



Threat to Gender Equality due to Covid-19: UNESCO Study

Why in News

Recently [UNESCO](#) released a new study, 'when schools shut', exposing the gendered impact of [Covid-19](#) school closures on learning, health and well-being.

- It was released on the occasion of the 2021 **International Day of the Girl Child** (11th October).

International Day of the Girl Child

▪ History:

- In 1995, at the **World Conference on Women in Beijing**, the need for an event focused on young and vulnerable girls was identified.
- The initiative began as a **non-government international plan of action** to address the challenge faced by young women.
- A resolution to declare 11th October as the **International Day of the Girls Child** was adopted by the **UN General Assembly** in 2011.
- In 2020, this marked 25 years of the adoption of the **Beijing declaration**.

▪ Aim:

- It is celebrated for **empowering and amplifying the voices of young girls** around the world.

▪ Theme for 2021:

- **'Digital generation'. Our generation'**.

Key Points

▪ About the Study:

- The global study titled **"When schools shut: Gendered impacts of Covid-19 school closures"** brings to the fore that girls and boys, young women and men were affected differently by school closures, depending on the context.
- At the **peak of the Covid-19 pandemic**, 1.6 billion students in 190 countries were affected by school closures.

▪ Areas of Gendered Impacts:

◦ Household Demands:

- In poorer contexts, **girls' time to learn was constrained by increased household chores**. Boys' participation in learning was limited by income-generating activities.

◦ Digital Divide:

- Girls faced **difficulties in engaging in digital remote learning modalities** in many contexts because of limited access to internet-enabled devices, a lack of digital skills and cultural norms restricting their use of technological devices.

- The study pointed out that **digital gender-divide was already a concern** before the Covid-19 crisis.
- **Rate of School Return:**
 - **Limited data available to date about school return rates** also show gender disparities.
 - A study conducted in four counties in Kenya found that 16 % of girls and 8 % of boys aged 15 to 19 failed to re-enrol during the two months following school reopening in early 2021.
- **Impact on Health:**
 - School closures have **impacted children's health**, notably their mental health, well-being and protection.
 - **Girls reported more stress, anxiety and depression** than boys in 15 countries across the world. LGBTQI learners reported high levels of isolation and anxiety.
- **Suggestions:**
 - **Factor Gender in Policies and Programmes:**
 - The study calls on the **education community to factor gender in policies and programmes to tackle declining participation** and low return-to-school rates in vulnerable communities, including through cash transfers and specific support to pregnant girls and adolescent mothers.
 - **Track Trends and Expand Interventions:**
 - Continued efforts are needed to **track trends and expand interventions to bring an end to [child marriages](#)** as well as early and forced marriages, practices which rob girls of their right to education and health and reduce their long-term prospects.
 - **No-Tech and Low-Tech Remote Learning Solutions:**
 - A strong **need for no-tech and low-tech remote learning solutions**, measures to enable schools to provide comprehensive psychosocial support and to monitor participation through sex-disaggregated data, among other necessary measures is needed.

[Source: TH](#)

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