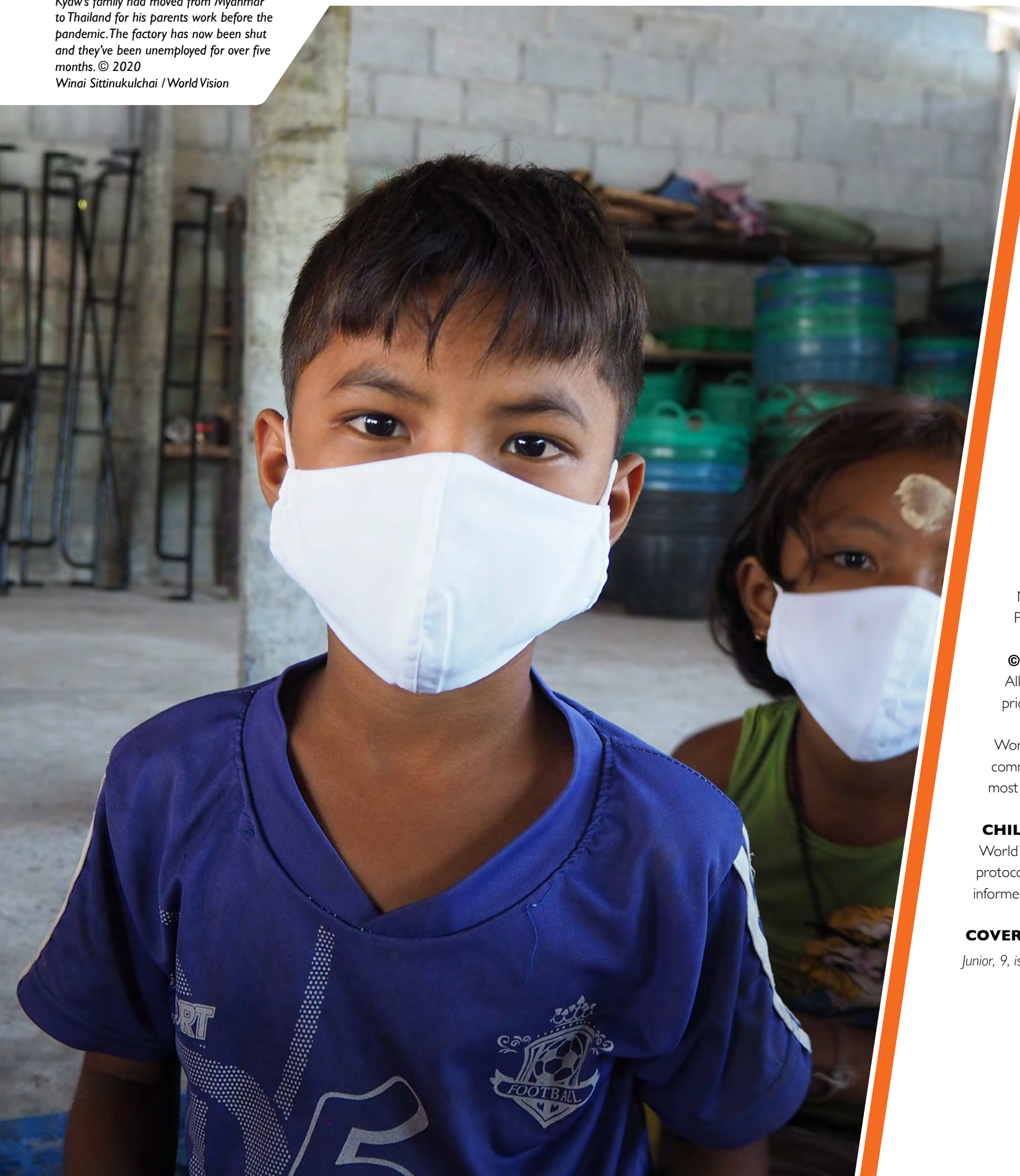


ACT NOW:

Experiences and recommendations
of girls and boys on the impact of COVID-19



Kyaw's family had moved from Myanmar to Thailand for his parents work before the pandemic. The factory has now been shut and they've been unemployed for over five months. © 2020
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RESEARCH MANAGEMENT TEAM:

Deepesh Paul Thakur
Patricio Cuevas-Parra
Kathrine Rose Yee
Kate Shaw
Loredana Giuglea

WRITTEN BY:

Rebekkah Bernheim
Karina Padilla

COPYEDITING

Micah Branaman-Sharma

DESIGN & LAYOUT

Carol Homsí

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CHILD AND ADULT SAFEGUARDING CONSIDERATIONS

World Vision ensured safe and ethical participation of children when they shared their stories, adhering to World Vision's safeguarding protocols. Names of children have been anonymised and changed to ensure confidentiality. All photos were taken and used with informed consent.

COVER PHOTO © WORLD VISION.

Junior, 9, is a sponsored child in Kenya. His grandma's paw-paw trees are helping the family weather the economic impacts of COVID-19



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FOREWORD

With COVID-19, many children, especially the girl child, have been affected. The school closures meant that children were home doing nothing, which presented an opportunity to perpetrators of child abuse in the communities.

This consultation was a perfect chance for me, as a young journalist, to present challenges faced by children to our traditional leader and get feedback from the chief on our proposed solutions to the problems we identified. When talking with my fellow children, I found an increase in teenage pregnancies, defilement cases and cattle herding. I met friends who did not have the means to access the government's online lessons because of not having gadgets (most of us do not have the resources to buy the devices). It was sad to find young girls and boys my age struggling to acquire soap and face masks.

I believe it is important for children to have a voice in the coronavirus response. Leaders need to listen to us and include us in their planning. We can reach people with messages that grownups cannot. My friends and I spoke to 70 households in the villages when schools were closed for five months. Children must take the lead to sensitise our communities on the dangers of COVID-19.

I hope that many people will read this consultation and take what children say seriously. They should be concerned about the problems we identify. As children, we are uniquely able to present these issues to people because we're experiencing the problems ourselves. I also hope that those who read this tell others, who don't know about us young people speaking out, how we are affected.

My main hope is that leaders read this and work to make sure that children are in school, despite COVID-19; it pains me to see girls with children at a young age because it deprives them of a chance to have a better future, and that is what was happening during our school closures.

Kampamba

16, male, young journalist, southern province in Zambia



FOREWORD

Whenever I meet children and young people, I am delighted to hear their thoughts and ideas, to talk about the issues that have an impact on their lives, about their fears, but especially about the solutions they propose. It is my experience, after 25 years working with them, that, when empowered, children and young people are real heroes. I have met so many inspiring young leaders who have helped to change their communities. And this makes me appreciate the honour of introducing this study so much more to amplify the voices of 763 children and young people across 50 countries.

World Vision is committed to listening to children and young people. We believe that including them in the processes that affect their lives helps them to grow as individuals, empowers them and provides unique perspectives that help to target our work as a global community to serve the most vulnerable amongst them. It is their right to have their voices heard and to be consulted on the plans to change the world and shape their destinies.

Even before the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the COVID-19 outbreak a pandemic,¹ World Vision was deeply concerned about the direct and indirect impacts of the virus on the daily lives and well-being of children.² The lockdowns that helped to slow down the spread of the virus have also locked some of those children and young people in terrible conditions. COVID-19 Aftershocks: A perfect storm³ shared some daunting predictions:

- Up to 85 million more girls and boys worldwide are at risk of physical, sexual and/or emotional violence as a result of COVID-19 quarantines and restrictions.
- As many as 13 million more child marriages will occur in the years immediately following the crisis, with at least 4 million more girls married in the next two years.⁴

Over the past six months, I have heard stories from our colleagues about increasing teen pregnancies, families forced to send their children off to work and a worrying increase in calls to child helplines.

In this report, children and young people are telling us about the impact COVID-19 has had on their lives, in their families and on their communities and their recommendations to stay safe, healthy and help to fight the further spread of the virus. Children and young people from around the world shared examples of violence at home, child labour, child marriage, online risks and violence in their communities.

Reading through this report, I believe you will agree that children and young people are not just victims. They are resilient and have an important role to play in addressing the effects of COVID-19. However, they remain the most vulnerable group of people on our planet – and adults have the social, juridical and moral duty to protect them and provide the best development opportunities. Children and young people share stories throughout the report of how they have been coping and supporting their families and friends to address the present crisis. They, supported by World Vision, are calling on their governments and the international community to support their advocacy and awareness-raising activities and include them in planning the response and reconstruction.

It is my hope that reading this report will urge us all to act now. These children, and the millions around the world they represent, deserve nothing less.

Dana Buzducea
Partnership Leader, Advocacy and External Engagement



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

COVID-19 is currently wreaking havoc on countries around the world; between December 2019 and November 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) confirmed more than 46 million cases of COVID-19 and 1.2 million deaths worldwide.⁵ The devastating health consequences of the virus are only the tip of the iceberg. The pandemic's indirect impacts, such as loss of livelihoods, school closures and restrictions on travel and socialising have far-reaching effects on children and young people's health, safety, education and well-being. During this period, many children and young people are not in school and are spending more time at home, with family and online. In this context, children and young people are at risk of hunger, isolation, witnessing and/or experiencing violence at home and in their communities, child labour, child marriage, and online risks.⁶ More than 81% of the children and young people spoken to for this report talked about violence in their homes, online and in their communities since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.^a This consultation delves into this and explores children and young people's other experiences related to COVID-19 and its indirect impacts.

This global report is a consolidation of six regional reports based on consultations conducted between April and August 2020 that used a qualitative approach. Listening to children is at the heart of World Vision's child-centred approach and our commitment to amplifying the voices of children and young people on the world stage. The consultation included individual interviews and focus group discussions with 763 children and young people (403 girls, 334 boys and 26 gender not specified) between the ages of 7 to 19 years old. The research was conducted in 50 countries in regions ranging from Asia Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, the Middle East and Eastern Europe, and sub-Saharan Africa.^b The interviews and focus group discussions took place in-person with physical distancing, over the phone, and through online platforms. This consultation followed the minimum standards for consulting with children and young people developed by the Inter-agency Working Group on Children's Participation.⁷

The report is organised around the three themes emerging from the data: (1) the impacts of COVID-19 on children and young people; (2) their resilient responses to these impacts personally, in their families and communities; and (3) the support that children and young people need to be safe, healthy and help to fight the further spread of the virus.

81%
children talked
about violence
in their homes,
online and in their
communities
since the start of
the COVID-19
pandemic

a- Due to variations in localisations of the methodology, not every question was asked of every respondent. Percentages are accurate reflections of children and young people who spoke about a topic; however, not every child in every country may have responded. This number is based on the total number of children and young people who were asked about violence during COVID-19. As such, it does not include the 123 children and young people interviewed in East Africa or 18 of the children and young people interviewed in Southern Africa.

b- For the purposes of this report, sub-Saharan Africa includes countries in East Africa, Southern Africa and West Africa where World Vision operates.

Tatenda is a youth leader at his school in Zimbabwe, where he engages with fellow students to find ways to improve his school.

Children and young people from around the world shared examples of violence at home and in their communities, child labour, child marriage and online risks. 82% of the young respondents said that COVID-19 had adversely affected their education; 67% also said it had affected their ability to socialise with friends. However, it is clear from their responses that children and young people are not merely victims of the current crisis. Despite the many challenges they face, they also shared stories of resiliency and hope, of following best practices to stop the spread of COVID-19 (87%), and of helping their communities. Children and young people are willing to play their part in fighting the spread of COVID-19; however, they cannot do this alone. They mentioned that they need materials and support to be more efficient. As the biggest vulnerable social group, children need special protection.

Based on the views and experiences shared by children and young people in these consultations, World Vision recommends that the relevant actors work together to provide practical help in the areas of education, health and hygiene, food provision, family livelihoods and COVID-19 awareness raising. Participants' responses highlight the need to establish and maintain comprehensive child protection mechanisms and provide clear avenues to seek support. Relevant stakeholders and decision makers must also listen to children and young people and consider their views when planning COVID-19 response strategies.



Schools in Tanzania were closed for over 100 days as part of COVID-19 control and prevention measures



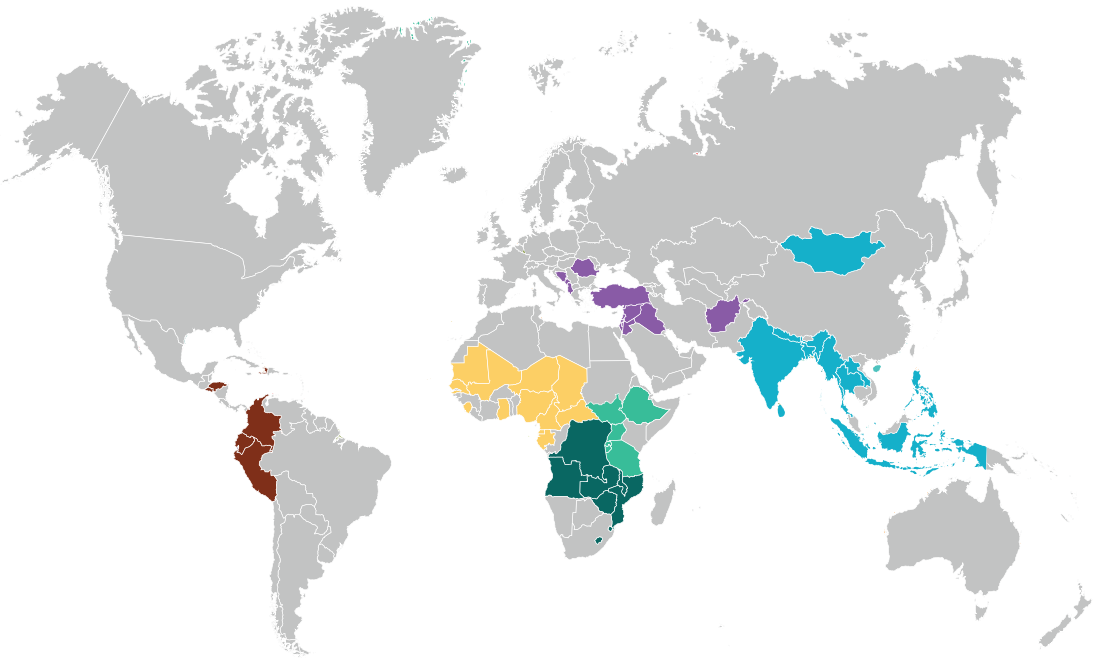
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b- For the purposes of this report, sub-Saharan Africa includes countries in East Africa, Southern Africa and West Africa where World Vision operates.

Children's experiences during COVID-19

Between April – August 2020, World Vision spoke to 763 children and young people in six regions between the ages of 7 to 19 years old.

81%

of children and young people talked about **violence in their homes, communities and online** since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.



CHILDREN ARE BEING MARRIED OFF SOONER, ESPECIALLY IN ASIA PACIFIC AND SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

My parents forced my sister to marry an old man because we are 13 girls and boys at home and my parents did not have the means to feed us all. (Girl, 16, Syria)

DISRUPTION OF EDUCATION

82%

children and young people said COVID-19 has had an impact on their education.

MORE CHILDREN ARE BEING FORCED TO WORK



Many of my friends are working to help out their parents. In our town, we can work at vegetable growing fields and chicken farms. **I work at the vegetable greenhouses and growing fields. We work eight hours a day.** (Tsend-Ayush, 14, male, Mongolia)

MISSED SOCIAL LIVES

67%

children and young people said that the pandemic affected their ability to interact with friends.

EXPOSURE TO INAPPROPRIATE INTERNET CONTENT

47%

of participants said they or someone they knew had faced one or more online risks since the start of the pandemic.

65% of respondents in Sierra Leone reported that they, or someone they knew, had seen inappropriate sexual content online.



One of my friends . . . [was] asked to [snap a] naked [picture of] herself and send [it] to him. Because she did not do [what he asked], he . . . sent her a nude video of himself. **Because she blocked [him] . . . he [wrote] bad things about her on Facebook and photoshopped her picture on a nude form.** (Jessica, 16, female, Sierra Leone)

87%

of children and young people said that they were following one or more preventative measures to **stop the spread of COVID-19.**



Every child should contribute to the fight against COVID-19 by staying at home, following the rules, wearing face masks, washing [their] hands and keeping physical distance in order to prevent the spread of the virus. (Boy, 14, Georgia)



Children and young people are organised in groups. **They collect protective materials, such as handwashing materials, hand soaps, sanitisers and masks from the community and organisations.** They put handwashing pans and soap on the main streets and people-crowded areas. (Binyam, 14, male, Ethiopia)



[We're] spreading awareness about COVID-19 to those who live on the streets and the migrant workers, about how to stay safe by following all the safety measures – [e.g.] washing hands with soap, wearing masks, maintaining social distance. [We] reached out to them with messages on posters and provided food to them as well. (Karishma, 17, female, India)

How children are fighting COVID-19:



- following the rules
- raising awareness
- helping with distributions
- supporting community members
- improving local sanitation by building "tippy taps" and "Veronica buckets"

INCREASED VIOLENCE AT HOME AND IN THE COMMUNITY



My father beats me harshly with a stick. I do not have a good relationship with him, and I got used to being beaten every day. (Girl, 13, Afghanistan)



I heard that several girls were raped during the time of the confinement. Even in my neighbourhood, a girl was raped and is now pregnant. If there were no confinement and no COVID-19, she would have been in school, [and] she wouldn't be pregnant today. (Flore, 15, female, Haiti)



For some children, insecurity pre-dates COVID-19. Children and young people from Syria expressed fears of air strikes, bullets and bombs.

Six messages children and young people have for leaders



1) PROTECT CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE FROM VIOLENCE

Make, or ensure functioning of, all child-related helplines because currently children's helplines do not function well. (Ameet, 16, male, Bangladesh)



2) INVOLVE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN DECISION-MAKING

Our government needs to listen more to children. No one asked us what it was like to be locked in houses for so long. (Girl, 14, Bosnia and Herzegovina)



3) FIGHT THE SPREAD OF THE VIRUS

We need more information on how to prevent and protect from COVID-19 in villages and communities. [The] government should provide materials to prevent and protect from COVID-19, like masks, soaps and alcohol hand gels for children and people living in communities. (Miss Soud, 13, female, Laos)



4) SUPPORT EDUCATION

I would ask the president to improve the education . . . I would ask him to help many children in the rural areas who do not have Internet, radio or TV. (Zelma, 16, female, Peru)



5) HELP FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

The economic crisis in Lebanon is affecting the lives of children. Our families cannot meet our nutritional needs anymore. Everything is very expensive. I want the president to regulate the price of food so we can survive this bad time. (Boy, 14, Lebanon)



6) ASSIST MARGINALISED COMMUNITIES

During this pandemic period, I want the government to better protect children with disabilities, like me. Make sure other children and I are not discriminated against. (Charles, 16, male, Indonesia)

Note: Due to variations in localisations of the methodology, not every question was asked of every respondent. Percentages are accurate reflections of children and young people who spoke about a topic; however, not every child in every country may have responded.

For the full report, please visit: wvi.org/act-now

FINDINGS

I.

INCREASED RISK OF WITNESSING OR EXPERIENCING VIOLENCE

We children feel so in danger because, with the violence that we are currently experiencing, our future is uncertain. (Arnold, 17, male, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC))

Globally, 81% (445 out of 552) of children and young people spoke about their experiences, or those of other children and young people, with different forms of violence and abuse in their homes and communities or online since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.^c

These findings are in keeping with the World Vision report, *The Perfect Storm*, which estimated that because of the global pandemic and its indirect impacts: “Violence against children could increase by between 20% and 32%. This could mean up to 85 million more girls and boys worldwide may be exposed to physical, sexual and/ or emotional violence over the next three months as a result of COVID-19 quarantine.”⁸

Violence against children takes many forms, including physical, sexual, and emotional abuse, and may involve neglect or deprivation. Violence occurs in many settings, including the home, school, community and over the Internet. Similarly, a wide range of perpetrators commit violence against children, such as family members, intimate partners, teachers, neighbours, strangers and other children. Such violence not only inflicts harm, pain and humiliation on children; it also kills. (UNICEF 2015⁹)

^c Please see Appendix Methodology for a full explanation of the survey methods.

🔍 VIOLENCE AT HOME

In my community, children are subject to [a] rise in physical violence and beatings because parents are frustrated from the lockdown. (Boy, 16, Jerusalem/West Bank/Gaza (JWG))

As a result of the current global pandemic, children and young people are spending more time at home, and in environments of heightened stress, children and young people are at greater risk of experiencing or witnessing violence.¹⁰ This was demonstrated in the responses received across the regions, where participants shared examples of experiences with violence at home since the start of the pandemic. The most likely perpetrators of violence against children and young people are people that they know,¹¹ and in some cases, domestic violence was already taking place inside the home prior to the outbreak of the virus. The increased time spent isolated there only increased their risk.

Dola, a 16-year-old female from Bangladesh, said: “Due to lockdown, parents have no work and no income and resort to negative coping [mechanisms]. As a reaction, some parents . . . punish their children and do not give attention to their children.” In Bangladesh, a national impact and needs assessment was conducted in April 2020 by several stakeholders, including World Vision; it found that beatings perpetrated by parents or guardians had increased by 42%.¹²

Globally, violence is a hidden issue that that is likely worsening as more families spend longer hours at home together.¹³ Maria, a girl from Colombia explained: “Children cannot go outside, and it is not suitable for their mental health; the anxiety can affect relationships, producing verbal fights.”

From the time quarantine started, there has been domestic conflicts between parents involving children, where they are physically abused by their own parents or guardians. Physical abuse cases towards children have really risen in our neighbourhood. Previously, the most prevalent violence against children cases were parental neglect. (Fernanda, 16, female, Angola)

Aside from physical violence and verbal abuse, children and young people from all of the regions shared examples of sexual abuse during COVID-19. Young people voiced their concerns that the risk of sexual abuse had increased since the outbreak of COVID-19.

Sexual abuse is, however, happening now. It is a concern because even children as young as 3-years-old are sexually abused by uncles and cousins that live close to them. I even heard of a 3-month-old baby that was molested and she died. (Mwiinga, 18, female, Zambia)

Some of our uncles ask us for sex and give us money. (Jessica, 16, female, Sierra Leone)

CHILD LABOUR

The International Labour Organization (ILO) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) suggest that, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, more children and young people could be pushed into child labour.¹⁴ In every region where the consultation was conducted, participants shared examples of children and young people forced to participate in child labour.

Child labour is defined as “work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to their physical and mental development”.¹⁵ It exposes children and young people to other types of harm and violence, for example, physical, psychological and sexual abuse, as well as dangerous working conditions.¹⁶ This stands in contrast to “children in light work”; the main difference is that child labour is harmful to children and young people’s health and development, whereas “light work” is not.¹⁷

Across Africa, there are currently 71.2 million children and young people involved in child labour; this is the largest number of children and young people working in any region globally.¹⁸ The majority work in family agriculture, and many parents are reliant on their children to help to generate income.¹⁹

Especially since there is no more school, the parents take the opportunity to send and give heavy work to their children ... the fact that today parents no longer work as before, forces some children to contribute to family survival, for example, by selling water, and this exposes them to risks, such as traffic accidents, rape, etc. (Miradie, 15, female, DRC)

The secondary impacts of COVID-19, such as temporary school closures and economic hardship, in combination with existing social norms and gender inequalities, have contributed to children and young people’s involvement in paid work, additional household chores and agricultural work.²⁰

Before COVID-19, I used to go to school for half a day and to work for the other half, now I am working for the whole day. (Girl, 13, Afghanistan)

In my neighbourhood, the children are really suffering. Some parents use the children in the fields, searching for firewood and other hazardous work that harms the child’s development. (Sammy, 16, male, Central African Republic (CAR))

Jordana, a 13-year-old female from Ecuador, explained that children and young people who worked found it difficult to fulfil their school commitments: “I have a schoolmate that has fewer economic resources [so] he works to help his family. He feels bad because he should be studying and not working.”

For some children and young people, the increased time at home has led to increased domestic responsibilities, including looking after younger siblings and doing housework. Young women and girls are more likely to carry household workloads; however, this type of work is rarely represented in child labour estimates.²¹ Like paid labour, in some cases, the extra burden of housework and childcare kept children and young people (mostly young women) from completing their education.²² Eshika, a 12-year-old female from India, said: “I have a friend who does most of the domestic work [in her house] instead of engaging in her studies.” A 15-year-old boy from Romania explained: “Some parents are taking advantage of the school closure to make girls do domestic work.”

CHILD MARRIAGE

Child marriage was recognised as an issue by children and young people globally, particularly in Asia Pacific, sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East and Eastern Europe. Every year, across countries, cultures and regions, 12 million girls are married before the age of 18.²³ The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) estimates that over the next decade there could be an additional 13 million child marriages taking place, that otherwise would not have occurred, because of the indirect effects of COVID-19.²⁴ This is cause for concern as child marriage puts children and young people at greater risk of experiencing sexual and physical violence.²⁵

South Asia has the greatest number of child brides globally, with 44% of the global burden; that is equivalent to “285 million women married, or in a union, before the age of 18”.²⁶ While the practice of child marriage has declined globally, especially in South Asia, no region is on track to eliminate the practice by 2030.²⁷ In Asia Pacific, almost half (25 out of 51) of all children and young people who spoke on the topic reported an increase in child marriage in their communities, and in Bangladesh (67%) the proportion was even higher.

Child marriage is a hidden issue, and the global pandemic may veil the extent of the issue. In Indonesia, for example, marriages often go unregistered.²⁸

There are some children here who [have an unregistered marriage based on sharia law]; about three people also got married in the middle of this pandemic. I’m more worried for the future of the child or her parents, especially since she’s still a child who, at her age should go to school instead of getting married. If she drops out of school, I’m worried how her education will be and her dreams. (Sekar, 16, female, Indonesia)

Sub-Saharan Africa is home to the second largest number of child brides, with over 18% of the global burden. This is equal to 115 million girls married, or in union, before the age of 18.²⁹ Alie, an 11-year-old female from Sierra Leone, stated: “Children are now more afraid of getting married than before.” Noeline, a 16-year-old female from Uganda, reported: “Family disputes amongst parents ... force children to leave home and [enter] into marriage.”

In some extreme cases, participants shared that child marriage was employed by families as a solution to poverty and hunger. In a focus group, young women, between 15 and 18 years old from Zambia, cited a lack of family income and a shortage of food as risk factors for child marriage. They relayed that “mothers let girls to get married because they fail to source enough food to feed the family on their own”. Naimul, a 15-year-old male from Bangladesh, confirmed: “Poverty is forcing many parents to marry off their children at an early age. They are being persecuted, too. Poverty is the prime cause of these issues. I think COVID-19 has increased child marriage and child labour.” Similarly, a 16-year-old Syrian girl said: “My parents forced my sister to marry an old man because we are 13 girls and boys at home and my parents did not have the means to feed us all.”

In Latin America and the Caribbean, the majority of children and young people interviewed reported that they did not know about any cases of child marriage in their communities. This is in line with pre-COVID statistics that indicate that the region is responsible for only 9% of the global burden of child brides; however, this still represents 60 million boys and girls who are wed before the age of 18.³⁰

ONLINE RISKS

60%
children in CAR
said that they
did not have
Internet access

Globally, nearly half (258 out of 552) of children and young people said that they or someone they knew had been exposed to inappropriate content online, sending or receiving indecent images, or cyberbullying.

Online risks can quickly escalate to other forms of violence and abuse. For example, during lockdown, the Philippines' Office of Cybercrime in the Department of Justice reported a 264% increase in reported sexual exploitation of children and young people online.³¹ This issue is unfortunately a global one, and victims and perpetrators no longer necessarily live in the same community, although sometimes they do. A 13-year-old Romanian boy reported: "While surfing the net, I discovered YouTubers who incite girls and boys to violence and sexual abuse. They are followed by girls and boys who are easily influenced by them, and I think it's bad." A 15-year-old Syrian girl shared: "One girl in the camp took [an] inappropriate photo of herself and sent it to her boyfriend . . . When her family [found out] they beat her." Altanchimeg, a 16-year-old female from Mongolia, recounted: "We receive posts and videos on Facebook that are not age appropriate; for example, [they say] 'wanted financial support'. I think this is like prostitution."

Children and young people around the world are spending more time online due to government recommendations to stay home and school closures. For those with access to the Internet, this increased time online can be both positive and negative. After schools closed, many countries opted to deliver lessons through online platforms. Online resources provide opportunities for maintaining children and young people's learning and keep them connected with their peers and teachers. However, increased time spent online may significantly increase children and young people's exposure to risks, such as being contacted by strangers, cyberbullying or viewing inappropriate content.

The regional consultations revealed that not all children and young people have access to the Internet and online education, thereby deepening existing inequalities. This divide was particularly pronounced in sub-Saharan Africa, where in 2017, the World Bank estimated that Internet coverage only reached 19% of the population.³² In CAR, for example, when asked about online risks, the majority of participants (60%) said that they did not have Internet access.

That said, even where Internet access was not available to all children and young people, at least one participant in every country, except CAR, said that they personally had seen inappropriate sexual content online. Joihane, a 15-year-old female from DRC, stated: "Because during these times [when] children no longer go to school, they devote themselves to social networks, and many people spend more time publishing things that harm children's lives, such as pictures of people naked."

Cyberbullying also arose as an issue that children and young people faced online; however, far fewer children and young people raised this concern over other online risks. Solomon, a 14-year-old male from Ghana, shared: "Yes, there are issues of cyberbullying in my community. In attempt to access educational materials online, some children are left in the hands of online fraudsters who bully children through messages [or] threats . . ."

VIOLENCE IN THE COMMUNITY

I heard that several girls were raped during the time of the confinement. Even in my neighbourhood, a girl was raped and is now pregnant. If there were no confinement and no COVID-19, she would have been in school, [and] she wouldn't be pregnant today. (Flore, 15, female, Haiti)

Children and young people in every region gave examples of violence of varying kinds in their communities. For example, in Sierra Leone, children and young people specifically cited "cliques" or gangs, comprised of mostly young men, who made them feel unsafe. In recent years, these have grown from "a loose collection of teenage social groups"³³ to gangs with defined territories and identities who have grown in prominence for perpetrating theft, robbery and electoral violence.³⁴ Natthawadee, a 13-year-old female from Thailand, also highlighted robberies as an issue: "Some people are taking a negative advantage during this COVID-19 situation, such as robbery, which can lead to violence against children."

Children and young people also cited violence perpetrated by soldiers and police. Bickson, a 17-year-old female from Chad, reported that "during curfew the soldiers hit the children". Mariem, a 12-year-old female from Mauritania, explained: "The police have become thieves and rapists."

World Vision considers Mali, Syria, South Sudan, CAR, DRC, and Sudan "fragile contexts" because of the chronic instability, conflict and violence experienced there.³⁵ Many of the children and young people who participated in the consultations from these countries gave examples of extreme and persistent forms of community violence. Some specifically talked about how violence in their communities had increased since the start of the pandemic.

I heard about a child who was kidnapped from our community. During the COVID-19 outbreak, children in my community are experiencing violence more than before. I heard that some groups of thieves kidnap girls and boys [from] the streets and sell their organs to child trafficker groups. (Girl, 13, Afghanistan)

Other children and young people in fragile contexts spoke about the pre-existing and prolonged high levels of violence in their communities and did not mention it in relation to COVID-19. For example, children and young people from Syria expressed fears of air strikes, bullets and bombs. Moreover, they said they were afraid to move around their communities due to frequent attacks, kidnappings, theft, verbal harassment and sexual violence. A 14-year-old Syrian girl said: "I always feel insecure since I live in a tent, not a house, and I am always afraid of bombs and kidnapping."



Nur Nobil, 17, shares his experiences of COVID-19 in Bangladesh

ECONOMIC HARDSHIPS AND FOOD INSECURITY

Food insecurity and poverty are significant issues in their own right, but they are also problematic because, in extreme cases, the stress caused by economic uncertainty and hunger puts children and young people at greater risk of witnessing or experiencing violence.³⁶

In some cases, children and young people reported that economic hardship and food insecurity contributed to instances of child neglect. Mawutor, a 13-year-old male from Ghana, confirmed: "Children are neglected and are often left alone at home without being given food." In other instances, the stress of economic instability and poverty contributed to violence and abuse, for example, Emily, a 17-year-old female from Uganda, recounted: "Poverty during this period has led to unwanted pregnancies, domestic violence and child abuse because children are not in school." One 14-year-old girl in Lebanon said: "With COVID-19 and the economic crisis, children are experiencing violence by their parents because of the stress parents are going through."

Children and young people reported that food insecurity and poverty in their communities worsened following the outbreak of COVID-19.³⁷ Ada, a 15-year-old female from El Salvador, explained that the pandemic worsened existing economic hardships in her community: "Other families have financial needs, perhaps some of them had this problem before, but now [since COVID-19] it is worse." Ada's statement is in line with findings from a recent rapid assessment conducted by World Vision in 24 countries across Latin America, sub-Saharan Africa and Asia Pacific which found an increase in child hunger, violence and poverty due to the economic impacts of COVID-19.³⁸

Estimates suggest that: "The percentage of children under 5 with severe acute malnutrition could rise globally by about 15 per cent (7 million children) over the first 12 months of the pandemic. Certain areas in Africa may see up to 20 – 25 per cent increase."³⁹ Thomas, a 15-year-old male from Tanzania, explained: "[There is a] decrease in household incomes due to the market shutdown, decrease of meals consumed per day (from three meals to one meal a day), and the crops harvested aren't enough for household consumption." One 15-year-old girl from Afghanistan, said: "Some nights we go to sleep without eating food because there is nothing to eat."

SCHOOL CLOSURES

82% children said COVID-19 had impacted their education

When asked how COVID-19 had affected their lives, 82% (559 out of 682) children and young people mentioned that it had had an impact on their education. The majority of children and young people interviewed^d mentioned the negative impacts of COVID-19 on their education – citing school closures, difficulties continuing education at home, and future career or education prospects.

School closures put children and young people at risk of experiencing violence and exploitation, including violence at home, child labour and child marriage.⁴⁰ Dorothy, an 11-year-old female from Malawi, replied: "Yes, the closure of schools is also exposing children to different kinds of child abuse, which includes child labour, as parents are taking advantage of the presence of children in the households." Abie, a 14-year-old female from Sierra Leone, shared that "there are some girls who are afraid their parents will give their hand out in marriage since there is no school right now".

^d- By region, the majority of participants that said COVID-19 was affecting their education: 83 out of 123 in East Africa, 100 out of 111 in Southern Africa, 120 out of 160 in West Africa, 76 out of 110 in Asia Pacific, 50 out of 59 in Latin America and the Caribbean, and 130 out of 130 in Middle East and Eastern Europe

Apart from increasing children and young people's exposure to violence and exploitation, school closures have other adverse consequences for children and young people's health and well-being. For example, school closures interrupt learning, increase dropout rates and affect children and young people's access to nutritious meals.⁴¹ Children and young people around the world rely on school meals to support their health and development. Globally, World Food Programme (WFP) estimates that, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent school closures, 346 million children and young people have lost access to school meal programmes.⁴² Sipelele, an 18-year-old female from Eswatini, said: "COVID[-19] has affected children's lives since they used to go [to] school and get some food, and now some miss that meal they got from school." As a result, the onus is on families to provide more food in a time of increasing economic uncertainty.

NAVIGATING COMPLEX HOME ENVIRONMENTS

67% children said the pandemic had changed their ability to socialise with friends

When asked how COVID-19 was affecting their lives, and the lives of children and young people in their communities, 67% (464 out of 693)^e of participants responded that the pandemic had changed their ability to socialise with friends.

Children and young people's support networks shrank due to school, church and mosque closures; social distancing measures; and "stay-at-home" recommendations. Children and young people said they missed social interactions with friends, teachers and faith leaders in their communities. Mariem, a 12-year-old female from Mauritania, said: "I don't see my friends as I used to, nor my teachers, and only I spend more time with the family."

This isolation also has repercussions on children and young people's ability to seek help, if they experience violence or abuse. When asked whether they or their friends knew whom to tell or how to seek help, if they felt unsafe or threatened by violence, the majority of respondents in Asia Pacific (95%),^f Latin America and the Caribbean (94%),^g West Africa (82%)^h and the Middle East and Eastern Europe (100%)ⁱ replied yes.^j However, while many children and young people knew where to seek help, not all did. Joao, a 16-year-old male from Angola, stated: "Myself, I know who to report to in our community, though it will be good for every child to know who to consult." Mhlonishwa, a 12-year-old male from Eswatini, gave this example: "I could be violated by my parents right here at home and have nobody to tell. But [before], I could call the police, tell my teacher or a trusted relative."

^e-East Africa (72 out of 123 respondents), West Africa (101 out of 160), Southern Africa (55 out of 111), Asia Pacific (63 out of 110), Latin America and the Caribbean (43 out of 59), MEER (130 out of 130)

^f- 73 out of 77 respondents

^g- 35 out of 37 respondents

^h- 132 out of 160 respondents

ⁱ- 130 out of 130 respondents

^j- This question was not asked of children in East Africa, and only 32 children in Southern Africa



2.

RESILIENT RESPONSES: FACING CHALLENGES AND CREATING OPPORTUNITIES

Children and young people were aware that they could contribute to making a significant difference through individual and collective actions in their families and communities. This section looks at the ways in which they are responding to the challenges created by the pandemic. Many examples in this section give evidence of the actions children and young people have taken towards bettering their own lives and the lives of those around them, but due to lockdowns and “stay-at-home” recommendations, some instances highlight their future plans.

🔍 FOLLOWING BEST PRACTICES TO STOP COVID-19

Children and young people can contribute to the fight against COVID-19 in different ways. First, I have to start with myself. I have to be safe first, then I can help others be safe too. (Sital, 18, female, Nepal)

87%
children said
that they were
following
one or more
preventative
measures
to stop the
spread of the
virus.

Globally, 87% (488 out of 563) of the children and young people asked said that they were following one or more preventative measures to stop the spread of the virus in their communities (i.e. social distancing, staying home, avoiding large gatherings and practising good hygiene). The majority of children and young people in Asia Pacific (83%),^k Latin America and the Caribbean (84%),^l and sub-Saharan Africa (88%)^m shared examples of this during interviews.

When asked how children and young people were contributing or could contribute to fighting the spread of COVID-19, participants said that they were following the guidance given by their governments and other trusted non-governmental organisations (e.g. World Vision and WHO). Parfait, a 7-year-old male from Rwanda, stated: “Children and young people are very much contributing to the fight against the spread of COVID-19; we respect all measures [put in place] to control COVID-19.” A 14-year-old boy from Georgia said, “Every child should contribute to the fight against COVID-19 by staying at home, following the rules, wearing face masks, washing [their] hands and keeping physical distance in order to prevent the spread of the virus.”

While children and young people recognised the importance of following these guidelines, they also expressed that it was sometimes difficult for them to do so. Benjamin, a 13-year-old male from Sierra Leone, stated: “It is difficult to breathe when you wear [a] face mask.”

^k 92 out of 110 respondents

^l 50 out of 59 respondents

^m 346 out of 394 (i.e. East Africa (93 out of 123 respondents), Southern Africa (102 out of 111) and West Africa (151 out of 160))

AT HOME WITH FAMILY

POSITIVE OPPORTUNITIES AT HOME

Children and young people shared their positive experiences of spending more time with family as a result of “stay-at-home” guidance. Eden, an 11-year-old female from Zambia, responded: “My parents and I are together, and this has helped us to bond as a family.” A 15-year-old girl from Georgia agreed: “In ‘normal’ days, my mom used to go out every evening and gather with the neighbours. [She would] come back a little late, so we often couldn’t play dominoes or Joker [a card game] together. [But] during the lockdown, she stayed with us at home and we organised family evenings all together.”

HELPING THEIR COMMUNITIES

Based on their responses during this consultation, children and young people have contributed significantly to slowing the spread of the virus in their communities. Not only that, participants have also made future plans and shared creative ideas they can further make a difference, such as through awareness raising, volunteering, supporting and encouraging others, and reaching out to marginalised communities.

AWARENESS RAISING

Children and young people shared examples of how they are raising awareness about the spread and prevention of COVID-19 by modelling best practices and disseminating information to others in their communities.

I educate people around the neighbourhood on how to protect themselves from the disease. My message is to tell people to stay at home, to use a mask, and if they sneeze or cough to do so in their elbow. (Jean Gardi, 17, male, Haiti)

Children and young people also took the opportunity while at home with their families to teach them and other people in their communities about following best practices to fight the spread of COVID-19. Omar, a 13-year-old male from Senegal, suggested: “We [can] educate our parents and our friends on the means of prevention of the disease.” Adalia, a 15-year-old female from Peru, reflected: “Economically we cannot contribute, we cannot make more hospitals, buy more beds, but we can make our voices heard so that citizens become aware of the risks.” Apart from teaching family and friends, children and young people had many creative ideas on how to raise awareness to reach a larger audience.

In my community, [we] (two of my colleagues and I) use the MP3 player . . . to disseminate this information. The Department of Community Development and Social Welfare Directorate forward jingles on COVID-19, and we play the jingles twice a week. (Sarah, 13, female, Ghana)

In our community, a group of young people named “youth volunteers” has been formed who are in charge of raising awareness within the community about staying at home, handwashing, and observing other safety measures, like wearing masks and social distancing. (Theogene, 18, male, Rwanda)

The level of understanding about [how] COVID-19 [spreads] is very low . . . But community volunteers and some volunteer youths were participating in awareness creation and providing cleaning services. (Wondy, 9, male, Ethiopia)

VOLUNTEERING

Children and young people spoke about the ways in which they were volunteering to help to fight the spread of COVID-19. For example, children and young people volunteered for different organisations, for example, to distribute food parcels, deliver masks and provide hand sanitisers. A 14-year-old boy from Palestine said: “Young people in my community helped through different youth associations or the Red Cross to distribute food parcels.”

In sub-Saharan Africa, children and young people volunteered by helping to construct handwashing stations (e.g. “tippy taps” and “Veronica buckets”).ⁿ

Children and young people are organised in groups. They collect protective materials, such as handwashing materials, hand soaps, sanitisers and masks from the community and organisations. They put handwashing pans and soap on the main streets and people-crowded areas. (Binyam, 14, male, Ethiopia)

SUPPORTING AND ENCOURAGING OTHERS

Children and young people shared their experiences and ideas to inspire and encourage people in their communities.

I also wrote thank you notes and recorded a video clip to send in support of the health-care providers, doctors and nurses. (Tawan, 18, male, Thailand)

Religion and nationality are not important, what is important is the support we give to each other during these hard times. (Girl, 14, Bosnia and Herzegovina)

[Children and young people] can send positive messages to other children about personal care through letters or videos saying that this situation will change someday. That for now, we have to be patient, and concentrate all our energy on studying, with the resources we already have, making the best of the time with the family. (Soleiddy, 17, female, Ecuador)

REACHING OUT TO MARGINALISED COMMUNITIES

Refugees, migrants and displaced people, like other marginalised groups, may experience the negative indirect impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic even more severely due to their precarious statuses.⁴³ Children and young people were especially concerned that messages and guidelines were not reaching the most marginalised or vulnerable groups, including disabled people, the elderly, indigenous communities and those living in poverty. Chadza, a 15-year-old male from Malawi, reported: “We are transmitting what is being spread through the media to those who cannot get the message, like the elderly and the disabled. We are also washing [our] hands with soap and observing social distance.” One participant said she wanted to do what she could to help the homeless and migrant workers by:

spreading awareness about COVID-19, to those who live on the streets and the migrant workers, about how to stay safe by following all the safety measures – [e.g.] washing hands with soap, wearing masks, maintaining social distancing. The children and youth together reached out to them with messages on posters and provided food to them as well. (Karishma, 17, female, India)

ⁿ “Tippy taps” and “Veronica buckets” go by a variety of names in different regions around the world but are two common handwashing stations that can be set up in areas where running water may not be readily available. “Tippy taps” are water jugs that are suspended by a string with a hole punctured in the lid. Another string is attached to a stick as a lever to tilt the jug hands-free, allowing water to flow for handwashing. “Veronica buckets” are buckets with a water spigot often found for handwashing outside schools, health centres and restaurants.



3.

WHAT'S NEXT? SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

During this consultation, children and young people shared what resources they needed to continue their efforts to fight against the spread of COVID-19 and provided suggestions to their countries' leaders on how their governments could help to support and protect children and young people in the time of COVID-19. Based on these replies, recommendations fell into six key areas: (1) protecting children and young people from violence, (2) including children and young people in decision-making, (3) fighting the spread of the virus, (4) supporting education, (5) helping families and communities and (6) assisting marginalised communities. Here are a few of their ideas in their own words.

PROTECT CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE FROM VIOLENCE

[The government] urgently needs to protect us [children and young people] from all kinds of violence. (Soleiddy, 17, female, Ecuador)

Children and young people asked their governments to strengthen existing strategies to protect children. Ameet, a 16-year-old male from Bangladesh, suggested that the government should, "make, or ensure functioning of, all child-related helplines because currently children's helplines do not function well". A 14-year-old girl in Lebanon asked organisations to advocate for the enforcement of existing laws: "There are laws in Lebanon to stop violence against children, but they are not being applied. Non-governmental organisations should work on stressing the application of these laws."

Participants recognised that protecting children and young people requires collaboration between children and young people and adults. Esther, a 17-year-old male from DRC, agreed: "The government and other actors, like NGOs [non-governmental organisations], the UN [United Nations], etc., must involve children and ensure that the protection of the child is always respected, despite the time that the country goes through."

Children and young people cited school disruption as a factor that may exacerbate the risk of violence. For this reason, some participants called on their governments to work on the safe reopening of schools to protect children and young people. Ambrose, a 12-year-old male from Sierra Leone, implored: "I'm . . . pleading with the president to reopen schools to prevent our sisters from getting [married] or even [having] early teenage pregnancies."

In light of the increased time spent online since the start of COVID-19, thereby increasing exposure to online risks, some children and young people asked for more information and protection in this matter. A 14-year-old girl from Lebanon believed that "children need awareness sessions to learn how to deal with people online in order to avoid any online harm".

INCLUDE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN DECISION-MAKING

The participation of children is a right, not a favour, and COVID-19 affects our lives [too]. (Arnold, 17, male, DRC)

Children and young people are aware that they have the right to participate and they want to be listened to by their countries' decision makers and take part in decision-making processes. A 14-year-old girl from Bosnia and Herzegovina stated: "Our government needs to listen more to children. No one asked us what it was like to be locked in houses for so long." Elvis, an 18-year-old male from Honduras, agreed: "We need to be taken into account; we also have ideas, and each and every one of us is important. We also deserve to be heard."

Participants across the regions highlighted that they should be involved in strategising to help to stop the spread of the virus.

I believe that children and young people can play a pivotal role in raising awareness on COVID-19 and providing information to people. Because, in many cases, they have a better education and more access to technology and information than their parents and other community members. (Tamiru, 16, male, Ethiopia)

FIGHT THE SPREAD OF THE VIRUS

Children and young people want to contribute to curbing the spread of COVID-19, but they cannot do it alone. Participants said they and their families must receive up-to-date information as well as resources to protect themselves.

We ask for the facilities, such as masks, soaps and buckets, especially in schools, so that we can fight easily against COVID-19. (Kelvin, male, Tanzania)

We need more information on how to prevent and protect from COVID-19 in villages and communities. [The] government should provide materials to prevent and protect from COVID-19, like masks, soaps and alcohol hand gels for children and people living in communities. (Miss Soud, 13, female, Laos)

[We need] to be connected with the Internet and be able to be informed about this pandemic because if [we are] not very well informed, then we would not know anything. (Jose, 13, male, El Salvador)

The president should establish information centres in all communities as a means to disseminate information to the population. (Sarah, 13, female, Ghana)

Children and young people are also interested in continuing to disseminate information; however, they need resources to do so. A 16-year-old boy from Iraq requested: "We need awareness-raising leaflets and posters to distribute and post in the camp." Jihad, a 12-year-old male from Burundi, said: "Young people need [transportation, e.g. bicycles], which they can use while going to sensitise other children and adults [about COVID-19]. They also need banners and posters [to] use in sensitisation sessions."

SUPPORT EDUCATION

[I want the head of state to] talk to the minister of education and our teachers [and tell them] that they must come up with learning techniques [for] while we are staying at home; these must benefit all children, both rich and poor, as some do not have radios at their homes. (Sinethemba, 14, female, Eswatini)

Participants globally requested that their governments support children and young people in the area of education, including improving their access to remote learning platforms, improving the quality of education and providing better access to future opportunities.

Children and young people recognised that school closures have further highlighted existing inequalities and educational challenges and asked for support for children and young people who do not have electricity, Internet, radios or books at home.

I would ask the president to improve the education . . . I would ask him to help many children in the rural area who do not have Internet, radio or TV. (Zelma, 15, female, Peru)

I want to let the government know that it is quite difficult for us to take an online class; we cannot ask questions, and sometime the teachers go too fast. I would like our PM [prime minister] to support [us with] educational materials and cell phones. I want them to actually visit the area. I also want to let them know that the indigenous people have no Internet access and [the government] should provide them one. (Jirawong, 15, male, Thailand)

Children and young people also shared some suggestions to ensure students' safety and security when reopening the schools. Nadeige, a 12-year-old female from Burundi, talked about the need to improve schools' infrastructure to ensure social distancing is possible amongst students: "Where it is possible, classrooms should be increased to respect social distancing while learning." Similarly, a 14-year-old boy from Kosovo asked his "prime minister to create safer conditions at schools for children so that we can be safe and have suitable facilities". Sisay, a 12-year-old female from Ethiopia, asked their country's leaders to "create new ways for children to continue their studies . . . [and] play games [while] social distancing. They must also teach children continuously how to protect themselves from COVID-19 and disinfectant classrooms with chemicals."

HELP FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

Children and young people called on governments to support their families and communities in a number of ways, including increased financial support for families who had lost their livelihoods or were struggling to make ends meet.

I want the government to help with every family's income; they should try to take a look at all the rural areas, not only in the inner-suburban areas. We've seen some families lose their source of income and so on. There is now a lack of resources and help. (Natthawadee, 13, female, Thailand)

Governments, NGOs and other people have to economically support poor people who are affected due to COVID-19. (Betelihem, 13, male, Ethiopia)

Participants also pointed out that families and communities were going hungry.

The economic crisis in Lebanon is affecting the lives of children. Our families cannot meet our nutritional needs anymore. Everything is very expensive. I want the president to regulate the price of food so we can survive this bad time. (Boy, 14, Lebanon)

[We need] food because there are some families and children who do not have [food] to eat. Also, [we want] support for our parents with job opportunities, so that they would have money and could feed us. (Jenifer, 14, female, Ecuador)

We have suffered too much during this period of the disease; we want food and material assistance to fight against this COVID-19 disease. (Kaltouma, 12, female, Chad)

Children and young people also asked their governments to provide other basic necessities, such as clean water and electricity.

I would like the head of state to make electricity and drinking water available. (Jean Gardi, 17, Haiti)

Our families need to be provided with water so that we can wash our hands as there is scarcity of water in the community – for example, tankers that will supply us with water. (Sinethemba, 14, female, Eswatini)

Better distribution of electricity and potable water is needed. (Jean, 17, male Haiti)

ASSIST MARGINALISED COMMUNITIES

Children and young people spoke about the need to protect people living in the most challenging situations in their countries, including people with disabilities, those living with HIV and AIDS, migrants, and those living in fragile settings.

During this pandemic period, I want the government to better protect children with disabilities, like me, to not be discriminated against. (Charles, 16, male, Indonesia)

For those living with HIV and AIDS and other illnesses, [COVID-19] is a risk because some are critical and really need nutritious foods to survive. If they die, there is a risk of children again not having people to look after them. So, I think we need to do something as a country to make sure everyone is protected and to reduce the spread of COVID-19. (Evan, 18, male, Zambia)

Ensure that people living with disabilities are catered for and aren't left out because they are equally at risk of getting COVID-19. There should be an organisation specifically focused on people living with disabilities, to sensitise them on COVID-19, particularly the deaf, blind and mute because we may want to help them as regular people but struggle communicating with them. (Dabulamanzi, 16, male, Eswatini)

We ask humanitarian organisations to provide us with masks and disinfectants to protect the elderly in the [refugee] camps. (Boy, 13, Jordan)



CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Children and young people are ready and willing to play their part in fighting the spread of COVID-19. However, they need support from their governments, UN agencies, donors, NGOs and the private sector to continue their efforts to do so. Relevant stakeholders must create an environment where child rights are protected and children and young people are included as actors in their own right.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM WORLD VISION

On the basis of these findings from this research, World Vision suggests the following recommendations to ensure that children and young people are active participants, protected, educated and have their basic survival and development needs fulfilled throughout this crisis.

- **Children and young people must be protected from violence, equipped with practical help to fight the spread of COVID-19, supported to continue their education, and provided with livelihood opportunities for their families.**
- **Recognise and embrace children and young people as rights-holders and social actors with capabilities to contribute to stopping the spread of COVID-19.** This includes utilising appropriate strategies to ensure that their participation is safe, sensitive, and meaningful, including the provision of age-appropriate information.
- **Governments, donors, UN agencies and the international community must prioritise child protection actions in all national COVID-19 responses.** This includes ensuring continued functioning of child-friendly reporting mechanisms, such as SOS hotlines.
- **Governments, UN agencies and civil societies must fund and implement a mental health and psychosocial (MHPSS) strategy** for reaching those directly and indirectly affected, especially the most vulnerable, taking into account gender, age and disability.
- **Governments, UN agencies, civil societies, faith-based organisations and the private sector should work together to make the Internet a safer place for children and young people.** This includes strict implementation of laws on cybercrime, such as the online sexual exploitation of children and young people and online bullying, and intensifying efforts to raise online safety awareness amongst children and young people.
- **Governments, donors, UN agencies and the international community must improve access to and availability of age-appropriate and gender-responsive distance education methods** to mitigate the disruption school closures, due to COVID-19, are having on learning.



- **Governments must ensure that education reaches the most vulnerable children and young people,** particularly where learning has already been difficult or interrupted due to fragility or exclusion.
- **Distance learning curriculums should include life skills education** to help children and young people to recognise and mitigate violence, exclusion, stigmatisation and poverty-associated risks. This is crucial to preventing increased rates of child labour and child marriage.
- **Governments, donors, UN agencies and the international community must urgently take action to scale their responses to acute hunger** by investing in public health and water, sanitation, and hygiene to address root causes of child malnutrition.
- **Governments should ensure social protection measures are in place for the most vulnerable throughout the response and recovery phases.**
- **Governments, banks and microfinance institutions should develop and fund poverty alleviation plans** that incorporate economic recovery lending to help the most vulnerable families to recover more quickly after the shock.

APPENDIX: METHODOLOGY



Nine-year-old Ireen collects clean water from the borehole that was drilled by World Vision in her village.

WorldVision considers children and young people as active social actors capable of interacting with others and shaping their environments, not helpless, hidden victims of this pandemic. Following this premise, the methodology for this consultation included collaboration between adults and young leaders engaged as peer researchers.

AIM AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The aim of the regional child consultation project was to explore children and young people's views and experiences related to the outbreak of COVID-19. Participants were asked about their views on the impact of COVID-19, and/or their right to be protected from violence and abuse, as well as their needs and concerns to fight against the spread of the virus.

Research questions included:

- How is COVID-19 affecting the lives of children and young people in their countries and communities?
- How are children and young people contributing, or can they contribute, to the fight against the spread of COVID-19?
- Are there children and young people in your community who are facing violence or abuse in this time of COVID-19?

METHOD, DATA COLLECTION, AND ANALYSIS

This project used a qualitative interview approach which allowed the research team to capture information about participants' personal meanings and interpretations.⁴⁴ The data were collected through interviews and focus groups in-person with social distancing, over the phone and via online platforms. The World Vision team in each country adapted the data collection procedure to the contexts of the participants. In each region, interviews and/or focus groups were conducted using open-ended questions and a series of prompt questions to stimulate conversations. As for analysis, audio recordings were transcribed, and the research team analysed the transcripts to identify emerging themes and patterns mentioned by children and young people.

ETHICS

This consultation followed the minimum standards for consulting with children and young people developed by the Inter-agency Working Group on Children's Participation.⁴⁵ These principles include transparency, honesty, accountability, provision of a child-friendly environment, equality of opportunity, and the safety and protection of young participants.⁴⁶ This project took into account the special considerations required to gain informed consent, ensure confidentiality and anonymity, acknowledge the diverse cultures of the research sites, and refrained from presenting any information that may potentially harm participants.⁴⁷ The facilitation team ensured safe and ethical participation of children and young people, strictly adhering to World Vision's safeguarding protocols, including a referral procedure in coordination with local partners engaged in the crisis response. In order to ensure that participation was meaningful, safe and ethical, World Vision staff members facilitated conversations with the child participants, and they were encouraged to decide on their own whether or not they would participate.

SAMPLE

This consultation included 763 children and young people (403 girls, 334 boys, and 26 gender not specified) between the ages of 7 and 19 years old from six regions around the world. This report is not representative of the views of all children and young people from these regions. What this report does do, however, is provide a useful snapshot of what children and young people are thinking and feeling about their experiences living in the time of COVID-19.

Table 1. Consultation participants

Region	Countries	Total participants	Girls	Boys	Gender not specified	Ages
Asia Pacific	WBangladesh, India, Indonesia, Laos, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand	110	71	39	0	11 – 19 years old
Latin America and the Caribbean	Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Haiti, Honduras, Peru	59	37	22	0	11 – 18 years old
Southern Africa	Angola, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia, Zimbabwe	181	95	86	0	7 – 18 years old
East Africa	Burundi, Ethiopia, Rwanda, South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Kenya ^o	123	55	42	26	7 – 18 years old
West Africa	Central African Republic (CAR), Chad, Ghana, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, Sierra Leone	160	80	80	0	9 – 18 years old
Middle East and Eastern Europe	Afghanistan, Albania, Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Iraq, Jerusalem, West Bank and Gaza (JWG), Lebanon, Romania, Jordan, Syria, Turkey ^p	130	65	65	0	13 – 16 years old

^o- The report also draws on findings from interviews conducted in Kenya as part of another World Vision consultation, Children's voices, from May to July 2020.

^p- Children and young people interviewed from countries where World Vision has a Syria Response, i.e. Jordan, Syria and Turkey, were all displaced Syrian children and young people.

Sarafina with her daughter Grace. Sarafina says coronavirus has negatively impacted business in her area, forcing her to close her grocery shop.



ENDNOTES

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INTERNATIONAL OFFICES

Executive Office

Waterview House
1 Roundwood Avenue
Stockley Park
Uxbridge
Middlesex UB11 1FG
UK
+44.207.758.2900

New York and United Nations Liaison Office

919 2nd Avenue New York
2nd Floor
New York NY 10017
USA
+1.212.355.1779

WVI Geneva and United Nations Liaison Office

Geneva Nations 6th floor Rue
du Pré-de-la-Bichette 1
1202 Geneva, Switzerland+41 22
592 1500

WV Brussels & EU Representation

18, Square de Meeûs
1st floor, Box 2
B-1050 Brussels
Belgium
+32.2.230.1621