

COLLECTIVE OUTPUT PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

COVID-19 and Women in Transitional Countries: A Comparative Perspective

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In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, our interdisciplinary project, 'COVID-19 and Women in Transitional Countries: A Comparative Perspective,' seeks to elucidate the pandemic's nuanced impact on women across transitional countries, leveraging a comprehensive analytical framework. This endeavour is steered by a collaborative team from the Gender, Justice and Security Hub, with Angelika Rettberg of Universidad de los Andes serving as the project leader and co-director, bringing her extensive expertise in Gender, Justice and Security to the forefront of our analysis. Regional coordination is led by Luisa Salazar-Escalante and the administrative and operative oversight provided by María Gabriela Vargas, ensuring the project's logistical and methodological rigor. Additionally, William McInerney and Nicky Armstrong provided research support from the central Gender, Justice and Security Hub team at the London School of Economics.

Integral to our research methodology are the contributions of our in-country Research Assistants: Hernando Castro (Colombia), Harriet Pamara (Uganda), Shanya Mohammed (Kurdistan-Iraq), Azra Nazar (Sri Lanka), Zakaria Nasser (Lebanon), and Melvin Tarawalie (Sierra Leone). Their localised insights and data collection efforts are crucial for developing country-specific profiles and understanding the pandemic's impact from a ground-level perspective. The country profiles present data on key indicators such as access to the labour market, employment, education, health, mental wellbeing, violence against women, among others, by analysing secondary data from sources like the national statistics departments of each country, UN Women, the World Bank, etc.



Credit: Paula Natalia Alfonso Ruiz, Social Science Faculty of Universidad de Los Andes

From left to right: María Gabriela Vargas Parada, Professor Angelica Rettberg, and Luisa Salazar-Escalante

Furthermore, the project uniquely incorporates the personal and professional experiences of Hub researchers working in these countries and their observed impacts of the pandemic on women in their respective research communities. This dual perspective aims not only to quantify the pandemic's effects but also to qualitatively illustrate the lived experiences of those most affected, enriching our understanding through a blend of empirical data and narrative evidence.

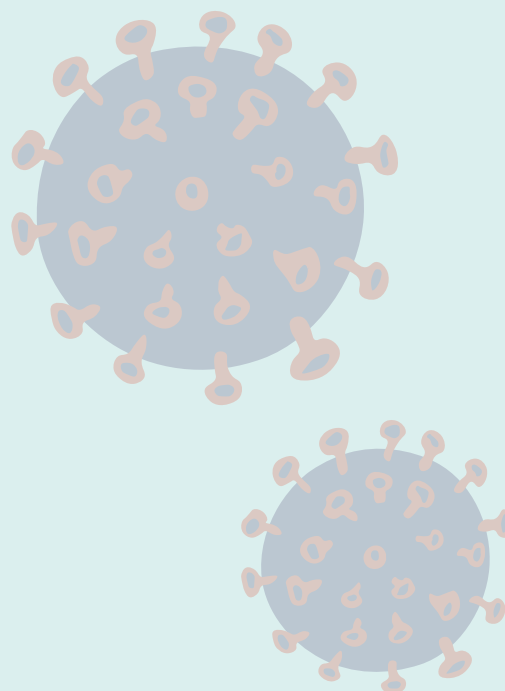
From grappling with socioeconomic barriers in Sri Lanka to addressing concerns of environmental sustainability in Uganda, negotiating political complexities in Iraq, and contending with the Taliban's return to power in Afghanistan, each chapter of the project illuminates the multifaceted nature of these struggles.

Moreover, it delves into the nuances of implementing peace agreements and engaging in ongoing negotiations with remaining armed groups in Colombia, combating the enduring scourge of violence against women in post-war Sierra Leone, and grappling with Lebanon's status as one of the most unequal nations amidst a crisis of unprecedented magnitude.

These stories not only illuminate the experiences of women but also the adaptability of researchers in these challenging environments, contributing to our understanding of the pandemic's multifaceted impact and the necessity for gender-sensitive policies in the post-pandemic era. These documents describe the different challenges, opportunities and strategies of the Hub's research projects; they started in 2019, before the pandemic, and had to adjust their work during and after being significantly affected by lockdowns, inability to travel to research countries, lack of access to data, physical and mental health concerns, difficulties reaching the communities, work-life balance, and numerous other uncertainties. Nevertheless,

researchers managed to adapt their projects to these realities, adjusting time frames and methodologies, taking advantage of technology to conduct research online, strengthening communitarian and civil society partnerships, and prioritising well-being of colleagues and participants.

In summary, the narratives from Afghanistan, Colombia, Lebanon, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka, Uganda, and Kurdistan-Iraq provide a rich tapestry of experiences, illustrating the resilience and challenges faced by women in these diverse contexts while also acknowledging that the pandemic exacerbated existing vulnerabilities of women prior the pandemic and represented a setback in gender equality goals. Through this project, we contribute to the discourse on gender, justice and security, with regard to a critical moment for the gender equality agenda: the COVID-19 pandemic. We offer data and reflections on the main challenges, but also the opportunities that the pandemic represented for the Hub's work.



This Collective Output Project Spotlight was first published in the Hub's final report, *Gender, Justice and Security: Structural Challenges, Feminist Innovations and Radical Futures*. Go to www.TheGenderHub.com to read the full report and to learn more about all 38 research projects in the Hub.



This research is part of the UKRI GCRF Gender, Justice and Security Hub. The Hub is an interdisciplinary, transnational research network working with local and global civil society, practitioners, governments and international organisations to advance the delivery of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 on gender equality; SDG 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions; and the implementation of the UN Security Council's Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda.

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