



Cambridge International AS & A Level

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES & RESEARCH

9239/11

Paper 1 Written Exam

October/November 2025

INSERT

1 hour 30 minutes

INFORMATION

- This insert contains all the resources referred to in the questions.
- You may annotate this insert and use the blank spaces for planning. **Do not write your answers** on the insert.



This document has 4 pages. Any blank pages are indicated.

The following documents consider issues related to global inequality. Read them **both** in order to answer **all** the questions on the paper.

Document A: adapted from *The stark reality of how COVID-19 has worsened global inequality*, an article written by Priya Joi, published in 'VaccinesWork, Gavi' in 2022. She was previously a staff writer and editor at the World Health Organization and has a degree in genetics. Gavi is a global Vaccine Alliance that aims to save lives and protect people's health.

COVID-19 has been devastating to so many people who saw their health damaged and livelihoods destroyed. For the most vulnerable people across the globe, the pandemic has pushed millions into extreme poverty. This has left them even more at risk of disease, hunger, and domestic violence.

These are people who were victims of inequality even before the pandemic, with poor access to healthcare, unstable employment, and difficult living conditions. They were most vulnerable to COVID-19 and they are now experiencing the worst impacts of the pandemic.

In 2020, it seemed that lower income countries were far less affected by COVID-19 and some seemed almost untouched. However, the reality has been quite different. A study published last month showed that COVID-19 was twice as deadly in low-income countries. The study looked at data from 25 lower income countries between April 2020 and February 2021. The average COVID-19 fatality rate of 20-year-olds in low-income countries was nearly three times that in high-income ones. And 60-year-olds had almost double the risk of dying from COVID-19 compared with 60-year-olds in wealthy countries.

The pandemic has made almost all inequalities worse. By the end of 2022, the World Bank estimates that an additional 75 million people will have been pushed into poverty. This would bring the total number of people living in extreme poverty to 677 million by the end of the year – a staggering two-thirds of those could be in sub-Saharan Africa. The food crisis triggered by the pandemic could mean that the situation gets worse before it gets better.

The effects of poverty and the pandemic are far reaching. Many children saw their education paused during the pandemic and some never went back to school. This can have extremely negative consequences, especially for girls. When girls are not in education, they are often married too early. Also, they have children too early. When girls drop out of school, they also miss out on lifesaving vaccines such as HPV, which protects against cervical cancer.

Stopping girls' education also reduces their earning potential. Every extra year of schooling has the potential to increase girls' future wages by 12%, compared with 10% for boys. Women who are educated are more likely to educate their children, creating a positive cycle.

Being stuck at home in a family descending into poverty also has particular impacts on girls and women. Evidence has shown increasing rates of domestic violence during the pandemic. This can be hard to measure as violence within the home is often hidden. Some women feel unsafe to speak up, or if they do speak up, their testimony is not believed. However, a survey by UN Women says that seven out of ten women believe violence has gone up during the pandemic.

The pandemic has clearly worsened global inequality. The impact has been worse for the most vulnerable. For many, although the immediate threat of COVID-19 might be over, the effects of the pandemic will last for years to come.

Document B: adapted from *Economic migration: the root problem is not smugglers but global inequality*, an article written by Dr Seb Rumsby, published in 'The Conversation' in 2022. The author is an academic at the University of Warwick (UK), who has just finished his research project on Vietnamese migrant workers. 'The Conversation' is a network of not-for-profit media outlets publishing news stories and research reports online, with accompanying expert opinion and analysis.

Migration has always been a regular feature of human existence, but these days it is more visible than ever. An Amnesty International survey in 2016 found that 80% of people would welcome refugees who are fleeing wars or are at risk of persecution. However, there is much less agreement about those fleeing poverty to seek a better future. Migrants who attempt to reach other countries "illegally" are also often called "irresponsible" for embarking on dangerous journeys.

A recent British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) documentary looked at the 2019 case of 39 undocumented* Vietnamese migrants who died while trying to enter the UK. The documentary repeated the common belief that smuggling gangs are responsible for these tragedies.

It is true that smuggling gangs can make a lot of money by supplying illegal, and dangerous, transport services to desperate migrants. One bereaved father, interviewed by Vietnam News, gave a very different perspective. He stated that the reason his son was dead was not because of smugglers, but because of the better wages he could earn in the UK. In other words, while smugglers do contribute to dangerous conditions on the migrants' journeys, the root cause of those journeys is actually global inequality.

As part of my research, I have interviewed many Vietnamese migrants who come to the UK via these dangerous routes. They say they come to find work and send money back home. Most of them are originally from rural provinces. First, they move to Vietnam's major cities where they work very long, exhausting shifts, assembling electronics, for around USD 10 per day. This wage is relatively high compared to the average wage of USD 130 per month for unskilled workers in Vietnam. But without a decent education or the right personal connections, they cannot move up the career ladder. Interviewees said there was no hope of a better future in Vietnam.

In a report from 2017, workers at a Samsung factory in Vietnam reported extreme fatigue, fainting and dizziness due to their poor working conditions. Yet Samsung has made huge profits in Vietnam. This inequality happens all across the world: multinational corporations take advantage of cheap labour in poorer countries. For example, a 2011 study of an iPhone factory in China found that Apple only paid 1.8% of the finished product value to factory workers. Meanwhile Apple made an enormous 58.5% in profits.

So, in an unequal world, it makes sense for these workers to follow the money to a more developed country, find a low-skilled job, work hard and then send some money back home. This may lead Vietnamese migrants to Japan, Taiwan, South Korea, Germany – or all the way to the UK. Such movement, however, is often forbidden, forcing people to risk dangerous border crossings.

Vietnamese migrants told me they can earn 10 times more working in a UK nail shop than they could in Vietnam so it is not surprising that people would want to try their luck abroad.

So if we really want to prevent the tragic consequences associated with undocumented migration, we must address the root cause, which is inequality, instead of simply blaming smuggling gangs or "irresponsible migrants".

*People who have no valid visa or other immigration documents.

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