Policy Response

**Social Distancing**
- School and office closures
- Travel bans and sealed borders
- Complete or partial lockdown

**Fiscal Policy**
- Stimulus packages with direct benefit transfers
- Food rations
- Increase in health expenditures

**Monetary Policy**
- Almost zero interest rates
- Quantitative easing
- Increasing money supply
L/MIC lockdowns match the HIC ones. The handouts do not*

L/MICs have lower government capacity

They also have a larger informal sector

And a smaller elderly population

*Source: Adapted from the Economist Emerging-market lockdowns match rich-world ones. The handouts do not; 4 April 2020
Designing COVID-19 Policies in Developing Countries

- Lack of capacity, less fiscal space, a larger informal sector make COVID-19 policy design difficult in developing countries
- Policies that worked in developed countries may not be a good strategic fit for developing countries

- Although testing rates have been universally poor, testing in L/MICs is even more limited
- As of April 1st, India tested 11 samples per million people while Bangladesh tested 10
- Improved data on prevalence is needed to design a coordinated response

- The spread of the novel coronavirus has also led to the spread of misinformation
- Accurate information on how infections can be prevented has to be communicated to people
- To design effective information campaigns, data on what kind of messaging strategies motivate people to change behavior are needed

- Data on income shocks and food security for daily wage workers are needed to guide policy response
- Many L/MICs also rely on export, remittance, and SME revenue all of which are declining
- Data on magnitude of this decline can help inform long term macro economic policies
Responding to COVID-19: Ongoing Activities

- **Rapid data collection - phone surveys**
  - Symptom prevalence
  - Public health behavior & knowledge
  - Income shock, food insecurity
  - Food prices, shortages
  - Risk Exposure - migrants

- **Migration Data to Identify Hotspots**
  - Migrants as Disease Vectors
  - Identify districts and upazilas at risk
  - Losses in remittance revenues
  - International transmission risk

- **Information Campaign & Social Influence**
  - Personal appeals - social networks
  - Community leaders (imams, teachers)
  - A/B testing – incentives, identity, messaging content.
  - Scale effective strategies via govt, telcos

- **Modeling**
  - Add economic and behavioral factors to epidemiological models
  - Discipline with rich Bangladesh data
  - Should LMIC & HIC policies differ?
  - Specific policy guidance for LMICs

- **Specific Sectors**
  - RMG Sector - Survey managers
  - Produce and distribute masks

- **Targeting of Social Protection**
  - Design a targeting mechanism that uses cell phone usage data to identify beneficiaries of cash transfer programs the government has launched

**Build a website that serves as a one-stop shop for policy research on COVID-19 in developing countries, with a special focus on Bangladesh. Data dashboards, policy briefs, webinars will be posted here**
Rapid data collection will facilitate iterative assessment of effectiveness of policy intervention and scaling of effective policy

- Y-RISE in collaboration with IPA will conduct phone surveys of nationally representative samples to determine the prevalence of COVID-19 in communities and identify hotspots where the disease is growing rapidly
- Two types of surveys will be conducted: in depth surveys and rapid interactive voice responses (IVRs)

Households to be surveyed in depth:
1. Bangladeshi migrant workers who participated in a lottery program to work in Malaysia
2. Residents of rural areas selected for a joint government and UNDP project related to dispute resolution
3. A representative sample of both refugees and members of the host community in Cox’s Bazar
4. Beneficiaries of social transfer programs who use digital financial services to receive benefits
5. Urban slum dwellers
6. Seasonal migrant workers within Bangladesh
7. Seasonal migrant workers within Nepal

Households to be chosen for IVRs:
1. Our partner Viamo will generate a random list of plausible phone numbers to administer surveys
2. The IVR will ask key demographic questions to match the IVR sample to other nationally representative samples

Government administered IVRs:
1. We will also have access to the IVRs being administered by the Government of Bangladesh to add to our sample
Data Collection to Guide Policy

We will collect data on:

- Symptoms
- Disease awareness
- Behavior and disease exposure
- Economic impact and food security

- Use symptoms data to estimate changing prevalence in the country over time and identify clusters where the disease might be growing. This could enable us to recommend more targeted isolation policies instead of a blanket lockdown.
- Understand the level of disease awareness in the community and identify the information gaps that may need to be filled and the behavioural patterns that need to be changed to promote disease prevention.
- Understand the magnitude of income shock and food insecurities faced by households to capture the economic cost of social distancing.

Map showing geographical coverage of two of our existing survey populations.
Y-RISE Strategy to Promote Behavior Change: Randomize roll out of multiple messaging strategies that raise COVID-19 awareness, test their effectiveness during data collection, and work with A2i to scale up the messaging channels that create highest impact

We will raise awareness by running information treatments both at the household and community level. Evidence suggests that individual messages from acquaintances and community leaders are more effective than impersonalized text messages in changing behavior and at times of crises such as these, information is particularly effective when it comes from influential leaders in the community.

Household Level

- We will use a combination of social network, monetary incentives, and varying message content to raise awareness about COVID-19
- Follow up surveys and real time epidemiological modeling will help us identify the most effective messaging strategies that can then be scaled

Community Level

- In collaboration with A2i, BRAC, and Youth Policy Forum, we have mobilized 50+ volunteers to reach out to imams, headmasters, and health workers across 50 unions in Bangladesh
- Over the next 10-14 days we will reach out to leaders in random geographical order
- Ongoing phone surveys will help us capture the impact of reaching out to community leaders
**Y-RISE Strategy to Mitigate the Impact of COVID-19: Generate evidence on the extent of economic loss and recommend short and long term micro and macro measures**

- Y-RISE in collaboration with BRAC and BIGD will conduct phone surveys of SMEs and mid-level managers of RMG factories to assess the extent of economic losses they are faced with.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SMEs</th>
<th>Mid-managers of RMG Factories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• We will be surveying a sample of borrowers from BRAC’s SME program</td>
<td>• We will be surveying a sample of mid level managers of RMG factories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• We will be collecting information on layoffs, their ability to continue operations, access to markets, price levels, and changes in profits, revenues, and cost</td>
<td>• We will be collecting information on types of clothing produced, inventory, supply chain, layoff, factory closure schedules, wages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Assessing our data will help us analyze the kind of support productive firms need to survive in the economy once we are past COVID-19 and need to boost demand</td>
<td>• Assessing this data will help us analyze the kind of support RMG factories need to survive and whether they have existing capacity and capability to switch to the production and export of PPE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• We plan to produce at least two policy notes that lay out the state of SMEs and proposes short and long term steps</td>
<td>• We plan to produce at least two policy notes that describe the current situation and lays out long and short terms steps both the government and factories can take to save the industry and livelihood of workers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Use migration patterns of countries to predict coronavirus hotspots and estimate potential losses in remittance revenues

Use migrant stocks in destination countries that have been identified as COVID-19 hotspots to serve as proxy for exposure to risk

Also use this data to predict timing of outbreak

Early analysis shows that some countries that had migrant stocks in China and US/Europe experience both early and late exposure

Bangladesh Specific Analysis

- Compile data on migrant flows and remittances from BMET, CAA, and Bangladesh Bank and 500,000 passport numbers of returning migrants from A2i to assess Bangladesh's potential exposure to COVID-19

- Map this data to identify (1) COVID-19 hotspots and (2) communities that might be most vulnerable to losses in remittance revenue

- Validate hotspot predictions by matching it to locations of 333 calls, quarantine reports, newspaper accounts, and official health ministry update on incidence of respiratory distress to determine whether returning migrants are in fact bringing back COVID-19
Social Distancing: Is this the way to go for developing countries?

Benefits of Social Distancing

- Combine epidemiological modeling and value of statistical life estimates to show that benefits of disease suppression are much lower in developing countries than developed countries.
- Social distancing saves $12 trillion in US and only $50 billion in Nigeria.
- Conduct further analysis to determine if low mortality estimates in LICs hold if prevalence of comorbidities are accounted for.
- Assess compliance to lockdown to determine (1) if social isolation is effective in disease suppression and (2) if alternative harm reduction measures that allow the economy to operate are needed.

Better Social Protection Coverage

- Social distancing places a heavy burden on the poor, many of whom rely on daily wages.
- We need to assess what other measures can be put in place to cushion this loss in welfare of the poor should developing countries choose to pursue disease suppression.
- Feasibility of large social protection measures that could be transferred to majority of the poor should be explored.
- We are partnering with TELCOs to see how cell phone usage data can be used to target benefit transfers.
Policy Outreach: Creating a Data Repository

Collaborate with BUET students to build a website that is going to be a one-stop shop for any economic research related to COVID-19 in developing countries, with a special attention to Bangladesh.

- Disease prevalence data as we conduct phone surveys
- Heat maps on disease prevalence at the union level
- Number, origin, and destination of recently returned migrant workers
- Behavior and disease exposure
- Disease awareness
- Income shocks, prices, food security
- Mapped relief efforts
- Compilation of policy briefs
- Instruments used for data collection and information treatment
- Webinars bringing together global policy makers