

COVID-19: Working with and for young people



**Compact for
Young People**
in Humanitarian
Action

Compact for Young People in Humanitarian Action

COVID-19: Working with and for young people

May 2020

Version 1.0

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Table of contents

PART 1

Young people, seriously affected by COVID-19, are part of the global response

<i>PAGE 7</i>	Health impacts
<i>PAGE 8</i>	Safety and protection issues
<i>PAGE 8</i>	Educational impacts
<i>PAGE 9</i>	Economic impacts
<i>PAGE 9</i>	Impact on civic space and participation
<i>PAGE 10</i>	Young people mobilise

PART 2

Key actions

<i>PAGE 12</i>	ACTION 1	Services
<i>PAGE 21</i>	ACTION 2	Participation
<i>PAGE 28</i>	ACTION 3	Capacity
<i>PAGE 30</i>	ACTION 4	Resources
<i>PAGE 33</i>	ACTION 5	Data

This guidance note is meant to assist humanitarian actors, youth-led organizations, and young people themselves across sectors, working at local, country, regional, and global levels in their response to the novel coronavirus pandemic. It begins diagnostically, exploring the impacts of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) on young people. It then proposes a series of actions that practitioners and young people can take to ensure that COVID-19 preparedness, response plans and actions, are youth-inclusive and youth-focused – with and for young people. Recommendations are structured around the five key actions of the Compact for Young People in Humanitarian Action: services, participation, capacity, resources, and data. Where available, the recommended actions are accompanied by resources and concrete examples, which can inform approaches and support implementation. The Compact will iteratively update this document as the pandemic unfolds in the coming weeks and months.

PART 1

**Young people,
seriously affected
by COVID-19,
are part of the
global response**

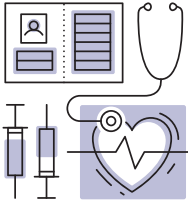
From the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, one of the defining messages has been that older persons are more affected. Yet health and non-health impacts on young people are proving to be significant. A common understanding of these impacts and the role young people are playing in driving solutions is essential to the pandemic response. The repercussions of COVID-19 will extend beyond health and well beyond the pandemic time frame. This global crisis is exacerbating existing vulnerabilities and inequalities.¹ All of these impacts are further amplified in humanitarian contexts where fragility, conflict, and emergencies have undermined institutional capacity and limited access to services.

Specific vulnerabilities

The impacts of COVID-19 are, and will continue to be, felt most harshly by young people already living in difficult and/or disadvantaged circumstances. These include but are not limited to:

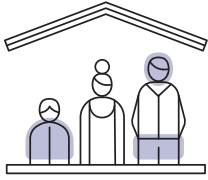
- Refugees, asylum seekers, and internally displaced persons, both in and out of camp settings, and others caught in pre-existing humanitarian emergencies.
- Young people living in poor, high-density urban areas and informal settlements without access to running water and other services and with limited ability to physically distance.
- Young people experiencing homelessness, who also have little access to services and limited ability to physically distance.
- Young migrants, who will suffer disproportionately, both from the pandemic and from its aftermath – whether because of restrictions on their movement, close living conditions, fewer employment opportunities, inability to return home, or increased xenophobia.
- Young people separated from, unaccompanied by, or left behind by migrant working parents, who face higher risks of exploitation, violence and mental health issues and have limited access to health services and protection.
- Young people with disabilities or who are differently abled, including those with physical, visual, hearing, intellectual, and other impairments.
- Adolescent girls and young women who already suffer from gender-based inequalities and deprivations, and are at heightened risk of experiencing gender-based violence (GBV) and increased care burdens.
- Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, and intersex (LGBTQI) young people, who tend to face broad discrimination, including and especially in health-care settings.
- Young people living with chronic health conditions such as asthma.
- Youth living with HIV may be at heightened risk due to weakened immune systems and disruptions of their treatment regimens, while deprivations caused by the COVID-19 virus may increase the risk of HIV transmission, especially for girls.

¹ UN, [Shared Responsibility, Global Solidarity: Responding to the Socio-economic Impacts of COVID-19](#) (March 2020).



Health impacts

- Young people are being infected by COVID-19, are transmitting the virus to others, and in some cases are being hospitalized with serious cases. However, compared with older adults, young people and adolescents are less likely to develop serious illness.
- The COVID-19 response is already putting immense stress on health systems around the world. It is disrupting the delivery of routine health services and information to young people, sharply limiting access to sexual and reproductive health services, disrupting immunization schedules, and cutting off young people's access to health services delivered through schools and universities (including continuation of preventive measures such as physical exercise), now shut because of physical distancing measures.
- As the pandemic spreads to low-income and lower-middle-income countries – which have disproportionately high numbers of young people and significantly weaker health systems – direct and indirect health impacts on adolescents and youth will likely increase.
- Owing to lockdown measures, young people have limited access to positive coping mechanisms they may turn to in times of crises (i.e. social initiatives, community service, formal or non-formal education, sports or other types of physical activity, etc.). Isolated from their support systems, young people may turn to negative coping mechanisms such as alcohol and drug abuse, self-harm, or other harmful behaviors. The need for adolescent- and youth-sensitive mental health and psychosocial services and counselling will increase as the pandemic progresses.
- With the observed disruption of health services, young people who need essential, time-sensitive, and life-saving medication and services may be at risk of not being able to access them, thereby increasing the likelihood of developing complications when infected. Specifically, access to essential antiretroviral medications and services for young people living with HIV may be deprioritized and disrupted in the coming months, and the health impacts on this segment of the population, who are already immunocompromised, may be significant.
- Young people with disabilities may be disproportionately affected by interrupted home, community, and social services and support, including personal assistance.
- Many young people do not have adequate levels of health literacy to enable them to gain access to, understand, and use information in ways that protect their health and well-being. Health literacy is critical to empowerment. It includes the timely recognition of the need for health or other services, the ability to seek advice and care, including making appointments, and the ability to navigate complicated health systems. In addition, being highly digitally connected and in the absence of adequate skills to critically assess health-related information, young people might lack accurate knowledge regarding their health and disease in general, and the pandemic in particular, and have a greater chance of being exposed to misleading or inaccurate information. Lack of life-saving information in accessible formats (e.g. easy to read materials, videos with closed captioning and sign language, materials in Braille) puts young people with disabilities at higher risk.



Safety and protection issues

- Protection needs of young people will need to be addressed in the context of this pandemic, in particular when caregivers are infected, are quarantined, or pass away.
- During lockdown, and in a context of overall economic and social distress, children and adolescents are at high risk of domestic violence. Young women and girls are at higher risk of experiencing GBV, intimate partner violence, or sexual exploitation. Many young women and girls are forced to “lock down” with their abusers while their access to support services is severely disrupted.²
- As illustrated by the long-term impacts of the Ebola epidemic, sustained disruption of education may lead to a rise in rates of child labor and child marriage.³ Support structures for at-risk young people (such as safe spaces, women’s centers, or life-skills programmes) are likely to be closed because of physical distancing.
- With education, activism, and other engagement opportunities shifting to online platforms, children and young people may also face increased risks of cyberbullying, cybercrime, and various forms of online harassment and abuse.



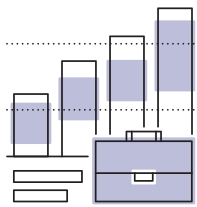
Educational impacts

- Over 90 per cent of the world’s students, 1.5 billion young people in 188 countries, are being kept away from school and universities due to physical distancing measures.⁴
- Young people are additionally affected by closures of non-formal education opportunities. Youth in humanitarian contexts especially rely on informal learning, online courses (where feasible), and social interaction as means of personal development.
- This large-scale interruption of learning, including non-formal and informal learning, may have severe consequences – from compromising nutrition to limiting access to health care, raising dropout rates, and depriving young people of social support and resources. These negative consequences will be exacerbated in cases of students living with disabilities, by lack of access to assistive devices, accessible materials, and platforms as well as lack of trained teaching personnel.
- For adolescents and youth, connecting with one another is key to their sense of belonging and overall well-being. Long-term confinement and isolation from educational spaces will erode the social support networks young people build with each other.
- While young people are generally very connected digitally, large numbers do not have regular and affordable Internet access and may fall behind as learning and participation shift to online platforms. Online learning limits the pedagogical tools available to educators, placing an extra burden on students and caretakers. This may lead to anxiety, frustration, and elevated dropout rates.
- Distance learning is also a driver of existing inequities. Fewer than 40 per cent of low-income countries have announced distance-learning education programmes, compared with 90 per cent of high-income countries. Girls and young women have comparatively less access to digital technology than boys and young men, so they can expect to miss out on additional learning.

2 [United Nations, Policy Brief: The Impact of COVID-19 on Women \(April 2020\).](#)

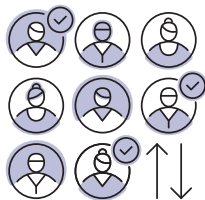
3 [UNDP, Assessing Sexual and Gender-based Violence During the Ebola Crisis in Sierra Leone \(October 2015\); Amnesty International, Shamed and Blamed: Pregnant Girls’ Rights at Risk in Sierra Leone \(September 2015\).](#)

4 [The Lancet, Editorial: Pandemic School Closures: Risks and Opportunities \(April 2020\).](#)



Economic impacts

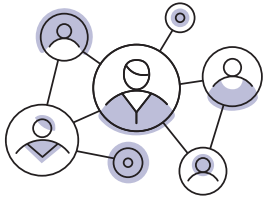
- Young people tend to be economically fragile, live closer to the poverty line than other age groups, have few savings, and work in the informal sector.
- Dependence on daily wages is forcing some to remain economically active, both exposing themselves to COVID-19 and risking spreading the virus to others.
- A global recession is a likely consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, and young people's livelihoods will be disproportionately affected. After the 2008 global economic and financial crisis, rates of global youth unemployment rose faster than those of adults and took significantly longer to recover.⁵ The effects of the current economic crisis are likely to be similar.
- Young people, who disproportionately work in the informal sector, are also more likely to be excluded from public policies and stimulus packages addressing the economic impacts of the pandemic. Young migrants and non-residents may also face higher rates of labor exploitation and abuse, as they are often excluded from national social protection measures.
- Before the pandemic began, the World Bank estimated that 1 billion young people would enter the labor market in the next decade, out of whom only 400 million would find a job. The coming recession will only increase the uncertainty around the prospects of the remaining 600 million.



Impact on civic space and participation

- Young people have played leading roles in a growing number of mass protests around the world, fighting for change in governance structures, economic inequalities, democratic inclusion, response to climate change, and more. Physical distancing has put many of these protests on hold, potentially undermining progress to date.
- Governments around the world are invoking executive powers and calling for extraordinary measures, such as lockdowns, quarantines, and increased surveillance in response to COVID-19. In the absence of sunset provisions, civic space may contract and freedoms of assembly, privacy, and expression may be negatively affected, silencing young people's calls for change. Moreover, these unprecedented restrictions by governments can leave young peacebuilders and human rights and environmental defenders less protected against attacks and threats.
- All young people, including adolescents below the age of 18, should enjoy their rights to participation, rights that should be upheld in humanitarian crises, fragile contexts, and the current COVID-19 crisis. As is being increasingly recognized, it is precisely in these settings that investing in and tapping into the power of adolescent participation, and acknowledging their role as rights-holders, can make a difference to improve the quality and impact of humanitarian responses.
- Restrictions on movement will hamper the ability of young leaders and organizations to mobilize and support their communities. Youth civil society organizations (CSOs) are often uniquely placed to understand the specific challenges faced by their communities as well as existing coping mechanisms that may help communities mitigate the effects of the pandemic.
- The current crisis is likely to have long-term effects on the critical work that youth organizations undertake. Such organizations tend to rely on volunteer work and already face major challenges in accessing reliable, sustained, and flexible funding. Youth leaders and organizations generally have little access to power and decision makers. The scale and complexity of humanitarian decision-making structures, funding mechanisms, and reporting structures further marginalize and threaten the survival of youth CSOs.

5 ILO, [Global Employment Trends for Youth](#) (August 2010).



Young people mobilise

- In spite of the multiple impacts of COVID-19 on young people's lives, many adolescents and youth have mobilized immediately to respond to the crisis.
- Even in the light of shortages of protective equipment, young health professionals and students are risking their lives on the front lines of the pandemic. Young women and men researchers and specialists are also helping to combat this disease by contributing to the development of life-saving measures, supporting medical interventions that can be implemented and replicated quickly (such as low-cost, low-tech ventilators), contributing to knowledge generation and promoting the diffusion of scientific and fact-based information online.
- The health sector has become the largest employer of young people, and employment rates in this sector have risen faster for young people than for any other age group. This trend is reflected in most countries despite the socioeconomic context.⁶
- Others are at the forefront of risk communication initiatives, running advocacy and handwashing campaigns, and countering disinformation, misinformation, and stigma in their communities. Many are volunteering to support the elderly and other vulnerable populations and contributing as scientists, social entrepreneurs, and innovators.
- The Ebola response demonstrated the essential role young people play in mobilizing their communities, changing behaviors, and distributing food and non-food items to quarantined people at home who are in need. By partnering with development actors and the government, young people collected data in real time, combated fear and mistrust, and disseminated accurate information in a manner that respected local values and traditions. COVID-19 presents a set of challenges distinct from those of the Ebola crisis, but these are lessons to be built upon.
- Despite the digital divide, young people today are more connected than any previous generation. With many critical activities and institutions moving online, young people are well positioned to respond and adapt to COVID-19.
- Young people can also be critical in bridging the digital divide by providing information and knowledge to communities that do not have access to digital technologies, and tailoring messaging and channels to reach diverse audiences and reflect multiple voices. Yet, in a context of acute reliance on online technologies and remote platforms, the digital divide becomes even more critical to address.
- Young people continue to play a critical role in disseminating accurate information on COVID-19, tackling myths and stigma, policing fake news, and supporting information-sharing programmes on risk reduction, national preparedness, and response efforts.
- Young people can be at the forefront of finding new and innovative ways to communicate with their governments, mass media, medical services, and their communities through channels such as the radio, WhatsApp, text message, social media, and videoconferencing platforms.
- Young people can also help mitigate the impact and consequences of the crisis in the longer term, including by engaging around issues such as promoting social cohesion and countering hate speech, xenophobia, human rights violations, and violence, and by building strong and inclusive initiatives. Through social media, they are finding ways to remotely check on, and support, others' mental health.

6 WHO, [Youth and Decent Work in the Health and Social Care Sector: An Evidence Synthesis](#) (May 2019).

PART 2

Key Actions

In this section you will find key actions intended to guide practitioners, youth-led organizations, and young people in the development of an adolescent- and youth-focused and inclusive COVID-19 response. These actions are derived from the five pillars of the Compact for Young People in Humanitarian Action: 1) services, 2) participation, 3) capacity, 4) resources, and 5) data. Recommendations followed by concrete examples and relevant resources are provided throughout.

Practitioners may find additional technical briefs and youth-friendly resources at the [Compact for Young People in Humanitarian Action's COVID-19 resource hub](#).



Promote and ensure access to age-, gender-, and disability-inclusive services that contribute to the protection, health, development, and participation of adolescents and youth in the context of the COVID-19 crisis.

Services



RECOMMENDATIONS

Ensure that COVID-19 response plans are sensitive to adolescent- and youth-specific health-care needs, including sexual and reproductive health, mental health, and psychosocial support.

- Every effort should be made to ensure the continuity of services (such as immunization schedules and essential HIV prevention and treatment services for those who need it) for all young people, irrespective of their ability to pay, age, sex, marital status, education level, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, or other characteristics. While there is some flexibility in immunization schedules for young people compared with younger children, it is important to ensure that they have access to vaccines they need.
- Ensure that health-care facilities provide, in a youth- and rights-informed manner, information, counselling, diagnostics, treatment, and care services that fulfill the needs of adolescents and young people. Consider alternative methods of health-care service delivery during lockdown (such as telemedicine, mobile clinics, and outpatient services).
- Ensure that health-care providers, support staff, and community workers respect, protect, and fulfill adolescents' and young people's rights to information, privacy, confidentiality, and non-discrimination in a non-judgmental and respectful manner. Put in place additional safeguards to ensure that confidentiality is not compromised in situations of restricted mobility.
- Support parents, guardians, community members, and community organizations in recognizing the value of continuous critical and time-sensitive services to adolescents and young people.
- Ensure that health-care providers and community workers are aware of increased risks of domestic violence during extended periods of confinement, understand adolescents' specific vulnerabilities (such as a limited ability to report abuse), and are equipped to promptly detect and respond to cases as well as providing referrals to available complementary services (protection, police, justice).
- Ensure life-saving information is available in accessible formats and health workers are trained in how to communicate and work with persons with disabilities.
- Ensure the availability of accessible transport, and physical accessibility at health premises.
- Ensure access to health and referral services related to GBV, particularly clinical management of rape.
- Strengthen availability and access to services related to mental health and psychosocial support (including prevention, promotion, and treatment) for young people along with their families, caregivers, and communities.

- Work with caregivers to recognize and address symptoms of stress, anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues in youth. Ensure that caregivers know where and how they may seek help remotely.
- In the interest of young people's well-being, ensure that they have opportunities to continue to socialize without face-to-face interaction.

The **World Health Organization (WHO)**, together with the **UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)**, the **UN Children's Fund (UNICEF)** and the **UN Population Fund (UNFPA)**, has issued a comprehensive online [Q&A](#) page to answer questions adolescents may have on how COVID-19 might impact their health and well-being.

For pregnant adolescents, **UNFPA** has developed a [technical brief](#) on antenatal care services in addition to a [technical brief](#) on maternal services, both of which are specific to COVID-19.

WHO has published a [Q&A](#) on COVID-19 and breastfeeding, which may be useful for pregnant adolescents.

UNICEF has issued [guidance](#) on COVID-19 considerations for children and adults with disabilities. These [videos](#) offer tips for practitioners to make information accessible for all.

The **Inter-agency Working Group on Reproductive Health in Crises** has published programmatic [guidance](#) on reproductive health in humanitarian settings in the context of COVID-19.

The **Office of the UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth, WHO, and UNICEF** have produced a [webinar series](#) on youth and mental health in times of COVID-19 using a safe, inclusive, and interactive format.

UNICEF has developed a [tip sheet](#) on how teenagers can protect their mental health during COVID-19, and a blog with **Voices of Youth** to illustrate how adolescents and youth are providing [guidance](#) and activities for their peers to strengthen their mental and psychosocial resilience and coping mechanisms.

UNICEF has developed [guidance](#) on nutrition for adolescents and young people, offering easy, affordable, and healthy eating tips during the COVID-19 outbreak.

War Child Holland, Save the Children, and UNICEF Netherlands have developed [Team Up at Home](#), a psychosocial support module delivered by volunteers to children and young adolescents. The programme includes simple, safe, and fun online exercises to promote well-being at home. This programme could be adapted for older adolescents and youth.

WHO, UNICEF, Global Partnership to End Violence, Centers for Disease Control, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and partners have issued [COVID-19 healthy parenting tips](#) to help parents interact constructively with their children during this time of confinement. Suggestions cover planning one-on-one time, staying positive, creating a daily routine, avoiding bad behavior, managing stress, and talking about COVID-19.

In April 2020, the **World Scouts Movement** held an [online jamboree](#) reaching thousands of young people with online seminars, self-care activities, and Q&As.

Restless Development has started [#FeelingRestless](#), a website and larger social media campaign with advice to young people on using their [#YouthPower](#) remotely to fight the virus, exercise self-care, connect with others, and continue to effect positive change in their communities.

WHO issued [Coping with stress during COVID-19](#), a short, informative flyer on coping with stress during the pandemic, which can be used with adolescents and youth.

Plan International has developed a [module](#) guiding field colleagues in the planning and provision of support sessions for adolescents, parents, and caregivers during COVID-19. This guide contains considerations for implementation, resources for the facilitator, handouts for participants, and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) tools.

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)



Ensure that young people have access to a water supply for drinking and personal hygiene, sanitation services, handwashing facilities with soap, and menstrual health management (MHM) supplies to maintain their health and well-being and prevent the spread of infection.

- Ensure national response plans include provision of medical, MHM, and WASH supplies (this includes water, sanitation, and handwashing facilities with soap) and services to adolescents and youth, including migrants, refugees, and displaced persons, at home, informal/camp settings, schools, health facilities, community centers, and workplaces, where they are still open.
- Work with partners to assess, identify, and plan production of medical and WASH supplies that meet quality standard requirements. These activities may streamline the supply chain for critical materials while providing employment opportunities for economically vulnerable youth.
- Ensure youth networks and young people lead and are engaged in hygiene promotion activities to encourage handwashing with soap and other behaviors to prevent the spread of infection.
- Work with governments and private sector companies to reduce the costs of essential WASH supplies or provide them for free so that they are accessible to and affordable for all adolescents and youth.
- Provide adolescents, especially girls, with dignity/hygiene/MHM kits. Coordinate access to WASH facilities and access sanitary products.
- Coordinate with humanitarian actors to distribute dignity kits through established humanitarian channels (e.g. UNFPA Namibia is distributing its dignity kits through partnership with the World Food Programme, which is distributing food supplies). Coordinate with adolescent sexual and reproductive health (ASRH) actors to include messaging on ASRH and managing menstruation as well as messaging on how girls might access related information or services. Distribution points, in general, can be entry points for providing services to women and girls.
- Ensure that sanitation and washing facilities are accessible and affordable, including in health facilities, schools, and public spaces.
- Build capacity of WASH actors to consider GBV risk mitigation in their work.

EXAMPLES & RESOURCES

UNICEF has issued [guidance](#) to young people on hand hygiene. For use in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, another [guide](#) outlines proper handwashing techniques. UNICEF Nigeria has also engaged students to promote handwashing in this [blog post](#).

The **Norwegian Refugee Council's (NRC's)** vocational youth education programmes plan to begin high-quality soap production and are assessing hand sanitizer production. Reliable information on COVID-19 would be shared on soap or sanitizer packaging.

War Child Holland has started to distribute hygiene kits in selected country offices. Kits include soap and hand sanitizer along with reading materials and information on homeschooling, COVID-19, and psychosocial support for children, young people, and their caregivers.

UNFPA answers [frequently asked questions](#) around menstruation and human rights.

The IASC has developed a [resource pack](#) for COVID-19: GBV risk mitigation.

Education



Support continued learning for young people, including for those over 18. Formal and non-formal education programming should reach migrants, refugees, and displaced young people.

- Ensure that adolescents and youth, including those over the age of 18, are included in education sector risk assessments, contingency plans, and response plans.
- Ensure that, in the event of school or learning facility closures, materials are available in all relevant languages and accessible formats for young people with disabilities.
- Consider how to best support socioemotional learning across age groups.
- Consider generating adolescent- and youth-specific content for educational TV and radio programmes.
- When schools reopen, ensure the facilities are safe and are equipped with water, sanitation, and handwashing facilities with soap, menstrual health management (MHM) supplies, and support.



- Consider designing new methods, such as remote coaching or mentoring, to cover life skills, comprehensive sexuality education (CSE), and theoretical content, to keep young people engaged until they return to school. Ensure that educators are trained in online safety and behavior.
- Consider providing training, orientation, or guidance for staff and teachers/facilitators in remote facilitation and mentoring, and train teachers to instruct students with disabilities remotely.

WHO, the **IFRC**, and **UNICEF** have developed [guidance](#) for COVID-19 prevention and control in schools.

NRC Jordan conducted an internal needs assessment of youth learning content and mapped the results against existing open source content online. **NRC** will use this data to move all learning online with remote facilitators or maintain engagement with young people through assessment, chat rooms, and course-related activities.

The **United States Agency for International Development's (USAID's) Advancing Youth Project** during the 2014 Ebola outbreak in Liberia disseminated literacy and mathematics lessons through radio broadcasts to support learning for young people in isolation.

War Child Holland is running a literacy programme for out-of-school adolescents in Lebanon. Teachers distributed books and videotaped lessons to youth without Internet access ahead of lockdown. Each teacher follows up with an assigned group of students on a daily basis over the phone.

UNICEF has developed a [kit](#) for expression and innovation that aims to bring positive change in adolescents' lives through the arts and self-expression.

The **UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR)** has produced a [tip sheet](#) offering resources and guidance on learning continuity during COVID-19.

Microsoft and **UNICEF** have developed the [Learning Passport](#) to transform access to education for children and young people on the move.

UNICEF has released a [checklist](#) for its staff and others on how to support learning for the most vulnerable children in areas where schools are closed.

UNICEF Syria Arab Republic's [blog post](#) outlines how, despite school closures, learning continues for many students in that country.

UNFPA Jordan and **NRC Jordan**, co-chairs of the Youth Task Force in Zaatari Camp, advocate for youth needs and aspirations during the COVID-19 pandemic by activating the focal point system for youth advocates in camp-level coordination meetings and working groups, including education, protection, camp management, and mental health and psychosocial support.

Protection



Ensure the protection of young people in all COVID-19 prevention and mitigation measures.

- Promote information-sharing with and by young people on available protection and care service (hotlines, referral pathways, GBV/PSEA case management, etc.) and how to access them. Consider changes in services, timings, or personnel during lockdown.
- Support appropriate national authorities and partners to enhance availability of and access to essential life-saving services for adolescents and youth experiencing GBV during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Train government, civil society, youth networks, and community partners in prevention of and response to GBV and how they can support and increase information-sharing on referrals, linking communities with facilities and other support services for adolescents (see [GBV Pocket Guide](#)).
- Build the capacity of teachers, families/caregivers, and young people to provide and protect a safe online learning experience and to stay safe online in general.
- Provide women and girls with dignity/hygiene/MHM kits and coordinate with WASH, ASRH, and humanitarian actors (distribution points can be entry points for providing services to women and girls, for instance).
- Ensure that first responders are trained in prevention of and basic response to GBV, including youth-friendly communication techniques and specific issues related to girls, such as early marriage. Coordinate closely with ASRH actors to incorporate basic ASRH information into training.
- Practitioners should ensure that safeguarding measures are in place, especially with adolescents. All youth participants should be fully aware of safeguarding and referral pathways. When moving safe spaces or counselling sessions online, consider appointing moderators to flag inappropriate communication, online harassment, or trolling.
- Strengthen referral pathways for intimate partner violence and domestic violence services. Increase community awareness of existing hotlines, apps, call-back services, and other remote case management options, or establish new ones.
- When caregivers are infected, are quarantined, or have passed away, ensure that adolescents left alone or living in care institutions, interim care centers, foster families, and adolescent-headed households receive specialized support.
- Advocate with governments to ensure that adolescents and youth who are in custody of the state (detained or imprisoned) have access to health care, education, and basic services.
- Engage young people in conducting self-assessments. They should be encouraged to reflect on how the pandemic may be affecting them as individuals as well as members of their communities.

Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) guidance assists humanitarian practitioners in identifying and mitigating risks to GBV during COVID-19.

UNFPA, the **International Rescue Committee (IRC)**, **UNHCR**, **UNICEF** and **International Medical Corps (IMC)** have developed guidance on case management and the GBV Information Management System, which provides practical advice to case management service providers on how to adapt their response in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

UNFPA has developed technical briefs on gender equality and GBV prevention, protection, and response.

The **IASC** GBV pocket guide offers practical advice to support survivors of violence.

UNICEF has published the results of a consultation with 1,200 young migrants in East Africa to explore the harm to, vulnerabilities of, and well-being of children and young people in the context of COVID-19; it also offers tips on the pandemic and migrant, refugee, and internally displaced children. In addition, **UNICEF** has released a report on the increased risk of GBV for Rohingya and Bangladeshi women and girls during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This global list of children and youth helplines compiled by **Child Helpline International** provides a channel for young people to seek support during the COVID-19 emergency.

UNFPA is operating hotlines and mobile psychosocial support teams to continue to provide GBV services throughout the pandemic.

Norwegian Church Aid, the **IRC** and **IMC** have developed technical guidance on operating safe spaces for women and girls.

The **National Youth Council of Ireland** provides online web safety training for youth leaders, as well as a list of useful resources for supporting online youth work and reporting cyberbullying and inappropriate content.

UNICEF has developed resources for practitioners on the implications of COVID-19 for adolescents' online safety. For tips targeting adolescents, **UNICEF** East Asia and Pacific has developed this tip sheet. This short note provides guidance to caregivers on parenting during COVID-19.

eSafety has developed a toolkit designed to support schools in creating safer online environments.

UNHCR has released guidance on protection considerations related to community-based protection and specific groups in the Americas.

Plan International has developed a set of recommendations for all humanitarian actors to adopt to protect the health, rights, and well-being of girls around the world during this unprecedented crisis.

Livelihoods, Cash & Markets



Ensure that young people whose incomes may be affected by the COVID-19 crisis are supported.

- Advocate for increased access to targeted credit, loans, and insurance for young entrepreneurs, especially for young people in the informal economy.
- Ensure that young people and young entrepreneurs are aware of and counselled on any assistance schemes run by their governments.
- Advocate for loan and rent forgiveness and the establishment of national safety nets that consider young people.
- Train young people to cope with the financial impact they are likely to experience as a result of the pandemic, and mentor them.
- Consider cash and voucher assistance to support and maintain local market functionality during the crisis (trade services and goods where the cash economy is dysfunctional).

Ensure that young people and their families have financial access to goods and services.

- Ensure that the basic needs of adolescents and youth and their families and caregivers are met – for example, through emergency cash transfers, expansion of existing social protection provisions, and adjusting and/or scaling up cash transfer programmes.
- Advocate for the most vulnerable young people and their families to be targeted in social and economic impact-mitigating and recovery measures at the global, national, and local levels.

For COVID-19-specific resources on livelihoods and cash see the [SEEP](#) and [Cash Learning Partnership](#) initiatives.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) has launched a [blog series](#) that highlights the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on young women and men in the world of work and discusses action-oriented policy responses and solutions.



Adolescents and youth should be treated as partners in all phases of the COVID-19 response.

They should be systematically included through consultations and knowledge-sharing, involved in decision-making at all levels, including budget allocations, and engaged in the implementation of response measures.

Participation

RECOMMENDATIONS

Maintain connections with young people in your networks.

- Map young people's access to devices. Consider access to mobile devices or smartphones, Internet/app knowledge, ownership of devices, and/or connectivity on the part of caregivers or youth themselves. Consider solutions that do not accrue costs related to data, allocate resources for data to be provided to young people in your networks, or make sure that your content is produced in a low-resolution format.
- While physical distancing measures are in place, maintain communication with young people through popular platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, WeChat, and Viber. Consider platforms used in specific countries, such as Weibo in China or VKontakte in the Russian Federation. Consider the relative sensitivity of these platforms to hacking, trolling, or other types of online abuse.
- Consider the digital divide as well as unequal access to devices and the Internet based on age, gender, and other social factors. Boys and young men are more likely than girls and young women to have access to devices and the Internet.

EXAMPLES & RESOURCES

NRC Jordan conducted a rapid assessment that reached 290 young people in 24 hours. Their access to the Internet and interest in online learning were assessed to inform COVID-19 adaptation measures taken by the organization.

Fifty young volunteers at the **UNFPA/Questscope** Youth Center in Zaatari Camp for Syrian refugees are leveraging their WhatsApp groups to spread awareness of COVID-19 to their families, their neighborhoods, and other young people. They are also using WhatsApp to share art projects and other indoor activities with one another.

UNHCR has issued a [guidance note](#) on connectivity for refugees. It is intended as a reference tool to support colleagues working directly with populations of concern in response to COVID-19 highlighting issues related to connected communication channels, Internet access, and modalities for delivery.

Please see the [Protection](#) section of action area 1 for resources on how to stay safe online.

Encourage inclusive information-sharing.

- Create or leverage existing online platforms for adolescents and young people to safely receive information and share their experiences, concerns, and positive steps they are taking in response to COVID-19 at home and in their communities.

EXAMPLES & RESOURCES

The **Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth** has produced a [blog series](#) featuring 10 young people leading the response in their communities.

UNFPA launched the [#YouthAgainstCOVID19](#) video series to provide young people with accurate information they can disseminate across their communities and in their own languages. See this [Trello](#) board for scripts and a full media package.

UNICEF is inviting young people to share their experiences and responses to COVID-19 through the [Voices of Youth](#) platform.

BBC Media Action has developed a short [guide](#) to assist development and humanitarian agencies to think through how risk communication and community engagement activity related to COVID-19 can be carried out amid lockdown.

The **Asia and Pacific Risk Communication and Community Engagement Working Group** issued [guidance](#) on how to include marginalized and vulnerable people in risk communication and community engagement, which includes a focus on children.

UNHCR has issued [guidance](#) on risk communication and community engagement (RCCE) during the pandemic. In addition, it has issued regional [guidance](#) on RCCE in the East, Horn of Africa and Great Lakes region.

UNDP and **UNHCR** have developed a [joint project](#) "Local Initiatives for Improved Social Inclusion of Young Roma" to respond to the needs in Roma communities most at risk, in the context of COVID-19.

Engage young people in monitoring and evaluating COVID-19 responses.

- Involve youth in rapid data collection and analysis on the pandemic's impact on their peers, families and caregivers as well as on the success of the response.
- Strengthen accountability measures for affected adolescents and youth by ensuring that they receive relevant and timely information, participate in decisions that affect their lives, and have access to trusted feedback mechanisms.
- Promote and support youth volunteerism (including UN youth volunteers and UNVs) to strengthen M&E forces at country level.

EXAMPLES & RESOURCES

Restless Development has developed a youth-led research [methodology](#) that may be helpful in meaningful engagement of young people in COVID-19 responses.

UNICEF has developed a [guidance note](#) on adolescent participation in monitoring and evaluation.

Engage young people in assessing the impact of COVID-19 on their communities.

- Engage young people in mapping the impact of COVID-19 on their communities; consider using telephone, SMS, or online assessments.

Actively engage young people in responses to COVID-19 as health workers, advocates, volunteers, scientists, social entrepreneurs, and innovators.

- Encourage the participation of young political activists, leaders, and parliamentarians in COVID-19-related innovations and legislation, including through dedicated cross-party youth dialogues on the COVID-19 response (e.g. with a focus on misinformation, privacy, e-governance, protection, accountability, etc.).
- Consult young people and include them in government decision-making mechanisms for COVID-19 response. If “sitting at the table” is not a realistic option, find creative ways of conveying the voice of young people to decision-makers, through recorded video messages, for example.
- Host online conversations, competitions, and challenges for adolescents and youth to identify solutions to problems they may face at home or in their communities.

Restless Development has formulated a youth-led research methodology that can engage young people in the COVID-19 response, adapted to context. It has also set up the #YouthPowerPanel, a global network of 30,000 youth leaders ready, willing, and able to act to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19.

UNICEF has developed U-Report, a messaging tool that empowers young people around the world to speak out on issues they care about.

The U-Report COVID-19 bot, disseminates critical information on COVID-19; it can be accessed via WhatsApp, Viber, or Facebook.

UNDP Pakistan organized a Disaster Risk Reduction Hackathon to encourage youth to find innovative and sustainable solutions for climate change disasters and COVID-19.

Engage young people in delivering responses to COVID-19.

- Support adolescents and youth in raising awareness of COVID-19 online and offline among their peers, families, and community networks. Consider making digital tools and graphics packages available publicly. Support them in conducting their own campaign.
- Engage adolescent and youth organizations, networks, and volunteer programmes in the safe provision of support to isolated elders and other vulnerable community members. Support may come in the form of phone calls or provision of food and non-food items to vulnerable people.
- Support young people in partnering with their governments and/or other institutions to mobilize their communities, promote preventive behaviors, and build positive narratives around their efforts to mitigate the effects of the pandemic.
- Leverage youth leaders' and youth networks' roles as advocates for social cohesion, community dialogue, conflict prevention, and the promotion of peace, particularly in contexts of pre-existing humanitarian crises and tensions between host and refugee communities.
- Ensure the safety and well-being of any volunteer engaged in COVID-19 response. Ensure that volunteers are aware of safeguarding measures in place and understand that their participation is elective and, at their discretion, they may stop at any time.
- Ensure young people with diverse backgrounds are included, e.g. youth with disabilities, ethnic minorities.

EXAMPLES & RESOURCES

War Child Holland in Uganda is working with rural refugees and host communities on the border with South Sudan. Young people previously involved in advocacy and employability programmes have been retrained to inform their communities about COVID-19. Young volunteers circulate their phone numbers through local leaders/radio/flyers, asking community members to reach out if they have questions. Youth are trained to refer cases to specialized service providers when needed.

During the Ebola outbreak, **Restless Development, GOAL, BBC Media Action** and the **US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention** developed the Social Mobilization Action Consortium's Community-Led Ebola Action approach ([field guide](#), [Lancet medical journal review](#)); this package may be adapted to COVID-19 responses.

UNICEF has developed an [advocacy toolkit](#) for youth to conduct their own campaigns, [guidelines](#) on engaging adolescents and youth in the COVID-19 response, and a [package](#) of social media assets for young people.

Plan International has developed an [article](#) on engaging young people in the Ebola response; lessons learned in this article are relevant to COVID-19 responses. In addition, this [post](#) outlines how youth triumphed in the Ebola response.

Peace Direct, Conducive Space for Peace and **Humanitarian United** convened 450+ peacebuilders from around the world in online consultations to discuss how the current COVID-19 crisis is affecting their work, changing their needs, and shaping their perspective. Their [report](#) shares key findings and recommendations from peacebuilders from around the world.

Tackle the spread of inaccurate information, debunk myths, and confront stigma.

- Engage young journalists, reporters, writers, and other young people working within media, advertising, and creative sectors in relevant training (either as trainees or as trainers) to combat misinformation around COVID-19.
- Engage young people to combat myths, rumors, fear, and the spread of stigma. Ensure that accurate information is available to them and continuously updated online and offline.
- Encourage young people to regularly check reliable websites for updated information and resources that will give them better tools to address myths, fear, and stigma in their communities.
- Link youth leaders and youth-led organizations to the media to amplify their voices and better address fake news and stigma. Train them to give good interviews and improve their public-speaking skills. Robust safeguarding, support, and protection measures will need to be in place.

EXAMPLES & RESOURCES

War Child Holland in the occupied Palestinian territories has supported a youth-led radio programme to raise awareness about COVID-19 and mental health.

The **NRC South Sudan EMPOWER** project is broadcasting messages to young people through radio stations. The project, a collaboration with **BBC Media Action**, transmits information pre-approved by WHO and the Ministry of Health. The project is also engaging youth through its existing [EMPOWER project Facebook page](#).

The **WHO Myth Busters** website uses engaging messaging and infographics to tackle common misconceptions and misinformation surrounding COVID-19.

ActionAid Nepal has launched the [#CalltoDoctor](#) campaign connecting young people with doctors trained to answer questions and debunk myths around COVID-19.

The **Slum and Rural Health Initiative Network** has developed [#stopcovid19.infographics](#) with basic messaging on handwashing and physical distancing measures in over 55 languages, including many African languages.

Restless Development and the **Centre for Countering Digital Hate** have developed [guidance](#) for young people outlining concrete steps they can take to stop the spread of fake news.

UNICEF has developed a [quiz](#) for young people to assess their knowledge of COVID-19 transmission and safety.

UNHCR has released 10 [tips](#) on minimizing the spread of misinformation on the pandemic on social media platforms.

Support access to youth-friendly content and work with young people to develop content.

- Ensure that youth-friendly content is available in local languages and dialects, takes into account youth living with disabilities, and may be accessed online and offline. Ensure content is inclusive and representative of young people in all their diversity – consider socioeconomic backgrounds, young people with and without disabilities, and other marginalized groups.
- Collaborate with artists, social media influencers, or other figures popular among young people to spread reliable information in creative and youth-friendly ways.

EXAMPLES & RESOURCES

Young artists from Goma, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, are mobilizing to protect their city and educate young people about COVID-19 through this [music video](#).

War Child Holland in South Sudan is collaborating with the local artist **Check-B Magic** to produce this [music video](#) in Juba/Arabic on COVID-19.

UNDP Chad and the artist **Salma Khalid** have produced a [comic strip](#) with a story of a Chadian family during the COVID-19 pandemic to raise awareness about COVID-19 prevention and response.

UNFPA is working with the technology platform **Prezi** and the youth networks **International Federation of Medical Students Associations, UN Major Group for Children and Youth, Restless Development**, the **IFRC**, and **War Child Holland** to develop and disseminate [video templates](#) that young people can recreate in their own languages to communicate about COVID-19.

ActionAid's youth partner in Ghana, **Activista**, has designed clear and concise [messaging](#) targeting people living with disabilities, to spread awareness on physical distancing.

WHO has partnered with **Facebook** and **WhatsApp** to deliver [daily updates](#) on the COVID-19 pandemic and address commonly asked questions.

The **Office of the Secretary General's Envoy on Youth** is working within the UN system to streamline [communication efforts](#) on COVID-19 and make them accessible to young audiences.

UNICEF has developed a youth-friendly [toolkit](#) to spread awareness of COVID-19. **UNICEF Viet Nam** has partnered with major pop icons to develop viral handwashing [videos](#).



Recognize and strengthen young people's capacities to be actors in COVID-19 preparedness, response, and rebuilding efforts. Empower and support local youth-led initiatives and organizations in their responses, particularly those targeting marginalized youth, including young refugees and internally displaced young people living in informal urban settlements and slums.

Capacity

RECOMMENDATIONS

Build the capacity of, and support, youth-led organizations to engage in COVID-19 response coordination with other humanitarian actors, access funding, and design and deliver programmes.

- Pull together capacity-building resources and deliver them remotely. Consider using local radio/flyers and low-resolution content.
- Ensure the following topics are covered in capacity-building materials:
 - Effective communication skills as well as basic information on human, refugee, and migrant rights as they relate to the ongoing pandemic.
 - How to counter common misconceptions, rumours, and myths spread offline and online, and how to combat xenophobia, stigma, and discrimination associated with COVID-19.
 - How to be a responsible online citizen, including the basics of online safety and incident-reporting pathways.

EXAMPLES & RESOURCES

Restless Development is developing a [toolkit](#) to support youth-led organizations in their pandemic response.

UNDP is [training](#) young volunteers through YouthConnekt health awareness and support as part of the COVID-19 response in Gambia.

In South Africa, **UNICEF** and **UNDP** have partnered with the Big Think Innovation Challenge winner [Zlto](#) to use blockchain technology to give users online rewards for completing safe, healthy actions around

COVID-19. Rewards can buy groceries, clothes, mobile data, and more.

Please see the [Education](#) section of action area 1 for guidance on how to transfer training content online.

Please see action area 2, [Participation](#), for content on debunking myths, rumors, and stigma.

Please see the [Protection](#) section of action area 1 for resources on online safety.

Build the capacity of governments, United Nations agencies, and CSOs leading response and coordination efforts for the meaningful engagement of youth.

- Young people should be meaningfully engaged in all phases of the COVID-19 response: assessment, planning, design, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation.

EXAMPLES & RESOURCES

In Erbil, Iraq, in December 2019, **UNICEF**, **NRC** and **UNFPA**, under the umbrella of the Compact for Young People in Humanitarian Action, delivered [training](#) for the humanitarian community, the Iraqi Ministry of Youth, and young people themselves on inter-agency

guidelines for working with and for young people in humanitarian settings.

Please see action area 4, [Resources](#), for resources that may assist you in including young people in funding opportunities.



Increase funding for adolescents and youth who are suffering the direct and indirect impacts of COVID-19 (such as the loss of a job or access to education, health care, or other services, or the inability to exercise civil rights) and for those who are actively mobilizing in response. Identify and improve tracking and reporting mechanisms on resources allocated to young people affected by and responding to this crisis.

Resources

RECOMMENDATIONS

Fund youth-led organizations' COVID-19 mitigation initiatives, including adolescent-led organizations and young women's collectives, and ensure that funding streams are reliable, transparent, sustained, and flexible.

- Streamline processes for applications and transfer of funds. Consider using Google forms and developing guidance videos.
- Support a learning-by-doing approach that is practical, iterative, and flexible.
- Involve young people in the funding allocation process.
- Reporting requirements should be flexible and simple, focused on impact and learning. Use basic templates with spaces for photos and videos.
- Partner with youth networks and organizations to assist in management and reporting of resources. Build regular two-way feedback into the work plan.
- Support youth groups to launch crowd-funding appeals for their work. Share these appeals with your networks.
- Establish inter-agency mechanisms to track funding allocated to youth priorities and youth groups. Advocate, both within agencies and among donors, for increased funding where gaps exist.



Advocate for the inclusion of young people in coordination mechanisms where funding decisions are made.

- Extend invitations for coordination meetings with your youth groups and networks.
- Mentor youth groups participating in coordination mechanisms to participate in assessments, information-sharing, and proposal submissions.

Co-design programmes and proposals with adolescent and youth groups and, where possible, include a budget for their projects in agency budgets.

- Where possible, provide youth groups with lump sums that include overhead, staffing, and contingency funding as well as activity costs.
- Provide mentoring and support in identified and agreed upon programmatic and operational areas that will help youth groups deliver programmes.

Restless Development is launching a [Youth Power Fund](#) to support youth leaders and CSOs taking action to tackle COVID-19.

The **Peace First** [funding opportunity](#) is a rapid response grant developed to assist young people aged 13 to 25 around the world in leading projects that address the impacts of COVID-19. The fund has developed a call to action as well as a social media [toolkit](#).

UNICEF's youth advocacy [guide](#), co-authored by African young people, helps youth tackle problems they see in their own communities.

In May 2020, **UNDP** organized a [global webinar](#) to encourage youth inclusion in the design and delivery of programmes, policy,

and services entitled “Youth Partnerships on Research and Data: A Game Changer for an Inclusive COVID-19 Response”.

The **Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE)** has developed a [technical note](#) on education during the COVID-19 pandemic. This practitioner-orientated publication details key actions, suggested tasks, and resources for the learning and well-being needs of affected children, adolescents, youth, teachers, caregivers, and other education personnel. Aligned with phases of response, the note is framed around the INEE Minimum Standards for delivering quality education in emergencies.



Ensure the generation, use, and sharing of age-, sex- and disability-disaggregated data pertaining to young people and the diversity of COVID-19 impacts.

Data

RECOMMENDATIONS

Generate and share data disaggregated by age, sex, and disability status.

- Collect, analyze, and share sex- and age- disaggregated data on young people in humanitarian settings (for example on who is using health services, accessing communication materials, and participating in learning activities, how many young people are asking for GBV support, receiving GBV support, or in shelters, etc.) in as much detail as possible. Data collection specific to COVID-19 and its impacts should be part of broader longitudinal data collection efforts.
- Provide needs and response analysis for youth disaggregated by sex and for the age brackets 10–11, 12–14, 15–17, 18–19, and 20–24. This contribution will reinforce protection capacity as a focus area of the [Global Compact on Refugees](#).
- Gender inequities are likely to get worse in the context of COVID-19. Conduct a rapid gender and intersectional analysis to understand how gender roles may change or become exaggerated in specific contexts. Consider the programme response implications, including how best to amplify the voices and needs of marginalized adolescents, including girls and those with disabilities.

EXAMPLES & RESOURCES

The data [guidance](#) developed by the **Compact for Young People in Humanitarian Action's** [data task force](#) should be applied in COVID-19-related data collection efforts.

The **UN Major Group for Children and Youth** is [mapping](#) youth-led action on COVID-19 at the community, national, and global levels. A live database will be available to youth organizations to strengthen action on the ground and foster new initiatives.

UNFPA, UNESCO, UNAIDS, Restless Development and the **African Youth Adolescents Network on Population and Development of Eastern and Southern Africa** have launched the “Have Your Say” survey to explore challenges experienced and actions taken by young people to tackle COVID-19.

Youth Co:Lab supports youth innovation and entrepreneurship in Asia-Pacific. In conjunction with **UNDP** and **Citi Foundation**, it conducted a [survey](#) among 400+ young entrepreneurs across 18 countries to understand the impacts of the pandemic on youth and how young people are responding.

UNDP Mali has partnered with 60 young community volunteers to assist in community data collection as part of a COVID-19 [needs assessment](#).

As a guide to developing rapid gender assessments, see the **UN Secretary-General's** [report](#) on the impact of COVID-19 on women as well as **CARE International's** [rapid gender analysis](#).

UNICEF and the **Washington Group** have developed a short set of [disability questions](#) to support disaggregation of monitoring and surveillance data by disability.

UNFPA Jordan in collaboration with **Plan International** and the **Institute for Family Health** has conducted a rapid assessment for women and girls with a focus on GBV and SRH services, findings will be used to inform the RCCE task force of the national COVID-19 response led by the Ministry of Health.

In Thailand, **UNDP** and **UNICEF** convened a rapid online survey to receive inputs from young people related to COVID-19 impacts, engaging young people in conducting self-assessments. Over 6,700 responses were collected, representing all the 77 provinces in Thailand.

Support adolescent- and youth-led and community-driven monitoring and accountability of COVID-19 responses.

- Collect, collate, and disseminate data on positive actions being taken by young people around the world to tackle COVID-19.
- Ensure that youth are empowered to monitor how effectively interventions respond to the needs of the young people and adolescents they target.
- Map primary responders and key humanitarian actors to help young people keep power-bearers accountable throughout the COVID-19 response and recovery.
- Support ongoing youth-led research on the intersectoral impacts of COVID-19 programmes.

EXAMPLES & RESOURCES

Restless Development in partnership with **UNFPA in East and Southern Africa** has produced [recommendations](#) for youth leadership, participation, and accountability, in addition to a comprehensive youth-led research [methodology](#) that includes recommendations for monitoring and accountability.

ActionAid Kenya's youth and training hub, **Global Platform Kenya**, produced a [video](#) demanding accountability for COVID-19-related police brutality.

YPAR (Youth-led Participatory Action Research) Hub hosted by the **University of California at Berkeley** has developed a [methodology](#) for youth-led participatory action research.

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