

# GENDER INEQUALITIES AND THEIR EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS FOR GIRLS AND BOYS IN CENTRAL ASIA DURING COVID-19



# Gender and Education in Central Asia

- There is a widening gap in educational attainment based on sex, rural/urban residence, and ethnicity in **Tajikistan**.
- The number of rural girls leaving school after grade 9 has increased significantly in Tajikistan since 1991, in part due to poverty and traditions.
- Gender inequality is more noticeable in rural areas of **Kyrgyzstan** in relation to access to school.
- Gendered educational inequalities have reduced in **Mongolia**, but there remain disparities in access to quality education and education for students from all ethnic minorities in the country.

# Impact of Pandemic on (Female) Teachers



- Need to make provisions to keep students safe in addition to regular workload
- Negative health and well-being effects - burnout, family conflicts, etc.
- Small physical space at home (e.g. yurt) that had to double as workplace
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- Job losses of their family members

# Students: Digital skills and approaches to technology

- Access to the Internet and gadgets has changed opportunities and gave chance developing digital skills for students in three countries, and especially girls in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.
- The need to provide schoolchildren with devices gave girls from conservative religious families a chance to develop their digital skills in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.
- Boys from religious families who were interested in technology also got these opportunities in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan

“My parents didn't allow me to use the Internet or the phone, because it was considered harmful. Since I had to study and stay in touch with the class, dad gave me a smartphone. I have learnt how to find information on the Internet, to use WhatsApp, Zoom. And I got a lot of time to communicate on the Internet with my classmates.”  
Girl, Focus Group, Kyrgyzstan

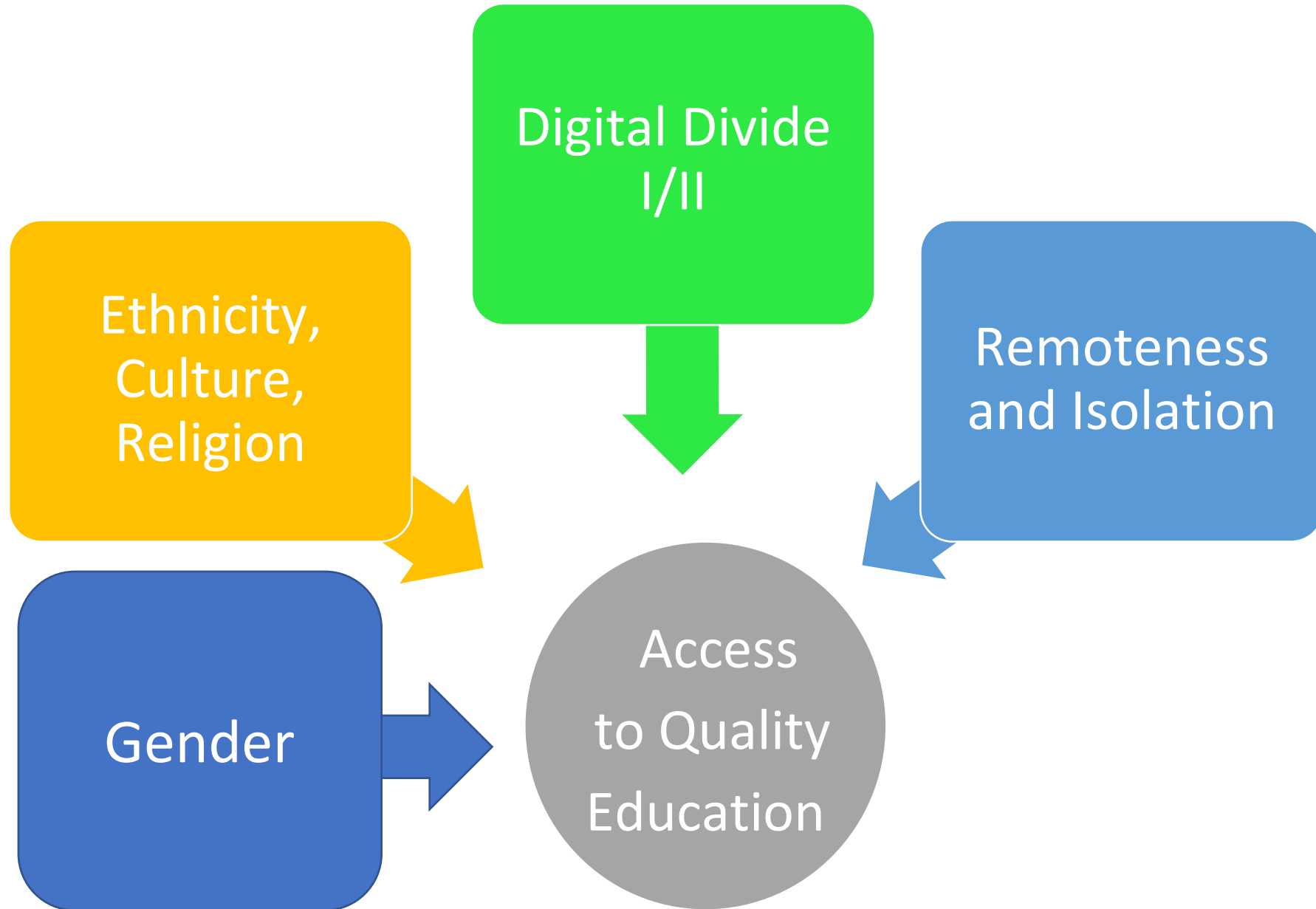
## **Students: Balancing domestic workload and education**

- Girls in Darvaz, Tajikistan, said that schoolgirls had to do all the housework and be responsible for the care and education of younger children in the family.
- In the southern regions of the Kyrgyz Republic, girls did childcare instead of studying.
- Boys in Mongolia and Kyrgyzstan are commonly engaged in farm work in the field or pasture.
- Meanwhile in the Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan, both girls and boys in some wealthy and some poor single-parent families did not perform any domestic work.

## **Students: Online learning vs school infrastructure**

- In Tajikistan noted as a positive aspect of online learning that adolescent girls could spend their menstruation days at home.
- In many rural schools, sanitary and hygienic conditions do not meet girls' needs.
- Online learning conditions at home are better than in the gender-insensitive infrastructure of rural schools.

# Vulnerability factors



# **Gender as one of many vulnerability factors**

Despite the fact that gender was one of the vulnerability factor, the respondents focused on other reasons for worsening the situation of children during distance learning

## **Other vulnerable groups of children mentioned in the field research:**

- with an additional needs
- from large families
- of herders (Mongolia, Kyrgyzstan)
- of labour migrant
- of internal migrants
- who dropped out of school after the pandemic
- of teachers



# Initial Recommendations

- Continue empowering women
- Engage community and religious leaders
- Continue improving school sanitation facilities to improve girls' school attendance
- Continue teaching some subjects in a hybrid format to keep students motivated and bridge the digital divide
- Develop teachers' capacity to integrate a gender lens into their practice to reduce vulnerability factors



# THANK YOU!

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