

Girls' and Boys' Voices on the Gendered Experience of Learning During COVID-19 in Countries Affected by Displacement

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# GIRLS' AND BOYS' VOICES ON THE GENDERED EXPERIENCE OF LEARNING DURING COVID-19 IN COUNTRIES AFFECTED BY DISPLACEMENT

NICOLE DULIEU, SILVIA ARLINI, MYA GORDON, AND ALLYSON KRUPAR

## ABSTRACT

*In this article, we present research on girls' and boys' gendered perceptions of their learning during COVID-19-related school closures. The research was conducted in ten countries affected by displacement across Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America. We applied statistical analysis using multivariate logistic regression models from the results of a survey conducted with parents or caregivers and their children. We complemented the quantitative study with qualitative methodology, which provided a nuanced understanding of girls' and boys' perceptions of their learning and their voiced concerns during the school closures. Our results show that the children in these displaced settings were likely to perceive a decline in their learning during the pandemic, and that the factors influencing this perception differed between boys and girls. Girls' perceptions of learning "nothing" or only "a little bit" were more strongly associated with material barriers, such as limited access to learning materials and household economic circumstances, than was the case for boys. The boys' experience of learning "a little bit" or "nothing" was more strongly associated with increased negative feelings, including feeling sad or worried, increased violence in the home, and increased responsibility for looking after siblings or other children. This research notes the importance of supporting displaced children by providing adequate resources to enable equitable access to learning, and calls for cross-sectoral programming to support displaced children who are dealing with emotional pressure.*

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## INTRODUCTION

In the wake of the massive number of school closures that were part of public health efforts to contain the spread of COVID-19, the education system worldwide is facing an unprecedented challenge. School closures due to COVID-19 led to approximately 90 percent of all students in the world being out of school and other places of learning. The move to remote learning has created gaps in the provision of education, especially for marginalized populations, displaced children, and girls with disabilities. Studies of previous school closures have shown that shocks, such as extreme weather events, result in a considerable decline in children's learning (Conto et al. 2020, 7). The school closures that took place during the COVID-19 pandemic may also result in a stagnation of children's learning and, in some cases, a decline in learning outcomes. The learning losses that may accrue among today's young generation, including their development of human capital, are likely to be significant. This study, which found that children reported learning significantly less since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic due to school closures, confirms such concerns.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, relatively limited research was conducted on the implications of public health emergencies for different groups, especially women and girls (Bennett and Davies 2016). Similarly little effort has been made to document children's voices when addressing learning needs during emergencies. Arguably, lessons learned from the Ebola epidemic were not applied in the Zika outbreak, nor were they widely known or applied during the COVID-19 pandemic (UNESCO 2021). Crises like the COVID-19 pandemic are shown to compound structural gender inequalities (Davies and Bennett 2016), as well as unequal access to education for marginalized groups.

Children have a legal human right to be heard in decisions that affect them, a right enshrined in the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child. However, only a limited number of systematic studies have incorporated children's perspectives or voices in the analysis of learning perceptions, especially those of girls and boys displaced during COVID-19. With this study, we aim to fill this gap by employing a mixed methods approach that draws from a quantitative survey conducted with children and their caregivers, and from four open-ended questions on the children's survey. Our analysis builds on children's lived experiences and perspectives on the quality of learning they experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic. Our aim is to provide evidence that highlights the importance of interventions that promote the provision of education in emergencies and of promoting gender equality in learning opportunities.

In this article, we attempt to answer the following research questions:

What effect has COVID-19 had on displaced children's perceptions of learning?

Do perceptions of learning during COVID-19 vary between girls and boys?

What factors are associated with the difference in girls' and boys' learning during school closures?

These questions, which are based on a feminist theoretical framework, highlight gender-based differences in children's perceptions, and on the voices of children who have experienced displacement. We assume that girls and boys are experts on their own experiences; thus, in our efforts to understand their home life, their perceptions of what they were missing most about school, their experience of learning at home, and their expectations of future opportunities for education programming during crises, we draw heavily from their words and responses in the quantitative and qualitative data collected for this study. Drawing from the work of Gallagher (2018) and Wang et al. (2020), our theoretical framework also considers the relationships between psychosocial wellbeing, learning, and the socioeconomic factors present in the households of displaced persons.

This article begins with a review of selected background literature that provides context and frames our analysis of the relationship between children's learning outcomes and gender disparities in learning in displaced settings. After discussing the research methods we used, we draw from our key findings to provide deeper insights into the perceived impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on learning outcomes, in particular those of displaced children.

## **GENDER DISPARITIES IN CHILDREN'S EDUCATION AND LEARNING IN DISPLACEMENT CONTEXTS**

### **EDUCATION AND LEARNING IN DISPLACEMENT**

Children worldwide are struggling with the impact of COVID-19, as an entire generation has had its education disrupted. The impact has been even more devastating for children experiencing displacement. UNHCR (2020a) estimates that displaced children are twice as likely to be out of school as those not displaced. Before the pandemic, more than half of the world's school-age children who were experiencing displacement did not have access to education (UNHCR 2019).

Displaced children are marginalized and vulnerable, and their right to education is commonly unfulfilled and often violated (Dryden-Peterson 2011). The barriers and obstacles to learning they have faced persisted and worsened during the COVID-19 pandemic. These children's families have been living precariously; on top of facing difficulties in securing food, shelter, social protection, and safety, they are unable to afford the education fees, uniforms, textbooks, travel, radios, mobile data, internet, and digital devices that will enable their children to continue learning. Where there is no learning infrastructure to support distance learning (Ambe-Uva 2012), the school closures inevitably posed a significant threat to children's ability to access and continue receiving a quality education.

A growing body of literature discusses the issues faced by children living in conflict-affected and disaster-related crisis settings, including inequitable access to education and learning opportunities, a lack of material and social-emotional learning support, and gender disparities in education and learning (Rai 2020; Burde, Lahmann, and Thompson 2019; Ullah, Khan, and Mahmood 2017; Silwal 2016; Dryden-Peterson 2016). Humanitarian organizations have a growing interest in shifting their efforts from providing reactive humanitarian aid to supporting the goal of achieving education for all and increasing child protection in unstable environments, thereby contributing to peace and stability (Burde et al. 2017). Practitioners and educators also noted the pre-COVID-19 gap in services provided to displaced children and called for increased support for and investment in education (Anderson et al. 2006; Karpinska 2012). The majority of studies show that education in settings of displacement has a positive effect on children's protection, wellbeing, economic development, peace, and stability (Davies and Talbot 2008; Paulson and Rappleye 2007; Novelli and Cardozo 2008; Mosselson, Wheaton, and Frisoli 2009).

Economic factors can vastly influence a child's learning outcomes (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre 2010). The economic consequences of the global lockdowns are likely to reduce the earning capacity of many displaced households, and they may increase the opportunity costs of sending children to school or of providing children with access to learning resources and technology (Orendain and Djalante 2021).

While much of the education response to COVID-19 attempted to use technology to maintain distance learning during the pandemic-related school closures, there were marked inequities in access to remote learning both between and within

countries (Chapman and Bell 2020; Dreesen et al. 2020; UNICEF 2020b). Estimates from more than 100 countries of the global reach of broadcast and online remote learning during the pandemic found that at least 30 percent of children were not reached by these efforts (UNICEF 2020a). Children in conflict zones, rural areas, and poorer households were likely to be in the worst situation, as the majority of them did not have access to technology. Furthermore, girls' learning was disadvantaged during the school closures by unequal access to technology and a lack of gender-sensitive initiatives (UNICEF 2020b). This situation calls for humanitarian actions and interventions to improve both online and offline learning infrastructures in order to support children's education and improve their learning experiences in displaced settings; this was discussed by Dahya and Peterson (2017) relative to conflict-driven displacement, and by Mooney and French (2005) relative to internal displacement resulting from a number of causes. Distance learning strategies should support teachers' transition to remote teaching, mobilize financial and technological resources to sustain the provision of learning, and develop learning content and materials that can be delivered through both online platforms and print-based materials.

The psychosocial condition of displaced children, including the effects of trauma, violence, discrimination, feeling unsafe, worrying, and fear of being attacked, may also significantly affect their education and learning experiences. Although psychosocial experiences in displacement may be less apparent than physical and economic issues, daily stressors nonetheless affect children's learning (Burde et al. 2017, 635; O'Neal et al. 2018; Fernando, Miller, and Berger 2010). For example, several studies have shown that violence against children increased when COVID-19 lockdown measures required people to stay at home (Sharma and Borah 2020; Bradbury-Jones and Isham 2020). Miller and Jordans (2016), who reviewed research on the relationship between conflict and children's psychosocial wellbeing, found that the prevalence of family violence and negative parenting practices, together with poverty and overcrowded or unsafe housing in displacement settings, can put additional stress on children's mental health and emotional wellbeing. Recent research (Burgess et al. 2020) builds on these findings, demonstrating that economic shocks endured during the pandemic are globally correlated with increased violence against both adults and children, and that an increase in children's domestic chores and caregiving duties resulted in their poorer mental health and wellbeing.

## GENDER DISPARITIES IN EDUCATION AND LEARNING

Despite continuous inclusion efforts, gender disparities in accessing education and learning resources remain prevalent among girls and boys from the poorest households and those living in fragile, conflict-affected, or humanitarian settings (Burde et al. 2019). Girls tend to receive less schooling than boys, particularly in rural areas, low-income countries, and settings of displacement (Alderman et al. 1996; Behrman and Knowles 1999; Glick 2008). Intra-household asset management, particularly for households experiencing difficult economic conditions, also appears to favor boys and to provide more learning resources for them, leaving girls behind in the process (Becker 2009; Björkman-Nyqvist 2013).

Evidence of girls facing barriers to education access is also observed among children living in refugee camps in conflict areas (Ullah et al. 2017; Silwal 2016). Research shows that, as conflict exacerbates inequitable access to education, girls and boys face reduced access to education in different ways (Burde et al. 2017). Some studies also found that education enrollment was disproportionately lower for girls living in conflict areas in Nepal (Silwal 2016) and Afghanistan (Burde and Khan 2016) than for boys in those areas. Unstable environments and social instability increase the likelihood that girls experiencing displacement will drop out of school (Kirk and Winthrop 2007). Furthermore, fears of being attacked and kidnapped have reduced parents' willingness to send their girls to school (Burde and Linden 2013).

Given the extensive evidence of girls' disadvantages in accessing learning and education, school closures due to the pandemic may also have led to a reduction in girls' time to study, due to their having a disproportionate increase in doing unpaid household work. A study by Burzynska and Contreras (2020) found that girls ages 5-14 already spent 40 percent more time doing household work than boys, and that time spent at home during school closures could lead to an even further increase in their domestic responsibilities. Studies of school closures due to the Ebola crisis in West and Central Africa also suggest that there was a decline in the time children had available for learning, and in their motivation to learn. For example, girls' time for learning in Sierra Leone declined by 12 hours per week, due to their increased household chores and paid work (Bandiera et al. 2019), while another study of the impact of the Ebola crisis in Sierra Leone found that girls lost interest in education (Kostelny et al. 2016). Studies on the effects of COVID-19 on girls' and boys' education have shown girls to be disproportionately disadvantaged by increased domestic responsibilities (UNESCO 2021), while a study of trends in national exam results in Colombia showed that girls were disproportionately disadvantaged, as evidenced in their lower exam grades in 2021, by the COVID-

19-related school closures (Vegas 2022). Research that considers these persistent gender disparities in education suggests that girls may have faced more barriers and obstacles to learning than boys during the COVID-19 crisis.

While this considerable body of literature has discussed the inequitable access to education and learning opportunities faced by girls and boys living in conflict and other crisis settings, there is limited literature on girls' and boys' lived experience from their own perspectives on their learning outcomes, especially in the context of COVID-19-related school closures in countries affected by displacement. The aim of this study is to fill this gap in the literature by sharing the results of an extensive survey we conducted of girls' and boys' own perceptions and voiced concerns, based on their lived experience of education during the COVID-19 school closures in countries affected by displacement.

#### RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

We formulated three hypotheses that we use as the framework for answering our research questions, particularly those on the factors associated with perceptions of learning.

First, we hypothesize that the self-perceived learning outcomes of the boys and girls in our sample differ, depending on their context and the different gendered challenges they face. We reflect on findings from previous studies that argue that, due to social and cultural norms that often favor boys' education, girls tend to have lower school enrollment and, further, that social instability often stops parents from sending girls to schools for security reasons (Silwal 2016; Burde et al. 2017; Ullah et al. 2017). We examined these data to more fully understand the children's gender-based experiences and perceptions related to education, keeping in mind the different contexts and different problems they face (Kirk and Winthrop 2007).

Second, we hypothesize that children's perceptions of a decline in their learning is associated with their socioeconomic circumstances, including barriers and obstacles to accessing remote learning materials, as well as a lack of help in understanding the learning content and of reduced interactions with teachers, parents, and peers. This hypothesis is supported by previous studies showing that temporary school closures have acutely negative effects on displaced children, for whom school can provide a safe space to interact with peers and seek psychosocial support, and it can even be a reliable source of food (Care International 2020).



Our third hypothesis, which relates to emotional and psychosocial wellbeing, is that children with increased household responsibilities, such as taking care of siblings and housework, coupled with the prevalence of violence reported to occur in their homes, will perceive a decline in their learning. Through a gender-based analysis, we build on the understanding that psychosocial wellbeing affects learning outcomes (Gallagher 2018; Wang et al. 2020), with the aim of understanding more fully how changing family support, increased responsibilities, and violence at home affect children's learning.

## METHODOLOGY

### MIXED METHODS RESEARCH DESIGN

In examining the perceived effects on children's experience of learning during COVID-19-related school closures, we utilized cross-sectional data collected from the Save the Children International's global COVID-19 survey. We employed a mixed methods research approach to analyze quantitative and qualitative data collected from June 7 to July 12, 2020 (Burgess et al. 2020). We submitted the study to Save the Children's ethics review committee in April 2020, where it was reviewed by approximately 30 certified experts; approval was granted on May 25, 2020. Where they existed, we obtained approval from local independent review boards in all countries where we implemented the research. Informed consent and child assent were required from all participants, which we obtained remotely before starting the survey questionnaire.

### DATA USED AND SAMPLE

We collected data using the Save the Children's global COVID-19 survey in 2020, which was administered randomly among the organizational program participants (the beneficiaries) across six regions (Asia, Eastern and Southern Africa [ESA], West and Central Africa [WCA], Latin America and the Caribbean [LAC], the Pacific, and North America). The survey was distributed to the total sample of 17,565 parents/caregivers and 8,069 children. It was administered in the local languages to children ages 11-17 and their adult caregivers through either an online survey or phone survey. The research instruments were translated into 28 local languages to facilitate uptake in all 37 participating countries (Burgess et al. 2020). To ensure that the sample accurately reflected the characteristics of the local population, it was weighted against the total program participant population. The weight factors were calculated using the proportion of country-

level population participating in Save the Children's programs. The same weight was applied to all respondents across the sample.

From the 37 participating countries, we selected the ten that had the highest proportions of respondents (at least about 1 in 10 respondents) who belonged to a displaced group.<sup>1</sup> This included countries in five regions where the adult program participants self-identified as either an internally displaced person (IDP) or a refugee/asylum seeker, and the children were participating in distance learning during the school closures. We included the displaced group and the nondisplaced group in the analysis.

We refer to displacement using a broad definition of forced migration (UNHCR 2016) that includes the movement of refugees and IDPs due to conflict, and people displaced by natural or environmental disasters, poverty, or development projects. People also leave their place of origin because of persecution, conflict, repression, human rights violations, and natural as well as human-made disasters. Below are the contexts of displaced groups from each country selected for our sample.

*Table 1: Context of Displaced Population in Selected Countries in the Sample*

<b>Countries</b>	<b>Number of Displaced Population (as of December 2019)</b>	<b>Displacement Context</b>
Columbia, Peru	5.5 million IDPs	The displaced people have been forced to flee their homes due to situations such as violence and persecution but have not sought safety in other countries.
Lebanon, Egypt, Albania	1.5 million Syrian refugees; 180,000 pre-existing Palestinian refugees	Syrians who fled the conflict in their home country and Palestinian refugees already living in the camps
Philippines	4 million IDPs, due to environmental disaster	The IDPs were displaced because of environmental disasters and conflicts between the armed forces and the Islamic state-inspired terrorist Maute Group. The respondents are among those who have lived in protracted displacement for decades, due to terrorist conflicts in Marawi City, Mindanao.
Bangladesh	nearly 0.5 million IDPs	Rohingya refugees from Myanmar who have fled to Bangladesh since August 25, 2017, and now live in the camp in Cox's Bazar

<sup>1</sup> These ten countries were the Philippines, Bangladesh, Somalia, South Sudan, Burkina Faso, Colombia, Peru, Albania, Egypt, and Lebanon.

*Table 1: Context of Displaced Population in Selected Countries in the Sample (cont.)*

Countries	Number of Displaced Population (as of December 2019)	Displacement Context
Somalia	more than 2.6 million IDPs	Conflict and violence linked to the activities of jihadist groups, together with slow- and sudden-onset disasters and food insecurity, have displaced this population.
South Sudan, Burkina Faso	1.3 million IDPs (South Sudan) More than 0.5 million IDPs (Burkina Faso)	Conflict, communal violence, and recurrent natural hazards such as floods and drought have created this IDP population.

*Sources:* Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (n.d.), Save the Children (2020), UNHCR (n.d.), UNHCR (2020b), and Bermudez, Temprosa, and Benson (2018)

In this study, displaced children are defined as children living in households where the parents/caregivers identified themselves or a family member as refugees/asylum seekers or internally displaced people/groups when responding to the question, “Do you or anyone in your family identify as belonging to any minority group based on refugee/asylum seeker status and/or internally displaced people?” The analysis of children’s characteristics and their learning experiences was taken from a children’s questionnaire, while the information on the caregivers’ and household characteristics was taken from the adult questionnaire. The children’s sample in the qualitative analysis is the same as the sample of children in the quantitative analysis. It includes any child who answered at least one of four open-ended questions administered on the children’s questionnaire.

### ANALYSIS PLAN

We employed multivariate logistic regression models to examine perceptions of learning during school closures among children from displaced populations. We focused on the distinct gender differences between girls’ and boys’ perceptions of learning. The outcome variable is a dummy variable denoting children’s perception of learning “a little bit” or “nothing” during the COVID-19-related school closures. Their perceptions were in response to the question, “How much are you learning now that you are not going to school?” This question was only answered by the children who reported that their school was closed during the pandemic. We coded 1 for those who responded “a little bit” or “nothing,” and 0 for those who responded otherwise. Our main predictors are the dummy variable of displacement status (1 for displaced children and 0 for nondisplaced children) and the dummy variable of child gender (1 for girls and 0 for boys). We include control variables that are common confounders of the main associations of interest

in the study's particular context. These include the children's characteristics, identifiers of types of households or caregivers, the children's wellbeing, available learning supports, and learning obstacles the children reported on the survey. The definitions of these variables are available in Table A1 in the Appendix.

To support our interpretation of the model findings, we also incorporate some qualitative findings from the children's responses to the five open-ended questions in the child questionnaire: "What can adults do differently at home?" "What did you enjoy most about this time?" "What scared you the most about this time?" "What would you say to the leader in your country?" "What message do you have for other children?" We specifically explore the narratives children constructed about their academic worries due to COVID-19, their advocacy requests for world leaders, and their requests for support during the school closures. We used a conceptual content analysis approach to determine the presence of certain words, themes, or concepts in the children's open-ended responses. All their open-ended responses were examined and coded, irrespective of any perceptions on saturation point.<sup>2</sup> Coding was undertaken to determine the key common themes that emerged from what the children were speaking of at the country level, regional level, or global level. Frequent themes included children's wellbeing, health, nutrition, education and learning, child protection, children's rights, and household economy.

## ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

### DESCRIPTIVE STATISTIC ANALYSIS OF THE SAMPLE

As shown in Table 2, which presents descriptive statistics of the analytical sample on children's and household characteristics, our sample includes 632 girls (52.1%) and 554 boys (47.9%) from the five regions where Save the Children is operating. Each region represents roughly 20 percent of the sample; West and Central Africa had the fewest respondents, around 10 percent of the sample. The largest sample by country was from Colombia, followed by South Sudan, Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Philippines, Somalia, Albania, Egypt, Lebanon, and Peru. Approximately 11.0 percent of the sample comprises displaced children, and there is no significant variation between the proportion of displaced girls and displaced boys in the sample, as seen from the bivariate test (Pearson's Chi-sq indicator).

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<sup>2</sup> Saturation means that no additional data are being found that the researcher can use to develop properties of the category.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of the Sample: Children's and Household Characteristics

	Combined Sample (%) n=1186	Girl Sample (%) n=632	Boy Sample (%) n=554	Bivariate Test
Learning a little or nothing				Pearson's Chi-sq(1)=2.92*
No	28.2	29.0	27.4	
Yes	71.8	71.0	72.6	
Displaced children				Pearson's Chi-sq(1)=0.60
No	89.0	87.5	89.6	
Yes	11.0	12.5	10.4	
Age of children				Pearson's Chi-sq(1)=0.44
11-14 years	57.2	56.3	58.1	
15-17 years	42.8	43.7	41.9	
Number of children in the household	3.5 (1.62)	3.6 (1.62)	3.5 (1.61)	Oneway ANOVA, F-stat=0.23
Disability status of children				Pearson's -sq(1)=4.67*
No	98.8	99.0	98.6	
Yes	1.2	1.0	1.4	
Caregiver gender				Pearson's Chi-sq(1)=3.50~
No	30.9	31.4	30.4	
Yes	69.1	68.6	69.6	
Caregiver age				Oneway ANOVA, F-stat=1.11
18-24 years	5.7	7.2	4.0	
25-29 years	9.4	9.0	9.9	
30-39 years	38.9	38.9	38.9	
40-49 years	32.6	32.1	33.2	
50-59 years	10.1	10.9	9.2	
60+ years	3.3	1.9	4.8	
Settlement				Pearson's Chi-sq(1)=0.75
Rural	65.1	62.9	67.5	
Urban	34.9	37.1	32.5	
Region				Pearson's Chi-sq(4)=7.32
Asia	21.2	20.7	21.7	
ESA	22.1	22.3	21.9	
WCA	10.2	9.2	11.3	
LAC	23.9	22.8	25.0	
MEE	22.7	25.1	20.0	

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of the Sample: Children's and Household Characteristics  
(cont.)

	Combined Sample (%) n=1186	Girl Sample (%) n=632	Boy Sample (%) n=554	Bivariate Test
Country				Pearson's Chi-sq(9)=9.77
Philippines	9.0	8.3	9.7	
Bangladesh	12.2	12.4	12.0	
Somalia	8.5	8.2	8.8	
South Sudan	13.6	14.1	13.0	
Colombia	17.7	16.4	19.1	
Peru	6.2	6.4	5.9	
Albania	8.1	8.9	7.2	
Egypt	8.1	9.3	6.9	
Lebanon	6.4	6.9	5.9	
Burkina Faso	10.2	9.2	11.3	

Note: Numbers in parentheses are the standard deviation of mean values of continuous variables; percentages are shown for categorical variables.

Statistically significance (p-value): ~p<0.10, \*p<0.05, \*\*p<0.01, \*\*\*p<0.001

As seen from the descriptive statistics (Table 3), more than half of the children (52.9%) in our sample lived in a relatively economically deprived household that reported a loss of more than half their household income due to the pandemic.

The majority of the children (83.9%) also reported having negative feelings: less happy, less hopeful, more worried, sadder, less safe, more bored, or having less of their own space and time. Moreover, a significant number (33.8%) of children lived in a household where a report of violence occurred, around 32.2 percent of them boys and 35.5 percent girls. About half of the children reported having more chores and more caregiving responsibilities than before the pandemic; more girls than boys reported having more chores (64.6% versus 38.0%) and doing more caregiving work (51.8% versus 46.0%).

More than 7 out of 10 boys and girls in the sample reported that they learned "a little bit" or "nothing" when they were not in school. More than half (56.5%) reported not having access to textbooks, reading books, worksheets, or activity books while learning at home during the school closures. A small proportion of children reported having access to other learning materials: about 1 in 4 reported having access to educational TV and radio, and less than 1 in 10 reported having access to a computer, tablet, phone, or the internet.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics of the Exploratory Variables

	Combined Sample (%) n=1186	Girl Sample (%) n=632	Boy Sample (%) n=554	Bivariate Test
Household: Lost more than half of their income during the pandemic				Pearson's Chi-sq(1)=0.22
No	47.1	41.3	43.2	
Yes	52.9	58.7	56.8	
Reporting negative feelings				Pearson's Chi-sq(1)=4.65*
No	16.1	15.7	16.5	
Yes	83.9	84.3	83.5	
Any violence reported by children/caregivers				Pearson's Chi-sq(1)=2.26~
No	66.2	67.8	64.5	
Yes	33.8	32.2	35.5	
Having chores to do				Pearson's Chi-sq(1)=38.05***
More than before	52.0	64.6	38.0	
Same or less than before	48.0	35.4	62.0	
Having to care for siblings/others				Pearson's Chi-sq(1)=9.52**
More than before	49.1	51.8	46.0	
Same or less than before	50.9	48.2	54.0	
Having access to textbooks/reading books				Pearson's Chi-sq(1)=0.11
No	56.5	57.3	55.7	
Yes	43.5	42.7	44.3	
Having access TV/radio programs				Pearson's Chi-sq(1)=0.7
No	75.7	74.9	76.6	
Yes	24.3	25.1	23.4	
Having access to computer/tablet/phone/internet				Pearson's Chi-sq(1)=0.12
No	90.7	91.5	89.9	
Yes	9.3	8.5	10.1	
Cannot be bothered to learn				Pearson's Chi-sq(1)=0.02
No	88.7	89.4	88.0	
Yes	11.3	10.6	12.0	

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics of the Exploratory Variables (cont.)

	Combined Sample (%) n=1186	Girl Sample (%) n=632	Boy Sample (%) n=554	Bivariate Test
Do not understand homework				Pearson's Chi-sq(1)=0.04
No	69.6	70.6	68.6	
Yes	30.4	29.4	31.4	
No available help				Pearson's Chi-sq(1)=0.01
No	65.0	66.0	64.0	
Yes	35.0	34.0	36.0	
Not enough data to access internet				Pearson's Chi-sq(1)=0.07
No	92.8	92.4	93.4	
Yes	7.2	7.6	6.6	
Someone else always uses computer, internet, TV, and radio				Pearson's Chi-sq(1)=0.22
No	96.9	97.3	96.5	
Yes	3.1	2.7	3.5	

Note: Percentages are shown for categorical variables.

Statistically significance (p-value): ~p<0.10, \*p<0.05, \*\*p<0.01, \*\*\*p<0.001

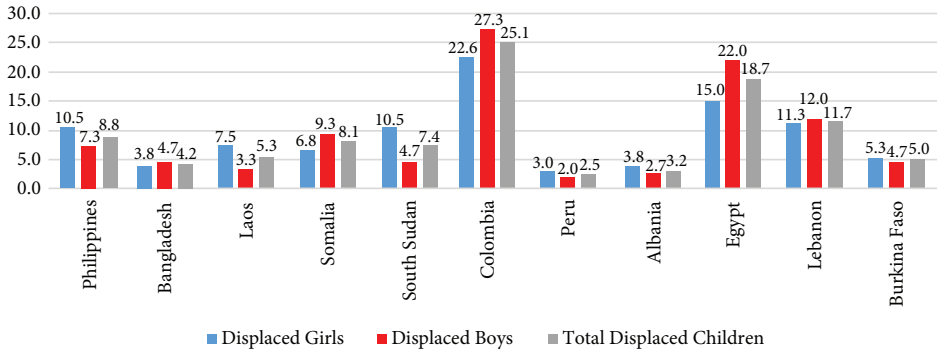
The learning obstacles the children reported most are “no available help” (35.0%) and “do not understand homework” (30.4%). More than 1 in 10 children reported that they “cannot/not bother to learn,” and around 7.2 percent reported “not having enough data to access the internet.”

### DISPLACED CHILDREN ’S PERCEPTIONS OF LEARNING LITTLE OR NOTHING DURING THE SCHOOL CLOSURES

Of the displaced children in the sample (11%, or 130 children), the highest proportion were from Colombia (25.4%), followed by Egypt (18.7%), Lebanon (11.6%), Philippines (8.8%), Somalia (8.1%), and South Sudan (7.4%) (see Table 2). Displaced children in the other countries—Laos, Burkina Faso, Bangladesh, Albania, and Peru—account for 5 percent or less (see Figure 1).



Figure 1: Proportion of Displaced Children by Gender and Country (in percentages)



The data indicate that there is a strong association between children’s perception of learning “a little bit” or “nothing” during school closures and their displacement status. Results from our logistic regression analysis, as seen in Table 4, show that displaced children were nearly one and a half times more likely than the nondisplaced children ( $OR=1.44$   $p<0.05$ ) to report that they were learning “a little bit” or “nothing” during COVID-19-related school closures. Our models are robust in predicting perceived learning among displaced children after controlling for characteristics of the children, the households, or the caregivers, the children’s wellbeing, the available learning supports, and learning obstacles reported by the children in the survey. The models provide a relatively similar odds ratio and are statistically significant in predicting the likelihood of displaced children learning “a little bit” or “nothing,” and they provide a better indicator of goodness of fit (see Table 4, cols. 1, 2, and 3).

Table 4: Results of Logit Regression Predicting Children’s Perception of Learning (likelihood of perceiving learning “a little bit” or “nothing” during school closure)

	Combined Sample (1)	Combined Sample (2)	Combined Sample (3)	
	Odds ratio	Odds ratio	Odds ratio	95% Confidence interval
Girls	<b>0.79</b> <sup>*</sup>	<b>0.77</b> <sup>*</sup>	<b>0.69</b> <sup>**</sup>	(0.53   0.91)
Displacement status	<b>1.44</b> <sup>**</sup>	<b>1.48</b> <sup>**</sup>	<b>1.49</b> <sup>*</sup>	(1.03   2.14)
<i>Children’s/Caregivers’ characteristics</i>				
Child age		0.83	0.96	(0.73   1.27)
Number of children in the household		1.05	1.10 <sup>~</sup>	(0.99   1.22)
Child having disabilities		<b>1.39</b> <sup>*</sup>	3.45 <sup>*</sup>	(1.18   7.10)
Caregiver: Female		1.14	1.13	(0.83   1.54)
Caregiver age		1.05	1.09	(0.95   1.25)
Household: Losing half of income during COVID-19		<b>1.77</b> <sup>***</sup>	<b>1.44</b> <sup>**</sup>	(1.08   1.91)
Settlement: Urban		1.04	1.13	(0.83   1.53)
Region (Asia as ref)				
ESA		<b>7.47</b> <sup>***</sup>	<b>7.11</b> <sup>***</sup>	(4.42   9.44)
WCA		1.51	<b>2.54</b> <sup>**</sup>	(1.45   4.46)
LCA		1.01	1.12	(0.70   1.78)
MEEE		<b>1.52</b> <sup>*</sup>	<b>1.66</b> <sup>*</sup>	(1.08   2.55)
<i>Wellbeing</i>				
Having negative feeling			<b>1.39</b> <sup>*</sup>	(1.01   1.89)
Report of any violence at home			<b>2.16</b> <sup>**</sup>	(1.27   3.68)
Having to do chores more than before			0.75	(0.47   1.22)
Having to care for siblings/others more than before			<b>1.50</b> <sup>*</sup>	(1.06   2.70)
<i>Learning supports</i>				
Having access to textbook, worksheet, and readings			<b>0.39</b> <sup>***</sup>	(0.24   0.83)
Having access to radio and TV learning program			1.11	(0.76   1.63)
Having access to computer, tablet/phone, and internet			0.74	(0.51   1.07)

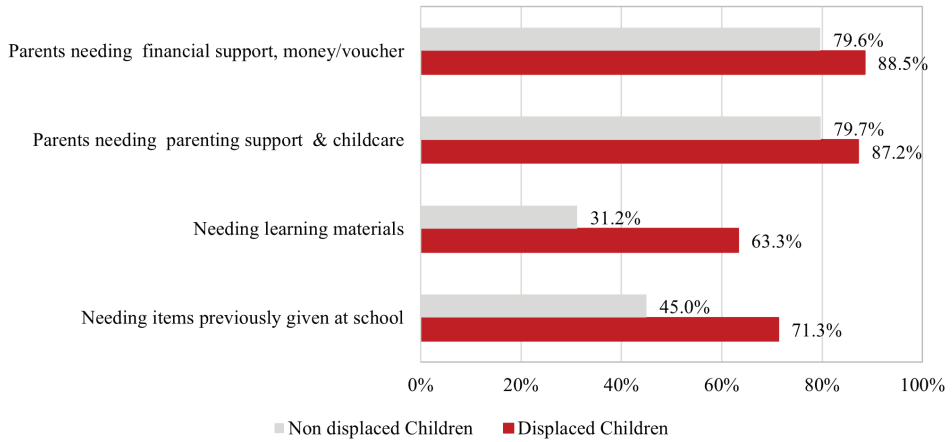
*Table 4: Results of Logit Regression Predicting Children's Perception of Learning (likelihood of perceiving learning "a little bit" or "nothing" during school closure) (cont.)*

	Combined Sample (1)	Combined Sample (2)	Combined Sample (3)	
<i>Learning obstacles</i>				
Cannot be bothered to learn			1.64	(0.89) 3.01)
Do not understand homework			<b>5.53</b> ***	(3.72) 8.24)
No available help			<b>3.96</b> ***	(2.66) 5.92)
Not enough data			<b>2.21</b> ***	(1.50) 3.26)
Someone else uses computer/internet/TV/radio			<b>1.89</b> *	(1.00) 3.55)
Constant			<b>0.17</b> *	(0.03) 0.19)
Pseudo R-square	0.07	0.109	0.291	
Number of observations	1186	1186	1186	

Note: Statistically significance (p-value): ~p<0.10, \*p<0.05, \*\*p<0.01, \*\*\*p<0.001

The result suggests that the perceived decline of learning among the displaced children is associated with the lack of learning support they and their parents experienced while struggling during the COVID-19 pandemic. Our bivariate analysis of several relevant variables from the survey data (seen in Figure 2) reveals that, during the pandemic, a higher proportion of displaced children than nondisplaced children (71.3% versus 45.0%) reported needing items such as learning materials, sanitary products, lunch, food to take home, health advice, and counselling; all of these were provided at the schools before they closed. A higher proportion of the caregivers of displaced children than those of nondisplaced children also reported needing parenting support and child care (87.5% versus 79.6%), as well as financial support and money/vouchers (79.6% versus 87.5%).

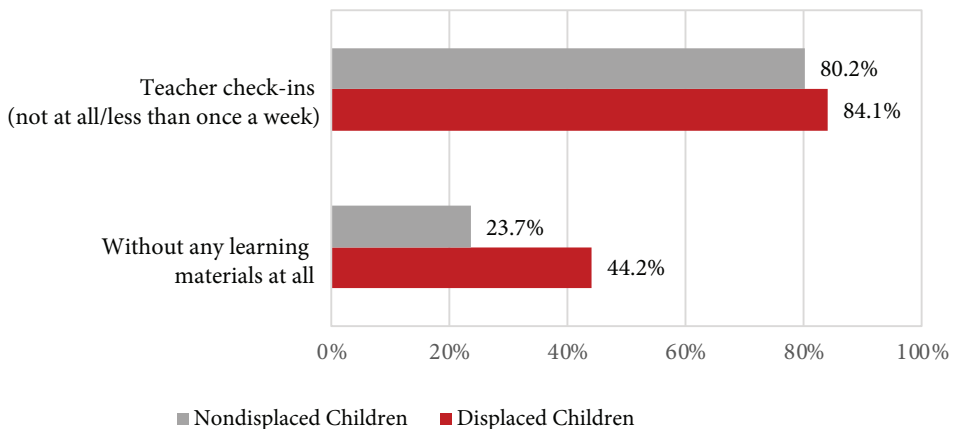
Figure 2: Proportion of Displaced Children Needing Supports during School Closures



Note: All percentages shown above are statistically significant (Chi-sq  $p < 0.05$ ).

As seen in Figure 3, the majority of displaced children (81%) reported having minimal check-ins with their teachers (less than once a week) during the school closures; more than half (53%) reported not having any. Nearly twice the proportion of displaced children as nondisplaced children (44.2% versus 23.7%) reported not having access to any learning materials, such as worksheets, textbooks, reading books, educational TV programs, radio, educational apps for a phone/tablet, a computer, or internet access.

Figure 3: Proportion of Displaced Children without/with Minimal Learning Supports during School Closures, as Reported by Caregivers



Note: All percentages shown above are statistically significant (Chi-sq  $p < 0.05$ ).

Children's responses to the qualitative question, "If you were asked to write a letter to the leaders in your country, what would you say?" put a wide lens on their perspective of COVID-19's impact on their home, food availability, education, household finances, health systems, and weak infrastructure. The children's responses can be framed around five overarching recommendations to protect them from COVID-19; provide educational support, help children, provide financial support for their families, help poor people, and deliver food.

For children from the displaced families in this study, the immediate needs of health, food, and economic security trumped requests for educational support. The children called for multidimensional responses and recovery strategies from the country's leaders. An 11-year-old boy from Colombia explained that he wanted leaders in his country to

find a way to help children like my brother and I who are migrants, and my mother who doesn't have a real job, to give help to those who need it, and to children who are on the streets, to grandparents that need help and attention, especially for children like my little sister who required psychological help so that she can communicate like us, and have opportunities to go to school and be able to study. Jobs for our parents so that they don't fight, shout, or abuse each other.

Of particular note in this study are the children's calls for cross-sectoral programming. Their responses demonstrate how intertwined and complex the issues are that affect their learning. For example, a 15-year-old girl from Kenya stated, "I would ask the leader to allow teachers back to school and put in place measures that will protect us and enable us to learn. To ensure that our families have food, since there has been a shortage."

Unlike the nondisplaced children, the displaced children identified infrastructure (or lack thereof) as a critical issue they want the leaders in their country to address. Many children mentioned issues such as a poor-quality healthcare system, lack of road access to the schools, and service delivery. Displaced children's answers differed from the overall population of children in their specific request that the government help children "like me" and a frequent request to return "home," particularly among the Latin American sample. A few children reported that their refugee or displaced status deprived them of adequate government support. For example, a 12-year-old girl from Peru said, "I am not in my country, what I would ask is that you please help us because, even if we are not from here, we are human beings . . . I study in this country and someday I will work here, so I think I also have the right to ask the government for support for refugee children like me."

These qualitative responses clearly demonstrate how children from marginalized groups, including refugees and displaced children, are more affected and vulnerable than the overall population of children and are aware that their displaced status contributes to the lack of services and quality education.

**GENDER VARIATION IN CHILDREN’S PERCEPTIONS OF LEARNING DURING SCHOOL CLOSURES**

Our results show that the extent to which children perceive they are learning varies by gender. The results of our logistic regression analysis (see Table 4) show that girls were less likely than boys (OR=0.69  $p<0.01$ ) to perceive that they learned “a little bit” or “nothing,” even after we include all control variables. These results may imply that girls are more likely to pursue learning outside of school, whereas boys are less likely to prioritize pursuing learning independently. Further study is needed to fully understand the gendered relationship of children’s self-directed and self-motivated learning.

*Table 5: Results of Logic Regression Predicting Children’s Perceptions of Learning, by Gender (likelihood of perceiving learning “a little bit” or “nothing” during school closure)*

	Girl Sample (4)			Boy Sample (5)		
	Odds ratio	95% Confidence interval		Odds ratio	95% Confidence interval	
Displacement status	<b>1.53 *</b>	(0.91	2.56)	1.39	(0.80	2.40)
<i>Children’s/Caregivers’ characteristics</i>						
Child age	1.06	(0.72	1.56)	0.91	(0.60	1.37)
Number of children in the household	<b>1.18 **</b>	(1.03	1.36)	1.00	(0.84	1.18)
Child having disabilities	3.63	(0.73	7.98)	<b>3.56 ~</b>	(0.81	11.64)
Caregiver: Female	1.29	(0.83	2.03)	1.07	(0.68	1.67)
Caregiver age	1.08	(0.89	1.32)	1.07	(0.87	1.30)
Household: Losing half of income during COVID-19	<b>1.52 **</b>	(1.03	2.25)	1.41	(0.91	2.18)
Settlement: Urban	1.23	(0.79	1.90)	1.00	(0.63	1.57)
<i>Region (Asia as ref)</i>						
ESA	<b>5.53 **</b>	(2.95	10.36)	<b>10.00 ***</b>	(5.49	11.25)
WCA	<b>2.37 *</b>	(1.10	5.10)	3.16	(1.30	7.67)
LCA	0.73	(0.37	1.46)	<b>1.80 **</b>	(0.93	3.51)
MEEE	1.29	(0.72	2.31)	<b>2.57 ***</b>	(1.29	5.13)

Table 5: Results of Logic Regression Predicting Children's Perceptions of Learning, by Gender (likelihood of perceiving learning "a little bit" or "nothing" during school closure) (cont.)

	Girl Sample (4)			Boy Sample (5)		
<i>Wellbeing</i>						
Having negative feelings	1.32	(0.84	2.07)	<b>1.40*</b>	(0.89	2.2)
Report of any violence at home	1.30	(0.78	2.73)	<b>3.98***</b>	(1.80	8.78)
Having to do chores-more than before	0.83	(0.41	1.68)	0.69	(0.34	1.38)
Having to care for siblings/others-more than before	1.00	(0.52	1.92)	<b>2.16*</b>	(1.12	4.17)
<i>Learning supports</i>						
Having access to textbook, worksheet, and reading books	<b>0.35</b>	(0.25	0.62)	<b>0.45***</b>	(0.27	0.80)
Having access to radio/TV learning program	1.03	(0.60	1.78)	1.34	(0.76	2.38)
Having access to computer, tablet/phone, internet	0.64	(0.37	1.10)	0.85	(0.49	1.48)
<i>Learning obstacles</i>						
Cannot be bothered to learn	<b>2.94</b>	(1.23	7.02)	0.77	(0.31	1.88)
Do not understand homework	<b>6.31</b>	(3.65	10.91)	<b>4.78***</b>	(2.62	8.75)
No available help	<b>3.75</b>	(2.22	6.36)	<b>4.63***</b>	(2.43	8.82)
Not enough data	<b>2.47</b>	(1.44	4.25)	<b>1.95*</b>	(1.09	3.51)
Someone else uses computer/internet/TV/radio	<b>2.34</b>	(0.94	5.80)	1.47	(0.58	3.75)
Constant	<b>0.05</b>	(0.01	0.18)	<b>0.06***</b>	(0.02	0.25)
Pseudo R-square	0.319			0.282		
Number of observations	632			554		

Note: Statistically significance (p-value): ~p<0.10, \*p<0.05, \*\*p<0.01, \*\*\*p<0.001

When looking at gender differences in the children's sample, our logistic regression results (as seen in Table 5) reveal two distinct differences associated with the variation in learning between the boys and girls. Economic conditions, household shocks, and access to learning resources appear to play an essential role

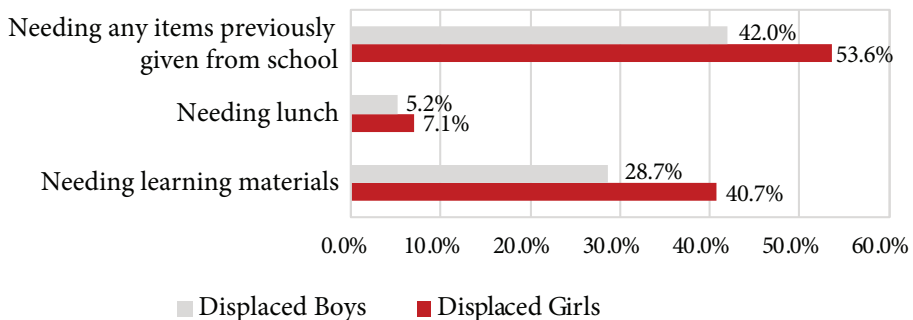
in determining whether a girl will perceive that she is learning. Disaggregation by gender and economic status showed that girls in the lower economic brackets are generally less likely to learn well than boys in that bracket. On the other hand, boys are less likely to perceive learning well when they are in an emotionally challenging situation, particularly those who experience family violence and increased negative feelings due to the pandemic.

**GIRLS’ LEARNING AND HOUSEHOLD SOCIOECONOMIC CONDITIONS**

There is a significant relationship between economic shocks, the prevalence of income loss, and children’s perceptions of learning. Our results (see Table 5) show that girls with caregivers identified as being in displaced groups—also associated with needing financial support and learning resources—were more likely to perceive learning “a little bit” or “nothing” during school closures than girls with caregivers who did not identify as being in displaced groups (OR=1.53  $p<0.05$ ). In households that reported losing more than half of their income, girls were also more likely to perceive learning “a little bit” or “nothing” during school closure (OR=1.52  $p<0.01$ ) than the girls from households that did not report losing more than half their income. This suggests that girls who face more economic barriers were likely to perceive a decline in learning during the pandemic.

Our bivariate analysis drawn from a correlation between several relevant variables in our survey also reveals that a higher proportion of girls than boys reported needing learning materials (40.7% versus 28.7%), lunch (7.1% versus 5.2%), and many other items that were previously provided at school (53.6% versus 42%), as seen in Figure 4.

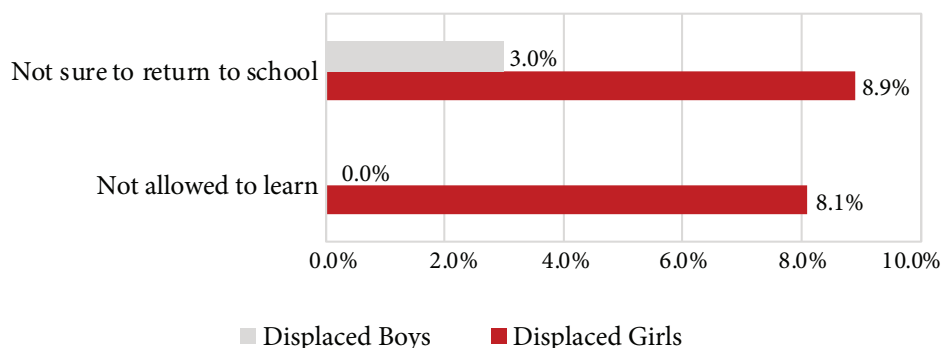
*Figure 4: Proportion of Displaced Girls and Boys Needing Supports Previously Provided at School*



*Note:* All percentages shown above are statistically significant (Chi-sq  $p<0.05$ ).



Figure 5: Proportion of Displaced Girls and Boys Reported Not Being Allowed to Learn and Not Sure If They Will Return to School



Note: All percentages shown above are statistically significant (Chi-sq  $p < 0.05$ ).

Family composition, particularly the number of children in the household, seems to influence children's perceptions of learning, particularly among girls. There was a positive correlation between the number of children in a household and girls' likelihood of reporting learning only a "little bit" or "nothing." This appears to be in line with the general pattern of gender inequality among low-income groups, where households tend to respond to income shocks by varying the amount of schooling and resources provided to girls, while boys are largely sheltered from such shocks (Björkman-Nyqvist 2013). This affects girls' learning. Indeed, our data support this argument and reveal that a higher proportion of displaced girls (8.1%) reported the learning obstacle "not allowed to learn"; no boys made a similar report (see Figure 5). Furthermore, our data show that a higher proportion of displaced girls than boys reported that they were unsure or did not know if they will return to school once they reopen (8.9% versus 3%).

### BOYS' LEARNING AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

Our logistic regression (Table 5) shows important and distinct results in the boys' perceptions of learning. Boys who reported having increased negative feelings due to COVID-19 were 1.4 times more likely than the boys who did not report such feelings to report learning "a little bit" or "nothing" during the school closures (OR=1.40  $p < 0.05$ ). Reports of increased negative feelings due to COVID-19 included being more worried, sadder, less happy, less hopeful, less safe, more bored, and having less of their own space or time. Our results show that the association between increased negative feelings and the decline of learning is not prevalent among girls.

To assess the children's emotional wellbeing, it is necessary to understand their individual emotional characteristics and the particular environments in which they develop those characteristics (Berger et al. 2011). In this study, we found that a higher proportion of boys than girls experience violence in their home, as reported by their caregivers and/or by the children themselves. Our logistic regression (Table 5) shows a strong relationship between boys' reports of violence occurring at home and their perceptions of declining learning. Boys living in households with any report of violence were nearly four times more likely than other boys not reporting violence to report learning "a little bit" or "nothing" (OR=3.98  $p<0.01$ ).

As seen in the qualitative data, when children were asked, "What worries you most at this time?" a negligible number of boys wrote about violence or child protection concerns, even among those who reported violence in the home. Given the high levels of violence reported, this suggests that the children interviewed either did not feel comfortable writing or speaking about these issues or that they did not perceive increased levels of violence to be a "worry." Although the intersection between wellbeing and learning is well evidenced (Gallagher 2018; Wang et al. 2020), these findings suggest areas for further programming, such as building trust with the children in these communities so that they are empowered to speak out or able to access protective services, or to educate these children more fully about their right to protection.

#### **GENDER VARIATION IN HOUSEHOLD RESPONSIBILITIES AND THE ASSOCIATION WITH CHILD LEARNING**

Existing research highlights the fact that girls face increased caregiving and household responsibilities during virus outbreaks, such as Ebola (Bandiera et al. 2019). According to our data (see the descriptive statistics in Table 3), household responsibilities have increased for a higher proportion of girls than boys during the COVID-19 pandemic. Around 64.6 percent of the girls reported having more chores to do, and 51.8 percent reported having more caregiving responsibilities with their siblings or others. In comparison, only 35.4 percent of boys reported having more household chores and 48.2 percent more caregiving responsibilities with siblings or others. While the normative gender roles appear prevalent among our sample, the regression results show, interestingly, that increased household responsibilities did not seem to affect girls' perceptions of learning but they did significantly affect boys'. This suggests that girls may be used to doing caregiving work and thus were less likely to perceive this as a significant barrier to their learning. Boys, however, may find caregiving work to be a burden or a shock to

their daily routine. This suggests that having additional responsibilities influences boys' emotional wellbeing and that boys feel the psychological toll of changing environments more acutely than girls, both of which affect their perceptions of learning. Our regression result (Table 5) shows that boys who did more caregiving work during the COVID-19 pandemic than before were 2.2 times more likely than peers without increased caring responsibilities to perceive learning "a little bit" or "nothing" (OR=2.16  $p<0.05$ ).

### **CHILD CONCERNS ABOUT THEIR EDUCATION, LEARNING, AND LIFE TRAJECTORY DURING SCHOOL CLOSURES DUE TO COVID-19**

The qualitative research found a number of consistent themes across the countries studied. The most common concerns were about the impact school closures had on children's education and life trajectories; the limitations of remote learning, mainly due to access issues; and a desire for governments to invest in resources for those in need. When asked the qualitative question, "What worries you the most about the COVID-19 outbreak?" children reported being concerned about schools not reopening, having to drop out, not being able to take exams, and being uncertain about their grades.

Their education concerns were more long term, and many hoped for a return to "normal." A 16-year-old boy from Somalia wrote, "I am worried that [the pandemic] might not end anytime soon and that might be a problem to our already jeopardized education." Children's perceptions of learning lost and anxiety about their future education permeated their qualitative responses. When asked, "What can adults in your home do differently during the outbreak of COVID-19?" several children in Lebanon reported that barriers to accessing technology, the internet, and/or remote learning limited their learning and requested increased access.

When asked, "If you were asked to write a letter to the leaders in your country, what would you say?" girls and boys identified education as the second priority for their leaders to address, after protection from COVID-19. In their responses about education, children primarily asked officials to reopen their schools or provide remote learning support. A 15-year-old girl in Colombia wrote, "Help all the children, so that we can do better with our education, I don't have internet access or tech, so I haven't learned much over the past months."

The pandemic has also highlighted the challenges of a wholly digital approach to education. Despite increased digital connectivity, many displaced populations still lack access to internet-connected devices, and some learning environments

lack the resources to facilitate online learning. Of those who requested support for remote learning or educational supports, most were girls, especially among Asian respondents, which gives weight to the quantitative analysis and suggests that girls face more challenges in accessing learning materials at home than boys. Children’s requests—in particular those from displaced girls—for scholarships and for access to TV, internet, and remote learning illustrate the importance they place on educational supports, and their expectation that governments should provide them.

A 15-year-old girl from Bangladesh advocated for the leaders in her country to “improve school-based web side [sic] so that we can attend in online classes more effectively.” Other children expressed frustration at not attending school due to lockdowns and identified a lack of educational tools as a critical priority. In their answers, the children emphasised that support to children and families should be equitable and fair, with a particular focus on the poorest. For example, a 15-year-old boy from Burkina Faso highlighted the systemic digital divide between urban and rural children, saying, “*Que les enfants des villages veulent internet aussi*” (Children from the village also want internet).

This research supports our recommendation that governments should provide adequate resources and equitable access to education so that certain groups of children are not left behind. Children are acutely aware of the impact school closures have had on their perceptions of quality of learning and the potential impact on their life trajectories. Interestingly, many children who exemplify the multiple pressures displaced households face called for cross-sectoral programming. These findings suggest that the organizations that provide continuous access to (alternative) education services during school closures should consider and respond to the unequal connectivity and accessibility of learning platforms among displaced populations.

## CONCLUSIONS

Through a combined analysis of quantitative surveys of parents/caregivers and children in contexts affected by displacement, and the qualitative responses from the children, our findings largely support our hypotheses.

The first hypothesis—that boys’ and girls’ perceptions of learning outcomes differ, depending on the context and the gendered challenges they face—is supported by the findings. Girls were more likely to report learning “a little bit” or “nothing”

when their household characteristics indicated a lack of resources, displacement, a loss of more than half their income due to COVID-19, and having a large number of children in the family. The findings are consistent with literature showing that girls are disadvantaged in terms of access to learning resources within their households, especially after economic and other types of shocks. In fact, girls were more likely than boys to lack access to learning materials.

Our second hypothesis was that children's perception of a decline in learning is associated with their socioeconomic circumstances, including barriers to accessing learning materials, a lack of help in understanding the learning content, and a lack of interactions with teachers, parents, and peers. We found that displaced children were more likely than nondisplaced children to report learning "a little bit" or "nothing," and that boys were more likely than girls to report learning little or nothing since schools closed due to COVID-19, both of which support this hypothesis. Displaced children's own perceptions of learning "a little bit" or "nothing" were strongly associated with having limited (or no) access to learning materials and related supports during school closures.

The qualitative research shows that girls and boys were vocal about poverty, their demand for cross-sectoral interventions, and access to learning resources. Displaced girls and boys were particularly concerned that displaced children should be given access to learning resources, including internet-based learning. They also were concerned about the future of their education, a return to normality, and going home, which may have implications for their wellbeing.

Our third hypothesis, which addressed emotional or psychosocial wellbeing, was that children with increased household responsibilities, such as taking care of siblings and housework, and those who reported experiencing violence in their homes will perceive a decline in learning. The findings support this hypothesis to some extent, though there are important nuances, such as that boys were more likely to report learning "a little bit" or "nothing" when they reported having increased negative feelings due to COVID-19 (such as feeling sadder, more worried, or more bored), increased violence in the home, and having more chores and responsibility for the care of other children. While girls reported the same challenges (although girls were less likely to report increased violence in the home), they were not correlated to their perceptions of learning "a little bit" or "nothing." This may suggest that girls were more accustomed to pursuing learning despite challenges related to wellbeing, violence, and domestic chores. On the other hand, boys may have been less able to adapt their learning to these challenges during COVID-19. This gender difference was not expected. While

correlations between learning and wellbeing are well documented, there is a need for further research on the gendered aspects, especially in terms of boys' challenges in maintaining learning in the face of a decline in wellbeing and a challenging home environment. The possibility of girls underreporting violence in the home cannot be excluded and may need to be addressed in future research.

While our findings from the qualitative research include the recurrent themes of concerns about violence and wellbeing, they were not commonly voiced and were not at the forefront of responses to questions about the children's request to their countries' leaders and their parents. Reasons for this may include a reluctance to talk about violence and wellbeing concerns (especially among girls), an acceptance of harmful norms relating to violence, or limited awareness of their right to services that address their protection and wellbeing concerns. These areas may require further research and prioritization in programming and policy.

Overall, we see the importance of these findings being centered on girls' and boys' views on their gendered experience of learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. We see the gendered obstacles these children have experienced when trying to access learning materials and supports during COVID-19, and have found that these challenges are more pronounced for children in contexts of displacement. We also have gained insight into the gendered connections between wellbeing and the experience of learning. We recommend that girls' and boys' requests for more support across sectors in humanitarian responses be addressed. The intersection of gender, displacement, and economic struggles should also be addressed in these interventions, with greater attention given than ever before to context-specific support for the social and emotional aspects of children's learning.

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## APPENDIX

Table A1: Definition of Variables Used in Analysis

Name of Variables	Category	Definition
<b>Learning Outcome</b>		
Child learning perception during school closure	1	Those perceived as learning a little bit or nothing
	0	Those perceived as learning as much as at school and/or more than at school
<b>Main Predictors</b>		
Gender of the child	1	Girls
	0	Boys
Displacement status of the children	1	Those with parents/caregivers identified as displaced group (i.e., refugee/asylum seeker and/or IDP)
	0	Those who do not belong to displaced group
<b>Children’s/Caregivers’ Characteristics</b>		
Child age	1	Those ages 15-17 (mid-adolescence)
	0	Those ages 11-14 (early adolescence)
Number of children in the household		Continuous variable

Table A1: Definition of Variables Used in Analysis (cont.)

Name of Variables	Category	Definition
Child having disabilities	1	Those who cannot see at all or have a lot of difficulty hearing or seeing or remembering/ concentrating, or with self-care, walking, or communicating
	0	Those without any report of disabilities
Caregiver gender	1	Female caregivers
	0	Male caregivers
Caregiver age		Continuous variable
Household: Losing half of income during COVID-19	1	Those losing more than half of household income
	0	Those losing household income by half or below (including those who reported not losing income)
Settlement: Urban	1	Those living in urban area
	0	Those living in rural area
Region (Asia as ref)	1	Asia
ESA	2	Eastern and Southern Africa
WCA	3	Western and Central Africa
LCA	4	Latin America and Caribbean
MEEE	5	Middle East and Eastern Europe
<b>Wellbeing</b>		
Having negative feelings	1	Those who report negative feelings (either less happy and/or less hopeful and/or more worried and/or sadder and/or less safe and/or less feeling of having own space and time and/or more bored)
	0	Those who reported otherwise
Report of violence at home by children/ caregivers	1	Those living in the household with any report of violence (i.e., violence happened at home; adults being hit or verbally abused; children being hit or verbally abused; adults yelling, aggressive, and resorting to physical punishment) by the children and/or caregivers
	0	Those living in the household without any report of violence
Having to do more chores than before	1	Those reporting having more chores to do
	0	Those reporting having same number or fewer chores to do

Table A1: Definition of Variables Used in Analysis (cont.)

Name of Variables	Category	Definition
Having to care for siblings/others more than before	1	Those reporting having to do more care work for siblings/others
	0	Those reporting having to do same amount or less work for siblings/others
<b>Learning Supports</b>		
Having access to textbook, worksheet, and reading books	1	Those with access to textbook and/or worksheet and/or reading books
	0	Those without any access to textbook and/or worksheet and/or reading books
Having access to radio and TV learning program	1	Those with access to radio and/or TV educational program
	0	Those without any access to radio and/or TV educational program
Having access to computer, tablet/phone, and internet	1	Those with access to computer, tablet/phone, and internet
	0	Those without access to computer, tablet/phone, and internet
<b>Learning Obstacles</b>		
Cannot be bothered to learn	1	Those who reported cannot be bothered to learn as the obstacle
	0	Those reported otherwise
Do not understand homework	1	Those who reported they do not understand homework as the obstacle
	0	Those who reported otherwise
No available help	1	Those who reported no available help as the obstacle; 0 for those reported otherwise
	0	Those who reported otherwise
Not enough data	1	Those who reported not having enough data to access internet as the obstacle; 0 for those reported otherwise
	0	Those who reported otherwise
Someone is always using TV, internet, computer, or radio	1	Those who reported someone using TV, internet, computer, radio as the obstacle
	0	Those who reported otherwise