

**CHILDREN AND
YOUNG PEOPLE'S VOICES
IN THE TIME OF
THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**
CHILD-FRIENDLY REPORT



What's it all about?

Hello everyone,

My name is Ajlin, and I am a young leader from Bosnia and Herzegovina. I am happy to introduce this report that was done by World Vision and supported by 12 young leaders. My key message in this time of the coronavirus is that we need to avoid people who are making up stories that are not true as this is creating unnecessary mass panic.



We should convince our peers, parents, and elders that this panic is not needed, but, at the same time, encourage them to stay home, be patient, and follow the rules. We are all in this together, and if we really want to stop this virus, we have to work together as a community. We, as children and young people, will continue doing public awareness raising using photos and videos to let everyone know that we can do this together, we can beat this virus together, and we are stronger when we are unified by a common goal.

Hope you like this report.
Ajlin

Who was consulted?



We spoke with 101 children and young people (58 girls and 43 boys) between the ages of 8 and 17 from 13 countries, including Albania, Bangladesh, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Mali, Mongolia, Nicaragua, Peru, Philippines, Romania, Sierra Leone, and Syrian children and young people living in refugee camps near the Syrian border in Turkey.

What were the questions?

We did the consultation with two adult researchers and 12 young leaders, ages 13 to 18, who engaged as peer researchers. We asked three questions to make the interview simple as all the children and young people were in lockdown in their countries:

- **How is COVID-19 affecting your life or the lives of children and young people in your country?**
- **How are children and young people contributing, or can they contribute, to the fight against the spread of COVID-19?**
- **Do you have any ideas for actions or a message to other children and young people about how they can raise awareness about COVID-19 using social media or other means?**

What did children and young people tell us?



They told us that the COVID-19 pandemic changed many things in their lives but the most important aspects were school closures, emotional worries caused by the coronavirus, the lack of contact with friends and relatives due to social distancing, and the problems with poverty that people are facing.

The coronavirus affects me a lot because I cannot go out to play like before; I do not go to school or church. I miss my friends and classmates. All the boys and girls in the community and the country are affected. (Christopher, age 8, Nicaragua)

Coronavirus and Ebola are almost identical but are not the same in the sense that coronavirus spreads faster than Ebola. Coronavirus infects the whole world while Ebola is only happening in one part of the world. (Gbenday, age 15, Sierra Leone)

How are school closures affecting children and young people?



Children and young people reported that while closing the schools for a certain time was important to help reduce the spread of the pandemic, 71% of them felt lonely not being able to be in contact with their friends or have a normal social life. Students told us that this also affected their learning capacity and changed the way they spent their time during the day.

We are behind in our schoolwork. Home schooling is not as efficient as learning in real life. This is something very important for us as children and students. (Egshiglen, age 15, Mongolia)

I do not feel good. Before, we were better as the schools were open and we were learning. Then suddenly, this virus came, and everything stopped. We pray that Allah will keep us safe from this pandemic. (Joudy, age 13, Syrian refugee in Turkey)

Children and young people said that these limitations and restrictions were more difficult in the communities where schools were closed, especially where it was impossible to have online learning over the Internet. Due to this, many students could not continue their studies during the quarantine. Children and young people made it clear that the most vulnerable and poorest communities were the most affected by not having access to online learning opportunities.

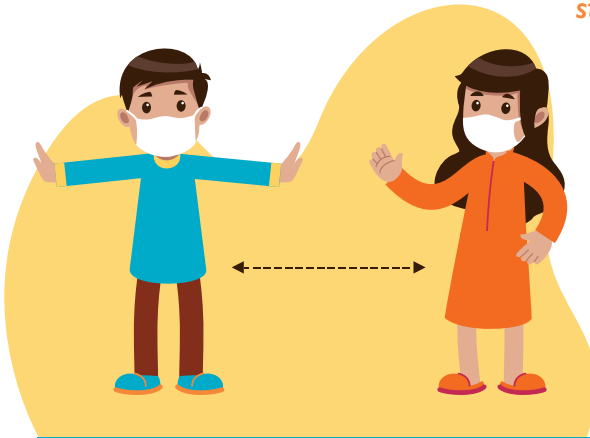
Children who live in rural areas do not have Internet access or the same opportunity to study as other more privileged children and young people. (Teodora, age 16, Romania)

Coronavirus is a big complication for our daily learning because all our schools are closed. To continue learning, we can just read books and do some research on the Internet. But having access to the Internet is not possible for all children in Mali because many of them live in poor conditions and therefore they can't study online. (Salimata, age 15, Mali)

How is social distancing causing emotional distress?

Of the children and young people interviewed, 91% reported suffering from emotional problems during the COVID-19 crisis. They said they felt alone not being able to stay in touch with their friends and relatives and that this had affected them physically as well with problems with their sleeping or eating. Those who did not have easy access to the Internet in some communities found themselves bored with all the free time, but no way to use it in a good and positive way. Some participants told us that they felt anxious, angry, and worried, and because of the isolation, they did not feel secure as they did not know when the crisis would end and how they would be able to survive this situation.

Coronavirus is affecting us very seriously. First of all, stress. We get depressed because of staying home. It affects me, [and I am feeling] not so much joy. I feel like I can't stay in the house. (Alexandru, age 13, Romania)



I do not like this situation. We wanted to announce the end of Ebola, but now coronavirus is already coming. We stay at home, we no longer study, we no longer go to church, and we are unable to participate in meetings. And, despite the fact that isolation will help protect us from the virus, this will bring starvation that can still kill us too. (Anita, age 16, DRC)

Most of the children and young people who responded told us that they were worried about the economic situation that was becoming so difficult due to the COVID-19 crisis. They were worried about their parents who did not have the possibility to work like before as each country put so many limits on people's movements.

We are very worried for the people who are informal workers, those who make their income on a daily basis. These people are suffering the consequences of the quarantine, and their families will start to starve very soon. So, solidarity will be very important to support each other. (Jose, age 15, Peru)

A big problem is the lack of water. For example, one of the most important recommendations is handwashing, but where we live, we don't have water. Many houses get water only once a week; so, how are these people going to have good hygiene opportunities? They can't! This will cause many infections. (Lara, age 17, Brazil)

What are children and young people worried about?

Children and young people are staying safe but mobilising against the spread of COVID-19

Participants said that they understood how important it was to follow the lockdown measures to limit the spread of the virus, but, at the same time, they told us of their desire to help and support others from home. Foysal, from Bangladesh, said that 'the role that children and young people can play in fighting the spread of COVID-19 is vital and urgent as we in my community

have mobilised many children to make changes in our lives'. Children and young people we interviewed also told us that they felt that they had a responsibility to raise awareness about the risks related to COVID-19 and help reduce the spread of this virus. Meghla, from Bangladesh, told us, "In this pandemic, children should take extraordinary steps for fighting against the coronavirus. At first, we have to know properly about this virus, and then we can educate other children how to be safe from it." They said they wanted to help the most vulnerable people, especially the elderly, other children and young people and their families, and those who did not have a house or a place to live by giving them information.

Many people are confused by the misinformation or are listening to rumours. We can make them aware of information from the World Health Organization . . . If necessary, we can explain how to call the hotline. All this can be done by building a network of other teenagers. However, it should be done without public meetings. Work must be done in a way to ensure personal safety. (Sanjidul, age 15, Bangladesh)



Ideas from Children and young people

Here you can see ideas from some of the participants on how we can support others during the COVID-19 pandemic. You can use their ideas too.

- We can create a WhatsApp group to inform our friends about the quarantine. We can upload videos, especially stories and tales from our regions, on a YouTube channel as an opportunity to honour and value our cultures. (Lucero, age 15, Peru)
- We can distribute awareness-raising messages to everyone via local radio stations. The messages could be: “The eradication of coronavirus is everyone’s business and the well-being of the child depends on it.” and “Respect the sanitary rules to fight against the coronavirus.” (Jason, age 15, DRC)
- We kids can contribute a lot since we have a lot of free time now and a lot of platforms as well. We can become influencers to raise awareness about the virus. (Martina, age 16, Albania)
- We can do drawings and launch challenges such as ‘be a hero stay at home’ or ‘you count, too’. (Rares, age 12, Romania)
- We can create different materials like animated videos to further grab the audience’s attention. We should start a social media campaign. What’s more important is to keep spreading good, positive vibes through awareness. (Suelv, age 15, Albania)
- The best awareness we can publicise around the world is around three things: to not go outside to stop the virus’ spread, to exercise daily, and to take care of ourselves to strengthen our immune systems. (Tarik, age 14, Bosnia and Herzegovina)
- We should educate ourselves on prevention and teaching [so we can] inform other children about the virus, the forms of infections, and the symptoms. This will help to improve measures to prevent the spread of the virus. (Regina, age 16, Nicaragua)
- We can notify our friends who have not seen some important news . . . We can easily send some important notifications via messaging over, for example, WhatsApp, Viber, Instagram, Messenger, or text messages. (Omar, age 15, Bosnia and Herzegovina)
- We can make some animated movies about the coronavirus, which could be funny but have a meaningful message to educate children on how to prevent the coronavirus. (Dola, age 14, Bangladesh)
- Children are exemplary in following the preventive measures, so we can put up posters in public places and raise awareness using online media to sensitise the adults who are more resistant to following these procedures. (Elizabeth, age 16, DRC)
- We can upload videos to sensitise adults about the coronavirus as there is a lot of disinformation and some of them are acting irresponsibly and not following the quarantine. (Bethania, age 15, Brazil)
- [We can] raise awareness on stopping racism and ask people to not to be mad at people who have Asian features. (Lishee, age 14, Mongolia)
- We can shoot videos to help people to understand this pandemic and [protect themselves]. Many people are illiterate in Mali so written information does not work well here. With simple videos and messages, we can support them. (Salimata, age 15, Mali)
- [We can] ask people to be conscious about the impact of food shortages. We should not buy too much food so someone in need can’t buy it then. (Arijan, age 14, Bosnia and Herzegovina)

**Final words
from World
Vision**

We are very proud of the children and young people who participated in this consultation. We hope that the results of these conversations will be helpful in supporting virtual participation opportunities throughout the crisis. Participants told us that they want to be part of the solutions, and we support that idea. When children and young people like you are engaged and committed to making a change, our work and strategies become more child-centred, empowering, and inclusive to all.

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