

## R4HC partnership during the COVID-19 pandemic January – June 2020 Report

### Mental Health (Palestine-KCL)

The Birzeit-KCL team have undertaken a wide range of activities during this period.

- Blog related to work with collaborators at the [LSE on food insecurity with reflections on COVID-19](#). This led to interviews with the Independent Jewish Voices-Canada, which was [published](#).

COVID-19 has led to some significant changes in the overall programme:

- **Palliative and Mental Health research:** Data collection will be postponed from Summer 2020 to Autumn 2020 (if necessary, it will have to be postponed until 2021).
- **Uncertainty research:** Data analysis will take longer as people are working from home facing lack of work space and additional caring responsibilities (especially women with children or those caring for older people).
- **Capacity building:** Our intensive course “Research Methods for Mental Health in War and Conflict” will be cancelled this summer. We will run it again in Summer 2021. *We would also like to request that funds will be extended to 1 year after the closure of the project so that we can run it a third time as we had planned.*
- **Meetings:** Meetings related to our capacity building courses, writing project, and proposal writing for funding opportunities will be held using online platforms.
- **Travel:** Unless the situation changes, Hanna Kienzler will not travel to the West Bank during the summer 2020. *We would like to suggest that travel and related research funds will be available 1 year after the project closes so that we can continue our work with a 1-year extension. If this is appropriate, Hanna can provide an estimate of what the travel would have costed.*
- **Conference presentation:**
  - Directly affected is Nancy Tamimi’s poster presentation at the CUGH Global Health Conference Washington. The conference has been cancelled. Since the poster is ready, we would like to request that we will receive additional funding to present it elsewhere when travel is possible again.
  - Directly affected is also Nancy Tamimi’s presentation at the World Health Organisation Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC) meeting in Geneva on 17-19 March.
  - Posters were also submitted to the Lancet Palestinian Health Alliance (LPHA) annual conference. Depending on whether or not the conference will go ahead, we would also like to have the chance to present the posters/talks either at other venues or at next year’s LPHA without additional costs, drawing from the current budget.

*Team members would be keen to be involved in writing proposals for projects or in the preparation of outputs that look specifically at COVID-19 in war and conflict (Nancy has voiced explicit interest in this).*

## Mental Health (Lebanon)

### ***Updates from Policy Research Group (PRG), Cambridge University, UK***

#### COVID-19 impact:

We have been able to continue work mostly as planned. A visit of the Cambridge Team to the Global Mental Health Lab (GMHLab, Teachers College, Columbia University) had to be postponed shortly before the pandemic peaked and we are unable to reschedule yet because of travel restrictions. We further assume a delay in review of our paper due to the increased number of submissions to health-related journals regarding COVID-19. The current restrictions will also inevitably delay our workshop for the Lebanese Ministry of Public Health (MOPH). Once there is more certainty in planning, we will resume conversations.

#### Publications:

Ruggeri, K., Garcia-Garzon, E., Maguire, Á., Matz, S., & Huppert, F. (in press). Well-being is more than happiness and life satisfaction: A multidimensional analysis of 21 countries. *Health and Quality of Life Outcomes*.

Graeff Buhl-Nielsen, S., Garcia-Garzon, E., Benzerga, A., Folke, T., & Ruggeri, K. (in press). Global mental health: An improved measure of well-being in multiple languages. *Health and Quality of Life Outcomes*.

Ruggeri, K., Jarke, H., El Zein, L., Verdelli, H., & Folke, T. (submitted). Mental health and risk-taking among refugees in Lebanon. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications\**.

Preparation of a white paper on behavioural insights for the use in mental health policy in Lebanon. *This will be provided to Lebanon MOPH and Nudge Lebanon, but that plan/timeline is currently in doubt given the situation in Lebanon. The report is still being drafted and should be finished soon.*

R4HC-MENA will also be credited in our upcoming textbook:

Ruggeri, K. (Ed). (forthcoming, likely 2021). *Behavioral Insights for Public Policy (2nd edition)*. New York and London: Routledge

#### Dissemination:

The PRG has engaged with colleagues at the Max-Planck-Institute for Human Development in Berlin to gain valuable feedback regarding the behavioural interventions which are part of the investigations into mental health and risk taking in Lebanon. In February 2020, we presented our work to the lab where one of the interventions (boosting) originated, gained input regarding the interpretation of results. Hannes Jarke met with the Director and other researchers of the Centre for Adaptive Rationality to discuss our work and implications for future applications. Kai Ruggeri presented preliminary results of the study at a number of smaller-scale events to obtain feedback on methods.

Further items:

During May, we worked on refining the research paper on mental health and risk-taking and consulted mental health and local experts on the interpretation of our results, which resulted in valuable insights. These have been incorporated into the submitted manuscript.

PRG have prepared workshop content for the evidence-based policy training (linking behavioural and mental health outcomes) to be conducted in Lebanon. While this is on hold for now, we are exploring options and timelines of alternative ways to deliver the workshop in online settings, taking into account the impact on the partners in Lebanon (who have informed us that they are under significant stress) and general restrictions of the pandemic. We are looking into engaging with additional partners, however, we have decided to wait until all current matters (over which we have control) are resolved, so we can provide clear materials and ideas. We anticipate those will be ready in late June/early July.

***Updates from Global Mental Health Lab (GMHLab), Teachers College, Columbia University, New York***

COVID-19 impact:

- **Interpersonal Psychotherapy (IPT) Capacity Building UK:** We initially planned to conduct an in-person didactic workshop (1.5 days) and implementation seminar (1.5 days) with mental health practitioners and researchers in capacity-building and applications of Group IPT for LMICs in London between May 26-28, 2020.
  - We restructured this training and adapted it for synchronous online delivery which was delivered in May. To enhance engagement and participation from the attendees we incorporated online discussion, role-plays, and breakout sessions.
  - We modified the content to include several new themes relevant to the COVID-19 pandemic and its links with mental health research and practice. The modifications involved:
    - The content of the workshop to highlight adaptations to the strategies and delivery structure of Group IPT in the context of COVID-19.
    - The seminar to address adaptations to the delivery and implementation of IPT in community, primary and tertiary care settings in usual times and in the context of COVID-19. Particularly, during the breakout working groups, we focused on system-level mental health capacity-building and program evaluation of Group IPT (including telehealth and online formats).
    - We organised a special presentation on “Working with vulnerable groups despite and in the context of the pandemic - from a policy perspective”, which was conducted by our policy expert, Dr. Sandra Willis.
  - The workshop was attended by researchers and clinical practitioners from various organisations such as the NHS Trust; IAPT services; and, private practices. 18 participants attended the workshop and 16 participated in the seminar.

- **Implementing IPT for Maternal Depression in Lebanon: Formative Situational Analysis; Research Capacity Building in Lebanon:** The GMH Lab team in collaboration with Lebanon MOPH, is conducting a situational analysis, resource mapping, and stakeholder engagement as a formative phase for the implementation of IPT for maternal depression in Lebanon. This is in line with the National Mental Health Programme's agenda to ensure equitable and inclusive mental health to refugee and host populations in Lebanon. We made the following modifications:
  - We adapted the administration of our surveys, implementation of focus group discussions, and key informant interviews to an online format. This was disseminated via a secure platform.
    - Our team has designed a robust survey to assess and evaluate the pathways to Maternal Mental Health Service Delivery in the context of Lebanon's private and public health sectors. **This will be administered as an online survey in June - July 2020, as originally planned.**
    - Our team has designed a survey to evaluate the use of IPT by previously trained practitioners in their current practice in Lebanon. Continuity of use of IPT after the supervision ended in 2019 will be used as a proxy indicator of IPT adoption in Lebanon. **This will be administered as an online survey in June - July 2020, as originally planned.**
    - Our team has adapted the Dissemination and Implementation (D&I) Survey developed by the Applied Mental Health Research Group, Johns Hopkins University and will be piloting the survey across regional centres. **This will be administered as an online survey in June - July 2020, as originally planned.**
    - Originally we planned to conduct a number of in-person focus group discussions and key informant interviews with policy experts; reproductive health and mental health clinical practitioners; academics etc. on maternal depression in Lebanon and acceptability of implementing IPT as a treatment for maternal depression. **Data collection will now be carried out online via Zoom video-conferencing. We will begin data collection in July 2020, and will complete data collection by Fall 2020.**

**Final status:** We submitted IRB amendments between April - May, 2020 to add the follow-up surveys, and to collect data through online platforms. We will complete data analysis for these deliverables by end-Fall 2020 - early Spring 2021.

- **Meetings:** Meetings related to our capacity building efforts in Lebanon, and proposal writing for funding opportunities have been held using online platforms. The following deliverables have been restructured:
  - **Scaling-up Training-of-Trainers in IPT in Lebanon:**
    - As originally intended, we are recruiting a cadre of 30 new trainee-providers, who will receive didactic training in IPT over a 4-day training workshop in Lebanon. In this new cohort, 15 will be key faculty members from Lebanese academic institutions, who have been identified as future local master-trainers. The content is being restructured to have a dual focus such that all aspects of IPT content, delivery, and implementation can be disseminated within and outside the

context of COVID-19 (e.g. IPT techniques; vulnerable populations; recruitment logistics; delivery format).

**Final Status: Planning for training to be held in August 2020**

- **Regional IPT Conference in Lebanon:**
  - The originally intended regional conference in Lebanon will be held virtually and will include a series of seminars with local and international IPT experts; poster sessions which will highlight national and regional evidence on IPT and EBPs.

**Final Status:** Planning for conference to be held in October 2020 (if there are interruptions to hosting the conference, we may postpone this to November/December 2020 (i.e. still within the projected timeline of this deliverable).

Lena Verdeli and team are Co-Investigators on the National Institute of Health Research (NIHR) Research and Innovation for Global Health Transformation (RIGHT) grant to conduct a randomised control trial of IPT for treatment of post-natal depression and child development in two sites (Lebanon and Kenya) (PI: Peter Fonagy). Lena Verdeli conducted a well-attended webinar in the Columbia University Global Center in Amman on [Mental and Behavioral Interventions Addressing the effects of COVID-19](#).

Given the changes outlined above, *we will reallocate budget from the UK and Lebanon trainings' costs* (i.e. flight tickets, accommodation, training venue, catering and material costs) to other items, such as paying our consultants, trainers, and trainee-supervisors. There will be no change to the overall total expenditure as currently budgeted.

We still plan to deliver on all outputs by the project end-date (December 31, 2021). No outputs will be cancelled.

Cancer & Palliative Care (Turkey, Jordan, Palestine, UK)

**The palliative care** capacity building programmes continue apace. **In Palestine** ethics are in place for the qualitative study on advanced cancer in collaboration with KCL due for a September launch. Sabah is working on the protocol for the public survey in Jordan and Turkey. *If this is extended to Palestine and Lebanon it will require additional resourcing.* Ethics are in place at KCL and almost ready at KHCC for the adult outcomes-focused quality improvement cycles.

**In paediatrics palliative care**, Sabah is working with teams in Turkey and Jordan to analyse the data. Recruitment is halted but we are very close to planned sample size. There are plans to meet in October to draft the paediatric outcome scale. This will be then cognitively tested and used in a quality improvement cycle in both countries in 2021. Sabah will develop the protocol for this.

**For COVID-19 specific research** we have a systematic review of pandemic palliative care response accepted for publication. The Italian study led by Irene was accepted. Sabah has developed the African preparedness web survey which goes to ethics late July. The African survey is completed and based on the review recommendations this could easily be adapted for the Middle East.

Publications:

1. Etkind, S. N., Bone, A. E., Lovell, N., Cripps, R. L., Harding, R., Higginson, I. J., & Sleeman, K. E. (2020). The Role and Response of Palliative Care and Hospice Services in Epidemics and Pandemics: A Rapid Review to Inform Practice During the COVID-19 Pandemic. *Journal of pain and symptom management*, 60(1), e31–e40.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpainsymman.2020.03.029>
2. Bajwah, S., Wilcock, A., Towers, R., Costantini, M., Bausewein, C., Simon, S. T., Bendstrup, E., Prentice, W., Johnson, M. J., Currow, D. C., Kreuter, M., Wells, A. U., Birring, S. S., Edmonds, P., & Higginson, I. J. (2020). Managing the supportive care needs of those affected by COVID-19. *The European respiratory journal*, 55(4), 2000815.  
<https://doi.org/10.1183/13993003.00815-2020>
3. Free guidance on [self-management of breathlessness](#).
4. Shamieh O, et al. COVID-19 – Impact on DNR Orders in the Largest Cancer Center in Jordan. *J Pain Symptom Manage*. 2020;S0885-3924(20)30242-6.  
[doi:10.1016/j.jpainsymman.2020.04.023](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpainsymman.2020.04.023)
5. Ping has drafted the adult KHCC qualitative data and the place of death paper with the Ministry.

The KCL team also have ethical approval to survey hospice and palliative care providers to determine preparedness and needs in Africa and India. KCL are working with colleagues from R4HC-MENA to conduct this online survey in the WHO EMRO region. In India and Africa, the regional palliative care association has a membership list, but such an association does not exist in EMRO. *This could be a collaboration with the WHO EMRO working group; how would this be done?*

In addition, in the **palliative care group**, colleagues at Hacettepe University are completing a literature review of palliative care in Turkey as well as key informant interviews on palliative care.

Three additional research projects are underway:

- Cancer in Refugee population, Konya district, data collection recently started.
- Cancer in Refugee population, Southern Turkey, data collection recently started.
- C-POS research in paediatric palliative care in collaboration with KCL. An abstract is on the way for Oman World Cancer Congress, deferred to March 2021.

**Cancer activities** have continued with all four partners with a major focus on how the pandemic has impacted risk and service delivery. **In Lebanon** the team have led on creating [COVID-19 specific cancer guidelines](#) and are now developing an on-line training module – Cancer and Conflict – in light of the completed capacity needs assessment.

All four cancer leads with our external partners, UICC and eCancer, have been co-founders of the [global taskforce on Cancer and COVID-19](#). A substantial body of work is now underway, including significant [cancer intelligence resources](#), and numerous working groups, for example:

- Risk of COVID-19 to cancer patients
- Modelling the indirect impact on COVID-19 measures e.g. lockdowns on cancer services
- Impact on cancer healthcare workers
- Silver linings: positive learnings for cancer control in pandemics
- Economic impact on cancer control from COVID-19

The teams have produced a number of publications during this period:

- Debbie Mukherji *et al.* High-Cost Cancer Treatment Across Borders in Conflict Zones: Experience of Iraqi Patients in Lebanon. **JCO Glob Oncol**. 2020 6:59-66
- RA Abdul-Khalek, P Guo, F Sharpe, A Gheorghe, O Shamieh, T Kutluk, F Fouad, A Coutts, A Aggarwal, D Mukherji, G Abu-Sittah, K Chalkidou, R Sullivan. The economic burden of cancer care for Syrian refugees: A population-based model. **Lancet Oncology** 2020 21(5):637-44
- A Aggarwal, P Patel, G Lewison, A Ekzayez, A Coutts, F Fouad, O Shamieh, R Giacaman, T Kutluk, RA Khalek, M Lawler, P Boyle, D Sarfati, R Sullivan. Non-communicable disease research in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, 1991-2018: Evidence to inform regional research, health systems capability and capacity planning **PLoS One** 2020 (online)
- A Gheorghe, K Chalkidou, O Shamieh, T Kutluk, F Fouad, I Sultan, R Sullivan. The economics of paediatric cancer in four Eastern Mediterranean countries: a comparative assessment. **J Global Onc** 2020 (accepted)
- Muhammed Aasim Yusuf, Shoaib Fahad Hussain, Faisal Sultan, Farhana Badar, Richard Sullivan, Cancer care in times of conflict: cross border care in Pakistan of patients from Afghanistan, and Cancer care in the time of COVID-19—a perspective from Pakistan both been published in **eCancer** 2020 14: 1018
- M Jawad, C Millett, R Sullivan, F Alturki, B Roberts, E P Vamos, The impact of armed conflict on cancer among civilian populations in low- and middle-income countries: a systematic review. **eCancer** 2020: 14:1039-79

This has also included COVID-19 specific outputs:

- The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on cancer deaths due to delays in diagnosis: a national population-based modelling study **Lancet Oncology** 2020 (accepted subject to revisions)
- M Sullivan, E Bouffet, C Rodriguez-Galindo, R Sullivan, K Pritchard-Jones *et al.* The COVID-19 pandemic: A rapid global response for children with cancer from SIOP, COG, SIOP-E, SIOP-PODC, IPSO, PROS, CCI and St Jude Global. **Pediatric Blood & Cancer** 2020 (online)
- S Al Waheidi, R Sullivan, EA Davies. Additional challenges faced by cancer patients in Gaza due to COVID-19. **eCancer** 14 ed100

The major impact to policy has been the cancellation of the March 2021 World Cancer Congress (which had been deferred from this year). This is a huge loss as we had three major sessions and the hosts – Oman – provided the perfect platform for wider dissemination and engagement. The group will have to re-think policy translation next year, likely building on the work of the COVID-19 and Cancer Taskforce.

## Political Economy of Health (PEoH)

Imperial College London team-led work with MENA partners have delivered a substantive range of research, capacity building and publications:

### Pre-planned research:

- Imperial College London (Adrian Gheorghe, Mohammed Jawad) and KHCC (Abeer Rabaiah, Tala Haddad) “**Cost-effectiveness of breast cancer in Jordan**” scoping work started in January 2020 with a view to co-producing a model-based cost-effectiveness analysis of organised vs. opportunistic screening for breast cancer in Jordan. The work has not been significantly affected by COVID-19 as it entails essentially desk-based work and regular teleconferences between partners in the UK and Jordan; only one teleconference was postponed at the height of social distancing measures rolled out in Jordan (March 2020). A live stakeholder consultation meeting had been planned for July 2020, where two UK researchers would have travelled to Amman; this will no longer happen and will be replaced by a series of videoconferences. The scoping and conceptual modelling stages have been completed; model building and data collection begin in June with preliminary results expected in September and final results in December 2020.
- Imperial College London (Adrian Gheorghe) and AUB (Deborah Mukherji and Zahy Sater) “**Economic evidence for setting priorities in cancer care in the Middle East**”: scoping work is near finalised for conducting a thematic review of the economics of setting priorities for cancer care in conflict-affected settings in the Middle East. Similarly, this is desk-based work and is not expected to be affected by COVID-19. Results are expected in December 2020 and they will feed into the online course on cancer in conflict developed by AUB (see above), where Adrian Gheorghe will also prepare a session on the cost-effectiveness of cancer interventions.

### Pre-planned capacity development:

- Plans for launching a pilot, health economics-focussed, online community of practice for public health researchers in Jordan, Lebanon and Palestine have been postponed and will be reassessed in September 2020.
- Plans for tailored capacity development activities at KHCC have also been postponed and will be reassessed in September 2020.
- Collaborating with AUB for the online course on Cancer in Conflict for the health economics component.

### Peer-reviewed publications (not already mentioned above\*):

- Understanding the structure of a country’s health service providers for defence health engagement (M Bricknell, S Hinrichs-Krapels, S Ismail, R Sullivan). *BMJ Mil Health* Published Online First: 04 June 2020, doi: 10.1136/bmjmilitary-2020-001502
- Capacity for health economics research and practice in Jordan, Lebanon, the occupied Palestinian territories and Turkey: needs assessment and options for development (A Gheorghe, S Ismail, M Gad and K Chalkidou) – accepted, in press with *Health Research Policy and Systems*.

Submitted grant applications:

- Imperial College London, KHCC, KCL and KEMRI Wellcome Trust “**Access to technological innovation in cancer care in health systems facing external shocks: a blessing or a curse?**” (submitted to the MRC Global Health Board outline stage in March 2020)

Blogs:

- [Does Cancer Treatment Warrant Special Consideration from Health Decision-Makers in Low- and Middle-Income Countries?](#) (A Gheorghe, R Sullivan, K Chalkidou)

COVID-19 impact on workstream activities/outputs:

- The political economy workstream had a 4-speaker panel session accepted at the CUGH Global Health Conference in Washington, which was cancelled. This would have addressed thematic issues in the political economy of health in conflict and included presentation of country-level work in Palestine, Lebanon and Turkey.
- The political economy workstream had a 4-speaker panel session on the political economy of cancer policies accepted at the World Cancer Congress in Oman, which has been moved to March 2021.

COVID-19 projects:

- Imperial College London (K Chalkidou, A Gheorghe, J Kazibwe, M Gad) are partnering with the WHO, the World Bank, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the International Decision Support Initiative in the [COVID-19 Multi-Model Comparison Collaboration \(CMCC\)](#). CMCC’s aim is to enhance the informed use of models in policy making by providing end users (focusing on LMICs) with an accessible overview of aims, capabilities and limits of the existing COVID-19 models, as well as how their projections differ and what the models’ key assumptions and drivers are.
- Imperial College London (A Gheorghe, J Kazibwe, M Gad) and King’s College London (Martin Bricknell) “**Utilisation of military health systems in the response to COVID**”: the project entails analysing publicly available media reports for detecting, identifying, categorising and synthesising the role of the military in the health and non-health response to COVID-19. A methodology has been piloted on 8 European countries and the results are summarised in a blog, forthcoming on the CGD website. Immediate plans (June-July 2020) are to extend and apply the methodology to all 30 NATO countries and a selection of LMICs, including Jordan and Egypt in the Middle East.
- Imperial College London (K Chalkidou, M Gad) collaborating with WHO EMRO on developing a design guide for developing health benefit packages ([draft](#)).
- A series of analyses focusing on the response to COVID-19 in LMICs, published as blogs on the CGD website:
  - [Does One Size Fit All? Realistic Alternatives for COVID-19 Response in Low-Income Countries](#) (K Chalkidou, R Sullivan)
  - [Urgent Call for an Exit Plan: The Economic and Social Consequences of Responses to COVID-19 Pandemic](#) (K Chalkidou, R Sullivan)
  - [Are Strict Lockdowns Suited to Populations Who Live Hand to Mouth? A Closer Look at Malawi](#) (K Chalkidou, R Sullivan)

- [Strengthening the Basics: Approaches to COVID-19 Care in Low-Resource Settings](#) (S Ismail, K Chalkidou, R Sullivan)
- [Strategic Investments for COVID-19 and Future Epidemic Threats](#) (A Gheorghe, K Chalkidou)
- [Maintaining Essential Services in the Time of COVID-19: Vaccination Delivery in Low- and Middle-Income Countries](#) (S Ismail, K Chalkidou)
- [Using Military Health Systems in the Response to COVID-19](#)

**AUB has experienced considerable disruption** with the pandemic adding to the economic collapse. Deliverables and ongoing activity include:

- Health Wellness and Society Conference (Paris) Sept 3-4, 2020 on “Political Economy of Health in Conflict: The Case of Lebanon” -- The presentation on 'The Political Economy of Health in Lebanon' has been accepted. We have paid the one-day registration fee and anticipate the conference will still take place as scheduled.
- Diab, J. L., & Fouad, F. (2020). The Politics and Economics of COVID-19 Relief in Times of Conflict and Vulnerability in the MENA Region. *IJRDO - Journal of Health Sciences and Nursing* (ISSN: 2456-298X), 5(7), 01-10. Retrieved from <https://ijrdo.org/index.php/hsn/article/view/3752>
- Country Report – PEOH R4HC-MENA Draft finalized, and two reviewers’ comments inserted.
- Country report currently in its final draft after undergoing a double peer review by both Dr. Bassel Sallouk and Dr. Nesrine Salti. The final draft needs one last read by contributors from the R4HC-MENA team and can be published as soon as possible. The original intended date for publication was June 2020. We are slightly delayed, and this will be published by the end of July.
- We submitted an abstract entitled: 'The Political Economy of Health in Conflict: The Dualism of Lebanon’s Health Sector as a Means for Survival’ to the International Conference on Public Economics and Political Economy (Berlin) July 23-24. This conference is organised by the World Academy of Science, Engineering and Technology. They organise a number of these conferences on political economy annually.
- “The Political Economy of Health in Lebanon amid Conflict, Post-Hoc Policies and the Absence of a Unified System”, initial draft submitted by Jasmin for comments. Currently with Political Economy Team under review.

### **Cambridge PEOH team led by Adam Coutts:**

After running a one-day international policy conference in September 2019, [No place like home? New perspectives on displacement and the modern refugee system](#), we are planning a further series of online meetings with the UK Foreign Office, Department for International Development and the Syria Support Group in 2020.

[Two films](#) will be used as the basis of a policy roundtable event with the UK mission to the United Nations in Geneva and heads of UN agencies. A one-day event was scheduled for mid-March 2020 but had to be cancelled due to COVID-19. The event brings together the members of the Syria support group and UN representatives to examine possible policy options for integrating displaced Syrian healthcare workers into labour markets in neighbouring, frontline countries and

further afield in Europe. The former head of UNHCR video (Edith Champagne) is producing a short documentary to examine the situation of displaced health care workers in the MENA and in Europe. Both films will be launched online in September 2020 with the Syria support group in Geneva.

Commissioned a political economy of health audit for Yemen which is currently being conducted by a new CARA fellow in Cambridge, Dr Bothaina Ahmed Attal, a medical doctor from Yemen.

Adam Coutts has also undertaken a number of interviews for various media outlets on the situation of COVID-19 in humanitarian contexts on behalf of R4HC-MENA. These include:

- [Unprepared for the Worst: World's Most Vulnerable Brace for Virus](#)
- [Collapse Of Bangladesh's Garment Industry During Coronavirus Leaves Its Workers More Vulnerable Than Ever](#)
- [COVID-19 and Humanitarian Access for Refugees and IDPs: Part 2 – Syria and Bangladesh](#)
- [Crowding, lack of water spell COVID-19 nightmare for world's 71 million refugees](#)
- [No soap nor water: Fear mounts for refugees as coronavirus spreads](#)
- [US now leads in the World in Confirmed Cases](#)
- [How the coronavirus outbreak could hit refugees and migrants](#)
- [Coronavirus fears grip Middle East as Iran denies cover-up](#)
- [As Coronavirus Spreads, Experts Warn Refugees Are Particularly Vulnerable](#)

**Mona Jebril with Simon Deakin from Cambridge** have completed the following outputs:

1. Published article at Discover Society Magazine (Feb, 2020): [De-politicizing the Health Sector in Gaza: Necessity vs Politics](#)
2. Animation Film (part 1): [Political Economy of Health in Gaza: An Introduction](#)
3. Animation Film (part 2): [Political Economy of Health in Gaza: Research Methodology](#)
4. A Life Lived in Conflict podcast, [Disability and Covid-19 in Gaza](#)

**There have been a number of cancellations due to COVID-19:**

1. Presentation as part of a 4-speaker panel session for R4HC-MENA at the 2020 Annual CUGH Global Health Conference Washington, 18-20 April 2020.
2. Participation in a discussion session at Medact 2020 Gathering: "Health Justice: The health community as a force for change" 29 March 2020.

**Other COVID-19 related work delay and changes:**

Transcription work was delayed because of technical issues (transcription equipment purchase and installation). The problem continued between 1 January and 15 March, causing significant disruption to research work. After 15 March, the university was closed and we started working from home. The general feeling of uncertainty, and the challenges of adjusting to the new environment, have slowed the working pace on the project. Being away from the office space is expected to cause delay to data analysis, since access to the printer would be needed at this stage.

Bothaina Attal and Simon Deakin have submitted a joint application to Cambridge's internal GCRF QR Fund to undertake a project on public health provision and outcomes in Yemen (Political Economy Analysis of the Health System in Yemen). This application is currently pending.

Simon Deakin is also writing a paper with CBR colleague, Gaofeng Meng, on 'The governance of COVID-19'. This is not MENA specific but will discuss international cooperation as well as features of China's response to the crisis.

Conflict and Health (KCL, AUB, Hacettepe)

Staffing: There has been a significant gap without a post-doc since Dr. Andreas Papamichail left us in August 2019 for a Lectureship at Queen Mary University London. We have held off recruiting a replacement until August 2020 due to COVID-19. Dr. Gemma Bowsher (a Senior Research Associate with the KCL Conflict and Health Research Group) will be joining us on this workstream in a 50% capacity from August 2020, with the other 50% from LISS-DTP. This will ease some of the capacity issues. Kristen Meagher has been supporting the workstream by taking over Andreas's teaching, research, capacity strengthening activities.

Activities: A series of research-policy workshops (led by AUB) based on Nassim El Achi et al's study (A conceptual framework for capacity strengthening of health research in conflict: the case of the Middle East and North Africa region. *Global Health*. 2019) have been postponed due to the pandemic and political unrest in Lebanon. We had a very successful visiting fellowship with Dr. Nassim El Achi, spending 3 weeks at KCL working with the conflict and health workstream on joint teaching, publications, theory of change workshops, and external seminars for the Women Leaders in Health and Conflict Initiative.

Publications: Since the last IAB in September 2019, the Conflict and Health workstream has published 7 papers.

1. **Ekzayez A**, Al-Khalil M, Jasiem M, Al Saleh R, Alzoubi Z, **Meagher K**, **Patel P**. COVID-19 response in northwest Syria: innovation and community engagement in a complex conflict. *J Public Health (Oxf)*. 2020 May 21;fdaa068. doi: 10.1093/pubmed/fdaa068. Online ahead of print.
2. Aggarwal A, **Patel P**, Lewison G, **Ekzayez A**, Coutts A, Fouad FM, Shamieh O, Giacaman R, Kutluk T, Khalek RA, Lawler M, Boyle P, Sarfati D, Sullivan R. The Profile of Non-Communicable Disease (NCD) research in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region: Analyzing the NCD burden, research outputs and international research collaboration. *PLoS One*. 2020 Apr 27;15(4):e0232077. doi: 10.1371/journal.pone.0232077.
3. Akik C, Semaan A, Shaker-Berbari L, Jamaluddine Z, Saad GE, Lopes K, Constantin J, **Ekzayez A**, Singh NS, Blanchet K, DeJong J, Ghattas H. Responding to health needs of women, children and adolescents within Syria during conflict: intervention coverage, challenges and adaptations. *Confl Health*. 2020 May 29;14:37. doi: 10.1186/s13031-020-00263-3.
4. **El Achi N**, **Papamichail A**, Rizk A, Lindsay H, Menassa M, Abdul-Khalek RA, **Ekzayez A**, Dewachi O, **Patel P**. A conceptual framework for capacity strengthening of health research in conflict: the case of the Middle East and North Africa region. *Global Health*. 2019 Nov 28;15(1):81. doi: 10.1186/s12992-019-0525-3.
5. **Ekzayez A**, Flecknoe MD, Lillywhite L, **Patel P**, **Papamichail A**, Elbahtimy H. Chemical Weapons and public health: assessing impact and responses. *J Public Health (Oxf)*. 2019 Dec 5;fdz145. doi: 10.1093/pubmed/fdz145.
6. **Ekzayez, A**, Partnerships with local organisations are vital for conducting health research in Syria – personal reflections, *Journal of International Humanitarian Assistance*, in press.

7. **El Achi, N.**, Strengthening health research in conflict settings, Orient III/2020, German Orient-Institute, available online in July 2020.
8. **Ekzayez, A.** Sabouni, A. Targeting healthcare in Syria: a military tactic or a collateral damage?, Journal of Humanitarian Affairs, in press.

We have also submitted 7 papers as joint publications:

1. **Nassim El Achi; Gladys Honein-Abouhaidar; Anthony Rizk; Elsa Kobeissi; Andreas Papamichail; Kristen Meagher; Abdulkarim Ekzayez; Ghassan Soleiman Abu-Sittah; Preeti Patel.** Assessing the capacity for conflict and health research in Lebanon: A qualitative study, Conflict and Health, invited to resubmit with minor revisions (June 2020).
2. Ecology of war, health research and knowledge subjugation: Insights from the Middle East and North Africa Region, American Journal of Public Health, under review.
3. **Kristen Meagher; Preeti Patel; Nassim El Achi; Abdulkarim Ekzayez; Richard Sullivan.**, “Having more women humanitarian leaders will help transform the humanitarian system”: Challenges and Opportunities for Women Leaders in Conflict and Humanitarian Health, Conflict and Health, under review.
4. Shrum, L., **Meagher, K., Ekzayez, A., Bowsher, G., Patel, P.**, A Qualitative Analysis of Governance in Post-Conflict Health Systems: Evidence from Humanitarian Professionals, Journal of International Humanitarian Assistance, under review.
5. **Meagher, K., Nassim El Achi, Patel, P.**, Exploring the role of City Networks in supporting urban resilience to COVID19, PLoS One (special issue on Cities as Complex Systems).
6. Abdul-Sater, Z., Menassa, M., **El Achi, N.**, Abdul-Khalek R., **Abu-Sittah, G.**, Mukherji, D.: Strengthening capacity for cancer research in conflict settings: key informant insights from the Middle East, Global Health Action, under review
7. Abdul-Khalek, R.; **Abu-Sittah, S.; El Achi, N.**; Kayyal, W; Elamine, A.; Noubani, A.; Menassa, M.; Ahmad, F.; Sullivan, R.; Mukherji, D.: Mapping breast cancer journal publications in conflict settings in the MENA region: A scoping review, BMC Cancer, under review

We have also **provided substantial inputs to a paper led by the Hacettepe team**: “COVID-19 response strategies for refugees and undocumented migrants in Turkey – challenges and opportunities” and a paper led by AUB: [COVID-19: Gender Balance Forgotten in an Outbreak of “Webinar Fever”](#) 20 May 2020

**Special Themed Issue on NCD prevention in Humanitarian Settings with BMJ Global Health.** Call for abstracts was very successful with around 10 abstracts received mostly from the MENA region. We are currently in the process of organising a themed series on Women Leaders in Health and Conflict with Conflict and Health.

### **Research Grants:**

Our most significant research achievements include a successful NIHR grant for £4m on health system strengthening in northern Syria, with UOSSM, David Nott Foundation and KCL. This will start 1 September 2020 for 4 years. Kristen Meagher and Eleanor (Elly) Nott have both been awarded NIHR PhD fellowships as part of this award. Kristen will be studying for a PhD investigating the role of women's leadership and participation in health systems strengthening in northern Syria. Elly will be studying for a PhD on Healthcare as resistance: The political potency of providing healthcare in opposition-held Syria. Preeti will be lead supervisor for both Kristen and Elly.

Submitted a proposal (April 2020) to the Norwegian Government for £300,000. Rebel Orders: Non-State Armed Group Responses to COVID-19 with the Conflict, Security & Development Research Group (CSDRG) at KCL.

Submitted a proposal (April 2020) to the King's Together: Multi & Interdisciplinary Research Scheme. Developing a framework for Africa-wide response to mental health challenges in communities affected by Violent Extremism for £40,000. In collaboration with the Neem Foundation, Nigeria.

Submitting a programme grant in July 2020 on Tobacco Control in Pakistan, Georgia and Palestine to the Global Alliance for Chronic Diseases (GACD) with partners from IOPPN, Edinburgh University and partners based in the 3 LMIC countries.

Future plans: Grants for Women Leaders in Health and Conflict, Cities and Health in Conflict-affected areas, Diabetes in Humanitarian Settings.

### **Teaching:**

We had a very successful conflict and health course at KCL (Denmark Hill campus) as part of the MSc in Global Health and intercalated BSc in Global Health. We had our largest cohort so far with 58 students, so it was a very busy time with assessments, marking and adapting to COVID-19 with web-based live lectures and seminars. All members of our workstream contributed to teaching and assessments. One of the CSaP Policy Fellows (Dr Tasnim Atatrah, WHO Health Emergency Central Asia Hub Coordinator, World Health Organization, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan) offered to teach a live session on: International Health Regulations (IHR) (2005) implementation as a mean to advance global health security but we were unable to organise it to fit in with the course timetable. We are in the process of organising a webinar on the COVID-19 response in Central Asia for our webinar series.

In February 2020, Abdulkarim Ekzayez gave a lecture on Health Systems in Conflict settings as part of the Health in Urban Development MSc program at University College London (UCL).

On 6 February 2020, Abdulkarim Ekzayez and Gemma Bowsher took part in delivering a lecture on Health and Security as part of the Science and Security MSc program at KCL.

On 3 April 2020, Abdulkarim Ekzayez gave a lecture on Medical Humanitarianism in conflict settings as part of an International Relation MSc program at Queen's Mary University of London.

**Presentations/Webinars/Trainings:**

Abdulkarim Ekzayez: Health and Security, Politics Society, University of Sussex, 6 February 2020.

Abdulkarim Ekzayez: Health Humanitarian response in conflict settings, Humanitarian and Conflict Response Institute, Manchester University, 7 February 2020.

Nassim El Achi and Abdulkarim Ekzayez: Global Health Security and Pandemics: COVID-19 in Syria, Palestine and Lebanon, Mile End Institute, Queen Mary University of London, 6 May 2020.

Nassim El Achi: Women & Health and their role in Lebanon's current political crisis and Intifada, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, 4 February 2020.

Preeti Patel and Nancy Tamimi were invited to present on Tobacco Control in Conflict at the World Health Organisation in March 2020 but this has been postponed due to Covid19.

Abdulkarim Ekzayez took part in evaluating the Hostile Environment Surgical Training course provided by David Nott foundation in conflict affected countries. The evaluation process is led by the Health in Humanitarian Crisis centre at LSHTM.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Abdulkarim Ekzayez has delivered more than 15 online training courses on COVID-19 preventative and curative measures in conflict affected countries: Syria, Yemen, Nigeria and Pakistan. The trainings focused on updating local practitioners on up-to-date evidence on COVID-19 and get updates on how the pandemic is evolving in these countries.