



STATEMENT ON COVID-19 & YOUTH

UNITED NATIONS INTER-AGENCY NETWORK ON
YOUTH
DEVELOPMENT

INTRODUCTION

The unprecedented global health crisis we are facing is affecting all parts of society and changing lives and livelihoods. In all types of crises and times of need, from climate change to armed conflict or political unrest, young people and youth-led organizations have been quick to take action and respond to the needs of others. The same is happening now during the COVID-19 pandemic.

While attention is currently focused on those most immediately affected by the virus, there are many indications that the COVID-19 pandemic will have long-lasting social, cultural, economic, political and multidimensional impacts on the whole of societies, including young people, as highlighted by the Secretary General's Report "Shared Responsibility, Global Solidarity" (March 2020).

CALL TO ACTION

The United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development (UN IANYD) is committed to the goals enshrined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the World Programme of Action for Youth and the UN Youth Strategy. Respect for all human rights - including economic, social and cultural rights as well as civil and political rights - is fundamental to the success of public health responses and recovery from the pandemic.

This is why members of the UN Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development (UN IANYD) are calling for:

- 1) Partnering, safely and effectively, with young people during and after the COVID-19 crisis;
- 2) Recognizing young people's own actions and their potential to advance the fight against the pandemic; and,
- 3) Understanding the specific impacts the pandemic has and will have on young people, while ensuring that COVID-19 related responses uphold young people's human rights and are inclusive of young people's specific needs.

YOUNG PEOPLE'S ACTIONS

In increasing numbers, young people are proactively combating the spread of the virus and working to mitigate and address the pandemic's impacts. For example, young people are already:

RAISING AWARENESS AND ENHANCING CONNECTIONS

- Young people are at the forefront of risk communication initiatives - i.e. spreading the word about combating misinformation, discrimination and stigma related to the crisis, as well as the importance of physical distancing and proper measures to stop the spread of the virus. For instance, Indigenous youth are disseminating information about the virus in local Indigenous languages; and networks of young people such as those living with HIV are reaching out to their peers to assess their needs, monitoring disruption of services and ensuring dissemination of information on how to access antiretrovirals; or using various platforms to spread adapted and fact-based information. Young people are also connecting communities together at a time of separation, through innovative ideas and social media platforms to raise community spirit.

SUPPORTING OTHERS

- Young people are helping promote the World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines and addressing the COVID-19-related needs of the most vulnerable in their communities, including persons with disabilities, older persons, migrants, refugees and those living in slums and informal settlements. Across the world, young people are volunteering to safely help seniors and other at-risk groups to access supplies, such as food and medication. Young people are also assisting schools with limited resources by transferring and translating school curricula for broader on-line use, or by providing tools for physical activity and sport during confinement. Young people are also providing guidance on thorough handwashing practices so as to reduce the spread of the virus. Additionally, young people are contributing to data-collection and monitoring, including in relation to marginalized communities, to assess the COVID-19 response. Through social media, young people are also finding ways to check-in on, and support, others' mental health.

SAFEGUARDING HUMAN RIGHTS

- Young people are finding new ways to mitigate the risks that physical distancing poses on social justice and inclusion, as well as safeguarding the human rights of groups who are at-risk. Young people are also seeking accountability for decisions made in COVID-19 responses, in order to strengthen institutions and the rule of law through transparency and anti-corruption measures.

SAVING LIVES

- Even in 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. Young researchers are also working to further understand animal to human disease transmission (zoonosis) to help prevent similar outbreaks in the future.

ADDRESSING THE ECONOMIC AND FOOD SECURITY IMPACT OF THE CRISIS

- Young workers, including young farmers and rural entrepreneurs, are innovating and using various technologies and communication tools to develop local solutions. Such work is critical to maintain supply chains and build alternate, more resilient and inclusive economies, which are vital to ensure access to an adequate food supply for the population.

Young people are part of the solution, actively contributing to efforts to reduce the spread of the virus and mitigate the pandemic's impact. Young people, as torchbearers of our sustainable development, are advocating for environmental action to drive transformative change, at scale, to leave no one behind.

ENGAGING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE DURING AND AFTER THE PANDEMIC

When developing initiatives to support young people's efforts to safely and effectively act as agents of change in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, a number of important elements need to be taken into consideration, such as:

INCLUSION AND PARTICIPATION

- Efforts to mitigate the short and long-term impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic require an unprecedented level of collaboration. Young people should be able to actively participate in shaping responses, and need to be meaningfully included in all aspects and phases of the response.

DUTY OF CARE

- When collaborating to fight COVID-19, adequate caution and prudence is required to ensure young people, particularly young women and girls, are not exposed to unnecessary dangers related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

TRUST

- As for other global challenges, such as climate change, biodiversity loss and sustaining peace, the most efficient solutions are always those leveraging everyone's collective strengths and contributions. Young people are already developing and implementing solutions on multiple fronts; they are trustworthy partners. These actions by young people need to be invested in, recognized and amplified. This also offers opportunities for institutions and governments to enhance trust in young people and strengthen social cohesion among groups and between generations.

LONG-TERM COMMITMENT

- While a large portion of the world's resources will need to be redirected toward the fight against the virus and the post-pandemic recovery, youth development should remain a top priority. For the world to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic in a sustainable and equitable manner, young people need to be supported to reach their full potential and thrive.

NO YOUNG PERSON LEFT BEHIND

- Interventions related to the COVID-19 pandemic and recovery need to be mindful of young people who are marginalized or vulnerable, including rural young people, young migrants and refugees, adolescent girls and young women, Indigenous and afro-descendent youth, young persons with disabilities, young people living with HIV, young members of LGBT communities, and others who are potentially marginalized and in vulnerable situations. A strong and sustainable recovery is possible only if young people are reached and included in this process and related interventions.

Efforts to stop the spread of the virus and to rebuild in a sustainable and equitable manner must meaningfully include young people and support their unique contribution. However, this cannot be done at the cost of young people's own development or without including the most vulnerable.

IMPACT ON YOUNG PEOPLE

While young people are already taking actions to stop the spread of the disease and mitigate the repercussions of the pandemic, it is critical to recognize the multiple and diverse impacts the COVID-19 pandemic already has and will have on young people and their human rights. These include, among many others:

RIGHT TO HEALTH

- Limited access to health insurance coverage, especially in low- and middle-income countries without Universal Health Coverage, reduces young people's opportunities to access appropriate and timely health care and services should they become sick. Furthermore, with the observed disruption of health services, young people who need essential, time-sensitive and life-saving medication and services may risk not being able to access them, thereby increasing the likelihood of developing complications when infected. These challenges may be further exacerbated for young people with disabilities. In addition, the crisis – and particularly the confinement and physical distancing measures – poses a series of mental health challenges to young people and may aggravate the state of youth with pre-existing mental health conditions.

RIGHT TO SAFETY

- Confinement measures increase the likelihood of violence towards young people - particularly physical and sexual violence against girls, boys, adolescent girls and young women - and may also hinder their ability to seek supportive services, including mental health services. Also, disproportionate restrictions by governments can leave young peacebuilders, human rights and environmental defenders less protected against attacks and threats.

RIGHT TO EMPLOYMENT

- Around one in five of the world's youth are not in employment, education or training (with young women in this group outnumbering young men two to one) and youth unemployment rates are about 3 times as high as those of adults. Young people, and especially young women, are highly vulnerable since most of them are likely employed in the informal economy and often have low-paid, less secure and less protected jobs than their male counterparts and are more likely to live in working poverty. Youth under 18 years old are at risk of increased poverty and of being exposed to child labour, sexual exploitation and child marriage. With these benchmarks, in times of crisis, young people are highly susceptible to unemployment and greater labour market vulnerabilities. In addition, some economic policy responses - such as fiscal and monetary policies, bailouts and tax reliefs, mortgage freezes, waivers of interests on student and business loans - are not taking into account young people's needs and will not reach them directly or in the short term. Social protection mechanisms that are being implemented in the context of the COVID-19 crisis to safeguard incomes, for example, monetary transfers and extended unemployment benefits, should take into account the specific vulnerabilities faced by youth.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

- While COVID-19 has temporarily led to reduced greenhouse gas emissions and improved air quality at the expense of economic activities, many have overturned environmental efforts previously made, resulting in an increase in the amount of medical and hazardous waste generated. In the post-crisis setting, as governments approve stimulus packages to support job creation, poverty reduction, development and economic growth, there is the opportunity to "build back better". This entails leapfrogging to green investments, such as renewable energy, smart housing, green public procurement, public transport - all guided by the principles and standards of sustainable production and consumption. Such advancements can contribute towards sustainable and resilient economies for present and future generations that young people have been demanding.

RIGHT TO EDUCATION

- An increasing number of countries have closed schools, and other educational and training institutions. This has caused an unprecedented number of young people facing a significant disruption to their education and may delay their graduation or impact their ability to graduate at all. Underprivileged youth often lack access to remote learning tools and the internet, if they are provided with affordable access to education at all. This may lead to a decrease in the likelihood they will be able to continue their education during such school closures. In addition, as schools are often a source of free meals and other social services (e.g. mental health, sexual and reproductive health education, etc.) a high number of young people may face additional nutrition and health challenges. Young women and girls are less likely to go back to school than their male counterparts, as they are the ones to take up domestic care roles at home. Child marriages are also likely to increase, as families look for means to sustain themselves.

RIGHT TO FOOD SECURITY AND GOOD NUTRITION

- It is expected that the COVID-19 crisis will widely hit developing countries with less diversified and resilient economies, leading to a high risk of regional food shortages. In fact, the massive job losses and income constraints to which young people are particularly exposed may impact their ability to access food; farm labour constraints could affect the production and the availability of fresh food in the markets. Vulnerable and low-income groups like smallholder farmers, food vendors, slum dwellers, and especially women and youth, will be disproportionately affected.

RIGHT TO PARTICIPATION AND INCLUSION

- Containment and physical distancing measures may limit the capacity of youth to exercise their rights, leading to discrimination and the exclusion of young people from decision-making processes, as well as limiting their right to peaceful assembly and association. While online solutions and digital spaces exist, inequalities in access to the internet limits youth participation, while increasing cybercrime. In addition, the barriers faced by young migrants and refugees to integrate into labour markets, education and health systems, may be further exacerbated by the pandemic.

RIGHT TO PEACE AND SECURITY

- The risks of instability, radicalization and violence fueled by the pandemic – especially in countries already affected by conflict, organized crime and terrorism – are unprecedented challenges for the international community. It is also a generational call for young people around the world to advocate for stronger multilateral cooperation, principled public safety and security based on human rights and the rule of law, and decisive action to respond to the United Nations Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire. Furthermore, protecting fundamental rights such as freedom of association and expression are critical for young people to continue their human rights and peacebuilding work, even in the midst of the COVID-19.

Efforts to mitigate and address the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic must include provisions that are responsive to young people's needs and uphold their rights, or youth-specific provisions when needed. More decent jobs are part of the solutions to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 crisis in order to reduce poverty, food insecurity and malnutrition simultaneously.

SUPPORTED BY THE FOLLOWING MEMBERS OF THE UN IANYD

UN ENTITIES:

1. Convention on Biological Diversity Secretariat
2. Department of Economic and Social Affairs / Division for Inclusive Social Development
3. Department of Economic and Social Affairs / Division for Sustainable Development Goals
4. Department of Global Communications
5. Department of Peace Operations
6. Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs / Peacebuilding Support Office
7. Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
8. International Fund for Agricultural Development
9. International Labour Organization
10. International Organization for Migration
11. International Telecommunication Union
12. International Trade Centre
13. Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
14. Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth
15. Office of the Special Adviser on Africa
16. Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict
17. Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence Against Children
18. Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect
19. Regional Commissions New York Office
20. The Food and Agriculture Organization
21. UNAIDS
22. UN-HABITAT
23. United Nations Alliance of Civilizations
24. United Nations Capital Development Fund
25. United Nations Children's Fund
26. United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
27. United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification

28. United Nations Development Programme
29. United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
30. United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
31. United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
32. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
33. United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
34. United Nations Environment Programme
35. United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
36. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
37. United Nations Industrial Development Organization
38. United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs

39. United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction
40. United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs
41. United Nations Office for Project Services
42. United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism
43. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
44. United Nations Population Fund
45. United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
46. United Nations Volunteers
47. United Nations World Tourism Organization
48. World Bank
49. World Food Programme
50. World Health Organization

YOUTH ENTITIES:

1. Abra Youth Organizations Society-Philippines
2. Access to Learning and School Initiative - Nigeria
3. ACOT TANZANIA
4. Activists Alliance Foundation-Pakistan
5. Aditya Sivdas- India
6. Africa Matters Initiative-South Africa
7. Africa Youth Transformation-Tanzania
8. African Center for Solidarity and Mutual Aid Between the Communities (CASEC | ACSAC)-Benin
9. African Centre for Human advancement Social and Community Development-Nigeria
10. African Children and Youth Development Network (ACYDN)-Liberia
11. African Youth Commission-The Gambia
12. AIESEC in Uganda-Uganda
13. Ainembambazi Carolyne-Uganda
14. Alliance for Future Generations-Fiji
15. Alpha Steps Foundation-Nigeria
16. Alpha Team Organization (ATO)-Philippines
17. Angels in the Field-India
18. Arab Youth Climate Movement Qatar LLC(G)-Qatar
19. Arab Youth Platform for Sustainable Development, League of Arab States (AYPSD)
20. Asian Youth Peace Network-Malaysia
21. Association of Solidarity through Humanitarian Imperative Actions (ASHIA)-Cameroon
22. Association of Youth Organizations Nepal (AYON)-Nepal
23. AYCM Palestine
24. AYO Malaysia-Malaysia
25. Bangladesh Model Youth Parliament (Protiki Jubo Sangshad) - Bangladesh

26. Blue Chips Research and Consultancy Co.-Philippines
27. Borokinni Joshua Initiative-Nigeria
28. Boycott Plastics Bottles Association
29. Building Blocks for Peace Foundation-Nigeria
30. Canadian Rohingya Development Initiative (CRDI)-Canada
31. Center for Peace and Sustainability-India
32. Centre for Youth Entrepreneurship Development (CENYED)-Nigeria
33. Change foundation-Pakistan
34. Children and Youth Partner Constituent Group for the New Urban Agenda
35. Citoyen-Gov initiative-Tunisia
36. Clear Yo Mind-Uganda
37. Climate and Sustainable Development Network-Mali
38. COVID-19 Youth Task Force
39. Collaborative Living and Development Initiative (COLIDEIN)-Nigeria
40. Commonwealth Youth Council
41. CYI.org-Malawi
42. DREAMSS Foundation-India
43. Ecological Manifesto-ManEco-Bulgaria
44. Elige Red de Jovenes por los Derechos Sexuales y Reproductivos A.C-Mexico
45. European Law Student's Association (ELSA)
46. Foundation for Empowerment and Entrepreneurship Prpgram-Ghana
47. Free A Girl's World Network-Kenya
48. Friends for Leadership-Russia
49. Generation Climate Europe (GCE)
50. Global Alliance for Food & Agriculture-Canada

51. Global Forum for Development-GLOFORD-Uganda
52. Global Indigenous Youth Caucus (GIYC)
53. Global Institute for Youth Development, Inc.-Philippines
54. Global Shapers Community Chennai Hub -India
55. Global Women and Youth's Right to Education-Nigeria
56. Global Youth Alliance for Kindness
57. Global Youth Biodiversity Network
58. Global Youth Caucus on Land and Desertification
59. Global Youth Caucus on SDG16
60. Global Youth Constituency for Environmental Governance (UNEP MGCY)
61. Global Youth Health Caucus
62. Global Youth Humanitarian Affairs Caucus
63. Global Youth Migration Caucus
64. Global Youth Network for Goal 16
65. Grand River South East Youth Circle-Mauritius
66. Green Student-Cote D'Ivoire
67. Harvesters Theological Training Seminary-Nigeria
68. Head Up Africa-Nigeria
69. Health Advocacy Nepal
70. H Nepal-Nepal
71. House of Africa-Chad
72. IMUNA-United States of America
73. Industrial Engineers Network for Sustainable Development-Jordan
74. Instituto Global Attitude-Brazil
75. International Coordination Meeting of Youth Organizations (ICMYO)
76. International Federation of Medical Students Associations
77. International Young Leaders Organization - Austria
78. International Youth Alliance for Family Planning
79. International Youth Centre Kuala Lumpur- Malaysia
80. International Youth Council, Nigerian chapter
81. International Youth Society ZJUT Chapter-China
82. International Youth Society-Yemen
83. Join a Town-France
84. Justice Call for Rights and Development
85. Kabataan San Sidlangan, Inc.-Philippines
86. KOTHOWAIN (vulnerable peoples development organization)-Bangladesh
87. Kura Foundation by Dafero -United States
88. Latin America and Caribbean Regional Youth Caucus
89. Laureate Foundation-Pakistan
90. Malaysian Humanitarian Movement-Malaysia
91. Maswa Family Group -Tanzania
92. Morya Samajik Pratishtha-India
93. National Youth Council of India-India
94. National Youth Council of Ireland-Ireland
95. National Youth Environment Network - RNJA Colombia
96. Ngo Peace One Day Mali-Mali
97. Nigeria Youth SDGs Network-Nigeria
98. NOBE Initiative-Nigeria
99. Oceans Youth Constituency
100. OLIVE Foundation Trust-India
101. Organizing Action Towards Humanity
102. Outreach Social Care Project (OSCAR)
103. Pan African Youth Network for a Culture of Peace (PAYNCoP)-Republic of Congo
104. Pan-Afrikan Volunteers Network
105. PAWA 254-Kenya
106. Pax Politica-India
107. Peace Hope Pakistan-Pakistan
108. PETsPoint Recycling-Nigeria
109. Plant-for-the-Planet
110. Polygeia-Hong Kong
111. Population and Development Service Center-Egypt
112. Project for Good Indonesia-Indonesia
113. Public Authority of Youth and Sports-Libya
114. REDES Mexico-México
115. REDMe-Pakistan
116. Reseau International des Jeunes Leaders Francophones - Bénin
117. Rohingya Refugee Network (RRN)-United Kingdom
118. Rural Empowerment & Institutional Development
119. Sadius Systems-Nigeria
120. Scholarship for Afghanistan-Afghanistan
121. SDG7 Youth Constituency
122. Securecycle Environment and Climate Change Initiative -Nigeria
123. SGB Academy Community Initiative-Nigeria
124. Sierra Leone School Green Clubs (SLSGC)
125. Simplemente Opinión-Colombia
126. Smiles Africa International Youth Development Initiative SAIDYI-Nigeria
127. Somali Youth Empowerment Program-Somalia
128. Somali Youth Green Peace Association
129. Soul Sustainable Progress
130. Sportanix Healthtech Private Limited-India
131. Sendai Stakeholders Youth Group
132. Sustainable Development Council-India
133. SUUUD ANDAL-Burkina Faso
134. Tamazight Women's Movement-Libya
135. Teman Aksi-Indonesia
136. The ARACHNEED Journal-India
137. The Millennials Movement-Peru
138. The Road to Rights-Sri Lanka
139. The Society-Together for Health and Education
140. Tinada Youth Organization (TIYO)
141. TinkuLab-Ecuador
142. Together for Africa-Uganda
143. Trailblazer Initiative Nigeria
144. Two Hands One Life-Uganda
145. UN Forest Forum MGCY (UNFF-MGCY)



146. Union Des Peuples Autochtones Pour le réveil au Développement (UPARED)-Burundi
147. United Nations Major Group of Children and Youth (UN MGCY)
148. U-Report Trinidad and Tobago-Trinidad and Tobago
149. We Yone Child Foundation-Sierra Leone
150. World Assembly of Youth-Malaysia
151. World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts-United Kingdom
152. Y Coalition-Bangladesh
153. Young Climate Change Activists-Caribbean
154. Young Friends of the Earth-Nigeria
155. Young Leaders Entrepreneurs-Tunisia

156. Young Youth Network for good leadership in Nigeria- Nigeria
157. Youth Advocacy Network Sri Lanka-Sri Lanka
158. Youth and Environment Europe-France
159. Youth Climate Lab-Canada
160. Youth for Change Initiative
161. Youth for Environment Education And Development Foundation (YFEED Foundation)-Nepal
162. Youth for Peace and Development-Zimbabwe
163. Youth Network for Reform (YONER Liberia)
164. Youth NGOs in UNFCCC (YOUNGO)
165. Youth Science Policy Interface Platform
166. YPSA (Young Power in Social Action)-Bangladesh

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE UN IANYD AND THIS STATEMENT, PLEASE CONTACT YOUTH@UN.ORG