



**POPULATION
COUNCIL**

Ideas. Evidence. Impact.

Lockdowns & learning possibilities: Reflections on unintended pregnancy and school re-entry for girls in sub-Saharan Africa

Chi-Chi Undie

IUSSP Webinar Series

'The COVID-19 Pandemic and SRH in Africa'

August 31-September 3, 2020



About **one-fifth** (19.3%) of adolescent girls in sub-Saharan Africa experience pregnancy

Kassa, Arowojolu, Odukogbe, Yalew (2018)

In sub-Saharan Africa,
nearly half (45%) of all
pregnancies among girls
aged 15-19 are
unintended

Obare, Kabiru, Chandra-
Mouli (2018)



Photo by
Nirle

Pregnancy spells the end of education for almost all girls

Country	Ever pregnant (%)	% out of school among ever pregnant
Kenya	18	98
Malawi	29	94
Tanzania	27	97
Uganda	25	95
Zambia	29	86

Source: Demographic and Health Surveys

Education sector policies and practices

Country	Relevant Policies	Practice ([in]formal, theoretical)	Re-Entry Regulations	Policy Status
Kenya	Return to School Policy (1994)	Re-entry	Unclear	Established
	National School Health Policy (2009)	Retention	Re-entry 6 months after childbirth	Established
	School Re-Entry Policy Guidelines (1988, 2019)	Re-entry	Re-entry into next academic year	Revised Re-entry Guidelines yet to be approved (2019)
Malawi	MOEVT Readmission Policy (1993)	Re-entry	12-month suspension, re-entry into next academic year	Revised Re-entry Guidelines in Draft Form
Tanzania	No official policy	Expulsion	N/A	N/A
	Draft Re-entry Guidelines	Re-entry	Re-entry after 6-12 month suspension	Yet to be approved
Uganda	No official policy	Suspension Expulsion Re-entry at different schools	Left to the discretion of Head Teacher	N/A
	Draft National School Health Policy	Re-entry	Unclear	Yet to be approved
Zambia	MOE Re-entry Policy (1997)	Re-entry	Re-entry after 12-month leave of absence	Established

Adapted from Birungi, Undie, MacKenzie, Katahoire, Obare, Machawira (2015)

Barriers to school re-entry

Lack of support

- Policy-level
- School-level
- Community-level
- Parent-level

Lack of policy awareness

School-based stigma

Child care & school expenses



Photo by SDE Kenya

Dreams and determination

Homa Bay County, Kenya

Out-of-school girls ages 13-19 who left school due to pregnancy

91%

(n=427)

would like to go back to school
someday

76%

(n=427)

intend to go back to school someday

Undie, Birungi, Odwe, Obare (2015)

How lockdowns have changed the face of schooling in SSA

- Home-based, radio-based
- Homework packages
- Virtual learning
- Community-based learning
- Mapping of learners
- Etc.



Photo by Uwezo Kenya

What opportunities does the pandemic present for school re-entry?

- Schooling 'without school walls' in the time of COVID-19: How it changes things:
 - Support issues
 - School
 - Community
 - Parent
 - School-based stigma
 - Child care & School expenses



Photo by Washington Post

Seizing the opportunities presented by COVID



Photo by The Star

- Influencing
 - government learner mapping exercises
 - government-led learning programs
 - program monitoring and documentation
- Preparing for transitions: school re-entry post-COVID

Worth a
thousand
words



References

- Birungi H, Undie C, MacKenzie I, Katahoire A, Obare F, and Machawira P. (2015). Education sector response to early and unintended pregnancy: A review of country experiences in sub-Saharan Africa. STEP UP Research Report. Nairobi: Population Council.
- Kassa GM, Arowojolu AO, Odukogbe AA, Yalew AW (2018). Prevalence and determinants of adolescent pregnancy in Africa: a systematic review and Meta-analysis. BMC Reproductive Health 15 (195).
- Obare F, Kabiru C, Chandra-Mouli V. (2018). Reducing early and unintended pregnancies among adolescents. Family Planning Evidence Brief. WHO: Geneva.
- Population Council (2020). Final evaluation results: Expanding access to secondary school education for teenage mothers in Homa Bay County, https://www.popcouncil.org/uploads/pdfs/2020RH_Phase_I_Evaluation_Results_Kenya.pdf.
- Undie C. (2020). Learning in the time of COVID-19: Openings and opportunities for school re-entry in Kenya. Regional Education Learning Initiative Convening on ‘Learning in COVID-19: Innovation and Spaces for Participation.’
- Undie C., Birungi H. (2016). Are school principals ‘the bad guys’?: Nuancing the narrative of school re-entry policy implementation in Kenya. In A. Okwany and R. Wazir (eds.). Changing social norms to universalize girls’ education in East Africa. Garant Publishers, Belgium.
- Undie, C., Birungi, H, Odwe, G. and Obare, F. (2015). Expanding Access to Secondary School Education for Teenage Mothers in Kenya: A Baseline Study Report. STEP UP Technical Report. Nairobi.
- Undie C., Mackenzie I, Birungi H, Barongo S, Ahindukha D, and Omondi C. (2015). Education sector response to early and unintended pregnancy: A policy dialogue in Homa Bay County, Kenya. STEP UP Meeting Report. Nairobi.

Ideas. Evidence. Impact.



The Population Council conducts research and delivers solutions that improve lives around the world. Big ideas supported by evidence: It's our model for global change.