

# **CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES AS STUDENTS RETURN TO SCHOOL: EVIDENCE FROM CAREGIVER AND STAFF SURVEYS ACROSS RISING ACADEMY NETWORK SCHOOLS ROUND I**

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## Authors

Erika Caballero Montoya: [erika.caballeromontoya@idinsight.org](mailto:erika.caballeromontoya@idinsight.org)

Sokhna Mously Fall: [sokhnamously.fall@idinsight.org](mailto:sokhnamously.fall@idinsight.org)

Jeff McManus: [jeffery.mcmanus@idinsight.org](mailto:jeffery.mcmanus@idinsight.org)

Frida Njogu-Ndongwe: [frida.njogu-ndongwe@idinsight.org](mailto:frida.njogu-ndongwe@idinsight.org)

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# 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

This report describes the results from the first round of phone surveys conducted with Rising Academy Network (RAN) families and staff in January-March 2021. The main objective of this study is to determine the barriers that girls face as they transition back to school after prolonged school closures and inform the type of interventions education providers should implement in response. We collected data on school enrollment, attendance and the impact of COVID-19 on households across 103 government and private schools managed by RAN in Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Ghana. Across our sample, student dropout and irregular attendance rates after COVID-19 induced school closures are low and are expected to remain contained in the medium term. Caretakers reported that the transition to remote learning decreased the time children spend on education compared to time spent during in-person learning and had a negative impact on their learning. IDinsight will conduct a second round of data collection in Summer 2021 to help RAN develop additional interventions.

## 1.2 KEY FINDINGS

- **Enrollment and attendance:** Dropout rates and irregular attendance are generally low across countries. This contrasts with results from previous epidemics such as Ebola. Caretakers highlighted financial difficulties as the main barrier to re-enrollment.
- **COVID-19's impact on education:** Caretakers report a decrease of at least 5.7 hours spent in education-related activities each day and 76% of them believe that this has negatively impacted their child's learning. The main challenges limiting the time children spend in education are the lack of access to educational programming (39%), internet (44%), and materials (45%).
- **Availability of devices and internet for distance learning:** The technologies that children access on a weekly basis include basic handsets (45.7%), smart phones with data (36%) and radio (24.3%) One in eight (13.0%) of the respondents did not have access to any technology or inputs to support mobile use. Access to and utilization of the internet for schooling is limited.
- **Support provided to students during school closures:** Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the subsequent closure of schools, caretakers and other individuals within the household had to assume a more active role in children's education in order to support their learning. School staff and caretakers reported different frequency of interaction between school staff and students.
- **COVID-19's impact on households:** The financial impact of COVID-19 appears to be widespread with most (83%) caretakers having difficulty providing for their family. Regarding the health impact, despite the fact that the vast majority of parents have sent children back to school and have not observed high infection rates related to the pandemic, over half (54%) of caretakers 'worry a lot' about sending their kids to school during the COVID pandemic. Respondents do seem to think that some types of household conflict increased due to COVID-19 related stress.

- **COVID-19's impact on RAN's staff:** 61% of RAN staff expected that some of their colleagues would not return to school. The main reasons given include the possibility of another job (48.6%), better salary elsewhere (29.4%), and increased responsibilities at home (18.8%).

### 1.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Dropout and irregular attendance:** Continue to monitor attendance and retention throughout the year considering the long term financial impact of COVID-19 could translate into increased student' dropout.
2. **COVID-19's financial impact:** Consider setting in place safety nets for families with low-economic status families who are prone to food insecurity and lack access to electricity.
3. **Decrease in time spent on education:** Education providers could re-think the role that their staff could play, as well as the support they would need, during future school closures to incentivize allocating time towards education and facilitation of remote learning.
4. **EdTech tools:** Remote learning needs to be disseminated across multiple technological and non-technological tools in order to reach all types of students.
5. **COVID-19's health impact:** Communicate COVID-19 prevention protocols more clearly and broadly to reassure parents about the safety guidelines in place to protect the health and safety of students.
6. **Gender-based-violence:** Establish support structures for girls facing gender-based-violence now and during potential future school closures.

## 2. STUDY DESIGN

This study is a descriptive survey of caregivers and staff from across RAN’s schools. Our study sample comes from RAN’s database of over 20,000 phone numbers of the caregivers of active students from nursery to senior high school.<sup>1</sup> This database includes students and their families from 3 countries and 20 subregions (7 regions in Ghana, 4 districts in Sierra Leone and 9 counties in Liberia), covering all the locations where RAN currently operates. The database includes students from government and private schools, depending on RAN operations in each country: all schools in Ghana private, all schools in Liberia are government (and managed by RAN), whereas schools in Sierra Leone are a mix of private and government managed by RAN.

**Table 1** describes the approximate student population in each country, the number of available phone numbers, and the final surveyed sample per country. While most RAN schools in Ghana and Sierra Leone are represented in the sampling frame and in the final sample, only ~50% of schools in Liberia had sufficient phone numbers and are represented in our survey sample. We therefore advise caution in extrapolating the results in this report to families or communities that were excluded from the sampling frame, particularly for Liberia-specific estimates.

We stratified by school to attempt a minimum number of surveys per school and oversampled girls relative to boys.<sup>2</sup> We calculated and applied sampling weights to all analyses reported below to recover population-representative estimates.

**Table 1. Caretaker Survey Sampling Design**

Country	Population <sup>3</sup>		Sampling frame (available phone numbers) <sup>4</sup>		Sample (students who were surveyed)	
	# schools	# students	# schools <sup>5</sup>	# students	# schools <sup>6</sup>	# students
<b>Ghana - Private</b>	34	9,076	31	5,922	31	709
<b>Liberia - LEAP (Government)<sup>7</sup></b>	87	18,268	50	6,773	44	1,326
<b>Sierra Leone - EIC (Government)</b>	25	7,399	21	5,530	21	751
<b>Sierra Leone - Private</b>	8	2,608	8	2,075	7	461
<b>Total</b>	<b>154</b>	<b>37,351</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>20,300</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>3,247</b>

<sup>1</sup> Students that were enrolled and attending regularly in March 2020, the month prior to school closures.

<sup>2</sup> The target number of surveys per school varied by country and school type. Stratification was disproportionate, meaning that we targeted a certain number of surveys per school regardless of the school population. Although we oversampled girls in an attempt to obtain more precise estimates for girls, our final sample was relatively balanced, with 53% female and 47% male.

<sup>3</sup> Student population counts are approximate, based on various databases that were dated at different points in time.

<sup>4</sup> The number of phone numbers in this table excludes duplicates and numbers that had the wrong number of digits.

<sup>5</sup> Only schools with at least 20 available phone numbers are reported here.

<sup>6</sup> Only schools with at least 5 surveyed students are reported here.

<sup>7</sup> The Liberia school and student counts exclude 8 schools that RAN took over this year since limited data was available on these schools.



We also surveyed 245 school staff (Ghana: 102, Liberia: 107, Sierra Leone: 36), including teachers, school performance managers, and school leaders. We attempted to survey the school leader or SPM and one randomly selected teacher per school.

## 3. RESPONDENTS' PROFILES

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### 3.1 CARETAKER PROFILES

On average, respondent's households have 6.7 members and over 73% of them are led by a male. Regarding educational attainment, parents with students from private schools have attained a higher educational level than those of students from public schools.

To characterize the socio-economic status of the children's households, we estimated the Poverty Probability Index (PPI)<sup>8</sup>. On average, households in Ghana have an 1.8% chance of being below the national poverty line (NPL), the probability increases to 45% for Sierra Leone and 74.1% for Liberia.

### 3.2 SCHOOL STAFF PROFILES

The school staff interviewed for this study includes teachers, school program managers and school leaders. 68% of those respondents were male with an average age of 33 years old.

These stakeholders displayed a variety of levels of education. 27% of school staff say they have completed secondary school, 50% have completed at least some university, while 22% have a vocational diploma as their highest educational attainment. By country, most staff members in Liberia and Sierra Leone have completed at least some university or obtained a vocational diploma, while in Ghana about 60% of staff report only completing up to secondary school.

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<sup>8</sup> Since Liberia does not have a scorecard, we decided to use Sierra Leone's PPI scorecard with an adapted response set to ensure local relevance. Refer to Appendix 1 for additional details.

## 4. ENROLLMENT AND ATTENDANCE POST SCHOOL-CLOSURES

### 4.1 SCHOOL RE-ENROLLMENT

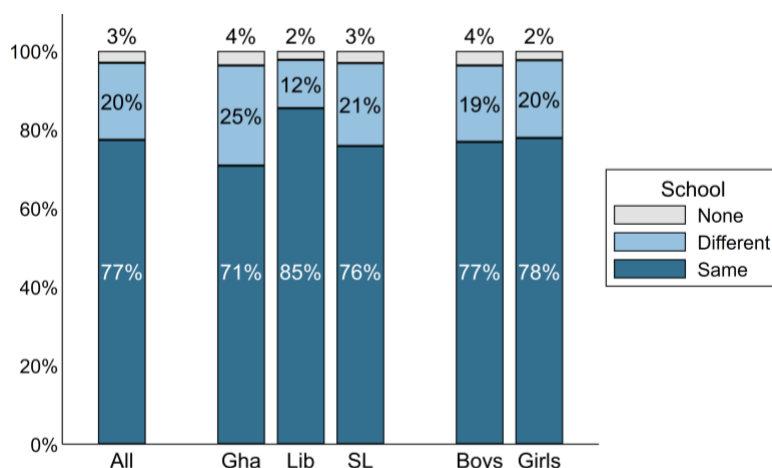
#### DEPTH AND STUDENT PROFILES

Student dropout<sup>9</sup> rates after COVID-19 induced school closures are low across geographies with an overall rate of 3.0% [2.3%, 3.7%]<sup>10</sup>. Across countries, the dropout rates are 3.7% [1.9%, 5.4%] in Ghana, followed by 3.1% [1.9%, 4.2%] in Sierra Leone and 2.3% [1.5%, 3.0%] in Liberia. This contrasts with evidence from previous crises. During Ebola 25% of students in Sierra Leone and 13% of students in Liberia did not return to school after the epidemic<sup>11</sup>. The low dropout rates not only surprised this study's authors; 16.6% of respondents expected that some or most of the caretakers in their communities would not send their children back to school.

The following statistics are based on only 83 respondents who reported that their child had dropped out of school, and thus the estimates are somewhat imprecise.

- Dropout rates are slightly higher for male children, although the difference is not significant (3.7% for boys vs 2.3% p = 0.76) and students enrolled in private schools (4.8% vs 1.7% in public schools; p < 0.01).
- The students who did not return to school live in households that are slightly smaller as compared to those who returned (5.9 members) and are mostly led by male caretakers (73.1%). Only in Ghana did dropout students' households appear to be from lower socioeconomic status than the other students in the sample (PPI = 71.0) with a 2.1% likelihood of being below NPL.

**Figure 1. Re-enrollment Decisions (Percentage)**



<sup>9</sup> In our survey, we defined dropout as a permanent absence or unenrollment from school. Dropout rates exclude the 10 students in our sample who did not re-enroll because they had completed school.

<sup>10</sup> 95% confidence intervals are reported in brackets after estimates.

<sup>11</sup> World Bank (2015), The Socio-Economic Impacts of Ebola in [Liberia](#) and [Sierra Leone](#).

The occupation of students post dropout consist mainly of earning money for the family (20.3%), starting a family (14.9%), supporting their family (3%), taking private classes (1.8%). 16.1% of them do not yet know what they will be doing out of school. By country, in Ghana the main occupation is earning money, while for Liberia most respondents don't know what children will be doing out of school.

## **BARRIERS TO RE-ENROLLMENT**

Caretakers listed lack of financial resources (47.5%) as the main reason for dropout across countries (Ghana: 41.4%, Sierra Leone: 42.9%, Liberia: 64.2%), followed by fear of COVID-19 (7.1%), moving to another place (5.9%) and pregnancy (5.4%). This holds true for all relevant subgroups.

Teacher data supports this, as they identified decreased household income as the main cause of student dropout (Ghana: 61.8%, Sierra Leone: 30.6%, and Liberia: 40.6%). When comparing the main barriers to re-enrollment before and after COVID-19 induced school closures, the main reasons are very similar in terms of topics and percentages. This might suggest that COVID-19 did not drastically change the barriers that students face to re-enroll in school.

When comparing how barriers to re-enrollment vary across gender, teachers highlighted pregnancy (27.4%) and getting married (4.5%) as other reasons behind girl dropout rates. For boys, teachers point to peer pressure (11.1%) and labor opportunities (10.3%). This indicates that while the main barriers to re-enrollment are similar across gender, teachers perceive that there is a gender component to the constraints faced by children to re-enroll in school. However, this perception is not backed by evidence since only few of the surveyed students (Ghana: 1, Sierra Leone: 9, and Liberia: 0) indicated pregnancy as the reason behind dropout.

## **MEDIUM TERM DYNAMICS**

Dropout rates are not expected to increase substantially in the coming months, as indicated by the percentage of dropouts who are planning to re-enroll in school later in the year and the number of enrolled students that are planning to stay in school.

- 75.3% [60.1%, 90.4%] of dropout students are planning to re-enroll in school (boys: 89.1% and girls: 56.3%,  $p=0.02$ ; private: 93.0% and public: 68.9%,  $p<0.01$ ). 51.6% of dropouts say they will re-enroll in less than 2 months.
- Of the students currently enrolled, the vast majority are planning to either stay enrolled for the remainder of the school year or re-enroll next year.
  - Only 1.0% of currently enrolled students are not planning to stay enrolled for the remainder of the school year. We see that 1.8% [0.6%, 3.0%] of those students are from private schools (vs 0.4% in public schools). And 1.2% [0.3%, 2.1%] are female (vs 0.7% male students).
  - The reasons for those students not completing the school year are: earning money to support the family (26.5%), change in child custody (23.2%), and 10.4% do not know why.
  - 2.4% are not planning to enroll next year and 5.1% of those are from private schools. Differences across other genders are not significant ( $p>0.05$ ).

- The main barriers to continued enrollment are lack of access to learning materials (42.5%) and educational programming (35.9%), followed by lack of access to the internet (41.1%), lack of motivation (14.4%), lack of support from teachers and schools (16.7%), and lack of supervision (11.8%). There do not appear to be any gender differences.

## **GENDER ANALYSIS**

As schools were forced to close due to the COVID-19 pandemic, one concern is the possible unintended contribution of closures to teenage pregnancy and school dropout rates. However, our data does not appear to support this hypothesis, with pregnancy explaining only 5 dropouts in our sample.

Despite the limited number of students who dropped out due to pregnancy, we collected additional information to try to characterize this subgroup. To complement the data from RAN's children, we gathered demographic and enrollment information for up to three school-age children from each interviewed household. While 65.6% of girls reported having their monthly period, 3.8% have been pregnant. 1.8% of school-age boys and girls were married. Pregnancies and marriages are more likely to happen in households with lower parental educational attainment, lower socio-economic status (52.5) and in households where other siblings did not re-enroll in school (31.1%).

Further, we tried to understand school and community perceptions around teenage pregnancies. 67.5% of the caretakers believed that students should not come to school while pregnant, and 46.1% state that girls should not come to school when menstruating. School staff identified a need to have more teachers (56.3%), students (41.6%) and parents (33.5%) with positive attitudes towards pregnant students. They also considered schools could provide additional support to help children catch up after giving birth (33.5%).

Despite the lack of evidence of a gender gap in dropout rates, 40.2% [38.2%, 42.2%] respondents believed that during school closures girls might have been at higher risk of facing any type of gender based violence than before. The perception varies significantly across countries, with over 56.7% in Sierra Leone, 37.8% in Liberia and 25.8% in Ghana. This might suggest that even when female students are not dropping out, they might be facing increasing rates of violence that could pose additional obstacles to girls' access to education and learning.

## **4.2 ATTENDANCE**

### **DEPTH AND STUDENT PROFILES**

In line with low dropout rates after school reopened, the number of students who report an increase in irregular attendance<sup>12</sup> are low. These rates were similar across the countries, at 3.9% [2.3%, 5.4%] in Ghana, 4.8% [3.4%, 6.1%] in Sierra Leone and 3.5% [2.4%, 4.4%] in Liberia.

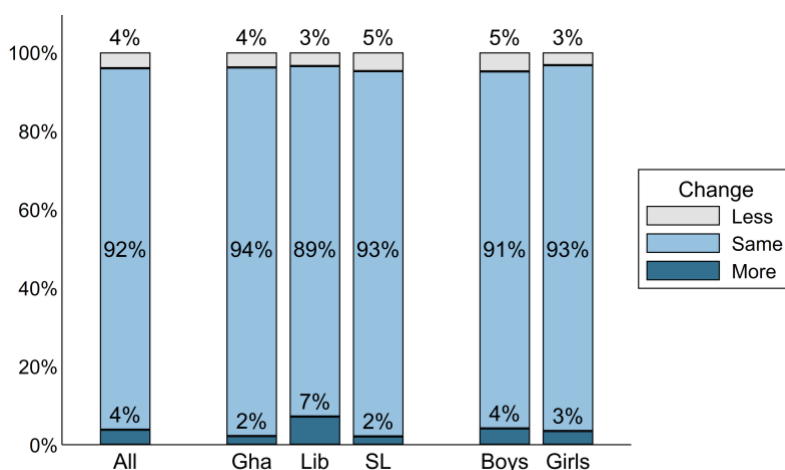
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<sup>12</sup> In our study, we defined irregular attendance as the decrease in attendance when comparing the number of days that a child attended school before and after COVID-19 school closures.

The following statistics are based on only 127 respondents who reported that their child is attending school irregularly, and thus the estimates are somewhat imprecise.

- Similar to dropouts, irregular attendance is slightly higher for male children (4.9% vs 3.3%;  $p=0.04$ ) and students enrolled in private schools (5.8% vs 2.8%).
- Students who attend school irregularly live in households of on average 7.2 members. They have lower socio-economic status in Ghana (PPI = 66.3 vs 73.9).

**Figure 2. Attendance Rates, Now vs Pre-COVID-19 (Self-Reported Days per Week)**



## BARRIERS TO REGULAR ATTENDANCE

Caretakers mentioned change in child custody (7.4%), house responsibilities (10.6%) and health issues (8.6%) as the main reasons for irregular attendance. By gender, male students report more irregular attendance due to change in custody than female students (10.1% vs 2.8%). Further, only one or two respondents listed pregnancy, marriage or fear of COVID-19 as reasons behind irregular attendance.

The main needs respondents highlighted as contributing to a smooth return to school and regular attendance include better school equipment (82.3%), a calm environment (11.3%), and assistance with school material and fees (2.2%).

From the school staff perspective, pre-COVID-19 lack of finances (above 60%) was the main reason behind irregular attendance, both for boys and girls. After COVID-19 induced school closures, financial constraints remain the main reason (girls: 35.6% and boys: 39.3%) for irregular attendance. However, teachers expect an uptick in other barriers. For girls, teachers expect that marriage (17.6%) and pregnancies (21.3%) will increasingly hinder girls' regular attendance. For boys, their entrance to the labor market (23.7%) is expected to decrease regular attendance. For both genders, teachers identified COVID-19 as an increased threat. This might indicate that even when irregular attendance remains a rare event, the barriers behind it might have shifted as a consequence of COVID-19 induced closures.

According to school staff, the actions taken by the school or staff to increase attendance once schools reopened include reaching out to parents (91%), implementing COVID-19 prevention protocols (70.9%) and keeping in touch with students (59%). Further, school staff suggest that schools should

implement additional measures to boost attendance, such as educating and motivating students around the importance of school (28%) and providing financial support (14.4%). These measures tackle the barriers around financial constraints and COVID-19. However, there is still need to implement additional measures to address barriers that would potentially affect girl attendance more disproportionately, such as marriage and pregnancy.

### **4.3 STUDENTS THAT HAVE SWITCHED OUT OF RAN SCHOOLS**

While analyzing dropout rates, we observed that 19.5% of RAN students decided to re-enroll in different schools (Ghana: 25.3%, Liberia 21%, Sierra Leone: 12.3%). Of those 613 students represented by our survey, 49.7% have re-enrolled in government schools. Overall, public school students mostly remained within public schools while private school students that switch schools are more spread out across the different types of schools (i.e., government, public, community, and vocational)

- By type of school previously attended by students switching schools, 62% of students from public schools re-enrolled in public schools while 20.6% switched to private schools. On the other hand, 39.3% of private school students re-enrolled in public schools, while 40% of them enrolled in other private schools. Since at least some of the caretakers from the latter group would be paying for school, we know that in this group there is still at least some willingness to pay for their children's education.

Though the gender differences are not significant, the reasons why people switch schools vary depending on which type of school students are moving to. Students switching to public schools cited moving (graduating) to secondary school (37.4%), financial reasons (30.5%), distance (13%), and family issues (10%), while those switching to private schools cited distance (38.1%), financial difficulties (20.1%), moving/ graduating to secondary school (12.7%), family issues (12%), and dissatisfaction with the previous school (7.2%) as a push to change schools.

While this data offers a snapshot of the number of children who decide to transfer schools, we do not have administrative data to further contextualize these results. We would suggest additional analysis to compare this percentage to the number of transfers during pre-COVID-19 years or to the number of students transferred from non-RAN schools to RAN schools.

## 5. COVID-19'S IMPACT ON EDUCATION

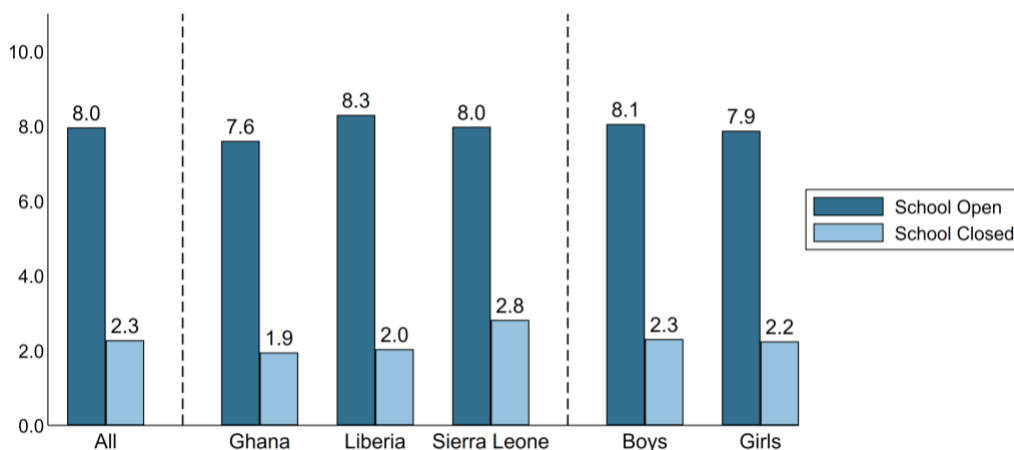
COVID-19 induced school closures brought about changes to the education system through several channels. These changes are expected to have long-lasting negative impacts on children's learning primarily through a significant decrease in the time children spend on education. Considering the uncertain course of the health crisis with potential for additional school closures, the information collected in this section is relevant for current program design and future preparations and interventions.

### 5.1 TIME SPENT ON EDUCATION AND INCOME GENERATING ACTIVITIES

Since most of children's formal learning takes place in schools, the transition to a remote learning environment was expected to decrease the time children spend in education activities. While 87.1% of caretakers indicated that children spent time on their education during school closures (Ghana: 83.6%, Sierra Leone: 97.0%, and Liberia: 80.3%), on average, we observed a decrease of at least 5.7 hours spent in education-related activities each day (2.3 during school closures compared to ~8 hours<sup>13</sup> during in-person school sessions). From the time spent in education activities during school closures, caretakers reported that children spent, on average, 0.62 hours listening to radio education programming. By country, Sierra Leona reported the highest amount of time listening to the radio (1.0 hours per day) compared to Ghana and Liberia (0.4). The stark decrease in time spent in education indicates that students did not adjust their at-home educational practices to compensate for the lack of in-school learning.

- By school type, students from private schools reported spending less time on educational activities during school closures than those from public schools ( $p < 0.0001$ ).
- The gender differences are not significant in any case ( $p = 0.492$ ).

Figure 3. Time Spent on Educational Activities (Hours per Weekday)



<sup>13</sup> This assumes a 6-hour school day and is scaled based on the fraction of school days that the average student attends school.



We also noted an increase in the time spent on income generating activities, for both boys and girls. However, the magnitude of this increase is quite small, suggesting that students substituted much of their in-school time with activities that were neither educational nor income-generating.

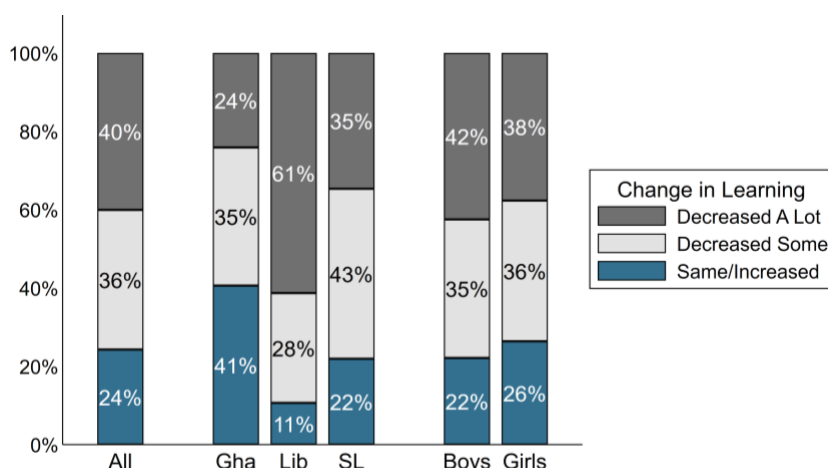
- By school type, children enrolled in private schools reported spending less time on income generating activities compared to their public-school counterparts ( $p < 0.01$ ).
- Overall, we did not find evidence of significant differences in the time allocation among boys and girls ( $p = 0.16$  &  $p = 0.89$ ).
- In order to understand other household dynamics, we gathered data comparing the time spent in income generating activities between the RAN’s targeted child and other school-age children in the household. Some 81.8% of respondents said that the child of interest spent the same or more time on income generating activities than other children in the household. By gender, more male students reportedly spent the same amount of time ( $p = 0.05$ ), while more female students indicated spending more time ( $p = 0.04$ ).

The main challenges limiting the time children spend in education appeared to be a lack of access to school materials (45%), educational programming (39%) and internet access (44%). We did not observe any meaningful variations by gender.

As expected, the transition to remote learning appeared to have impacted children’s learning negatively. Three in four (76%) caretakers reported that COVID-19 induced school closures decreased their children’s learning. By subgroup, caretakers of male children, students attending public schools, and children in Liberia reported a larger decrease in learning.

- By gender, 42% of caretakers reported that boys’ learning decreased a lot, compared to 38% for girls. The difference is statistically significant ( $p = 0.042$ ).
- By type of school, children enrolled in public schools were more negatively affected compared to those enrolled in private school (51% vs 25%), a significant difference ( $p < 0.0001$ ).
- By country, almost twice as many caretakers reported that their children’s learning has decreased ‘a lot’ in Liberia (61%) as compared to Sierra Leone (35%) and Ghana (24%).

**Figure 4. Effect of School Closures on Child Learning (Self-Reported by Parents)**



## 5.2 AVAILABILITY OF DEVICES AND INTERNET FOR DISTANCE LEARNING TOOLS

Inadequate access to remote learning resources was highlighted as a key factor limiting the time children spent in education during school closures; there is therefore a need to understand the constraints faced by students.

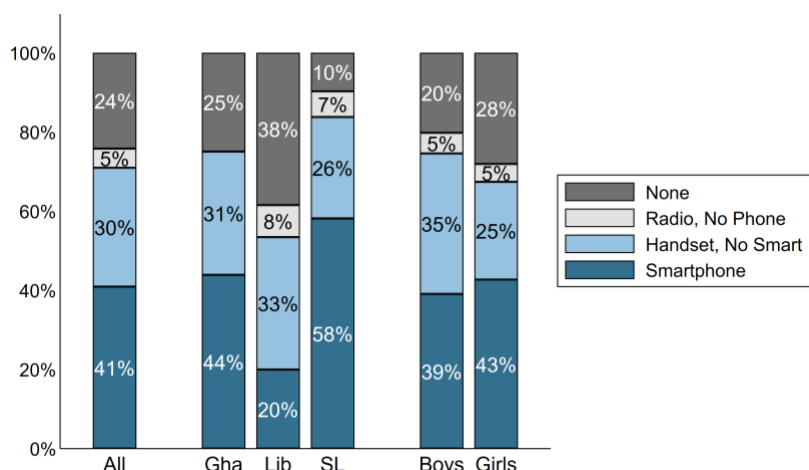
We asked caretakers to identify the mobile phone technologies and inputs that children could access on a weekly basis. Overall, the most available phone technologies are basic handsets (45.7%) and smart phones with data (36%). Only 24.3% of students have radios. Regarding inputs to support mobile phone use, the most accessible are consistent coverage (48.4%), and charging capabilities (47.8%). One in eight (13.0%) of the respondents did not have access to any technology/inputs. By country, the most accessible technology in Sierra Leone is radio for education related programming (51.0%); while in Ghana and Liberia it was a handset at 53.7% and 39.2% respectively. By gender, the only significant difference is regarding access to handsets, with boys presenting a larger percentage (53.7%).

Furthermore, access to and utilization of the internet for schooling is limited. While 42.9% of households indicated having internet access, only 23.2% reported that the child could use it for distance learning activities. Data bundles (37.7%) are the most common source. Of the households with access to the internet for learning activities, 76.8% admitted that children never used it. This might suggest that households do not have access to educational programming online, are not aware of them or might not know how to access it.

The differences in access across private vs public schools are significant ( $p < 0.0001$ ) with 11.9% of public school students having access to the internet for distance learning compared to 38.5% of private school students. Similarly, 49.5% of private school students have access to a smart phone with data and only 26% of public school students do. There appears to be no significant difference in access across gender.

This data suggests that remote learning needs to be disseminated using multiple technological and non-technological channels in order to reach more types of students. As school systems remain uncertain, understanding the local limitations will become more relevant. Different branches of governments and education providers should therefore re-think and adapt the remote learning tools. In this case, by combining multiple technologies such as radio, handsets and smartphones, RAN could reach 76% of sampled students. However, they would still need to find ways of reaching the 24% percent who have access to none of these technologies.

**Figure 5. EdTech Available for Distance Learning (Percentage)<sup>14</sup>**



### 5.3 SUPPORT PROVIDED TO STUDENTS DURING SCHOOL CLOSURES

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the subsequent closure of schools, caretakers and other individuals within the household had to assume a more active role in children’s education in order to support their learning. The majority of caretakers in our study supported children’s learning through various means, including increased communication to remind students of school (58.1%), asking them to review their books (56.6%), reading to them (34.2%) and helping them with homework (35.8%). Only 7.5% of caretakers reported that they did not support students' education in any way. Parents reported reading (40% vs 28%) or talking to girls about school (63% vs 53%) more often than with boys.

Similarly, teachers and school staff had to recalibrate their role to adjust to distance learning. RAN’s school staff set in place targeted efforts to support student’s learning through school closures and eventually boost re-enrollment. School staff practices included sending learning materials (Take Home Packs) to students (66.5%), visiting students (46.1%), introducing techniques adapted to distance learning (39%) and prescribing radio lessons (22%), particularly Rising on Air in Liberia.

When asked about communication with parents and students, most school staff (51.8%) reported that in a typical week they would be in touch with most or all of their students. The main means of communication include in person-visits (69.0%), and phone calls to parents (50.2%), particularly in Liberia (80.4%). The least used means of communication with parents and students was texting. Most school staff reported communicating at least once a week but less than once a day (59.8%). Some of the challenges that school staff faced to communicate with students during school closures include the inability to get hold of students (47.4%), and students being busy doing other activities that did not involve their education (21.6%).

<sup>14</sup> This graph represents the access to different technologies by individuals. There is a discrepancy between the number of people who have access to none of technology mentioned above (24%) vs those who do not have access to any technology/ inputs (13%). This can be explained because there are a few respondents who have access to inputs for education but do not own smartphones.

These data contrasts with the information provided by caretakers of dropouts, who mostly mentioned that they have not been in contact (70.6%) with teachers or school staff. Only 17.9% of parents said that they received phone calls from the school and 9.5% reported that they received visits from teachers. These discrepancies might represent an opportunity to re-think the role that teachers play during school closures, as well as the support they might require, in contexts where access to technology is varied and children might be facing competing priorities.

## 6. COVID-19'S IMPACT ON HOUSEHOLDS AND RAN'S STAFF

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Student's home environments have an impact on their learning., We sought to understand other impacts of COVID-19 on households beyond educational.

### 6.1 FINANCIAL IMPACT

The financial impact of COVID-19 appears to be widespread. Most (83%) caretakers reported having difficulty providing for their family while 27.7% reported getting loans, 20.8% losing their job; 2.4% reported that their children had to get jobs. Only 11.7% of respondents did not report an impact in their household's financial situation. We did not observe significant differences by gender of the target children.

Besides severe financial difficulties, other reported impacts were movement restrictions (19.5%) which disrupted multiple activities; others were lack of food and means to access basic needs (14.8%).

### 6.2 HEALTH IMPACT

Regarding the health impact of COVID-19, 78.3% [76.3%, 80.4%] of caretakers mentioned that no family members fell ill while 3.2% reported someone in the household either died or suffered long-term health impact due to COVID-19. One in five (21.2%) did not indicate any impact. Despite the fact that the vast majority of parents have sent children back to school and have not observed high infection rates related to the pandemic, over half (54%) of caretakers 'worry a lot' about sending their kids to school during the COVID pandemic. This incongruence between their perceptions and behavior might be explained by several factors such as the lack of child care alternatives or the high value that households place on education - which could explain their willingness to re-enroll students despite these fears.

To understand if the pandemic resulted in any changes within household dynamics, we asked about COVID-19 related stress and the way household members reacted to it. On one hand, respondents recounted positive coping mechanisms such as increased solidarity within the community (36.4%), and help among neighbors (32.6%). On the other hand, 55.4% of respondents mentioned parents being stricter regarding letting their children go outside during school closures, 15.1% reported more drinking, 10.6% reported more quarreling within the household, and 7.1% reported intimidation from another household member. Over a third (37.4%) reported no change in household dynamics due to COVID-19. Regarding the possibility of an increased risk of gender-based violence, respondents do seem to think that some types of household conflict increased due to COVID-19 related stress.

### 6.3 IMPACT ON CHILD

Finally, we asked caretakers to reflect on the effect of the pandemic on their children's life. Just under a third (30.6%) thought that their children have been affected. The main concerns included the disruption of the school year (66.2%), academic decline (10.9%), and difficulties to provide for the family (10%). This is in line with caretakers' perception of learning loss and could be exacerbated by increased financial hardships forcing parents to prioritize other basic needs over education.

## 6.4 IMPACT ON RAN'S STAFF

When asked about whether they were aware of other teachers not coming back to school, 61% of RAN staff responded affirmatively. The main reasons why other teachers would quit include the possibility of another job (48.6%), better salary elsewhere (29.4%), and increased responsibilities at home (18.8%). Only 3.7% of them mentioned COVID-19 as a reason for teachers quitting.

Of the interviewed teachers, 4.9% said they are likely not to complete the school year while 10.7% were unsure if they will. Amongst those who did not expect to complete the year or were unsure, 22.5% of them quoted increased house responsibilities and 24.5% indicated fear of COVID-19. It seems that causes for teachers quitting all relate to COVID-19 financial impact and the security risk it brings on. The numbers also contradict the perception of the reasons they have for other teachers quitting which may suggest self-reporting bias.

## 7. RECOMMENDATIONS

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Below we present high-level recommendations derived from the insight drawn from our research. These recommendations will be refined through an iterative process informed by among other things RAN's priorities and organizational capacity.

1. **Dropout and irregular attendance rates:** Although financial constraints have hindered school re-enrollment before COVID-19 school closures, the pandemic might exacerbate financial vulnerabilities. Schools should continue to monitor attendance and retention throughout the year acknowledging that the long term financial impact of COVID-19 could translate into increased student' dropout.
2. **COVID-19's financial impact:** Government and education providers could consider setting in place safety nets for families with low-economic status families who are prone to food insecurity and lack access to electricity.
3. **Decrease in time spent on education:** Education providers could re-think the role that their staff could play, as well as the support they would need, during future school closures to incentivize allocating time towards education and facilitation of remote learning.
4. **EdTech tools:** Remote learning needs to be disseminated across multiple technological and non-technological tools in order to reach all types of students. Governments and education providers should consider using a multi-pronged approach that is tailored to the local environment depending on students' access to the various types of tools.
5. **COVID-19's health impact:** Given the concerns that caretakers expressed about sending children back to school during the COVID pandemic, the government, media and education providers should communicate COVID-19 prevention protocols more clearly and broadly to reassure parents about the safety guidelines in place to protect the health and safety of students. In addition, the government should enforce and provide oversight over implementation of these protocols in schools.
6. **Gender-based-violence:** Educators should establish support structures for girls facing gender-based-violence now and during potential future school closures. On an ongoing basis, relevant government agencies and civil society players should explore sexual and gender based violence practices (and attitudes) in the region and put in place programs to address these at community level.

## APPENDIX

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### APPENDIX 1: MEASURES OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS

#### 1A. PPI AND SCORING METHOD

IPA describes PPI as a poverty measurement tool for organizations that aspire to serve the poor. It is based on 10 questions surrounding a household's characteristics and asset ownership which are scored and summed to provide a country-specific PPI-score. The PPI score allows us to assess the likelihood of a household having expenditure below the national poverty line. The team describes the scorecards as efficient ways to easily collect poverty information and track changes in poverty rates using the 10 available questions.

In Sierra Leone, the questions were created using the 2003/04 Integrated Household Survey which tested 500 items, and each household was visited seven times over the course of a month. This survey was simplified into 10 overarching questions which use non-negative scoring systems.

We have adapted the option sets from the given PPI options using the DHS survey which was not a country specific survey, therefore included. For example, the PPI system asks:

*What is the main fuel used by the household for cooking?*

A. Wood, or other **0**

B. Charcoal **4**

C. Gas, kerosene, or electricity **6**

Given that the update dates to 2011 we used a more recent response set to encompass the variety of options and facilitate selection for parents. In the DHS Survey dated April 2020, these are some of the responses for the same question.

Alcohol/ ethanol	Agricultural crop
Kerosene/Paraffin	Animal dung/waste
Coal/Lignite	Processed biomass or woodchip
Charcoal	Garbage/ plastic
Wood	Sawdust
Straw/ shrubs	

We then combined these options and matched them to the fitting responses within the PPI's option set. For example, **processed biomass, woodchip, sawdust, garbage/plastic, straw/ shrubs** in the new option set were assigned the same score as **Wood or other (0)**.

In the case of Ghana, the PPI was updated in 2016 and consisted mostly of Yes/No questions. It uses the Ghana's 2016/17 Living Standards Survey (GLSS) conducted by the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS).



## 1B. HOW TO CALCULATE THE PPI

After obtaining the cumulative score (out of 100), we use the scorecard to identify the household poverty likelihood. Sierra Leone’s scorecard is based on data from the 3,702 households in the 2003/4 IHS surveyed by Statistics Sierra Leone from 24 April 2003 to 26 April 2004.

Since Liberia does not have a PPI scorecard, we identified Sierra Leone as the next best country whose scorecard we can use as a proxy, given their economic similarities. In fact, the 2008 Liberia Census<sup>15</sup> includes 7 out of 10 questions from the Sierra Leone PPI’s questionnaire.

We used the country-specific scorecard constructed by the PPI team which was not altered as it comprised mainly of yes/no questions.

To understand a household’s socio-economic status, we use the look-up tables for Sierra Leone and Ghana, which associates every score with a poverty likelihood that varies with the poverty line used.

We use the national poverty line as our interpretation tool, thus a PPI score of 4 means that there’s a 86.1% likelihood that the household is under the national poverty line.

PPI Score	National Poverty Line	Extreme Poverty Line	150% National	200% National
0	89.7%	62.4%	95.7%	98.0%
1	88.9%	60.0%	95.3%	97.9%
2	88.0%	57.5%	95.0%	97.7%
3	87.1%	55.0%	94.6%	97.5%
4	86.1%	52.4%	94.3%	97.3%

Table 1a. PPI Look-Up Table

## 1C. OTHER SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS MEASURES

Besides the 10 PPI questions for Ghana, Liberia and Sierra Leone, we have also interviewed respondents on main source of income, number of meals, access to internet and other distance learning tools,

## 1D. CONCLUSION

Using the PPI as a measure of poverty is a cost effective way of collecting socio-economic data. The 10 questions survey can be filled out by parents or students every year and the score added up to determine where the student’s household stands in comparison to the average household in the country.

<sup>15</sup> [Population and Housing Census 2008, Liberia](#)

## APPENDIX 2: HOUSEHOLD INDICATORS AND PPI FACTORS

The shaded areas from Appendix 2 – Appendix 8 represent significant differences in subgroups: i.e., in Table 2b, the difference in PPI scores between public and private schools is significant.

Relationship to child	All	CI	Ghana	Liberia	Sierra Leone	Boys	Girls	Public	Private
<b>Father</b>	39.7%	[0.37,0.42]	39.6%	46.5%	33.2%	42.1%	37.3%	41.6%	37.1%
<b>Mother</b>	41.9%	[0.40,0.44]	52.9%	34.1%	38.6%	41.8%	42.0%	34.3%	52.3%
<b>Sibling</b>	4.7%	[0.04,0.06]	2.6%	5.3%	6.1%	4.4%	4.9%	6.0%	2.9%
<b>Other</b>	13.7%	[0.12,0.15]	4.9%	14.1%	22.1%	11.7%	15.8%	18.2%	7.7%

Table 2a: Survey respondent's relationship to child. "Other" includes aunt/uncle, grandparents

Household factor	All	CI	Ghana	Liberia	Sierra Leone	Boys	Girls	Public	Private
<b>PPI Score</b>	59.2	[58.5,59.8]	73.4	47.9	56.1	58.9	59.4	50.1	71.5
<b>Permanent resident</b>	92.3%	[0.91,0.93]	92.6%	90.8%	93.4%	91.9%	92.7%	92.2%	92.4%
<b>Number of people</b>	6.712	[6.59,6.84]	4.912	7.816	7.418	6.797	6.630	7.819	5.209
<b>Number of meals missed per week<sup>16</sup></b>	0.649	[0.60,0.70]	0.147	1.078	0.730	0.675	0.624	0.991	0.185
<b>Number of rooms</b>	3.150	[3.07,3.23]	-	3.156	3.145	3.159	3.142	3.240	2.575
<b>Number of school kids</b>	3.200	[3.12,3.28]	2.153	3.747	3.680	3.244	3.158	3.761	2.425

Table 2b: Household Factors. Child residency, number of people in household including respondent, number of meals missed, number of rooms in household excluding toilet and kitchen

Household Head	All	CI	Ghana	Liberia	Sierra Leone	Boys	Girls	Public	Private
<b>Husband or Father</b>	73.2%	[0.71,0.75]	73.7%	78.8%	67.1%	75.1%	71.2%	74.4%	71.5%
<b>Wife or Mother</b>	16.7%	[0.15,0.19]	22.3%	13.7%	14%	16.1%	17.2%	13.3%	21.2%
<b>Other</b>	10.2%	[0.09,0.11]	4.0%	7.5%	18.8%	8.7%	11.6%	12.3%	7.3%

Table 2c: Household head, options combined. Other includes aunt/uncle, grandparent

Main income source	All	CI	Ghana	Liberia	Sierra Leone	Boys	Girls	Public	Private
<b>Agriculture</b>	23.0%	[0.22,0.24]	5.8%	44.6%	19.2%	23.5%	22.6%	36.5%	4.8%
<b>Retail - Trade</b>	33.2%	[0.31,0.35]	43.8%	26.0%	29.8%	32.5%	33.9%	30.1%	37.5%
<b>Other</b>	36.4%	[0.34,0.39]	42.6%	24.9%	41.4%	37.5%	35.4%	28.0%	47.8%
<b>Unemployed</b>	7.3%	[0.06,0.09]	7.8%	4.4%	9.6%	6.5%	8.1%	5.4%	9.9%

Table 2d: Household main income source

<sup>16</sup> Number of times people in household went hungry in a week

Household Utilities	All	CI	Liberia	Sierra Leone	Boys	Girls	Public	Private
<b>Type of toilet</b>								
Flush or pour flush toilet	29.5%	[27%, 32%]	28.7%	30.2%	27.7%	31.3%	25.1%	58.0%
Common pit/Pit latrine	48.1%	[46%, 50%]	34.5%	61.3%	49.2%	47.0%	49.2%	41.2%
Hanging Latrine	8.3%	[7%, 9.5%]	13.4%	3.3%	8.3%	8.3%	9.5%	0.2%
No facilities	13.6%	[12%, 15%]	22.8%	4.7%	14.1%	13.0%	15.6%	0.4%
Other	0.5%	[0.2%, 1%]	0.5%	0.6%	0.7%	0.4%	0.6%	0.2%
<b>Type of floor</b>								
Cement, Tile, Parquet	76.3%	[74%, 78%]	73.7%	78.7%	73.9%	78.7%	74.1%	90.3%
Natural floor(earth, sand)	23.7%	[22%, 26%]	26.2%	21.3%	26.1%	21.3%	25.9%	9.7%
<b>Wall Material</b>								
No walls, cane, cardboard	5.1%	[4%, 6%]	4.4%	5.8%	4.4%	5.8%	4.8%	7.2%
Mud, wood, bamboo	43.5%	[41%, 46%]	45.6%	41.6%	43.6%	43.5%	46.5%	24.5%
Cement, stone	51.4%	[49%, 53%]	50.0%	52.6%	52.0%	50.7%	48.7%	68.3%
<b>Type of fuel used for cooking</b>								
Wood, crop, dung, straws	43.5%	[42%, 45%]	54.5%	32.8%	45.2%	41.7%	49.8%	2.6%
Charcoal	52.6%	[51%, 54%]	45.4%	59.5%	49.9%	55.3%	50.0%	68.8%
Gas, electricity	4.0%	[4%, 4%]	0.1%	7.7%	4.9%	3.0%	0.1%	28.6%
<b>Drinking water source</b>								
Pipe or Pump Indoors	17.6%	[15%, 20%]	2.8%	17.2%	17.2%	18.1%	6.7%	32.7%
Pipe or Pump Outdoors	51.9%	[50%, 54%]	79.0%	30.4%	49.6%	54.1%	60.1%	40.6%
Well	16.5%	[0.15,0.18]	6.8%	33.2%	17.5%	15.4%	19.3%	12.6%
Other	16.0%	[0.14,0.18]	6.0%	15.5%	19.8%	12.2%	7.7%	27.3%
<b>Light source</b>								
No light source	0.7%	[0.4%, 1%]	1.3%	0.1%	0.6%	0.8%	0.2%	4.0%
Electricity	44.6%	[43%, 46%]	20.4%	67.9%	43%	46.2%	37.1%	93%
Lamp or flashlight	54.5%	[52%, 56%]	79%	30.8%	56%	53%	62.4%	3.1%

Table 2d: Type of toilet, floor, wall, cooking fuel, drinking water source (PPI Indicators) for Sierra Leone and Liberia

### APPENDIX 3: ENROLLMENT AND ATTENDANCE

Re-enrollment Status	All	CI	Ghana	Liberia	Sierra Leone	Boys	Girls	Public	Private
Dropout	3.0%	[2%, 4%]	3.7%	2.3%	3.1%	3.7%	2.3%	1.7%	4.8%
Staying in RAN school	77.1%	[75%, 80%]	70.4%	85.4%	75.5%	76.7%	77.5%	83.0%	68.9%
Switching schools	19.5%	[17%, 22%]	25.3%	12.3%	21.0%	19.4%	19.7%	15.3%	25.4%
Graduate	0.4%	[0.1%, 0.6%]	0.6%	0.0%	0.5%	0.2%	0.5%	0.0%	0.9%

Table 3a: General re-enrollment information.

#### 3A. STUDENTS SWITCHING SCHOOLS

RAN students switch to	All	CI	Ghana	Liberia	Sierra Leone	Boys	Girls	Public	Private
Private	35.2%	[30%, 41%]	36.7%	43.0%	29.0%	29.0%	41.1%	29.6%	39.9%
Government	49.7%	[45%, 54%]	38.3%	48.7%	63.4%	54.6%	44.9%	62.0%	39.3%
SHS	8.3%	[6%, 11%]	19.6%	0.0%	0.0%	9.3%	7.4%	0.0%	15.3%
Other	6.8%	[3.2%, 10.4%]	5.4%	8.4%	7.5%	7.1%	6.5%	8.4%	5.5%

Table 3a.1: Type of schools RAN students who switch schools are re-enrolling in

RAN students switch to other schools	All	CI	Ghana	Liberia	Sierra Leone	Boys	Girls	Public	Private
Lower school fees	23.3%	[0.206,0.259]	25.2%	23.6%	20.9%	25.6%	21.1%	10.8%	33.8%
Moving to secondary school	32.4%	[0.286,0.362]	20.2%	24.4%	51.0%	32.6%	32.2%	48.9%	18.5%
Distance	21.2%	[0.163,0.261]	32.2%	16.9%	10.9%	18.4%	23.9%	13.9%	27.3%
Dissatisfaction with school	3.8%	[0.021,0.055]	4.7%	2.5%	3.5%	2.3%	5.2%	2.6%	4.8%
Change in child custody	1.9%	[0.010,0.029]	0.3%	5.8%	1.7%	2.6%	1.4%	3.4%	0.7%
Poor performance	2.1%	[-0.011,0.054]	3.3%	1.7%	1.0%	3.6%	0.8%	1.6%	2.6%
Child's choice	1.2%	[-0.001,0.025]	0.1%	0.0%	3.2%	1.1%	1.3%	2.2%	0.4%
Family issues	9.9%	[0.066,0.132]	10.7%	20.1%	3.2%	8.4%	11.3%	11.6%	8.5%

Table 3a.2: Reasons why students choose enroll elsewhere.

### 3B. STUDENTS THAT HAVE DROPPED OUT

Dropout Profiles	All	CI	Ghana	Liberia	Sierra Leone	Boys	Girls	Public	Private
Permanent residency	92.3%	[91%, 93%]	92.6%	90.8%	93.5%	91.9%	92.7%	92.2%	92.4%
Male household head	73.2%	[71%, 75%]	-	73.7%	78.8%	75.1%	71.2%	74.4%	71.5%
Female household head	16.7%	[15%, 19%]	22.3%	13.7%	14%	16.2%	17.2%	13.3%	21.2%
PPI score (out of 100)	59.2	[58.5, 59.8]	73.4	47.9	56.1	58.9	59.4	50.1	71.5
Number of people in household	6.7	[6.6, 6.8]	4.9	7.8	7.4	6.8	6.6	7.8	5.2
Is internet available for learning?	23.2%	[21%, 25%]	34.6%	11%	23.6%	23.5%	22.8%	11.9%	38.5%
Do students like their teachers	4.3	[3.9, 4.6]	4.2	3.6	4.4	4.1	4.07	3.7	4.3
Learning decreased somewhat or a lot	75.7%	[74%, 78%]	59.4%	89.4%	78.1%	77.9%	73.6%	84.1%	64%

Table 3b.1: Profile of students who mentioned that they will not be returning to school

Reasons for dropouts	All	CI	Ghana	Liberia	Sierra Leone	Boys	Girls	Public	Private
Lack of financial resources	47.5%	[24%, 71%]	41.4%	64.2%	42.9%	55.4%	35.0%	56.3%	43.3%
Increased house responsibilities	2.0%	N/A	5.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	5.2%	0.0%	3.0%
Taking private classes	1.1%	[-0.8%, 2.9%]	0.0%	0.0%	3.0%	1.7%	0.0%	0.0%	1.6%
Moving away	5.9%	[1.5%, 10.4%]	8.1%	11.0%	0.0%	7.1%	4.1%	8.3%	4.8%
Change in child custody	0.5%	[-0.9%, 2%]	0.0%	2.2%	0.0%	0.0%	1.4%	1.7%	0.0%
Pregnancy	5.4%	N/A	5.7%	0.0%	8.7%	1.5%	11.4%	9.6%	3.4%
Family issues	3.1%	[0.1%, 6%]	0.0%	12.6%	0.0%	3.9%	1.7%	9.6%	0.0%
Fear of COVID-19	7.1%	[-13.2%, 27%]	15.8%	0.0%	2.1%	11.6%	0.0%	2.3%	9.4%
Other	32.8%	[21%, 45%]	29.8%	10.1%	52.0%	20.2%	52.7%	21.8%	38.0%

Table 3b.2: Why do students drop out of school. "Other" includes multiple with ~2 respondents

Occupations post dropout	All	CI	Ghana	Liberia	Sierra Leone	Boys	Girls	Public	Private
Earning money	20.3%	N/A	51.2%	0.0%	9.4%	31.5%	12.2%	17.8%	21.2%
Supporting family in other ways	3.0%	N/A	0.0%	14.4%	0.0%	0.0%	5.2%	11.8%	0.0%
Starting a family	14.9%	N/A	29.3%	28.0%	0.0%	13.9%	15.6%	23.0%	12.1%
Doesn't know yet	16.1%	N/A	19.5%	48.2%	0.0%	33.3%	3.6%	39.6%	8.1%
Taking private classes	1.8%	N/A	0.0%	0.0%	3.8%	4.4%	0.0%	0.0%	2.4%

Table 3b.3: Students' occupation post-dropout

Girls' reasons for dropout	Liberia	Ghana	Sierra Leone
Lack of financial resources	21.5%	63.7%	36.1%
No school near household	0.93%	0%	2.8%
Household responsibilities	6.5%	0.9%	5.6%
Getting married	5.6%	2.9%	5.6%
Pregnancy	50.5%	4.9%	22.2%
Lack of parental care	7.5%	4.9%	2.8%
Bad environment	0.93%	4.9%	0%
Peer Pressure	4.7%	1.9%	2.8%
Sitting at home	0%	0.9%	0%
Lack of food	0.93%	0%	0%

Table 3b.4: Teachers' perceptions of girls' reasons for dropping out of school before COVID-19

Boys' reasons for dropout	Liberia	Ghana	Sierra Leone
Lack of financial resources	38.7%	66.7%	52.8%
No school near household	0.94%	1.96%	0%
Household responsibilities	14.2%	0%	11.1%
Starting a family	10.4%	0%	0%
Had a get a job	19.8%	3.9%	0%
Peer Pressure	12.3%	10.8%	8.3%

Table 3b.5: Teachers' perceptions of boys' reasons for dropout before COVID-19

Boys' reasons for dropout	Liberia	Ghana	Sierra Leone
Lack of financial resources	40.6%	61.8%	30.6%
Had to get a job	15.1%	6.9%	6%
Household responsibilities	23.6%	2.9%	16.7%
Marriage	33%	0%	2.8%
Pregnancy	57.6%	7.8%	25%
Fear of COVID-19	17.9%	15.7%	8.3%
Peer Pressure	20.8%	0.98%	2.8%
Lack of parental care	21.7%	6.9%	0%

Table 3b.6: Teachers perception of girls' reasons for dropout post school closures

Means of communication	All	CI	Ghana	Liberia	Sierra Leone	Boys	Girls	Public	Private
No contact with school	70.6%	[46%, 95%]	69.6%	66.8%	74.4%	65.4%	78.4%	64.9%	73.3%
Text to parents	0.0%	N/A	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Texts to students	0.0%	N/A	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Phone calls to parents	17.9%	[-6%, 42%]	26.7%	3.7%	18.0%	22.3%	11.2%	5.9%	23.7%
Phone calls to students	2.0%	[-1.5%, 6%]	2.1%	2.6%	1.5%	2.3%	1.6%	2.0%	2.0%
In-person visits	9.5%	[4.6%, 14%]	1.6%	26.9%	6.1%	10.0%	8.7%	27.2%	1.0%

Table 3b.7: Students that have now dropped out mention having been in contact with teachers

Means of communication	All	Liberia	Ghana	Sierra Leone	Public	Private
Text to parents	5.3%	90.7%	0%	8.3%	8.9%	0.91%
Texts to students	0.82%	0%	0%	5.6%	0.7%	0.91%
Phone calls to parents	50.2%	27.1%	74.5%	50%	31.9%	72.7%
Phone calls to students	9.8%	10.3%	8.8%	11.1%	10.4%	9.1%
In-person visits	68.9%	80.4%	65.7%	44.4%	75.6%	60.9%
Organizing meeting with parents	3.7%	8.4%	0%	0%	6.7%	

Table 3b.8: How teachers claim they have communicated with students through school closures

### 3C. STUDENTS ATTENDING SCHOOL IRREGULARLY

Irregular Attendance	All	CI	Ghana	Liberia	Sierra Leone	Boys	Girls	Public	Private
<b>Irregular attendance</b>	4.0%	[3.3%, 4.8%]	3.8%	3.5%	4.8%	4.9%	3.2%	2.8%	5.8%
<b>PPI for absentee students</b>	56.8	-	66.3	51.3	55.3	55.4	60.1	52.3	63.2

Table 3c.1: Absentee students and their PPI scores

Reasons for irregular Attendance	All	CI	Ghana	Liberia	Sierra Leone	Boys	Girls	Public	Private
<b>Increased house responsibilities</b>	10.6%	[0.4%, 21%]	17.1%	7.2%	7.2%	13.4%	5.9%	5.3%	14.3%
<b>Pregnancy or Marriage</b>	2.0%	[0.4%, 4%]	0.0%	3.6%	2.6%	0.0%	5.4%	5.0%	0.0%
<b>Sickness / Health Issues</b>	8.6%	[1.2%, 16%]	3.3%	5.5%	16.2%	6.3%	12.4%	11.9%	6.3%
<b>Fear of COVID-19</b>	0.6%	[-0.6%, 1.8%]	1.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.9%
<b>Child's choice</b>	5.5%	N/A	14.0%	2.1%	0.0%	7.7%	1.7%	1.5%	8.2%
<b>Change in child's custody</b>	7.4%	[3.5%, 11%]	0.0%	14.3%	8.8%	10.1%	2.8%	16.4%	1.3%
<b>Distance</b>	5.8%	[-0.1%, 12%]	7.7%	2.9%	6.4%	6.1%	5.4%	7.8%	4.5%
<b>Child is distracted</b>	1.2%	[-0.2%, 2.5%]	3.4%	0.0%	0.0%	1.8%	0.0%	0.0%	2.0%
<b>Child did not get the WASSCE</b>	1.3%	[0%, 2.6%]	0.0%	0.0%	3.6%	2.1%	0.0%	0.0%	2.2%
<b>Child has not yet registered</b>	3.6%	[-2.7%, 10%]	0.0%	0.0%	10.1%	1.2%	7.6%	0.0%	6.0%

Table 3c.2: Reasons for irregular attendance

Girls irregular attendance reasons	Liberia	Ghana	Sierra Leone
<b>Lack of financial resources</b>	46.7%	85.3%	33.3%
<b>No school near household</b>	5.6%	7.8%	5.6%
<b>Household responsibilities</b>	42.1%	26.5%	25%
<b>Getting married</b>	20.6%	0%	2.8%
<b>Pregnancy</b>	36.5%	0%	5.6%
<b>Fear of COVID-19</b>	0%	20.6%	13.9%
<b>Bad environment</b>	3.7%	11.8%	2.8%
<b>Peer Pressure</b>	23.4%	3.9%	2.8%
<b>Sitting at home</b>	6.5%	9.8%	2.8%
<b>Lack of food</b>	13.1%	0%	0%

Table 3c.4: Teachers' perception of girls' reasons for irregular attendance before COVID-19



Boys Irregular attendance reasons	Liberia	Ghana	Sierra Leone
Lack of financial resources	3.7%	7.8%	2.8%
No school near household	58.9%	84.3%	27.8%
Household responsibilities	35.5%	12.8%	16.7%
Starting a family	32.7%	0.98%	0%
Fear of COVID-19	0%	21.6%	0%
Peer Pressure	36.5%	30.4%	13.9%

Table3c.5 : Teachers' perception of boys' reasons for irregular attendance before COVID-19

Girls' Irregular attendance reasons	Liberia	Ghana	Sierra Leone
Lack of financial resources	34.9%	43.1%	16.7%
Had to get a job	12.3%	2.9%	5.6%
No school near household	0.93%	0.98%	2.8%
Household responsibilities	46.2%	5.9%	27.8%
Getting married	37.7%	0%	8.3%
Pregnancy	39.6%	0.98%	25%
Fear of COVID-19	21.7%	11.8%	8.3%
Lack of parental care	15.1%	8.8%	11.1%
Peer Pressure	19.8%	2.9%	16.7%
Child's choice	1.9%	0%	2.8%
Child is ill	0%	2%	2.8%
FGM	0.9%	0%	0%
Lack of food	0.93%	0%	2.8%
Periods	0%	0.98%	0%

Table 3c. : Teachers' perception of girls' reasons for irregular attendance post school-closures

Boys' Irregular attendance reasons	Liberia	Ghana	Sierra Leone
Lack of financial resources	36.8%	46.1%	27.8%
Had to get a job	33%	14.7%	22.2%
No school near household	0.93%	0%	2.8%
Household responsibilities	37.7%	4.9%	25%
Getting married	19.8%	0.98%	2.8%
Pregnancy	11.32%	0.98%	0%
Fear of COVID-19	22.6%	11.8%	5.6%
Lack of parental care	16%	13.7%	11.1%
Peer Pressure	21.7%	10.8%	22.2%
Child's choice	0.93%	0%	2.8%
Lack of food	0.93%	0%	0%

Table 3c Teachers' perception of boys' reasons for irregular attendance post school-closures

## APPENDIX 4. TECH AND DATA FOR EDUCATION

Students needs for success in school	All	CI	Ghana	Liberia	Sierra Leone	Boys	Girls	Public	Private
<b>Better equipment</b>	82.3%	[80%, 84%]	77.1%	89.0%	80.7%	82.6%	81.9%	85.8%	77.4%
<b>Calm environment</b>	11.3%	[9.5%, 13%]	14.8%	8.0%	11.2%	10.9%	11.8%	9.7%	13.6%
<b>Help with school fees</b>	2.2%	[1.4%, 2.9%]	4.3%	1.7%	0.6%	2.5%	1.8%	1.1%	3.7%
<b>School transportation</b>	0.6%	[0%, 1.1%]	0.4%	0.0%	1.3%	0.8%	0.4%	0.4%	0.7%
<b>PPE and Hygiene</b>	0.1%	[0.1%, 0.2%]	0.2%	0.0%	0.1%	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.3%

Table 4a: Child needs for successful school year

Internet source	All	CI	Ghana	Liberia	Sierra Leone	Boys	Girls	Public	Private
<b>Data Bundles</b>	37.7%	[35%, 40%]	48.9%	20.4%	43.4%	35.4%	40.0%	26.3%	53.3%
<b>Cyber café</b>	1.1%	[0.6%, 1.6%]	1.4%	0.1%	1.8%	1.1%	1.2%	1.1%	1.1%
<b>Wi-Fi</b>	1.5%	[0.8%, 2.1%]	1.1%	0.2%	3.1%	1.4%	1.5%	0.9%	2.2%
<b>Megabytes</b>	2.1%	[1.6%, 2.5%]	-	4.2%	0.0%	2.8%	1.3%	2.4%	0.0%
<b>Other</b>	0.5%	[0.2%, 0.8%]	0.0%	0.1%	1.3%	0.7%	0.2%	0.7%	0.1%
<b>No internet</b>	60.5%	[58%, 63%]	51.3%	77.1%	53.6%	62.0%	59.1%	71.1%	46.2%

Table 4b: Sources of internet accessible to students at least once a week

Access to technology	Full Sample	Ghana	Liberia	Sierra Leone	Boys	Girls	Public	Private
<b>Consistent Battery</b>	46.3%	37.4%	42.5%	56.5%	43.8%	49.0%	47.5%	45.0%
<b>Consistent Charging Capabilities</b>	51.3%	35.5%	53.0%	64.3%	49.1%	53.7%	58.8%	43.0%
<b>Consistent Phone Coverage</b>	51.0%	29.9%	50.7%	69.8%	48.5%	53.6%	62.5%	38.1%
<b>Data Available (Smartphone Only)</b>	88.0%	95.7%	71.9%	87.6%	87.0%	88.8%	78.4%	96.4%
<b>Data Available for Distance Learning (Smartphone Only)</b>	42.4%	67.0%	34.7%	26.6%	45.2%	39.9%	22.0%	60.2%

Table 4c: Availability of phone inputs (handset and smartphone owners)

## APPENDIX 5. SUPPORT PROVIDED TO CHILDREN AND CHALLENGES THEY FACE

Support provided to students	All	CI	Ghana	Liberia	Sierra Leone	Boys	Girls	Public	Private
No support	7.5%	[0.064,0.086]	12.1%	7.2%	3.3%	8.2%	6.8%	5.2%	10.6%
Talk to children about school	58.1%	[0.556,0.606]	51.9%	58.2%	64.0%	53.1%	63.0%	65.2%	48.2%
Read to children	34.2%	[0.325,0.358]	35.1%	40.0%	27.7%	28.2%	40.1%	36.7%	30.6%
Paid for tutoring	36.9%	[0.348,0.390]	35.2%	42.4%	33.3%	38.0%	35.9%	36.6%	37.4%
Ask children to review books	56.6%	[0.544,0.587]	63.9%	46.8%	58.8%	55.8%	57.4%	55.5%	58.1%
Helped children with their homework	35.8%	[0.340,0.376]	26.6%	31.2%	49.3%	34.3%	37.3%	42.1%	27.0%
Called child's teacher	18.3%	[0.167,0.200]	6.2%	8.7%	39.5%	17.3%	19.3%	25.9%	7.8%
Engaged in play-learning	7.9%	[0.069,0.088]	6.5%	3.0%	13.9%	5.9%	9.8%	8.0%	7.7%
Encouraged distance learning	19.7%	[0.183,0.211]	18.5%	10.0%	30.3%	18.7%	20.7%	18.3%	21.7%
Other	8.6%	[0.076,0.096]	1.3%	2.8%	21.3%	8.0%	9.2%	9.2%	7.7%

Table 5a: Support caretakers provided during school closures.

Educational challenges students face	All	CI	Ghana	Liberia	Sierra Leone	Boys	Girls	Public	Private
No access to TV	22.7%	[21%, 24%]	8.8%	22.8%	35.9%	21.2%	24.3%	31.5%	10.5%
No access to radio	22.6%	[21%, 24%]	10.0%	25.6%	31.7%	20.1%	25.1%	30.3%	11.9%
No access to internet	41.1%	[0.386,0.436]	41.0%	37.3%	45.0%	38.2%	44.0%	42.8%	38.8%
No access to educational programming	35.9%	[0.334,0.383]	39.0%	40.6%	28.3%	33.0%	38.6%	36.3%	35.2%
No access to books	42.5%	[0.405,0.445]	44.2%	48.5%	35.0%	39.6%	45.3%	46.4%	36.9%
Lack of motivation	14.4%	[0.129,0.159]	22.2%	13.3%	8.1%	16.5%	12.4%	11.3%	18.7%
Lack of teacher and school support	16.7%	[0.146,0.188]	16.1%	16.0%	17.8%	18.1%	15.3%	17.3%	15.8%
Children work to earn money	4.9%	[0.040,0.059]	2.6%	10.5%	1.8%	5.5%	4.4%	6.7%	2.4%
Children take care of their siblings	5.6%	[0.049,0.062]	1.2%	7.0%	8.4%	5.3%	5.8%	6.3%	4.5%
Children are doing housework	12.8%	[0.117,0.138]	1.6%	23.7%	12.8%	12.1%	13.4%	16.4%	7.7%
Lack of supervision from adults	11.8%	[0.102,0.134]	15.7%	12.8%	7.1%	14.2%	9.4%	11.0%	12.9%
No good place to study	7.7%	[0.069,0.085]	7.4%	7.1%	8.6%	6.8%	8.6%	8.4%	6.8%
Children spend their time doing other things	11.1%	[0.100,0.122]	7.1%	10.2%	15.7%	12.4%	9.8%	11.8%	10.1%
Other	15.7%	[0.145,0.169]	4.7%	18.7%	23.2%	17.8%	13.6%	18.9%	11.2%

Table 5b: Challenges faced by students

Time spent on different activities	All	CI	Ghana	Liberia	Sierra Leone	Boys	Girls	Public	Private
<b>Education during closures</b>	2.3	[2.2, 2.4]	1.95	2.04	2.8	2.31	2.25	2.49	1.98
<b>Radio for education during closures</b>	0.6	[0.57,0.67]	0.41	0.43	1.02	0.60	0.65	0.71	0.51
<b>Income generating activities during closures</b>	0.6	[0.52,0.68]	0.27	1.1	0.42	0.54	0.66	0.86	0.25
<b>Education post closures</b>	2.2	[2.0, 2.3]	1.7	2.56	2.25	2.28	2.07	2.51	1.72
<b>Income generating activities post closures</b>	0.4	[0.38,0.50]	0.19	0.94	0.20	0.45	0.44	0.64	0.17

Table 5c: Time spent on different activities during and after school closures (in hours)

## APPENDIX 6. IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON HOUSEHOLDS

Financial Impact of COVID-19	All	CI	Ghana	Liberia	Sierra Leone	Boys	Girls	Public	Private
No financial impact	11.7%	[9.7%, 14%]	18.3%	8.4%	8.5%	11.3%	12.0%	8.3%	16.5%
Parents lost their job	20.8%	[19%, 23%]	18.8%	32.0%	11.7%	20.4%	21.1%	21.7%	19.5%
Difficulty providing to household	83.0%	[81%, 85%]	76.2%	85.3%	87.1%	84.7%	81.2%	86.9%	77.4%
Parents had to take loans	27.7%	[26%, 29%]	16.0%	30.1%	36.4%	24.5%	30.7%	35.4%	16.8%
Parents had to sell their assets	10.4%	[9.2%, 11%]	1.4%	6.5%	22.6%	9.6%	11.2%	15.4%	3.3%
Children had to get jobs	2.4%	[1.9%, 2.9%]	1.3%	2.5%	3.4%	2.2%	2.6%	3.2%	1.3%
Increased housework for kids	15.3%	[13%, 17%]	11.8%	6.4%	27.3%	15.9%	14.8%	16.4%	13.8%
Other	4.4%	[3.8%, 5.1%]	0.3%	3.8%	9.0%	4.7%	4.2%	4.3%	4.7%

Table 6a: Financial Impact of COVID-19 on household

Health Impact of COVID-19	All	CI	Ghana	Liberia	Sierra Leone	Boys	Girls	Public	Private
No health impact	21.2%	[19%, 24%]	23.7%	24.8%	15.2%	23.1%	19.3%	18.3%	25.2%
No one got sick	78.3%	[76%, 80%]	85.2%	62.9%	86.8%	77.2%	79.5%	74.0%	84.4%
Someone was physically ill	7.7%	[6.7%, 8.7%]	1.6%	11.6%	9.7%	8.0%	7.4%	10.6%	3.7%
Someone was mentally ill	1.6%	[1.2%, 2%]	0.4%	4.0%	0.5%	1.8%	1.4%	2.5%	0.4%
Long term health impact	1.9%	[1.5%, 2.3%]	0.5%	4.4%	0.8%	2.1%	1.6%	2.8%	0.5%
Death in the household	1.4%	[1%, 1.7%]	0.1%	2.7%	1.3%	1.7%	1.0%	2.2%	0.1%
Other health impact	0.5%	[0.3%, 0.7%]	0.0%	0.3%	1.1%	0.5%	0.5%	0.7%	0.2%

Table 6b: Health impact of COVID-19

Other impact of COVID-19	All	CI	Ghana	Liberia	Sierra Leone	Boys	Girls	Public	Private
Sickness or death	1.4%	[0.8%, 2%]	0.8%	1.7%	1.3%	1.7%	1.1%	1.6%	0.8%
Loss of job or severe financial difficulties	61.9%	[60%, 64%]	93.7%	43.7%	72.4%	55.8%	67.5%	53.3%	86.3%
Movement restrictions	19.5%	[18%, 22%]	0.0%	28.7%	15.2%	24.5%	14.9%	23.9%	7.0%
Lack of food	14.8%	[13%, 17%]	2.3%	24.1%	8.5%	16.0%	13.7%	19.1%	2.4%
Psychological effect	0.6%	[-0.1%, 1.3%]	0.5%	0.2%	1.0%	0.9%	0.3%	0.1%	1.9%
Disrupted year	1.5%	[0.9%, 2.2%]	1.8%	1.3%	1.7%	1.1%	1.9%	1.6%	1.2%
Student dropped out	0.1%	[-0.1%, 0.3%]	1.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%	0.0%	0.4%
No other impact	0.2%	[-0.1%, 0.5%]	0.0%	0.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.4%	0.3%	0.0%

Table 6c: Other impacts of COVID-19

Impact of COVID-19 on child	All	CI	Ghana	Liberia	Sierra Leone	Boys	Girls	Public	Private
Academic decline	10.9%	[9.6%, 12%]	84.8%	1.0%	9.6%	10.7%	11.1%	2.9%	37.8%
Disrupted academic year	66.2%	[64%, 69%]	2.2%	82.2%	52.4%	68.9%	63.1%	76.7%	30.9%
Difficulty for parents to provide	10.0%	[8.2%, 12%]	3.8%	5.4%	21.1%	10.3%	9.7%	7.7%	17.7%
Death and sickness in family	0.9%	[0.4%, 1.5%]	0.0%	0.7%	1.7%	0.8%	1.1%	1.1%	0.4%
Lack of food and basic necessities	2.6%	[1.7%, 3.5%]	0.0%	1.2%	6.1%	2.0%	3.3%	2.5%	2.9%
Psychological effect	1.1%	[0.4%, 1.8%]	0.7%	0.4%	2.5%	0.4%	1.9%	0.3%	3.6%
Movement restrictions	4.1%	[2.8%, 5.4%]	0.0%	4.5%	4.5%	3.8%	4.5%	4.8%	2.0%
Child failed to pass the year	1.9%	[1.2%, 2.6%]	0.0%	3.1%	0.0%	1.4%	2.5%	2.5%	0.0%

Table 6d: Impact of COVID-19 school closures on child

Parents worries	All	CI	Ghana	Liberia	Sierra Leone	Boys	Girls	Public	Private
<b>Worries on health</b>									
Not worried	8.1%	[6.9%, 9.3%]	12.0%	3.7%	8.6%	7.9%	8.3%	6.0%	11.1%
Somewhat	36.2%	[34%, 38%]	59.9%	24.5%	25.0%	37.1%	35.4%	25.2%	51.6%
Very worried	55.7%	[54%, 58%]	28.1%	71.7%	66.4%	55.0%	56.3%	68.8%	37.3%
<b>Worries on finance</b>									
Not worried	6.6%	[4.7%, 8.4%]	10.6%	3.4%	5.8%	6.6%	6.6%	4.2%	9.8%
Somewhat	32.6%	[30%, 35%]	55.6%	24.2%	18.7%	31.5%	33.7%	22.2%	47.1%
Very worried	60.8%	[59%, 63%]	33.8%	72.3%	75.4%	62.0%	59.7%	73.5%	43.1%
<b>Worries on return to school</b>									
Not worried	8.2%	[6.9%, 9.5%]	11.0%	5.0%	8.6%	8.6%	7.7%	6.8%	10.1%
Somewhat	38.4%	[36%, 40%]	62.9%	28.2%	24.9%	38.5%	38.3%	27.1%	54.2%
Very worried	53.5%	[52%, 55%]	26.1%	66.8%	66.5%	52.9%	54.0%	66.1%	35.8%

Table 6e: Worries from parents on health, finance and returning school

## APPENDIX 7: TEACHER AND STAFF INFORMATION AND RETENTION

Education Level	Liberia	Ghana	Sierra Leone	Number of staff per educational level
No formal schooling	0	0	1	1
Primary	0	0	1	1
Secondary	4	61	1	66
Vocational Diploma	46	1	8	55
Some university	31	24	8	63
University Degree	10	14	7	32
AA Degree	2	0	0	2
C Certificate	14	0	0	14
Diploma in Basic Education	0	1	0	1
HTC	0	0	9	9
Other (Specify)	0	0	1	1
<b>Country Total</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>245</b>

Table 7a: RAN Teacher's educational level

Teacher completion	All	Liberia	Ghana	Sierra Leone	Public	Private
Likely to complete it	84.4%	91.4%	77.5%	83.3%	90.2%	77.3%
Likely not	5%	7.6%	2.9%	2.8%	6.8%	2.7%
Unsure at this time	10.7%	1%	19.6%	13.9%	3%	20%

Table 7b. How do teachers feel about completing school?

Reasons why teachers/staff quit	All	Liberia	Ghana	Sierra Leone	Public	Private
Increased financial hardships	42.9%	70%	35.7%	36.4%	52.6%	36.7%
Increased house responsibilities	22.5%	30%	14.3%	36.4%	31.6%	16.7%
Sickness (own)	8.2%	20%	0%	18.2%	21.1%	0%
Sick (family member)	6.12%	30%	0%	0%	15.8%	0%
Fear of COVID-19	24.5%	30%	25%	18.2%	26.3%	23.3%

Table 7c: Reasons why teachers are not likely to return to school

## APPENDIX 8: TEACHER IDEAS FOR ENROLLMENT AND ATTENDANCE

Ideas to enroll	Frequency
Mobilize, campaign and encourage students	45.3%
Create after-school program for pregnant students	0.8%
Facilitate 1-1 conversation b/w students and teachers	4.1%
Create or intensify a free school-feeding program	2.5%
Provide financial support and scholarships	5.3%
Follow-up with students as school opens	2.5%
Provide school materials	5.7%
Home visits and house-to-house registration	9.8%
Establish regular PTA meetings	2.9%
Reassure parents on COVID-19 measures	2%
Reduce school fees, have a family discount	6.9%
Introduce extra-curricular activities	3.7%
Provide school transportation	1.2%

Table 8a: Recommendations to improve enrollment

Ideas to improve attendance	Freq
Communicate and engage parents	5.4%
Encourage and motivate students	28%
Extra-points or reward for attendance	8.2%
Extracurricular activities	7%
Provide lunch for students	3.3%
Provide financial support	14.4%
Visit students and follow up with them	4.1%
Give homework	0.8%
Monitor attendance and report to parents	2.9%
Pay daily fee in advance	0.8%
Positive attitude towards students	3.7%
Provide school material	4.9%
Punishment	0.8%
Reassure parents about COVID-19 measures	2.1%
Discount daily fees	2.1%
Discount school fees	4.1%
Regular calls with students	1.7%
Regular teacher attendance	0.8%
Assist with transportation	0.8%

Table 8b: Recommendation for improving attendance