

EDUCATION

FINANCE

AND POLICY

## EFP Takeaways

COVID-19 Crisis, Economic Hardships, and Schooling Outcomes

Esther Gehrke, Friederike Lenel, and Claudia Schupp

### *The Study*

To slow down the rapid spread of the COVID-19 virus, schools worldwide were closed in March 2020. For students from developing countries, like Cambodia, the implications of the pandemic were particularly severe. Online lessons could not be held in many places because both schools and students lacked the necessary equipment (e.g., internet access). The authors investigate the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic for schooling outcomes of grade 9 students in Northwest Cambodia, focusing on the implications of the economic downturn in 2020.

### *Key Findings*

Despite schools being closed and students having only limited access to learning material, most students continued their studies during the COVID-19 lockdown. However, studying was the main activity for a minority of students only during the school closure, suggesting that very few students maintained high study hours.

Economic repercussions affected students substantially, yet the impact depended on who of the parents was affected by the economic downturn: Students whose fathers experienced income losses were less likely to study during the lockdown, were more likely to drop out during grade 9, performed less well in the lower-secondary graduation exam, and were less likely to transition to high school. In contrast, students whose mothers experienced income losses were more likely to study during the lockdown, less likely to drop out during grade 9, and more likely to transition to high school.

### *Implications and Recommendations*

The results suggest that the COVID-19 lockdown and accompanying economic downturn led to substantial learning losses. Without intensive support, students are at risk of being left behind. The fact that students, whose mothers were affected by the economic repercussions overall fared better, highlights that women in Cambodia have to carry out multiple tasks simultaneously: earning income (in the study, 84% of mothers worked before the crisis), completing household chores (including agricultural production), and supporting children with school work. To prevent negative effects of maternal income generating activities on children's schooling, it is important to reduce the workload faced by mothers – e.g., by creating more childcare opportunities or by providing targeted tutoring for low-performing students.

#### **For more details:**

- View the [full issue](#).
- See the [full article in \*Education Finance and Policy\*](#).
- [Sign up here to receive future EFP Takeaways](#).
- Summary of:  
Gehrke, E., Lenel, F, & Schupp, C. (2023). COVID-19 Crisis, Economic Hardships, and Schooling Outcomes. *Education Finance and Policy*, 18(3): 522–546.