panel 2018/19, and Uganda National Panel Survey 2019/20. In Ethiopia, Malawi and Uganda, the phone survey attempted to call all LSMS-ISA households for whom at least one phone number was available either for a household member or for a reference individual. In Nigeria, a national subsample was drawn from the set of LSMS-ISA households with phone numbers. The anonymized survey data and documentation are accessible through the World Bank Microdata Library⁸ and are comparable across countries, based on the template questionnaires and the phone survey sampling guidelines (see Methods and Supplementary Information for more information on the sampling frame).

We directly measure the effects of the pandemic on 10,855 households across the four countries, as well as how those households

CHAPTER 7

The evolving socioeconomic impacts of Covid-19 in four African countries

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INTRODUCTION

The socioeconomic impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic are not yet fully understood as the disease continues to affect individuals and households around the world. Governments have worked to attenuate these socioeconomic impacts by limiting the spread of the virus and mitigating the negative health outcomes of the disease through various policy measures. These policies include limiting travel, imposing quarantines and lockdowns, and closing businesses and schools. The effects of the pandemic have been felt worldwide, though little evidence yet exists on the ongoing impacts for individuals and households in Africa (one exception is the chapters in Djankov and Panizza 2020). We rely on direct measurements of socioeconomic indicators to present evidence on the evolving effects of the pandemic on households, adults, and children living in four African countries (Ethiopia, Malawi, Nigeria, and Uganda), as well as the actions that households are taking to mitigate these impacts.

DATA AND METHODS

To examine the evolving effects of the pandemic, we use longitudinal data from high-frequency national phone surveys in Ethiopia, Malawi, Nigeria, and Uganda. In each country, these phone surveys aim to conduct monthly phone interviews, for a period of 12 months. Supported by the World Bank Living Standards Measurement Study (LSMS), the implementing agencies for the phone surveys in Ethiopia, Malawi, Nigeria, and Uganda are, respectively, Laterite Ethiopia, the Malawi National Statistical Office, the Nigeria Bureau of Statistics, and the Uganda Bureau of Statistics. The anonymised, unit-record phone survey data – as well as basic information documents, interviewer manuals, and questionnaires – associated with each monthly survey round are made publicly available through the World Bank Microdata Library, under the High-Frequency Phone Survey collection (World Bank 2020a, 2020b, 2020c, 2020d).

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