

- Campaigners in Kenya, Sudan, Somalia, fear hundreds of girls have also undergone FGM, with families taking advantage of lockdowns to prepare their daughters for marriage. Reports of adolescent pregnancies, child and forced marriages have also sky-rocketed. Authorities in Ethiopia have rescued more than 500 girls from child marriage since the pandemic shut its schools.
- In Malawi, helplines run by the charity YONECO reported a 350% rise in calls linked to child and forced marriages from March to May.
- As child marriage and pregnancy rise, girls will have an even harder time going back to school when it reopens, undoing precious gains in girls' education. Teen pregnancies and early marriage stifle a girl's progress in education, health and employment, also hampering the development of her children, say health experts.
- A child bride is more likely to quit school, endure problems in pregnancy and childbirth and is at high risk of domestic violence. Her children are also lucky to survive beyond five.
- From rape and sexual exploitation to female genital mutilation (FGM), child marriage and early pregnancy, COVID-19 has unleashed a myriad of "shadow pandemics" on girls across Africa, say child rights groups.
- Low levels of testing in most nations mean infection rates are likely to be higher, say health experts, adding it is hard to determine when countries will reach a peak in transmission.
- School closures have left girls open to sexual violence from family, neighbours and community members; lockdown poverty has forced minors into transactional sex to buy basics, they add.

- Uncertain when schools will resume, desperate families have resorted to marrying off under-age daughters to ease expenses - with some girls undergoing FGM as part of traditional customs.
- Countries such as Kenya, Malawi and Ethiopia are reporting spikes in teen pregnancies and early marriages, raising fears many girls may not ever return to school - and jeopardising decades of work to reverse deep-rooted gender inequalities.
- There has to be a recognition that some of the gains made in terms of delivering for girls and their rights have been eroded, and if it is not deliberately addressed in a concerted manner, we will not be fit for purpose in a post-COVID world.