

Discussion and insights on the South African experience with poverty and COVID-19

Amina Ebrahim

[WIDER Webinar Series](#), 7 July 2020

Between a Rock and a Hard Place

The paper: Lockdown poses challenges for those living hand-to-mouth. The trade-off between poverty and getting C-19.

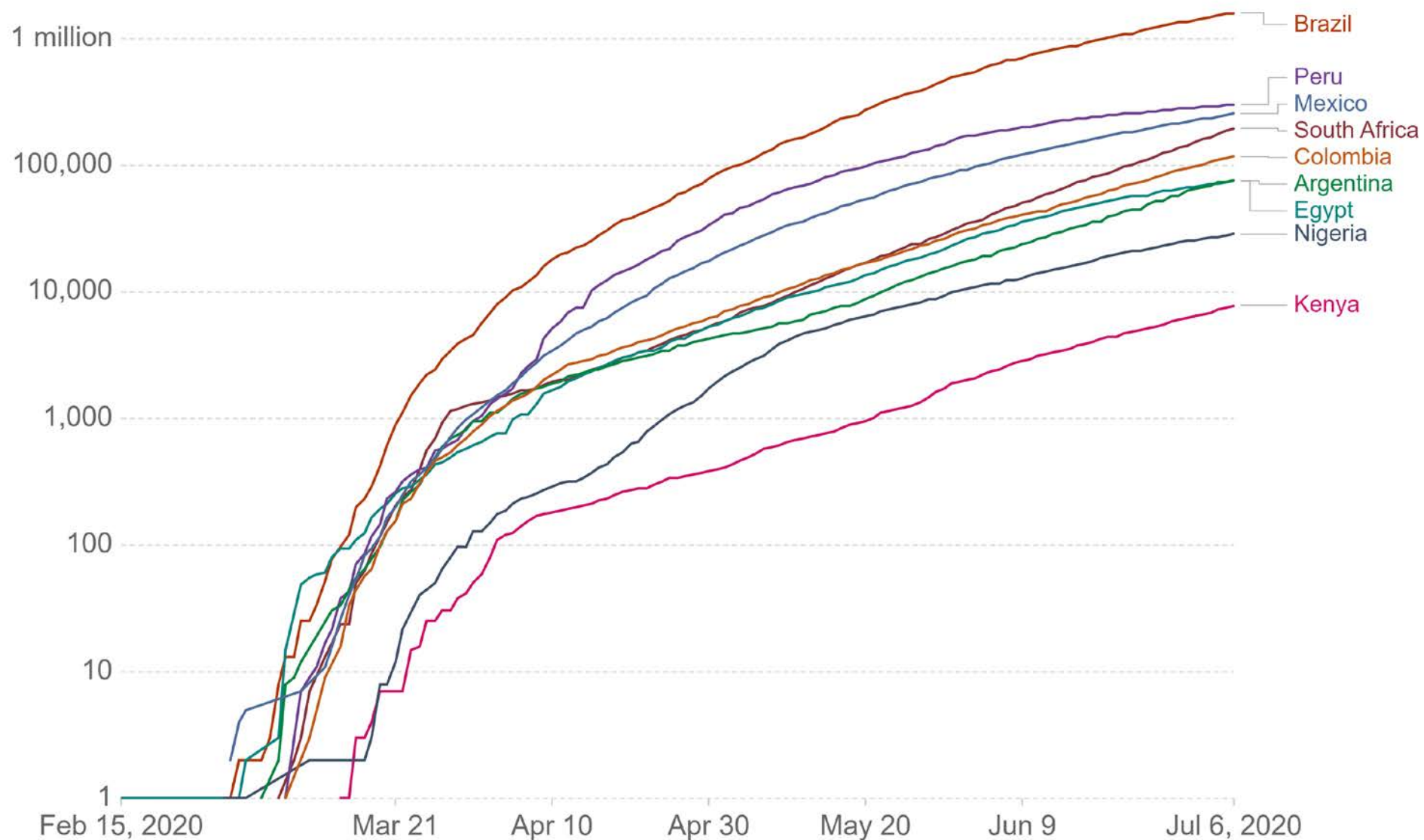
Findings: Work-related mobility during lockdown is higher in regions with high poverty rates relative to regions with low poverty rates.

Interpretation: Lower levels of lockdown compliance due to the necessity to work. Poorer areas comply less with shelter-in-place.

Data: Google COVID-19 mobility [data](#), survey data and C-19 data

Cumulative confirmed COVID-19 cases

The number of confirmed cases is lower than the number of actual cases; the main reason for that is limited testing.



Regional Context – South Africa

- Lockdown largely viewed as a necessity to “flatten the curve”
- Complete lockdown not possible
 - Food supplies required
 - Need hospital staff and municipal workers = “essential workers”
 - Transport and grocery store workers also essential
- National lockdown started 27 March and continues (102 days)
 - Level 5 (23 March – 30 April): Essential services and groceries only
 - Level 4 (1 May – 31 May): Limited movement, Exercise between 6am-9am
 - Level 3 (1 June – present): Business travel, phased return to work and schools.

The Rock and Hard place in South Africa

Density of living space in poorer areas much higher

Schools/daycares are closed

High concentration of co-morbidities in poorer areas.



Source: Johnny Miller - Unequal Scenes

Support

Price controls on essential items

Social relief of distress
food parcels and vouchers

Increase in Social Security (top up and new grant)



Source: Brenton Geach/GroundUp (CC BY-ND 4.0)

Reality

Food protests and looting

Implementation problems

Food parcel corruption



Source: Mary-Anne Gontsana/GroundUp (CC BY-ND 4.0)