#CovidUnder19: Fulfilling children’s right to be heard for a participatory response to the pandemic

**WHY:** Covid-19 is affecting every human being in one way or another and on many fronts, including in terms of health, education, socially and economically. Even though children are not, medically-speaking, amongst the most vulnerable, it is clear that the pandemic will have profound and long-term consequences on children’s lives. Some 90% of the world’s children are not in school. Conditions of confinement and stress exacerbate risks of violence in the home. For households with internet access, the digital environment provides an opportunity for connection and learning, however it also harbours significant risks, such as susceptibility to online abuse. Meanwhile, under lockdown, the impacts of the digital divide are exacerbated, which disproportionally affects girls and those in rural or deprived areas.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child provides a clear framework to inform rights-based responses to the COVID crisis, including through fulfilling children’s rights to survival, development, protection and participation. Children have a right to be heard. But while children are speaking - they are interacting online or where possible in their communities - their views are rarely listened to. Their perspectives are rarely sought out by decision-makers and their ideas are not feeding into the responses to the pandemic. #CovidUnder19 aims to change that.

**WHAT WE PROPOSE:** The #CovidUnder19 initiative aims to bring together children, child human rights activists, experts and other key stakeholders, including the private sector, to work together in understanding what children are experiencing due to Covid-19 and to involve children in responding to these issues. #CovidUnder19 seeks to create spaces for children across the globe to be meaningfully involved in the discussions about responses to the COVID19 pandemic and contribute towards shaping the post-COVID19 world.

Whether they are under lockdown and out of school, in refugee camps or in crowded villages, detained, or living on the streets, institutionalized or on the move, children have a right to be heard. Child rights practitioners have a responsibility to find ways of understanding children’s views and amplifying their voices so they can inform policymakers, legislatures, professionals working with children, and governments. In the short term, #CovidUnder19 seeks to build a coalition of partners, including children themselves, that will gather children’s views on their current experiences and how they see their role as active citizens, emphasizing the positive: proactivity, solidarity, peer-to-peer support, and an empowered role for their future. Based on this, the initiative will accelerate the design of responses to the pandemic in the short and long term, while increasing opportunities for children to interact with eachother to collectively create and innovate.

**OBJECTIVES:** #CovidUnder19 has three objectives:

1. **Collect and amplify children’s views and voices:** with their input, gather children’s experience of Covid-19 through the development of a questionnaire to be disseminated globally and then analysed to help inform different stakeholders develop informed prevention and response interventions, policies, etc.
2. **Promote children’s awareness of their rights and ability to claim their rights:** through the questionnaire, guide children’s reflection on their role as actors of positive change and as peer-to-peer resources.
3. **Empower children:** create meaningful spaces for children to interact with other stakeholders in order to enable meaningful child participation in the creation of the post-COVID world.
TIMELINE of ACTION (Subject to change as circumstances evolve)

Phase 1 (April 2020)

- Preliminary kick-off meetings with interested individuals and organisations
- Co-creation of consultation tool with children
- Ongoing resource collation for child participatory tools and methods

Phase 2 (May 2020)

- Virtual launch event
- Dissemination of global consultation tool. The tool will be available online and offline, to enable participation of children across the digital divide.
- Consultation analysis

Phase 3 (June - July 2020)

- Based on results of consultation: design and deployment of child-participatory activities in online and offline spaces.

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