



Impact of COVID-19 on Protection and Education Among Children in Dadaab Refugee Camp, Kenya

September 2020



Save the Children

ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has aggravated existing risks to children's education, livelihoods and physical and mental wellbeing.

Save the Children conducted research in three refugee camps in Dadaab in Kenya which explored the impact of COVID-19 on children's education, young mothers' livelihoods and gender-based violence. This study highlights programmatic adaptations made in response to COVID-19, identifying what has worked well or less well and considers practical recommendations for the sector. The research gathered views from children, young mothers, caregivers and key stakeholders working in child protection and education in the camp. This study found that:

- The majority of children are still learning at home, predominantly through radio lessons. However, a lack of learning materials (including radios and solar lamps) is a substantive barrier for others.
- Young mothers especially have struggled to access necessary social and economic support as they have been unable to earn an income or socialize with their peers.
- Gender-based violence has intensified as a result of COVID-19 measures. Domestic violence and sexual harassment were the main forms of violence experienced. This has been made worse by a lack of available services, which have either closed or reduced staff.
- Restrictions in movement also reduced the ability for child protection actors to deliver general services. Yet, agencies continue to try innovative approaches to support the community in stopping the spread of COVID-19 including - telecoms counselling sessions and awareness-building radio sessions. Children and caregivers themselves called for Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for example masks and hand sanitizers to support them in their daily lives.

This study underscores the need for continuous support to these communities. The provision of facemasks, hand sanitizers and handwashing kits remain of crucial importance to ensure their safety and minimize the transmission of COVID-19.



INTRODUCTION

Save the Children has been operational in Dadaab since 2011, delivering Education in Emergency and Child Protection related programmes. Save the Children is providing non-formal education through the Alternative Basic Education (ABE) centres in the 3 camps (IFO camp, Dagahaley and Hagadera). This enables more Out of School Children access education. Child protection is done through the existing comprehensive case management system and referral mechanisms put in place for referral of children with serious protection risks. Best Interest Assessment and Best Interest Determination (BIA/ BID) is undertaken when necessary for individual cases including for the unaccompanied and separated minors and returnees.

The general objective of this research was to assess the impact of the COVID-19 on child protection, education, livelihoods and Gender based violence (GBV) among refugees in Dadaab. Specifically, the research sought to answer to the following specific objectives.

Specific objectives

- i. To find out whether children are learning at home
- ii. To establish the extent of gender-based violence on girls, boys, women and men
- iii. To establish the impacts of COVID-19 on livelihoods among young mothers
- iv. To find out what/how is the response of child protection actors including community child protection volunteers during emergency e.g. in COVID-19?



METHODOLOGY

This research employed a combination of cross-sectional qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. A list of beneficiary households was randomly sampled from the three camps (Dagahaley, IFO and Hagadera) in Dadaab camp and with each household sampled a caregiver and a learner aged between 8 -18 years was selected as the respondent. About 60 girl mothers aged 15-17 years were also interviewed from IFO and Dagahaley camps. For the qualitative data, we purposively sampled selected key informants working with child protection and

welfare in the Dadaab camp. This included four representatives of child welfare committees, 10 community caseworkers and foster parents and representatives from NGOs working on child protection and education. Data collection was carried out in the month of August 2020.

Quantitative data was collected through phone interviews by trained enumerators. A total of 250 caregivers and 250 children were interviewed.

Number of interviewed households by Camp

Camp	No. Caregivers	Percent
Dagahaley	70	28.0
Hagadera	105	42.0
Ifo	75	30.0

STUDY FINDINGS

Among the interviewed caregivers, 48.0 percent were male while 52.0 percent were female. The mean age was 45.5 and 38.5 years for males and females respectively. Averagely households had 3 boys and 3 girls aged between 3-18 years.

TABLE 1: NUMBER OF CAREGIVERS INTERVIEWED BY AGE GROUP AND CAMP

Age group (in years)	No of caregivers	Percent
20-24	2	0.8
25-29	6	2.4
30-34	33	13.2
35-39	67	26.8
40-44	56	22.4
45 and above	86	34.4

Caregivers Level of Education

About 80.8 percent of the caregivers had no formal education, 14.4 percent had attended primary school, and 4 percent had attended secondary school while 0.8% had attended college education. Disaggregating by gender shows that 77.5 percent male and 83.8 percent female had no formal education, 15.8 percent male and 13.1 percent female had primary school education, 5.0 percent male and 3.1 percent female had secondary education, 1.7 percent male had college education while none of the female caregiver interviewed had college education.

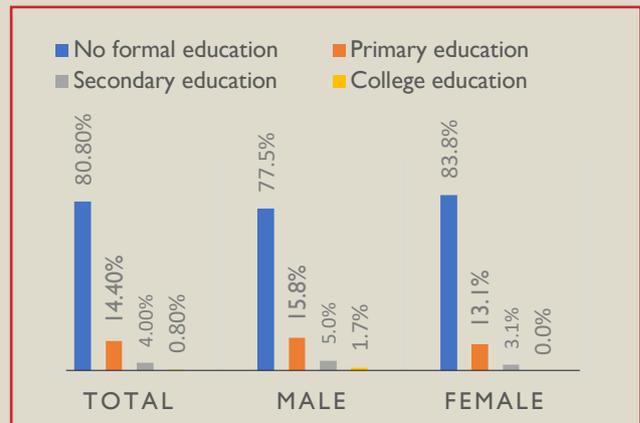


FIGURE 1: LEVEL OF EDUCATION OF CAREGIVERS

With regard to the learners, 54.4 percent were boys while 45.6 percent were girls. The mean age was 13.1 and 13.1 years among boys and girls respectively. About 6.0 percent of the learners were living with disabilities.

About 49.6 percent of the learners interviewed were from Alternative Basic Education (ABE) centers while 50.4 percent were from the Alternative Education Programme (AEP) centers run by Save the Children (SC) and Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) respectively.

Majority of the learners interviewed were aged between 10-13 years as presented in Table 2.

TABLE 2: NUMBER OF LEARNERS INTERVIEWED BY AGE GROUP

Age group	No of children	Percent
Less than 9	6	2.4
10-13	154	61.6
14-17	75	30.0
18 and above	15	6.0

INTERVIEWED CAREGIVERS:



MEAN AGE:

AVERAGE HOUSEHOLDS:

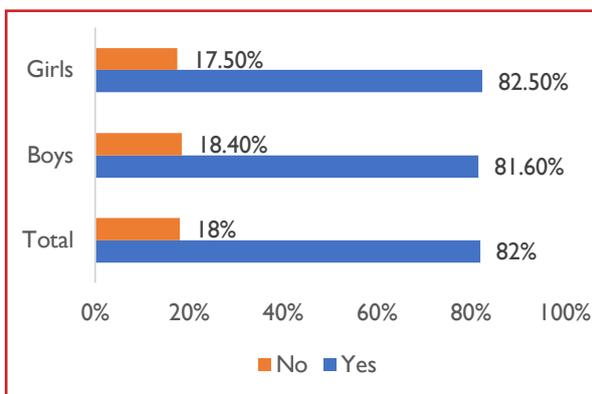


1 Objective one: To find out whether children are learning at home

Learning at home

About 82.0 percent of the learners reported that they are still learning at home. Notably, a slightly higher percentage of girls (82.5 percent) are still learning at home compared to boys (81.6 percent). This is an important finding that requires further investigation on why more girls are learning compared to boys.

FIGURE 2: LEARNERS STILL LEARNING AT HOME



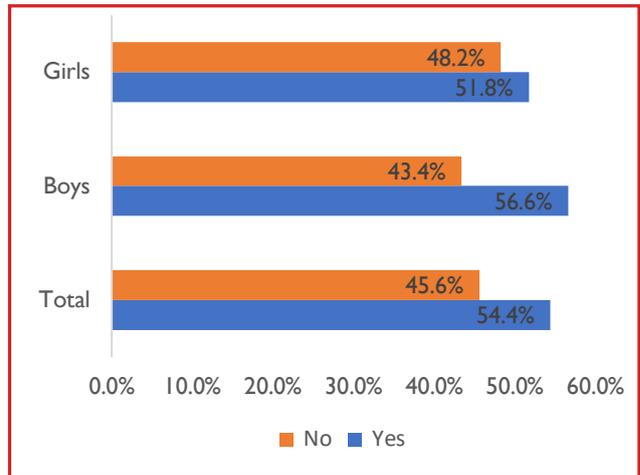
The learners were asked to indicate how much they were learning from home. About 38.0 percent indicated that they are learning a lot; 50.4 percent were learning a little; 11.2 percent think nothing at all while 0.4 percent don't know.

Reasons FOR not learning at home

About 18.0 percent of the learners interviewed are not learning at home. The reasons include; lack of learning materials (86.7 percent), engaged in other household duties (8.9 percent) and not interested (4.4 percent).

Out of the learners who were still learning from home, 54.4 percent were learning from the radio lessons/programs while about 40 percent were learning on their own. More boys (56.6 percent) were learning from the radio programs compared to girls (51.8 percent).

FIGURE 3: LEARNERS LEARNING FROM THE RADIO PROGRAMS



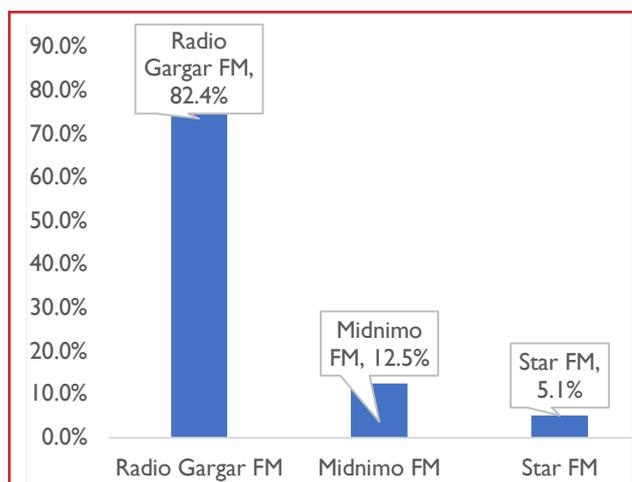
The reasons why some learners are not learning from the radio programs include family have no radio (88.6 percent); don't know the time for the lesson (6.1 percent); not interested (2.6 percent); are engaged to do others duties; (1.8 percent) while 0.9 percent don't know what is going on in the radio programs.

Radio lessons/classes

About 46.4 percent of the caregivers viewed the radio lessons /classes as very useful; 20.0 percent useful; 6.0 percent not useful while 27.6 percent have no radios in their homes.

Majority of the learners listened to lesson programs aired by radio Gargar FM (82.5 percent); Midnimo FM (12.5 percent) and 5.1 percent from Star FM.

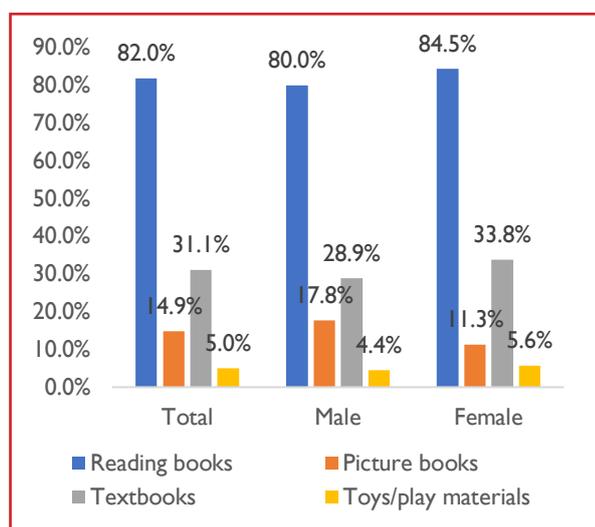
FIGURE 4: RADIO STATIONS LISTENED BY LEARNERS



Access to relevant learning materials

About 78.5 percent of the learners reported to have access to educational materials that is relevant to their learning. A higher percentage of boys (81.1 percent) have access to educational materials compared to girls (75.5 percent). The learning materials include reading books (82 percent), picture books (14.9 percent), textbooks (31.1 percent) and toys/play materials (5 percent).

FIGURE 5: EDUCATION MATERIALS AVAILABLE TO LEARNERS AT HOME

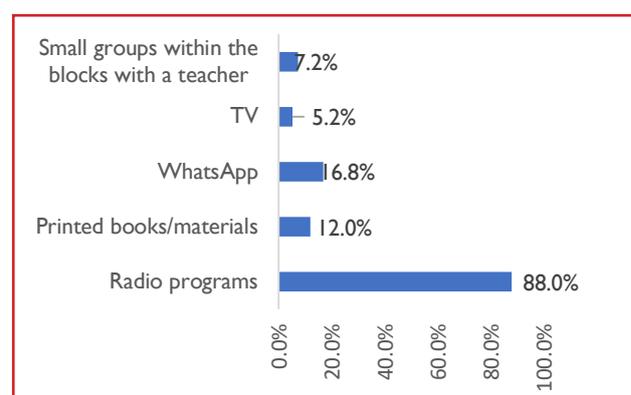


Support for learners at home

About 68.4 percent of the caregivers were available to support their children's learning at home. They provide the support including; reading with them (50.3 percent), leading and guiding them through activities (37.4 percent), answering their questions (7.0 percent), providing them with a radio or phone to listen to the classes (25.1 percent) and 1.8 percent by providing books, pens and chairs. On the other hand, 32.8 percent of the learners reported that teachers were available to support their home-based learning whilst schools are closed.

The learners were asked to indicate the best learning channels while they are still at home. About 88 percent indicated through radio programs; 12 percent through printed books/materials; 16.8 percent through WhatsApp; 5.2 percent through the TV while 7.2 percent through small groups within the blocks with a teacher.

FIGURE 6: LEARNERS BEST OPTIONS TO CONTINUE LEARNING AT HOME



Despite the long closure of schools as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, 84 percent of the learners were hopeful that they will go back to school after the pandemic. In terms of gender, 86.0 percent of boys and 81.6 percent of girls indicated that they will go back to school after the pandemic.

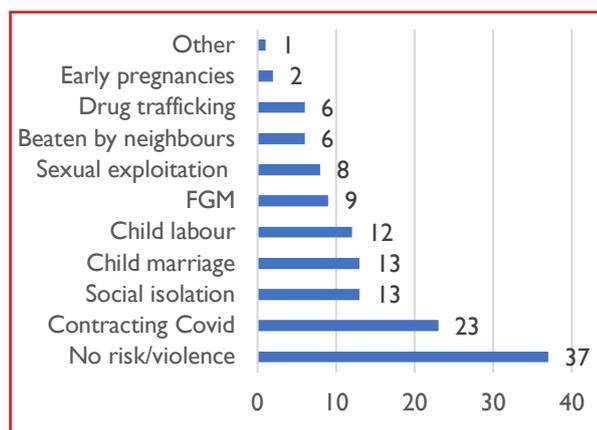
On the contrary, some key informant respondents interviewed reported that there would be higher rates of school dropouts when schools reopen because of learners engaging in income generation activities.

"If the closure of schools continues like this for a longer period, I predict many learners would opt to drop out from schools permanently. Most children became engaged in other activities during this period. Besides that some children see schools as a burden and others used to attend schools by compulsion and force and not willingly." (KII CEWC member 56 yrs. old male)

Risks faced by Learners

According to the caregivers and learners, some of the main risks faced by learners while out of school include contracting Corona Virus, child marriage and social isolation as presented in Figure 7.

FIGURE 7: MAIN RISKS FACED BY LEARNERS WHILE OUT OF SCHOOL (%)



The supports that exist to address the risks faced by learners while out of school are; no support/none(33.2 percent); awareness sessions both remotely and radio(32 percent); peer support groups(18.8 percent); counselling services (10 percent); referral support (14 percent); resilience forums and workshops (8.4 percent) and radio counselling sessions (11.2 percent).

Child friendly activities

About 60 percent of the caregivers interviewed said that learners are engaged in child friendly activities while at home. Some of the activities include; playing (70 percent), drawing (14 percent) and storytelling (16 percent).

Child labour

About 14.0 percent of the caregivers reported to have sent their children to work during the past 30 days in order to meet their basic needs. Of the children sent to work, 34.3 percent were boys, 42.9 percent girls while 22.9 percent sent both children to work. Specifically, the child labour activities that the children engaged while the schools are closed include; shoe shining (17.1 percent),

hawking/selling ice cream (17.1 percent), washing utensils for hotels (2.9 percent), cleaning hotel compounds(17.1 percent),working as maids (2.9 percent),fetching water for hotels and restaurants (17.1 percent),construction of temporary traditional dwellings(2.9 percent),doing laundry for neighbors(8.6 percent),selling firewood(20.0 percent) and agricultural work (5.7 percent).

Disaggregating by gender, the boys were mainly engaged in shoe shining (41.7 percent), selling at the shop (25 percent) selling at the shop and collecting firewood (33.3 percent). On the other hand, girls were engaged in activities including selling clothes (40 percent), selling at the shop (53.3 percent) and saloon (13.3 percent).

Change of responsibilities

According to the findings, 28.4 percent of learners have changed their responsibilities in the household because of COVID-19. New responsibilities taken up by learners include; caring for the sick family members/relatives (29.6 percent), caring for siblings/ other children (66.2 percent), domestic work (31.0 percent), child marriage (1.4 percent), sexual exploitation (2.8 percent) and fetching water from the borehole (1.4 percent).

Specifically, the new responsibilities that have been taken by boys include; care for their siblings/ other children (39.3 percent); domestic work (35.7 percent); herding/look after cattle, sheep, goats and camels (25.0 percent), while 16.1 percent care for sick family members.

On the other hand, the new responsibilities taken up by girls include; caring for sick family members/ relatives (38.4 percent), caring for siblings and other children (46.6 percent), domestic work (30.1 percent), child marriage (9.6 percent) while sexual exploitation (4.1 percent).

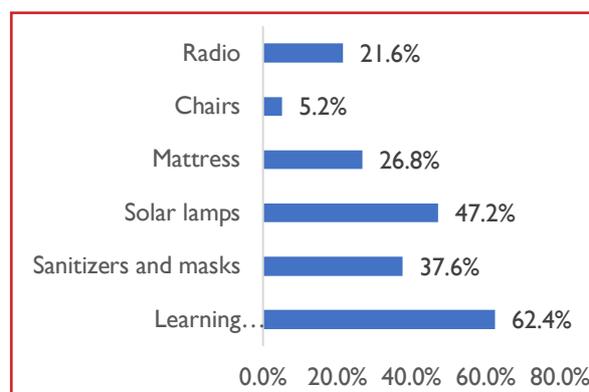
Notably, COVID-19 has also changed the routine of learners living with disabilities.About 80.0 percent can no longer go to school/learn, 46.7 percent cannot go to the Child Friendly Space (CFS) to play while 46.7 percent cannot play /interact with their friends.

Sending learners to live elsewhere

According to the findings, 11.2 percent of caregivers have sent their learners to live elsewhere because they don't have enough money to meet basic needs mainly due to the COVID-19 pandemic. A higher percentage of girls (50.0 percent) have been sent to live elsewhere compared to boys (42.9 percent) and both (7.1 percent).

Psychosocial wellbeing

FIGURE 8: WAYS LEARNERS WOULD LIKE TO BE SUPPORTED



2 Objective Two: To establish the extent of gender-based violence on girls, boys, women and men

Survey findings show an increase in gender-based violence with about 37.2 percent of caregivers reporting increased cases of gender-based violence. Furthermore, three out of four respondents interviewed in the KIs responded that the community has experienced higher rates of SGBV violence because of COVID 19 measures. The increase was linked to people being at home and idle as compared to normal times.

“Yes, before the corona, people were busy and everybody was engaged but now due to the corona, people are idle and there are a lot of domestic violence. A man and his wife who are at home may fight because of the behavior of the children.” (KI CEWC member 42 yrs. old female).

The respondents indicated that COVID-19 has exacerbated the risks of SGBV since schools are closed and children are idle and hence can easily be exploited.

“COVID-19 has intensively increased the SGBV cases. This is because children are idle and unengaged. Before COVID-19 impacts children were busy learning and attending schools. Child marriage is also higher, yesterday I was at the hospital and I encountered a 15 years old girl who was married off to a man and got pregnant. The girl delivered a live child. During this Period of COVID-19, I have confronted the emergence of unique and unfamiliar habits i.e. commercial sex workers in the camps. The area is located next to the “Soko Ng’ombe market”. (FGD male community worker-Dagahaley)

The main forms of gender based violence and abuse being experienced include; domestic violence (44.1 percent), sexual harassment(40.9 percent),defilement cases(18.3 percent),abduction and kidnapping(19.4 percent),female genital mutilation(20.4 percent),forced marriage(8.6 percent) and grooming(2.2 percent).

There is a mixed feeling on whether COVID-19 has led to increase in cases of child forced marriage. As reported, three (2male, 1female) out of the four respondents interviewed in the KIs responded that COVID-19 outbreak has not led to increase in early and forced marriage. However, some acknowledged that early marriage cases have been there before COVID 19.

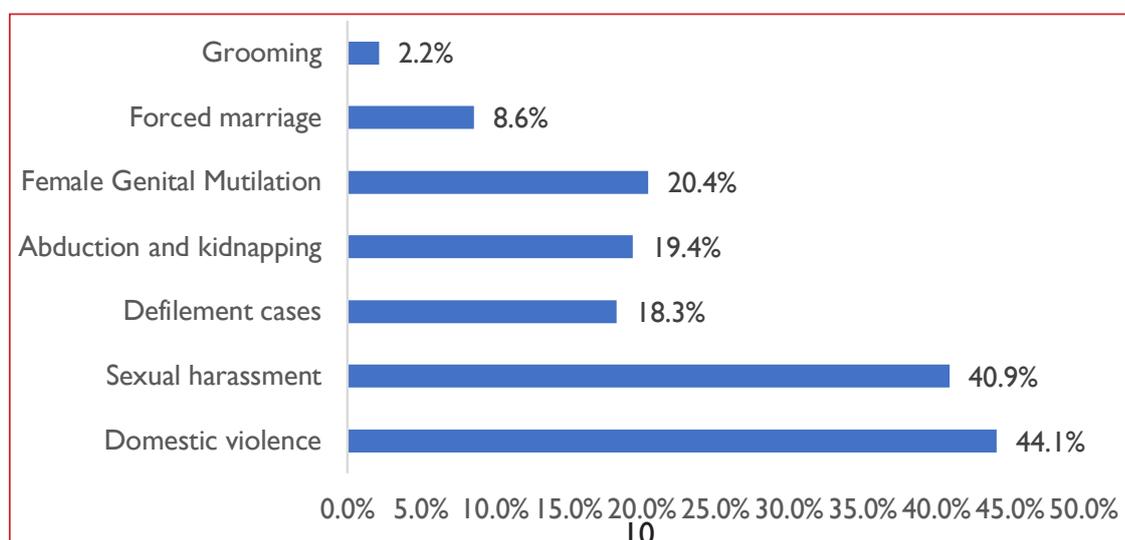
“I have not encountered any forced marriage since the corona outbreak but early marriages are there where girls are getting married willingly.” (KI CEWC member 71yrs old male)

On the contrary, the participants from the FGDs felt that COVID 19 outbreak has led to increase in early and forced marriage.

“Yes, several early marriages have been encountered during the corona period. Since there are no schools to attend to, girls prefer to get married than to wait for schools to reopen in order to get economic gains. Some girls are convinced and influenced by their caregivers.”(FGD male community worker-Ifo)

1 Child grooming is befriending and establishing an emotional connection with a child, and sometimes the family, to lower the child's inhibitions with the objective of sexual abuse.

FIGURE 9: GENDER BASED VIOLENCE CASES





Some of the factors leading to the shift in prevalence include economical/reduced financial gains to support the family, idleness and depression because of the long closure of schools. From the quantitative findings, women are the most affected by the various forms of GBV (44.1 percent), followed by girls (25.8 percent), boys (11.8 percent), children living with disabilities (8.6 percent), men (6.5 percent) and people living with disabilities (3.2 percent).

Channels for reporting gender-based violence

“There are several channels of reporting sexual violence in the camps e.g. The survivors bring themselves when they encounter a problem to the hospital for medical services or the victims report to the police for actions then they are referred to us for assistance like counselling services, life skills training provision of sanitary items and follow up or Our community workers identify SGBV cases and report to the office for further assistance. SGBV intake form is filled and we report SGBV cases to UNHCR.”(KII Female NGO representative)

“There are contact persons in the camps and Medical services are provided. when our community workers report cases of SGBV, We take the victims seriously and we offer 6 sessions of counselling services, we indirectly

offer livelihood support by providing life skills training for the victims to enable them to become self-reliant in future, we do monthly follow up.”(KII Female NGO representative)

On whether SGBV services have been affected by COVID 19 restrictions, all the respondents interviewed in the KIIs and who participated in the FGDs reported that SGBV services has been affected by COVID-19 since organizations dealing with SGBV services are closed or operating with very few staff.

“Yes, the services have been affected because all the office who are mandated to address SGBV issues are closed and agency staffs are not allowed to move anywhere therefore corona has impacted service delivery. Save the children are working but the response of clients takes time.”(KII CEWC member 42yrs old female)

“In March when corona started these services were difficult to access so it was hard for the survivor to get services. Some survivors end up solving their issues on traditional way of solving the problem. (Maslaha way).²This makes the survivors not get the necessary help required e.g. justice and so on.”(Female NGO representative)

² Maslaha entails the male elders in the community sitting under a tree to resolve a conflict between the affected families. This is a form of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR), which is mostly used to resolve conflicts that arise between members of the community.

3 Objective Three: To establish the impacts of COVID-19 on livelihoods among young mothers

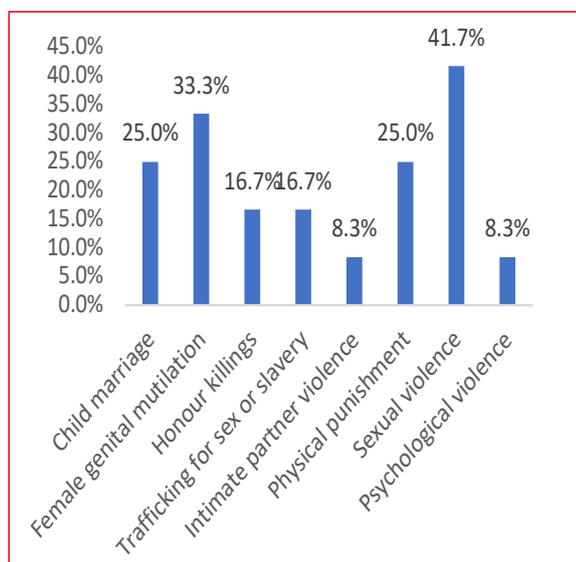
Girl Mothers are girls under 18 years' old who are pregnant or have given birth and are taking care of a child/children. About 60 percent of Girl Mothers in Dadaab refugee camps are aged 15-17 years old from various nationalities: including Somalis and minorities from South Sudan, DR Congo, Burundi, Ethiopia and Eritrea. About 60 girl mothers from IFO and Dagahaley camps were interviewed to get views on the impact of COVID-19 on their livelihood. About 46.7 percent of the mothers were from Dagahaley camp while 53.3 percent were from IFO camp. The mean age for the girl mothers was 16.6 years with the youngest being 15 years old and eldest 17 years old. About 31.7 percent of the young mothers had no formal education, 46.7 percent had primary school education while 21.7 percent had secondary school education.

Knowledge on Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV)

The mother were asked about their understanding of sexual and gender-based violence. Their responses varied; 55 percent of girl mothers understand SGBV to mean female genital mutilation; 22 percent sexual harrasment while 23 percent don't know the meaning of sexual and gender based violence.

Notably, only 20.0 percent of the girl mothers feel prone to experiencing SGBV during this COVID-19 period. The mothers indicated that they are more likely to experience different forms

FIGURE 10: FORMS OF VIOLENCE PRONE TO GIRL MOTHERS



of violence including sexual violence (41 percent); child marriage (25 percent); FGM (33.3 percent) as presented in Figure 10.

How COVID-19 has affected daily activities

About 13.3 percent of the mothers expressed having a challenge of accessing social support from their peers as a result of COVID-19. This is because they can no longer go and visit or socialize with their peers due to the COVID-19 restrictions. Due to COVID-19, girl mothers' daily activities have been affected in different ways. About 51.7 percent are unable to work and earn income to meet their basic needs among others.

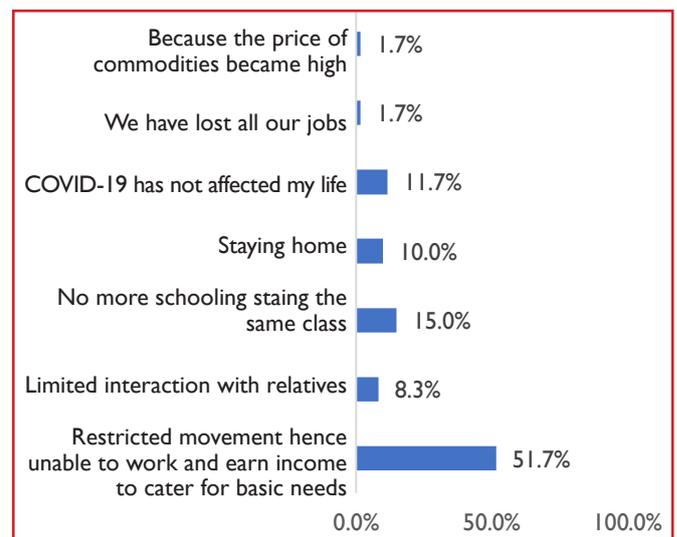


FIGURE 11: HOW COVID-19 HAS AFFECTED THE MOTHERS' DAILY ACTIVITIES

The girl mothers expressed some fears with regard to Covid pandemic. About 80.0 percent fear contracting the virus; 43.3 percent fear death while 16.7 percent fear that children are not going to school. To protect their children, the girl mothers have taken some measures including; wearing masks (71.7 percent), sanitizing (65 percent), social distancing (40.0 percent) and staying at home (50.0 percent).

In order for girl mothers to feel safe during this COVID-19 period, 76.7 percent indicated that they need to be given sanitizers and masks while 56.7 percent need shelter. Other requests include opening up business for them, creating awareness, giving them hand gloves and clean water.

4 Objective Four: To find out what/how is the response of child protection actors including community child protection volunteers during emergency



Key informant interview with a child protection officers from Terre des hommes (Tdh), a leading Swiss organization for children's aid was conducted. Terre des hommes (Tdh) is operational in all the three camps in Dadaab namely IFO, Dagahaley and Hagadera with programs in child protection.

The main challenge they have been facing while responding to protection concerns in the last 3 months is hostility from caregivers who don't allow them to visit their homes due to fear of contracting Corona Virus. In addition, they also face difficulties in accessing relevant offices to report child protection concerns.

Sensitization and creation of awareness on children rights and COVID-19 will be essential in mitigating the challenges above.

“Creating awareness and sensitization on the effects of disrespecting child rights. To educate the public on how corona is spread since most of them don't know that face masks are put on as a protective measure.” (KII CEWC member 71yrs old male).

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic the child protection actors have innovated ways to continue supporting the beneficiaries/communities through telecommunication conferencing for counselling, radio sessions and community forums for awareness creation on COVID-19. In addition, the community continues to use *maslaha* way of solving cases and hence less SGBV cases have been reported.

CONCLUSION

Despite the closure of schools from March this year because of COVID-19, this assessment shows that majority (82%) of learners are still learning while at home. Notably, a higher percentage of girls are able to learn at home than boys. This could be attributed to the ongoing community sensitization by teachers to parents on the importance of girls continuing to learn while at home. Lack of learning materials was cited as the main reason for not learning at home. Radio is the main channel for learning through the lessons aired by the local radio stations. However, majority of families have no access to radio making it difficult for some children to listen to the radio classes. The learners have access to learning materials such as reading and pictorial books. However, few have toys and playing materials.

Learners are at a higher risk of contracting the virus since most parents /caregivers are unable to afford the personal protective equipment such as masks and sanitizers. It is inspiring to note that learners are complying with the COVID-19 rules put in place by the Ministry of Health such as staying at home and observing social distance. In addition, parents/caregivers have played a critical role in supporting learner's psychosocial wellbeing by supporting them with child friendly activities.

It is evident that COVID-19 measures have led to a slight increase of sexual gender-based violence. This is attributed to the current closure of schools and hence idleness. Results show the common forms of SGBV reported are domestic violence, sexual harassment, defilement, female genital mutilation and forced marriage. Numerous efforts such as awareness creation on prevention, reporting and responding to SGBV cases have been done by child protection agencies. Notably, the community continues to use the informal ways of solving cases (Maslaha) in addressing SGBV cases.

Despite numerous campaigns against child labour, the practice is still being used by families as a coping strategy to meet their daily needs during this COVID-19 period. Caregivers/parents send their children to work for pay to support the household income. Additionally, learners are being sent to live elsewhere since families do not have enough money to meet basic needs.

Some gender roles at the household level have changed due to COVID-19. For instance, boys have taken up new roles including; caring for their siblings/other children and doing domestic work. On the other hand, girls have taken up new responsibilities including; caring for sick family members/relatives, caring for siblings and other children and domestic work.

Most parents/caregivers and girl mothers have embraced positive discipline as a mode of correcting their children when they do a mistake. This could be attributed to the child safeguarding training and awareness sessions done in the camps.

Girl mothers are prone to experiencing gender-based violence during this COVID-19 period. The common forms of GBV they are prone to experience include child marriage, FGM, physical punishment and sexual violence. Worse still, most girl mothers have limited livelihood opportunities and this expose them further risks of violence as they try to cope and meet basic needs.

Partners have come up with innovated ways to continue supporting communities in addressing child protection concerns including telecommunication conferencing for counselling, radio sessions and community forums for awareness creation on COVID-19. However, service delivery to the community has been affected due to restrictions in movement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- For children to continue learning there is need of provision of Radios, learning materials and solar lamps to support their home-based learning.
- There is need for cash transfer programs to boost household incomes and hence reduce the need for families to send their children to work in order to supplement family incomes during this COVID-19 period.
- Counselling services, career talks and role modelling through adolescent life skills sessions can be useful to girls and boys in defining their roles and build their skills for success.
- Continuous support to the communities with facemasks, hand sanitizers and handwashing kits is importance to ensure their safely and minimize the transmission of COVID-19 virus.
- There is need for girl mothers to be supported with livelihood programs /income generating activities for them to be able to cater for basic need of their children.



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