



A Shadow Pandemic: Teen Pregnancy

On January 10, 2022, Uganda reopened its schools to some 15 million students, ending 83 weeks of school closure—the longest of any country during the COVID-19 pandemic. While many students are no doubt overjoyed at returning to school for the first time since March 2020, sadly most received no virtual or remote learning assistance during the prolonged closures. Our students at the Lukome Center were an exception, with staff members doing their utmost to stay in contact and provide support, including emergency hunger relief.

Some schools, including the Lukome Center, were allowed to reopen at the end of 2020 if they had students that had been getting ready to graduate. This allowed these students to finish their education and prepare for national exams. Our students at the center were overjoyed. “I didn’t have any hope of coming back to the center because the pandemic spread to the entire world,” said Janet, one of our students. “I was very scared about the future.”

However, as the pandemic surged again in the spring of 2021, another lockdown ensued. Our students at the Lukome Center were more fortunate than most; the center was allowed to remain open, although restrictions in class size and activity were put in place to protect students and staff.

But lost education is not the only casualty created by the pandemic and ensuing lockdowns. A “shadow pandemic” has emerged in a number of countries across the globe: [sexual violence and exploitation of women and girls](#). In Uganda specifically, teen pregnancy has exploded. Nelson Ayo, Uganda’s Education Officer, [stated in December 2021](#) that over 90,000 school-girls under 18 got pregnant. This led to a much higher than normal number of girls—over 200—applying to attend the Lukome Center in 2021. Sadly, because of capacity limitations, we were not able to take them all.



HOW YOU CAN HELP

January is Human Trafficking Awareness month. Because of the pandemic, more young people than ever have become vulnerable to exploitation. If you feelled to join the fight to protect at-risk youth in Uganda and Nigeria, here are some ways you can help:

DONATE: The needs of the youth we serve are ongoing. Join us and be a force for good in the lives of vulnerable, war-traumatized youth. To partner with us, please go to childvoice.org/makeadonation.

VOLUNTEER: There are many ways to help! You can join a sewing group and help put together THRIVE reusable menstrual pads, or even create your own fundraiser to support ChildVoice’s mission. To learn more, email info@childvoice.org.

VISIT: We look forward to resuming a busy travel schedule for team trips in 2022! For more information, please contact our Team & Intern Coordinator at teamandintern@childvoice.org.

PRAY: Please pray for Ugandan students returning to school, especially those who now bear the responsibility of raising a child. To join the ChildVoice Prayer Network, email haley.westerkamp@childvoice.org.