COVID-19 school closures, inequality implications, and learning recovery strategies

July 27, 2022

Based on **Asian Development Outlook 2022 Special Topic,** prepared by:

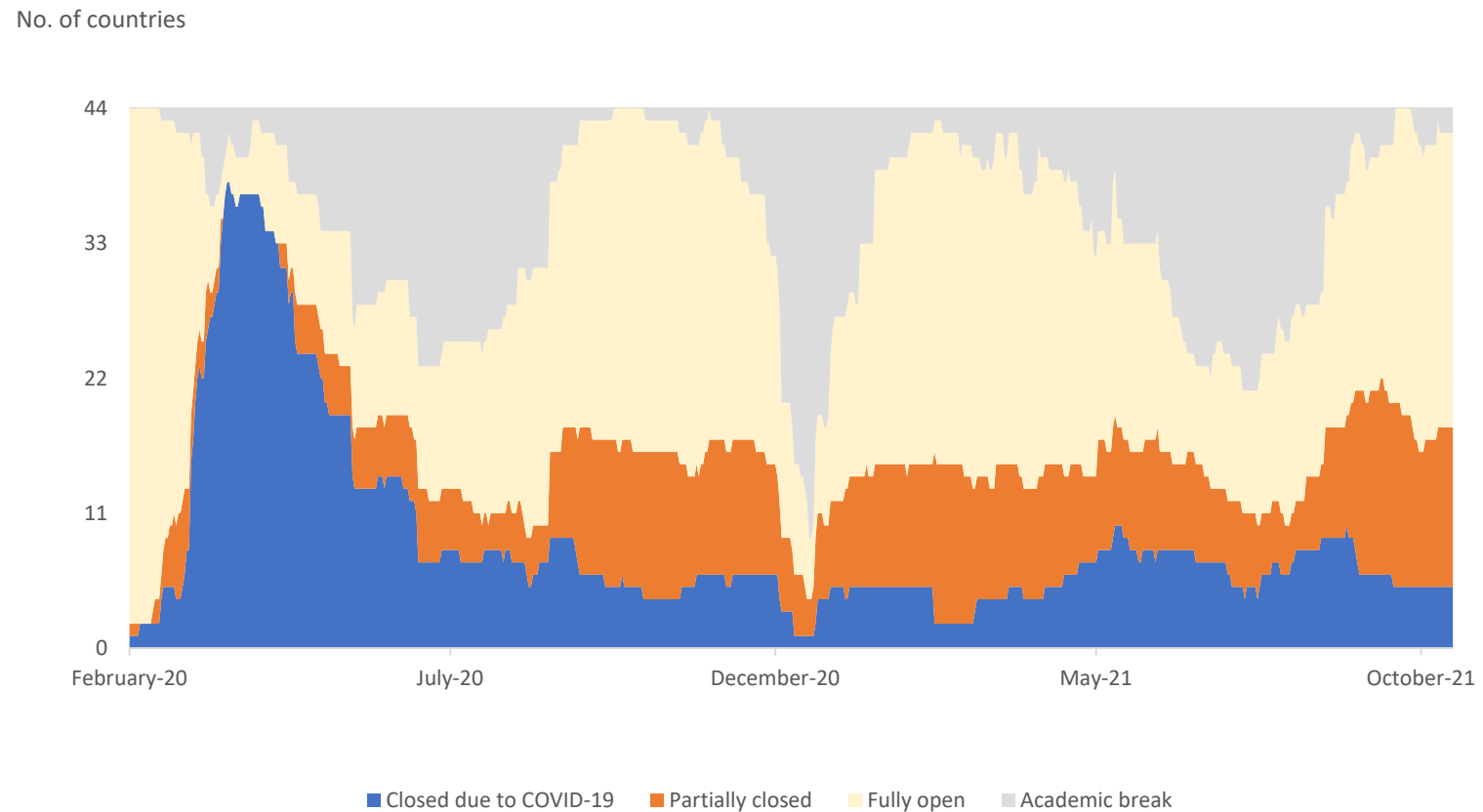Rhea Molato-Garayes and Milan Thomas

And **ADB Brief No. 217**, prepared by:

Rhea Molato-Gayares, Albert Park, David Raitzer, Milan Thomas, Paul Vandenberg (ADB), and Daniel Suryadarma (ADBI)

School closures – coming to a close

No. of countries

Legend: ■ Closed due to COVID-19 ■ Partially closed ■ Fully open ■ Academic break

Source: Authors based on UNESCO COVID-19 Response Tracker (accessed 17 November 2021).

1. **Projected** losses in absence of remedial measures

FALLING FURTHER BEHIND:
THE COST OF COVID-19
SCHOOL CLOSURES BY GENDER
AND WEALTH

Special Topic of the Asian Development Outlook 2022

APRIL 2022

# Methodology for projecting learning and earnings losses

- Estimate learning losses for countries in developing Asia.
  - Take length of national school closure as starting point.
  - Adjust by efficacy of remote instruction relative to in-person instruction under three scenarios (low, medium, high).
  - Further adjust by internet access (proxy for remote instruction).
  - Express learning losses in learning-adjusted years of schooling, so that losses are comparable across countries.

- Convert learning losses into lifetime earnings losses.
  - Multiply reduction in learning by country-specific wage premium.
  - Express as a percentage of pre-pandemic expected lifetime earnings.

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Projected learning and earnings losses in absence of remedial measures

- Students in developing Asia are projected to lose over half a year of learning-adjusted schooling.

- Less learning -> lower ability to earn income.

- Estimated $3.2 trillion in lost lifetime earnings – 13% of developing Asia's GDP in 2020.

- This is a conservative estimate (see *Asian Development Outlook* 2022 Special Topic for more details).
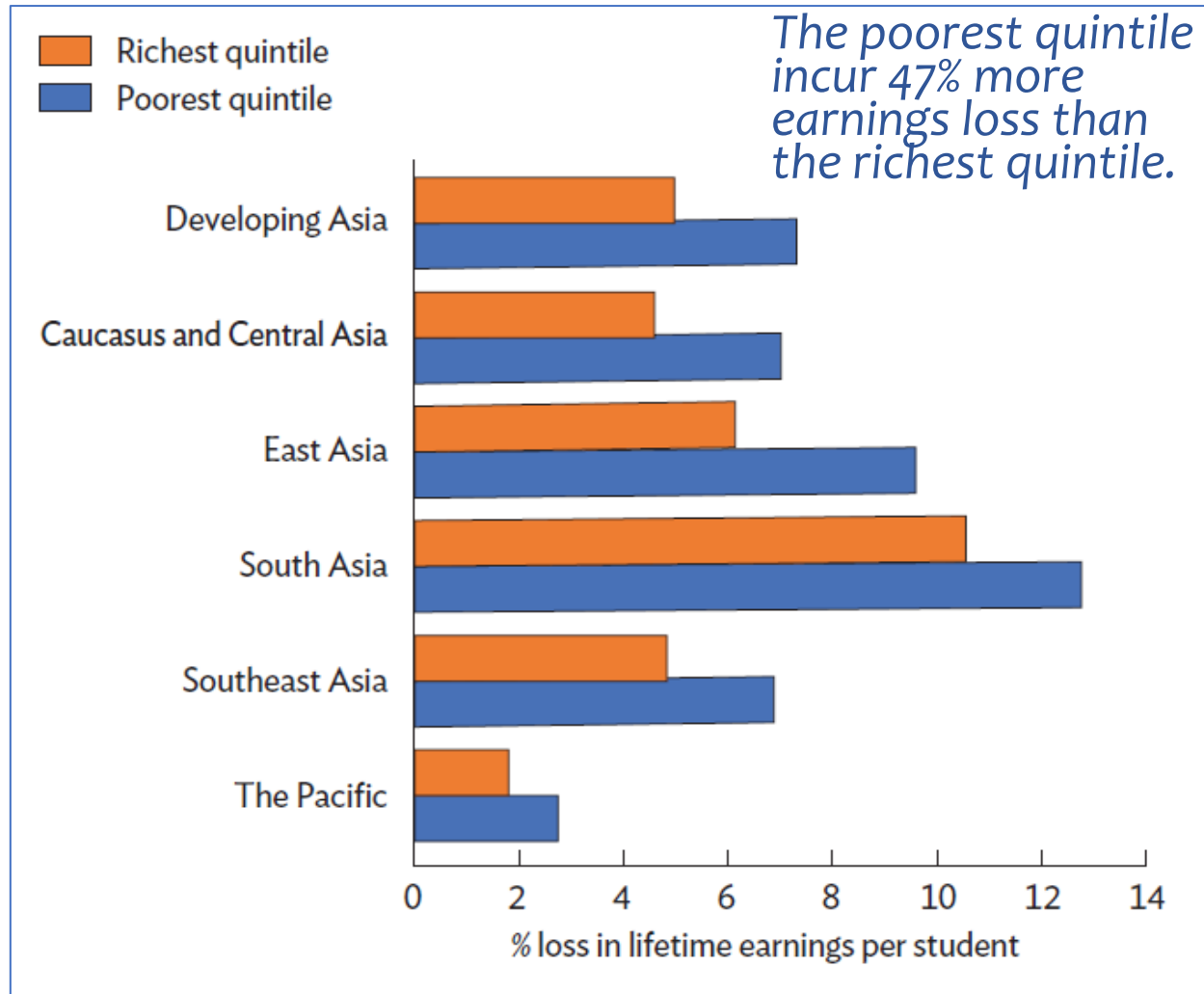
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Projected learning and earnings losses in Asia

Projected gender gaps
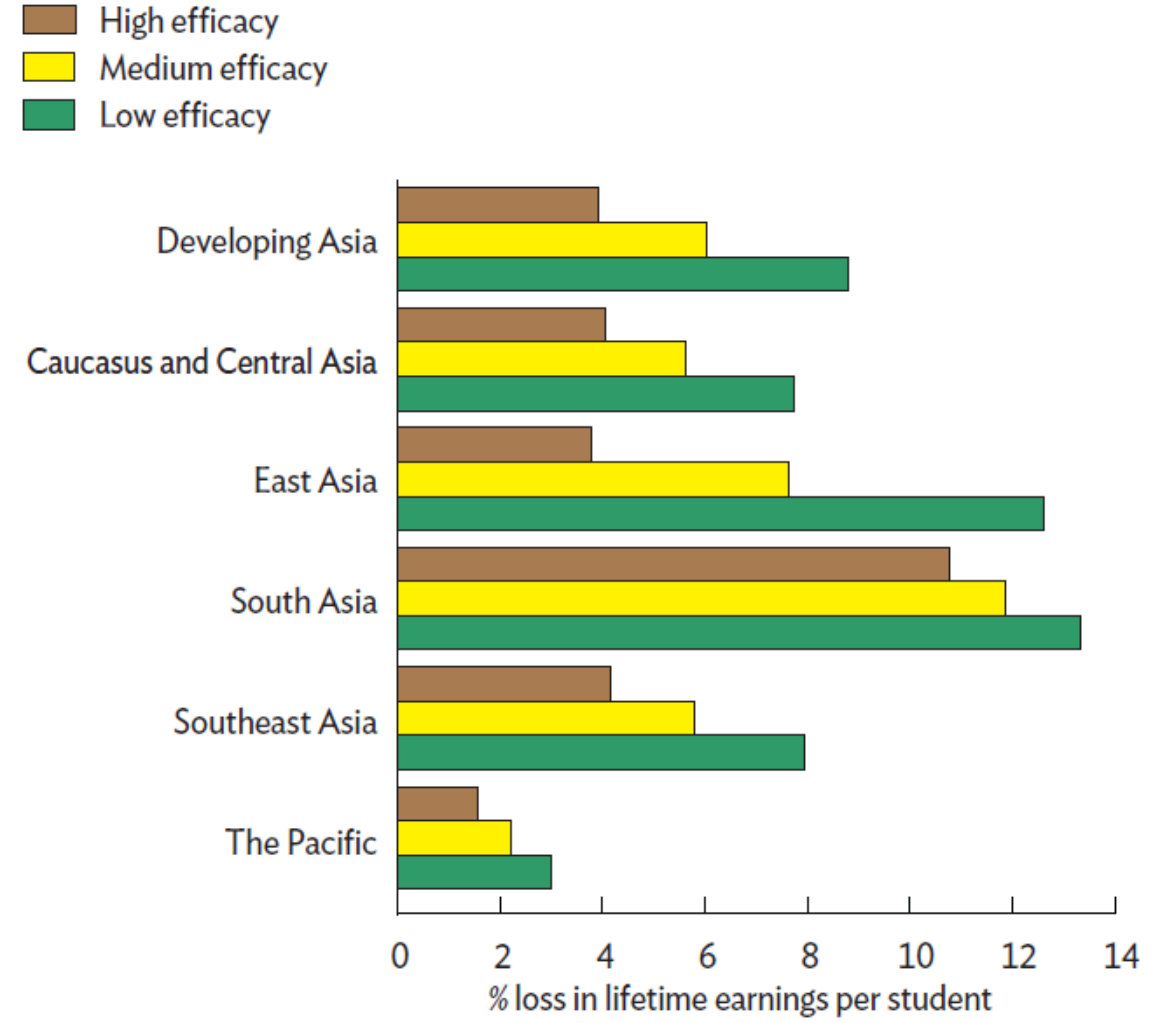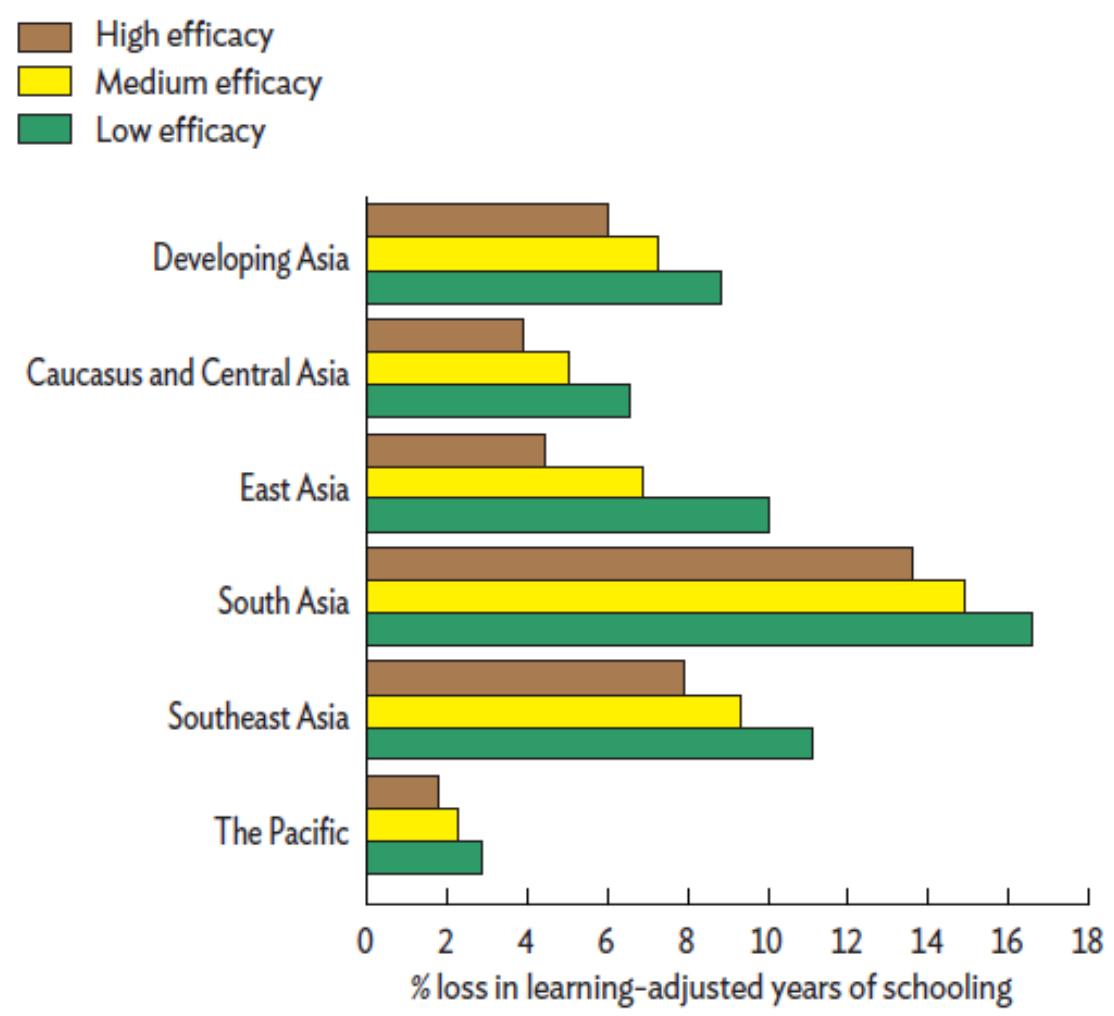
Girls incur 28% more earning loss than boys.
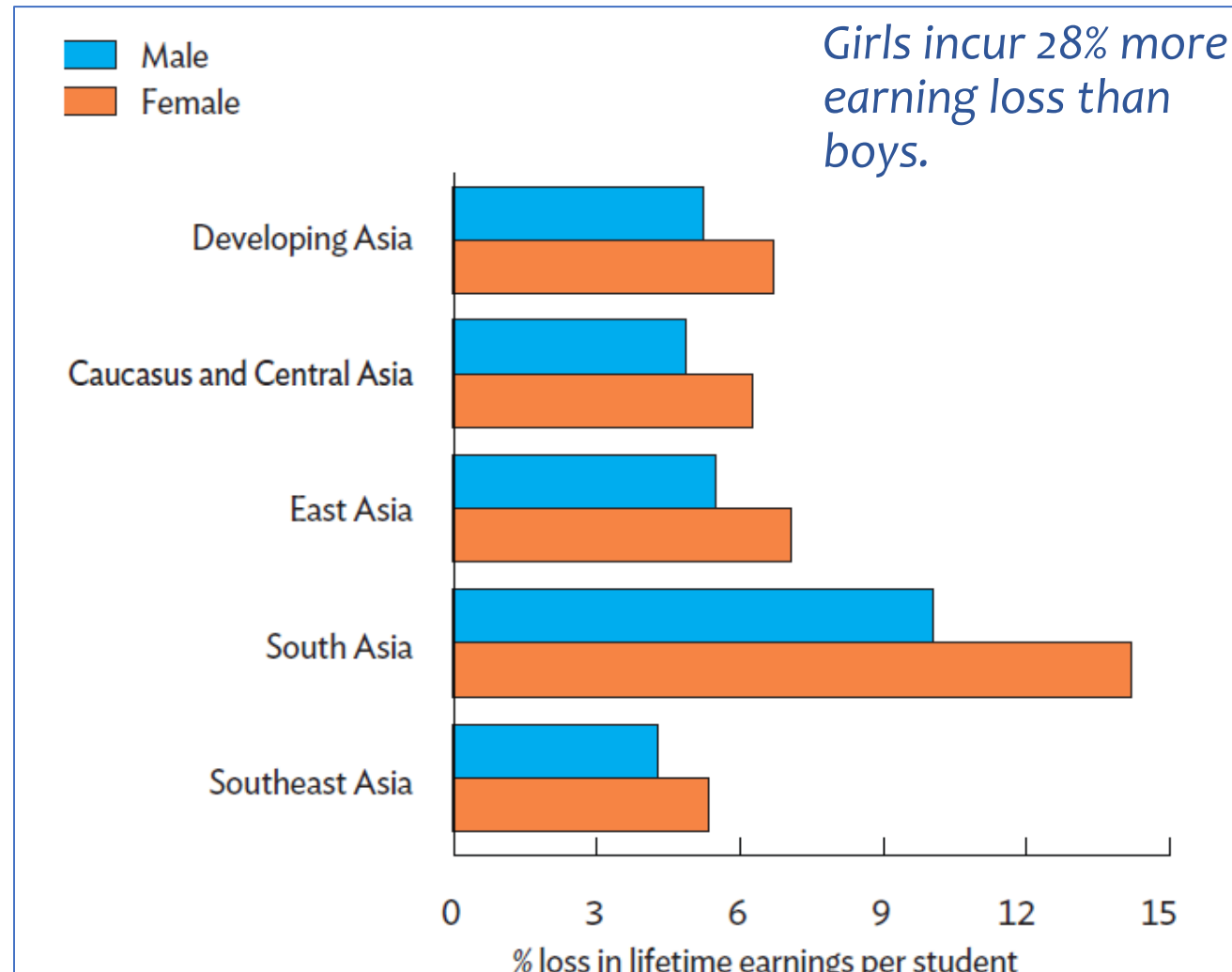
Projected wealth gaps

From projections to assessments

- Review of 35 studies from mostly advanced economies shows an average of a half year of learning lost (Patrinos et al. 2022)

- Losses much greater for children from poor families (Evans and Moscoviz 2022).

- But reasons for hope:
  - Impact evaluations of innovative remote solutions show promise in limiting learning losses (Angrist et al. 2022).
  - Remedial education campaign in rural Tamil Nadu, India coincided with two-thirds of learning gap closing in four months (Singh et al. 2022)

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2. Three broad approaches to learning loss recovery

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KEY POINTS

- School closures led to substantial learning losses that urgently need to be recovered to prevent lasting impacts on student progression, human capital formation, and livelihoods.

How to Recover Learning Losses from COVID-19 School Closures in Asia and the Pacific

Enabling factors for recovery approaches

- Periodic student assessment
  - Nationally representative learning survey using a standardized test focused on literacy and numeracy (for policymakers)
  - Periodic formative assessment of individual students' learning levels (for teachers and administrators)

- Pre-service and in-service teacher training

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Losses can be recovered using proven approaches for improving learning

Periodic measurement of learning levels

Consolidate curriculum

Targeted instruction

Extend instruction time

Regroup classrooms by level

Teaching assistants for small groups

Personal tutoring

Tech-assisted learning

More hours per day, weekend classes, shorter breaks

Continuous teacher training

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Supporting policies for re-enrollment

- Community monitoring and mobilization efforts

- Financial incentives, social safety nets.

- Public information campaigns sensitive to reasons for dropout

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Conclusion

- School closures have had highly unequal impacts and threaten to exacerbate inequality in education. Recovery strategies must be designed accordingly.

- Optimal mix of approaches for a coherent strategy depends on pre-pandemic situation and nature of school closure.

- Also depends on resource availability (financial, human).

Extra slides

The more effective is remote learning, the more essential are equity considerations

Remote learning efficacy	Average LAYS loss	Wealth gap in LAYS loss
Low	9%	14%
Medium	7%	33%
High	6%	58%

Projections for Developing Asia

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