



Migration, COVID-19, and Possible Implications for Food Security

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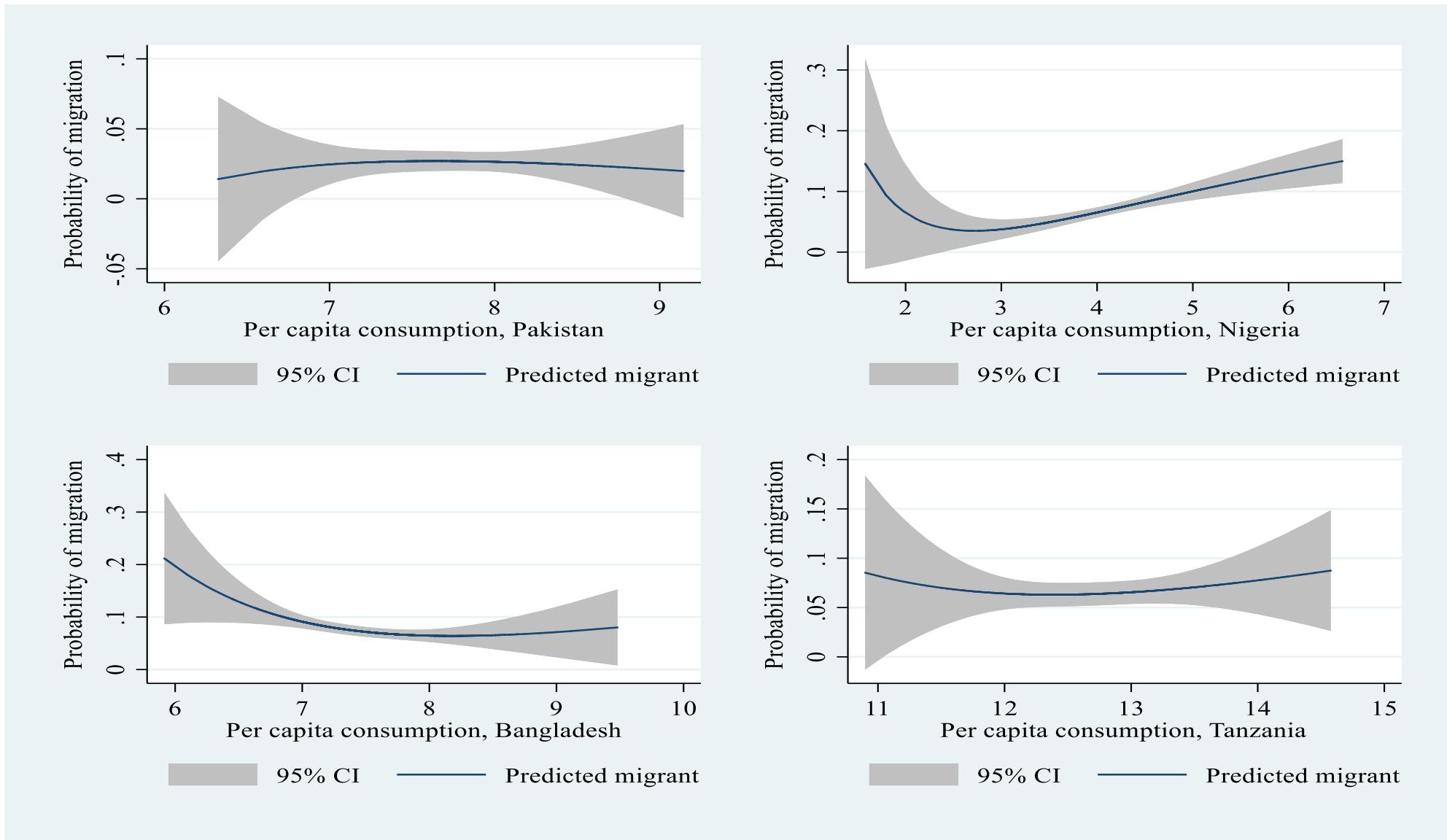
How is COVID-19 affecting overall food security particularly due to new migration restrictions?

- Major reduction in availability of work migrants typically do (or changes)
- Voluntary rural-urban migration
 - Where in income distribution do migrants come from?
 - What are likely implications?
 - Caveat on India
- International Migration
 - Immigration offices closed in some countries, substantial new restrictions on visas
 - What source countries are more likely to be affected?
- Involuntary Migration (IDP/Refugee Situations)

Migration and Food Security (without COVID)

- Clearest relationship between migration and food security is with rural-urban migration
 - Returns to labor among migrants much higher (partially due to self-selection into migration)
 - Some migrants may come from poorer households— if so could be an increase in food insecurity

Relationship- HH Consumption and Youth Migration, Four Countries



Implications

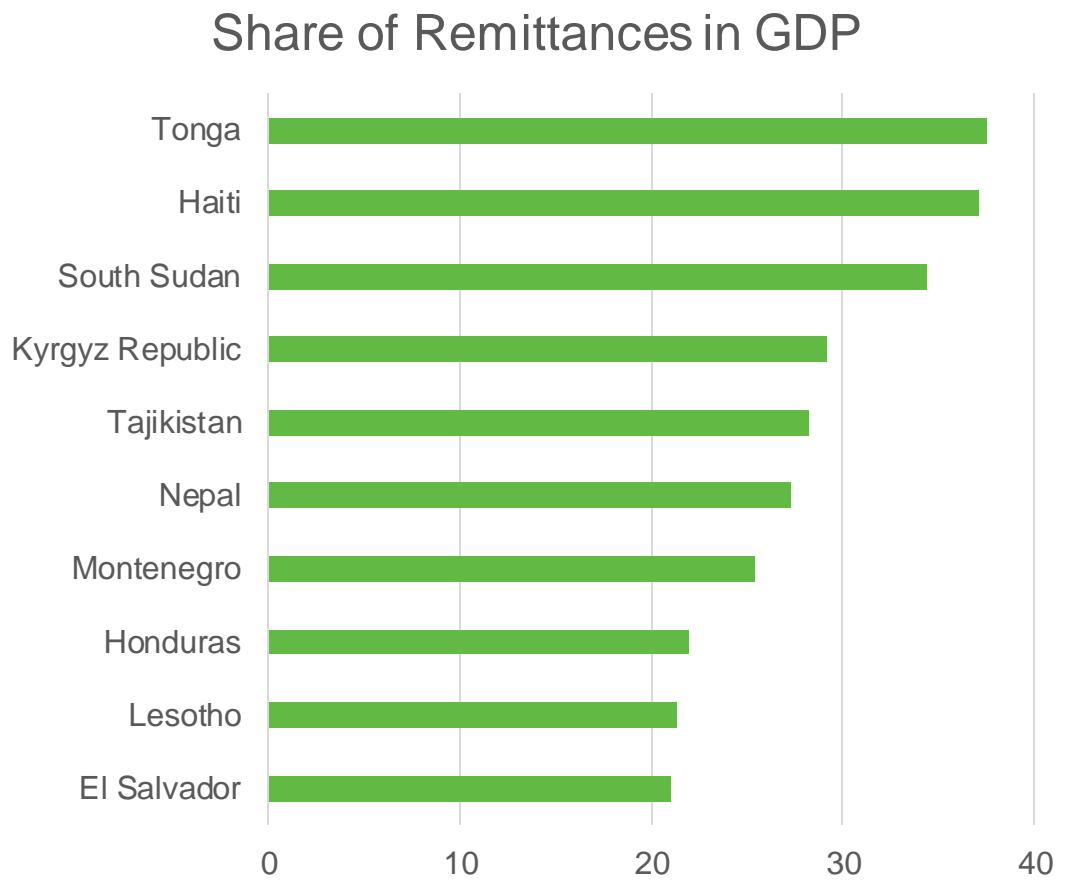
- In each of these countries, no clear relationship between *youth* migration and household expenditures (proxy for income)
- So should be some concern that if migrants return to poor households increase in food insecurity

INDIA CAVEAT

- India locked down in June, causing millions of migrants to return home
- May have substantially contributed to spread of COVID-19 in India
- Makes recovery more difficult; 23.9 percent decline in GDP in Q2 2020 (NSO)
 - Agriculture only sector that is growing (3.4 percent)

International Migration?

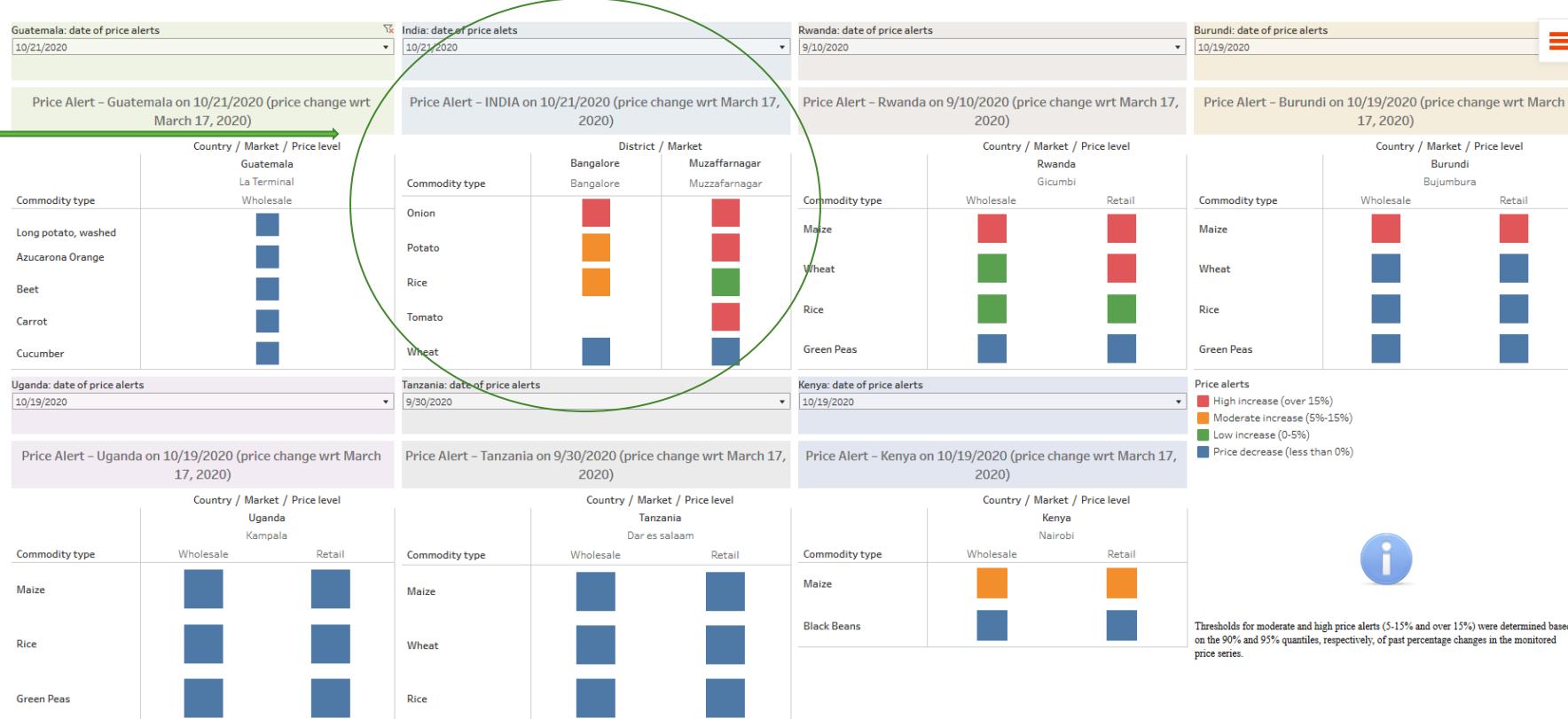
- International Migration also has large returns to skills
 - But high fixed costs of migrating leads to smaller probability of food insecurity among those left behind
 - Some possible exceptions...
(Remittances/GDP>20 percent)



How is COVID 19 potentially affecting food supply?

- Many value chains seem to have been quite resilient to COVID
 - Ag GDP rising in three largest developing countries (India, China, Indonesia)
 - But effects are heterogeneous across crops, regions, type of food
 - First place to look- prices? (Food Security Portal)

India



Involuntary Migration



Already an endogenous relationship with food insecurity



May be more difficult to leave/get into IDP/Refugee camps as a result of COVID-19



Protracted crises (both “irregular” migration and refugee situations) create another set of challenges

More difficulty integrating IDP or refugee camp residents into local economies...

And...

- Some camps so crowded density is 4x greater than NYC (Rohingya in Bangladesh)
 - Health worker resources stretched
 - Testing appears limited
- Food, sanitation, schooling, medical care are all issues difficult to address
 - Important to bring attention to these challenges as they are easy to neglect with “closed” governments, etc.



Conclusions

- Reverse Migration could contribute to food insecurity and should be monitored more closely
 - Especially in context of rural-urban migration (or urban-rural)
- International migration concerns are context specific
 - For countries highly dependent on migration worth further study
 - International migration will be slow to recover as some jobs (food away from home, modern food systems) likely to return more slowly than others (construction?)
- It is more likely to change food demand patterns for a long time to come, and hopefully the global response will not reduce gains in undernutrition attained this century prior to 2020

Thank you!

Happy to discuss further at a.debrauw@cgiar.org or @adebrauw on
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