



GLOBAL HEALTH CENTRE POLICY BRIEF | 2021

**SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC RESPONSE TO COVID-19:  
IMPLICATIONS FOR A FUTURE PANDEMIC  
PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE FRAMEWORK**

Austin Liu

THE  
GRADUATE  
INSTITUTE  
GENEVA

GLOBAL  
HEALTH  
CENTRE

This publication was written by Austin Liu, and is a revised and updated version of a briefing note on the same topic published in May 2021 (Liu A. The Social and Economic Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic. Briefing Note. Global Health Centre).

Any views or opinions, errors or omissions in the text are the sole responsibility of the author.

This document was developed as part of the Policy Briefs series under the project on a pandemic treaty at the Global Health Centre, Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva. The research project is supported by the Pax sapiens Foundation.

More information: [www.governingpandemics.org](http://www.governingpandemics.org)

## Global Health Centre

Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies  
Chemin Eugène-Rigot 2 | Case Postale 1672  
1211 Geneva 21 | Switzerland

Tel +41 22 908 4558  
Fax +41 22 908 4594  
Email [globalhealth@graduateinstitute.ch](mailto:globalhealth@graduateinstitute.ch)

 [graduateinstitute.ch/globalhealth](http://graduateinstitute.ch/globalhealth)

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This policy brief seeks to complement analyses focusing on the health aspect of the pandemic response by presenting an overview of the social and economic response to the COVID-19 pandemic and discussing their implications for a future pandemic preparedness and response framework. It builds on and represents a substantial update to our earlier briefing note on this topic released in May 2021.

The first part of this brief provides an overview based on a synthesis of major publications from international organisations and think tanks across six areas: 1) education, 2) jobs and social protection, 3) tourism, 4) transport, 5) migration, and 6) fiscal response, with an emphasis on the issues identified as requiring strengthened international coordination and cooperation. It particularly highlights the disproportionate socioeconomic impact on the most vulnerable populations during the pandemic, including women, girls, young people, low-paid and low-skilled workers, and migrants and refugees.

The second part of the brief reviews their implications for pandemic preparedness and response through a health perspective. It highlights three key issues: 1) the importance of going beyond biomedical and disease-based approaches to address social and economic determinants of health and build resilient health systems in confronting pandemics, 2) the critical role of social safety nets and social protection to promote adherence to non-pharmaceutical public health measures during a pandemic, and 3) the need to review and define network governance models for international coordination and policy harmonisation with other sectors implicated in health measures.

The Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response has called COVID-19 “a pandemic of inequalities and inequities”. Targeted international policies and actions to address these inequalities and protect those with the greatest socioeconomic vulnerability and exposure to pandemic risks are crucial to prevent a global crisis at this scale from happening again.

Socioeconomic disadvantages significantly heighten vulnerability to health and social risks during a pandemic. In particular, to promote adherence to non-pharmaceutical public health measures such as like lockdowns, quarantines, and social restrictions, the brief highlights the importance of development and provision of social safety nets to strengthen a whole-of-government and a whole-of-society approach to global pandemic preparedness and response, drawing on lessons from, for example, the Sendai Framework. A financing mechanism could provide supplementary resources to strengthen social safety nets in lower income economies as well as contingency financing to support social protection in pandemic response. Addressing social and economic disruptions caused by pandemics would be an important element in protecting national health systems and outcomes in such times of crises.



## 1. OVERVIEW OF SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC IMPACT AND RESPONSE

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in a massive loss of life and an unprecedented economic crisis with far-reaching social impacts, including increased poverty and inequality, loss of livelihoods and education opportunities, and greater gender inequalities.

### a) Education

Global losses in access to education due to the pandemic pose significant challenges to human capital and are exacerbating education disparities. At a global scale, school closures affected 1.6 billion students at its peak.<sup>1</sup> Pandemic-induced disruptions in educational systems are especially large in countries with limited access to online platforms for remote learning due to limited infrastructure, including access to electricity, internet, and information and communication technology. As a result, losses in access to education were more severe in low-income countries, where students missed an average of 69 days of instruction in 2020, compared with 15 days in advanced economies.<sup>2</sup> As of September 2021, UNICEF put the estimated effect of missed school at more than 1.8 trillion hours of in-person learning since globally.<sup>3</sup> Pandemic-related disruptions could lead to an overall reduction in learning levels in the longer term due to losses in learning proficiency, equivalent to up to 2.8 years of lost learning for young children, and are likely to impair some of them socially and economically for life.<sup>4</sup> Some economists put the estimated lifetime loss in labour earnings for the affected cohort at \$10 trillion.<sup>5</sup>

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) estimates that about 24 million learners, from pre-primary to university level, are at risk of not returning to school, of whom almost half are in South and West Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>6</sup> Over 11 million girls may not go back to school after the COVID-19, due to greater burden on girls in households struggling with economic hardships.<sup>7</sup> Despite additional funding needs (e.g. expansion of remote learning), many countries did not allocate funding to education in their fiscal responses, and two-thirds of low- and lower-middle-income countries had cut their public education budgets since the onset of the pandemic.<sup>8</sup> In light of

---

<sup>1</sup> World Bank. 2020. The Human Capital Index 2020 Update: Human Capital in the Time of COVID-19. Available at: <http://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/45690160011156873/pdf/The-Human-Capital-Index-2020-Update-Human-Capital-in-the-Time-of-COVID-19.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> International Monetary Fund. 2021. World Economic Outlook: Managing Divergent Recoveries. Available at: <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/WEO/Issues/2021/03/23/world-economic-outlook-april-2021>

<sup>3</sup> UNICEF. 2021. Education disrupted. Education Disrupted. The second year of the COVID-19 pandemic and school closures. Available at: <https://data.unicef.org/resources/education-disrupted/>

<sup>4</sup> UNESCO. 2021. Pandemic-related disruptions to schooling and impacts on learning proficiency indicators: A focus on the early grades. Available at: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000377781/PDF/377781eng.pdf.multi>; Angrist N et al. 2021. Building back better to avert a learning catastrophe: Estimating learning loss from COVID-19 school shutdowns in Africa and facilitating short-term and long-term learning recovery. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 84, p.102397. Available at: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S073805932100050X>

<sup>5</sup> Azevedo JP et al. 2020. Simulating the potential impacts of COVID-19 school closures on schooling and learning outcomes: A set of global estimates. The World Bank. Available at: <https://pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/798061592482682799/covid-and-education-June17-r6.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> UNESCO. 2020. UNESCO COVID-19 Education Response: How Many Students Are at Risk of Not Returning to School?; Advocacy paper. Available at: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000373992>

<sup>7</sup> UNESCO. 2020. Addressing the gender dimensions of COVID-related school closures. Available at: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000373379>

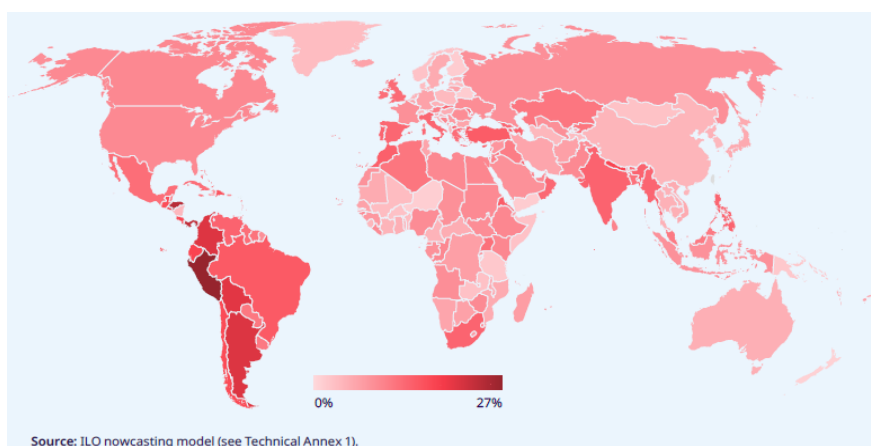
<sup>8</sup> UNESCO. 2021. Education and training: Not yet prioritized in national fiscal responses. Available at: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000376916>; UNESCO and World Bank. 2021. Education Finance Watch 2021. Available at: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000375577>

disruptions in global education systems, UNESCO, the United Nations Secretary General (UNSG), and many NGOs have called for the mobilisation of international resources and the maintenance of Official development assistance (ODA) for education to ensure low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) can cover public spending for education.<sup>9</sup>

## b) Jobs and social protection

The pandemic has had a deep impact on the jobs, livelihoods and well-being of workers and their families, particularly those in the informal economy. While certain sectors and industries have successfully moved online, millions of workers have lost their livelihoods, with the impacts falling disproportionately on the most economically vulnerable segments of the population.<sup>10</sup> A key reason is that COVID-related restrictions particularly affect informal workers in contact-intensive services like retail, transport, accommodation, food, and tourism.<sup>11</sup> Lower-income economies also tend to have a lower share of jobs that can be done remotely.<sup>12</sup> Estimates from the International Labour Organization (ILO) show that 8.8% of global working hours were lost in 2020, equivalent to 255 million full-time jobs. Around half of working hours were lost due to employment loss, with young people, women, low-paid and low-skilled workers being hit hardest.<sup>13</sup> As of the third quarter of 2021, working hours in higher-income economies tended to recover, while lower-income economies continued to suffer large losses, to a large extent due to the evolution of the pandemic and the uneven availability of fiscal stimulus and vaccines.<sup>14</sup>

Fig 1: Working hours lost around the world in 2020 relative to the fourth quarter of 2019 (%)<sup>15</sup>



<sup>9</sup> UN. 2020. Policy Brief: Education during COVID-19 and beyond. Available at: [https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/sg\\_policy\\_brief\\_covid-19\\_and\\_education\\_august\\_2020.pdf](https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/sg_policy_brief_covid-19_and_education_august_2020.pdf); Save Our Future. 2020. Averting an Education Catastrophe for the World's Children. Available at: <https://saveourfuture.world/white-paper/>

<sup>10</sup> UN. 2020. Policy Brief: The World of Work and COVID-19. Available at: [https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/the\\_world\\_of\\_work\\_and\\_covid-19.pdf](https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/the_world_of_work_and_covid-19.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> World Bank. 2020. Beaten or Broken? Informality and COVID-19. Available at: <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/34517/9781464816406.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> Dingel JI and Neiman B. 2020. How many jobs can be done at home? *Journal of Public Economics*, 189, p.104235.

<sup>13</sup> ILO. 2021. ILO Monitor: COVID-19 and the world of work. Seventh edition. Available at: [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/briefingnote/wcms\\_767028.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/briefingnote/wcms_767028.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> ILO. 2021. ILO Monitor: COVID-19 and the world of work. Eighth edition. Available at: [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/briefingnote/wcms\\_824092.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/briefingnote/wcms_824092.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> ILO. 2021. ILO Monitor: COVID-19 and the world of work. Seventh edition. Available at: [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/briefingnote/wcms\\_767028.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/briefingnote/wcms_767028.pdf)

Moreover, women have borne the brunt of job losses. Women's employment declined by 5% in 2020 compared with 3.9% for men. Additionally, 90% of women who lost their jobs in 2020 exited the labour force, which suggests that their working lives are likely to be disrupted over an extended period unless appropriate measures are adopted.<sup>16</sup> They have suffered disproportionate job and income losses because of their over-representation in the hardest-hit sectors, such as accommodation and food services, and the manufacturing sector.<sup>17</sup>

The COVID-19 pandemic posed a critical challenge for policymakers as they needed to address workers' and households' concerns during the abrupt economic crisis. While the impact of fiscal stimulus measures on employment has been overall positive, ILO found that this impact is unevenly distributed worldwide compared to the scale of labour market disruptions.<sup>18</sup> The relative size of fiscal stimulus put in place compared with the labour market damage, in terms of working-hour losses, is much smaller in developing countries than in high-income countries. Between March 2020 and May 2021, a total of 3,333 social protection measures have been planned or implemented globally, with an unprecedented level of over \$2.9 trillion (conservative estimate) invested. Most social protection measures are provided as social assistance. Of the \$1.7 trillion earmarked for social assistance (e.g. cash transfers, in-kind vouchers, school feeding, fee waivers, public works), high-income countries distributed an average of \$874 per capita, compared with around \$4 per capita in low-income countries.<sup>19</sup> It is also evident that social protection and labour market measures need to be more gender sensitive, as few have targeted specifically women's economic security or provided support for unpaid care.<sup>20</sup>

More fundamentally, ILO highlights that the large majority of the working-age population in the world – around 4 billion people – lack social safety nets to cushion them from crisis.<sup>21</sup> The World Bank estimates that 97 million more people have fallen below the \$1.90-a-day poverty line in 2020, and low-income countries and countries in Sub-Saharan Africa are expected to see further increases in poverty in 2021.<sup>22</sup> Going forward, the UNSG has highlighted the need for coordinated global effort to create decent and productive jobs for all as the foundation of recovery.<sup>23</sup> Various initiatives have also been put forward to strengthen social protection systems, such as the launch of a Global Accelerator for Jobs

---

<sup>16</sup> ILO. 2021. World Employment and Social Outlook 2021: Trends 2021. Available at:

[https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms\\_795453.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_795453.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> ILO. 2021. Building Forward Fairer: Women's rights to work and at work at the core of the COVID-19 recovery. Available at : [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---gender/documents/publication/wcms\\_814499.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---gender/documents/publication/wcms_814499.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> ILO. 2020. ILO Monitor: COVID-19 and the world of work. Sixth edition Updated estimates and analysis. Available at: [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/briefingnote/wcms\\_755910.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/briefingnote/wcms_755910.pdf)

<sup>19</sup> Gentilini U et al. Social Protection and Jobs Responses to COVID-19: A Real-Time Review of Country Measures. "Living paper" version 15 (May 14, 2021). Available at :

<http://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/281531621024684216/pdf/Social-Protection-and-Jobs-Responses-to-COVID-19-A-Real-Time-Review-of-Country-Measures-May-14-2021.pdf>

<sup>20</sup> UN Women. 2021. Global gender response tracker: Monitoring how women's needs are being met by pandemic responses. Available at : <https://data.unwomen.org/resources/women-have-been-hit-hard-pandemic-how-government-response-measuring>

<sup>21</sup> 4.1 billion lack social safety net, warns UN labour agency. Available at: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/09/1098892>

<sup>22</sup> Mahler DG et al. 2021. Updated estimates of the impact of COVID-19 on global poverty: Turning the corner on the pandemic in 2021? *World Bank Data Blog*. Available at: <https://blogs.worldbank.org/opendata/updated-estimates-impact-covid-19-global-poverty-turning-corner-pandemic-2021>

<sup>23</sup> UN. 2020. Policy Brief: The World of Work and COVID-19. Available at: [https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/the\\_world\\_of\\_work\\_and\\_covid-19.pdf](https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/the_world_of_work_and_covid-19.pdf)

and Social Protection by the UNSG,<sup>24</sup> and the call for a Global Fund for Social Protection by the Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights.<sup>25</sup>

Furthermore, an increased risk of human and labour rights abuses has been highlighted.<sup>26</sup> Increasing evidence from ILO and UNICEF shows that child labour has risen as schools close during the pandemic, with girls particularly vulnerable to exploitation in agriculture and domestic work.<sup>27</sup> School closures have also made women's participation in the labour market that much more difficult. In the context of COVID-19, ILO has reaffirmed the importance of International Labour Standards<sup>28</sup> in protecting the human rights of workers.

### c) Tourism

Tourism suffered its worst year on record in 2020 and has been one of the sectors most affected. There were 1 billion fewer international arrivals in 2020, equivalent to a 74% drop compared to 2019, due to an unprecedented fall in demand and widespread travel restrictions.<sup>29</sup> On the other hand, nearly 62 million jobs in the tourism sector were lost, despite job support schemes. The sector's contribution to global GDP suffered a drop of 49.1% in 2020, compared to the 3.7% GDP drop in the overall global economy.<sup>30</sup> Many organisations, including the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), International Air Transport Association (IATA), World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), have highlighted the importance of international cooperation on border management and travel restrictions and protocols to restart international mobility.<sup>31</sup> For instance, the Global Tourism Crisis Committee established by the UNWTO is focusing on coordinating efforts to

---

<sup>24</sup> UN. 2021. Secretary-General's Policy Brief Investing in Jobs and Social Protection for Poverty Eradication and a Sustainable Recovery. Available at:

[https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/sg\\_policy\\_brief\\_on\\_jobs\\_and\\_social\\_protection\\_sept\\_2021.pdf](https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/sg_policy_brief_on_jobs_and_social_protection_sept_2021.pdf)

<sup>25</sup> Global fund for social protection: international solidarity in the service of poverty eradication. Report of the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, Olivier De Schutter, A/HRC/47/36 (22 April 2021). Available at: <https://undocs.org/A/HRC/47/36>

<sup>26</sup> 2020 Annual Forum on Business and Human Rights – High-level Virtual Plenary. Remarks by ILO Director-General Guy Ryder. Available at: [https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/how-the-ilo-works/ilo-director-general/statements-and-speeches/WCMS\\_761148/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/how-the-ilo-works/ilo-director-general/statements-and-speeches/WCMS_761148/lang--en/index.htm)

<sup>27</sup> COVID-19 may push millions more children into child labour – ILO and UNICEF. Available at: [https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS\\_747583/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_747583/lang--en/index.htm)

<sup>28</sup> ILO Standards and COVID-19 (coronavirus). Available at: [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_norm/---normes/documents/genericdocument/wcms\\_739937.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---normes/documents/genericdocument/wcms_739937.pdf)

<sup>29</sup> 2020: Worst Year in Tourism History with 1 Billion Fewer International Arrivals. Available at:

<https://www.unwto.org/news/2020-worst-year-in-tourism-history-with-1-billion-fewer-international-arrivals>

<sup>30</sup> WTTC research reveals global Travel & Tourism sector suffered a loss of almost US\$4.5 trillion in 2020 due to the impact of COVID-19. Available at: <https://wttc.org/News-Article/Global-TandT-sector-suffered-a-loss-of-almost-US4-trillion-in-2020>

<sup>31</sup> UN. 2020. Policy Brief: COVID-19 and Transforming Tourism. Available at:

[https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/sg\\_policy\\_brief\\_covid-19\\_tourism\\_august\\_2020.pdf](https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/sg_policy_brief_covid-19_tourism_august_2020.pdf); Tourist Arrivals Down 87% in

January 2021 as UNWTO Calls for Stronger Coordination to Restart Tourism. Available at:

<https://www.unwto.org/news/tourist-arrivals-down-87-in-january-2021-as-unwto-calls-for-stronger-coordination-to-restart-tourism>; Remarks by the Secretary General of the International Civil Aviation Organization, Dr. Fang Liu, to the UNWTO

Global Tourism Crisis Committee Meeting. Available at: [https://www.icao.int/Documents/secretary-general/fliu/20210118\\_SG%20speech\\_UNWTO-GTCC.pdf](https://www.icao.int/Documents/secretary-general/fliu/20210118_SG%20speech_UNWTO-GTCC.pdf); Remarks of A. de Juniac at IATA's Media Briefing on 27

January. Available at: <https://www.iata.org/en/pressroom/speeches/2021-01-27-01/>; WTTC requests clear rules and a

consistent protocol for mobility at the G20 Tourism Ministerial meeting hosted by Italy. Available at: <https://wttc.org/News-Article/WTTC-requests-clear-rules-and-a-consistent-protocol-for-mobility-at-the-G20-Tourism-Ministerial-meeting-hosted-by-Italy>

restart tourism.<sup>32</sup> Yet, coordination with the private sector might be challenging for policymakers given the fragmented nature of the tourism sector.<sup>33</sup>

#### d) Transport

A key challenge is limited coordination between countries including in curtailing travel and closing borders, also impacting on the delivery and availability of essential goods. A number of international organisations, including the World Customs Organization (WCO), the International Road Transport Union (IRU), the Intergovernmental Organisation for International Carriage by Rail (OTIF), the Organisation for Co-operation between Railways (OSJD), the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the ICAO, UNCTAD and UN regional commissions, have called for more effective international coordination between border agencies, custom administrations and transport authorities, as well as cooperation between different transport modes, to ensure supply chain continuity.<sup>34</sup> This is especially important for Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs).<sup>35</sup> In addition, IMO and a number of IOs have called for coordination to exempt seafarers from travel restrictions and implement the recommended framework of protocols for safe crew changes.<sup>36</sup> ICAO have called for a closely coordinated international approach to the treatment of air crews, and through the Prevention and Management of Public Health Events in Civil Aviation (CAPSCA) developed harmonised risk management measures, including the establishment of Public Health Corridors.<sup>37</sup>

#### e) Migration

COVID-19-related travel measures and border closures have had far-reaching impacts on migrants and travellers worldwide. By mid-July 2020, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) estimated that the pandemic had left nearly 3 million people stranded (likely an underestimation), sometimes without consular assistance to prevent their slipping into irregular status or sufficient resources to meet basic needs. The pandemic has also amplified the socioeconomic vulnerability of those who depend on mobility for survival, especially many migrant workers who often work in sectors negatively affected by national lockdowns. Restrictions on movement have increased the dependence of many migrants on

---

<sup>32</sup> UNWTO. 2021. 8th Global Tourism Crisis Committee Meeting. 18 January 2021, Madrid, Spain. Available at: <https://webunwto.s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/2021-01/global-tourism-crisis-committee-8-key-messages-en.pdf>

<sup>33</sup> OECD. 2020. Mitigating the impact of COVID-19 on tourism and supporting recovery. OECD Tourism Papers, 2020/03, OECD Publishing, Paris. Available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/47045bae-en>

<sup>34</sup> Joint WCO-IRU statement on responding to the impacts of COVID-19 on cross-border transport. Available at: [http://www.wcoomd.org/-/media/wco/public/global/pdf/media/important-notice/wco\\_iru-joint-statement\\_en-signed.pdf?db=web](http://www.wcoomd.org/-/media/wco/public/global/pdf/media/important-notice/wco_iru-joint-statement_en-signed.pdf?db=web); Joint WCO-OTIF-OSJD statement on responding to the impacts of COVID-19 on cross-border railway transport. Available at: [http://www.wcoomd.org/-/media/wco/public/global/pdf/media/press-release/2020/wco-otif-osjd\\_joint\\_statement.pdf?db=web](http://www.wcoomd.org/-/media/wco/public/global/pdf/media/press-release/2020/wco-otif-osjd_joint_statement.pdf?db=web); Joint statement on the contribution of international trade and supply chains to a sustainable socio-economic recovery in COVID-19 times. Available at: [https://unctad.org/system/files/information-document/IMO-UNCTAD-2020-statement\\_en.pdf](https://unctad.org/system/files/information-document/IMO-UNCTAD-2020-statement_en.pdf)

<sup>35</sup> Joint Statement on Facilitating Trade and Transit During the COVID-19 Pandemic. Available at: [http://www.wcoomd.org/-/media/wco/public/global/pdf/media/press-release/ohrls\\_wco-joint-statement\\_covid\\_19\\_en.pdf?db=web](http://www.wcoomd.org/-/media/wco/public/global/pdf/media/press-release/ohrls_wco-joint-statement_covid_19_en.pdf?db=web)

<sup>36</sup> Joint Statement calling on all Governments to immediately recognize seafarers as key workers, and to take swift and effective action to eliminate obstacles to crew changes, so as to address the humanitarian crisis faced by the shipping sector, ensure maritime safety and facilitate economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Available at: <https://wwwcdn.imo.org/localresources/en/MediaCentre/HotTopics/Documents/COVID%20CL%204204%20adds/Circular%20Letter%20No.4204Add.30%20Joint%20Statement%20Seafarers.pdf>

<sup>37</sup> ICAO. 2020. ICAO Council Aviation Recovery Task Force (CART) Report and annexed guidance document Take-off: Guidance for Air Travel through the COVID-19 Public Health Crisis. Available at: <https://www.icao.int/covid/cart/Documents/067e.pdf>



intermediaries and facilitators, from employment agencies to smugglers.<sup>38</sup> In light of the exacerbation of the vulnerabilities migrants face and the intensification of forced returns, including under the pretext of public health measures, the UNSG and the UN Network on Migration have called for the suspension of forced returns during the pandemic<sup>39</sup> and the full respect of the rights of people on the move, for instance in line with the Global Compact for Migration,<sup>40</sup> in the implementation of travel restrictions and border control measures necessary to protect the health of migrants and control the pandemic.<sup>41</sup>

## f) Fiscal response

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has highlighted the importance to ensure LMICs have adequate access to international liquidity so that they can continue needed health, social, or other infrastructure spending.<sup>42</sup> It quickly responded with emergency financing equivalent to over \$110 billion, using a variety of instruments. Its lending to Sub-Saharan Africa in 2020 was 13 times more than the annual average over the previous decade.<sup>43</sup> However, resources to contain the pandemic and cushion its severe health, social and economic consequences remain unequally distributed across countries. Although many LMICs deployed unprecedented fiscal stimulus packages, their policy response was constrained by limited fiscal space and was insufficient to address the pressing needs of vulnerable populations.<sup>44</sup> The IMF estimates that advanced economies provided fiscal policy support equivalent to about 24% of their GDP in 2020, compared to just 2% in low-income countries.<sup>45</sup>

---

<sup>38</sup> Benton M et al. COVID-19 and the State of Global Mobility in 2020. IOM and Migration Policy Institute. Available at: <https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/covid-19-and-the-state-of-global.pdf>

<sup>39</sup> UN Network on Migration Official Statement: Forced Returns of Migrants Must be Suspended in Times of COVID-19. Available at: <https://migrationnetwork.un.org/un-network-migration-official-statement-forced-returns-migrants-must-be-suspended-times-covid-19>; Stronger Together: Including Migrants in the COVID-19 Response and Recovery. Available at: <https://migrationnetwork.un.org/stronger-together-including-migrants-covid-19-response-and-recovery>

<sup>40</sup> Liu G. 2020. Deeper international cooperation on COVID-19 pandemic prevention and control measures in the field of migration administration, with reference to the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. International Organization for Migration (IOM). Geneva. Available at: <https://publications.iom.int/fr/system/files/pdf/deep-intl-coop.pdf>

<sup>41</sup> UN. 2020. Policy Brief: COVID-19 and People on the Move. Available at: [https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/sg\\_policy\\_brief\\_on\\_people\\_on\\_the\\_move.pdf](https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/sg_policy_brief_on_people_on_the_move.pdf)

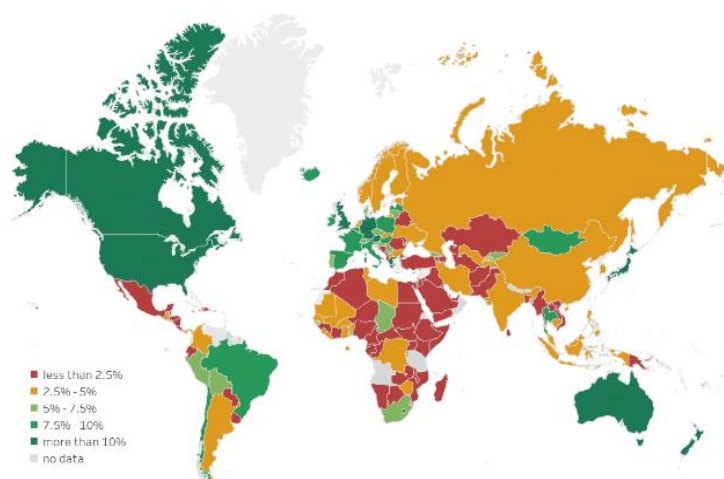
<sup>42</sup> International Monetary Fund. 2021. World Economic Outlook: Managing Divergent Recoveries. Available at: <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/WEO/Issues/2021/03/23/world-economic-outlook-april-2021>

<sup>43</sup> Giving People a Fair Shot—Policies to Secure the Recovery By Kristalina Georgieva, IMF Managing Director Washington, DC. Available at: <https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2021/03/25/sp033021-SMs2021-Curtain-Raiser>

<sup>44</sup> World Bank. 2021. Global Economic Prospects. Available at: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/global-economic-prospects>

<sup>45</sup> Georgieva K. 2021. The Great Divergence: A Fork in the Road for the Global Economy. Available at: <https://blogs.imf.org/2021/02/24/the-great-divergence-a-fork-in-the-road-for-the-global-economy/>

Fig 2: Additional Spending and Forgone Revenue (% of 2020 GDP) in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic 46



Among a range of recommendations, to create fiscal space for investment in crisis response the UNSG has called for voluntary reallocation of special drawing rights (SDRs) from countries with sufficient international reserves to countries facing persistent external deficits or emergencies to support liquidity, fresh concessional financing by meeting ODA commitments, and to broaden the scope of debt relief to include middle-income countries that have been seriously affected by the crisis.<sup>47</sup> Commentators and analysts have argued that the IMF needs to step up financing,<sup>48</sup> possibly by linking debt treatment to instruments that explicitly support health preparedness,<sup>49</sup> and in the longer term to support structural initiatives to deepen capital markets in developing economies, such as support for impact bond issuance.<sup>50</sup>

In response to the call for debt relief, G20 finance ministers have established the Debt Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI), which has delivered more than \$5 billion in relief to more than 40 eligible countries.<sup>51</sup> Building on the DSSI, G20 countries have also agreed to a Common Framework for Debt Treatments beyond the DSSI, which is a step forward by bringing in non-traditional official bilateral creditors to a common set of agreed terms on restructured debts.<sup>52</sup> Furthermore, in August 2021, a \$650 billion allocation of SDRs, the largest in history, came into effect at the IMF, which will provide additional liquidity to the global economic system.<sup>53</sup> At the Rome Summit in October 2021, G20

<sup>46</sup> IMF Fiscal Monitor Database of Country Fiscal Measures in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic. Available at: <https://www.imf.org/en/Topics/imf-and-covid19/Fiscal-Policies-Database-in-Response-to-COVID-19>

<sup>47</sup> UN. 2021. Liquidity and Debt Solutions to Invest in the SDGs: The Time to Act is Now. Available at: [https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/sg\\_policy\\_brief\\_on\\_liquidity\\_and\\_debt\\_solutions\\_march\\_2021.pdf](https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/sg_policy_brief_on_liquidity_and_debt_solutions_march_2021.pdf)

<sup>48</sup> Ahmed M. 2021. Low-Income Countries Need a Boost for the Recovery. Here's How the IMF Can Step Up. Center for Global Development. Available at: <https://www.cgdev.org/blog/low-income-countries-need-boost-recovery-heres-how-imf-can-step>

<sup>49</sup> Segal S. 2021. Creating Fiscal Space in the Covid-19 Era. CSIS Commission on Strengthening America's Health Security. Available at: <https://www.csis.org/analysis/creating-fiscal-space-covid-19-era>

<sup>50</sup> Mateos y Lago I. 2021. Managing global liquidity through COVID-19 and beyond. Chatham House. <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2021/02/managing-global-liquidity-through-covid-19-and-beyond/what-more-can-be-done>

<sup>51</sup> COVID 19: Debt Service Suspension Initiative. Available at: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/debt/brief/covid-19-debt-service-suspension-initiative>

<sup>52</sup> Common Framework for Debt Treatments beyond the DSSI. Available at: [https://clubdeparis.org/sites/default/files/annex\\_common\\_framework\\_for\\_debt\\_treatments\\_beyond\\_the\\_dssi.pdf](https://clubdeparis.org/sites/default/files/annex_common_framework_for_debt_treatments_beyond_the_dssi.pdf)

<sup>53</sup> IMF Managing Director Announces the US\$650 billion SDR Allocation Comes into Effect. Available at: <https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2021/08/23/pr21248-imf-managing-director-announces-the-us-650-billion-sdr-allocation-comes-into-effect>

Leaders further supported the call from the IMF to establish a new Resilience and Sustainability Trust (RST), which can channel reserve asset (i.e. SDRs) to provide affordable long-term financing to low-income countries. They also decided to establish a G20 Joint Finance-Health Task Force to enhance dialogue and global cooperation on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response, which will report back in by early 2022 on modalities to establish a financial facility to ensure adequate and sustained financing.<sup>54</sup>

Going forward, the IMF has estimated that low-income countries need around \$200 billion until 2025 to step up their response to the pandemic, and a further \$250 billion to catch up with advanced economies.<sup>55</sup> On the other hand, given the range of unprecedented actions taken, a coordinated withdrawal of fiscal support will be important to reduce the risk of economic downturn, inflation or impacts on trade imbalances.<sup>56</sup> The IMF has also highlighted a “*unique opportunity to rethink and fix the international tax system*”, for instance by addressing the question of efficient taxation solution as it relates to multinational digitalised companies that have fared very well during the pandemic and are among the most valuable and profitable in the world.<sup>57</sup>

## 2. IMPLICATIONS FOR PANDEMIC PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE

Reviewing the social and economic response to the pandemic through a public health perspective shows that three key aspects in terms of international obligations, cooperation, and coordination need to be strengthened: 1) social determinants of health as they relate to existing international law (e.g. international labour standards, right to education, human rights of people on the move) and resilient health systems, 2) social safety nets and social protection to promote adherence to non-pharmaceutical public health measures during a pandemic, and 3) international coordination and policy harmonisation with other sectors implicated in health measures (e.g. common protocols in relation to mobility, common approach to treatment of seafarers and aircrews).

### a) Social determinants of health and resilient health systems

A pandemic treaty or a similar instrument needs to go beyond biomedical and disease-based approaches to address social determinants of health and related health inequities and protect the poor and the marginalised from health risks.<sup>58</sup> While beneficial in aiming to reduce infection risks, many COVID-19 containment measures have immediate and potentially long-term consequences for health equity because of their adverse impact on social determinants of health.<sup>59</sup> For instance, school closures

---

<sup>54</sup> G20 Rome Leaders' Declaration. Available at: <https://www.g20.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/G20-ROME-LEADERS-DECLARATION.pdf>

<sup>55</sup> Chabert G et al. 2021. Funding the Recovery of Low-income Countries After COVID. IMF Blog. Available at: <https://blogs.imf.org/2021/04/05/funding-the-recovery-of-low-income-countries-after-covid/>

<sup>56</sup> Kongsamut P et al. 2021. Unwinding COVID-19 Policy Interventions for Banking Systems. IMF Special Series on COVID-19. Available at: <https://www.imf.org/-/media/Files/Publications/covid19-special-notes/en-special-series-on-covid-19-unwinding-covid-19-policy-interventions-for-banking-systems.ashx>; Shearing N. 2021. Fiscal policy and the post-COVID-19 recovery. Chatham House. Available at: <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2021/02/fiscal-policy-and-post-covid-19-recovery>

<sup>57</sup> Managing Director Georgieva's Opening Remarks, “Virtual Book Launch—Corporate Income Taxes Under Pressure”. Available at: <https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2021/05/04/sp050421-opening-remarks-virtual-book-launch-corporate-income-taxes-under-pressure>

<sup>58</sup> Holst J. 2020. The world expects effective global health interventions: Can global health deliver?. *Global Public Health*, 15(9), pp.1396-1403. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17441692.2020.1795222>

<sup>59</sup> WHO. 2021. Social determinants of health: Report by the Director-General, EB148/24 (6 January 2021). Available at: [https://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf\\_files/EB148/B148\\_24-en.pdf](https://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/EB148/B148_24-en.pdf)

have deprived many children of their only nutritious meal through school-feeding programs. Job losses and increase in poverty will impact utilisation of services and expose more people to catastrophic health expenditure. Forced returns of migrants place additional strain on health systems of countries of return, and returnees often face additional health risks during transfer and upon return.

Besides, social and economic disruptions have caused severe impact on access to essential non-COVID-19 health services, from routine immunisation to maternal and child services, cancer treatment, and other emergency services.<sup>60</sup> Emerging data estimates that for each COVID-19 death, more than two women and children have lost their lives as a result of disruptions to health systems since the start of the pandemic.<sup>61</sup> In particular, restrictions on freedom of movement have severely disrupted sexual and reproductive health services and lockdowns have led to a worldwide increase in domestic and sexual violence, especially affecting women from indigenous, migrant, or refugee backgrounds, women with disabilities, and those living in conflict settings.<sup>62</sup> These disruptions magnified pre-existing health workforce shortages due to systemic underinvestment and inequitable workforce distribution.<sup>63</sup> Progress towards universal health coverage is also at risk due to reduced economic growth combined with rising poverty, impacting countries' health financing capacities.<sup>64</sup>

A pandemic treaty should aim at strengthening resilient health systems as the foundation of pandemic preparedness and response, prioritising the poor, vulnerable and marginalised to ensure equitable access to health services. It should emphasise human rights and strengthen existing instruments (e.g. international labour standards, right to education, human rights of people on the move) to address the determinants of health.<sup>65</sup> It could also build on a set of indicators to monitor and assess the human rights implications of a pandemic, spanning across gender, education, social protection, protection of vulnerable groups (e.g. refugees and migrants), as developed by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights with a sub-group of the UN Crisis Management Team and outlined in the UN socioeconomic framework.<sup>66</sup> A human rights based approach also means that communities and civil society have a right to participate in decisions about their health and in processes affecting it, including the process to develop a pandemic treaty.

---

<sup>60</sup> COVID-19 continues to disrupt essential health services in 90% of countries. Available at: [who.int/news/item/23-04-2021-covid-19-continues-to-disrupt-essential-health-services-in-90-of-countries](https://www.who.int/news/item/23-04-2021-covid-19-continues-to-disrupt-essential-health-services-in-90-of-countries)

<sup>61</sup> Emerging data estimates that for each COVID-19 death, more than two women and children have lost their lives as a result of disruptions to health systems since the start of the pandemic. Available at: [www.globalfinancingfacility.org/emerging-data-estimates-each-covid-19-death-more-two-women-and-children-have-lost-their-lives-result](https://www.globalfinancingfacility.org/emerging-data-estimates-each-covid-19-death-more-two-women-and-children-have-lost-their-lives-result)

<sup>62</sup> Cousins S. COVID-19 has “devastating” effect on women and girls. *Lancet* 2020;396:301-2. doi:10.1016/S0140-6736(20)31679-2; United Nations. Particular challenges of women and girls in the context of COVID-19. Global humanitarian response plan on Covid-19, May update. 2020. [https://unric.org/it/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2020/05/GHRP-COVID19\\_MayUpdate-Part-2.pdf](https://unric.org/it/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2020/05/GHRP-COVID19_MayUpdate-Part-2.pdf); Paremoer L et al. 2021. Covid-19 pandemic and the social determinants of health. *BMJ*, 372. Available at: <https://www.bmj.com/content/372/bmj.n129.long>

<sup>63</sup> Bustamante Izquierdo JP. COVID-19 and the health workforce: Six lessons. *UHC2030 Blog*. Available at: <https://www.uhc2030.org/blog-news-events/uhc2030-blog/covid-19-and-the-health-workforce-six-lessons-555473/>

<sup>64</sup> Sparkes SP et al. 2021. Will the Quest for UHC be Derailed? *Health Systems & Reform*, 7(2), p.e1929796. Available at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/23288604.2021.1929796>

<sup>65</sup> Davis S et al. An international pandemic treaty must centre on human rights. *The BMJ Opinion*. Available at: <https://blogs.bmj.com/bmj/2021/05/10/an-international-pandemic-treaty-must-centre-on-human-rights/>; Haynes LK et al. Addressing Inequity and Advancing the Right to Health to Strengthen Pandemic Prevention, Preparedness, and Response. A Civil Society Perspective. Policy Brief. Global Health Centre, The Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies. Available at: <https://www.graduateinstitute.ch/sites/internet/files/2021-11/FCGH-v3.pdf>

<sup>66</sup> UN. 2020. A UN framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19. Available at: [https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/un\\_framework\\_report\\_on\\_covid-19.pdf](https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/un_framework_report_on_covid-19.pdf)



## b) Social safety nets and social protection

The existence of social safety nets and the capacity to provide social protection support has a big impact on countries' ability to implement non-pharmaceutical public health measures like lockdowns, quarantines, and social restrictions, which are critical to fighting disease especially before access to vaccines and treatments is possible. Evidence highlights the strong correlation between socioeconomic inequities and the spread of COVID-19, particularly the inability of population with lower socioeconomic backgrounds to adhere to public health measures due to falling household income, inability to work remotely, and lack of access to food and other essential resources. Socioeconomic disadvantages heighten vulnerability to health and social risks – the absence of social welfare and income support in the informal economy makes it very difficult for workers to endure job loss while also adhere to public health measures to mitigate the effect of COVID-19.<sup>67</sup>

Table 1: Examples of studies on the relationship between socioeconomic factors and the spread of COVID-19

Study	Key findings
Review patterns emerging from data on infection rates <b>across 70 countries</b> for 21 weeks between March and August 2020 to investigate whether pre-existing systemic inequities might link with higher infection rates <sup>68</sup>	During the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, one additional point of the Gini coefficient correlated with a 1.34 percentage point higher rate of weekly new infections across countries. After twenty-one weeks of the pandemic, just one additional Gini point correlates with an approximately 1/3 higher overall number of cases in a country. More equal countries might enjoy an “equality dividend” that is associated with more shock resilience during the ongoing crisis.
Analysis of the role of socioeconomic differences in explaining self-protecting behaviour, such as social distancing and mask wearing, at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in the <b>US</b> in April 2020 <sup>69</sup>	Higher income is associated with larger changes in self-protective behaviours. People with lower income are more likely to report circumstances that make adoption of self-protective behaviours difficult, such as inability to tele-work. Policies that assume universal compliance with self-protective measures—or that otherwise do not account for socioeconomic differences in the costs of doing so—are unlikely to be effective or sustainable.
Analysis of the relationship between the availability of health-care resources and socioeconomic characteristics and the spread of the epidemic in <b>Brazil</b> from February to October 2020 <sup>70</sup>	Existing socioeconomic inequalities, rather than age, health status, and other risk factors for COVID-19, have affected the course of the epidemic, with a disproportionate adverse burden on states and municipalities with high socioeconomic vulnerability. Despite a well-established health and social protection systems, COVID-19 spread rapidly in Brazil. Targeted policies and actions are needed to protect those with the greatest socioeconomic vulnerability.

<sup>67</sup> Ebuenyi ID. 2020. COVID-19: an opportunity for African governments to rethink social welfare benefits and protection. *The Pan African Medical Journal*, 35(Suppl 2). Available at: <https://www.panafrican-med-journal.com/content/series/35/2/64/full/>

<sup>68</sup> Von Chamier P. 2021. Inequality, Lockdown, and COVID-19: Unequal Societies Struggle to Contain the Virus. *Center on International Cooperation*. Available at: [https://cic.nyu.edu/sites/default/files/nyu\\_cic\\_-\\_inequality\\_lockdown\\_and\\_covid-19\\_unequal\\_societies\\_struggle\\_to\\_contain\\_the\\_virus\\_-\\_april\\_2021.pdf](https://cic.nyu.edu/sites/default/files/nyu_cic_-_inequality_lockdown_and_covid-19_unequal_societies_struggle_to_contain_the_virus_-_april_2021.pdf)

<sup>69</sup> Papageorge NW et al. 2021. Socio-demographic factors associated with self-protecting behavior during the Covid-19 pandemic. *Journal of Population Economics*, 34(2), pp.691-738. Available at: <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s00148-020-00818-x>

<sup>70</sup> Rocha R et al. 2021. Effect of socioeconomic inequalities and vulnerabilities on health-system preparedness and response to COVID-19 in Brazil: a comprehensive analysis. *The Lancet Global Health*. Available at: [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/langlo/article/PIIS2214-109X\(21\)00081-4/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/langlo/article/PIIS2214-109X(21)00081-4/fulltext)

<p>Analysis of incidence and mortality attributed to SARS-CoV-2 infection and its association with demographic and socioeconomic status across the urban metropolitan area of the capital of <b>Chile</b> during the first wave of the pandemic<sup>71</sup></p>	<p>Strong association between socioeconomic status and both COVID-19 outcomes and public health capacity. Testing was insufficient early in the pandemic in lower–socioeconomic status municipalities and human mobility was not reduced by lockdowns as much as it was in more affluent locations. Findings highlight the substantial consequences of socioeconomic and health care disparities in a highly segregated city.</p>
<p>Assessment of the knowledge, behaviours, health and socio-economic circumstances through a large-scale multi-country surveillance programme at 93 locations across <b>four South Asian countries (Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka)</b> during national lockdowns implemented from March to July 2020<sup>72</sup></p>	<p>Many South Asians had poor access to essential resources for personal protection, and that uptake of recommended preventive measures was low, especially among people from modest educational and socio-economic backgrounds. The prevalence of unemployment rose and household income fell during the lockdown, where younger people and those from less affluent socio-economic groups were most severely impacted. It underscores the need for immediate large-scale action to close gaps in knowledge and access to essential resources for prevention, along with measures to safeguard economic production and mitigate socio-economic impacts on the young and the poor.</p>
<p>Review of public health measures initiated in <b>sub-Saharan African countries (Nigeria, South Africa, Rwanda, and Burundi)</b> to mitigate the spread of COVID-19<sup>73</sup></p>	<p>Fragile medical infrastructure, poor living conditions, lack of social welfare system, draconian lockdown implementation strategies, and inconsistent information from authorities have impeded the success of public health measures. Lockdown and social distancing measures had not reduced the rate of infection in these countries, and the implementation of those measures was sporadic and not backed up with increased capacities of diagnostic tests.</p>

While social protection and social safety nets are traditionally a matter of national responsibility, they become global and regional common goods in the context of pandemic preparedness and response as the lack of social safety nets increases the opportunity for disease transmission which affects everyone in a pandemic. This highlights the need for international support towards targeted policies and actions to protect those with the greatest socioeconomic vulnerability, so that lower-income economies have the necessary resources to implement those public health measures and mitigate their adverse impact on individuals. Policy response should provide incentives to enable people to adhere to those public health measures, not motivate them to oppose it.

Importantly, the G20 High-Level Independent Panel on Financing the Global Commons for Pandemic Preparedness and Response recognises that countries’ capacity to implement non-pharmaceutical public health measures (e.g. lockdowns, quarantines and social restrictions) requires adequate social safety nets as part of a resilient national systems to strengthen preparedness.<sup>74</sup> The Global

<sup>71</sup> Mena GE et al. 2021. Socioeconomic status determines COVID-19 incidence and related mortality in Santiago, Chile. *Science*, 372(6545). Available at: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8158961/>

<sup>72</sup> Kusuma D et al. 2021. Low uptake of COVID-19 prevention behaviours and high socioeconomic impact of lockdown measures in South Asia: evidence from a large-scale multi-country surveillance programme. *SSM-Population Health*, 13, p.100751. Available at: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2352827321000264>

<sup>73</sup> Ogbolosingha AJ and Singh A. 2020. COVID-19 pandemic: Review of impediments to public health measures in Sub-Saharan Africa. *American Journal of Preventative Medicine and Public Health*, 6(3), pp.68-75. Available at: <https://www.bibliomed.org/?mno=106637>

<sup>74</sup> A Global Deal for Our Pandemic Age: Report of the G20 High Level Independent Panel on Financing the Global Commons for Pandemic Preparedness and Response. Available at: <https://www.g20.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/G20-HLIP-Report.pdf>

Preparedness Monitoring Board also recommended that a new collective financing mechanism should provide supplementary financing for national preparedness in LMICs and fragile states (e.g. to build multisectoral resilience) as well as contingency funds to support early response (e.g. measures to mitigate the socioeconomic impact).<sup>75</sup> The World Bank's COVID-19 crisis response pillar on "Strengthening Policies, Institutions and Investments for Rebuilding Better" particularly calls for pandemic preparedness as a priority across all economic and social sectors, as well as stronger systems for social safety nets.<sup>76</sup> Strong social protection systems and well-established safety nets allow rapid adaptation and expansion of delivery mechanisms to ensure income security and protect jobs of vulnerable groups when a crisis hits.<sup>77</sup>

A pandemic treaty or a similar instrument could therefore include provisions on the development of social safety nets as a long-term priority to strengthen pandemic preparedness. That could help mainstream social protection in sector-wide pandemic preparedness and response plans, which could outline the roles and responsibilities of actors, financing mechanisms (e.g. with domestic financing options) and coordination structures to enable joined-up actions.<sup>78</sup> The new legal instrument could draw lessons from the Sendai Framework, which recognises the principles of multistakeholder coordination and international cooperation,<sup>79</sup> as well as the development of social safety nets as disaster risk reduction measures. It could build on the Bangkok Principles<sup>80</sup> for the implementation of the health aspects of the Sendai Framework, which has an aim to promote systematic integration of health into national and subnational disaster risk reduction plans through a whole-of-government and a whole-of-society approach.

An interesting progress in disaster risk reduction (DRR) research has been the finding that it is often not the hazard that determines a disaster, but the vulnerability, exposure, and ability of the population to anticipate, respond to, and recover from its effects.<sup>81</sup> A pandemic treaty could build on the concept of vulnerability under the Hyogo Framework for Action that preceded the Sendai Framework, which was defined as "the conditions determined by physical, social, economic and environmental factors or

---

<sup>75</sup> GPMB. 2021. From Worlds Apart to a World Prepared: Global Preparedness Monitoring Board report 2021. Available at: <https://www.gpmb.org/annual-reports/annual-report-2021>

<sup>76</sup> World Bank. 2020. Saving Lives, Scaling-up Impact and Getting Back on Track. World Bank Group COVID-19 Crisis Response Approach Paper. Available at: <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/136631594937150795/pdf/World-Bank-Group-COVID-19-Crisis-Response-Approach-Paper-Saving-Lives-Scaling-up-Impact-and-Getting-Back-on-Track.pdf>

<sup>77</sup> World Bank. 2021. Findings for COVID-19 from the World Bank's Support to Address Ebola Outbreaks. Available at: [https://ieg.worldbankgroup.org/sites/default/files/Data/Topic/COVID19\\_LessonsFromEbola.pdf](https://ieg.worldbankgroup.org/sites/default/files/Data/Topic/COVID19_LessonsFromEbola.pdf); ILO. 2021. World Social Protection Report 2020–22: Social protection at the crossroads – in pursuit of a better future. Available at: [https://www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/WCMS\\_817572/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/WCMS_817572/lang--en/index.htm); Hillier D et al. 2020. Initial COVID-19 responses in Bangladesh, Kenya, Pakistan, Sierra Leone and Uganda: Documentation and learning from March to May 2020. *Maintains, Oxford Policy Management, Oxford, UK*. Available at: <https://www.opml.co.uk/files/Publications/A2241-maintains/covid19-synthesis-report-exec-sum-only-final-2.pdf?noredirect=1>

<sup>78</sup> Beazley R, Bischler J and Doyle A. 2021. Towards shock-responsive social protection: lessons from the COVID-19 response in six countries. *Maintains, Oxford Policy Management, Oxford, UK*. Available at: <https://www.opml.co.uk/files/Publications/A2241-maintains/maintains-towards-shock-responsive-social-protection-synthesis-report.pdf?noredirect=1>

<sup>79</sup> Strobeyko A. Disaster Preparedness and Response in International Law: Implications for a Prospective Pandemic Treaty. Policy Brief. Global Health Centre, The Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies. Available at: <https://www.graduateinstitute.ch/sites/internet/files/2021-11/PolicyBrief3.pdf>

<sup>80</sup> Bangkok Principles for the implementation of the health aspects of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030. Available at: [https://www.who.int/hac/events/2016/Bangkok\\_Principles.pdf?ua=1](https://www.who.int/hac/events/2016/Bangkok_Principles.pdf?ua=1)

<sup>81</sup> Aitsi-Selmi A et al. 2015. The Sendai framework for disaster risk reduction: Renewing the global commitment to people's resilience, health, and well-being. *International journal of disaster risk science*, 6(2), pp.164-176. Available at: <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s13753-015-0050-9>

processes, which increase the susceptibility of a community to the impact of hazards”.<sup>82</sup> The understanding of disaster risk in the Sendai Framework takes into account the exposure of persons and assets, and its national-level objectives include increasing “business resilience and protection of livelihoods and productive assets throughout the supply chains”.<sup>83</sup> This element speaks to the call for principal social and economic actors, including employers organisations, worker representatives, and the investment community to be integrated into the new global health security architecture through a pandemic treaty to minimise future pandemic risks.<sup>84</sup>

A financial mechanism with an institutional link to a pandemic treaty, for instance through a proposed financial intermediary fund hosted by the World Bank, could provide supplementary financing to strengthen social safety nets and social protection systems in lower income economies. With clear triggers, the financial mechanism could allow rapid disbursement of contingency financing to support social protection during pandemic response to promote adherence to public health measures.<sup>85</sup> While it does not apply to pandemics, the scope of provisions contained in international instruments like the Nuclear Accidents Convention provide insights into how a mutual assistance provision could be framed in the context of pandemic preparedness and response.<sup>86</sup>

### **c) International coordination and policy harmonisation**

COVID-19 has highlighted the dramatic effects of health measures on many other sectors, such as transport and tourism, with implications on issues like international cooperation on border management, travel restrictions, and protocols on international mobility. It has highlighted the need for international coordination over cross-cutting issues to develop harmonised risk management measures with public health and epidemiological considerations at the centre, balanced against other economic considerations. Mechanisms like the Global Tourism Crisis Committee and the ICAO Council’s Aviation Recovery Task Force (CART) have been convened during the pandemic to coordinate efforts.

Going forward, the international community could review and better define network governance models that incorporate the World Health Organization and the International Health Regulations with other legal regimes and institutions, for instance through inter-agency platforms on areas implicated in health measures to promote dynamic and regular dialogue for mutual learning, consultation and comparison of national risk assessments.<sup>87</sup> The current response has shown the importance of multisectoral and multistakeholder engagement, including with a range of non-state actors such as airlines, shipping companies, and tourism stakeholders. Similarly, more effective international coordination between

---

<sup>82</sup> Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters. Available at: <https://www.unisdr.org/2005/wcdr/intergover/official-doc/L-docs/Hyogo-framework-for-action-english.pdf>

<sup>83</sup> Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015 – 2030. Available at: [https://www.preventionweb.net/files/43291\\_sendaiframeworkfordrren.pdf](https://www.preventionweb.net/files/43291_sendaiframeworkfordrren.pdf)

<sup>84</sup> Donnelly A. Creating a new global treaty to minimise future pandemic risks. *BMJ*, 375. Available at: <https://www.bmj.com/content/375/bmj.n2784>

<sup>85</sup> Bastagli F and Lowe C. 2021. Social protection response to Covid-19 and beyond: emerging evidence and learning for future crises. Available at: <https://odi.org/en/publications/social-protection-response-to-covid-19-and-beyond-emerging-evidence-and-learning-for-future-crises/>

<sup>86</sup> Strobeyko A. Disaster Preparedness and Response in International Law: Implications for a Prospective Pandemic Treaty. Policy Brief. Global Health Centre, The Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies. Available at: <https://www.graduateinstitute.ch/sites/internet/files/2021-11/PolicyBrief3.pdf>

<sup>87</sup> Burci GL and Negri S. 2020. Governing the Global Fight against Pandemics: The WHO, the International Health Regulations, and the Fragmentation of International Law. *NYUJ Int’l L. & Pol.*, 53, p.501. Available at: <https://www.nyuilp.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/NY1204.pdf>



border agencies, custom administrations, transport authorities will be required to promote supply chain continuity during a pandemic.

### 3. CONCLUSION

The Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response has called COVID-19 “*a pandemic of inequalities and inequities*”<sup>88</sup> as inequality has been the determining factor of the differential impacts of COVID-19 on peoples’ lives and livelihoods. The Global Preparedness Monitoring Board has suggested that COVID-19 reflects the fragility of highly interconnected economic and social systems for pandemic preparedness and response and “*there is no health security without social security*”<sup>89</sup>. It is evident that, insofar as it is a health crisis, the pandemic is also a social and economic crisis that depend on many pre-existing structural conditions. In upcoming opportunities to shape a collective approach to prevent, prepare and respond to future health emergencies, policymakers need to take a whole-of-government and a whole-of-society approach to 1) address social and economic consequences of pandemics in view of their disruptive impact on national health systems and outcomes 2) strengthen social safety nets and social protection to promote adherence to non-pharmaceutical public health measures during a pandemic, and 3) review and define network governance models for international coordination and policy harmonisation with other sectors implicated in health measures. Targeted international policies and actions to address inequalities and protect those with the greatest socioeconomic vulnerability are crucial to prevent a global crisis at this scale from happening again.

---

<sup>88</sup> The Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response. 2021. COVID-19: Make it the Last Pandemic. Available at: [https://theindependentpanel.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/COVID-19-Make-it-the-Last-Pandemic\\_final.pdf](https://theindependentpanel.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/COVID-19-Make-it-the-Last-Pandemic_final.pdf)

<sup>89</sup> GPMB. 2020. A world in disorder: Global Preparedness Monitoring Board annual report 2020. Available at: <https://www.gpmb.org/annual-reports/overview/item/2020-a-world-in-disorder>



THE  
**GRADUATE  
INSTITUTE  
GENEVA**

—  
INSTITUT DE HAUTES  
ÉTUDES INTERNATIONALES  
ET DU DÉVELOPPEMENT

GRADUATE INSTITUTE  
OF INTERNATIONAL AND  
DEVELOPMENT STUDIES