

What emerged from the report?

The lockdown caused by the pandemic has had major physical as well as psychological impacts persisting over the medium and long term. Compared to national statistics, girls in the care of the Congregational have been less negatively impacted by the pandemic on most indicators, most remarkably in the much lower school drop-out rates. This study can be of guidance for developing an aid guide aimed at preventing negative impacts on young girls in the event of future pandemics or large-scale health crises.

Insights

- 1 Lockdown caused **emotional distress on girls and adolescents**. Many of them suffered anxiety and depression during the pandemic period.
- 2 **The prevalence of early marriages still remains a pervasive problem in several countries**. The COVID-19 pandemic has amplified this problem because of the scarcity of aid to young girls.
- 3 Girls were **dependent on either locally available resources as absorbents during menstruation or had to paid more to buy sanitary pads**.
- 4 **Cases of sexual violence and incest, assisted domestic violence, commercial and sexual exploitation (transactional/survival sex) increased during periods of restriction**.
- 5 **Disparities on access to technological resources** among young girls increased educational gaps, and school disengagement across cohorts.

Recommendations

- Prioritize a new era of investment in robust health systems** that support a family-centered health care model and child health programs.
- Develop additional protection**, awareness and development programs involving not only young girls, but parents and relatives close to the girls, to provide them with the opportunities for participation in engagement activities and for education about reproductive health and sexuality.
- Implement interventions** to maintain the supply chain of sanitary pad and basic hygiene kits for girls, creating a widespread network of primary health care aid.
- Develop additional community-based programs**, particularly in low-income areas, to create more equitable gender norms to decrease tolerance of sexual violence and abuse.
- Invest on connectivity** at communal hot spots, frequented by vulnerable children and improve the education and technology education system and provide appropriate capacity-building.



Scan the QR Code to download the full research report

www.howarethegirls.gsif.it



The study aims of exploring the complex and long-lasting effects of the global pandemic amongst girls living in the most deprived areas within the Majority South served by the Congregations. The research team proposed to work on a two-level survey conducted from November 2021 to June 2022: a quantitative study, administered to a larger pool of girls in the six countries, and a qualitative study, administered to a smaller group of girls in the same communities. The aim of this empirical study was twofold. On the one hand, to provide a detailed and comprehensive description of the general condition of girls in the target communities in the aftermath of the pandemic outbreak. On the other hand, to get some insights on the impact on the current and future outcomes for these girls. The quantitative research involved 3,443 adolescent girls, selected among the participants in the Congregations' programs. The qualitative study involved 314 adolescent girls aged 10-20 years to complement the findings to the quantitative study. It aimed at illustrating quantitative findings and providing a space for girls to voice out their experience and their concerns in their own words.

The survey

How are the Girls?

A Study on the Rights of Girls during the COVID-19 Pandemic in six countries, promoted by four International Women Religious Congregations.



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THE RESEARCH IN NUMBERS

The Project

The Covid-19 pandemic which began at the end of 2019, disrupted every facet of our lives. Many communities, mostly in the Global South, have suffered from its impact; among them, children and adolescents, particularly girls, have suffered its impacts more than others. Upholding the dignity and promoting the well-being of this group of people is at the core of the mission of the four Congregations that promoted the present research.

The four organizations that have coordinated this research are the "development arms" of four of the largest international women religious Congregations: the Good Shepherd International Foundation ONLUS, for the sisters of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, VIDES Internazionale, for the Salesian Sisters of Don Bosco, Fondazione Comboniane nel Mondo ONLUS, for the Comboni Missionary Sisters and the International Mission Development Office of the sisters of Notre Dame des Mission. All four Congregations have been working for decades to support children and girls in the most vulnerable communities in resource-deprived countries. The congregations joined to attempt an unprecedented research, across different countries and continents, to assess how the pandemic had affected girls involved in the programs and how the unique, holistic model of service that places integral development and care for each single girl and young woman at the center of the four congregations' work had mitigated the negative impact of pandemic. Such understanding was key to review programs and to inform new educational, development and advocacy initiatives. Given the worldwide presence of the four Congregations, it was agreed to narrow the scope of the research to six countries: South Sudan, Kenya, India, Nepal, Ecuador, Peru.

The impact of COVID-19 on girls and young women

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EDUCATION



2 IN 4 GIRLS
HAD DIFFICULTY
STUDYING IN THE LAST
18 MONTHS



**SCHOOL
CLOSURE**
62% URBAN/SEMI-URBAN
80% RURAL
85% INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS



13%
DROP-OUT RATE
Schools closed for more than
6 months resulted in a 13%
dropout rate



1 IN 5 GIRLS
DID NOT USE THE
INTERNET DURING
LOCKDOWN

53% of girls from Kenya claim not to have used alternative means to traditional education and 69% of them never used internet during lockdown

WORK AND HOUSEOLD CHORES



6 IN 10 GIRLS
REPORT CARE AND DOMESTIC
WORK INCREASED

FOOD SECURITY



1 IN 6 GIRLS
HAD TROUBLE
ACCESSING FOOD

FUTURE EXPECTATION

91% GIRLS CLAIM TO CONTINUE
THEIR STUDIES

HEALTH AND SANITATION



1 IN 3 GIRLS
LIVING IN INFORMAL SETTLEMENT
DID NOT HAVE ACCESS TO CLEAN
WATER AT HOME



LACK OF SEX EDUCATION LED
THE MOST VULNERABLE GIRLS TO
FALL INTO THE TRAP OF TEENAGE
PREGNANCY



34%
DIFFICULTY BUYING
SANITARY PADS IN
URBAN AREAS

MENTAL HEALTH



60%
REPORT A SENSE OF
WORRY AND SADNESS



1 IN 2 GIRLS
REPORTED THAT
CONFLICTS AT HOME
INCREASED



MOST OF THE GIRLS
SUFFERED FROM A
STRONG SENSE OF
LONELINESS

CONGREGATIONS IMPACT



30%
OF GIRLS INVOLVED IN
CONGREGATIONAL PROGRAMS LIVING
IN RURAL AND REMOTE AREAS HAVE
RECEIVED A MENSTRUAL HYGIENE KIT
AT LEAST ONCE.



99%
OF GIRLS INVOLVED IN
CONGREGATIONAL PROGRAMS
ARE STILL ENROLLED IN SCHOOLS

The research in numbers



3,443
Adolescents girls
and Youth woman
participants



10-20
AGES



6
Countries



30
Places



URBAN
RURAL / REMOTE
INFORMAL SETTLEMENT



4
Congregations



94
Coordinators &
Enumerators

Future Actions



Support a family-centered health care model and child health programs.



Develop additional protection, awareness programs involving young girls, parents and relatives close to the girls



Improve the technology education system and provide appropriate capacity-building.



Implement interventions to maintain the supply chain of sanitary pad and basic hygiene kits for girls



Create more equitable gender norms to decrease tolerance of sexual violence and abuse.



Strengthen collaboration among congregations