



The Hidden Impact of COVID-19 on Children: A Global Research Series

Research Overview and Key Findings across Asia

29th October 2020
Life in Kyrgyzstan
Conference
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Economist



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The Hidden Impact of COVID-19 on Children

Research purpose

Research purpose

This mixed-methods research study explored how the pandemic and measures implemented to mitigate it, are impacting:



Child health & nutrition



Child education & learning



Child protection & wellbeing



Family finances and poverty



Child rights
especially children's
right to be heard

and
identified children's and their
families' **needs** during this time.



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Who did we survey?

Three related study groups

1. The general public

A convenience sample reached through social media and other channels

2. Save the children program participants

A random representative sample reached largely through phone interviews and online survey.

3. Populations of interest to Save the children

I.e. people living in a particular urban slum, refugee camp or other discrete community.

A purposive sample reached largely through phone interviews and online survey.



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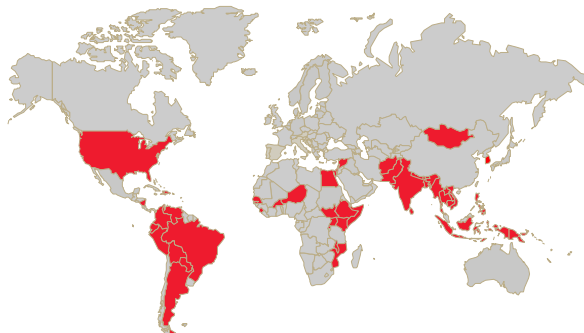
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Where were they?

31,640 adult respondents and
12,334 child respondents from **46 countries**.



Asia had the largest response, with 17,336 respondents overall

- 6,195 program participants incl 3,686 children
- 3,731 target population incl 1,969 children
- 6,690 general public incl 2,557 children

The findings presented here come from our
representative random sample of Save the Children program participants



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FINDINGS

Global level and Asia-specific findings from our representative random sample of Save the Children program participants


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Top-level findings



Child Poverty

77% of households lost income as a result of COVID-19.
96% of households reported having trouble paying for an essential item or service.
81% struggled to pay for food.

Education

More than **8 in 10 children** felt that they were **learning little or nothing at all.**

Two thirds of parents and caregivers reported their **child had received no contact from teachers** since their schools closed.



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Top-level findings



Nutrition

Almost **two thirds** of parents and caregivers reported that (62%) they found it **difficult to provide their families with meat, dairy products, grains, fruits and vegetables** during the pandemic.

The primary reason reported was cost – **over half** (52%) of these respondents reported that **food items were too expensive**.

Health

89% of parents and caregivers reported that their households' **access to healthcare, medicine or medical supplies has been affected**, rising to **96%** for households where at least one child has a disability.



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The Hidden Impact of COVID-19 on Children

Top-level findings



Child Protection

One third (32%) of households had a child or caregiver reporting that **violence, including physical and emotional abuse**, has occurred in the home.

Children reported more violence when schools were closed, 17% compared to 8% when the child was attending school in person.

Child Wellbeing

More than **8 in 10** (83%) children reported **an increase in negative feelings**.

Just under **half** (46%) of parents/caregivers reported **observing signs of psychological distress in children**.



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Top-level findings



Child Rights

Half (51%) the children surveyed reported being **deprived of social interaction** with their friends. **Over half** (58%) of child respondents said that they **can express their concerns** about the pandemic to family members. **One in five** (20%) said that they had **made decisions together** with their parents and caregivers.

Inequalities

It is **girls**, children with **disabilities** or caregivers with disabilities and **the poorest** children that are being **hit hardest** by the pandemic. Households with **refugee or internally displaced person** status reported **greater risk** of school dropout, violence and income loss.



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Child Poverty: Asia level findings

Household Income



85% of households **reported losing income** since the start of the COVID-19 outbreak (higher than the global comparison of 77%).



1 in 5 parents/caregivers (19%) **lost all of their income**

Of those who lost income:

A higher proportion of respondents **from female-headed households (47%) lost their job** compared to **mixed households (31%)**

41% of parents/caregivers with **disabilities lost their job**



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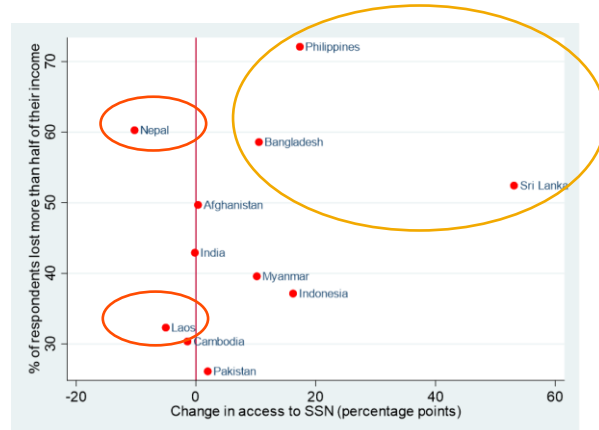
Child Poverty: Asia level findings

Social Safety Nets

Change in access to social safety nets does not correlate with income loss.

Change in access to social safety nets does not correlate with income loss. **Three-quarters (73%) of respondents who lost all of their income are not receiving government support.**

% of beneficiaries lost more than half of their income



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Child Poverty: Asia level findings

Trouble Paying for things

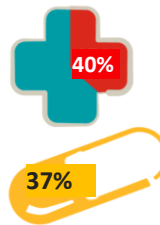
95% of households **reported having trouble paying for an essential item or service**

88% reported **struggling to pay for food** (higher than the global of 81%).

This is **worse for households classified as poor** (88%) vs for non-poor (72%).

"[...] I beg you to oversee the distribution of basic food items provided to underprivileged citizens, so it can be sent to those who really need and deserve it, and there is no fraud in this matter. I also beg you to make a regulation about the remote learning that benefits the people, both upper middle and lower middle-class people, also both people in urban areas and in the remote areas. [...]" 17-year old rural boy, Indonesia

"So many people are hungry and do not have enough to eat. I would demand leaders to provide food to these people; otherwise they might die of hunger."
(Girl, 15, India)



Two in five are having trouble paying for **healthcare** (40%) and **nutrition supplements** (37%).

One-quarter have difficulties **paying their rent** (25%) and **utility bills** (21%). This is higher than the global level.



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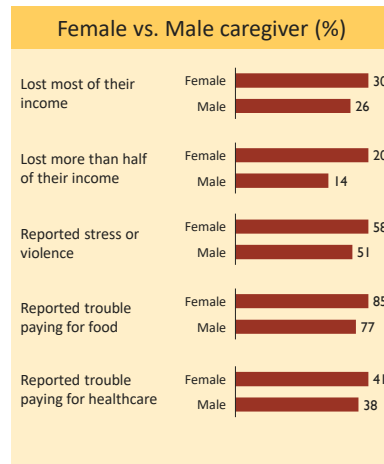
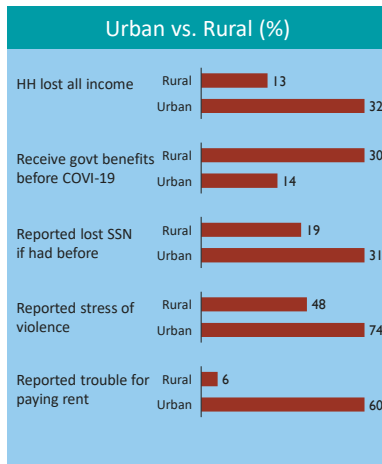
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Child Poverty: Asia level findings

Inequalities



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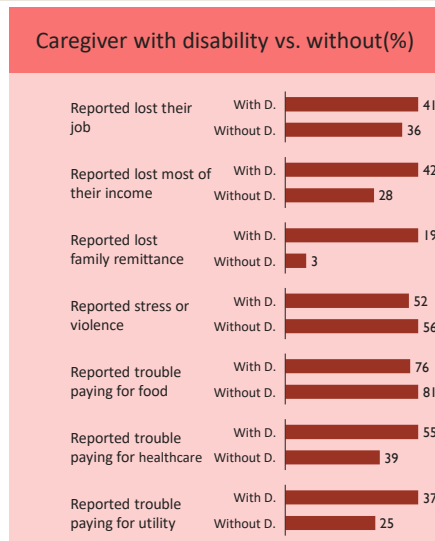
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Child Poverty: Asia level findings

Inequalities



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Child Poverty: Global level recommendations

For Governments and Policy

1. Assess **social protection provisions** for children; implement measures for financing expanded coverage
2. Multi-year plans for **universal child benefits** (min 1% of their GDP long term)
3. Learn lessons from pandemic, design social protection to be more **shock-responsive**.

For Donors & Related Stakeholders

1. Develop package of **support for struggling countries**: debt cancellation, global fund for social protection
2. Humanitarian actors develop and strengthen government-led **shock-responsive social protection** systems to bolster resilience
3. **Humanitarian assistance** complements existing social protection measures, strengthening them over time.

For Programs

1. Support families to **access basic goods and services** (cash; in-kind food; target female-headed HH and persons with disabilities)
2. Give children access to **counselling services, psychosocial support & protection from violence**, esp. for individuals with disabilities, girls and minorities
3. Deliver **assistance at scale**, for those who need it most



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Child Education: Asia level findings



What message do you have for leaders?

- Equal #1 message is to **re-open schools**.



What worries you the most about COVID-19?

- Schools not re-opening
- Not being able to **go back to school**

Perception of Learning

More than **8 in 10 children** felt that they were **learning little or nothing at all**



"Dear Mr. President or Ministry of Education, I am a student and I want the schools to be opened. Because what will this nation become without schools? In schools we can get new things that can be our innovation. I know that it is impossible to study in school in this condition, but I really want to be back to school..."
(Boy, 14, Indonesia).



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Child Education: Asia level findings

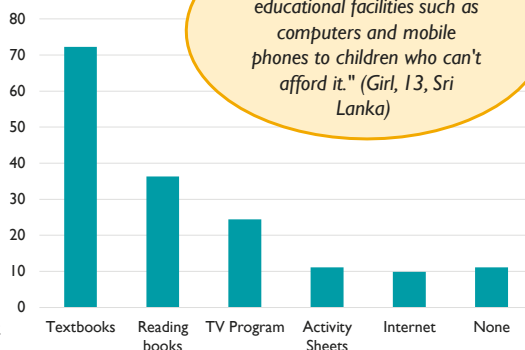
Obstacles to Learning



11% of children were not using any form of learning material at home

Strong relationship with learning a lot or as much as before:

- Electronic books
- Internet
- Educational apps on phone/tablet
- Educational



"Please provide face masks and other distance learning educational facilities such as computers and mobile phones to children who can't afford it." (Girl, 13, Sri Lanka)

Learning materials used by children



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Child Education: Asia level findings

Obstacles to Learning



Three in four (75%) children reported obstacles to learning during school closures.

"Mama papa is so worried to arrange laptops, tab for online classes, paying more for internet and full fee to school are too much"

12 year old boy, Pakistan.

31%	33%	13%	16%
Do not understand homework	No available help	Too many chores to do	Not enough data to access internet

Two thirds of parents and caregivers reported their child had **received no contact from teachers** since their schools closed



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Child Education: Asia level findings



School drop out

The **majority** of children (95%) and their parents and caregivers (96%) thought that they **would return to school** once COVID-19 is over

More boys than girls say they **will return to school** (96.1% vs 94.3)

More children without disabilities say they **will return to school** vs. Those with disability (95.6% vs 90.2)

Two thirds of parents and caregivers reported their child had **received no contact from teachers** since their schools closed



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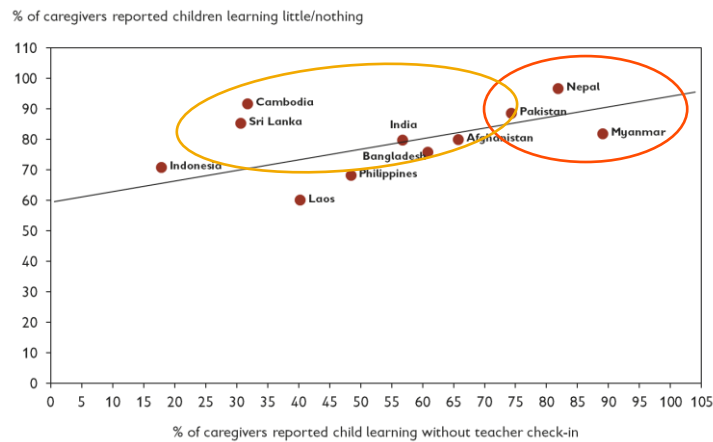
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Child Education: Asia level findings

Lack of teacher check-ins and learning little or nothing at all

An association with parent/caregiver reports of **their child learning little or nothing at all** and the parent/caregiver reports of **teachers not checking in with their child**



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Child Education: Asia level recommendations

For Governments and Policy

- Provide effective, flexible and inclusive **distance learning programs**
- Implement a **global COVID-19 education action plan**: keep learning alive, support safe return to school, build more resilient education systems
- **Support to teachers** through ongoing professional development

For Donors & Related Stakeholders

- WB shareholders provide a **supplementary International Development Association (IDA) budget** of ~\$35 billion over 2021-22, incl. min \$10bn in grants
- G7 and OECD donors contribute min. \$10m per country to **Global Partnership for Education to fund emergency response to COVID-19**, in addition to 2021 funding
- \$300 million to **Education Cannot Wait fund** & \$2bn in-country to support multi-year resilience programs

For Programs

- Build on Safe Schools common approach
- Provide quality learning materials & **distance learning programs**
- Inclusive and gender & disability sensitive **'Back to School'** campaigns
- Ensure integration with other sectors: WASH, Health and Nutrition, Child Protection



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Child Health and Nutrition: Asia level findings

Access to healthcare, medicine or medical supplies



87% of parents and caregivers reported their households' **access to healthcare, medicine or medical supplies have been affected** as a result of the outbreak.

Access was comparatively less affected in **Myanmar** (32%) and **Sri Lanka** (31%)

Access was also comparatively lower among:

- Households where at least one **parent/caregiver or child has a disability**
- **Rural households**
- Households who **received government benefits before COVID-19 or have lost more than half of their income since COVID-19**
- Households with members belonging to a **minority group**

"The thing which I would like to tell them are about the issues related to food security and health services. They should try to extend such facilities even in this quarantine and after quarantine because many people are dying in this situation due to starvation and lack of health services."

Boy, 17 years old, Nepal, message for leaders



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Child Health and Nutrition: Asia level findings

Access to healthcare, medicine or medical supplies



Three quarters (76%) of households reported **not being able to access health services and support** needed in order to stay healthy. This included :

- Medication
- COVID-19 tests
- In-person healthcare
- Counselling
- Mental health services and
- remote healthcare among others.

It was higher in BGD, AFG, PAK, PHL, LAO and CMB

90% of the households that lost over half of their income due to the pandemic have struggled to access healthcare and medicine

"What worries me the most is the infection of COVID-19 on my family members."

Girl, 15 years old, Cambodia

"I worry that if government cannot control this situation it will affect a lot of people and spread over all districts." – Boy, 13 years old, Afghanistan



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Child Health and Nutrition: Asia level findings

Strong association between trouble paying for health / food items and services



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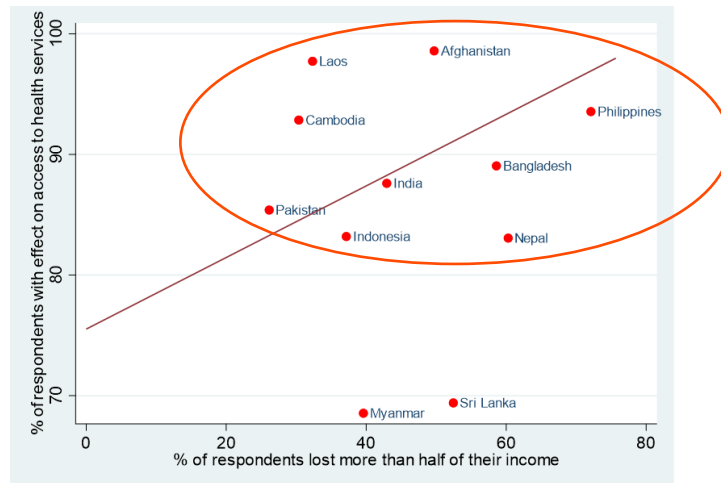
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Child Health and Nutrition: Asia level findings

Strong association between income loss and barriers to accessing health items and services

Access was affected in all countries, however to a lesser extent in MMR and SLK. Note however scale is from 70%.



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Child Health and Nutrition: Asia level findings

Nutrition needs



Almost two thirds of households (63%) reported barriers to providing their families with meat, dairy, grains, fruits and vegetables.

The primary reason was cost, with over half of these respondents saying food was too expensive.



A strong association between income loss and access to diversified foods

Infant and young child feeding

97% of parents/caregivers who breast fed their child before COVID-19 were able to **continue breastfeeding** (higher than the global level of 94%).



Concerns about continuing breastfeeding were common.

- 32% feared getting the baby infected
- 32% were concerned about being separated from their baby if they became infected



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Child Health and Nutrition: Global level recommendations

For Governments

1. Remove financial and non-financial barriers to **equitable H&N services**; make them free at point of use, for vulnerable families; incl. with pre-existing conditions
2. Maintain and strengthen during pandemic **essential routine services**: Maternal, newborn and child health, reproductive and sexual health, mental health, immunization and nutrition, child feeding; IPC for safety and confidence
3. Increase investment in **resilient health and nutrition systems**, critical to prepare and respond to public health emergencies

For Donors & Related Stakeholders

1. Prioritize **most vulnerable countries** (weak health systems, fragile or conflict-affected settings) for preparedness, response and delivery of essential H&N services, free at the point of use
2. Call for **removal of user fees** & provide guidance to countries through intl. and national platforms

For Programs

1. Risk Communication and Community Engagement to build confidence in **accessing healthcare**
2. Guidance on support for **infant and young child feeding** (WHO guidance) and protect **breastfeeding** (standards and recommendations of the Code and subsequent related World Health Assembly resolutions).
3. Ensure all **health and nutrition information and guidance** is accessible to all, including children and people with disabilities



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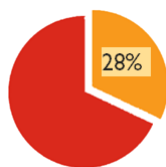
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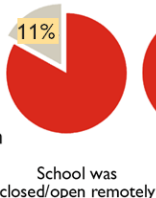
Child Protection and Wellbeing: Asia level findings

Violence in the home



28% of households had a child or caregiver **reporting** that **violence**, including physical and emotional abuse, has occurred in the home

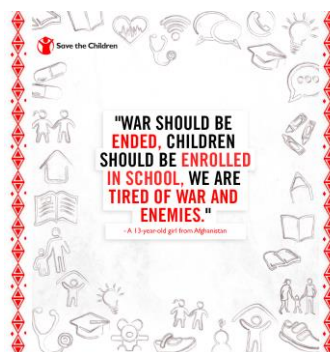
Violence was reported at **higher rates** by children when schools were closed compared to when children were attending in person.



School was closed/open remotely



School was open



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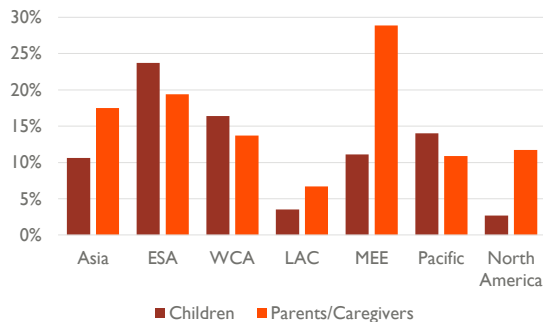
Child Protection and Wellbeing: Asia level findings

Violence in the home

1 in 6 children reported that there had been violence occurring in the home, including children being hit or verbally abused and/or adults being hit or verbally abused

During this time violence against children is increased, thus please work on this issue.

Girl, 14, Ethiopia



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Child Protection and Wellbeing: Asia level findings

Separation from children

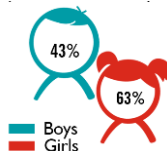


Nearly **one-quarter (23%)** of parents/caregivers who had to move because of COVID-19 reported **separation from children**

"Mom has gone abroad for work. Being separated from her is worrying"
(Boy, 13, Sri Lanka)

Chores and exacerbation of gender roles

Almost **two-thirds of the girls (65%)** reported an **increase in household chores**, compared to **less than half** of the boys (38%).



This was stopping 1 in 5 (18%) girls from learning, compared to 7% of boys.



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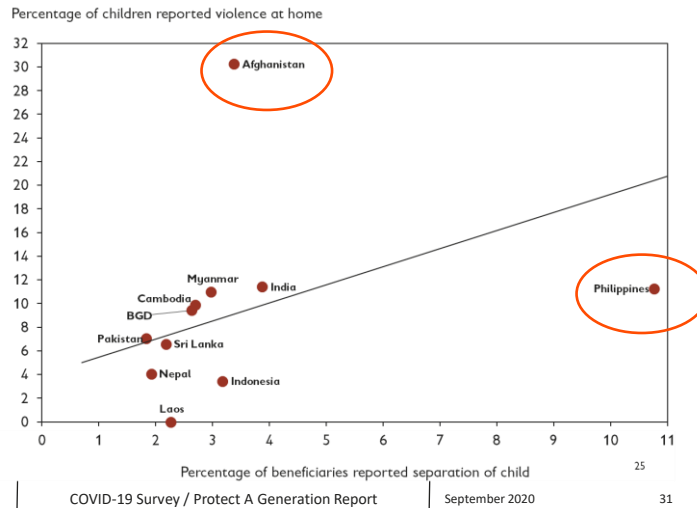
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Child Protection and Wellbeing: Asia level findings

Separation and violence

There was a global trend that indicated countries with high child separation have high rates of violence reported by the children. This is less so in Asia



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Child Protection and Wellbeing: Asia level findings

Children's Mental Health and Psychological Wellbeing



More than **8 in 10 children** (83%) and 7 in 10 **parents/caregivers** (70%) reported **an increase in negative feelings**.



43% of the parents/caregivers reported observing **signs of psychological distress** in children

Overall, a large proportion of children reported feeling:

worried more often (73%)

bored more often (57%)

sad more often (55%)

hopeful less often (34%) than before the pandemic.



"While sleeping I think always about the virus, my grandfather has fever and headache so we get scared."
12 year old girl, Afghanistan



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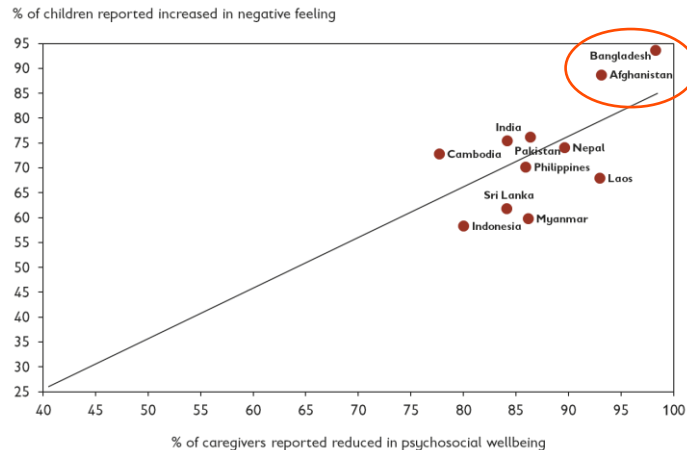
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Child Protection and Wellbeing: Asia level findings

Children's increase in negative feelings and parent/caregivers reduced psychological wellbeing

There is a strong association between increase in **children's negative feelings** and caregiver's self-reports of **reduced of psychosocial wellbeing**



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The Hidden Impact of COVID-19 on Children

Child Protection and Wellbeing: Asia level recommendations

For Governments

- Prioritize **child protection** in emergency preparedness plans.
- Ensure child protection services & referral systems are **well resourced, inclusive and supported** by designating the social service workforce as essential workers, addressing barriers to access for vulnerable groups, and considering the violence experienced by children in the home during the pandemic in all aspects of child protection systems.
- Family Separation prevention and response programming support

For Donors & Related Stakeholders

- **Scale-up flexible funding** for Parenting without violence, child protection programs, MHPSS and gender-based violence prevention, mitigation and response.
- To include funding services for addressing **violence against children**, as well as children and caregivers' **MHPSS** in humanitarian response plans
- To include funding community level organizations **mobilizing front-line protection** for children

For Programs

- Ensure quality services are reaching **the most vulnerable**
- Integrate child protection risk factors into **social protection & child benefit programs**
- Strengthen **mental health and psychosocial wellbeing** programs
- Prepare plans to **transition children back to school** safely
- Integrate **child protection messaging** in Covid-19 risk communication and community engagement



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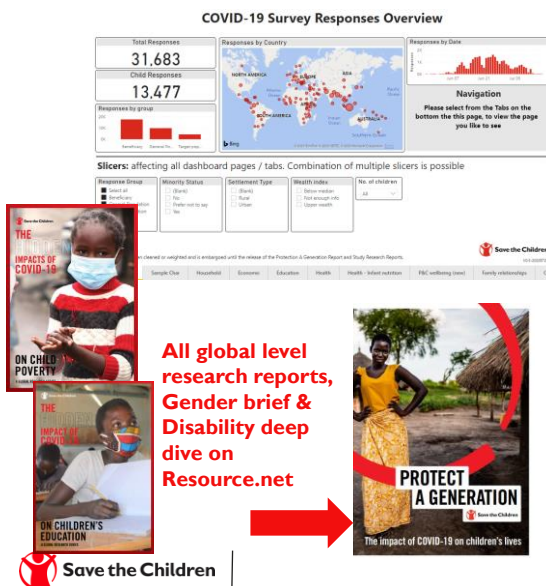
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Interactive dashboards, research reports and media materials



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for media materials inc. Press release, Q/A, Key messages, social media cards, infographics, gifs, videos etc

Engage with

#ProtectAGeneration posts on SCI's twitter:

@Save_Children

and LinkedIn:

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International

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Acknowledgements and contacts

Core research team (ARO)

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THANK YOU



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