

**Timeline**

May 2020-June 2021

**Study Type**

Quasi-experimental Analysis

**Article Link**

<https://medium.com/center-for-effective-global-action/students-life-under-afric...>

**Research Implemented by IPA**

No

# The Effects of the COVID-19 Shock on Young Firms, Young Workers and Young Vocational Students

## Researchers

[Livia Alfonsi](#), [Sara Spaziani](#), [Mary Namubiru](#)

## Abstract

Part 1: Aims at generating evidence on how young firms and young workers are coping with the current situation. We target 720 alumni of accredited Vocational Training Institutes (VTIs) in Uganda who graduated 2 to 4 years ago, whom, as of January 2020 were: young entrepreneurs (22%), formal workers (44%) and informal workers (24%) in core manufacturing and service sectors in Uganda (plumbing, welding, carpentry, tailoring, etc.). We collected labor market outcomes and demographics in January 2020 and we now want to understand how the COVID-19 crisis impacted them.

Part 2: The prolonged closure of schools and VTIs raised several issues for the educational sector. From ongoing discussions with our partner VTIs, strategies under consideration to face the crisis include restrictions on visitors and classes on weekends. However, the discourse is based on little or no knowledge of what the students are going through and planning for. For instance, it is unclear how many students are considering dropping out. We target 1200 students surveyed twice in 2019. The lessons learned will be instrumental for the VTIs to organize a response to the crisis.

## Partners

[BRAC Uganda](#), [Center for Effective Global Action \(CEGA\)](#)

## Key Findings

April 2021 Policy Brief (June 2020 Survey):

- **School closures widen pre-existing inequalities in access to schooling.** Forced by the school dorms' closure in late March, the students moved back to their family home. There, many had to adjust to inadequate learning environments: 52% reported having worse access to internet, 39% worse access to power and 52% less space to study and concentrate. These shares are significantly higher among agricultural households, particularly for those who rely on subsistence agriculture as their main source of income.
- **School closures likely widen pre-existing gaps in access to labor market opportunities.** Since the beginning of the lockdown, over 30% of the students in our sample had worked, mostly for pay and in the sector in which they were being trained while at the VTIs. Even though there emerges no difference between female and male students when it comes to time spent studying as well as contacts with classmates and teachers, less than half as many of the female students as male students were involved in any work activity (18% vs. 40%).
- **Shared ad hoc tools to assess learning losses and remedial education.** The heterogeneity in learnings material and time devoted to schooling portend heterogenous learnings losses across students. New standardized learning assessment tools would be developed to allow the government to direct resources in a targeted manner to those most in need. Remedial education should be provided to those students who have fallen behind and should be offered at no cost as these students are likely to belong to the poorest households and areas.

*This study is a spin-off of the Meet Your Future Project, an ongoing RCT designed to investigate the relative importance of several barriers to quality employment that students face when transitioning from the educational sector into labor markets characterized by high levels of informality. Evidence on medium and long run effects of the school closure will be available in the near future.*

## Impact Goals

- Build resilient and adaptable businesses and employment opportunities

## Project Data Collection Mode

- CATI (Computer-assisted telephone interviewing)

## Results Status

Results