COVID-19 impact on school age girls and adolescents in Punjab Pakistan

First insights from the SMS GIRL Impact Evaluation

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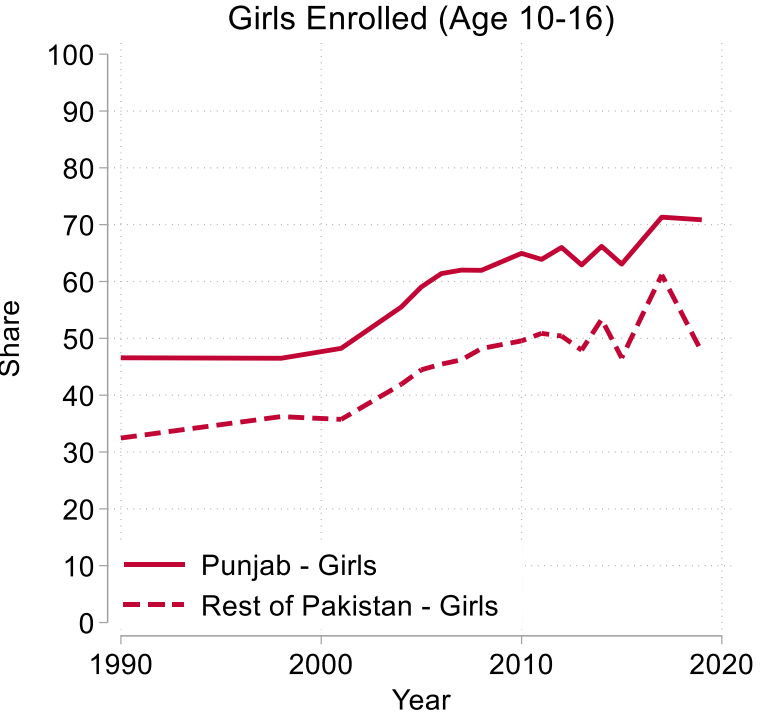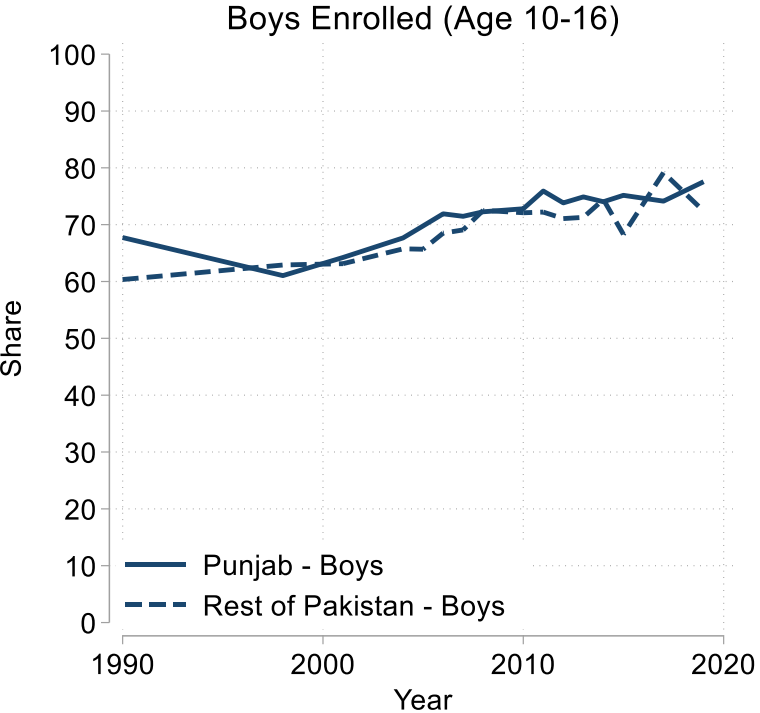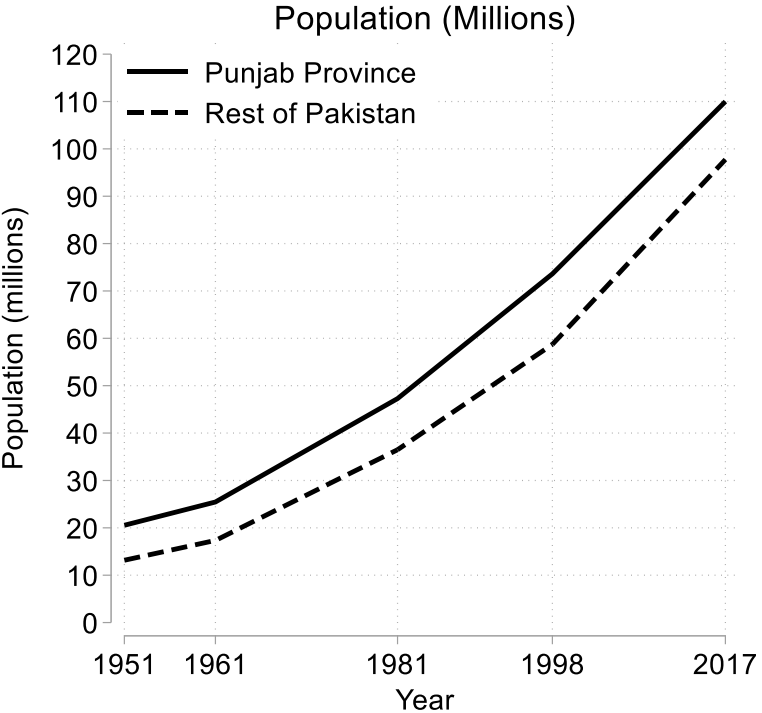
Structure

1. **Background** on Punjab and PESP-3
2. **Pandemic impact and response** in Punjab
3. Baseline **Survey Findings**
4. How is our **thinking evolving** and what is the **intervention** doing?
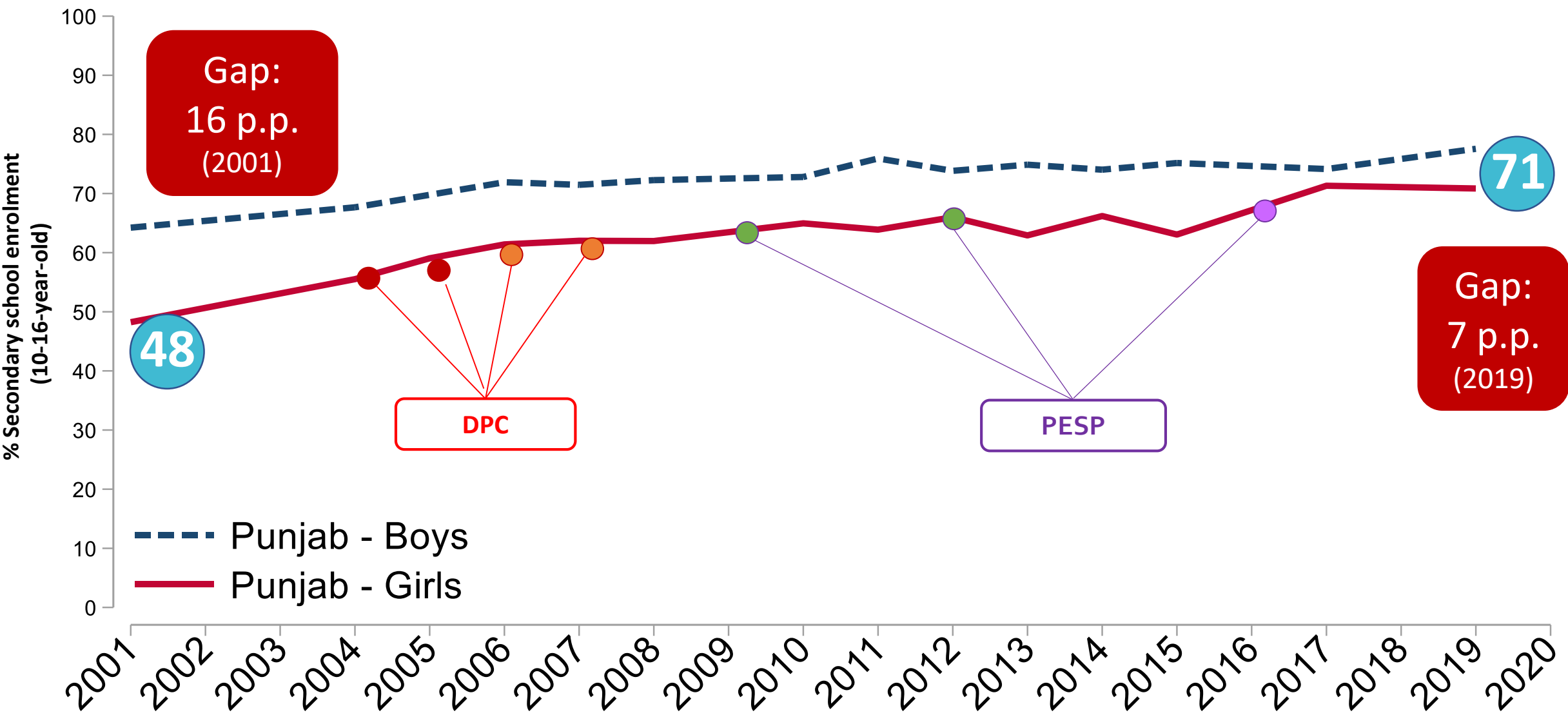
Background on Punjab and PESP-3

Context of adolescent enrolment in Punjab and Pakistan

Data from household surveys 1990-2019, Education Data Depot

Girls and boys school enrolment in Punjab (age 10-16)

The Strategy to Improve Education in Pakistan

Governance

- Establish a **Delivery Chain** with **accountability at different levels** from province to districts to schools

- Increase **volume and efficiency of public financing** and **empowering districts and schools** to spend

- Use of an **independent monitoring system**, which provided additional accountability

Access

- Make **education free for all** at the point of access (no tuition, free textbooks)

- **Scale up supply**: public-private partnerships and missing facilities in public sector

- **Strengthen girls' enrolment** through conditional cash transfers
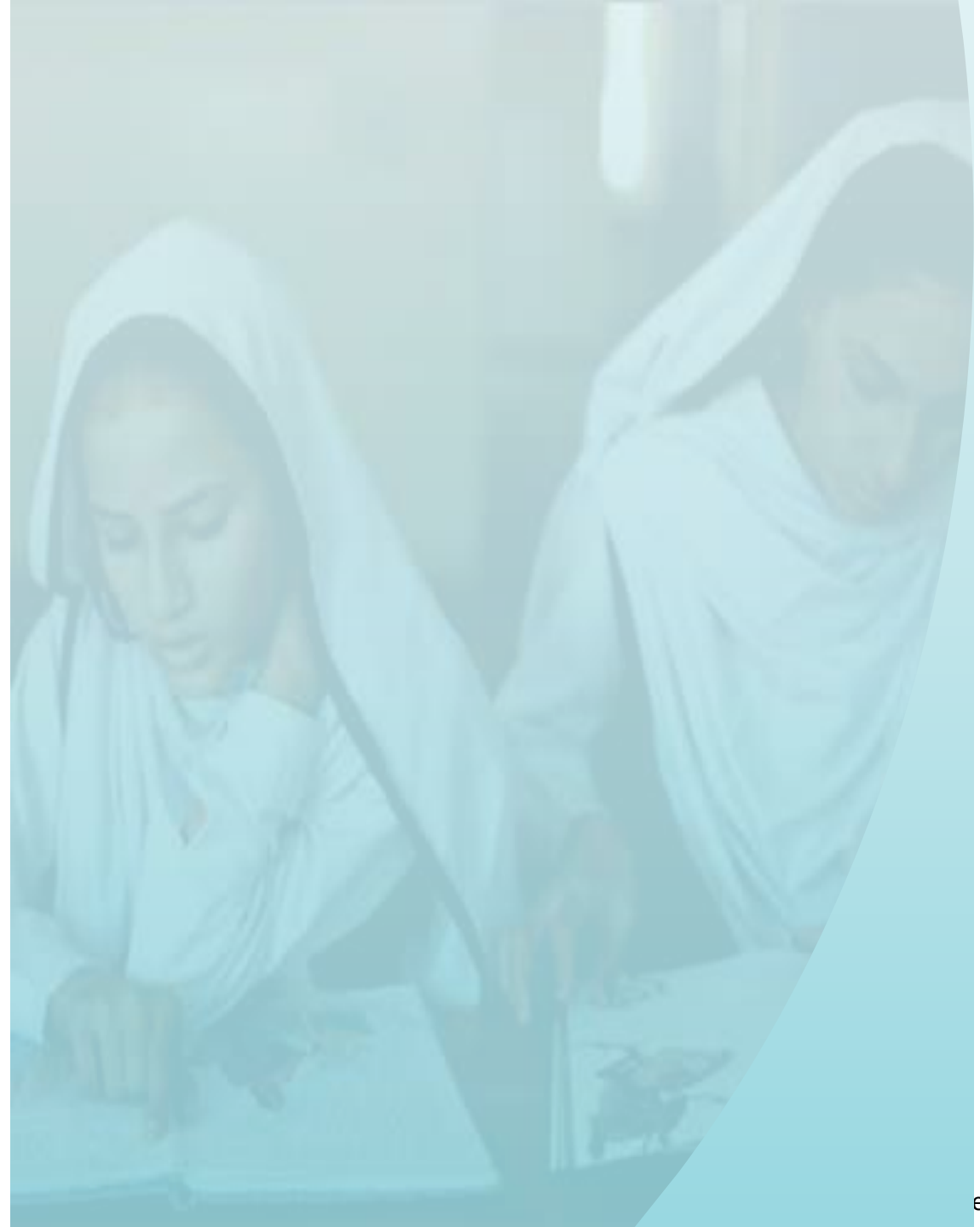
Learning

- Build a **teaching profession** through merit-based recruitment, teacher mentoring and professional development

- Use **student assessments** to diagnose learning difficulties and introduce accountability
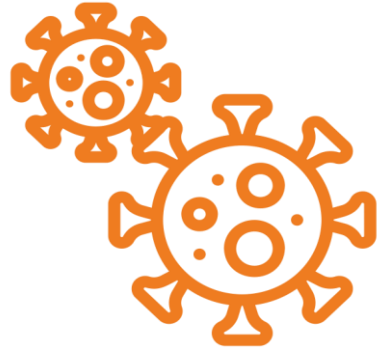
Pandemic Impact in Punjab

The Pandemic Timeline

April 02
Launch of remote learning

26th October
SMS GIRL

March 1
Start of
school year

March 15
School closures

April 01
Total Lockdown

May 09
Country-vide
Lockdown
ended

September 15:
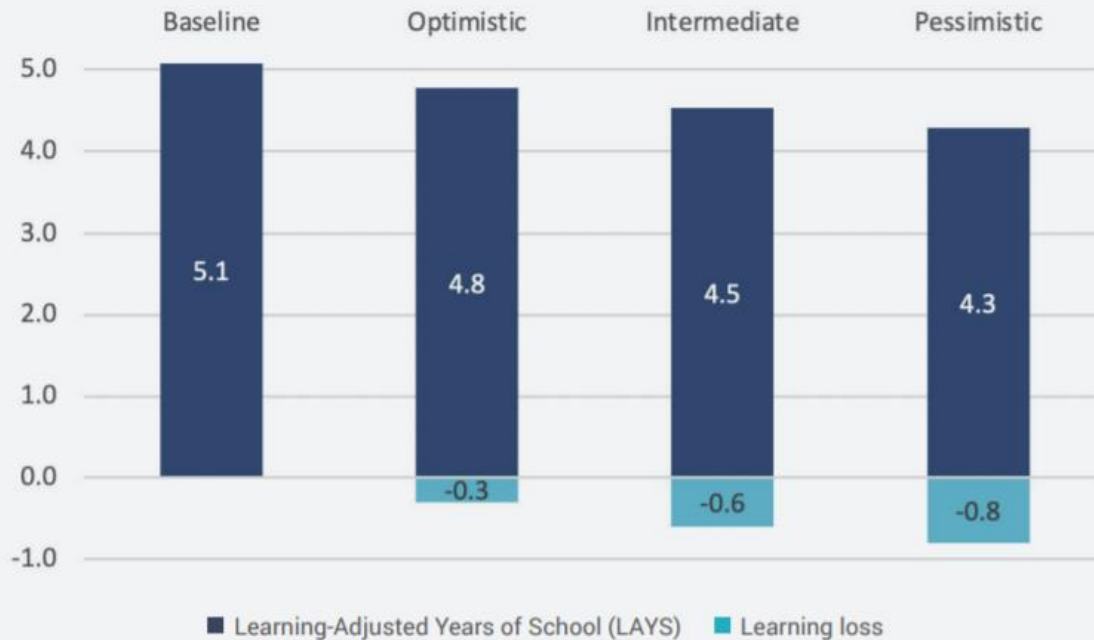School opening

November 26
School closures

January 11
Projected Schools
re-opening date

Projections of learning loss are substantial

- **Dropouts are expected to increase by 930,000 children.**
- **Reduction in LAYS from 4.8 to 4.5 in intermediate scenario**

Learning Poverty projected to increase from 65% to 70% in Punjab.
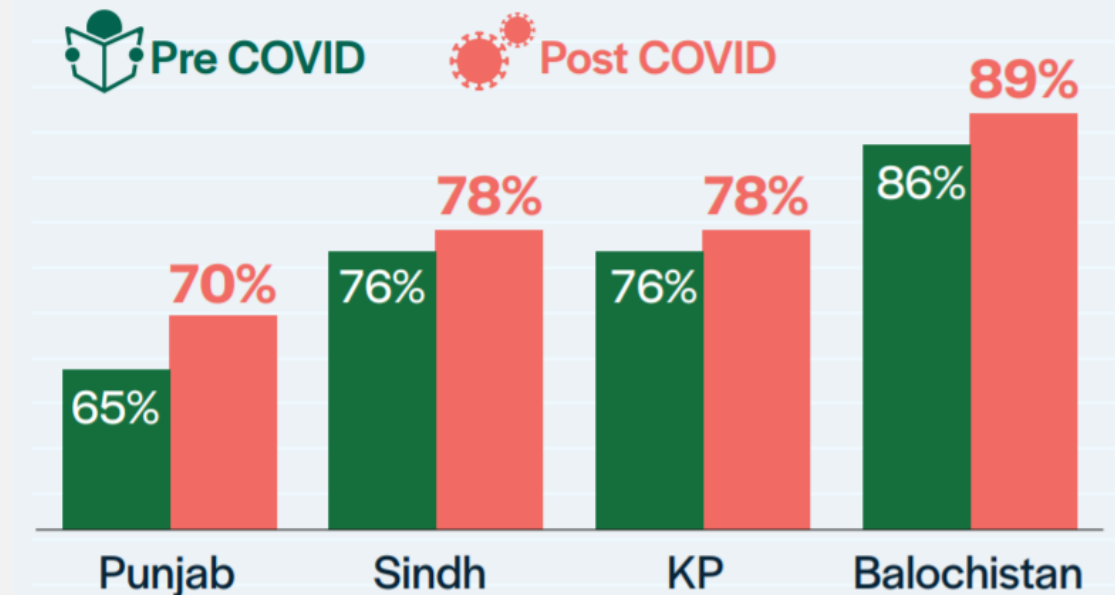
Source: Geven & Hasan, 2020

How do we expect the pandemic to impact adolescents?

Household shocks may affect boys and girls in different ways:

Potential impacts on **Adolescent Girls**':

Potential effect on **adolescent boys**:

Intra-household allocations

Shifting household roles

Safety Perceptions

Generating income for the family

Source: Aslam & Kingdon, 2008
        Jacoby & Mansuri, 2011

Sample

- 5,362 Girls in Grade 6 (age 10-14)
- 2,774 of these girls and families participated in SABER Service Delivery (SD) conducted in Punjab from March 2018 – December 2018.
- Additional sample of 2,588 girls enrolled in public school pre-pandemic in the same age group
- Additional sample of 536 Boys who participated in SABER SD
- Baseline interviews happened from 19 August – 27 October

	Girls	Boys
School Type		
Public	83%	49%
Private	6%	18%
PPP	11%	32%
Total	5362	536

What we know about the SABER kids pre-pandemic (2018):

Learning Data (Math, English, Urdu)

School Type (Public, Private, PEF)
School Environment

Teacher Quality

Family Background

Intervention: SMS GIRL is using informational nudges to:

Encourage parents to engage their daughters in distance learning
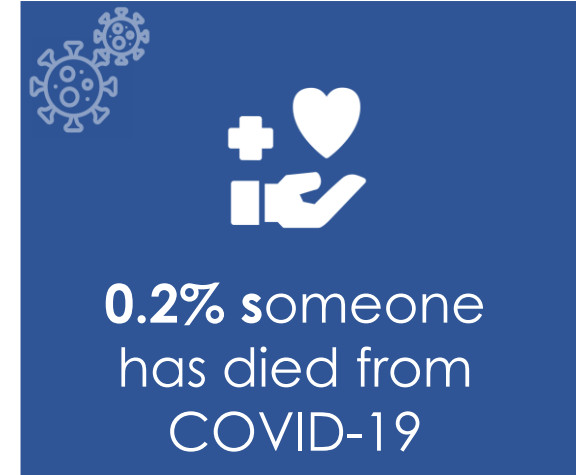
Encouraging parents to re-enroll girls in schools

Provide information to parents about girls' stipend program

SMS GIRL Baseline Key Findings

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What is the pandemic like in Pakistan?

Household shocks faced during COVID-19:

33.7% lost a substantial share of income

0.7% got sick from COVID-19

0.2% someone has died from COVID-19
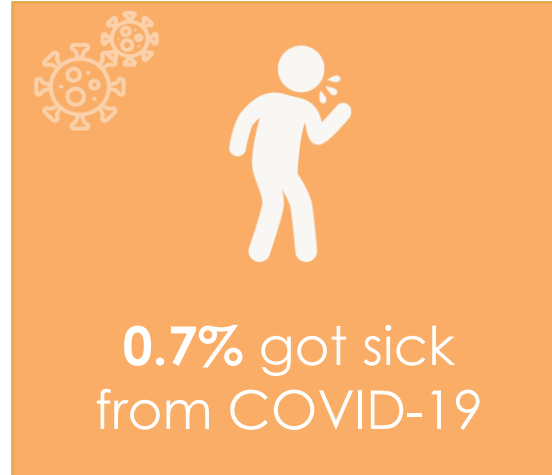
What did other research find about the pandemic?
- Pakistan had 403,311 COVID cases reported (Dawn dashboard)

CERP Economic Vulnerability Analysis:
- Income/employment emerges as the main concern of households
- Health was cited as the top concern by 15% of respondents
- 54% of households have suffered income losses between February 2020 and May 2020

Most students in our sample have access to TV-based & online remote learning program in principle

Households own a TV or Internet
Girl: **68%**
Boy: **63%**

Households own a TV
Girl: **63%**
Boy: **55%**

Households own a cell phone
Girl: **87%**
Boy: **84%**

Households own a smart phone
Girl: **29%**
Boy: **36%**

Households has internet of cellphone
Girl: **17%**
Boy: **19%**

Households has internet on cable
Girl: **6%**
Boy: **5%**

Households own WIFI
Girl: **3%**
Boy: **4%**

Time use during the lockdowns is somewhat gendered

Time Use of Girls and Boys while they are at home:

	Girls*	% any	Boys*	% any
Remote Learning	0	12%	0	14%
Other Learning	3	88%	3	86%
Household tasks	2	86%	1.5	81%
Income generation	0	17%	0	42%
Play and entertainment	1	75%	2	83%
Religious activities	1	90%	2	94%
Sleep	9	95%	9	97%

Reports median time use

Key Differences:

Girls and boys spend equal amounts of time on learning

Girls are less often engaged in income generation

Girls get **an hour less for play and entertainment**

Girls spent **an hour less at prayer/mosque**

The pandemic had drastically affected expectations about the future:

25.6% of girls' parents and **40.5% of boy's parents** have *reduced expectations* for the highest grade completed

…Reasons for reduction in parental expectations:

Child will not catch up with learning

Girl: **76%**
Boy: **72%**
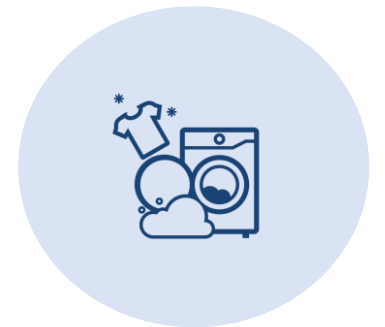

Decrease in household income

Girl:**19%**
Boy:**17%**

Child will generate income for the family

Girl:**2%**
Boy:**5%**

Fewer income opportunities for the child

Girl:**7%**
Boy:**7%**

Child helps at home

Girl:**2%**
Boy:**1%**

Parents are not concerned about school reopening overall, although there are slightly gendered concerns about safety.

…Issues parents are concerned about with regard to school-reopening:

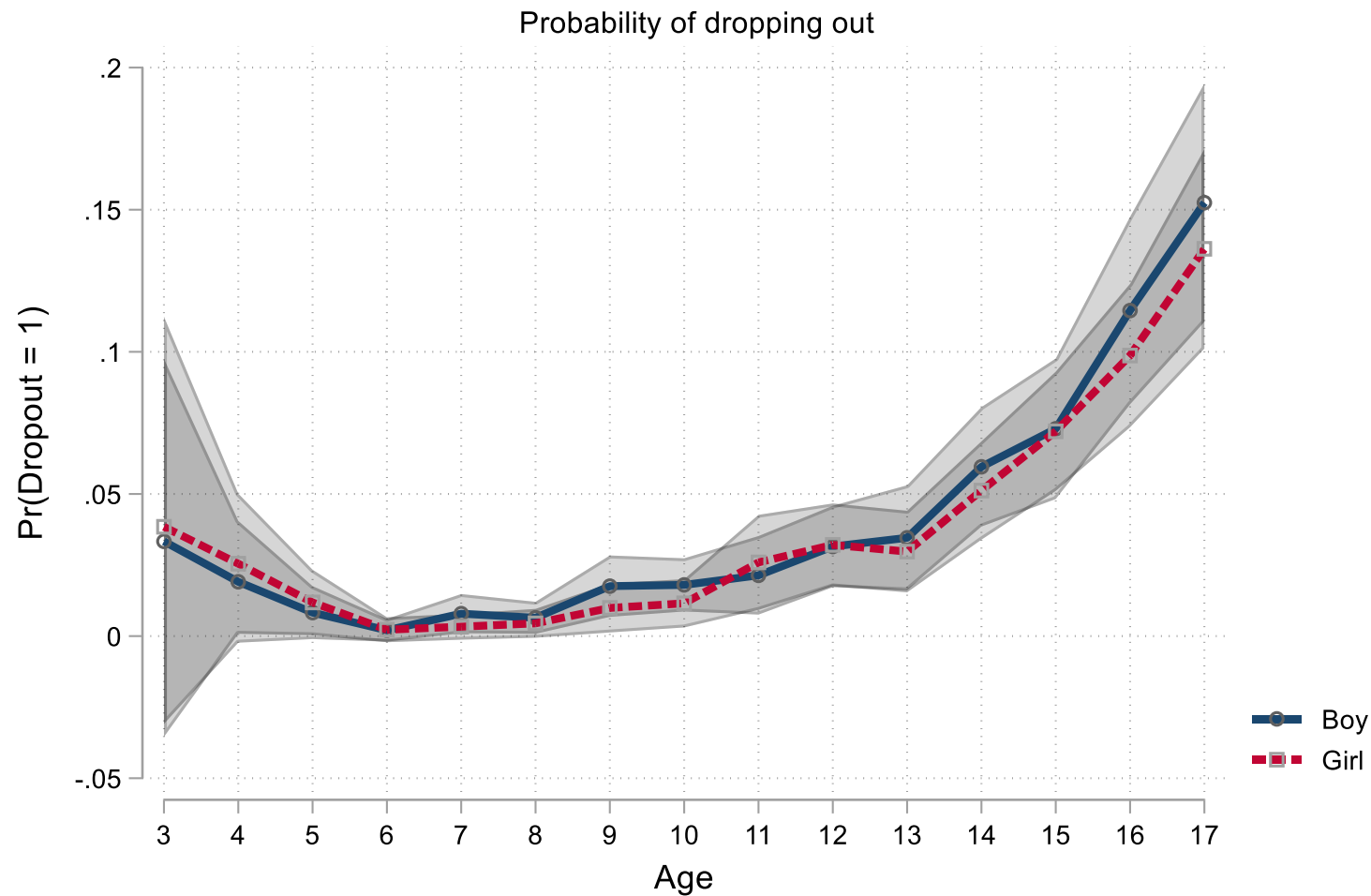| No concern	Concerns about price of education	Concerned about health of child or family	Child falling behind in learning	Concerns about Government SOPs
Girl: **89%** Boy: **89%**	Girl:**3%** Boy:**4%**	Girl:**2%** Boy:**0%**	Girl:**2%** Boy:**2%**	Girl:**5%** Boy:**4%**

We are losing a substantial share of students from the education system, particularly in adolescence
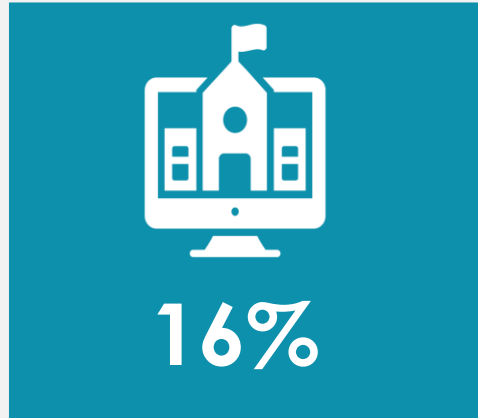
Probability of dropping out

*Predicted margins from a logistic regression where the outcome is parental intension to withdraw from school
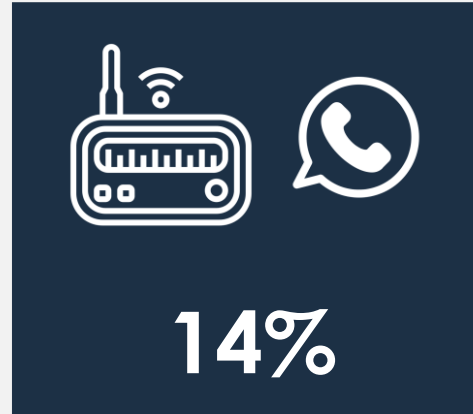
2.5% of girls in our sample who were enrolled in schools pre-COVID will not return to school after schools reopen.

But that goes up to >10% for adolescents.

Knowledge about government initiatives is surprisingly low

16%

of parents are aware of **TV Learning Opportunities**

14%

of parents are aware of **other Learning Opportunities**

4.5%

eligible parents are aware of **stipends for enrolment**

Take up of remote learning program is even lower, but heavily driven by knowledge of these programs.

9% of all girls (8 % of boys) in the sample participate in remote learning

32% of girls (28 % of boys) whose parents are aware of opportunities participate in remote learning

How is our thinking evolving and what is our intervention doing?

How is Our Thinking Evolving?

This pandemic is primarily an economic and a schooling shock

…We should be concerned about:

Target potential dropouts among age 10-14, but also older adolescent girls AND boys	Target gendered time use, particularly through highlighting the importance of (remote) learning, social connections and entertainment	Use text messages to increase household knowledge of government initiatives	Improve cash disbursement and options for remote learning more programmatically

Research Question, Target Population & Treatments

Research Question:
Are text messaging campaigns effective to keep girls learning during school closures, and help them to return to school after re-opening?

Target population:
Girls in Grade 6 (age 10-14)

Treatment
T1: Messages focused explicitly on girls
T2: Messages neutrally framed for any children

T3: Informational nudges to increase parental information about Government's stipend program

Official Use

SMS GIRL Text Messages Format

Leveraging a growing literature with lessons on text message nudging

Source: Minero (2014), Batool, et al. (2017), York & Loeb (2018), Cabell et al (2019)

Parents receive several messages per week, which can be:

'**FACT**' texts, parents are informed about how girls learn, the returns to schooling, etc.

'**ACTION**' texts provide suggestions to parents about what they can do at home (learning, support)

'**TALKING POINTS**' texts provide parents with suggestions on how to talk to their daughters about learning.

'**VOICE MESSAGES**' spoken by someone who the parents know drive these points home in conversation.

Timeline & Next Steps

Midline 1 (completed), Midline 2 (December) + Endline (January/February) – Promising Findings

Continuing text messages and voice messages

Qualitative work to understand household dynamics

Phone-based assessment

Thank you

Questions/suggestions welcome!