



Save the Children

The Hidden Impact of COVID-19 on children and families with disabilities

Research
Overview
and Key Findings

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DISCUSSION



Anis*, 13, at a Save the Children-supported Temporary Learning Space (TLS) in a village in Southern Rural Idlib, North West Syria.

Before he was displaced, he was injured due to an airstrike and became paralyzed. He is now in fourth grade.

The Hidden Impact of COVID-19 on Children

A research series

Research purpose

This large-scale, mixed-methods, cross-thematic research study aims to understand how the pandemic and measures implemented to mitigate it, are impacting:



Child health & nutrition



Child education & learning



Child protection & wellbeing



Family finances and poverty



Child rights
especially children's
right to be heard

and
identified children's and their
families' **needs** during this time.



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Who did we survey?

Three target groups

1. Save the Children programme participants

A random representative sample reached largely through phone interviews and online survey.

2. Populations of interest to Save the Children

I.e. people living in a particular urban slum, refugee camp or other discrete community.

A purposive sample reached largely through phone interviews and online survey.

3. The general public

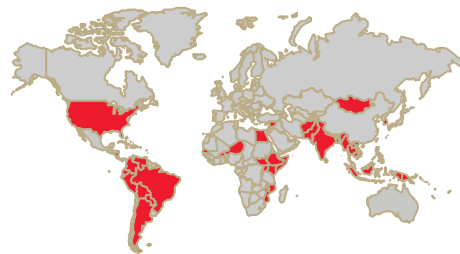
A convenience sample reached through social media and other channels.



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Where were they?

31,640 adult respondents
and
12,334 child respondents
from **46 countries**.



The findings presented here come from our **representative random sample of 25,000 Save the Children program participants** (8,069 children and 17,565 adults) **across 37 countries**

Region	Countries where the research was implemented among Save the Children programme participants
Asia	Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Laos, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka
Eastern and Southern Africa (ESA)	Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Somalia, South Sudan, Uganda
West and Central Africa (WCA)	Burkina Faso, Niger, Senegal, Sierra Leone
Middle East and Europe (MEE)	Egypt, Lebanon, Syrian Arab Republic, Albania, Kosovo
Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC)	Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Paraguay, Peru
North America	United States of America
Pacific	Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands

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Methods

This mixed-methods research study explored the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on children and their families to understand:

1. The impact of school closures, home isolation/quarantine and community lockdown on children's health, nutrition, learning, wellbeing and protection.
2. The economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on households with children.
3. The health, psychosocial, learning and protection needs of children during times of school closures, home isolation/quarantine and community lockdown.

Parents and caregivers

- Survey was administered to adult parents/caregivers and gathered household level information, as well as self-report information specifically about the parent/caregiver and children in his, her or their care.
- Disability status

Indexed Child

- Questionnaire prompted the parent/caregiver to think about one child in the household between the ages of 11 and 17 – the 'indexed child' – and to answer some specific questions about that child.
- Disability status

Child Respondent

- At the end of the parent/caregiver portion of the survey, the parent was asked to consent to their child participating in the second part of the survey
- Assenting children were then able to access the second portion of the survey.

Data collection methodology



Adult respondents had to be parents and/or caregivers of children aged 0–17 living in the same household (Part 1) Child respondents had to be aged 11–17 (Part 2)



Survey online or over telephone



Available in 28 languages



Indicators of poverty, marginalization and deprivation were collected



Disaggregation by age, gender, disability, minority, migration status and chronic health condition



Disability disaggregation by Washington Group Short Set on Functioning



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Analysis in a number of ways

- **A disability is present if a respondent answered “a lot of difficulty” or “cannot do at all” in at least one of the six domains. ***
- **Parents/caregivers with disabilities:** Adult respondents who reported a disability in at least one of the six domains
- **Parents/caregivers of children with disabilities:** Adult respondents who reported a child (‘the indexed child’) with disability
- **Children with disabilities:** Child respondents in this study did not respond to WG-SS themselves. Matching by age and gender was performed in order to transfer the disability status from the indexed child to the child respondent
- **Children of parents/caregivers with disabilities:** Child respondents could be matched to parent/caregiver responses
- **Household with disabilities:** Households where at least one parent/caregiver and/or one child have a disability

Disability information was not obtained from or about any other household members due to length of the survey.



KEY FINDINGS

Global level findings from
our representative
random sample of Save
the Children program
participants



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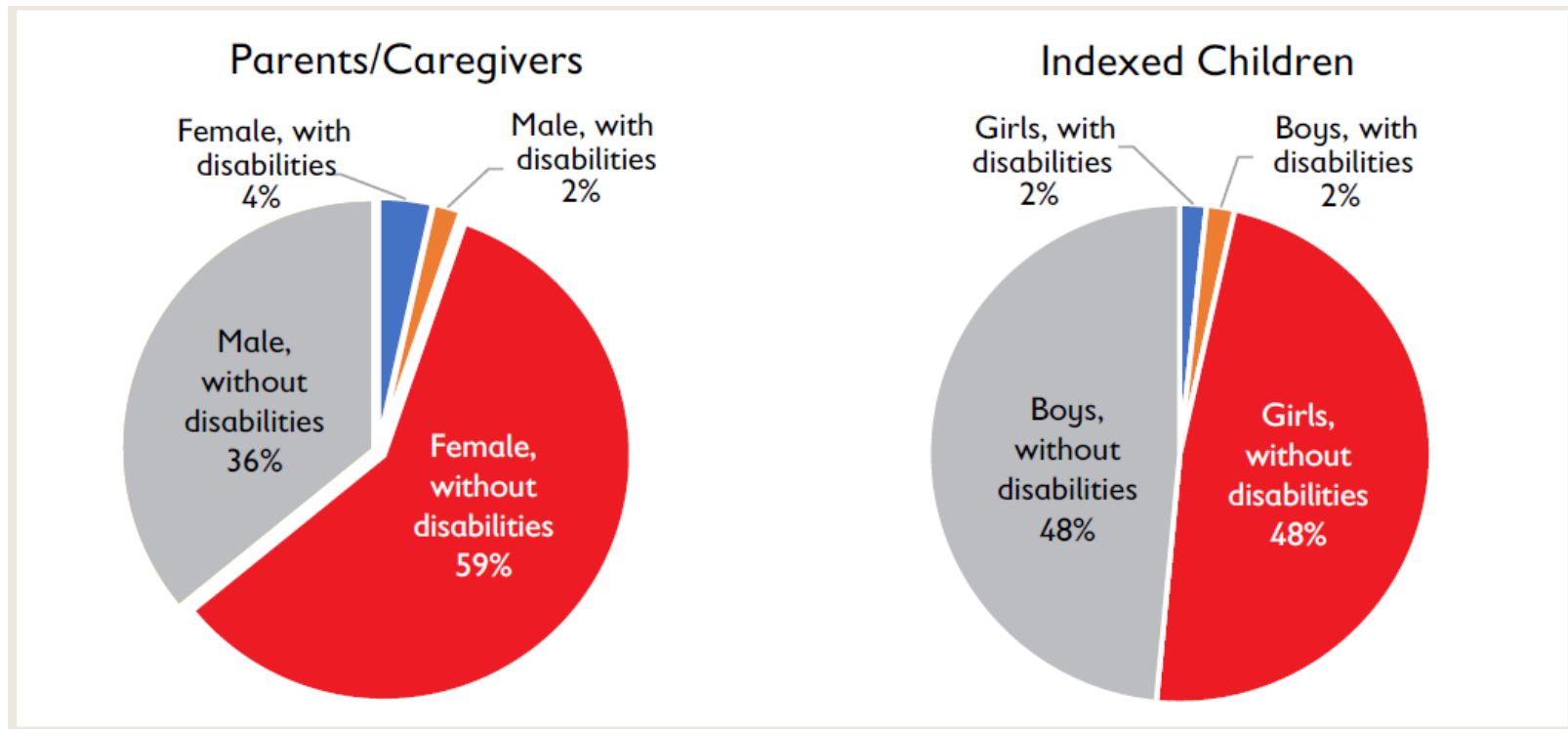
Study sample

The findings presented here come from our **representative random sample of 25,000 Save the Children program participants** (8,069 children and 17,565 adults) **across 37 countries**

	Program participants	Target populations	General public	Total
Total worldwide	17,523	4,301	9,816	31,640
Asia	6,915	3,731	6,690	17,336
East & Southern Africa (ESA)	3,274	232	802	4,308
West & Central Africa (WCA)	1,372	71	441	1,884
Latin America & the Caribbean (LAC)	3401	1	1,102	4,150
Middle East & Eastern Europe (MEE)	2,167	213	367	2,747
Europe	22	4	216	142
Pacific	208	45	43	296
North America	518	4	155	677

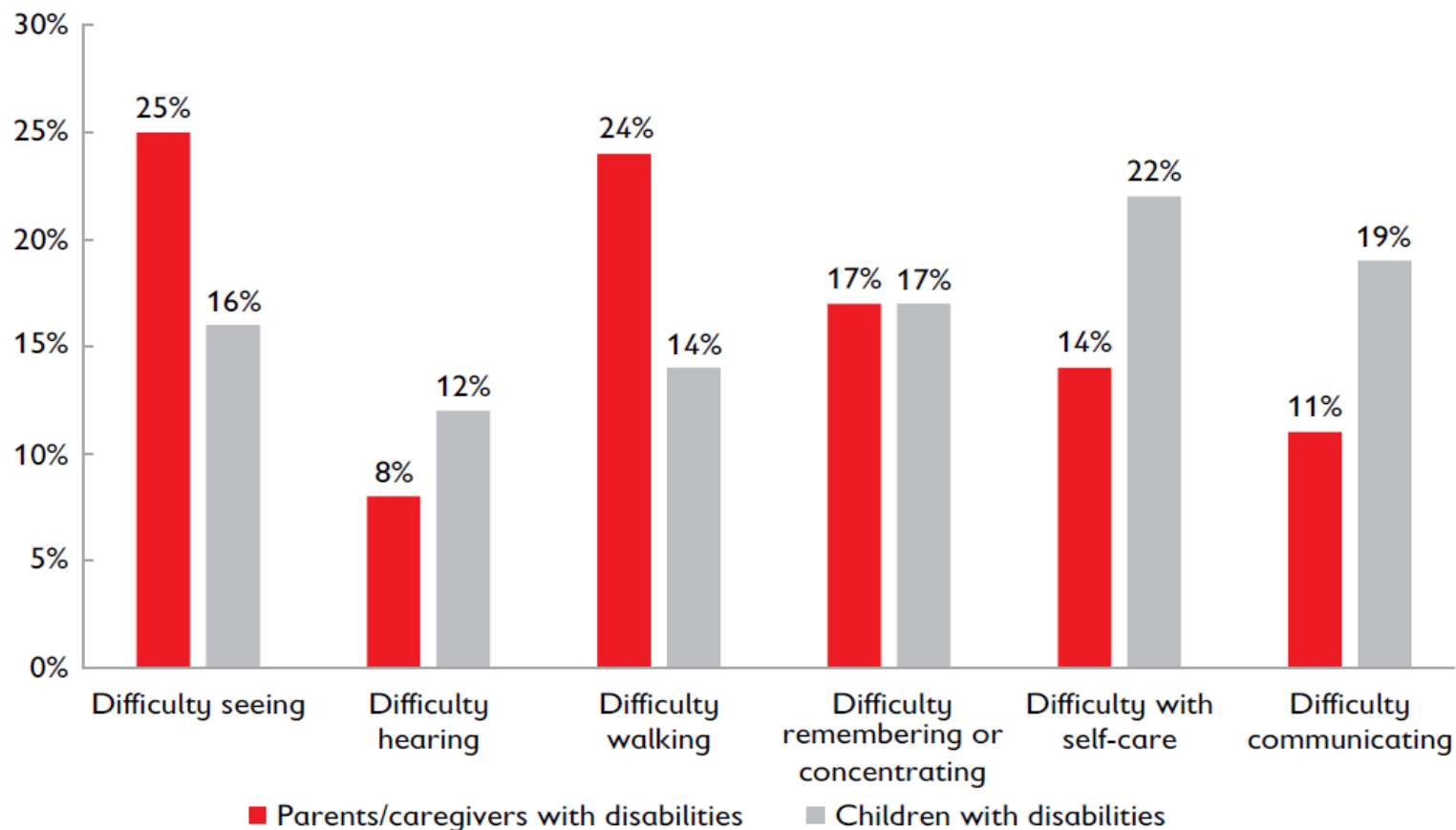
Proportion of parents/caregivers and indexed children with disabilities

6% of the adult parent respondents and 4% of indexed children were identified as having a disability



Proportion of parents/caregiver and indexed children (5-17 years) per functional domain

Half of indexed children reported difficulty seeing or walking, while 40% of parents/caregivers reported difficulty communicating or self-care



Top level findings per thematic area

Household economy

Household economies



83% of parents/caregivers with disabilities **lost “more than half” of their income** since COVID-19, compared to 66% of those without disabilities.

Among the parents/caregivers with disabilities who reported loss of household income:

50% reported losing their **jobs**

49% reported losing **social safety nets** they previously received

“This is a very stressful situation for everyone. My parents have a lot on their shoulders, especially since they are not working any more.”

–15 year old girl with a disability who also has a parent/caregiver with a disability, Kosovo, when asked, “What worries you the most about the COVID-19 outbreak?”

More parents/caregivers with disabilities than those without reported **being in food insecurity crisis** and having to reduce the quality/size and frequency of meal intakes

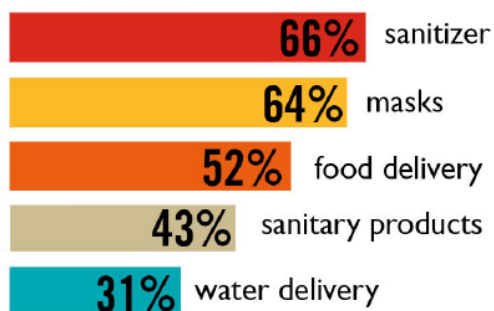
Households with disability reported **trouble paying for food, utility bills, rent, fuel/transport**



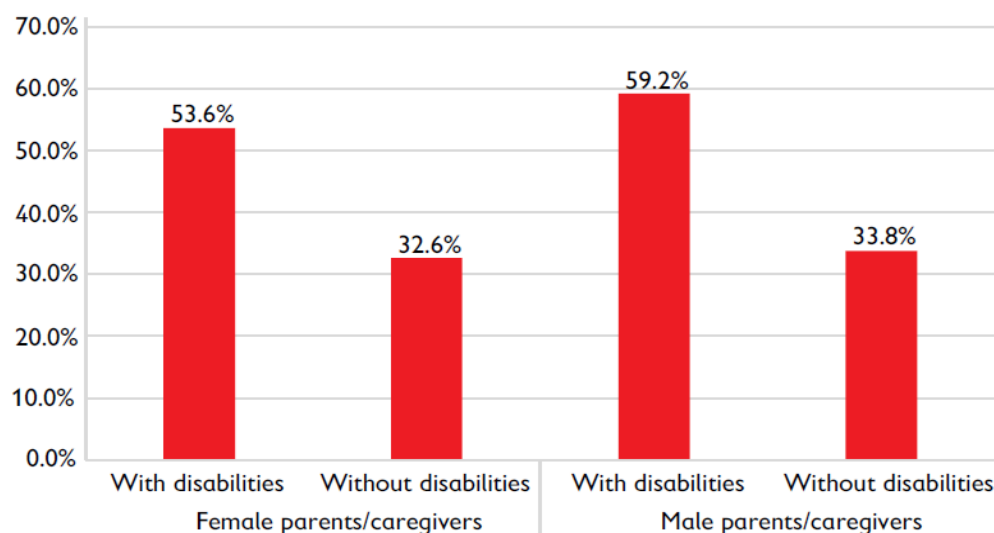
Top level findings per thematic area

Health and Nutrition

A higher proportion of **households with either a parent/caregiver or a child with disabilities** (87%) reported needing at least one of any essential items compared to those **without disabilities** (70%)



Parents who reported at least one barrier to accessing health care, medication or menstrual products



Top level findings per thematic area

Education and Learning



Only **78%** of children with disabilities in this study **attended school** before COVID-19, compared to 90% of those without disability.

7 in 10

children with disabilities reported **needing home schooling/learning materials**

compared to **5 in 10** children without disabilities



Only **87%** of parents/caregivers of children with disabilities expected that their child would **return to school**, compared to 94% parents/caregivers of children without disabilities

1 in 3

parents/caregivers with disabilities reported that their child **did not have access to any learning materials at all** compared to **1 in 5** parents/caregivers without disabilities



Top level findings per thematic area

Education and Learning

Obstacles to Learning

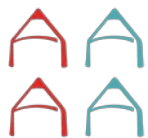
Most common obstacle to learning reported by children, regardless of disability, was access to appropriate support for their learning: “I need help and no one can help me”.



60% children with disabilities reported not having someone to help them, compared to 36% children without disabilities

Girls with disabilities

Boys with disabilities



Half parents with disabilities reported needing greater support with home schooling/learning materials

57%	51%	40%	18%
64%	55%	31%	10%
No available help	Do not understand homework	Not enough data to access internet	Too many chores to do

4 in 10

parents/caregivers of children with disabilities felt unable to support their children with learning

compared to 3 in 10 parents/caregivers of children without disabilities



Top level findings per thematic area

Child Rights

A higher proportion of children with disabilities reported **playing less**



A higher proportion of children with disabilities reported **sleeping less**



A smaller proportion of children with disabilities could **stay in touch with friends** during COVID-19



- Children with disabilities
- Children without disability

75% of children with disabilities, said **they could ask questions about COVID-19 at home** compared to 65% of those without



80%

of parents/caregivers with disabilities reported an increase in their use of **positive parenting methods**, compared to those without disability (77%).



33%

of parents/caregivers with disabilities also reported an increase in their use of **negative parenting methods**, compared to those without disability (21%).

Top level findings per thematic area

Psycho-social wellbeing and Child Protection



82%

of parents/caregivers with disabilities reported **reduced psychological wellbeing** since the COVID-19 outbreak.

17%

5%

of parents/caregivers with disabilities reported being **separated from their children** due to COVID-19, compared to **5%** of those without disability.



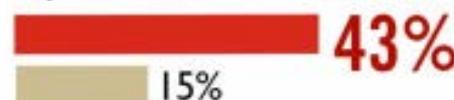
A higher proportion of children with disabilities reported an increase in **negative feelings**.



A higher proportion of children with disabilities showed **signs commonly associated with distress**.



A higher proportion of children with disabilities reported **violence at home**.



■ Children with disabilities
■ Children without disability



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Children's quotes

"This is a very stressful situation for everyone. My parents have a lot on their shoulders, especially since they are not working any more."

15 year old girl with a disability who also has a parent/caregiver with a disability, Kosovo, when asked, "What worries you the most about the COVID-19 outbreak?"

"Help disabled children especially in health and sanitation."

17 year old boy with disability, Senegal, when asked, "If you were asked to write a letter to leaders in your country, what would you say?"

"Schools being closed and not sure about my future."

16 year old boy with disability, Afghanistan, when asked, "What worries you the most about the COVID-19 outbreak?"



"Since my parents worked from home, we limited our food portions because my parents' income were reduced"

17 year old girl who has a parent/caregiver with disability, Indonesia, when asked, "What worries you the most about the COVID-19 outbreak?"

"Talk more with me and with my brothers and sisters"

13 year old boy with disability who also has a parent/caregiver with disability, Paraguay, when asked, "What can adults in your home do differently during the outbreak of COVID-19?"





KEY RECOMMENDATI NS

Top level recommendations

Across themes and stakeholders

1. **Disaggregate data** by disability as much as possible whenever gender and age is collected (WG-SS and CFM) and present disaggregated results
2. Work together with **representative organizations of persons with disabilities** on all levels, including parents' associations
3. **Budget** for accessibility and disability inclusion
4. Recognize impact on **children with disabilities and their parents and on parents with disabilities and their children** as well as the household at large



Top level recommendations

Per thematic area

Closing income gaps

1. Expand flexibility in eligibility criteria for persons with disabilities to access social protection
2. Governments should specifically aim towards the progressive achievement of universal child benefits
3. Introduce disability-specific cash benefits that cover disability-related costs

Health & Nutrition

1. Support families with disabilities to receive accurate and accessible information on COVID-19 risks, transmission and prevention and can access basic items for infection prevention
2. Ensure that safe and nutritious food is affordable and accessible for all by financing and scaling up social protection schemes alongside measures to address livelihoods and food system challenges
3. Ensure accessible water points and water supplies are maintained.

Top level recommendations

Education and learning

1. Develop **back to school campaigns** with children with disabilities in mind
2. Provide **continuous teacher skills development** on inclusive education, special pedagogy and accessible learning materials
3. Provide effective, flexible and inclusive **distance learning programmes and learning materials**
4. Support parents/caregivers with disabilities and parents/caregivers of children with disabilities to **support their child's learning at home**

Child rights, wellbeing and child protection

1. **Train parents/caregivers** on how to care for and support their children with disabilities
2. Ensure **child protection services are well resourced** with disability-trained and skilled child protection workers, inclusive reporting mechanisms and case management procedures
3. Research **how and why children with disabilities or children of parents with disabilities are being separated** from their families
4. **Scale up and ensure access to family domestic violence services, especially for** women and girls with disabilities
5. Ensure programmes and **messages of positive parenting/parenting without violence** are accessible, and inclusive

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