

# The Impact of Covid Restrictions in Low and Middle Income Countries

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## PROJECT SUMMARY

The Impact of Covid Restrictions in Low and Middle Income Countries Project was collectively developed by [Professor Toby Green](#) (Department of History), [Dr Aleida Borges](#) (Global Institute for Women's Leadership), and two third sector organisations: [Collateral Global](#) and the [Institute of Development Studies](#). Together, they worked jointly to deepen the impact of a conference held in 2023 focused on exploring the impact of Covid restrictions in lower and middle income countries.

Drawing upon the conference's findings, academics and other stakeholders created a [detailed policy statement](#) investigating the impact of Covid restrictions on the Global South. This document was presented by Green during a [side-panel](#) held during the UN High Level Political Forum in July 2023. The statement has since been discussed in a [report](#) issued by the Royal United Services Institute, one of the world's most prominent security and defence thinktanks.

Following the conference, Green authored a series of print media articles highlighting the impacts of Covid lockdowns in African low and middle incomes countries. Presently, Collateral Global is working on creating a series of video recordings of participants' contributions during the conference, which will be made available to the public shortly.

## HOW DID THE PROJECT COME ABOUT?

The Covid pandemic wrought havoc across the globe, disrupting lives, economies, and healthcare systems.

Recognising the necessity of bringing wider attention to the substantial changes that accompanied the imposition of lockdown around the world, Toby Green, and his co-author Thomas Fazi, wrote *The Covid Consensus* (2023). This well-received work delivers a poignant message: the world's response to the pandemic has had devastating consequences for democratic rights and impoverished communities worldwide. Aleida Borges has broached similar questions in her scholarship. Her research outputs, which include authoring an essay for the edited volume *Pandemic Response and The Cost of Lockdowns*, have focused in particular on highlighting the gendered impacts of policy responses to Covid in the Global South.

Green notes that, when it came to broader impact work, his study 'provided an obvious sense of direction'. The desire to host a conference centered on responses to the pandemic in less economically advantaged parts of the globe arose from collaborative research on Covid and prior work completed with colleagues in Africa.

The conference and the policy statement aimed to not just deepen our understanding of the inherent inequalities within pandemic prevention strategies but also to raise awareness of these issues among the general public.

# TOBY GREEN THOMAS FAZI

'A unique take'  
*New Statesman*

'A bracing  
polemic'  
*LRB*

'Brave,  
measured,  
essential'  
*El País*



# THE COVID CONSENSUS

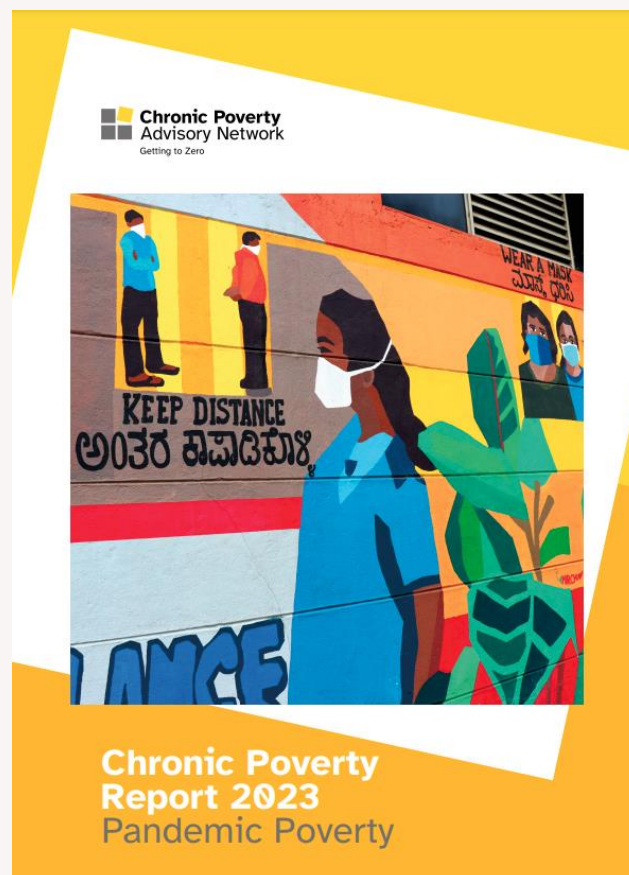
**The Global Assault on Democracy and  
the Poor – A Critique from the Left**

## WHAT HAPPENED?

“The Impacts of Covid Restrictions in Low and Middle Income Countries”, an academic conference, was held at King’s College London in April 2023. The event brought together a range of interdisciplinary scholars from Asia (India, Turkey, and Vietnam), Africa (Angola, Cabo Verde, Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, and Nigeria) and Latin America (Argentina, Bolivia, Colombia, and Central America). Speakers with close ties to the Indian Public Health system, and the former deputy-director of Médecins-Sans-Frontières-Spain’s emergency section also presented. The conference concluded with a live press conference attended by members of the Collateral Global steering group, the convenor of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Pandemic Response and Recovery, and the Health Editor of the *Sunday Express*.

After the conference, Green, Mendes Borges, and others collaborated on formulating a policy statement that drew on the contributions of all attendees. The statement addressed several significant issues, including the effects of lockdowns on human rights, the agency of global institutions, and the interrelationship between political authoritarianism and public discourse.

Dr Andrew Shepard, an attendee at the conference and the Director of the Chronic Poverty Advisory Network at the Institute of Development Studies, subsequently convened the side-panel event at the UN High Level Political Conference, entitled *How Can we Avoid Pandemic Poverty in the Future?* Green presented the collaborative policy document during this panel, which also featured speakers including Dr Martha Reyes Alvarez, Minister of Health for the Republic of Nicaragua, and Dr N’da Konan Michel Yao, Director of the Department of Strategic Health Operations at the World Health Organisation.



The front page of the policy statement.



**“Their conclusions and recommendations make for stark reading, amply illustrating the costs that policies dreamed up in the halls of Geneva can have elsewhere”**

— Simon Rynn, writing in a report for the *Royal United Services Institute*.

## WHAT WAS THE PROJECT’S IMPACT?

The project secured several significant impacts. One notable outcome of the conference itself was the heightened awareness among attendees from the Global South that there were significant symmetries between their country’s experiences of Covid, especially for the poor.

A key motivation accompanying the presentation of the policy statement to the UN High Level Political Conference was the desire that the conference’s findings inform policy-makers going forward. A report issued by the *Royal United Services Institute* (RUSI), highlighted the importance of the statement’s findings. As the author, Simon Rynn, reflects, “In much of the developing world, Covid restrictions were seen as a cruel imposition from the get-go. In Spring 2023, King’s College London convened scholars and activists from 14 mainly Asian, Latin American and African countries to discuss the impacts of Covid restrictions in Low and Middle Income Countries (LMICs). Their conclusions and recommendations make for stark reading, amply illustrating the costs that policies dreamed up in the halls of Geneva can have elsewhere.”

This engagement with RUSI led to a significant additional impact, the co-convening of a meeting on March 1<sup>st</sup> 2024, called “African Leadership, Health Security and Pandemic Preparedness”. This meeting was funded in part through a faculty Impact Case Study development award, bringing together senior academics and politicians from Africa with diplomats, civil servants, and think tank analysts. The event will therefore bring greater awareness of some of the themes discussed at the event in April 2023 to a high-level policy meeting.

In the months following the conference, Green also raised public awareness of the ways in which lockdowns have disproportionately harmed the global poor by writing for the press. These include an [article](#) linking pandemic poverty to the military coups that have taken place across West and Central Africa, published in the *New Statesman*, and a broader [piece](#) on lockdowns in Africa in the liberal US publication *Persuasion*.

Green, ruminating upon his experience working on the project, mused that ‘is ‘too early to tell’ what impact it will truly have, especially when it comes to policy making. His efforts to promulgate the findings of the report and draw attention to the inequalities inherent in global responses to Covid continue.

## TOBY'S TOP 3 TIPS FOR IMPACT

1. One important benefit that comes from collaborating with others is the ability to share the workload. Impact projects tend to have demands that exceed the capacities of a single person.

2. Working with others exposes you to different points of view and fosters fresh perspectives. Engaging beyond your immediate circle, even outside your faculty, offers the opportunity to engage with different problem-solving methods and unconventional insights that can challenge your own assumptions.

3. Focusing on modest but achievable goals is an excellent starting point for doing impact work. This approach minimises the risk of becoming overwhelmed and enhances the ability to track and communicate progress effectively to stakeholders. This, in turn, helps maintain support and momentum for the project.

## FURTHER READING

Himakiran Anagula, *Impact of Covid-19 Crisis on Migrant Workers in Tamil Nadu and the Response from Civil Society* (New Delhi, 2020)

Toby Green; Thomas Fazi, *The Covid Consensus: The New Politics of Global Inequality* (London, 2021).

Toby Green, 'What Lockdown Did to Africa', *Persuasion*, September 2023.

Dorothea Hilhorst; Rodrigo Mena, 'When Covid-19 Meets Conflict: Politics of the Pandemic Response in Fragile and Conflict-Affected States', *Disasters*, 45 (2021), S174-S194.

Peter Sutoris; Sinéad Murphy, Aleida Borges (eds.), *Pandemic Response and the Cost of Lockdowns: Global Debates from Humanities and Social Sciences* (London, 2022).



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