

**Compact for Young People
in Humanitarian Action**



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Action

COVID-19: Working with and for young people

Guidance summary



PART I

Young people, seriously affected by coronavirus disease (COVID-19), are part of the global response

A common understanding of the health and non-health impacts of the pandemic, along with the role young people are playing in driving solutions, is essential to the pandemic response.

Every young person is affected differently

This global crisis is exacerbating existing vulnerabilities and inequalities experienced by young people, all further amplified in humanitarian contexts where fragility, conflict, and emergencies have undermined institutional capacity and limited access to services. Young migrants, young people who are internally displaced and refugees, young people living in poor, high-density urban areas, young people without a home, young people living with disabilities, girls and young women, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, and intersex (LGBTQI) young people and those living with HIV will be particularly affected; young people separated from, unaccompanied by, or left behind by migrant working parents face higher risks of exploitation, violence and mental health issues, and already poor access to health services and protection.

Impacts on young people

Health impacts

As the pandemic spreads to low-income and lower-middle-income countries with proportionally high numbers of young people and significantly weaker health systems, direct and indirect health impacts on young people are likely to increase (i.e. diminished access to adolescent and youth sexual and reproductive health services). Young people may also see serious negative impacts on their mental and psychosocial well-being.

Safety and protection issues

During lockdown, and in a context of overall economic and social distress, adolescents and young people are at high risk of domestic violence and gender-based violence (GBV), as well as online harassment and cybercrime. Early marriage, teen pregnancies, and child labor are also likely to increase in the recovery phase.

Educational impacts

1.5 billion young people, over 90 per cent of the world's students, in 188 countries are being kept away from school and universities because of social distancing measures. This large-scale interruption of learning, including non-formal and informal learning, may have severe consequences, especially for young people living with disabilities and for those with little to no access to technology, Internet, or telecommunication services.

Economic impacts

A global recession is a likely consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, and young people's livelihoods will be disproportionately affected. Dependence on daily wages is forcing some to remain economically active, both exposing themselves to COVID-19 and risking spreading the virus to others. Young people who work in the informal sector fall through the cracks of stimulus packages and other public economic policies.

Impact on civic space and participation

Restrictions on movement will hamper the ability of young leaders and organizations to protest, mobilize, access funding, and support their communities.

Young people mobilize to respond to COVID-19

Many young people have mobilized immediately to respond to the crisis as health workers, advocates, volunteers, scientists, social entrepreneurs, and innovators.

PART 2

Key actions

These five key action areas, derived from the pillars of the Compact for Young People in Humanitarian Action – services, participation, capacity, resources, and data – are intended to guide practitioners in the development of an adolescent- and youth-focused and inclusive COVID-19 response. The following recommendations will be accompanied by concrete examples and resources.

ACTION 1

Services

- **Health.** Ensure that COVID-19 response plans are sensitive to adolescent- and youth-specific healthcare needs, including sexual and reproductive health, mental health, and psychosocial support.
- **Water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH).** Ensure that young people have access to a water supply for drinking and personal hygiene, sanitation services, handwashing facilities with soap, and menstrual health management (MHM) supplies to maintain their general health and well-being and prevent the spread of infection.
- **Education.** Support continued learning for young people, including for those over 18. Formal and non-formal education programming should reach migrants, refugees, and displaced young people.
- **Protection.** Ensure the protection of young people in all COVID-19 prevention and mitigation measures, coordinate closely with adolescent sexual and reproductive health (ASRH) actors and ensure that practitioners are trained in youth-friendly communication techniques and basic response to GBV along with issues related to adolescent girls, such as child marriage.
- **Livelihoods, cash and markets.** Ensure that young people whose incomes may be affected by the COVID-19 crisis are supported. Ensure that young people and their families have financial access to goods and services.

ACTION 2

Participation

- Maintain connections with young people and youth organizations in your networks.
- Encourage inclusive information-sharing that is accessible online and offline, consider barriers to access that young people living with disabilities may face.
- Engage young people, including the most marginalized, in assessing the impact of COVID-19 on their communities.
- Actively engage young people in responses to COVID-19 as health workers, advocates, volunteers, scientists, social entrepreneurs, and innovators.
- Engage young people in monitoring and evaluating COVID-19 responses.
- Tackle the spread of inaccurate information, debunk myths, and confront stigma.
- Support access to youth-friendly content and work with young people to develop content.
- Apply the “do no harm” approach and ensure safe and ethical participation of young people at all times.

ACTION 3

Capacity

- Build the capacity of, and support, youth-led organizations to engage in COVID-19 response coordination with other humanitarian actors, access finding, and design and deliver programmes.
- Build the capacity of governments, United Nations agencies, and civil society organizations (CSOs) leading response and coordination efforts for the meaningful engagement of youth.

ACTION 4

Resources

- Fund youth-led organizations' COVID-19 mitigation initiatives, including adolescent-led organizations and young women's collectives, and ensure that funding streams are reliable, transparent, sustained, and flexible.
- Advocate for the inclusion of young people in coordination mechanisms where funding decisions are made.
- Co-design programmes and proposals with adolescent and youth groups and, where possible, include a budget for their projects in agency budgets.

ACTION 5

Data

- Generate and share data disaggregated by age, sex, and disability.
- Support adolescent- and youth-led and community-driven monitoring and accountability of COVID-19 responses.

PART 3 Compact membership

