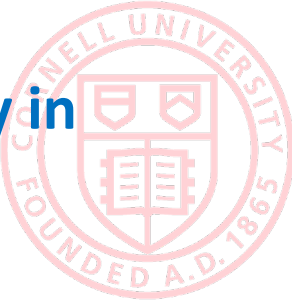


Effective strategies to eradicate poverty and hunger: Addressing food insecurity in the time of COVID-19



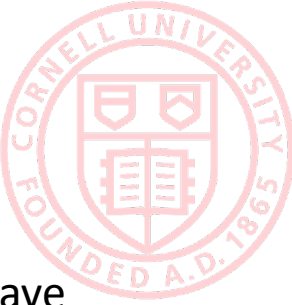
John Hoddinott

Cornell University and International Food Policy Research Institute

30 July 2021

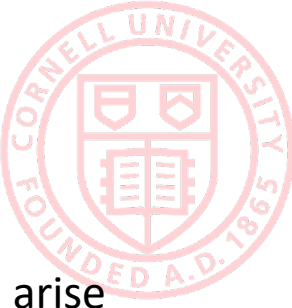
Paper prepared as background document for: Virtual Expert Group Meeting on “Inclusive and resilient recovery from COVID-19 for sustainable livelihoods, wellbeing and dignity for all: eradicating poverty and hunger in all its forms and dimensions to achieve the 2030 Agenda”.

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Introduction

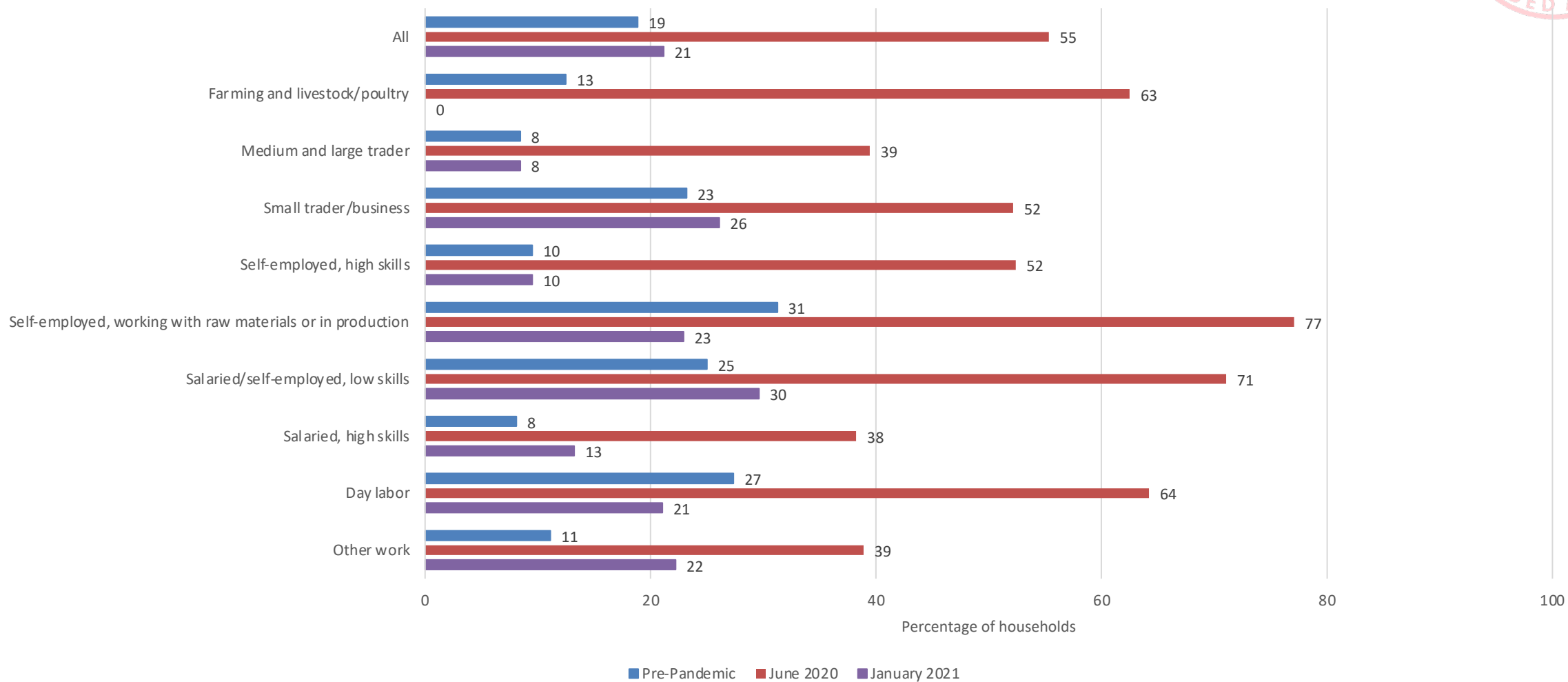
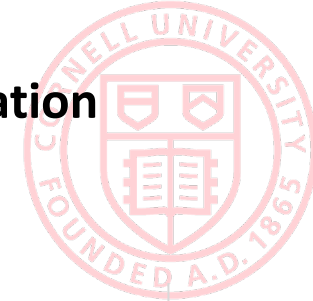
- The COVID-19 pandemic has had major impacts on health across the globe. In response, governments have imposed measures including social distancing, restrictions on mobility and closures of workplaces and retail outlets.
- While these measures have been necessary to contain the spread of the virus, they have created significant economic stresses as well as having adverse impacts on national and international food systems. Estimates by FAO and partner organizations suggest that chronic hunger increased by approximately 118 million people and that the number of people lacking adequate access to food rose by 330 million people in 2020 (FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO, 2020)
- This presentation assesses the food security impacts of the pandemic. Focusing on Bangladesh, it looks at associations between access to social protection interventions and food security in the time of Covid-19 and draws out their implications for future efforts to eradicate poverty and hunger

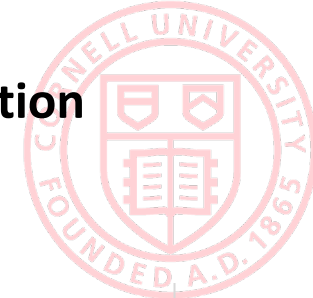


Frameworks

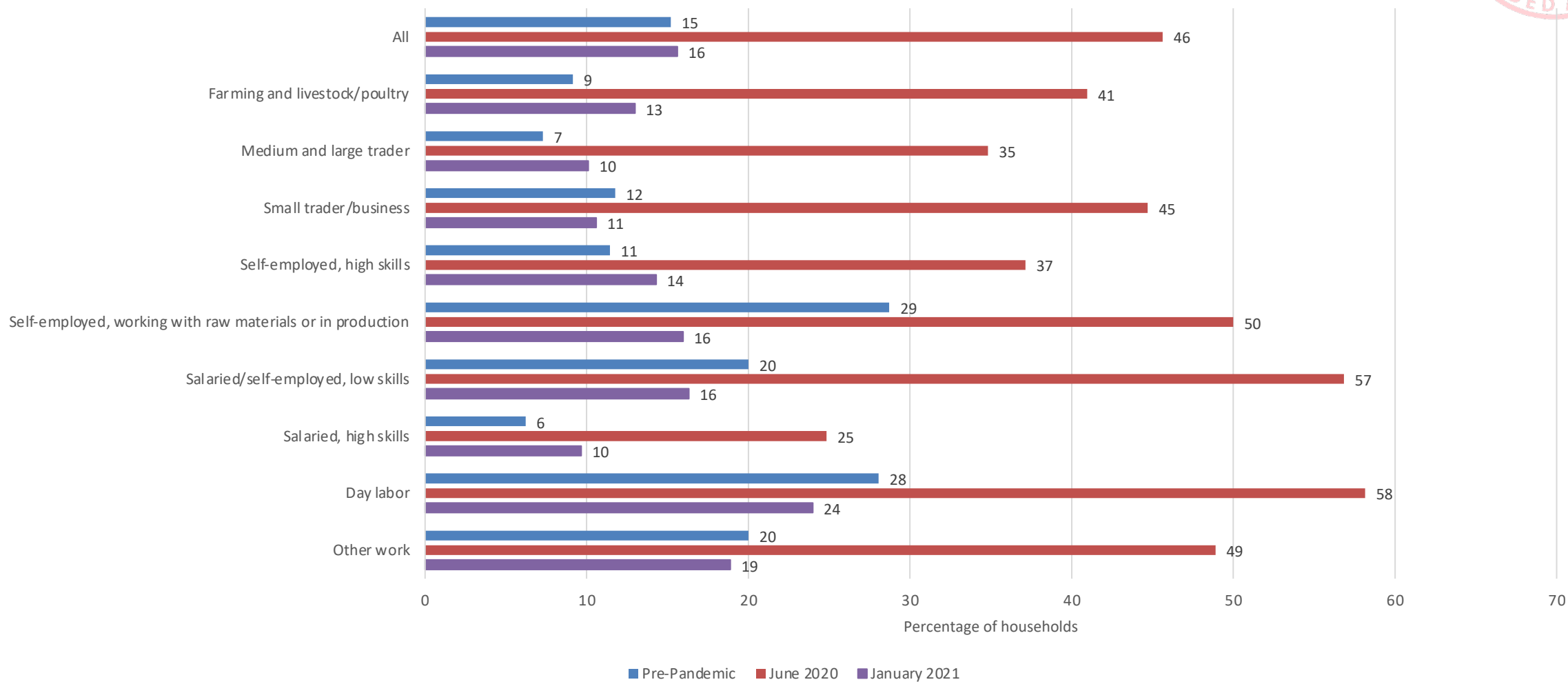
- Several frameworks can inform how the consequences of the pandemic for household food security can arise and how these consequences can be addressed. These include:
- FAO's 'four pillars' approach (FAO 2008) - availability, access, utilisation, and stability (FAO 2008).
- The 'food systems' approach which includes "activities that relate to the production, processing, distribution, preparation and consumption of food.", and the output of these activities, including socio-economic and environmental outcomes" UN Committee on World Food Security (HLPE 2017).
- Sen's 'entitlement approach' which emphasises that food security is not simply a supply-side issue; rather that food insecurity, hunger and even famine can result when entitlements to food, rather than food supply, falls.
 - Sen (1981) identifies four forms of entitlements: (1) *production* - a farming household produces the food it consumes; (2) *trade* - a farming household produces a non-food crop, sells that crop and uses the income to buy food; (3) *own labour* – household members work for themselves (operating their own businesses) or for others (receiving wages); and (4) *transfers* - received from other households (remittances), from charities or other non-profit institutions or from governments.
 - The ability to translate these entitlements into food depends on both the level of these entitlements as well as the relationship between the prices associated with those entitlements and the prices of food

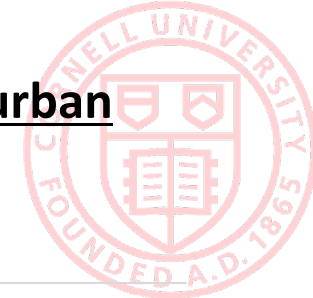
Prevalence of moderate or severe food insecurity, post-pandemic onset, urban, by occupation



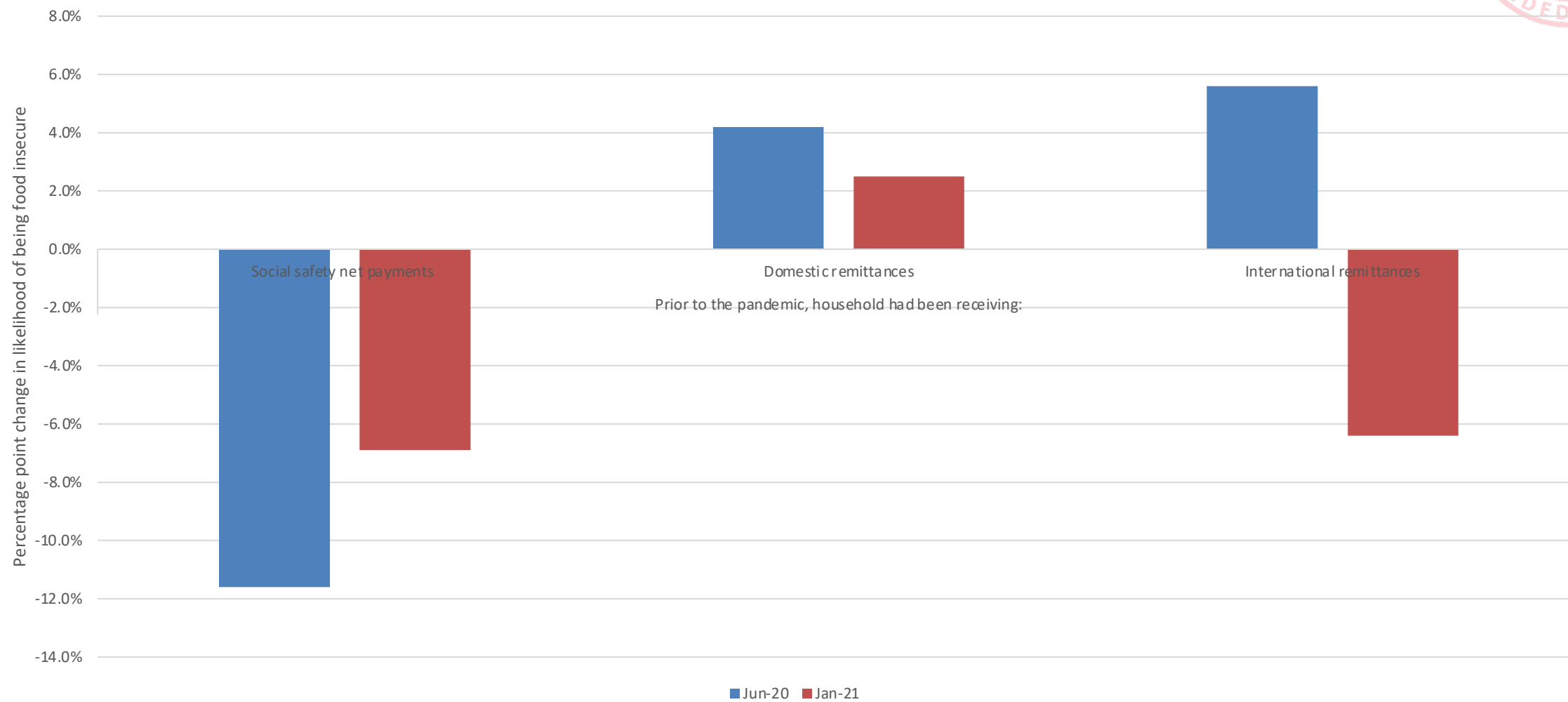


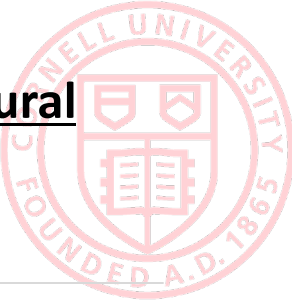
Prevalence of moderate or severe food insecurity, post-pandemic onset, rural, by occupation





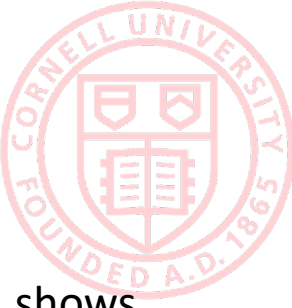
Associations between receipts of social safety net payments, remittances and changes in urban household food security status, Bangladesh, by round





Associations between receipts of social safety net payments, remittances and changes in rural household food security status, Bangladesh, by round





Summary

- Evidence presented here from Bangladesh, consistent with what is observed in other parts of the world, shows that the coronavirus pandemic together with associated restrictions on economic activity contributed to increases in food insecurity in both rural and urban areas. These malign effects, however, were not equally distributed; instead, they were – in the language of Sen’s entitlements – particularly marked among households that relied on their own labour entitlements (low skill workers; the self-employed) to generate the income needed to acquire food. Private transfers, either domestic or international remittances, were not protective.
- By contrast, having a well-functioning social protection program in place *prior* to the pandemic is protective of household food security. Evidence presented from both Bangladesh (and Ethiopia) is consistent with this claim; households that had been enrolled in well-functioning social protection programs before the pandemic struck were less likely to food insecure during the pandemic.
- This all implies that future efforts to eradicate poverty and hunger should include investing in the architecture of social protection programs (improving links between social protection and humanitarian interventions; designing programs that can be easily scaled) and implementation (improving delivery mechanisms, for example through contactless delivery of transfers).