

Locked Down and Left Behind: The Impact of COVID-19 on Refugees' Economic Inclusion

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Abstract

Refugees living in low- and middle-income countries are especially vulnerable to the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on data from eight hosting countries before COVID-19, we find that refugees are 60 percent more likely than host populations to be working in highly impacted sectors, such as accommodation and food services, manufacturing, and retail. As a result, COVID-19 will likely lead to widespread loss of livelihoods and an increase in poverty among refugee populations. These impacts will be exacerbated by the fact that COVID-19 has made it more difficult for refugees to access the labor market, social safety nets, and aid provided by humanitarian organizations. Going forward, as refugee-hosting countries face looming economic recession, increasing unemployment, and rising xenophobia, there will be increased skepticism of refugees' economic inclusion. This paper explores these issues and argues expanded economic inclusion is in the best interests of refugees, their host populations, and their host countries. It also provides a series of recommendations for refugee-hosting countries to safeguard refugee livelihoods in the short- and long-term.

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About the “Let Them Work” Initiative

Despite recent advances, most refugees and international forced migrants in low- and middle-income countries face practical and legal barriers to work. This restriction creates a wide range of costs and missed benefits, including lower economic productivity and tax revenues for the host country, as well as lower incomes and living standards for both refugees and host community members on average.

The Center for Global Development (CGD) and Refugees International have embarked on a joint initiative (“Let Them Work”) to make the case for expanded labor market access.¹ Our work focuses on generating research and advocacy products on the costs, benefits, and effects of granting labor market access; the policy solutions and private sector engagement that would make labor market access work well for both refugees and host communities; and the barriers that prevent governments from extending labor market access.

We hope that by bringing more evidence and private sector engagement to policy dialogues, we can help build on existing momentum and make even more progress. For more information about the project, and to discuss further, please get in touch with Helen Dempster: hdempster@cgdev.org.

About the Center for Global Development (CGD)

The Center for Global Development (CGD) works to reduce global poverty and improve lives through innovative economic research that drives better policy and practice by the world’s top decision-makers.

About Refugees International

Refugees International advocates for lifesaving assistance, human rights, and protection for displaced people and promotes solutions to displacement crises. Refugees International does not accept any government or United Nations (UN) funding, ensuring the independence and credibility of their work.

About the International Rescue Committee (IRC)

The International Rescue Committee (IRC) helps people whose lives and livelihoods are shattered by conflict and disaster to survive, recover and regain control of their future. The IRC responds to the world's worst humanitarian crises, helping to restore health, safety, education, economic wellbeing and power to people devastated by conflict and disaster.

¹ For more information, please see <https://www.cgdev.org/page/labor-market-access>

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has spread quickly and widely; the number of cases worldwide has now exceeded ten million.² Many governments responded with an escalating range of policies including widespread business and border closures.³ While some countries are cautiously beginning to emerge from their lockdowns, some form of containment measures are likely to remain in place in many countries for the coming months.

The economic consequences of the pandemic are expected to be dire. The World Bank has estimated COVID-19 will cause the fourth-worst global recession in the past 150 years,⁴ and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has estimated a global contraction of 4.9 percent,⁵ the worst downturn since the Great Depression.⁶ This impact will be realized through a variety of channels. Disruptions to production will affect supply chains and global trade. The majority of businesses, regardless of size, are facing declines in revenue, insolvencies, and job losses. This is leading to mass unemployment,⁷ wage reductions, lower productivity, and reduced remittances.⁸ The International Labour Organization (ILO) has estimated that nearly half of the global workforce is now at risk of losing their livelihoods.⁹

These impacts are compounded for the millions of refugees living in low- and middle-income countries.¹⁰ Prior to COVID-19, this population already faced a wide range of *de jure* and *de facto* barriers to economic inclusion (see box 1), facing challenges distinct from those faced by host populations preventing them from being able to obtain decent work as defined by the ILO¹¹ and earn an income commensurate with their skills. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has estimated that 70 percent of refugees live in countries with restricted or no right to work, 66 percent in countries with restricted or no right to freedom of movement, and 47 percent in countries with restricted or no right to

² “COVID-19 Coronavirus Pandemic,” Worldometer, accessed June 30, 2020. <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/>

³ Anna Petherick, Beatriz Kira, Noam Angrist, Thomas Hale, Toby Phillips, and Samuel Webster, “Variation in Government Responses to COVID-19,” *Blavatnik School Working Paper 032*, May 28, 2020. <https://www.bsg.ox.ac.uk/research/publications/variation-government-responses-covid-19>

⁴ Richard Partington, “World Bank warns Covid-19 pandemic risks dramatic rise in poverty,” *The Guardian*, June 8, 2020.

<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2020/jun/08/world-bank-warns-covid-19-pandemic-risks-dramatic-rise-in-poverty>
⁵ June 2020 IMF estimates.

⁶ “World Economic Outlook: A Crisis like No Other, An Uncertain Recovery,” *International Monetary Fund*, June, 2020.

<https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/WEO/Issues/2020/06/24/WEOUpdateJune2020>, and Larry Elliot, “Great Lockdown’ to rival Great Depression with 2% hit to global economy, says IMF,” *The Guardian*, April 14, 2020.

<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2020/apr/14/great-lockdown-coronavirus-to-rival-great-depression-with-3-hit-to-global-economy-says-imf>

⁷ Dominic Rushe and Michael Sainato, “US unemployment rises 6.6m in a week as coronavirus takes its toll,” *The Guardian*, April 9, 2020. <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2020/apr/09/us-unemployment-rises-coronavirus>

⁸ World Bank, “World Bank Predicts Sharpest Decline of Remittances in Recent History,” *World Bank Press Release*, April 22, 2020. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2020/04/22/world-bank-predicts-sharpest-decline-of-remittances-in-recent-history> and UNHCR, “Global Trends Report,” June 2019. <https://www.unhcr.org/globaltrends2019/>

⁹ International Labour Organization (ILO), “ILO: As job losses escalate, nearly half of global workforce at risk of losing livelihoods,” April 29, 2020. https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_743036/lang-en/index.htm

¹⁰ Throughout this paper, we will use the term “refugees” to refer to recognized international refugees, asylum-seekers, and others in refugee-like situations, such as Venezuelans throughout Latin America, who are not recognized as refugees by their host governments. It does not include internally displaced persons (IDPs).

¹¹ “Decent work” is defined by the ILO as involving “opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organize and participate in the decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men.”

bank accounts.¹² Partly as a result of these restrictions, most refugees work in the informal economy and in sectors that the ILO has deemed “highly impacted” by the pandemic. COVID-19 is therefore likely to lead to widespread loss of livelihoods and an increase in poverty among this population.

For refugees, COVID-19 is a health crisis, a socio-economic crisis, and a protection crisis.¹³ While the pandemic will affect refugees differently depending on their location, it will impact their access to additional sources of income, like aid. In addition, refugees’ invisibility to social safety nets, along with rising xenophobia, will only serve to increase their economic precarity in the face of COVID-19. Increasingly inward-looking policymaking, driven by nationalism and coupled with rising unemployment resulting from the potential global economic recession, will make it more difficult to argue for expanded economic inclusion for refugees in low- and middle-income countries. Before the pandemic, efforts to facilitate the economic inclusion of refugees were progressing, albeit slowly. The effects of COVID-19 threaten the progress achieved so far.

Nevertheless, COVID-19 has shown that efforts to expand economic inclusion for refugees are more relevant than ever. Facilitating greater economic inclusion will enable refugees to enter the labor market and provide for their own socio-economic needs. It will also help low- and middle-income refugee-hosting countries expand labor markets by including “essential workers” (such as doctors, nurses, caregivers, scientists, and cleaners), and stimulate the post-COVID-19 economic recovery. The pandemic’s spread has shown that leaving refugees and other marginalized groups behind only serves to exacerbate the situation.

This policy paper, part of the “Let Them Work” initiative, aims to understand the economic impacts of the pandemic on refugees in low- and middle-income hosting countries. It gathers available evidence that shows the disproportionate effect of the crisis on refugees, both in terms of effects on employment and wider socio-economic outcomes. It also provides recommendations to both refugee-hosting country governments and donors as to how to ensure and extend economic inclusion for refugees, both in the short- and long-term, and improving economic outcomes, combating xenophobia, and building an inclusive labor market to support economic recovery when it is needed most.

Box 1. What is economic inclusion?

We define economic inclusion as the achievement of decent work and income commensurate with one’s skills. To create the conditions necessary for economic inclusion, a wide range of barriers that refugees typically face—including legal, administrative, practical, discriminatory, and social barriers—must be removed and/or lowered. These include the inability to obtain proper identification including work permits

¹² UNHCR, “Livelihoods and Economic Inclusion,” retrieved June 12, 2020. <https://www.unhcr.org/livelihoods.html>

¹³ António Guterres, “The COVID-19 crisis is an opportunity to reimagine human mobility,” *United Nations*, June 3, 2020. <https://www.un.org/en/coronavirus/covid-19-crisis-opportunity-reimagine-human-mobility>

or business licenses, restricted freedom of movement, difficulty accessing financial services including social safety nets, a lack of job opportunities, unsafe working conditions, poor access to childcare, and more. Some of these barriers apply to other vulnerable populations as well, but the challenges are typically most acute for refugees.

Economic inclusion is a necessary step towards greater long-term integration for refugees in their host communities and is acknowledged in the 1951 Refugee Convention. It should not be mistaken as an alternative to returns. In fact, our definition of economic inclusion does not conflict with safe and voluntary returns whenever possible. There have been a number of cases throughout history where refugees were included in the economy and still chose to return home in large numbers when it was safe to do so.¹⁴ There is some evidence that greater economic inclusion can allow refugees to accumulate the assets needed to undertake a return journey and successfully reestablish themselves in their home country, thus improving the chances of sustainable return.¹⁵

Impacts of COVID-19 Across Major Refugee-Hosting Countries

There are currently 79.5 million forcibly displaced people worldwide, including 45.7 million internally displaced people (IDPs), 26 million refugees, and 4.2 million asylum-seekers.¹⁶ In addition, there are millions of people not recognized in these categories, such as the 3.6 million displaced Venezuelans throughout the world. This creates an immense group of people who fall under the mandates of the UNHCR and UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). According to the 2019 Global Trends Report, 73 percent of refugees live in neighboring countries, and 85 percent in low- and middle-income countries (herein also referred to as Emerging Markets and Developing Economies, EMDEs). 60 percent of refugees live in urban areas, while the remainder live in camp-like settings.¹⁷ These refugee-hosting countries, like the rest of the world, are vulnerable to the health and socio-economic impact of COVID-19, with the added challenge and responsibility to also protect the refugee populations they host.

COVID-19, and the measures used to prevent or address the pandemic, have not affected all countries equally.¹⁸ While the majority of deaths attributable to the virus have occurred in

¹⁴ Niels Harild, Asger Christensen, and Roger Zetter, *Sustainable refugee return: Triggers, constraints, and lessons on addressing the development challenges of forced displacement* (Washington DC: World Bank, 2015). <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/542611468188337350/pdf/99618-WP-PUBLIC-Box393206B-Sustainable-Refugee-Return-15Sept-WEB-PUBLIC.pdf>

¹⁵ Richard Black, Khaled Koser, and Karen Munk, *Understanding voluntary return* (Sussex: Sussex Centre for Migration Research, 2004). <https://web.archive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110220155644/http://rds.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs04/rdsolr5004.pdf> and Chris Dolan, “Repatriation from South Africa to Mozambique – Undermining Durable Solutions?” in *The end of the refugee cycle? Refugee repatriation and reconstruction*, edited by Richard Black and Khaled Koser (Oxford: Bergahan Books, 1999). <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt9qcp3z>.

¹⁶ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), “Figures at a Glance,” <https://www.unhcr.org/uk/figures-at-a-glance.html>

¹⁷ Cristiano D’Orsi, “Refugee camps versus urban refugees: what’s been said – and done,” *The Conversation*, November 3, 2019. <https://theconversation.com/refugee-camps-versus-urban-refugees-whats-been-said-and-done-126069#:~:text=About%2017.5%20million%20refugees%20worldwide,are%20living%20in%20urban%20areas.>

¹⁸ UNHCR, “Coronavirus outbreak,” retrieved June 12, 2020. <https://www.unhcr.org/uk/coronavirus-covid-19.html>

high-income countries, the death toll in low- and middle-income countries is high and rising. On May 13, all African countries confirmed infections, and on June 13, Brazil became the country with the second highest death toll (between the United States and United Kingdom).¹⁹ Yet all countries are facing a severe economic crisis.

The World Bank has predicted a 3.6 percent decline in global incomes per capita,²⁰ causing the first increase in global poverty since 1998.²¹ Similarly, the IMF predicts that the negative impact of the crisis on low-income households will revert back the progress made in reducing extreme poverty since the 1990s.²² Economic growth is falling in Africa (1.8 percent), Asia and the Pacific (2.7 percent), and Latin America (11 percent).²³ This decline, alongside the effects of a 6 percent decline in high-income countries,²⁴ is decreasing working hours and earnings, and increasing informality. 68 percent of workers live in countries with recommended or required workplace closures, including nearly all employers and own-account workers in lower-middle income countries. This has led to a 4.5 percent drop in working hours, equivalent to approximately 130 million full-time jobs, estimated to increase to 10.5 percent in the second quarter.²⁵ These impacts are projected to be magnified for refugees and those living in conflict areas, where, under current conditions, curfews and restrictions on movement “may cause more suffering than the disease itself,” according to Kurt Tjossem, regional vice president for East Africa at the IRC.²⁶ For example, the World Food Program (WFP) is estimating these job closures, combined with declining agricultural output, disrupted supply chains, and reduced aid,²⁷ will likely lead to 265 million more people facing acute food shortages by the end of 2020.²⁸

Undoubtedly, COVID-19 will pose many challenges both in the short and long-term for all low- and middle-income countries. Nevertheless, these challenges are also compounded for low- and middle-income refugee-hosting countries (see figure 1). In order to examine the macroeconomic effects of COVID-19 on countries that host large numbers of refugees, we

¹⁹ Al Jazeera, “Brazil’s coronavirus death toll now world’s second highest,” *Al Jazeera*, June 13, 2020.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/06/brazil-coronavirus-death-toll-world-highest-200613050629869.html>

²⁰ Partington, “World Bank warns Covid-19 pandemic risks dramatic rise in poverty.”

²¹ Daniel Gerszon Mahler, Christop Lakner, R. Andres Castaneda Aguilar, and Haoyu Wu, “The impact of COVID-19 (Coronavirus) on global poverty: Why Sub-Saharan Africa might be the region hardest hit,” *World Bank Blog*, April 20, 2020.

<https://blogs.worldbank.org/opendata/impact-covid-19-coronavirus-global-poverty-why-sub-saharan-africa-might-be-region-hardest>

²² International Monetary Fund (IMF), “World Economic Outlook: A Crisis like No Other, An Uncertain Recovery,” June, 2020. <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/WEO/Issues/2020/06/24/WEOUpdateJune2020>

²³ David Evans and Amina Mendez Acosta, “The Economic Impact of COVID-19 around the World: Projections of Economic Growth Falling Further, Food Insecurity, and A Round-Up of Other Recent Analysis,” *Center for Global Development (CGD) Blog*, May 4, 2020. <https://www.cgdev.org/blog/economic-impact-covid-19-around-world-projections-economic-growth-falling-further-food#evans-asia-growth>

²⁴ Mahler et al, “The impact of COVID-19 (Coronavirus) on global poverty.”

²⁵ For instance, the Government of Kenya restricted all activities with the exclusion of those that would put at risk the population, like health, water, security services and the provision of food. See Tracy Mutinda, “List of sectors classified as providing essential services,” *The Star*, March 25, 2020. <https://www.the-star.co.ke/business/kenya/2020-03-25-list-of-sectors-classified-as-providing-essential-services/>

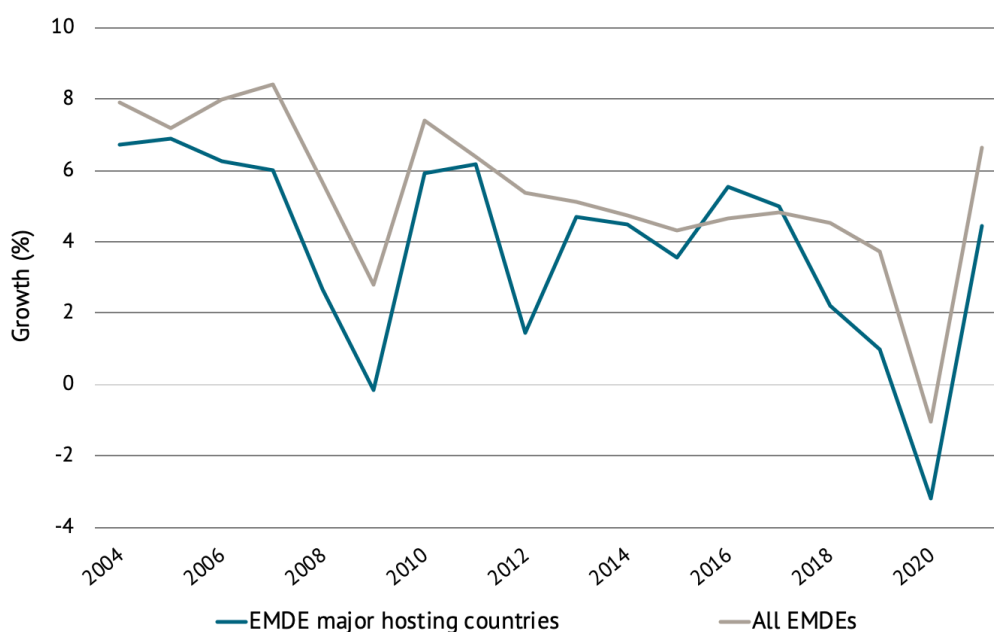
²⁶ Abdi Latif Dahir, “‘Instead of Coronavirus, the Hunger Will Kill Us.’ A Global Food Crisis Looms,” *The New York Times*, April 22, 2020. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/22/world/africa/coronavirus-hunger-crisis.html>

²⁷ In April, the WFP announced a 30 percent reduction in food rations in Uganda due to a decrease in available funding. See Deborah Leter and Gatwal Gatkuoth, “Fears in Uganda over coronavirus outbreak in refugee settlements,” *Al Jazeera*, April 8, 2020. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/04/fears-uganda-coronavirus-outbreak-refugee-settlements-200406145749564.html>

²⁸ Dahir, “‘Instead of Coronavirus, the Hunger Will Kill Us.’”

used the projected growth rates from the April 2020 World Economic Outlook (WEO) from the International Monetary Fund (IMF).²⁹ Our sample consists of the 15 EMDEs³⁰ hosting the most refugees, asylum-seekers, displaced Venezuelans abroad, and other people under UNHCR’s mandate who have travelled over national borders (“refugees”), compared with other EMDEs and the world.³¹ This ‘major refugee-hosting country’ sample covers 59 percent of the world’s refugee population and has more than five times the number of refugees as a percent of the total population (1.6 percent) as the global average. We examine the change of the projected growth rate between 2019 and 2020.³² This provides a rough estimate of the macroeconomic effect of COVID-19 accounting for the differences in growth rates beforehand.

Figure 1. Impact of COVID-19 on real gross domestic product (GDP) growth in emerging market and developing economies (EMDEs), both those hosting refugees and those not



Source: IMF World Economic and Financial Surveys World Economic Outlook Database (WEO) April 2020.³³

Notes: The authors used IMF’s average growth estimates for Emerging Market and Developing Economies (EMDEs). For major refugee-hosting countries, the author calculated weighted averages of the countries’ GDP in current prices, following the IMF methodology for aggregation.

²⁹ An updated WEO was released in June 2020, but as of the publication date, the data with each country’s projections which are necessary for our purposes had not been released.

³⁰ We utilized the IMF’s classification on EMDEs that can be found here: <https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2020/01/weodata/groups.htm>

³¹ We classified major low- and middle-income refugee-hosting countries as the top fifteen low- and middle-income economies that host refugees according to UNHCR 2019 data. These include Turkey, Colombia, Pakistan, Uganda, Sudan, Iran, Lebanon, Peru, Bangladesh, Jordan, Ethiopia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ecuador, Kenya, and Chile, in order of refugee population.

³² Justin Sandefur and Arvind Subramanian, *The IMF’s Growth Forecasts for Poor Countries Don’t Match Its COVID Narrative*, Center for Global Development (CGD) Working Paper No. 533 (Washington DC: CGD, 2020).

<https://www.cgdev.org/sites/default/files/imfs-growth-forecasts-poor-countries-dont-match-its-covid-narrative.pdf>

³³ International Monetary Fund (IMF), “World Economic Outlook (WEO) Database,” <https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2020/01/weodata/index.aspx>

Overall, major hosting countries were growing slower than other low- and middle- income countries before the pandemic and are projected to experience almost equal declines in growth in 2020. In 2019, major hosting countries grew at 1.0 percent, compared to 3.7 for EMDEs overall. For 2020, the IMF projected growth of -3.2 percent for major hosting countries in 2020, relative to -1.0 percent for all EMDEs, in the April 2020 WEO. The decline in growth from 2019 to 2020, much of which can be attributed to the impacts of COVID-19, is therefore slightly less severe in major hosting countries than in all EMDEs (4.2 percentage points relative to 4.7 percentage points respectively, table 1). Nevertheless, because refugee-hosting countries started at a lower growth rate relative to EMDEs, their growth, on average, will be lower. The projected decline in growth varies across major refugee-hosting countries, from 6.7 percentage points in Peru to 1.4 percentage points in Uganda. Iran is the only major refugee-hosting nation projected to experience faster growth, with a 1.6 percentage point gain (see table 1).

The IMF projects a significant recovery in 2021, and the average projected changes between 2020 and 2021 for major-hosting EMDEs are the same as for all EMDEs. EMDEs are projected to grow at 6.6 percent and major-hosting EMDEs at 4.4 percent in 2021, representing 7.6 percentage point year over year recoveries for both groups. However, the IMF revised its projections downwards by 0.7 percentage points for all EMDEs in the June 2020 forecast, indicating a slower global economic recovery.³⁴ Such recovery remains contingent on the implementation of effective policies, the containment of the pandemic, the extent of supply chain disruptions, and other factors.

Table 1. Understanding the impact of COVID-19 on major low- and middle-income refugee-hosting countries

Major low- and middle- income refugee-hosting countries	Number of refugees hosted	Refugees hosted (percent of population)	COVID-19 cases per 1,000 people (as of June 23)	GDP growth (projected WEO April 2019, percentage points)		
				2019	2020	Difference
<i>World</i>	28,729,928	0.43	1.16	2.9	-3.0	-5.9
<i>All EMDEs</i>	23,321,686	0.43	0.75	3.7	-1.0	-4.7
<i>Top 15 EMDE refugee-hosting countries</i>	16,671,477	1.66	1.30	1.0	-3.2	-4.2
Turkey	3,907,788	4.80	2.24	0.9	-5.0	-5.9
Colombia	1,780,964	3.54	1.40	3.3	-2.4	-5.7

³⁴ IMF, "World Economic Outlook, April 2020." and "World Economic Outlook Update, June 2020."

Pakistan	1,428,122	0.71	0.84	3.3	-1.5	-4.8
Uganda	1,381,118	3.25	0.02	4.9	3.5	-1.4
Sudan	1,074,721	2.54	0.20	-2.5	-7.2	-4.7
Iran	979,468	1.20	2.47	-7.6	-6.0	+1.6
Lebanon	931,124	13.64	0.24	-6.5	-12.0	-5.5
Peru	867,770	2.75	7.73	2.2	-4.5	-6.7
Bangladesh	854,813	0.57	0.70	7.9	2.0	-5.9
Jordan	745,185	7.47	0.10	2.0	-3.7	-5.7
Ethiopia	734,799	0.65	0.04	9.0	3.2	-5.8
Democratic Republic of the Congo	526,925	0.59	0.07	4.4	-2.2	-6.6
Ecuador	503,609	2.95	2.87	0.1	-6.3	-6.3
Kenya	489,725	0.93	0.09	5.6	1.0	-4.6
Chile	465,346	2.48	12.92	1.1	-4.5	-5.6

Notes: Population (World Bank Data, Population in 2018: total³⁵); COVID-19 cases as of June 23, 2020 (The European Centre for Disease Control³⁶); Number of refugees hosted (UNHCR Refugee data finder³⁷) where “refugees” includes the UNHCR categories of “Refugees,” “Asylum Seekers,” “Venezuelans displaced abroad,” and “others,” discounting those with the same country of origin to their country of destination. Palestinians under the mandate of the UNRWA are not included.; and Decline in GDP growth 2019-2020 (International Monetary Fund (IMF) World Economic and Financial Surveys World Economic Outlook Database (WEO) 2020³⁸). Change in GDP growth is calculated as the projected 2019 growth rate subtracted from the 2020 estimated growth rate; a negative rate means growth is lower in 2020 than 2019. Aggregate growth rates were calculated using the IMF method of weighting by GDP PPP in current prices.

It is important to note these are projections and could differ substantially from the realized effects. For instance, Sandefur and Subramanian question why the projected declines in growth are lower in developing countries than advanced economies, given comparable mitigation measures and external shocks in trade and commodities.³⁹ While these points suggest caution in interpreting the results, there is no indication the methodology for major refugee-hosting countries differed from other EMDEs. In the June 2020 WEO Update, projections were lowered by 1.9 and 2.0 percentage points for global and EMDE growth

³⁵ World Bank, “Population, total,” <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL>

³⁶ The European Centre for Disease Control, “Download today’s data on the geographic distribution of COVID-19 cases worldwide,” <https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/publications-data/download-todays-data-geographic-distribution-covid-19-cases-worldwide>

³⁷ United countries High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), “Refugee data finder,” <https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/download/?url=xK8Q>.

³⁸ IMF, “World Economic Outlook (WEO) Database.”

³⁹ Sandefur and Subramanian, *The IMF’s Growth Forecasts*.

respectively. However, country-level projections were not available at the time of publication to update the major hosting countries specifically. Overall, the projections suggest that refugees are in countries which are growing slower and are hit almost as hard by COVID-19 on the macroeconomic level as other EMDEs.

Impacts of COVID-19 on Refugee Livelihoods within Hosting Countries

Refugees often face barriers to economic inclusion. Most refugees hosted in low- and middle- income countries face *de jure* restrictions (whereby refugees are not afforded the same rights in law as citizens) and/or *de facto* barriers (whereby the law says refugees can work, but there are practical barriers that prevent them from exercising such rights) that prevent their full economic inclusion.⁴⁰ Refugees may be limited to specific sectors, as in Jordan,⁴¹ or work permits may rarely be issued in practice, as in Kenya and Turkey.⁴² In countries like Peru or Colombia, some displaced Venezuelans have work permits, but in practice they struggle to formalize their employment.⁴³ Few countries permit refugees to work in the public sector. Other restrictions affect freedom of movement, a necessary component of refugees' economic inclusion. In countries such as Ethiopia⁴⁴ and Chad,⁴⁵ refugees are confined to camps, and therefore do not have the ability to fully integrate.

The economic effects of COVID-19 are therefore expected to have a disproportionate effect on refugees. The limited empirical evidence on this point supports this hypothesis. In Jordan, 35 percent of Syrian refugees who were employed before COVID-19 have lost their jobs, compared to 17 percent of Jordanian citizens.⁴⁶ In Lebanon, 60 percent of Syrians have been permanently laid off due to COVID-19, relative to 39 percent of Lebanese citizens.⁴⁷ The data, however, is so far limited from most countries and regions.

⁴⁰ Roger Zetter and Héloïse Ruandel, *Refugees' Right to Work and Access to Labor Markets - an Assessment, Part II: Country Cases* (Washington DC: KNOMAD, 2016). <https://www.knomad.org/publication/refugees-right-work-and-access-labor-markets-assessment-country-case-studies-part-2>

⁴¹ Bahaa Al Deen Al Nawas, "Experts ponder impact of revised work permit fees," *The Jordan Times*, October 7, 2019. <https://www.jordantimes.com/news/local/experts-ponder-impact-revised-work-permit-fees>. Thankfully, recent government announcements suggest that Syrian refugees may soon be permitted to work in all sectors. See <https://webcast.ec.europa.eu/regional-response-and-recovery-in-the-face-of-coronavirus>

⁴² Izza Leghtas, *Insecure Future: Deportations and Lack of Legal Work for Refugees in Turkey* (Washington DC: Refugees International, September 2019). <https://www.refugeesinternational.org/reports/2019/9/18/insecure-future-deportations-and-lack-of-legal-work-for-refugees-in-turkey>

⁴³ Guerrero Ble et al., *From Displacement to Development: Peru*, and Martha Guerrero Ble, Izza Leghtas, Daphne Payanotatos, and Jimmy Graham, *From Displacement to Development: How Colombia Can Transform Venezuelan Displacement into Shared Growth* (Washington DC: CGD and Refugees International, forthcoming).

⁴⁴ Nita Bhalla, "Ethiopia allows almost 1 million refugees to leave camps and work," *Reuters*, January 17, 2019. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ethiopia-refugees-rights/ethiopia-allows-almost-1-million-refugees-to-leave-camps-and-work-idUSKCN1PB2QH>

⁴⁵ Carol Watson, Emmanuel Dnalbaye, and Blandine Nan-guer, "Refugee and Host Communities in Chad: Dynamics of Economic and Social Inclusion," *World Bank*, May 2018. <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/734861563057353544/pdf/Refugee-and-Host-Communities-in-Chad-Dynamics-of-Economic-and-Social-Inclusion-Report-of-Qualitative-Research-Findings.pdf>

⁴⁶ ILO, "Impact of COVID-19 on Workers in Jordan: A Rapid Assessment." <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/75961>

⁴⁷ Tewodros Aragie Kebede, Svein Erik Stave, and Maha Kattaa, "Facing Multiple Crises: Rapid assessment of the impact of COVID-19 on vulnerable workers and small-scale enterprises in Lebanon," May 2020. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---arabstates/---ro-beirut/documents/publication/wcms_747070.pdf

Highly impacted sectors

In this section, we aim to compare the potential economic impact of COVID-19 on refugees versus host populations based on their sectors of employment across a wide geographic range. We calculate and compile estimates from eight large EMDE refugee-hosting countries with available representative data from 2015-2019 where we could extract comparable statistics: Colombia, Ethiopia, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Peru, Turkey, and Uganda. We analyzed individual-level data in all cases except Turkey, where we rely on the analysis by Pinedo Caro (2020) for refugees and the ILO for host populations;⁴⁸ the details of each dataset are in Appendix 1. This represents the largest quantitative cross-country comparison of refugees to our knowledge—10.64 million displaced people, or 37 percent of the total population.

To gauge the impact of COVID-19, we group sectors of employment by the projected impact of COVID-19 according to the third edition of the ILO Monitor: *COVID-19 and the World of Work*.⁴⁹ Sectors are analyzed based on real-time data from business data and surveys, including IHS Markit Global Business Outlook and Moody's Analytics.⁵⁰ In total, each ISIC Rev-4 industry code⁵¹ is assigned to one of five categories.

The most highly impacted sectors, according to their analysis, are manufacturing, accommodation and food services, wholesale and retail trade, and real estate and business activities.⁵² These sectors encompassed approximately 436 million enterprises and 30 percent of GDP worldwide before COVID-19. Many of these are small struggling enterprises themselves, without access to credit, other assets, or government stimulus packages, and will likely be unable to bounce back from COVID-19 related closures.

It is important to note that these are global projections, and the impacts are likely to vary from country to country. The projections are also at the sector level, and the impact on refugees might be different. In some instances, refugees may be in isolated locations that are relatively less affected. In other cases, refugees may be disproportionately affected even if the industry is less affected as a whole.

⁴⁸ Luis Pinedo Caro, *Syrian Refugees in the Turkish Labour Market* (Ankara: ILO Turkey, 2020). https://www.ilo.org/ankara/publications/WCMS_738602/lang-en/index.htm, and ILO, "ILOSTAT database," <https://ilostat.ilo.org/data/>

⁴⁹ Sectors are analyzed based on global real-time data from business data and surveys, including IHS Markit Global Business Outlook and Moody's Analytics. For more on the methodology used to calculate impact by sector, see the Technical Appendix 3 of ILO, "ILO Monitor: COVID-19 and the world of work. 3rd edition," *ILO Briefing Note*, April 29, 2020. https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/coronavirus/impacts-and-responses/WCMS_743146/lang-en/index.htm

⁵⁰ For more on the methodology used to calculate impact by sector, see the Technical Appendix 3 here: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/briefingnote/wcms_740877.pdf

⁵¹ ISIC Rev. 4 is a standard classification of economic activities arranged so that entities can be classified according to the activity they carry out. For more information, please see United countries Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) Population Division, *International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities: Revision 4* (New York: UN, 2008). https://unstats.un.org/unsd/publication/seriesM/seriesm_4rev4e.pdf

⁵² Based on ILO's classifications of ISIC Rev. 4 sectors, assessing sectors on real-time economic and financial data. For more information, view Annex 3 of this report: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/briefingnote/wcms_740877.pdf

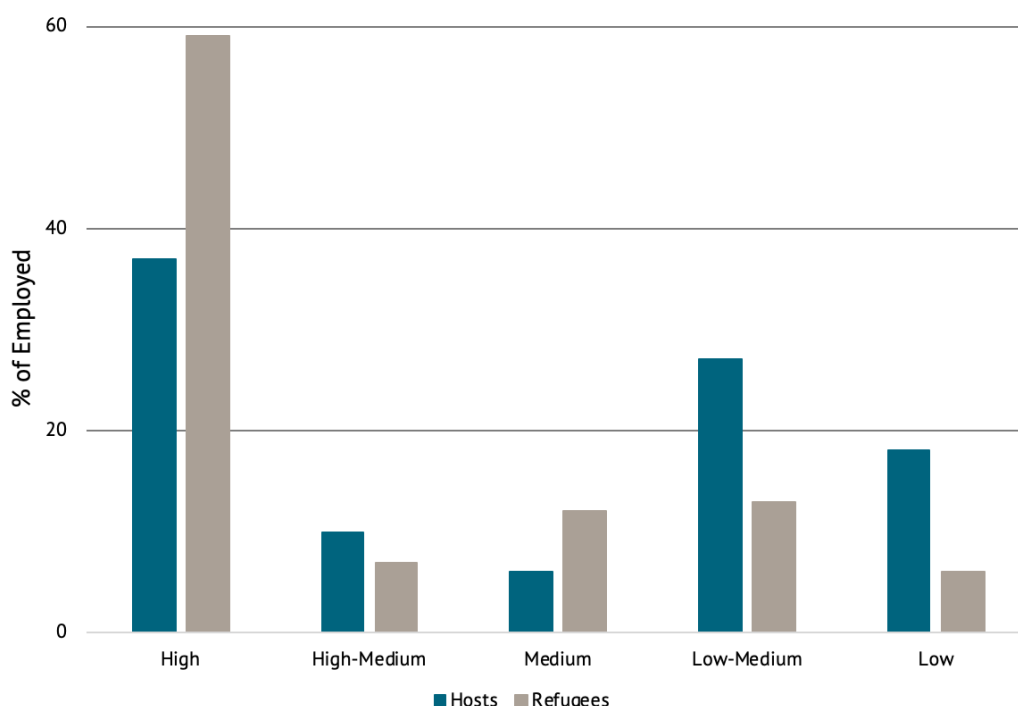
Table 2. Impact of COVID-19 by sector

Impact	Industry
High	Accommodation and food services
High	Manufacturing
High	Real estate; business and administrative activities
High	Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles
High-medium	Entertainment and other services
High-medium	Transport, storage, comms
Medium	Construction
Medium	Financial and insurance activities
Medium	Mining and quarrying
Low-medium	Agriculture; forestry and fishing
Low	Education
Low	Human health and social work activities
Low	Public administration and defense
Low	Utilities

Source: ILO, “ILO Monitor: COVID-19 and the world of work. 3rd edition,” *ILO Briefing Note*, April 29, 2020. https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/coronavirus/impacts-and-responses/WCMS_743146/lang-en/index.htm

Overall, our results show that before COVID-19, refugees were 60 percent more likely to be working in the sectors highly impacted by COVID-19 and the economic downturn. 60 percent of employed refugees work in highly impacted sectors, relative to 37 percent of the populations in host countries. Meanwhile only 7 percent of refugees work in the lowest impacted sectors, like education and public administration, compared to 19 percent of hosts. The percentages of the working age population that are employed vary significantly across countries and are listed in Appendix 2. Appendix 2 also includes the top three sectors for employment within each country, which also differ across countries and refugee status.

Figure 2. Projected impact of COVID-19 by sector of employment among refugees and host populations in Colombia, Ethiopia, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Peru, Turkey, and Uganda



Notes: Observations are pooled representative samples of all employed and self-employed workers, formal and informal, ages 15 and older over eight countries. To aggregate across countries, each country-refugee status is weighted by its population, so that the measures are for the average refugee and average host. The results do not change significantly when hosts are weighted by the country's refugee population to estimate the gap for the average refugee.

Figure 3 breaks down the percentage of employment in highly impacted sectors across each country in the sample. In all eight countries where we have estimates, more refugees work in the most highly impacted sectors, although for Lebanon and Iraq this gap is within the sampling margin of error.⁵³ Turkey has the largest gap, with 74 percent of refugees in highly impacted sectors, compared to 46 percent of hosts. 48 percent of refugees in Turkey are employed in manufacturing (with the majority in textiles), while 24 percent work in retail and services.⁵⁴

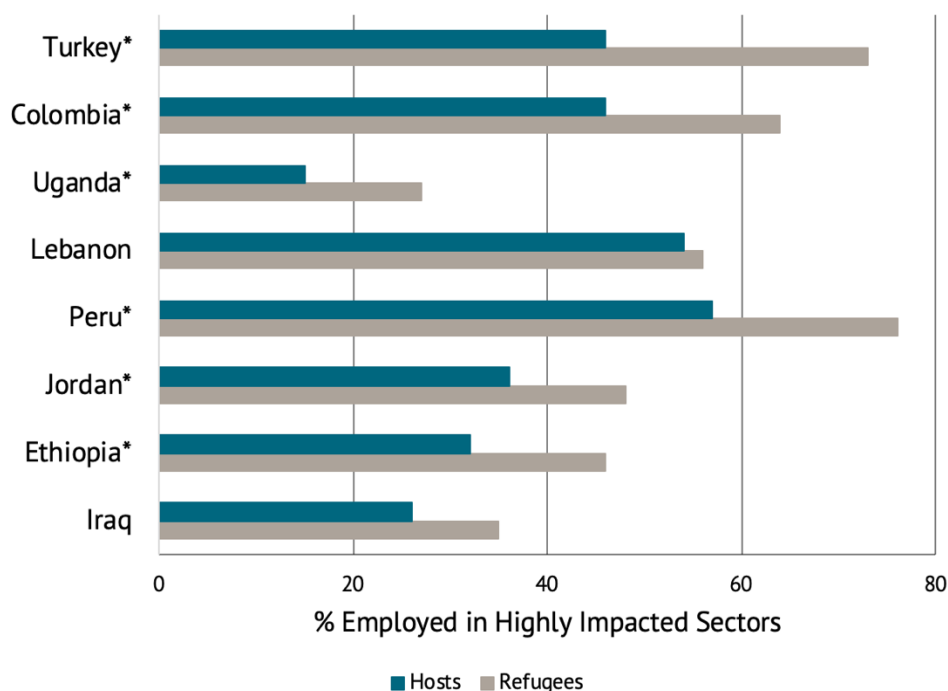
The concentration of refugees in highly impacted sectors is sometimes a result of limited economic inclusion or restrictive laws that push refugees to work in specific industries. For instance, Jordan, one of the first countries to implement reforms to expand work opportunities for refugees, left many sectors off limits for Syrian refugees, pushing them to

⁵³ The margin of sampling error describes how close we can reasonably expect a survey result to fall relative to the true population value. Therefore, in Lebanon and Iraq, the margin is large enough to cover the detected effect, giving us little confidence the difference between refugees and hosts is that large within these countries.

⁵⁴ See <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/70508> for an additional labor force survey of refugees in Turkey.

work in manufacturing, agriculture, and hospitality.⁵⁵ In Peru, around 55 percent of Venezuelans work in services, primarily in tourism or restaurants, relative to 7.2 percent of Peruvian citizens.⁵⁶ At the same time, the least affected sectors like education, public administration, health, and agriculture are often unavailable to refugees due to land or citizenship requirements.⁵⁷ Incentive work with non-profits is often the closest equivalent but available on a much smaller scale and ad-hoc basis. Overall, 46 percent of hosts compared to 20 percent of refugees work in these “low” and “low-medium” impacted sectors across our sample.

Figure 3. Percentage of employment in highly impacted sectors among refugees and host populations by country



Notes. The percentage of employed workers ages 15 and older in each country working in the most highly impacted sectors as defined by the ILO: accommodation and food services, manufacturing, real estate, business and administrative activities, wholesale and retail trade, and repair of motor vehicles. Each sample is weighted according to the individual survey design. Countries are ordered by the size of their refugee population. Asterisks indicate the differences between refugees and host populations are statistically significant at the 5 percent level.

⁵⁵ Andrew Baird and Mariel Davis, “5 ways to integrate Syrian refugees into the workforce,” *World Economic Forum*, September 18, 2018. <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2018/09/lessons-from-jordan-5-ways-to-integrate-syrian-refugees-into-the-workforce/>

⁵⁶ Instituto Nacional de Estadística e Informática (INEI), *Condiciones de vida de la población Venezolana que reside en Perú* (Lima: INEI, 2018). <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/70521>; and Ministerio de Trabajo y Promoción del Empleo, *Informe Anual del Empleo en el Perú* (Lima: Ministerio de Trabajo y Promoción del Empleo, 2017). https://cdn.www.gob.pe/uploads/document/file/285846/IAE_2017_14-12-2018_.pdf

⁵⁷ For example, in Uganda, refugees are granted land. But while a progressive policy, it is important to note the land allocated (30x30 feet) is most often not enough for neither household food production nor commercial agriculture as noted in Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), REACH, and UNHCR, “Refugee Access to Livelihoods and Housing, Land, and Property,” May 2019. <https://reliefweb.int/report/uganda/refugee-access-livelihoods-and-housing-land-and-property-kampala-district-may-2019>

While suggestive, it is important to again note that these are projections and that in some countries and some hosting situations, the reality is potentially significantly different from the global trends noted by the ILO. Our estimates also use employment data as old as 2015, and the picture could have shifted since then. However, we believe it is an indicative snapshot across countries for now and look forward further evidence from socio-economic surveys.

Informality

The ILO projects even greater impacts on those within the informal sector. They estimate that “almost 1.6 billion informal economy workers are significantly impacted by lockdown measures and/or working in the hardest-hit sectors”—76 percent of all informal workers.⁵⁸ These workers are projected to see a decline in earnings of 60 percent globally, with low- and lower-middle-income countries experiencing a 82 percent decline. Many informal workers lack job security and access to a pension account, as well as other benefits. Given the large proportions of informal workers in low- and middle-income countries,⁵⁹ relative poverty in these regions is projected to increase by at least 34 percentage points. One respondent from a recent survey of IRC clients in Nairobi, Kenya said:

“I have not paid rent for a month now. I have been working but am now at home. I have no income because we were paid on commission.”

If refugees are unable to achieve economic inclusion, they may be driven to working in the informal sector.⁶⁰ Their informal status means they have less job security and are less protected against job and income loss,⁶¹ and their refugee status often prevents them from accessing government provided health and social safety nets, further increasing their vulnerability. As a displaced Venezuelan recently mentioned in an interview to Refugees International:⁶²

“My sister was working informally as a dispatcher in a casino. But when the quarantine started, she was immediately fired, they did not want to pay her during that time. A lot of Venezuelans are suffering the same fate. As soon as the quarantine started, we all lost our jobs.”

Figure 4 shows the levels of informal employment in the refugee-hosting countries where data exists. Similar to the results seen above, in all five of the countries, refugees are more likely to work in the informal sector. The gap between refugees’ and host populations’

⁵⁸ ILO, “ILO Monitor. 3rd edition.”

⁵⁹ For instance, informality levels reach 85.5 percent in Africa, 68.2 percent in Asia and the Pacific, 68.6 percent in the Middle East, 40 percent in the Americas, and 25.1 percent in Europe and Asia. See ILO, “More than 60 per cent of the world’s employed population are in the informal economy,” *ILO Press Release*, April 30, 2018. https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_627189/lang-en/index.htm

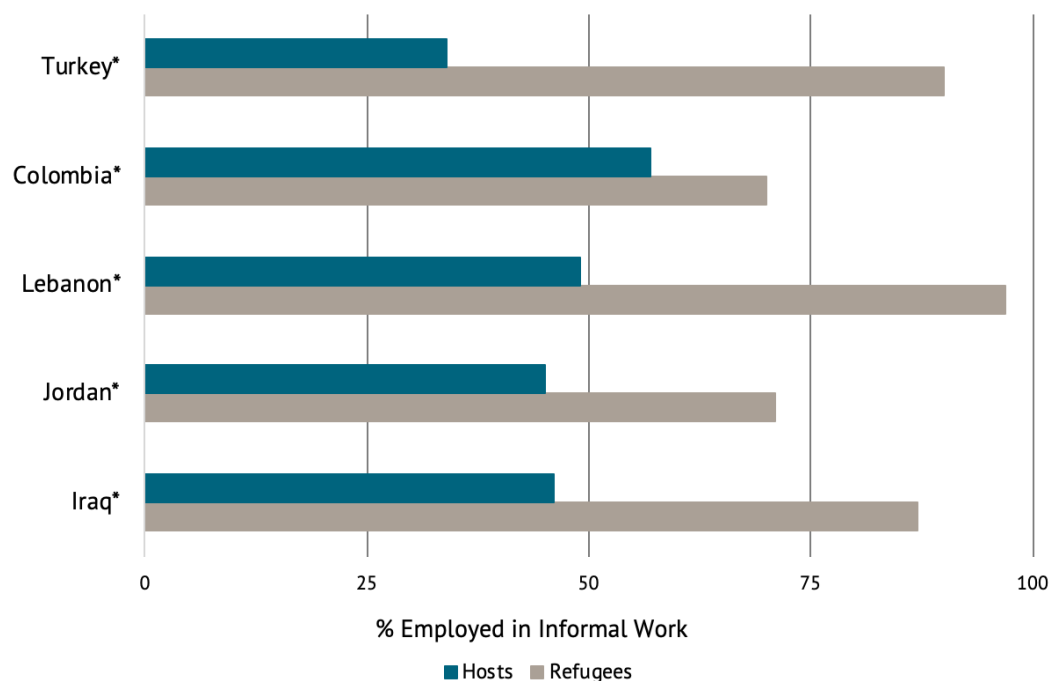
⁶⁰ Michael Clemens, Cindy Huang, and Jimmy Graham, *The Economic and Fiscal Effects of Granting Refugees Formal Labor Market Access (Brief)* (Washington DC: CGD and Tent, 2018). <https://www.cgdev.org/publication/economic-and-fiscal-effects-granting-refugees-formal-labor-market-access-brief>

⁶¹ Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), “Coronavirus,” <http://oecd.org/coronavirus/en/#data>

⁶² Martha Guerrero Ble, Interview with Venezuelan forced migrant in Peru, April 2020.

informality is smallest in Colombia, where more refugees are afforded formal labor market access than in Jordan, Lebanon, or Turkey. As the pandemic is expected to hit informal workers harder, refugees that concentrate mainly in informal work will be disproportionately affected.

Figure 4. Percentage of informal employment among refugees and host populations



Notes: The percentage of employed workers ages 15 and older in each country working in the informal economy where data is available. Each sample is weighted according to the individual survey design. Asterisks indicate the differences between refugees and hosts are statistically significant at the 5 percent level.

Gender

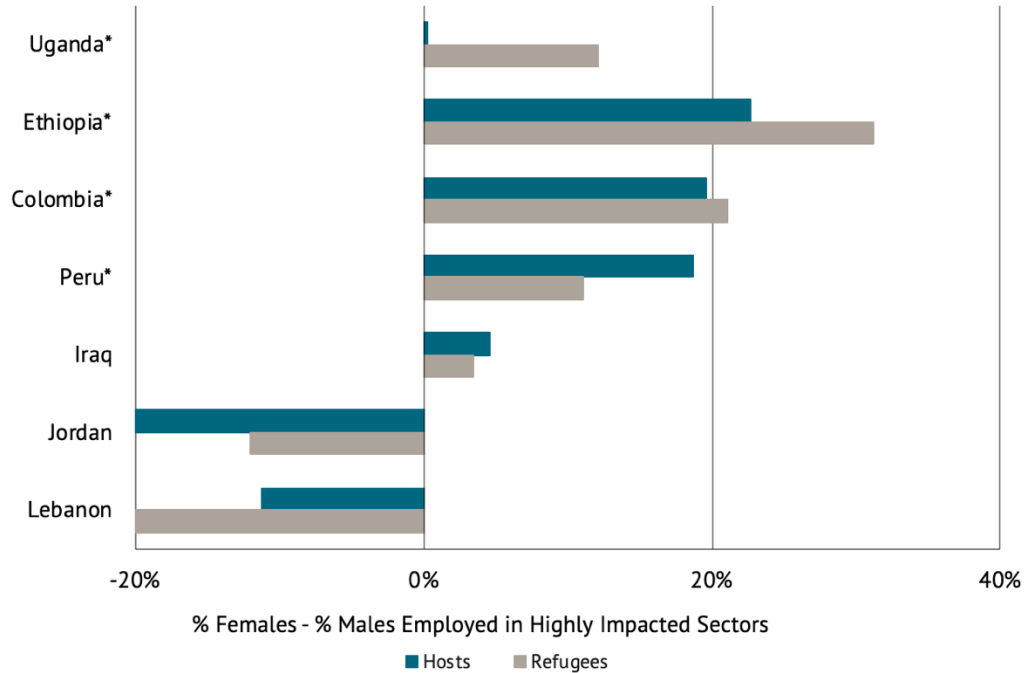
Women are over-represented in the informal economy at large, and within this, over-represented in highly impacted sectors. The ILO estimates that 42 percent of women are working in highly impacted sectors, compared to 32 percent of men.⁶³ This trend can be seen in countries around the world, from high-income countries (51 percent versus 47 percent) to low-income (28 percent versus 17 percent).

As Figure 5 shows, with data broken down by gender, women refugee workers are more likely than male refugees to work in highly impacted sectors in four of the seven refugee-hosting countries: Colombia, Ethiopia, Uganda, and Peru. In Jordan and Lebanon, however, men are more likely to be in the highly impacted sectors, though the difference is within the sampling margin of error. Given lower employment of women in the Middle East as well,

⁶³ ILO, “ILO Monitor. 3rd edition.”

female workers overall in our sample are likely to work in highly impacted sectors, but the story does vary across countries.

Figure 5. Projected impact of COVID-19 by gender among refugees and host populations



Notes: Each bar represents the difference in the proportion of employed women and men in highly impacted sectors where data is available. A positive value indicates that females are more likely to work in highly impacted sectors, while a negative value indicates that men are more likely to work in highly impacted sectors. Countries are grouped by region to highlight patterns. Asterisks indicate the difference between refugee females and males is statistically significant at the 5 percent level.

Refugee women face a double disadvantage in the labor market, due to their gender, and their refugee status. A recent study by the IRC and Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security looked at the impact of closing the employment and wage gap in six refugee-hosting countries: Germany, Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, Uganda, and the United States.⁶⁴ They found that across all countries, refugee women were less likely to be engaged in paid work, earned less, and were more greatly discriminated against, than men and women of their host country. They found that closing such gaps in these countries could boost their GDP by US\$53 billion. Similar issues can be observed in other refugee-hosting countries around the world. For example, according to Peruvian labor market data from August to October of 2019, after controlling for other characteristics, the average Venezuelan displaced

⁶⁴ Raiyan Kabir and Jeni Klugman, *Unlocking Refugee Women's Potential* (New York: RescueWorks and IRC, 2019). <https://www.rescue.org/sites/default/files/document/3987/reportrescueworksunlockingrefugeewomenspotential.pdf>

woman earns 23 percent less than the average Peruvian woman and 49 percent less than the average Peruvian man.⁶⁵

Given their pre-existing precarious position in host country labor markets, refugee women are likely to experience increased economic vulnerability due to COVID-19.⁶⁶ For instance, Venezuelan women in Peru tend to work in public facing jobs that require direct contact with the client. Similarly, in Ethiopia, refugee women find employment in jobs related to services like domestic work or hairdressing.⁶⁷ Evidence from the Ebola crisis shows that men's economic activity may recover faster than women's economic security and livelihoods.⁶⁸ As a result, women may accept more exploitative working conditions or engage in negative coping mechanisms to earn a living and support their basic needs.⁶⁹

COVID-19 will not only affect displaced women's access to livelihoods, but also will increase instances of domestic violence and other forms of violence against women. Indeed, COVID-19 has prompted increased levels of domestic violence, as the pandemic leaves women stuck at home, many times with their abuser.⁷⁰ In Latin America, the IRC operates a multi-platform information hub with two-way messaging, "*CuentaNos*," where refugees can seek information and service providers for essential services as well as critical information on signs and symptoms of COVID-19.⁷¹ *CuentaNos* data as of May 31 reveals drastic increases in searches and requests for help due to gender-based violence. According to the Presidential Counselor for Equity for women, during the first days of the national quarantine there was a 51 percent increase in cases of domestic violence against women.⁷² Furthermore, research suggests that as income precarity of several households increases, domestic violence will continue to increase.⁷³ While gender-based violence affects all women and girls, without a support network and without access to protection, the risk for refugee women and girls is also high.⁷⁴

⁶⁵ Martha Guerrero Ble, Izza Leghtas, and Jimmy Graham, *From Displacement to Development: How Peru can turn Venezuelan displacement into a development opportunity* (Washington DC: Center for Global Development (CGD) and Refugees International, forthcoming).

⁶⁶ Devon Cone, *Gender Matters: COVID-19's outsized impact on displaced women and girls* (Washington DC: Refugees International, 2020). <https://www.refugeesinternational.org/reports/2020/5/4/gender-matters-covid-19s-outsized-impact-on-displaced-women-and-girls>

⁶⁷ Zetter and Ruaudel, *Refugees' Right to Work*.

⁶⁸ United countries, "Policy Brief: The Impact of COVID-19 on Women," April 9, 2020.

https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/policy_brief_on_covid_impact_on_women_9_apr_2020_updated.pdf

⁶⁹ Cone, *Gender Matters*.

⁷⁰ Amanda Taub, "A New Covid-19 Crisis: Domestic Abuse Rises Worldwide," *The New York Times*, June 4, 2020.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/06/world/coronavirus-domestic-violence.html>; Sarah Fielding, "In quarantine with an abuser: surge in domestic violence reports linked to coronavirus," *The Guardian*, April 3, 2020.

<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/apr/03/coronavirus-quarantine-abuse-domestic-violence>; and IRC interviews with HIAS.

⁷¹ For more information, please see <https://www.cuentanos.org/selectors>

⁷² IRC, "IRC data shows an increase in reports of gender-based violence across Latin America," *IRC Press Release*, June 9, 2020.

<https://www.rescue.org/press-release/irc-data-shows-increase-reports-gender-based-violence-across-latin-america>

⁷³ Susan L. Stagg, and Stephanie Riger, "Effects of Intimate Partner Violence on Low-Income Women's Health and Employment," *American Journal of Community Psychology* 36 (2005): 133-145. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10464-005-6238-1>

⁷⁴ Cone, *Gender Matters*.

Additional Impacts of COVID-19 on Refugees' Incomes

COVID-19 will cause widespread loss of livelihoods among refugee populations, which will affect their self-reliance and increase protection concerns. Without jobs and access to income, many refugees may suffer from increased food insecurity,⁷⁵ inability to pay rent, debt arising from vital health care costs, and a lack of ability to cope with shocks. Refugees are therefore more likely to turn to negative coping strategies including skipping meals, exploitative work, or child labor.⁷⁶ Furthermore, their status as foreigners makes them subject to xenophobia and abuse, which in turn often translates into worse working conditions when compared to their national counterparts.

Indeed, COVID-19 has heavily disrupted refugees' livelihoods and forced many to choose between earning a living or prioritizing their health. The need to earn a living pushes refugee workers to keep working, despite quarantine measures. As COVID-19 affects businesses and economic activity around the world, refugees already facing challenges to their economic inclusion will continue to remain among the most vulnerable and marginalized. Their lack of access to social protections and economic systems of the countries that host them will only be magnified by the pandemic.

This section explores additional effects of COVID-19 on the household budgets of refugees. It analyzes refugees' access to aid and social safety nets, as well as the impact of rising xenophobia and discrimination on refugees' income vis-a-vis the host population. This list is not exhaustive. Other sources of household income like remittances are also disrupted by the pandemic, but there is little information available on how much refugees usually rely on remittances,⁷⁷ nor how much COVID-19 has disrupted these flows.⁷⁸

Box 2. The different impacts of COVID-19 on urban versus in-camp refugees

In 2018, UNHCR estimated that 61 percent of refugees live in urban areas, outside camps.⁷⁹ While the needs and challenges for urban and in-camp refugees vary from country to country, they often present different needs and vulnerabilities, requiring a differentiated approach in terms of service delivery and policy response. Urban refugees have more autonomy and freedom, which increases their access to economic opportunities. However, they often do not receive the same assistance as in-camp refugees. As a result of these and other differences, COVID-19 will have distinct effects

⁷⁵ Fatmeh Alzoubi, Ahmed Smadi, and Yazeed Mohammad Gougazeh, "Coping Strategies Used by Syrian Refugees In Jordan," *Clinical Nursing Research*, December 2017.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/322068667_Coping_Strategies_Used_by_Syrian_Refugees_in_Jordan

⁷⁶ UNHCR, "Monitoreo de Protección de las Americas: Perú," November 2019.

<https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/73326>

⁷⁷ Carlos Vargas-Silva, *Literature Review: Remittances Sent to and from Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons*, KNOMAD Working Paper 12 (Washington DC: World Bank, March 2016). <https://www.knomad.org/sites/default/files/2017-04/KNOMAD%20WP%2012%20Lit%20Review%20Remittances%20to%20from%20Refugees%20and%20IDPs.pdf>

⁷⁸ Alfonso Garcia Mora and Michal Rutkowski, "Remittances in times of the coronavirus - keep them flowing," *World Bank Blogs Private Sector Development*, April 3, 2020. <https://blogs.worldbank.org/psd/remittances-times-coronavirus-keep-them-flowing>

⁷⁹ UNHCR, *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2018* (Geneva: UNHCR, 2019). <https://www.unhcr.org/5d08d7ce7.pdf>

on the household budget for these two populations, both on income and expenses. Below are some of the main household budget implications and the different ways that they affect in-camp and urban refugees.

- **Access to the labor market.** Refugees living in camps face reduced access to livelihood opportunities due to both *de jure* (i.e. lack of labor market access and freedom of movement) and *de facto* (i.e. the remote nature of the camps) restrictions. Their livelihood options are often limited to a mix of humanitarian help and informal work within the in-camp economy, though some are able to leave the camps to work in informal low-skilled jobs. The COVID-19 mobility constraints have impeded the functioning of both of these economies. For instance, the lockdown of a Rohingya camp in Bangladesh led to a closure of all site development works and shops, many of which were staffed by refugees.⁸⁰ The below quote is from a 22-year-old mother of two, visiting the IRC's primary health care center in Kutupalong refugee settlement, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh.

"Because of this disease the government has stopped all public transportation...So we don't have any income now."

However, in-camp refugees' access to aid may mitigate some of these impacts. While urban refugees have more opportunities to obtain jobs, work restrictions often also leave them stuck in informal low-skilled jobs which have been affected by COVID-19 lockdowns.⁸¹ For example, most of the 12,000 urban refugees in Rwanda have seen the family wage earners lose their jobs due to business closures or struggles with importing commodities.⁸² A recent survey of over 1,000 IRC clients in Nairobi cite loss of income and business closures as the top two impacts of the pandemic.

- **Access to assistance to meet basic needs.** As cash-based assistance ramps up in response to COVID-19, refugees are often not included in the national social protection schemes that provide this assistance. As COVID-19 puts the health, livelihoods, and security of refugees at risk, UN organizations, non-governmental organizations, and their partners are therefore increasing some forms of support. For instance, UNHCR is increasing the delivery of shelter, food, and non-food assistance to Venezuelans in Chile, and providing cash-based assistance for those in Peru.⁸³ However, the delivery of such type of assistance still remains a challenge, especially in urban areas where aid is not enough for refugees to pay their rent and cover other basic needs while the

⁸⁰ Noor Hossain, "Rohingya Camp Lockdown Diary" <https://spark.adobe.com/page/nWVpIfa38dmvG/>

⁸¹ Zetter and Ruudael, *Refugees' Right to Work*.

⁸² UNHCR, "Urban refugees struggling to survive as economic impact of COVID-19 worsens in East, Horn and Great Lakes of Africa," May 26, 2020. <https://www.unhcr.org/news/briefing/2020/5/5ecbfec4/urban-refugees-struggling-survive-economic-impact-covid19-worsens-east.html>

⁸³ Response for Venezuelans (R4V), "COVID-19 Update," May 1, 2020. <https://r4v.info/es/documents/download/75914>

isolation measures remain. In a recent survey conducted by IRC in Nairobi, Kenya, one respondent said:

“Life is difficult since I lost my job, and affording food and rent has been a challenge to me. I moved to the rural area to reduce cost of living”

In-camp refugees, such as Syrian refugees in Jordan, often receive protection, health, education, cash assistance for basic needs and livelihood support from bodies such as UNHCR.⁸⁴ Yet it is important to highlight that not all official camps or unofficial settlements have the same access to services and support. For instance, a recent Refugees International report showed that refugees in the Greek islands of Lesbos, Chios, and Samos face unsanitary conditions, with no adequate access to services or assistance.⁸⁵ In those types of settlements, where humanitarian assistance has failed to provide adequate support and protection, and refugees lack aid, mobility, and access to economic opportunities, suffering is likely to be high.⁸⁶

- **Access to health services.** Many urban refugees are forced to choose between health and livelihoods. If they prioritize livelihoods, they risk getting sick and not being able to afford appropriate care, which in turn would also lead to losing their livelihood and even spreading the virus to their family or friends. But if they prioritize their health, they risk falling deeper into economic precarity. In-camp refugees may have access to NGO provided health care, but many of these services have been disrupted as a result of COVID-19. For instance, in Greece—a country where asylum-seekers do not have access to government health—aid groups have been restricted from entering camps and provide assistance.⁸⁷ Similarly in Bangladesh, COVID-19 has cut aid workers in camps by 80 percent. Moreover, without appropriate measures COVID-19 can spread rapidly in refugee camps.⁸⁸ Many camps, such as the Rohingya settlements in Cox’s Bazar, are among the most densely populated areas in the world, and are already experiencing several cases of COVID-19⁸⁹ with over 15,000 refugees in quarantine.⁹⁰ Such an outbreak can be devastating due to

⁸⁴ UNHCR, “UNHCR continues to support refugees in Jordan throughout 2019,” December 31, 2019.

<https://www.unhcr.org/fo/12449-unhcr-continues-to-support-refugees-in-jordan-throughout-2019.html>

⁸⁵ Devon Cone, *Seeking Asylum in Greece: Women and Unaccompanied Children Struggle to Survive* (Washington DC: Refugees International, 2020). <https://www.refugeesinternational.org/reports/2020/2/21/seeking-asylum-greece-women-unaccompanied-children-struggle-survive>

⁸⁶ Cory Rodgers, “COVID-19 has Kenyan refugee camp on edge,” *The New Humanitarian*, April 14, 2020.

<https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news/2020/04/14/kenya-kakuma-refugee-camp-coronavirus>

⁸⁷ Sarah Souli, “Greek island refugee camps face coronavirus ‘disaster’, aid groups warn,” *The New Humanitarian*, March 27, 2020. <http://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news/2020/03/27/greece-island-refugee-camps-coronavirus>

⁸⁸ IRC, “New IRC analysis reveals risk that coronavirus transmission rates in Moria, Al Hol and Cox’s Bazar refugee camps could outpace those seen on the Diamond Princess cruise ship,” *IRC Press Release*, April 1, 2020. <https://www.rescue.org/press-release/new-irc-analysis-reveals-risk-coronavirus-transmission-rates-moria-al-hol-and-coxs>

⁸⁹ Human Rights Watch (HRW), “Bangladesh: Covid-19 Aid Limits Imperil Rohingya,” *Human Rights Watch (HRW)*, April 28, 2020. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/04/28/bangladesh-covid-19-aid-limits-imperil-r>

⁹⁰ Ruma Paul, “Bangladesh says coronavirus detected in Rohingya refugee camp: official,” *Reuters*, May 14, 2020.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-bangladesh-rohingya-idUSKBN22Q2AZ> and AFP, “First Rohingya refugee dies from coronavirus in Bangladesh,” *Al Jazeera*, June 2, 2020. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/06/rohingya-refugee-dies-coronavirus-bangladesh-camps-200602095409310.html>

high levels of chronic and respiratory diseases among many refugees, as well as deficient access to health and sanitation services.⁹¹

- **Access to shelter.** Camps often offer shelter to refugees, whereas urban refugees must pay rent, often for overcrowded spaces, with little access to cash-based assistance and other types of humanitarian support.⁹² In Jordan and Iraq, for instance, the rent saved is estimated to be greater than the income lost from living in a camp.⁹³ The COVID-19 restrictions have left many without the ability to pay rent, thereby facing eviction. In Lebanon, a recent IRC assessment found that 61 percent reported difficulty in covering rental payments⁹⁴ and the same can be seen among Venezuelans in Peru and Colombia.⁹⁵ As a Venezuelan refugee in Peru mentioned to Refugees International in April:

*"In my building, there are ten other Venezuelans, four of them are unemployed because they used to sell empanadas on the streets. We try to help each other. This month I was able to pay only half of my rent, and my neighbors are using their deposit. I don't know what will happen next month."*⁹⁶

Access to aid

Aside from work, aid is often the most important source of income for refugee households, providing in-kind and cash-based assistance that helps cover basic needs. Refugees typically do not have access to publicly provided services and support, and therefore must rely on working and/or on humanitarian assistance to meet their needs. Aid for refugees includes both short-term emergency relief such as humanitarian cash transfers, and vital livelihoods programming like vocational training, agriculture support services, and job placement programs, among other programs key to refugee survival and resilience. As the pandemic affects refugees' incomes deriving from their work, humanitarian aid will become increasingly important for refugee households. However, COVID-19 has made it increasingly difficult for international donors and non-governmental organizations to deliver humanitarian assistance, especially given border closures and social distancing guidelines. As

⁹¹ Reva Dhingra, "Refugees at Risk in Jordan's Response to COVID-19," *MERIP*, April 9, 2020.

<https://reliefweb.int/report/jordan/refugees-risk-jordan-s-response-covid-19>

⁹² Alison Brown, Peter Mackie, Kate Dickenson, and Tegegne Gebre-Egziabher, *Urban refugee economies: Addis Ababa, Ethiopia*, (London: International Institute for Environment and Development, 2018).

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/resrep16507.5.pdf>

⁹³ Thomas Ginn, "Prison or Sanctuary: An Evaluation of Camps for Syrian Refugees," 2020.

<https://sites.google.com/site/thomascginn/research>

⁹⁴ IRC, "Protection Monitoring Reports: Protection Context Update COVID-19, Week 30 March- 03 April 2020."

⁹⁵ Steven Grattan, "Venezuelans face evictions amid Colombia coronavirus quarantine," *Al Jazeera*, April 2, 2020.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/04/venezuelans-face-evictions-colombia-coronavirus-quarantine-200402192335407.html>

and Brown Mardú, "Surviving without working for the coronavirus: the anguish of migrant Venezuelans," *El Pitazo*, March 23, 2020. <https://elpitazo.net/migracion/sobrevivir-sin-trabajar-por-el-coronavirus-la-angustia-de-venezolanos-migrantes/>

⁹⁶ Martha Guerrero Ble, Interview with Venezuelan forced migrants in Peru, April 2020.

a result, refugees' access to aid and livelihoods support has been threatened, affecting primarily urban refugees.

Funding is urgently required to adapt and deliver economic programs to mitigate the impact of economic shocks in the immediate and long term. To date, US\$39 billion has been committed to support COVID-19 responses, including to finance health systems, as well as to respond to the socio-economic impact of the pandemic.⁹⁷ Most of this financing is from international and regional financing institutions such as the IMF, World Bank, and Asian Development Bank, and therefore this funding is directly financing government responses, which are less likely to support refugees. In addition, the vast majority of the US\$1 billion in humanitarian financing committed to the Global Humanitarian Response Plan (GHRP) is being channeled through the UN system and is yet to reach frontline responders vital to providing essential support to refugees at risk of exclusion. Just US\$22.6 million (2.2 percent) of funding to the GHRP has been allocated directly to non-governmental organizations, and financing allocated to UN agencies has been slow to flow to non-governmental organizations, which means refugees and other vulnerable people are not reaping the full potential of this aid. More specifically, COVID-19 aid itself has moved slowly. Recent reports suggest that out of the US\$1.59 billion the United States Government allocated to pandemic assistance, only US\$386 million had been released to countries in need. Executives at 27 relief organizations have flagged that little to no assistance has reached those in world's most fragile contexts.⁹⁸

In addition, travel restrictions and lockdowns are preventing aid from reaching those who need it most. These restrictions are hindering humanitarian actors' ability to secure critical supplies. Disruptions to the movement of humanitarian staff and critical supplies are having a devastating impact on vital services including support to livelihoods and access to lifesaving aid like cash. For example, COVID-19 related travel restrictions in South Sudan and its neighbors may impede humanitarians' efforts to control the desert locust swarms threatening to invade and destroy regional agricultural production and farming livelihoods this year; food insecurity and malnutrition are in danger of growing to famine levels. In Yemen, humanitarian organizations are being prevented from reaching those in need—not just due to active conflict and longstanding bureaucratic constraints, but also new restrictions put in place to contain the virus. Access for humanitarians is key to delivering lifesaving assistance and ultimately support in the pathway to economic inclusion for refugees and vulnerable communities.

Access to social safety nets

Governments recognizing the impact of lockdown and economic recession on livelihoods are responding with social protection to support households, most notably through social

⁹⁷ Ruth Hill, Dillan Patel, Yi Yang, and Jon Gascoigne, "Tracking funding to the Covid-19 response: Multilateral commitments and disbursements," June 11, 2020. <https://devinit.org/blog/tracking-funding-covid-19-response-commitments-and-disbursements/>

⁹⁸ Lara Jakes, "Despite Big Promises, U.S. Has Delivered Limited Aid in Global Virus Response," *New York Times*, June 7, 2020. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/07/us/politics/coronavirus-humanitarian-aid-united-states.html>

assistance measures and wage subsidies. According to the World Bank, 310 cash-based measures are in place across 133 countries, with 179 new initiatives introduced specifically as COVID-19 responses.⁹⁹ On average, these transfers are 30 percent of GDP per capita per month. Including other social assistance measures like food programs, utility support, and public works, there are a total of 621 social assistance programs across 173 countries. These measures are essential to compensate for lost income, mobilize the economy, and reduce vulnerabilities for those in precarious conditions, such as informal workers or those experiencing poverty.¹⁰⁰

To date, some low- and middle-income refugee-hosting countries have implemented similar measures to counter the impact of COVID-19 on livelihoods. For example, Colombia is subsidizing 40 percent of the salary of formal employees of businesses that have lost over 20 percent of their income due to COVID-19.¹⁰¹ The country is also providing cash assistance and food to the most vulnerable households through its social security system.¹⁰² In Kenya, the government allocated an additional 10 billion shillings to its existing cash-transfer program, which targets over a million Kenyans.¹⁰³ Despite these impressive moves, many of these schemes exclude refugee populations for a variety of reasons. Such programs are commonly part of the country's existing social assistance and welfare schemes, which have widely excluded refugees.¹⁰⁴ Some forms of support are limited to citizens only, like the low-interest rate loans available in South Africa,¹⁰⁵ and the unemployment benefits in Israel.¹⁰⁶ Many refugees face practical barriers such as identity requirements or regulatory requirements that restrict their access to a mobile phone or bank account to receive government payments. These practical exclusions also limit their access to the financial services that are essential to rebuilding livelihoods.¹⁰⁷

It is important to acknowledge that some low- and middle-income refugee-hosting countries, especially those that are fragile and conflict-affected, may not have the fiscal resources or capacity to extend their systems to the whole population. Countries like Iraq continue to struggle to activate government led multipurpose cash schemes, with non-governmental

⁹⁹ Ugo Gentilini, Mohamed Almenfi, Ian Orton, and Pamela Dale, "Social Protection and Jobs Responses to COVID-19: A Real-Time Review of Country Measures," version 11, June 12, 2020. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/33635>.

¹⁰⁰ Christian Bodewig, Ugo Gentilini, Zainab Usman, and Penny Williams, "COVID-19 in Africa: How can social safety nets help mitigate the social and economic impacts?" *World Bank Blog*, April 24, 2020. <https://blogs.worldbank.org/africacan/covid-19-africa-how-can-social-safety-nets-help-mitigate-social-and-economic-impacts>

¹⁰¹ Presidencia de la República de Colombia, "National Government helps companies through the Formal Employment Support Program (PAEF)," November 5, 2020. <https://id.presidencia.gov.co/Paginas/prensa/2020/Gobierno-Nacional-ayuda-a-las-empresas-mediante-el-Programa-de-Apoyo-al-Empleo-Formal-PAEF-200511.aspx>

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Sara Jerving, "Cash transfers lead the social assistance response to COVID-19," *Devex*, April 14, 2020. <https://www.devex.com/news/cash-transfers-lead-the-social-assistance-response-to-covid-19-96949>

¹⁰⁴ UNHCR, "UNHCR Mapping of Social Safety Nets for Refugees," <https://www.unhcr.org/5ad5b4084.pdf>

¹⁰⁵ Business Insider, "Only licensed spaza shops can stay open during SA's lockdown," *Business Insider South Africa*, March 30, 2020. <https://www.businessinsider.co.za/which-spaza-shops-can-stay-open-during-lockdown-2020-3>

¹⁰⁶ Joy Bernard, "For African migrants in Israel, COVID-19 means health, jobs, homes all at risk," *The Times of Israel*, April 11, 2020. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/for-african-migrants-in-israel-covid-19-means-health-jobs-homes-all-at-risk/>

¹⁰⁷ Chrissy Martin, "We Build Bridges" Roadmap to the Sustainable and Responsible Financial Inclusion of Forcibly Displaced Persons (Berlin: Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), GmbH, 2019). <https://www.rescue-uk.org/report/we-build-bridges-roadmap-sustainable-and-responsible-financial-inclusion-forcibly-displaced>

organizations working in consortia to fill gaps in current systems.¹⁰⁸ In many African countries, social safety nets only cover a small proportion of the poor due to fiscal and capacity constraints.¹⁰⁹ At the same time, some safety net programs may not be available to the most vulnerable, particularly for those working outside the formal economy. The IRC reports that in Ethiopia, the Productive Safety Net Programme applies only to citizens, and in Uganda the social protection program covers only nationals in selected districts. In instances like these, humanitarian organizations are filling the gaps. In Pakistan, the “Ehsaas Emergency Cash Program” is either conditional on already being registered to receive a benefit or being identified through a national socio-economic database. The government of Pakistan is working with UNHCR to roll out an emergency cash assistance program to vulnerable refugee families affected by COVID-19.¹¹⁰ As discussed, refugees facing exclusion from government programs are also excluded from the formal economy and are therefore among the hardest hit. Additionally, without these protections to fall back on and with limited access to aid, refugees have little choice but to risk exposure to the virus or recurring to negative coping mechanisms in order to make ends meet.

Xenophobia and discrimination

COVID-19 has spurred a health and economic crisis, both of which are likely to increase xenophobia and racism. On the former, pandemics and increased xenophobia tend to go hand in hand, as people blame foreigners for disease spread.¹¹¹ Economic recession also tends to lessen support for refugees and migrants as host populations prioritize their own access to jobs and social services.¹¹² As COVID-19 raises xenophobia and discrimination, the possibilities for refugees to find decent jobs (especially jobs that match their skills) decrease, thus further increasing their income precarity and undermining their economic inclusion.

This can already be seen around the world. Several political parties and groups, including in France, Germany, Greece, Italy, the United Kingdom, and the United States have latched onto the COVID-19 crisis to advance xenophobic rhetoric that demonize refugees, foreigners, and prominent individuals.¹¹³ For example, Matteo Salvini, Italy’s former interior minister, insinuated that allowing migrant ships from Africa to dock in Italian ports would spread the pandemic.¹¹⁴ Xenophobia is also emerging in major low- and middle-income refugee-hosting countries. In Peru, media coverage blames Venezuelans for not isolating or

¹⁰⁸ The Cash Learning Partnership (CaLP) Consortium for Iraq, “Cash as a Core Component of the COVID-19 Response in Iraq,” April 16, 2020. <https://www.calpnetwork.org/publication/cash-as-a-core-component-of-the-covid-19-response-in-iraq/>

¹⁰⁹ Christian Bodewig, Ugo Gentilini, Zainab Usman, and Penny Williams, “COVID-19 in Africa: How can social safety nets help mitigate the social and economic impacts?” *World Bank Blogs Africa Can End Poverty*, April 24, 2020. <https://blogs.worldbank.org/african/covid-19-africa-how-can-social-safety-nets-help-mitigate-social-and-economic-impacts>

¹¹⁰ IRC, *The Cost of Living: COVID-19 Humanitarian cash transfers to prevent hunger and hardship* (New York: IRC, forthcoming)

¹¹¹ Daniel Trilling, “Migrants aren’t spreading coronavirus - but nationalists are blaming them anyway,” *The Guardian*, February 28, 2020. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/feb/28/coronavirus-outbreak-migrants-blamed-italy-matteo-salvini-marine-le-pen>

¹¹² Joachim Vogt Isaksen, “The impact of the financial crisis on European attitudes toward immigration,” *Comparative Migration Studies* 7, no. 24 (June 2019), <https://comparativemigrationstudies.springeropen.com/articles/10.1186/s40878-019-0127-5>

¹¹³ Human Rights Watch (HRW), “Covid-19 Fueling Anti-Asian Racism and Xenophobia Worldwide,” May 12, 2020. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/05/12/covid-19-fueling-anti-asian-racism-and-xenophobia-worldwide>

¹¹⁴ Lorenzo Tondo, “Salvini attacks Italy PM over coronavirus and links to rescue ship,” *The Guardian*, February 24, 2020. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/feb/24/salvini-attacks-italy-pm-over-coronavirus-and-links-to-rescue-ship>

spreading the virus, and in South Africa, xenophobic violence is on the rise, and refugees are among those being threatened.¹¹⁵

An increase in xenophobia and discrimination towards refugees could drive policies that further limit the resources available for this population, as well as their rights—particularly those related to economic inclusion. Governments in high-income countries such as the United States and Hungary are using the pandemic to maintain or extend border closures and restrict migrant visa categories to provide jobs for newly unemployed locals.¹¹⁶ Low- and middle-income countries may follow by increasing restrictions or retracting from plans aimed at improving refugees' economic inclusion, particularly if the health and economic impacts of the pandemic grow.¹¹⁷

Even if such perceptions do not shift policy, they are likely to undermine social cohesion and integration, further marginalizing refugees and reducing their ability to achieve economic inclusion.¹¹⁸ For instance, in Colombia—a country that has taken proactive actions to ensure the economic inclusion of Venezuelans—xenophobia often plays a role in undermining such efforts, preventing Venezuelans from obtaining formal jobs.¹¹⁹ However, as perceptions continue to worsen towards refugees worldwide, it is likely that efforts to expand economic inclusion for refugees will be affected.

Why Hosting Countries Should Continue to Foster Refugees' Economic Inclusion

The economic impact of COVID-19 will have a severe effect on major low- and middle-income refugee-hosting countries, which will continue to grow at a lower rate than other EMDEs. This will, in turn, affect the livelihoods of both refugees and host populations. Yet, as the analysis indicates, refugees will be disproportionately impacted on the labor market relative to host populations. While COVID-19 has created a more difficult socio-economic environment for all individuals, the lack of economic inclusion for refugees puts them at a disadvantage. By expanding economic inclusion for refugees, refugee-hosting countries can

¹¹⁵ Grandstand, "Venezuelan refugees in Peru do not respect COVID-19 quarantine," *Tribuna*, March 22, 2020. <https://www.tribuna.pe/venezolanos-refugiados-en-peru-no-respetan-cuarentena-por-covid-19/> and Charlie Yaxley, "Amid rising xenophobic attacks in South Africa, UNHCR ramps up aid for refugees, calls for urgent action," UNHCR, September 20, 2019. <https://www.unhcr.org/news/briefing/2019/9/5d848f694/amid-rising-xenophobic-attacks-south-africa-unhcr-ramps-aid-refugees-calls.html>

¹¹⁶ Jason Hopkins, "DHS Suspends Increase in Guest Worker Visas After Tucker Carlson's Segment," *The Daily Caller*, April 2, 2020. <https://dailycaller.com/2020/04/02/homeland-security-guest-worker-visas-coronavirus/>

¹¹⁷ Karen Hargrave, Sara Pantuliano, with Ahmed Idris, *Closing borders: the ripple effects of Australian and European refugee policy. Case studies from Indonesia, Kenya and Jordan*, Overseas Development Institute (ODI) Humanitarian Policy Group (HPG) Policy Brief 66 (London: ODI, 2016). <https://www.odi.org/publications/10557-closing-borders-ripple-effects-australian-and-european-refugee-policy-case-studies-indonesia-kenya>

¹¹⁸ Sara Pavanello, Samir Wlhawary, and Sara Pantuliano, *Hidden and exposed: Urban refugees in Nairobi, Kenya*, Overseas Development Institute (ODI) Humanitarian Policy Group (HPG) Working Paper (London: ODI, 2010). <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/5858.pdf>

¹¹⁹ Steven Grattan, "Venezuelan migrants face rising xenophobia in Latin America," February 13, 2020. <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news-feature/2020/02/13/Venezuelan-migrants-xenophobia-Latin-America>

reduce the spread of the pandemic, provide more “essential workers,” and stimulate the economic recovery for the benefit of the population as a whole.

Reduce the spread of the pandemic and save lives

The lack of economic inclusion for refugees has pushed greater numbers to work informally and to concentrate in specific sectors, regardless of their qualifications. Without access to formal jobs, refugees have also largely been denied the possibility to access publicly provided social safety nets and health care. For many, taking a day off work is not an option, even if they are sick. As a result, those refugees with jobs, like many other locals and migrants with informal survival jobs, continue to work out of necessity, regardless of the risks of spreading or contracting the virus. Such a scenario is already happening in countries like Singapore, where COVID-19 cases have surged among migrant workers, accounting for 88 percent of cases in the country.¹²⁰ Like migrants, refugees often live in crowded spaces and continue to work whenever possible, increasing the possibility of contracting and spreading the disease. Despite this precarity, refugees are largely excluded from national health and economic plans. Excluding refugee communities will directly undermine the effectiveness of the public health response by providing a population among which COVID-19 can spread.

Expanding access to health services for refugees is a necessary but not sufficient mechanism to minimize the economic and health effects of COVID-19. In the short-term, refugees, like other vulnerable communities, require financial support to cope with the economic effects of the pandemic. Excluding refugees from their host country’s response plan—which encompasses health and livelihoods—only increases their risk of contracting the virus and continuing to spread it, while also increasing their vulnerabilities as a whole. Hosting countries, with the support of the international community, should consider the inclusion of refugees in their health and economic responses as part of the strategy to contain the pandemic. Furthermore, as countries reopen and economic activity resumes, continuing to expand refugee’s economic inclusion will help create a more resilient community that is less dependent on aid and better able to cope with future economic shocks.

Provide more “essential workers”

Even with limited economic inclusion, refugees are already at the forefront of the fight against COVID-19. Some are working as doctors and nurses providing health services to host communities, some are seamstresses producing face-masks for their neighbors, and others are volunteering to bring food and groceries to the elderly.¹²¹ Regardless of their profession, many refugees are contributing their skills and talents to help prevent the spread of the virus.

¹²⁰ Weiyi Cai and K.K. Rebecca Lai, “Packed with Migrant Workers, Dormitories Fuel Coronavirus in Singapore,” *The New York Times*, April 28, 2020. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/04/28/world/asia/coronavirus-singapore-migrants.html>

¹²¹ UN News, “From the field: how refugees are helping overwhelmed health systems’ COVID-19 response,” *UN News*, April 27, 2020. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/04/1062642>

One specific story of an IRC client in Nairobi demonstrates the great resilience and contributions refugees can make to the response. Prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, Eve, a refugee from the Democratic Republic of Congo, was making and selling African wear and bags and said business was doing very well. However, things changed with the COVID-19 outbreak, and now she is mostly focusing on making and selling face masks. She is also supplying face masks to other sellers too, at a fair price to ensure that she can earn an income during these difficult economic times as well as help people stay healthy during this pandemic. She said:

“This is my way of not only contributing to support the fight against the virus, but also to earning a living.”

Despite the willingness of refugees to contribute to their host communities in the fight against the virus, most refugees cannot work in professions they had in their country of origin, even if they work in essential industries. As a result, refugee doctors, nurses, and scientists are barred from their professions in a time when they are needed the most. For instance, among the refugee population in Lebanon in January 2017, there were 57 doctors, 305 nurses, and 68 paramedical staff, many of whom were forced to practice informally or not at all.¹²² Greater economic inclusion, especially during times of COVID-19, would allow refugees working in essential industries to exercise their skills. This not only includes eliminating work restrictions for those in essential industries, but also promoting credential recognition for refugee and forced migrant professionals.

Recognizing the importance of refugee professionals in the fight against the pandemic, many countries and organizations are already instating mechanisms to fast-track credential recognition. For instance, the General Medical Council in the United Kingdom is fast-tracking the accreditation of refugee doctors who gained qualifications overseas.¹²³ In Peru, the government created a special division for foreign health professionals to work in public hospitals and contribute in the fight against COVID-19.¹²⁴ Similarly, in Argentina, local governments are summoning Venezuelan health professionals to strengthen the capacity of hospitals.¹²⁵ To this regard, the IRC has launched an online platform for refugees to gain medical accreditation and volunteer for the frontline response.¹²⁶ This type of initiative is now more important than ever, especially since in low- and middle-income countries there

¹²² Sharif A Ismail, Adam P Coutts, Diana Rayes, Sophie Roborgh, Aula Abbara, Miriam Orcutt, Fouad M Fouad, Gladys Honein, Nour El Arnaout, Aya Noubani, Hana Nimer, and Spencer Rutherford, *Refugees, healthcare and crises: informal Syrian health workers in Lebanon* (London: IIED, April 2018). <https://pubs.iied.org/10856IIED/>

¹²³ Diane Taylor, “Covid-19: call for fast-track registration of refugee doctors in UK,” *The Guardian*, March 25, 2020.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/mar/25/covid-19-call-for-fast-track-registration-of-refugee-doctors-in-uk>

¹²⁴ El Peruano, “Urgency Decree that provides complementary measures for the health sector in the framework of the sanitary emergency due to the effects of the Coronavirus (COVID-19)”, <https://busquedas.elperuano.pe/normaslegales/decreto-de-urgencia-que-dicta-medidas-complementarias-para-e-decreto-de-urgencia-n-037-2020-1865491-2/> and Stefania Gozzer, “Coronavirus in Peru: from selling arepas in a market to working as a doctor fighting covid-19 in one of the main hospitals in Lima,” *BBC News World*, May 13, 2020. <https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-america-latina-52619890>

¹²⁵ Maria José Lucasole, “Coronavirus: municipalities of the Province of Buenos Aires will add Venezuelan doctors,” *La Nación*, March 23, 2020. <https://www.lanacion.com.ar/sociedad/coronavirus-municipios-provincia-buenos-aires-sumaran-medicos-nid2346577>

¹²⁶ IRC, “IRC launches online platform for refugees and immigrants in the United States seeking to obtain medical accreditation and join the fight against Coronavirus,” April 12, 2020. <https://www.rescue.org/press-release/irc-launches-online-platform-refugees-and-immigrants-united-states-seeking-obtain>

are significant labor shortages of health professionals, as well as capacity issues to provide health services in remote areas. Including refugees and other foreign-trained professionals in the response could help satisfy this need, increasing the capacity of hosting countries to provide services and assistance for their citizens.

Stimulate economic recovery

Once a country is hosting refugees, the benefits to letting them work exceed the costs.¹²⁷ Greater economic inclusion benefits both refugees and host populations, as refugees' economic activity boosts the opportunities for others. Even with minimal opportunities, refugees consume goods and services, pay taxes, provide their skills to employers, create connections with new markets outside the country, and create new jobs and companies that employ locals. With greater economic inclusion, these contributions are amplified. For instance, a 2016 study by the World Bank found that allowing refugees greater economic integration in Kenya could boost average per capita host incomes by 6 percent.¹²⁸ For refugees, expanding their economic inclusion (and, with it, their labor market access) can lead to greater workplace protections, greater security and stability for refugees working both formally and informally, and decreased rates of negative coping mechanisms.

Despite these benefits, it will understandably be difficult for policymakers in low- and middle-income refugee-hosting countries to argue for maintaining or expanding economic inclusion for their refugee populations during and after COVID-19. Mass unemployment and looming economic recession, coupled with increased xenophobia and racism, will likely reduce political will for such efforts. Nevertheless, the potential positive effects of greater economic inclusion are large. Enabling refugees to work in the formal market would allow more refugees to find jobs that match their skills, increase their earnings, and reduce competition in specific sectors or places, all of which are just as important during a recession.¹²⁹

Economic inclusion is also unlikely to have a significant negative impact on the employment rates and wages for host populations. This is especially true in situations where refugees already have access to informal markets. In these contexts, expanding economic inclusion for refugees by opening up formal markets would not necessarily increase the *number* of people working as much as it would change *where* they are working. Furthermore, there is evidence, including from the large influx of refugees to Turkey, that confining refugees to certain sectors of the labor market (such as the informal market) creates negative labor market effects.¹³⁰ In contrast, when refugees have full access to the labor market, negative

¹²⁷ This paragraph is drawn from Michael Clemens, Cindy Huang, and Jimmy Graham, *The Economic and Fiscal Effects of Granting Refugees Formal Labor Market Access*, Center for Global Development (CGD) Working Paper 496 (Washington DC: CGD, 2018). <https://www.cgdev.org/sites/default/files/economic-and-fiscal-effects-granting-refugees-formal-labor-market-access.pdf>

¹²⁸ Apurva Sanghi, Harun Onder, and Varalakshmi Vemuru, *Yes in my Backyard: The Economics of Refugees and Their Social Dynamics in Kakuma, Kenya* (Washington DC: World Bank, 2016). <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/308011482417763778/pdf/111303-WP-Kakuma-Report-Yes-in-my-backyard-December-2016-PUBLIC.pdf>

¹²⁹ Clemens et al, *The Economic and Fiscal Effects*.

¹³⁰ Ximena Del Carpio, Çağlar Özden, Mauro Testaverde, and Mathis Wagner, "Local Labor Supply Responses to Immigration," *The Scandinavian Journal of Economics* 117, no. 2: 493-521 (2014). <https://doi.org/10.1111/sjoe.12099>

effects are less common or severe. In contexts where refugees are already working informally, allowing refugees to access the formal market will reduce competition for informal jobs and any negative effects that may exist, who are likely vulnerable workers in the informal sector. These measures that mitigate crowd-out are therefore especially important during a recession.

Where refugees have no access to work, facilitating economic inclusion can still create economic benefits for both refugees and hosts. Evidence from Malaysia demonstrates that allowing immigrants to work actually increases the number of roles available for the host community, particularly among those who are low- and middle-skilled.¹³¹ Although evidence is mixed, the majority of research about Syrian refugees in Jordan finds that labor market access for the refugee population did not lead to adverse employment or wage effects for native-born workers, primarily because any supply shock appears to have been offset by increasing demand.¹³²

As refugee-hosting countries face recession and manage recovery, they should fully reap the economic rewards of hosting refugees. The misallocation of high-skill refugees is a missed opportunity that, in some countries, puts pressures in informal labor markets. Yet, as countries acknowledge the potential GDP gains that come with hosting refugees, effective policies to promote their economic integration can be designed, thus generating positive spillovers in the country's economy. Undoubtedly, more research is needed to understand the effects of recessions in the labor market for refugee-hosting low- and middle-income countries. Nevertheless, the evidence outlined above shows that while the potential negative effects of expanding economic inclusion for refugees are uncertain but small, the potential positive effects are large and should be cultivated to produce a faster recovery.

Recommendations

As demonstrated above, the economic effects of COVID-19 are likely to fall disproportionately on refugees versus their host populations. International organizations, non-governmental organizations, donors, and refugee-hosting country governments therefore need to come together, ensuring that the socio-economic inclusion of refugees is upheld to the maximum extent possible. Below we provide a series of recommendations as to how that could be achieved: ensuring refugees can access social safety nets and health care, and that they can contribute to the response; continuing existing economic inclusion initiatives; combating misinformation and increasing anti-xenophobia efforts; extending livelihoods programming, including via digital methods; and collecting better data and evaluating efforts. Of course, many of these recommendations apply to poor host populations, especially those in the informal sector, and should be applied equally to reinforce social cohesion and improve livelihoods.

¹³¹ Ximena Del Carpio, Çağlar Özden, Mauro Testaverde, and Mathis Wagner, "Local Labor Supply Responses to Immigration," *The Scandinavian Journal of Economics* 117, no. 2: 493-521 (2014). <https://doi.org/10.1111/sjoe.12099>

¹³² Belal Fallah, Caroline Kraft, and Jackline Wahba, "The impact of refugees on employment and wages in Jordan," *Journal of Development Economics*, 139: 203-216 (June 2019). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdeveco.2019.03.009>

Ensure refugees can access social safety nets and health care

Hosting countries must ensure refugees are included in national COVID-19 response plans and expanded social safety nets. Donors and multilateral development banks must support this expansion, particularly in countries affected by fragility, conflict, and displacement. They should ensure social protection systems are equipped to meet the needs of displaced populations, especially in urban areas, and coordinate with national governments and humanitarian organizations to systematically identify unmet needs.¹³³ Humanitarian organizations should help fill gaps, working closely with governments to support last mile delivery of social protection services, coordinating on platforms and leveraging experience to ensure all who are in need are reached, including those outside of government-controlled areas.

As mentioned above, many countries impose restrictions on access to publicly provided health care based on immigration status. Even when refugees have the legal right to access publicly provided health care, administrative and financial barriers to access services are often significant. Refugees may not be aware of their entitlements, may not have the required paperwork, may face language or physical access barriers, and may be excluded due to xenophobia and discrimination. As a result, refugees may need to rely on accessing privately provided health care, or purchasing expensive insurance coverage, which reduces the amount of money available to spend on other aspects of their livelihood. Lack of access to health care for refugees also will lessen the effectiveness of the COVID-19 response, as widespread health coverage is needed to limit the spread of the disease. Publicly provided health care should therefore be decoupled from migration status and made physically and practically available to refugees. This will undoubtedly be administratively challenging and costly for low- and middle-income refugee-hosting countries, and international organizations should move to fill this gap.

Ensure refugees can contribute to the response

In the short-term, refugee-hosting country governments should fast-track the credentials of refugees, particularly those who could contribute to the national health response. Refugees should be supported with access to finance, such as cash transfers, to enable them to pivot their skills to in-demand industries like mask and personal protective equipment (PPE) production, contact tracing, delivery services, and digital platforms.

Governments, donors, and international organizations should also enable refugees to support their own communities by allocating financial resources to refugee-run and -serving local non-governmental organizations. Recent CGD research has found that only 0.07 percent of the US\$2.5 billion allocated by the major donors to COVID-19 response has

¹³³ Lauren Post, “Leaving No One Behind: Including Refugees in the World Bank’s Covid-19 Response,” *International Rescue Committee (IRC)*, June 2, 2020. <https://www.rescue.org/report/leaving-no-one-behind-refugee-inclusion-world-banks-response-covid-19>

ended up in the hands of local non-governmental organizations.¹³⁴ Donors should do more to identify these groups and transfer funding to allow them to better meet the specific needs of their population.

In the long-term, refugee-hosting country governments should explore ways to expand economic inclusion for refugees, including eliminating work restrictions and promoting credential recognition. Such efforts are important for sustainable livelihoods (as will be explored further below) and should not be limited to health care or pandemic response.

Continue ongoing economic inclusion initiatives

The significant negative economic shock from COVID-19 should not impede countries from addressing the *de jure* and *de facto* barriers to refugee economic inclusion. In fact, the benefits of increased access—raising productivity and wages of refugees and host populations, increasing purchasing power that boosts local businesses, increasing tax revenue, and reducing crowding into the informal sector—represent potential sources of stimulus for host communities during the recovery, as discussed above.

Before COVID-19, initiatives to lower barriers to access were underway in many refugee-hosting countries. For example, Pakistan announced last year that refugees could now open bank accounts.¹³⁵ Ethiopia passed a new law allowing refugees to obtain work permits, access primary education, obtain drivers' licenses, legally register life events such as births and marriages, and access to national financial services, such as banking.¹³⁶ Governments, international finance institutions, and the private sector should continue to support hosting governments in pushing these initiatives forward. Such efforts should pay particular attention to the barriers women face to labor market entry, including supporting transformative elements that ensure women's safety, financial decision-making, and burden-sharing of unpaid household work. The World Bank,¹³⁷ UNHCR, ILO, Tent Partnership for Refugees, Refugee Self-Reliance Initiative (RSRI), and many others have supported these efforts and continue to play a crucial role in sustaining forward momentum.

Combat misinformation and increase anti-xenophobia efforts

Fostering positive public perceptions of refugees is key to achieving economic inclusion. Without public support from the host population, it will be difficult for host governments to

¹³⁴ Jeremy Konyndyk, Patrick Saez, and Rose Worden, "Humanitarian Financing Is Failing the COVID-19 Frontlines," *Center for Global Development (CGD) Blog*, June 18, 2020. <https://www.cgdev.org/blog/humanitarian-financing-failing-covid-19-frontlines>

¹³⁵ Cindy Huang and Jimmy Graham, "Six Ways Pakistan Can Make the Most out of PM Imran Khan's Stand on Refugees in the Formal Economy," *Center for Global Development (CGD) Blog*, March 1, 2019. <https://www.cgdev.org/blog/six-ways-pakistan-can-make-most-out-pm-imran-khans-stand-refugees-formal-economy>

¹³⁶ UNHCR, "UNHCR welcomes Ethiopia law granting more rights to refugees," January 18, 2019. <https://www.unhcr.org/uk/news/press/2019/1/5c41b1784/unhcr-welcomes-ethiopia-law-granting-rights-refugees.html>

¹³⁷ The Jordan Times, "WB approves \$100m in support for Syrians, host communities in Jordan," June 13, 2020. <http://jordantimes.com/news/local/wb-approves-100m-support-syrians-host-communities-jordan>

enact generous economic inclusion policies.¹³⁸ COVID-19, and the tendency to blame foreigners for the spreading of disease, threaten to undermine this agenda. Refugee-hosting country governments must therefore work to combat xenophobia and racism and conduct rigorous evaluations to test what works in their particular context.¹³⁹

One way to do this is by implementing messaging campaigns to demonstrate the added economic, social, and cultural value of refugees. Such campaigns appear to be effective, particularly when the issue is highly salient.¹⁴⁰ These campaigns should build on the contributions of refugees to the COVID-19 response so far and emphasize solidarity in combating the health and economic impacts of the pandemic. Ideally, these messages would be transmitted by elites (e.g. high-level political figures) and others in positions of trust.¹⁴¹ Another way to foster social cohesion is by demonstrating the benefits that have flowed to host populations due to hosting refugees. For example, one ongoing study by CGD and the World Bank in Uganda is attempting to influence public opinion amongst host populations by showing the tangible value aid flows have to the community and highlighting that these flows are contingent on hosting refugee populations.¹⁴²

Support multi-year, flexible livelihoods programming

International organizations must provide fast, sustainable, multi-year, and flexible financing to respond to COVID-19. This long-term funding has been shown to be particularly critical for livelihoods programs—including those that have needed to adapt to lockdowns.¹⁴³ The currently underfunded UN Global Humanitarian Response Plan (GHRP) for COVID-19 must supplement funding for existing Humanitarian Response Plans to ensure that ongoing, life-saving humanitarian programs continue at scale. Multi-year, flexible funding is needed more than ever for both the immediate response to economic shocks—including through humanitarian cash—as well as the essential long-term economic recovery efforts.

Multi-year, flexible funding is vital to re-building refugee livelihoods that are resilient to further economic shocks. National governments, bilateral donors, international finance institutions, humanitarian actors, and the private sector must work together to build back more inclusive, resilient, and sustainable economies. The IRC points to the strengths of

¹³⁸ OEA, *Informe del Grupo de Trabajo de la OEA para abordar la crisis de migrantes y refugiados venezolanos en la región*, (OEA: 2019). https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/OEA-informe-migrantes-venezolanos-espanol_0.pdf

¹³⁹ Lancet Migration, “Leaving No One Behind in the Covid-19 Pandemic: A Call for Urgent Global Action to Include Migrants & Refugees in the Covid-19 Response,” <https://www.unmgcy.org/main-news-updates/2020/4/18/lancet-migration-global-statement-on-covid-19-leaving-no-one-behind-in-the-covid-19-pandemic-a-call-for-urgent-global-action-to-include-migrants-amp-refugees-in-the-covid-19-response>

¹⁴⁰ Jennifer Jerit and Jason Barabas, “Partisan Perceptual Bias and the Information Environment,” *The Journal of Politics* 74, no. 3 (July 2012). <https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/abs/10.1017/S0022381612000187>

¹⁴¹ Toby Bolsen, James N. Druckman, and Fay Lomax Cook, “The Influence of Partisan Motivated Reasoning on Public Opinion,” *Political Behaviour* 36 (2014): 235-262. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11109-013-9238-0> and James N. Druckman, Erik Peterson, and Rune Slothuus, “How Elite Partisan Polarization Affects Public Opinion Formation,” *American Political Science Review* 107 no. 1 (February 2013): 57-79. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055412000500>

¹⁴² Travis Baseler, Thomas Ginn, Helidah Ogude, and Olivia Woldemikael. “Can Development Aid Change Attitudes Toward Refugees? Experimental Evidence from Urban Microentrepreneurs in Uganda,” (Washington DC: World Bank, forthcoming)

¹⁴³ Farida Bena, Lauren Post, Daphne Jayasinghe, and Caitlin Tulloch, *A Win win multi-year flexible funding is better for people and better value for donors* (New York: IRC, June 2020). <https://www.rescue.org/report/win-win-multi-year-flexible-funding-better-people-and-better-value-donors-0>

multi-year funding in improving program design and adapting amidst uncertainty. Multi-year funding can also build long-term, local partnerships that bridge the humanitarian response to longer term development and localization.¹⁴⁴ The private sector plays a vital role as partners in re-skilling, rebuilding markets, and strengthening value chains.

Shift towards digital livelihoods programming and virtual service delivery, while planning for the future of work

As the delivery of livelihoods programming is disrupted due to isolation measures, non-governmental organizations and other institutions that implement livelihoods programs should adapt their current service delivery mechanisms towards virtual spaces, building on key lessons learned from the education sector. This should include vocational and skills training that could take place remotely. Such efforts could also provide remote employment opportunities for refugees during and after COVID-19. This should go hand-in-hand with advocacy to the government and private sector to expand digital access (e.g. to the internet and smartphones) for the most vulnerable, particularly women.

In the case of entrepreneurs or self-employed refugees, continued virtual support and guidance towards adapting their businesses will be crucial to ensure their survival; this could mean shifting products and services to respond to the crisis such as PPE development.¹⁴⁵ Through virtual support, non-governmental organizations and other actors can provide strategies for businesses to adapt and cope with the isolation such as utilizing delivery services, e-commerce platforms, or improving their social media presence. Specific attention should be paid to the challenges and barriers to access of such programs and new business opportunities for women including the burden of unpaid work, childcare, and decision-making at the household level.

Collect better data and evaluate interventions

During a recession, it is more important than ever for donors to invest in programs with a rigorous evidence base, evaluate all ongoing programs, and invest in expanding this rigorous evidence for the future. Mallett and Slater reviewed the empirical basis for humanitarian livelihoods programs in 2016 and found “many evaluations appear to conflate outputs with impacts and numerous studies fail to include adequate information on their methodologies and datasets, making it difficult to appraise the reliability of their conclusions.”¹⁴⁶ However,

¹⁴⁴ Bena et al, *A Win Win*.

¹⁴⁵ For example, see the United Nations Development Programme’s (UNDP) eFuture guides, some of which provide support to small businesses shifting into PPE development. <https://www.bb.undp.org/content/barbados/en/home/covid-19--response-programme/efuture.html>

¹⁴⁶ Richard Mallett and Rachel Slater, “Livelihoods, conflict and aid programming: is the evidence base good enough?” *Disasters* 40, no. 2 (2016): 226-245. <https://doi.org/10.1111/disa.12142>

the evidence base from development economics is growing significantly, and many of the promising interventions are currently being evaluated among displaced populations.¹⁴⁷

Before allocating funds, donors should require cost-efficiency and -effectiveness analyses based on the expected impacts from this empirical literature where possible. Donors should also require and fund evaluations, including randomized controlled trials that measure the program's effects against a control group and against a cash alternative whenever feasible. Finally, improved socio-economic data on refugees is critical to improving programming over the long-term. Donors should invest in, and host countries should facilitate, detailed longitudinal datasets on displaced populations.

¹⁴⁷ Nessa Kenny and Laura Benrey, "Filling the Forced Displacement Evidence Gap: Taking Stock on World Refugee Day," *Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA) Blog*, June 18, 2020. <https://www.poverty-action.org/blog/filling-forced-displacement-evidence-gap-taking-stock-world-refugee-day>

Appendix 1. Data Sources

Colombia	
Source	<i>Gran Encuesta Integrada de Hogares (GEIH)</i> http://microdatos.dane.gov.co/index.php/catalog/599/get_microdata
Related reports/briefs	Gran encuesta integrada de hogares (GEIH) Mercado laboral - Históricos https://www.dane.gov.co/index.php/estadisticas-por-tema/mercado-laboral/empleo-y-desempleo/geih-historicos
Date of survey	August, September, and October 2019
Coverage	Nationally Representative
Observations for working-age refugees (15 and above)	5,310
Observations for working-age Colombians (15 and above)	141,593
Refugee nationalities	Venezuelan
Ethiopia	
Source	Utz Pape, “Skills Profile Survey 2017, A Refugee and Host Community Survey: Ethiopia,” (Washington DC: World Bank, 2017). https://microdata.worldbank.org/index.php/catalog/3445
Related reports/briefs	Utz Pape et al, “Informing Durable Solutions by Micro-Data: A Skill Survey for Refugees in Ethiopia,” (Washington DC: World Bank, 2018). http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/996221531249711200/pdf/128185-WP-PUBLIC-P162987-SkillsReport.pdf
Date of survey	January 2017
Coverage	For refugees, representative of refugee camps and sites in four major refugee-hosting areas: Tigray Afar, Gambella, Benishangul Gumuz, and Somali. For hosts, representative of areas within a 5 km radius of the camps in the same four refugee-hosting areas.
Observations for working-age refugees	8,663
Observations for working-age Ethiopians	3,904
Refugee nationalities (and un-weighted percentages of the working-age sample)	Eritrean (29.50 percent) Sudanese (26.01 percent) South Sudanese (20.49 percent) Somali (23.63 percent) Other (0.37 percent)

Other notes	Several occupation sectors were not included in the calculations because they did not correspond to the categories for level of impact. The excluded categories were "Professional, scientific and technical activities"; "Activities of private households"; and "Extraterritorial organizations and bodies." The 35 observations (out of over 3,928 used for the calculation) in these categories were dropped.
Iraq (Kurdistan)	
Source	Survey of Syrian Refugees and Host Communities, 2015-2016 https://microdata.worldbank.org/index.php/catalog/3469
Related reports/briefs	Thomas Ginn, "Prison or Sanctuary? An Evaluation of Camps for Syrian Refugees," February 2020. https://sites.google.com/site/thomascginn/research
Date of survey	April and May 2016
Coverage	Representative of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq
Observations for working-age refugees (ages 15-64)	2,095
Observations working-age for Iraqi Kurds (ages 15-64)	2,598
Refugee nationalities (and un-weighted percentages of the working-age sample)	Syrian (100 percent)
Notes	Employment data comes from two randomly selected working-age members of each household. Iraqis from outside Kurdistan (internally displaced persons) were dropped for this analysis, since the focus is on international forced migrants, and there are questions about some of the IDP employment data.
Jordan	
Source	Jordan Labor Market Panel Survey, 2016 http://www.erfdataportal.com/index.php/catalog/139
Related reports/briefs	Caroline Krafft and Ragui Assaad, "Introducing the Jordan Labor Market Panel Survey 2016," Economic Research Forum, May 2018. http://erf.org.eg/publications/introducing-the-jordan-labor-market-panel-survey-2016/
Date of survey	December 2016 to April 2017
Coverage	Nationally Representative
Observations for working-age refugees (ages 15-64)	1,869
Observations for working-age Jordanians (ages 15-64)	18,418

Refugee nationalities (and un-weighted percentages of the working-age sample)	Syrian (76 percent) Palestinian (19 percent) Iraqi (4 percent)
Notes	Refugee is defined as a forced migrant who does not identify Jordanian as their nationality.

Lebanon

Source	Survey of Syrian Refugees and Host Communities, 2015-2016 https://microdata.worldbank.org/index.php/catalog/3471
Related reports/briefs	Thomas Ginn, "Prison or Sanctuary? An Evaluation of Camps for Syrian Refugees," February 2020. https://sites.google.com/site/thomascginn/research
Date of survey	October 2015 to March 2016
Coverage	Nationally Representative
Observations for working-age refugees (ages 15-64)	3,137
Observations for working-age Lebanese (ages 15-64)	5,480
Refugee nationalities (and un-weighted percentages of the working-age sample)	Syrian (97 percent)
Notes	Employment data comes from two randomly selected working-age members of each household.

Peru

Source for refugees	<i>Encuesta dirigida a la población venezolana que reside en el país</i> (ENPOVE) http://inei.inei.gob.pe/microdatos/
Related reports/briefs	<i>Resultados de la "Encuesta dirigida a la población venezolana que reside en el país"</i> ENPOVE 2018 https://www.inei.gob.pe/media/MenuRecursivo/publicaciones_digitales/Est/Lib1666/libro.pdf
Date of survey for refugees	November and December 2018
Coverage for refugees	Representative of five cities, where 85 percent of the refugee populations resided at the time of the survey: Lima y Callao, Tumbes, Trujillo, Cusco, y Arequipa
Source for hosts	<i>Encuesta permanente nacional</i> (EPE) http://inei.inei.gob.pe/microdatos/
Related reports/briefs	<i>Informe de Empleo</i> http://m.inei.gob.pe/biblioteca-virtual/boletines/informe-de-empleo/1/#lista
Date of survey for hosts	October, November, and December 2018
Coverage for hosts	Representative of Lima

Observations for working-age refugees	7,868
Observations for working-age Peruvians	13,004
Refugee nationalities	Venezuelan
Other notes	<p>Refugees may be included in the calculations for hosts, as they cannot be identified in the data.</p> <p>Several occupation sectors were not included in the calculations because they did not correspond to the categories for level of impact. The excluded categories were "Professional, scientific and technical activities"; "Activities of private households"; and "Extraterritorial organizations and bodies." The 687 observations (out of over 6,139 used for the calculation) in these categories were dropped for ENPOVE and 803 (out of 6,922) were dropped for EPE.</p>

Turkey

Source (Refugees)	Turkey Household Labor Force Survey, analyzed by Luis Pinedo Caro https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---europe/---ro-geneva/---ilo-ankara/documents/publication/wcms_738602.pdf
Related reports/briefs	Luis Pinedo Caro “Syrian Refugees in the Turkish Labour Market” February 2020
Date of survey	2017
Coverage	Nationally Representative
Observations for working-age refugees	2,469
Refugee nationalities	Syrian
Notes	<p>Refugees identified indirectly through strategy outlined in Pinedo Caro (2020), Appendix B</p> <p>For hosts, the dataset comes from the ILO’s estimates, based on data from 2018. See https://ilostat.ilo.org/data/.</p>

Uganda

Source	2018 Refugee and Host Communities Survey - World Bank and Ugandan Bureau of Statistics
Related reports/briefs	World Bank, “Informing the Refugee Policy Response in Uganda,” (Washington DC: World Bank, 2019). http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/571081569598919068
Date of survey	June and July 2018
Coverage	Nationally Representative
Observations for working-age refugees (ages 15 and above)	2,090
Observations for working-age Ugandans (ages 15 and above)	3,068

Refugee nationalities (and un-weighted percentages of the working-age sample)	South Sudanese (62 percent) Congolese (27 percent) Somali (4 percent) Burundian (2 percent) Rwandan (2 percent)
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Appendix 2. Employment and Sector Breakdown

		Employed (% , formal or informal)			Top 3 Sectors	
		Refugees	Hosts		Refugees	Hosts
Colombia	All	66%	61%	1.	Wholesale and retail trade; repairs (26%)	Wholesale and retail trade; repairs (20%)
	Male	84%	73%	2.	Accommodation and food services (20%)	Agriculture, hunting, forestry, fishing (17%)
	Female	50%	48%	3.	Manufacturing (12%)	Manufacturing (12%)
Ethiopia	All	20%	58%	1.	Wholesale and retail trade; repairs (36%)	Agriculture, hunting, forestry, fishing (44%)
	Male	24%	71%	2.	Human health and social work (13%)	Wholesale and retail trade; repairs (26%)
	Female	17%	46%	3.	Agriculture, hunting, forestry, fishing (13%)	Public administration and defense (11%)
Iraq	All	35%	34%	1.	Construction (38%)	Public administration and defense (40%)
	Male	63%	59%	2.	Wholesale and retail trade; repairs (13%)	Wholesale and retail trade; repairs (11%)
	Female	7%	9%	3.	Manufacturing (9%)	Construction (9%)
Jordan	All	21%	36%	1.	Wholesale and retail trade; repairs (21%)	Public Administration (20%)
	Male	37%	58%	2.	Manufacturing (20%)	Wholesale and retail trade; repairs (15%)
	Female	5%	10%	3.	Construction (16%)	Education (10%)
Lebanon	All	31%	29%	1.	Other services* (29%)	Wholesale and retail trade; repairs (27%)
	Male	56%	47%	2.	Construction (25%)	Public Administration and defense (12%)
	Female	6%	11%	3.	Retail (11%)	Manufacturing (11%)
Peru	All	86%	66%	1.	Wholesale and retail trade; repairs (28%)	Wholesale and retail trade; repairs (26%)
	Male	94%	74%	2.	Accommodation and food services (27%)	Manufacturing (16%)
	Female	77%	58%	3.	Manufacturing (17%)	Transport, storage, and communications (14%)

Turkey	All	41%	51%	1.	Manufacturing (48%)	Agriculture (18%)
	Male	71%	70%	2.	Construction (13%)	Manufacturing (18%)
	Female	11%	32%	3.	Agriculture, hunting, forestry, fishing (8%)	Wholesale and retail trade; repairs (14%)
Uganda	All	29%	62%	1.	Agriculture, hunting, forestry, fishing (52%)	Agriculture, hunting, forestry, fishing (68%)
	Male	31%	67%	2.	Wholesale and retail trade; repairs (16%)	Wholesale and retail trade; repairs (9%)
	Female	27%	57%	3.	Manufacturing (9%)	Other services* (5%)

Notes: *Other services are largely domestic household help for other households, which are classified as highly impacted by COVID-19. Employed means any compensated employment, formal or informal, usually within the last 30 days. Employed % is the percentage who report employment out of the total population over the age of 15, regardless of labor force participation. Employment rates on hosts in Turkey is taken from Pinedo Caro (2020) and the Turkish Household Labor Force Survey. The rest of the sources are the same as in Appendix 1.