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NOTHING ABOUT US WITHOUT US

Adolescent Engagement in Humanitarian Response

MAY 2022

 COLUMBIA | SIPA
School of International and Public Affairs

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South Asia

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Nothing About Us Without Us: Adolescent Engagement in Humanitarian Response

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Acronyms

AAP	Accountability to Affected Populations
ACLAB	Alliance for Cooperation and Legal Aid Bangladesh
ADAP	Adolescent Development and Participation
AYEVAC	Alliance of Youth to End Violence Against Children
BLCC/BUNYAD	Bunyard Literacy Community Council
CBCPC	Community-Based Child Protection Committees
CCA	Climate Change Adaptation
CCCs	Core Commitments for Children in Emergencies
CCCM	Camp Coordination and Camp Management
CCDRR	Child Centered Disaster Risk Reduction
CDA	Chanan Development Association
CiC	Camp-in-Charge
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CRPO	Child Rights Protection Officer
CWC	Coping with Carona Campaign
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
DSS	Department of Social Services
FDMN	Forcibly Displaced Myanmar Nationals
GBV	Gender-based Violence
GenU	The Generation Unlimited
HCD	Human-Centered Design
HPC	Humanitarian Program Cycle
HRW	Human Rights Watch
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
ILO	International Labour Organization
JCF	Jagorani Chakra Foundation
JDNA	Joint Disaster Needs Assessment
JRP	Joint Response Plan
KSDMA	Kerala State Disaster Management Authority
LGBTQI	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, & Intersex Life
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MPCs	Multipurpose Centers
NAS	National Adolescent Strategy
NEED	Not Enrolled in Education, Employment or Training
NDMA	National Disaster Management Authority
NGOs	Non-governmental Organizations
PYDI	Pakistan Youth Development Index
PSDF	Punjab Skills and Development Fund
ROSA	Regional Office for South Asia
RRRC	Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner
RSPN	The Rural Support Programmes Network
SIPA	School of International and Public Affairs

SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SoLF	The School of Leadership Foundation
SDTWG	Skills Development Technical Working Group
TOR	Terms of Reference
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council
VET	Vocational Education and Training
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
YWG	Youth Working Group

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Executive Summary

Adolescence is a critical time of social, physical, economic, and political change. In the context of humanitarian crises, adolescents face additional challenges to learn, be healthy, access clean water, and simply feel safe. When responding to humanitarian emergencies, agencies often deliver programming to help young people, but only recently have they moved to include adolescents in these programs' delivery.

The “Nothing About Us Without Us” report is a collaboration between the Capstone Program at Columbia University’s School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA) and the UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia (ROSA). This report represents progress toward more inclusive and influential humanitarian programming. Adolescents are leaders, innovators, and key on-the-ground informants. They should not be perceived as passive beneficiaries of aid, rather, they are active, ready, and needed to contribute. Programs for humanitarian resilience, response, and recovery would all benefit from the inclusion of adolescents in the design, implementation, and evaluation of these processes.

This report was informed by intensive research on international guidelines for adolescent meaningful participation, UNICEF ROSA country and regional strategies, and supplementary data from interviews, questionnaires, and databases. Through this variety of sources, the team’s findings and recommendations are guided by the voices of UNICEF, adolescent-serving organizations, adolescents, civil society members like lecturers and activists, and the team’s own unique backgrounds in international and public affairs.

With a focus on Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka, the capstone team’s findings and recommendations are presented through themes in data and technology, and opportunities for meaningful participation. More specifically, the findings assess meaningful participation through four strategic areas: *Influencing Law and Policy*, *Building Skills and Capacities*, *Addressing Social Norms*, and *Supporting Mechanisms and Opportunities for Participation*. Within the report, case examples from each country are also presented to provide timely and actionable recommendations.

Through assessment of the four target country analysis profiles and cross-cutting thematic evaluation, the report also presents regional recommendations under a general chapeau. These recommendations are categorized to address key challenges in South Asia, namely: *Intergenerational Biases and Attitudes*, *Social Structures*, and *Economic Inequality*. In addressing these challenges, humanitarian programming and adolescent engagement can simultaneously be improved.

The report’s recommendations are designed to be practical and actionable for UNICEF ROSA’s future implementation. With this report’s guidance, UNICEF can build upon its success and improve its development, establishment, and promotion of adolescent-centric emergency prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery.

Introduction

Advocacy for human values in international affairs is incomplete if the voices of those affected are not heard. Our report, “Nothing About Us Without Us,” addresses this need by providing solutions to include adolescents in the work and decisions that directly impact their lives.

South Asia is home to over 340 million adolescents - almost thirty percent of the global adolescent population. Consequential effects of COVID-19, natural disasters, refugee crises, and economic backlash from the war in Ukraine; today, the region is subject to diverse humanitarian emergencies resulting from political, ecological, and social factors. At the crossroads between childhood and adulthood, adolescents typically face many changes and uncertainties. In the context of humanitarian crises, adolescents face additional challenges to learn, be healthy, access clean water, and simply feel safe.

The Columbia University, School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA) capstone team, in collaboration with UNICEF’s Regional Office for South Asia (ROSA), present an examination of four South Asian country contexts - Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka - to determine how adolescents are meaningfully participating in humanitarian situations. Through these country-specific assessments, the team has created recommendations for UNICEF ROSA to better include adolescent voices and agency within these countries, and more broadly throughout the region.

Project Objectives

The SIPA capstone team developed its project objectives according to the Terms of Reference (TOR) summary drafted between UNICEF ROSA and the SIPA capstone faculty advisor, Suzanne Hollmann. With the intent to engage adolescents in South Asia as beneficiaries and contributors, the team finalized four key objectives:

- 1. Assess adolescent engagement and involvement in humanitarian response before, during, and after emergencies in Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.*
- 2. Identify ways to improve UNICEF engagement by leveraging and incorporating technology, data, and meaningful participation.*
- 3. Evaluate how UNICEF engagement can be improved through contextual application and modification of existing tools.*
- 4. Provide recommendations that help UNICEF to shape their engagement and match what adolescents and communities desire and need.*

Key International Guidelines for Adolescent Engagement



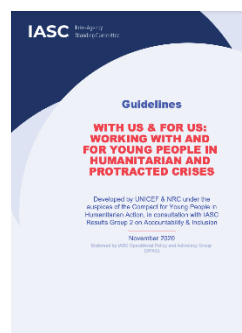
● Accountability to Affected Populations Framework (AAP)

A guiding document that supports the commitment amongst humanitarian actors to use power responsibly. It details how these actors may take account of, give account to, and be held accountable by the people they seek to assist.¹



● Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action (CCCs)

Document for equipping UNICEF and its partners to deliver principled, timely, quality, and child-centered humanitarian response and advocacy, in any crises with humanitarian consequences. The CCCs are guided by international human and humanitarian law. They apply within all countries and territories, in all contexts, and to all children affected by humanitarian crises.²



● Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Guidelines on Working with and for Young People in Humanitarian and Protracted Crises

A framework for working with and for young people throughout the Humanitarian Programme Cycle (HPC); complete with tips, examples and case studies.³



● UNSCR 2250

UN Resolution signed in 2015 that urges UN Member States to give youth a greater voice in decision-making at the local, national, regional, and international levels. Furthermore, it urges Member States to set up mechanisms that enable young people to participate meaningfully in peace processes.⁴

¹ International Office of Migration (IOM-UN), “Accountability to Affected Populations Framework,” September 21, 2020, <https://publications.iom.int/books/accountability-affected-populations-framework>.

² UNICEF, “Core Commitments for Children,” Humanitarian UNICEF, 2010, <https://www.corecommitments.unicef.org/cc-1-0>.

³ Inter-Agency Standing Committee, “IASC Guidelines on Working with and for Young People in Humanitarian and Protracted Crises,” November 2020.

⁴ United Nations Security Council, “Resolution 2250 (2015)” (2015).

Key Terms for the Report

Defining Adolescence

In UNICEF ROSA's Adolescent Development and Participation Strategy (ADAP), "adolescence" is defined as a developmental phase within the 10-24-year age group. The designation consists of early adolescents (10-14), late adolescents (15-19), and young adults (20-24).⁵ Our report remains consistent with this definition. By referring to persons in this age group as "adolescents," we aim to facilitate their respect and inclusion as participants, in contrast to "children," which often signifies dependency. We also aim to communicate that people between 10 and 24 years of age are represented by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. This means that adolescents have the international right to be included in decision-making processes regarding outcomes that may affect their lives. For example, decisions that occur before, during, and after humanitarian emergency responses.⁶

Defining Youth-led and Youth-serving Organizations

In our report, we also reference "Youth" in our analysis. For the purpose of our report, "Youth" refers to young people in the age group between 10-30 years old.

Youth-led Organizations: Young people between the ages of 10-30 are in leadership or management roles, coordinate the organization's initiatives, and/or contribute to the advancement of an organization's mission.

Youth-serving Organizations: Organizations that deliver programs to young people between the ages of 10-30 as beneficiaries.

Defining Meaningful Participation

UNICEF ROSA's Claiming Citizenship study defines meaningful participation as, "the proactive engagement of individuals, communities or groups in all matters affecting them, in an informed manner."⁷ Space, voice, influence, and audience are key features of meaningful participation in action,⁸ and they represent the intersection of social, political, economic, and physical elements that result in meaningful participation's enactment. Our report seeks to understand how to better facilitate these elements during humanitarian emergency contexts in South Asia.

⁵ "The Adolescent Development and Participation (ADAP) Section UNICEF Regional Office, South Asia (ROSA) Strategy Note and Regional Framework 2022 – 2025" (UNICEF Regional Office, South Asia (ROSA), November 2021).

⁶ General Assembly resolution 44/25, "Convention on the Rights of the Child," United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, November 20, 1989, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child>.

⁷ UNICEF ROSA.

⁸ UNICEF ROSA, "ADAP Guidelines for Participation," 2020.

The Four Strategies for Meaningful Participation

Our report evaluates ongoing UNICEF programs and approaches through the IASC Guidelines' four strategies for meaningful participation.⁹ We analyze the strategies as isolated to provide specific recommendations and pathways, however, it is important to note that these strategies go hand-in-and complement one another to create meaningful participation.

1. **Influencing Law and Policy:** How can development and humanitarian actors advocate with governments for law and policy reform and budget allocations that are responsive to the needs of young people and rooted in their participation?
2. **Building Skills and Capacities:** How and where can humanitarian actors make investments to help young people to realize their rights and gain the skills to design, implement and monitor initiatives in humanitarian situations?
3. **Addressing Social Norms:** How and who can humanitarian actors engage to create a safe and welcoming environment for adolescents to participate? Entrenched social and workplace hierarchies; traditional gender roles; expectations of discipline and respect for elders; assumptions of a lack of capacity, especially among younger adolescents and youth – all of these serve to exclude young people from having a say in decisions and becoming engaged.
4. **Supporting Mechanisms and Opportunities for Participation:** How can humanitarian actors work with young people to identify opportunities for engagement in decision-making and community life, including development and implementation of projects, as well as feedback/evaluation?

UNICEF 4 Strategic Areas on Youth Engagement



⁹ “IASC Guidelines on Working with and for Young People in Humanitarian and Protracted Crises” (UNICEF and NRC for the Compact for Young People in Humanitarian Action, November 2020), <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/events/iasc-guidelines-working-and-young-people-humanitarian-and-protracted-crises>.

Report Structure

In our report, the four country profiles are first presented through an evaluation of UNICEF's ongoing strategies for adolescent participation in humanitarian contexts. Then, we analyze UNICEF's work in these countries through the IASC's four strategies for achieving meaningful participation. A case example is then provided to visualize the need and opportunities for adolescents' meaningful participation in real, relevant humanitarian events. Finally, recommendations are proposed at the end of each country's section.

In Bangladesh, we examine government and technology restrictions within the refugee camps in Cox's Bazar. In India, we demonstrate how UNICEF and partner organizations included adolescents in their response to a series of annual floods in Kerala. In Pakistan, we explore how UNICEF's Coping with Corona (CWC) campaign empowered adolescent ambassadors to lead change within their communities. Lastly, in Sri Lanka, we assess how crises and digital divide affect meaningful participation opportunities for adolescents with disabilities.

Drawing from our team's country profile analyses, the report then provides general recommendations based on findings to inform UNICEF ROSA's strategies for meaningful adolescent participation. These region-wide recommendations are conveyed through challenges that broadly impact adolescent engagement in South Asia. These challenges include: *Intergenerational Biases and Attitudes*, *Social Structures*, and *Economic Inequalities*. We complement these findings with an additional section on *Other Opportunities that can Improve Regional Engagement*.

The report concludes with a guiding annex for the team's evaluation of meaningful participation, as well as an appendix with additional resources that informed our research.

Methodology

This report was developed by a team of eight graduate students as part of a capstone course at SIPA, and in consultation with UNICEF ROSA. The capstone team first performed desk research on adolescent engagement in South Asia, with a particular focus on Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. During this initial phase, the team reviewed the previously mentioned, key international guidelines on adolescent engagement.

To collect data, the team conducted 45 interviews with UNICEF, adolescent-serving organizations, adolescents, and civil society members. Furthermore, the team designed and distributed a [Questionnaire on Adolescent Engagement](#) (Appendix C) to all 8 UNICEF ROSA Country Offices and their partner organizations, and a [Meaningful Participation Survey for Adolescents](#) (Appendix D) through civil society and UNICEF partner organizations' channels. Through this survey the team hoped to collect greater adolescent feedback on meaningful participation experiences and identified needs.

The team's recommendations were informed by the qualitative information from the team's interviews, the questionnaires' responses, a follow-up desk review on practical and successful initiatives to address the team's findings, quantitative analysis of UNICEF and external databases and reports, and the unique backgrounds of each member of the capstone team.

As a result of COVID-19 restrictions, our team faced some limitations to conduct field research and identify adolescent informants. Furthermore, our allotted project time felt short in comparison to the scope, aims, and purpose of the project. We believe that our work is a step in the right direction, with methodology that can be replicated and continued.

This report represents progress toward more inclusive and influential humanitarian programming. We are hopeful that our recommendations will contribute to the wellbeing of adolescents in South Asia, and possibly for adolescents around the world.

Sources for Data Collection

For data collection, the team's three primary sources were: 1) Interviews, 2) Surveys, and 3) Databases provided by UNICEF and external sources.

Qualitative Sources

- **Interviews:** Conducted 45 interviews on meaningful adolescent participation with stakeholders from the team's four target countries (Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka). As a supplement to the interviews, working meetings were held amongst the 29 UNICEF ROSA and CO colleagues that collaborated with the capstone team. The additional interview participants included 40 stakeholders, such as

4 Countries
45 Interviews
29 UNICEF Colleagues
30 Partner Organizations
40 stakeholders

adolescents, government officials, and civil society members like university lecturers and activists, from across 30 implementing partner organizations. Questionnaires were transcribed through Zoom Pro services and analyzed by the team for relevant and thematic findings.

- **Surveys:** Designed in collaboration with UNICEF ROSA and direction from the IASC guidelines. The goal of the surveys was to collect qualitative data on adolescent engagement and experiences remotely. Both surveys were distributed as a google form with a statement describing the survey’s purpose, the team’s research, and the rights of the survey participant.
 - **Questionnaire on Adolescent Engagement**

Distributed to all 8 UNICEF Country Offices in South Asia and implementing partners to assess their ongoing implementation of the international guidelines and IASC four strategic areas for meaningful participation. We received 18 responses and believe that this questionnaire can continue to be used by UNICEF ROSA for future data collection, or adapted by a future capstone team.
 - **Meaningful Participation Survey for Adolescents**

Distributed to adolescents in the four target countries through UNICEF CO’s, civil society connections, and adolescent serving organizations. The survey’s purpose was to provide adolescents in these countries a platform to express their experiences with meaningful participation initiatives, and their ideas for how adolescent meaningful participation can be improved. 11 responses were submitted from adolescents between 16 to 24 years old, and similarly to the *Questionnaire on Adolescent Engagement*, we are confident that this can continue to be used and adapted as a UNICEF or capstone tool.

Quantitative Sources

- **Databases:** The team integrated demographic data on adolescents in South Asia from, The World Bank Databank¹⁰ and other public databases. Through the *Questionnaire on Adolescent Engagement*, the team also focused on assessing UNICEF’s use of digital platforms, like the U-report. By analyzing the U-Report’s user data and digital platform use across countries in the region, the team designed recommendations to improve regional adolescent engagement.

¹⁰ “DataBank | The World Bank,” <https://databank.worldbank.org/home.aspx>.

Country Profiles

BANGLADESH

Bangladesh Country Context

Out of Bangladesh's total population of 165.7 million people, indigenous ethnic groups, mainly located in border regions, represent 1.1 percent.¹¹ While caste-based discrimination is traditionally associated with Hinduism, this system nonetheless exists in a country where 88.4 percent of Bangladeshis are Muslim. In addition to ethnicity, physical location, and socio-economic/professional class, marginalization in Bangladesh occurs along the lines of age, gender, and disability.¹²

Although young people aged between 15 and 24 comprise nearly one-third of Bangladesh's population, the country has the third-highest prevalence of child marriage in the world: 59 percent of girls are married before they turn 18 and 22 percent before they turn 15.¹³ Young girls aged between 15 and 19 have an 81.7 percent fertility rate.¹⁴ Furthermore, girls' participation in skills education and training programs is low at 25 percent.¹⁵ A large number of youth lack access to schools and risk being trapped in low-paid jobs.¹⁶ More broadly, "Bangladesh's cultural context generally does not encourage adolescents to share their views, raise their voices or question adults on matters affecting their lives."¹⁷ Adolescents from low castes, ethnic and religious minority groups, and those living with disabilities face increased levels of discrimination.¹⁸

According to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), "Bangladesh is widely regarded as one of the most environmentally vulnerable countries in the world, as a result of the interplay between its geophysical characteristics, high population density, limited resilience, and peculiar environmental conditions."¹⁹ Different regions in the country are prone to tropical cyclones,

¹¹ "Bangladesh Country Profile," The World Factbook, CIA.gov, April 25, 2022, <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/bangladesh/>.

¹² "Report on National Summit of Marginalised Groups in Bangladesh" (BRAC, March 2020), <http://www.brac.net/program/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/A-report-on-National-Summit-on-the-Marginalized-People-of-Bangladesh.pdf>.

¹³ "Bangladesh Profile," Girls Not Brides, 2022, <https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/learning-resources/child-marriage-atlas/regions-and-countries/bangladesh/>.

¹⁴ "Adolescent Fertility Rate - Bangladesh," World Bank Data, 2020, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.ADO.TFRT?locations=BD>.

¹⁵ "ReImagining Humanitarian Action: Adolescent and Youth Engagement Policy and Practice During Emergencies and Protracted Crises in South Asia" (UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia (ROSA), 2021), 20.

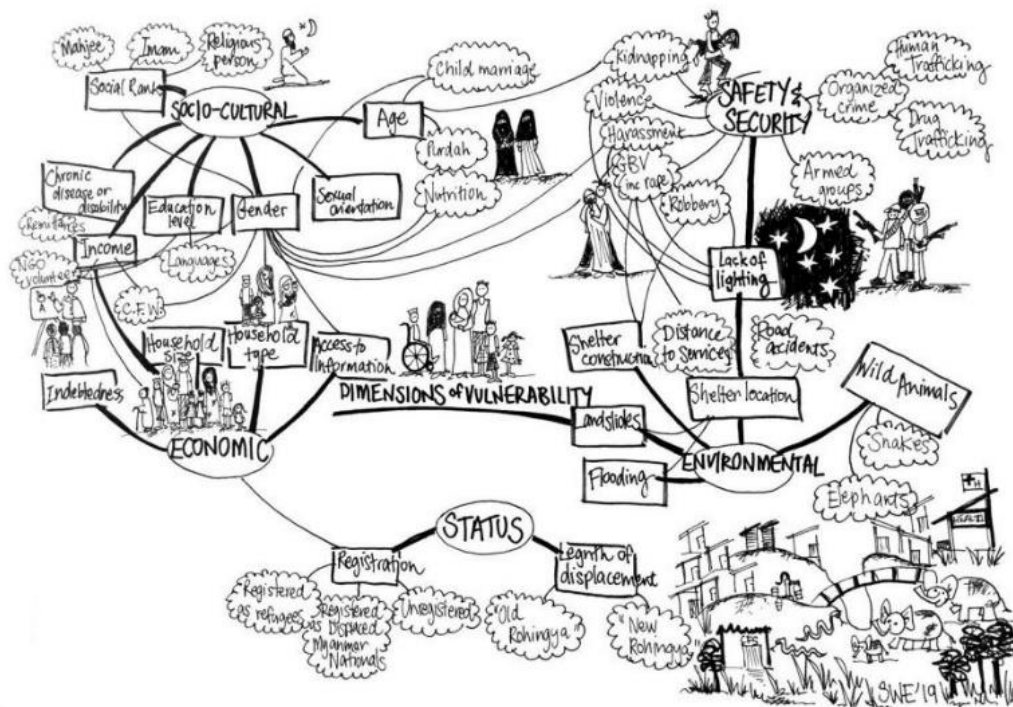
¹⁶ "Adolescents in Development," UNICEF Bangladesh, accessed March 30, 2022, <https://www.unicef.org/bangladesh/en/adolescents-development>.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ "Vulnerability Profile of Bangladesh" (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), December 2020), 46, <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/wp-content/uploads/sites/45/CDP-PL-2021-4A-VP.pdf>.

floods, drought, soil erosion, and landslides.²⁰ In terms of conflict and instability, Bangladesh has experienced different forms of violence over the years.



Rohingya Refugees' Vulnerabilities

Photo from ACAPS Thematic Report: Vulnerabilities in the Rohingya Refugee Camps

UNICEF Bangladesh uses the life-cycle approach to advance the rights of children by operating across the health, education, nutrition, child protection, WASH, communication, social policy, and other sectors.²¹ For the purposes of this report on adolescent engagement in humanitarian response, we focus on UNICEF’s work with Rohingya refugees and host communities in Cox’s Bazar. Here, in the world’s largest refugee camp, Rohingya refugees—most of whom arrived in 2017 fleeing persecution, large-scale violence, and human rights violations in Myanmar—rely on humanitarian assistance for food, water, shelter, health, and protection.²² Children and youth face risks including child labor, child marriage, abuse, neglect, exploitation, and child trafficking.²³ In this challenging environment, UNICEF and partner organizations play a critical role in providing life-saving humanitarian and sustainable development support to adolescents in both refugee and host community populations.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ “What We Do: Meeting the Needs of Children in All Life Stages,” UNICEF Bangladesh, accessed March 30, 2022, <https://www.unicef.org/bangladesh/en/what-we-do>.

²² “Bangladesh Profile,” United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), accessed March 30, 2022, <https://www.unhcr.org/bangladesh.html>.

²³ “Rekindling Hope: Supporting Rohingya and Bangladeshi Youths to Coexist and Gain Skills,” UNICEF Bangladesh, accessed April 15, 2022, <https://www.unicef.org/bangladesh/en/rekindling-hope-supporting-rohingya-and-bangladeshi-youths-coexist-and-gain-skills>.

Challenges to adolescent engagement in the Rohingya camps include the following: mobility restrictions for girls; low adolescent reading, writing, and digital literacy skills; government restrictions on certain digital tools and equipment; poor internet and network service; insufficient physical gathering and social spaces; and limited private and public sector involvement.²⁴

Assessment of UNICEF Strategies and Tools

UNICEF Bangladesh utilizes four major strategies and tools in Cox's Bazar as part of its integrated approach to address harmful social norms and empower young people: Vocational Education and Training (VET); the Life Skills Curriculum; Adapted Adolescent Kit for Covid-19; and the Me-We-Us resource package for social cohesion and resilience. First, VET provides young people in the Rohingya refugee camps and host communities with practical skills and professional development opportunities. Second, the Life Skills Curriculum for Rohingya Adolescents, developed in 2019 and adapted in 2022, is a collection of learning sessions and tools designed to empower Rohingya adolescent boys and girls. The life skills approach of learning addresses key issues on core life skills, health, hygiene management, nutrition child rights and safeguarding, environmental awareness, financial literacy, and empowerment.²⁵ Third, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, adolescents have lost opportunities for learning and building relationships with their peers due to the closure of facilities as well as Multipurpose Centers (MPCs). In order to promote adolescents' psychosocial wellbeing and upskilling in times of stress while staying at home, UNICEF Bangladesh adapted selected parts of the Adolescent Kit for Covid-19.²⁶ Fourth, to strengthen social cohesion and community resilience between Rohingya refugees and Bangladeshi host communities, UNICEF Bangladesh implements an initiative called the Me-We-Us resource package. Through this, adolescents are encouraged to act as social change agents and participate in community-based child protection committees (CBCPC) or other structures that help raise the concerns and needs of their peers.²⁷

Nonetheless, these four UNICEF strategies and tools face challenges. Certain tools and equipment are not allowed in camps due to government restrictions and private and public sectors' support are not visible; these have created difficulties for vocational and life skills training.²⁸ Likewise, the users of the Adolescent Kit for Covid-19 have had difficulties with accessing technology. Some households do not have technology devices, and even if some do, adolescents are not guaranteed access.²⁹ Lastly, the Me-We-Us resource package has not functioned well due to government restrictions.³⁰

²⁴ "Cox's Bazar Adolescent Development and Participation (ADAP) Coordination PowerPoint Presentation" (UNICEF Bangladesh, March 8, 2022).

²⁵ "Life Skills Curriculum for Rohingya Adolescents" (UNICEF Bangladesh, n.d.), 8.

²⁶ Anne Marie Catherine Charbel Akiki, Interview with UNICEF Bangladesh Cox's Bazar Adolescent Specialist, Zoom, March 22, 2022.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ "Cox's Bazar Adolescent Development and Participation (ADAP) Coordination PowerPoint Presentation."

²⁹ "Lessons Learned Workshop on Adolescent Kit for COVID-19" (UNICEF Bangladesh, January 9, 2021).


³⁰ Ibid

Assessment of Meaningful Adolescent Participation Strategies

● Influencing Laws and Policies

The Government of Bangladesh's National Adolescent Strategy (NAS) outlines the country's priorities for all adolescents aged 10 to 19.³¹ While the adolescent legislative and policy landscape covers a wide range of issues, actual implementation lags behind.³² In Cox's Bazar, the institutional framework is as follows: "the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner (RRRC)...is responsible for management and oversight of the Rohingya refugee response...[while] the operational response in the camps is coordinated through Camp-in-Charge (CiC) officials."³³

The RRRC and CiCs vet joint humanitarian response plans and approve organizations' specific programs. Since the government is not actively involved with in-camp humanitarian interventions, UNICEF Bangladesh aims to influence policies rather than laws. For example, Towela Ndhlema, UNICEF Bangladesh Emergency Programmes Specialist, shared that the team in Cox's Bazar in collaboration with the International Labour Organization (ILO) is currently working with the Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce to credentialize skills obtained by Host community youths in vocational training centres and is awaiting government approval of the Skills Development Framework that was jointly developed by UN Agencies and development partners for standardization of skills programmes³⁴ In the camps themselves, UNICEF Bangladesh recently launched youth guidelines in order to influence specific clusters and partner organizations to improve their programming with and for adolescents.³⁵ Similarly, the Youth Working Group (YWG)—co-chaired by UNFPA and Norwegian Refugee Council—aims to increase collaboration and coordination between 23 active members including on government advocacy.³⁶



“With UNICEF’s launch of the youth guidelines in Cox’s Bazar, we hope to initiate those conversations around youth engagement...and get youth a seat at the table.”

— Towela Ndhlema, UNICEF Bangladesh Emergency Programs Specialist



³¹ “Bangladesh National Adolescent Strategy” (Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MOWCA - Bangladesh), December 15, 2020), 4, https://mowca.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/mowca.portal.gov.bd/npfblock//National%20Adolescent%20Strategy_15.12.2020.pdf.

³² Ibid, 9.

³³ “Refugee Policy Review Framework Country Summary: Bangladesh” (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), June 30, 2020), 5, <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Bangladesh%20-%20Refugee%20Policy%20Review.pdf>.

³⁴ Bilateral Meeting with UNICEF Bangladesh Cox's Bazar Staff, Zoom, March 8, 2022.

³⁵ Towela Ndhlema, Interview with UNICEF Bangladesh Cox's Bazar Emergency Programme Specialist, Zoom, March 23, 2022.

³⁶ Interview with UNFPA Bangladesh Cox's Bazar Youth Working Group Co-Chair, Zoom, April 10, 2022.

● Building Skills and Capacities

In Cox's Bazar, UNICEF Bangladesh, and partner organizations have prioritized VET for adolescents in both the camps and host communities.³⁷ Pre-training activities include awareness campaigns, labor market assessments, curriculum development, and business idea generation.³⁸ Training activities consist of utilizing MPCs as a one-stop shop for providing life skills, literacy, numeracy, and other forms of vocational skills training.³⁹ Post-training activities range from internship and job placements to start-up kit support entrepreneurship, mentorship/coaching, financial inclusion and market linkages.⁴⁰

UNICEF Bangladesh has developed a contextualized VET curriculum developed through the DACUM process with private sector experts, conducted a labor market assessment,⁴¹ established more than 157 MPCs, provided 34,354 adolescents with vocational training, and developed standard operating procedures regarding adolescent internship and job placements.⁴² Despite these achievements, unmet needs include the lack of official certifications for trained adolescents, no central registry that the private sector can access, and few digital skilling programs.⁴³ Broader challenges are technology restrictions in camps, distorted private sector engagement, and harmful gender, social, and cultural norms.⁴⁴



Labor Market Assessment

Photo from UNICEF and BRAC Labor Market Survey

Partner organizations including the Jagorani Chakra Foundation (JCF)⁴⁵, CODEC, Coast Trust Foundation, World Vision International and BRAC⁴⁶ work closely with parents and community leaders in Cox's Bazar to advocate for them to enroll adolescent Rohingya girls in VET programs at the MPCs. According to Francis Okun Owilli, UNICEF Bangladesh Partner/Adolescent Specialist in Cox's Bazar, "Humanitarian organizations [and donors] should take vocational skills

³⁷ "Integrated Community and Adolescent Engagement in Humanitarian Response: Meaningful Action in Programming in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh" (UNICEF, 2018), 2.

³⁸ "Cox's Bazar Adolescent Development and Participation (ADAP) Coordination PowerPoint Presentation."

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Sheikh Islam et al., "Labor Market Survey" (BRAC and UNICEF, February 2021).

⁴² "Cox's Bazar Adolescent Skills Development Framework PowerPoint Presentation" (UNICEF Bangladesh, March 8, 2022).

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Shamima Sarker, Interview with Jagorani Chakra Foundation (JCF) Technical Coordinator, Zoom, March 29, 2022.

⁴⁶ Nazrul Islam and Farida Akter, Interview with BRAC Cox's Bazar Adolescent Coordinator and Training Officer, March 30, 2022.

programming seriously because they can help address societal challenges...through results-based approaches.”⁴⁷ Priorities moving forward include further adapting vocational curriculums and linking them to other sectoral initiatives, advocating for the credentialing and certification of trained adolescents, and establishing new comprehensive skills training centers.⁴⁸

“Humanitarian organizations [and donors] should take vocational skills programming seriously because they can help address societal challenges. Adolescents and youth can acquire education but what next? They need technical skills training through results-based approaches to contribute to their communities.”

— Francis Okun Owilli, UNICEF Bangladesh Cox’s Bazar Partner/Adolescent Specialist

● Addressing Social Norms

Under their social and behavior change strategies, UNICEF Bangladesh and partner organizations aim to address negative social norms that affect humanitarian response for adolescents. With the understanding that “social protection is all about inclusion and bringing adolescents into the circle,”⁴⁹ UNICEF Bangladesh and partner organizations provide adolescents with opportunities to build social interaction skills, raise their voices, and influence decisions at the community level through the life skills programming and the Me-We-Us social cohesion and resilience.

In parallel to engaging with young people, UNICEF and partners work with caregivers and CBCPCs through the socio-ecological model. Young people, are also encouraged to lead their own initiatives to tackle these harmful social norms, rather than being limited to service beneficiaries. Part of this work in Cox’s Bazar has been progress through radio platforms. Bangladesh Betar operates 73 of UNICEF’s 137 Radio Listener clubs in host community and 6 of UNICEF’s 154 radio listeners clubs in the refugee camps.⁵⁰ Through this program, adolescents receive core messages in regards to child protection, education, health nutrition, WASH, COVID-19 Prevention and Vaccination and are encouraged to verbally disseminate this information to family and friends.

“A family was forcing a girl into early marriage, which is a typical phenomenon in Cox’s Bazar, but with the help of other radio listeners in the club, the girl refused and stopped the marriage.”

— Ikram Hossain Tushar, Bangladesh Betar Adolescent and CwC Coordinator

⁴⁷ Francis Okun Owilli, Interview with UNICEF Bangladesh Cox’s Bazar Partner/Adolescent Specialist, March 23, 2022.

⁴⁸ “Cox’s Bazar Adolescent Development and Participation (ADAP) Coordination PowerPoint Presentation.”

⁴⁹ Ndhlema, Interview with UNICEF Bangladesh Cox’s Bazar Emergency Programme Specialist.

⁵⁰ Ikram Hossain Tushar, Interview with Bangladesh Betar Adolescent and CwC Coordinator, April 4, 2022.

Knowledge and capacity of 64 adolescent boys and girls in Cox’s Bazar have enhanced significantly through a training on developing adolescent-led radio programs provided jointly by UNICEF and its partner Community Radio Naf. After getting the training, the adolescents also developed 20 radio programs on various issues affecting them including ending child marriage, menstrual hygiene, reproductive health, climate change and social cohesion.

When the educational institutions were closed both in camps and host communities due to COVID-19 pandemic, the Adolescent Radio Listeners’ Clubs (ARLCs) kept the adolescents connected through holding weekly sessions by maintaining COVID-19 health hygiene protocols. At the sessions, they discussed further on the issues broadcast on the local radio stations which helped them remained in touch with basic education through distance learning programs.

However, there are challenges as well. The most salient ones are around religious stigma and superstition. This links to the harmful gender and social norms that adolescent girls cannot come out of their homes and are not allowed to be in social gatherings with boys.⁵¹ Further, many adolescents and young people are still out of reach due to limited access to learning. Approximately 200,000 young people are living in camps of Cox’s Bazar; more than 24,000 young people have been missing life skills education.⁵²

“To see a change in these communities, we need to reach at least 80% of adolescents. Only then will we see impact.”

– UNFPA Youth Working Group Chair



● Supporting Mechanisms and Opportunities for Participation

Many supporting mechanisms and opportunities for participation have faced challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic. UNICEF has aimed to develop positive relationships with the government and make progress in terms of safely reopening schools and facilities during this time.⁵³ Nonetheless, technology limitations have created significant barriers.

Youth Working Group

Photo from Food Security Cluster

⁵¹ Mohammed Ashraf Kabir, Interview with Bangladesh Betar Regional Director, Zoom, April 4, 2022.

⁵² Interview with UNFPA Bangladesh Cox’s Bazar Youth Working Group Co-Chair.

⁵³ Mamtaz Begum, Interview with Bangladesh Institute of Theater Arts Social Hub Manager, March 30, 2022.

“Adolescents’ participation is not a simple engagement. It is about impact. They want to solve problems in their communities”

– Anne Marie Catherine Charbel Akiki, UNICEF Bangladesh Adolescent Specialist

Case Example: Technology Restrictions in Cox’s Bazar

The government’s in-camp restrictions of digital tools and equipment such as computers and online learning platforms combined with poor internet coverage have presented challenges to adolescent engagement.⁵⁴ In response, UNICEF Bangladesh has been “advocating with the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner (RRRC) to allow certain gadgets in the camps, even those not linked with the internet.”⁵⁵ At the intersectoral level, the Emergency Telecommunications Cluster is “trying to get localized internet services in certain zones within the camps such as around the clinics and nutrition centers.”⁵⁶



Radio Listener Club Session

Photo from ACLAB

Simultaneously, partner organizations, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, have adapted their programming in order to continue reaching adolescents. JCF sent their youth instructors to adolescent learners’ homes to provide them with short educational sessions through simple videos and WhatsApp audio clips.⁵⁷ UNFPA “tried to expand the option of digital learning through low-tech solutions such as distributing radios with pre-recorded sessions and also using community radios.”⁵⁸ The Alliance for Cooperation and Legal Aid Bangladesh (ACLAB) similarly trained adolescents as members of Radio Listener Clubs so that they could develop programs for their own communities.⁵⁹

⁵⁴ “Cox’s Bazar Adolescent Development and Participation (ADAP) Coordination PowerPoint Presentation.”

⁵⁵ Ndhlema, Interview with UNICEF Bangladesh Cox’s Bazar Emergency Programme Specialist.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Sarker, Interview with Jagorani Chakra Foundation (JCF) Technical Coordinator.

⁵⁸ Interview with UNFPA Bangladesh Cox’s Bazar Youth Working Group Co-Chair.

⁵⁹ Didarul Hasan, Interview with Alliance for Cooperation and Legal Aid Bangladesh Programme Manager, April 5, 2022.

Although government and technology restrictions exist in Cox’s Bazar, UNICEF Bangladesh and partner organizations are finding ways to work around these challenges. They should continue to do so through longer-term government advocacy strategies as well as more immediate adolescent engagement and service delivery initiatives.

Bangladesh - Key Findings and Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Tackle government and technology restrictions through longer-term government advocacy strategies and more immediate adolescent engagement and service delivery initiatives

Challenge:

In Cox’s Bazar, the Government of Bangladesh restricts the use of certain digital tools and equipment, as well as online learning platforms. This, when combined with poor internet coverage throughout the refugee camps, presents challenges to adolescent engagement.

Mechanisms for Implementation:

- Continue advocating with the RRRC to ease restrictions and allow certain gadgets in the camps.⁶⁰ Delineate how these tools and equipment, including those not linked to the internet, will only be used for specific purposes such as adolescent skills assessments. Create specific strategies to address potential protection-related issues.
- Work at the intersectoral level to get localized internet services in certain zones within the camps.⁶¹ For example, in and around clinics and nutrition centers where adolescents can look up information on health and food-related matters.
- Support efforts of partner organizations like JCF, ACLAB, and UNFPA among others to expand usage of low-tech solutions including radios, simple video and audio clips, and adapted in-person interventions.

Justification:

According to some estimates, refugees are displaced for an average of 26 years.⁶² Given Myanmar’s current political and security situation, one can imagine Rohingya refugees remaining in Cox’s Bazar for the foreseeable future, especially if their safe repatriation cannot be guaranteed. UNICEF Bangladesh’s longer-term government advocacy strategies are therefore critical because the corresponding results—positive or negative—will affect multiple generations in both the camps and host communities. Simultaneously, UNICEF and partner organizations must continue to design and implement more immediate adolescent engagement and service delivery initiatives that work within the limits of existing barriers. Being able to use a few more digital tools and equipment, getting localized internet in certain zones, and expanding low-tech solutions all represent incremental but

⁶⁰ Ndhlema, Interview with UNICEF Bangladesh Cox’s Bazar Emergency Programme Specialist.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² “Global Trends: Forced Displacement” (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), June 20, 2016), 20, <https://www.refworld.org/docid/57678f3d4.html>.

important progress. As importantly, these are some ways in which organizations can creatively and effectively engage adolescents.

Recommendation 2: Strengthen linkages between pre-training/training activities and post-training activities as part of vocational education and training (VET) programs

Challenge:

UNICEF Bangladesh and partner organizations have prioritized VET for adolescents in Cox's Bazar, implementing a wide range of pre-training, training, and post-training activities. Despite numerous achievements in this sector, there remain unmet needs and challenges. According to a BRAC and UNICEF labor market survey of Cox's Bazar, unemployment conditions represent a major challenge for adolescents and youth in the Rohingya refugee camps as well as host communities.⁶³

Mechanisms for Implementation:

- Adapt VET curriculums so that they are more effectively linked to the labor market survey's recommended trades: light manufacturing of goods such as handicrafts and tailoring; and repairing and maintenance of electronic items.⁶⁴ Expand integration of green skills including training around vertical gardening, fixing solar and street lights, and improving water and sanitation pump facilities.⁶⁵
- Advocate for local/national certification of trained adolescents, especially in host communities, so that they have formal recognition of their skills which increases employment opportunities.⁶⁶ Continue ongoing collaboration with the ILO to work with the Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce to credentialize vocational training centers.⁶⁷
- Engage private sector organizations during the skills training design and development phases. Establish a registry in which adolescents can input their CVs and highlight relevant experiences, qualifications, and training so that these organizations can access profiles and link to potential internships and apprenticeships.⁶⁸ Create specific strategies to address potential protection-related issues.
- Mobilize resources for VET programs to reach more adolescents and cover a wider range of skills training available in the camps. Prioritize establishing comprehensive vocational skills training centers in the camps and host communities to serve as spaces for assessments, upskilling and retooling, training of trainers, and life-long learning.⁶⁹

⁶³ Islam et al., "Labor Market Survey," 3.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 5.

⁶⁵ "Cox's Bazar Adolescent Development and Participation (ADAP) Coordination PowerPoint Presentation."

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ndhlema, Interview with UNICEF Bangladesh Cox's Bazar Emergency Programme Specialist.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Owilli, Interview with UNICEF Bangladesh Cox's Bazar Partner/Adolescent Specialist.

Justification:

Most of these recommendations are linked to UNICEF Bangladesh's 2022 programming priorities in Cox's Bazar. Based on our research, these specific initiatives will lead to the most positive outcomes and impact for adolescents. What adolescents do before and during training activities must be linked to where they want and need to be post-training, especially with regards to being engaged in some form of gainful employment.



Expanding Education for Rohingya Refugee Children in Bangladesh

Photo from UNICEF Bangladesh

Recommendation 3: Tackle harmful gender, social, and religious/cultural norms with a focus on recognizing and addressing intersectional identities and challenges

Challenge:

In Cox's Bazar, harmful gender, social, and religious/cultural norms create challenges for the successful implementation of adolescent VET and other engagement programs. Adolescent girls face mobility restrictions and cannot always access the services they need. Rohingya girls and young women, in particular, are discouraged from socially mixing with boys, or are married off at a young age. Additionally, those belonging to marginalized groups such as LGBTQI communities face additional challenges.

Mechanisms for Implementation:

- Develop an advocacy plan to reach Rohingya girls and young women to promote the ways in which VET programs can improve their lives. Communicate clearly through verbal and non-verbal channels and mechanisms. Demonstrate how these programs can be fun through interactive sessions, games, and opportunities to interact with peers.⁷⁰
- Encourage and support partner organizations to work with parents and community leaders in Cox's Bazar to advocate for their enrolment of adolescent Rohingya girls in VET programs at the MPCs. Hire additional female field staff, facilitators, teachers, or trainers in order to reduce the concerns of parents regarding safety issues.⁷¹ Communicate with relevant stakeholders that vocational skills can help address societal challenges and empower adolescents through results-based approaches.⁷²

⁷⁰ Interview with UNFPA Bangladesh Cox's Bazar Youth Working Group Co-Chair.

⁷¹ Interview with Colleagues in Community Development Center Project Manager, Zoom, April 4, 2022.

⁷² Owilli, Interview with UNICEF Bangladesh Cox's Bazar Partner/Adolescent Specialist.

- Involve adolescents like girls or boys part of LGBTQI communities who face intersectional challenges in programs and activities to tackle harmful norms. As part of social and behaviour change initiatives, provide training on gender identity and sexual orientation to both adolescents and relevant community members to increase understanding.⁷³ Build on advocacy works for the LGBTQI community to consider a way to pilot programming for further support to grassroots organizations.
- Increase participation of trained young people in the CBCPC and other community committees to influence action in their communities to address harmful social norms.
- Support dialogue between caregivers and community leaders

Justification:

UNICEF and partner organizations' programs do not exist in a vacuum. They operate within wider social, cultural, and other structures and constraints. Even though this is a long-term process, it is important to intentionally approach and incrementally tackle harmful gender, social, and religious/cultural norms. With the principle of no one left behind, including, engaging, and supporting those with intersectional identities and challenges is critical.

Recommendation 4: Diversify mechanisms and widen opportunities for participation

Challenge:

With the use of the Adolescent Kit for COVID-19, adolescent girls and persons with disabilities are easier to reach in terms of education, skill learning, and psychosocial wellbeing. During the COVID-19 pandemic, using this Adolescent Kit finds out a modality of self-participation - acquiring skills and learning at home.⁷⁴ Like this example, using the right tool in the right way enables adolescents to have fruitful learning experiences. Many adolescents in Cox's Bazar from the host community and refugee camps need further inclusion since they both would benefit from inclusion in the MPCs and social hubs. Within the activities at the MPCs and the social hubs, adolescents are increasing their mutual familiarity and trying to understand each other's problems.⁷⁵ Finding the right mechanisms that will fit for a particular community can be challenging. Although UNICEF and partner organizations have provided mechanisms and opportunities for adolescent participation, radio programs in particular, have experienced challenges with retention partly due to loss of interest.

Mechanisms for Implementation:

- Consider the implementation of a mixed modality of the adolescent kit for covid-19 and the facility-based life skills trainings to ensure a wider reach and inclusion of adolescents and youth with restricted mobility
- Hold an exhibition with paintings and photos that adolescents drew and took in partner organizations' programs since art can serve as a means of healing and community

⁷³ Catherine Charbel Akiki, Interview with UNICEF Bangladesh Cox's Bazar Adolescent Specialist.

⁷⁴ Catherine Charbel Akiki.

⁷⁵ Islam and Akter, Interview with BRAC Cox's Bazar Adolescent Coordinator and Training Officer.

engagement. Encourage partners to train adolescents how to use video cameras and shoot for filming. Host short film festivals where adolescents can spread their voices.

- Collaborate with partner organizations to address retention challenges. For instance, provide incentives such as holding sports competitions for adolescent boys and girls or other activities that adolescents themselves identify as something they want.

Justification:

In collaboration with UNICEF Bangladesh, partner organizations have implemented many programs that enable adolescents to not only gain skills but also improve their psychosocial wellbeing. Therefore, these activities should also be fun and enjoyable for the adolescents. UNICEF and partner organizations must continue considering more creative and engaging ways to encourage and retain adolescent participation.

Recommendation 5: Improve and expand inter-agency collaboration and coordination to reduce potential duplication of work

Challenge:

The 2022 JRP for the Rohingya humanitarian crisis brought together the activities of 136 UN agencies and NGOs, 74 of whom are Bangladeshi organizations.⁷⁶ Given the sheer scale of the crisis and the number of vulnerable adolescents in the camps, many organizations are implementing education and vocational/life skills training programs. Even between partner organizations, effective collaboration and coordination can sometimes be difficult.

Mechanisms for Implementation:

- Assist implementing organizations who feel caught in the middle of donors/supporting partners and the government/local community. For example, send a UNICEF representative to accompany implementing organization staff who have to present or negotiate their programs proposals with the government CiC official.⁷⁷
- Work through a single harmonized vocational/life skills curriculum based on common standards. Cross-train between organizations based on areas of expertise. For example, UNICEF trains others on adolescent skills development and participation while UNFPA does the same on sexual and reproductive health.⁷⁸
- Coordinate and lead regular knowledge sharing sessions or workshops with other organizations working in similar thematic areas to consolidate key learnings, best practices, and joint priorities moving forward.

⁷⁶ “UNHCR Bangladesh Operational Update, March 2022” (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), March 2022), <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/92089>.

⁷⁷ Sarker, Interview with Jagorani Chakra Foundation (JCF) Technical Coordinator.

⁷⁸ Interview with UNFPA Bangladesh Cox’s Bazar Youth Working Group Co-Chair.

Justification:

Establishing more effective inter-agency collaboration and coordination mechanisms will become even more important over time when funds may be further constrained due to humanitarian crises in other parts of the world.⁷⁹ We have already seen the social and financial toll that COVID-19 has taken on camp communities in Cox’s Bazar.⁸⁰ As one of the most reputed and impactful agencies operating in the area, UNICEF Bangladesh is well positioned to continue leading and improving on inter-agency initiatives in both the camps and host communities. The organization should prioritize opportunities around shared and cost-effective solutions to challenges around adolescent development and participation.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ “COVID-19 Takes Social and Financial Toll on Cox’s Bazar Camp Communities” (Ground Truth Solutions and the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), January 2021), https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/COVID_19%20report_BDRCS_GTS%20FINAL.pdf.

INDIA

India Country Context

According to UNICEF, 27 of India's 29 states are vulnerable to severe weather and natural disasters, including cyclones, earthquakes, landslides, floods, and droughts.⁸¹ Combined with climate change and environmental degradation, the impacts of these hazards have grown more intense and more frequent. As a result, "development results for women and children, particularly from marginalized communities, are adversely impacted or compromised.⁸²⁸³" Between 2000 and 2016, an estimated 17,671 children died as a result of five major natural disasters that occurred in India during that period.⁸⁴

India is home to approximately 253 million adolescents, currently the largest adolescent population in the world.⁸⁵ As such, there is great potential for opportunities that encourage and enable adolescent participation in all phases of the humanitarian cycle. While India has Disaster Management Guidelines in place at the national level, the implementation of these efforts varies across the country according to state and local policies. As a case study, this report will highlight the ways in which UNICEF's partnerships in the South Indian State of Kerala have bolstered youth participation in natural disaster preparedness, response, and recovery.

Assessment of UNICEF Strategies and Tools

UNICEF India utilizes a variety of tools and resources designed to support the well-being and resilience of youth during challenging and traumatic events, such as COVID-19 and natural disasters. One tool that UNICEF piloted in India and Bangladesh is SParking Wellbeing, by which youth facilitators lead research-based activities on intergenerational dialogue, creativity, and adolescent empowerment. In addition, the U-Report messaging platform is intended to encourage Indian youth to share their thoughts on issues of importance to them. To date, U-Report India has reached 1,575,216 users, 80% of whom are aged

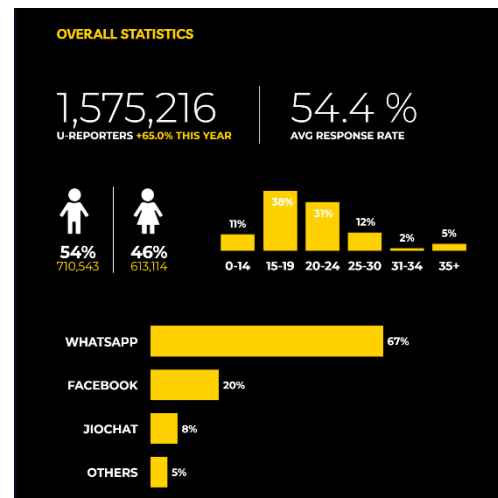


Photo from U-Report India

⁸¹ "Disaster Risk Reduction," UNICEF India, accessed May 3, 2022, <https://www.unicef.org/india/what-we-do/disaster-risk-reduction>.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ "Adolescent Development and Participation," UNICEF India, accessed May 6, 2022, <https://www.unicef.org/india/what-we-do/adolescent-development-participation>.

24 and younger.⁸⁶ U-Report India is also able to generate additional meaningful engagement among adolescents through its partnership with YuWaah, the India chapter of UNICEF’s Generation Unlimited Initiative. Together, they aim to be a resource for economic opportunities, higher education, skills-building, and channels of engagement for young people in India.⁸⁷ These approaches are valuable in that they provide youth with a platform to voice their concerns, feelings, and questions about events happening in their communities and the world. The popularity and the high number of users in India suggest that these tools are generally well-received in the country.

“U-Report India has reached 1,575,216 users, 80% of whom are aged 24 and younger.”

– U-Report India Website

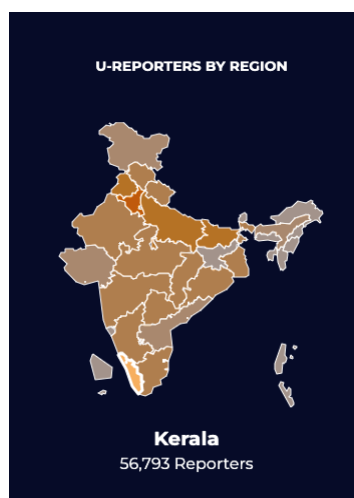


Photo from U-Report India

Following devastating floods and landslides in the State of Kerala in 2018, UNICEF partnered with stakeholders to develop the 2019-2022 Recovery Strategy and Plan. This plan aims to “build back better” by “supporting the Kerala Government to respond effectively to enable functioning and resumption of mainly delivery of services of social sector departments.⁸⁸” Among these sectors are school education, child protection, disaster risk reduction, and communication for development. UNICEF coordinated a recovery plan and strategy with the Rebuild Kerala Initiative, the State government, and local governments of the seven worst-impacted districts in Kerala. The strategy has proven to enhance the resiliency of those districts that were not already equipped with preparedness and response strategies.⁸⁹ Following recent flooding in 2021, UNICEF coordinated a Joint Disaster Needs Assessment (JDNA) with local actors in Kerala. Several of the JDNA recommendations and lessons learned center on adolescents’ needs and have contributed to pathways for greater responsibility in

community response. In this report, we highlight some of these examples. We also identify how UNICEF and local partners can build on these models and expand opportunities for adolescents’ meaningful participation according to the four strategic areas.

⁸⁶ “U-Report India,” accessed May 6, 2022, <https://india.ureport.in>.

⁸⁷ Interview with Neelam Pol U-Report India, Zoom, April 25, 2022.

⁸⁸ UNICEF, “UNICEF Recovery Strategy and Plan for Rebuilding Safe and Green Kerala,” 2019-2022, April 10, 2019

⁸⁹ Interview with Annie George Joint Disaster Needs Assessment consultant, April 20, 2022.

Assessment of Adolescent Meaningful Participation Strategies

● Influencing Laws and Policies

In India, there are mechanisms to provide a platform for children to speak about issues that are affecting them. However, there is no formal framework to include them in policy⁹⁰. Most recently the Kerala State Disaster Management Authority (KSDMA) has begun to include the participation of youth in emergency response efforts.

UNICEF, in partnership with the KSDMA, created a partnership project called the “Mainstreaming Disaster Risk Resilience”. This partnership included the creation of school safety and hospital safety training programs, focused on educating youth on risk reduction. Schools that had experienced landslides or were at risk for landslides were considered a priority in participation in risk reduction programs. These initiatives “incorporate climate change risk reduction and resilience building into the forthcoming National Curriculum Frameworks and relevant sub-national education policy, strategy and framework documents.”⁹¹ The KSDMA website also includes a “Kid’s Corner” tab that includes several animated informational videos, games, and infographics on emergency situations⁹². Kerala is considered India’s first digital state, and it has the highest percentage of households with computers and internet. As shown in the pandemic, Kerala state relied on important information and messaging through digital means, and focused on providing children with access to online training modules.⁹³

The KSDMA also partners with programs such as Samoohika Sannadha Sena, a coalition of 350,000 volunteers⁹⁴, to involve youth volunteers in government functionaries and in emergency response programming. This organization was started as a response to the 2018 Kerala flood, with a mission to provide training and risk reduction to civil society. Training modules for the Sannadha Sena created by the KSDMA.⁹⁵

The National Youth Policy also involves young people in “various initiatives like rural development, environment protection, blood donation, immunization, disaster management, etc.”⁹⁶ The National Youth Policy has been revised three times since its genesis in 1998. “It is intended to serve as a guiding document, and should be reviewed in five years, so that Government of India may refocus its priorities for youth development, as may be necessary”⁹⁷. The most recent 2014 revision of the Youth Policy adjusted the age range of ‘youth’ from 13-35 years of age to 15-24 years of age, to have a more

⁹⁰ “ReImagining Humanitarian Action: Adolescent and Youth Engagement Policy and Practice During Emergencies and Protracted Crises in South Asia” (UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia, 2021).

⁹¹ Fumiyo Kagawa, “The Heat Is On! Towards a Climate Resilient Education System in India.” (Kathmandu: UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia, 2002), <https://www.unicef.org/rosa/media/17581/file/The%20Heat%20is%20On%20-%20India.pdf>.

⁹² “UNICEF 2020,” Kerala State Disaster Management Authority, n.d., <https://sdma.kerala.gov.in/unicef-2020/>.

⁹³ O Ummer, D Mohan, and et al., “Connecting the Dots: Kerala’s Use of Digital Technology during the COVID-19 Response,” *BMJ Global Health* 6 (April 2021).

⁹⁴ Dhanuraj, D., Chairman, C. P. P. R., & Rafeeqe, S. S. Project Team.

⁹⁵ “Sannadha Sena – Kerala State Disaster Management Authority,” accessed May 7, 2022, <https://sdma.kerala.gov.in/sannadha-sena/>.

⁹⁶ ‘National Youth Policy’, India, 2014,

https://www.youthpolicy.org/national/India_2014_National_Youth_Policy.pdf.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

focused approach to youth-targeted interventions.⁹⁸ This revision may overlook the experiences that 13- and 14-year-olds undergo, which include physiological, social, and sexual transitions.

● Addressing Social Norms

For thousands of years in India, the caste system established a strict social hierarchy that kept individuals at the status they inherited at birth. Formally, it was a system that set and reinforced social, political, and economic norms, including occupation, social relationships, and more. The caste system was a source of socio-economic inequality and immobility that allowed lower castes to face severe disadvantages, discrimination, and poor life outcomes. Although the system was officially abolished in 1950, deeply entrenched attitudes and marginalization on the basis of caste persist informally in some communities.⁹⁹

Caste also intersects with other social identities such as gender, age, religion, class, sexual orientation, and disabilities. Such intersectional identities can have a powerful effect on a child's developmental outcomes related to education, health, and economic opportunity. For instance, household poverty, gender discrimination, and limited work opportunities are common drivers of child marriage in India.¹⁰⁰ UNICEF India has prioritized an end to child marriage in its programming by targeting these underlying social and cultural notions. Between 1970 and 2015, the rate of child marriage before age 15 in India decreased from 74 percent to 27 percent.¹⁰¹ However, according to a 2019 UNICEF report on strategies to end child marriage, conflicts and natural disasters continue to pose conditioning factors. In fact, India witnessed an uptick in vulnerability to young marriage and child trafficking during the COVID-19 pandemic. As of September 2020, Childline had "reported a 17 percent increase in distress calls related to the early marriage of girls in June and July this year compared to 2019."¹⁰²

In India, "89 percent of primary aged children attend school, however, 29 percent of those boys and girls drop out of school before completing a full cycle of elementary level education."¹⁰³ Gender discrimination, early child marriage, and caretaking obligations have led to boys outnumbering girls throughout their educational cycle. For example, of the total number of students enrolled at the undergraduate level, 66.8 percent of boys receive their diploma, while only 33.2 percent of girls receive

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Neha Sahgal et al., "4. Attitudes about Caste," *Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project* (blog), June 29, 2021, <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2021/06/29/attitudes-about-caste/>.

¹⁰⁰ Shireen J Jejeebhoy, "Ending Child Marriage in India, Drivers and Strategies" (New Delhi: UNICEF, 2019), <https://www.unicef.org/india/media/2556/file/Drivers-strategies-for-ending-child-marriage.pdf>.


¹⁰¹ United Nations Children's Fund, "Ending Child Marriage: A Profile of Child Marriage in India" (New York: UNICEF, 2019), <https://www.unicef.org/india/media/1176/file/Ending-Child-Marriage.pdf>.

¹⁰² "India's Covid Crisis Sees Rise in Child Marriage and Trafficking," *BBC News*, September 17, 2020, sec. India, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-54186709>.

¹⁰³ "Data Warehouse," UNICEF DATA, accessed May 6, 2022, https://data.unicef.org/resources/data_explorer/unicef_f/.

theirs.¹⁰⁴ Additionally, the Covid-19 pandemic also exacerbated existing gender disparities, and ten million girls were estimated to be at risk of dropping out of school within the country.¹⁰⁵

In parts of India, we have identified changing trends in some of these norms related to caste and gender. The Hope Foundation, which has provided technical training for girls, is not only breaking barriers on the gender front. During an interview, CEO Ian Correa also expressed how his organization has confronted caste-related stigmatization.



“There are times when parents from our so-called higher caste families said ‘we won’t eat the food cooked by people from a lower caste...’ We let them know that this was not acceptable, and we continued... Sometimes there is too much attention given to the politics of a process, and not just getting on with life.”

– Ian Correa, CEO of the HOPE Foundation



Kerala has made significant policy changes to include marginalized groups, such as those with disabilities, in data and programming initiatives. The Kerala state policy of 2014 for Persons with Disabilities, “recognizes the responsibility, necessity, inevitability, and commitment of including disability dimensions in all development agenda, programs,”¹⁰⁶ This includes the creation of the *Disability Disaster Risk Reduction Handbook* and the creation of emergency prevention training for PWD and their caretakers and or parents.¹⁰⁷ These state policies also included the establishment of disability inclusive warning signs, such as creating sensory-appropriate warning mechanisms to disseminate emergency information for those who are visually, audibly, physically, or intellectually impaired. Examples of this include the creation of braille warning messages, and deploying drummers to alert those who are visually impaired.¹⁰⁸ In the UNICEF led Joint Disaster Needs Assessment the issue of youth gender inequality and discrimination has also been identified and outlined. Recommendations from this assessment included creating lightning structures in emergency shelter camps to protect children from harassment and abuse, ensuring that common areas are monitored by authorities, and providing signage for information on child reporting hotlines.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁴ Aditi Tandon, “Boys Outnumber Girls in Higher Education Enrolment,” *Tribune India News Service*, accessed May 6, 2022, <https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/archive/nation/boys-outnumber-girls-in-higher-education-enrolment-837108>.

¹⁰⁵ Divya Trivedi, “10 Million Girls at Risk of Dropping out of School Because of the COVID-19 Pandemic: RTE Forum,” *Frontline*, January 25, 2021, <https://frontline.thehindu.com/dispatches/10-million-girls-at-risk-of-dropping-out-of-school-because-of-the-covid-19-pandemic-says-rte-forum-policy-brief/article33662229.ece>.

¹⁰⁶ Kerala State Government, “KERALA STATE POLICY FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES -2014,” n.d., <http://sjd.kerala.gov.in/DOCUMENTS/Orders/Internal%20Orders/18371.pdf>.

¹⁰⁷ “Disability & Disaster Risk Reduction – Kerala State Disaster Management Authority,” accessed May 7, 2022, <https://sdma.kerala.gov.in/disability-disaster-risk-reduction/>.

¹⁰⁸ <https://sdma.kerala.gov.in/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Handbook-Different-Ability-2016.pdf>

¹⁰⁹ “Joint Disaster Needs Assessment” (Kerala State Disaster Management Authority, October 2021).

● Building Skills and Capacities

In the UNICEF Kerala Flood Recovery Plan 2019- 2022, the role of capacity building is reserved for increased staffing and participation in emergency response sectors. Youth capacity building and training are discussed in association with an educational curriculum that provides life skills training, psychosocial support, and disaster training¹¹⁰.

Outside of the realm of educational training and capacity building, volunteers are often utilized in Kerala as part of emergency response programming. The NSS, National Service Scheme (NSS) includes the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports. This network includes more than 3.8 million volunteers and is spread over is active in 396 Universities.¹¹¹ The NSS allowed for youth to participate in developing social and civic responsibility, gaining skills in mobilizing community participation, and developing capacity for disaster relief training. One of the most important services provided by the NSS volunteers during natural disasters and Covid is their ability to assist in disseminating information and acting as a liaison between the government and their communities. Although youth are included in the forefront of social action, they are rarely heard in spaces where decisions are taken on behalf of them. Youth participation has been reduced to largely service-oriented engagement. However, there is a need for mechanisms that allow youth to directly influence disaster management policy¹¹².

Additionally, in an interview with Annie George, a consultant for the Joint Disaster Needs Assessment, the issue of increasing social capital was discussed as a means for capacity building. The inclusion of Garam Panchayats, or village councils, in the 73rd amendment of the Indian Constitution, allowed village councils to organize and perform functions entrusted to them by state legislators¹¹³ and allowed for an increase in persons who were part of the government's disaster risk reduction programs. This also included the involvement of youth-led councils such as Bal Sabhas in disaster response processes¹¹⁴. Bal Sabhas is an assembly or meeting of children in a council-like environment. This assembly is considered a children's parliament for children who live in village areas. This 'children's parliament' provides a platform for 5-18-year-olds to debate important issues, and showcase their talents¹¹⁵. "During events such as World Day against Child Labor, National Anti-Child Labor Day, World Environment Day and others; Bal panchayat organize rallies, human chain, etc to spread awareness about relevant issues."¹¹⁶ The described councils are models for building skills and capacities as well as enabling greater power-sharing and representation of adolescents. In this way, they are interlinked with adolescents' abilities to contribute to laws and policies, the first strategic area.

¹¹⁰ "Building Back Better: Kerala Addressing Post-Disaster Recovery Needs" (UNICEF, 2020).

¹¹¹ "National Service Scheme (NSS)," Government of India, n.d., <https://nss.gov.in/>.

¹¹² "ReImagining Humanitarian Action: Adolescent and Youth Engagement Policy and Practice During Emergencies and Protracted Crises in South Asia."

¹¹³"THE CONSTITUTION (SEVENTY-THIRD AMENDMENT) ACT, 1992,"

<https://legislative.gov.in/constitution-seventy-third-amendment-act-1992>, Government of India, Ministry Of Law And Justice, n.d.

¹¹⁴ Interview with Annie George Joint Disaster Needs Assessment consultant.

¹¹⁵"Bal Panchayat Mechanisms At A Glance," n.d., <https://cuts-chd.org/bal-panchayat-mechanism-at-a-glance/>.

¹¹⁶"Bal Panchayats," Centre for Integrated Development, n.d.

● Supporting Mechanisms and Opportunities for Participation

In the educational sector, UNICEF partners with the Kerala State Commission for Protection of Child Rights to create a curriculum that focuses on training youth for disaster risk reduction. UNICEF India also has collaborated with Myrtle Social Welfare Network, State Council of Education Research and Training (SCERT), and Kerala and National Institute of Mental Health & Neuro Sciences (NIMHANS), to provide disaster preparedness and psycho-emotional training for students in the Kerala region.

The Samoohya Sannadha Sen Volunteer Force provides opportunities for youth to participate as community helpers to assist in times of emergency and natural disasters. During the COVID pandemic, volunteers were able to deliver medications to elderly members of the community, and have also assisted in seed distribution programs to combat food insecurity¹¹⁷. Volunteers are also being trained to respond to flood disasters, which is an opportunity for participation and mitigates the issue of social capacity shortages.

Case Example: Kerala State 2018 Flood Response

As part of our study, UNICEF's India Country Office requested that we examine the role of adolescents in its joint flood recovery and response efforts in the south Indian state of Kerala. Kerala is vulnerable to frequent natural hazards, including cyclones and monsoons. Due to these severe weather events, Kerala has suffered a series of flooding and landslides each year since 2018. They have resulted in casualties as well as damages to the economy, infrastructure, and social sectors. We conducted an analysis of the Joint Rapid Needs Assessment from October 2021 and UNICEF's 2019-2022 Recovery Strategy and Plan for Rebuilding Safe and Green Kerala. We also interviewed the lead stakeholders involved in the Joint Disaster Needs Assessment (JDNA). Along with UNICEF, we spoke with a consultant and coordinators from Kerala State Disaster Management Authority, and Sphere India.

To broaden our understanding of strategies that youth-led and youth-serving organizations are implementing, we also conducted interviews with humanitarian and development organizations active across the country. These groups include U-Report India, the Hope Foundation, Green the Gene, and Rural Volunteer Center. We have recognized and incorporated some specific challenges, lessons learned, and recommendations into our analysis.

From our interview with the Kerala State Disaster Management Authority (KSDMA), we identified that several meaningful participation strategies were deployed in the Kerala State Flood response. As previously mentioned, the KSDMA has begun to incorporate youth volunteers in their disaster risk reduction programs and policies, such as the Sannadha Sena volunteer forces. These volunteer forces have provided an opportunity for youth to serve their communities and build skills and capacities in disaster relief efforts. KSDMA has also made an effort to address social norms by creating inclusive disaster risk reduction programs. An example of this is the Kerala State Policy for Persons with Disabilities. Additionally, intergenerational biases are being addressed through discourse in Bal Sabha

¹¹⁷*Delivering Meds to Running Community Kitchens: Kerala's Robust Volunteering System*, n.d., n.d., <https://www.thenewsminute.com/article/delivering-meds-running-community-kitchens-keralas-robust-volunteering-system-125594>.

platforms, where youth can discuss issues that affect them in humanitarian settings.

Additionally, the JDNA representatives we interviewed alluded to using digital tools and online training programs as a way to increase youth participation in disaster response. We learned that initially, Covid and the unexpected transition to remote learning brought about a digital divide between those with and without internet access. The main reasons for this divide were the affordability of data, network connectivity, and infrastructure¹¹⁸. Consequently, Kerala State provided mobile phones to students as a tool for learning. This has led to a high level of mobile phone penetration in the region, and consequently, there is potential to integrate youth-centered disaster relief training programs onto mobile phone applications. We also noted that there is potential for the integration of an on-the-ground, early warning system in Kerala.

India - Key Findings and Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Utilize mechanisms to reach marginalized communities where they exist and partner with governments to create them

Challenge:

In our conversations, interviewees most commonly referred to marginalized persons as those that reside in geographically isolated areas, face economic exclusion, or lack access to internet-connected services. Natural hazards and emergencies exacerbate the vulnerability of these communities and make it more difficult for disaster response agencies to deliver relief to those in need. There may be fewer opportunities for economically excluded persons to build skills and capacities for disaster risk reduction and resilience. Lack of internet access or last-mile connectivity can prevent important, life-saving information from reaching people before, during, and after emergencies.¹¹⁹ Organizations we spoke with either had initiatives that aim to address these vulnerabilities or they raised these issues to illustrate some of the gaps that currently exist. Although the stakeholders did not highlight specific gender disparities in participation and engagement, some of them shared that they have programs geared toward girls and women.

Mechanisms for Implementation:

- UNICEF can collaborate with local and community level youth groups to overcome such barriers and create opportunities for adolescents to become involved in outreach efforts.
- Utilize communication mechanisms where they exist and partner with governments to create additional outreach tools. Such entities may include volunteers dedicated to engagement in tribal communities, local level panchayats, children's clubs, and volunteer forces.
- Use in-person outreach to communities facing barriers to internet access or without internet-connected mobile phones.

¹¹⁸ UNICEF, "India Case Study: Situation Analysis on the Effects of and Responses to COVID-19 on the Education Sector of Asia."

¹¹⁹ "ReImagining Humanitarian Action: Adolescent and Youth Engagement Policy and Practice During Emergencies and Protracted Crises in South Asia."

Justification:

In Kerala, the state government has established volunteer and civil defense forces as a formal mechanism for the inclusion of young people as volunteers. There are now hundreds of thousands of volunteers, who have contributed to disaster risk reduction since the floods. We have identified several other examples of organizations developing and/or tapping into youth's tech skills. For instance, the HOPE Foundation has partnered with global technology and consulting companies to train young women in tech skills. In Kerala, college students flew drones to locate missing persons during the devastating floods. These are ways in which collaboration can be utilized for more effective disaster response.

Recommendation 2: Increase opportunities for adolescents' meaningful participation in high-level forums and conferences**Challenge:**

High-level forums and conferences hosted by the UN or UN agencies provide a unique chance for adolescents and youth-led organizations to share their experiences, raise their concerns, and voice their opinions based on the needs of their communities. However, intergenerational biases and prevalent social structures may hinder youths' potential to make meaningful change. Akshat Singhal of Green the Gene expressed that in his experience representing the organization at these events, not only can the application process be difficult; but there is still a perception that adolescents are inexperienced and not mature enough to be contributing their ideas and meaningfully participate. There is a widespread belief that youth must prove themselves by initiating conversations, and this is not always easy. Furthermore, there is the additional challenge of ensuring that the most marginalized voices are also heard in these forums. Youth and youth organizations with relatively more privilege may have higher chances of accessing these global spaces. It is important to understand how existing channels can be utilized to enhance inclusion.

Mechanisms for Implementation:

- Assess current outreach strategies to engage and encourage youth participation at high-level events. Develop tools such as mapping, advocacy, and outreach to engage youth specifically in marginalized communities about these opportunities.
- At forums and conferences, facilitate activities or roundtables that ensure young people can easily network and build relationships with decision-makers who are present.
- Build collectives or coalitions that enable information sharing and joint advocacy around issues that require global attention.

Justification:

Youth voices must be represented. Given the reportedly high barriers to access, UNICEF should ensure that the most marginalized have access to these channels to influence policy as well.

Recommendation 3: Allow for an expansion of open-ended questions in the U-Report platform and train youth, especially adolescents, as interns to monitor the feedback

Challenge:

In both India and Sri Lanka, the U-Report, a digital messaging tool used to engage and empower youth, currently does not focus on using open-ended questions as the main source of feedback because the algorithm does not pick up on natural language. Additionally, since the platform's algorithms capture aggregated data, there is a gap in information about the specific needs of youth based on gender, age, and location.

Mechanisms for Implementation:

- Encourage greater use of open-ended questions in the U-Report platform.
- UNICEF should train youth interns to monitor the U-report feedback weekly as a way of screening open-ended answers.

This way, UNICEF can leverage youth's technological skills and savvy by developing creative pathways for their contribution to efforts such as disaster risk reduction, while understanding the gender and age-specific needs of their peers. This internship program can also provide connections to and skills training by experts, which will increase employment and economic opportunities for youth who are involved.

Justification:

"In previous humanitarian and public health emergencies, it has been indicated that there is a need for practical, gender-sensitive recommendations for humanitarian practitioners that uphold the rights of affected populations."¹²⁰ By relying only on coded algorithms from the U-report, vital information is missed. For example, Annie George, a Kerala JDNA consultant, explained that in rescue and relief settings, aggregated data can miss key information and the whereabouts of marginalized communities. "We have women's groups in Kerala who are updating us on vulnerable people who are within an area. This information is usually lost, we do not know where those people are. So, when it comes to rescue and relief unless we have local people who can identify places where vulnerable people are during a crisis. This data of vulnerable persons is usually updated every six months, but we can use youth groups to update the data for us".¹²¹ This recommendation may be an approach that can communicate new youth interests and needs to U-Report staff.

¹²⁰ Sarah Fuhrman et al., "Gendered Implications of the COVID-19 Pandemic for Policies and Programmes in Humanitarian Settings," *BMJ Global Health*, May 1, 2020.

¹²¹ Interview with Annie George Joint Disaster Needs Assessment consultant.

Recommendation 4: Invest in or partner with the Kerala State Disaster Management Authority to create a user-friendly app for a natural disaster early warning system

Challenge:

Annie George, the lead consultant to the Kerala Joint Disaster Needs Assessment, informed us that a mobile application for basic early warning information would support “last-mile connectivity” needed at the ground level in Kerala state.

Mechanisms for Implementation:

- UNICEF can invest in or partner with the KSDMA to create a user-friendly application for a natural disaster early warning system.
- This system should also include settings that may alert persons with sensory disabilities.

Justification:

The United Nations Climate Action Department published findings stating that “A successful Early Warning System saves lives and jobs, land and infrastructures and supports long-term sustainability.”¹²² The devastation of the 2018 Kerala flood could have been mitigated if residents received an early flood warning alert. Although this may be a costly recommendation, the investment in the capital would be negligible compared to the potential loss of life and devastation to infrastructure.

¹²² “Early Warning Systems,” United Nations Climate Action, n.d., <https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/climate-solutions/early-warning-systems>.

PAKISTAN

Pakistan Country Context

Pakistan has an estimated population of 225.2 million, of which 64 percent are under the age of 30.¹²³ However, nearly half of the country's adolescents (32.4 million) are not enrolled in school, work, or training (NEET).¹²⁴ Pakistan's adolescent population also faces acute challenges in the areas of health, nutrition, protection, and water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH).¹²⁵ Further compounding these challenges is marginalization. In particular, adolescents living on the border of Pakistan and India are adversely impacted by crises and conflict.¹²⁶ Refugee and migrant adolescents also have unique vulnerabilities, namely access and identity issues. Gender and disability status add additional layers of discrimination and exclusion. Historically, marginalized groups are rarely acknowledged in Pakistan's mainstream social narrative, and as a result, such groups are frequently unable to influence policies that directly affect their lives.¹²⁷

The Pakistani government has developed policies and opportunities that promote adolescent engagement, including the National Youth Development Framework and National Youth Council. This Framework¹²⁸ aims to empower youth socially, economically and politically and ensure adolescents' active engagement at the grassroots level. The government implemented the Framework in 2018, with the launch of the Kamyab Jawan program under former Prime Minister of Pakistan, Imran Khan - a program aimed to empower youth by focusing on quality education, gainful employment and meaningful engagement.¹²⁹ In line with the Framework, Pakistan also developed the first ever National Youth Council,¹³⁰ with youth ministers from various provinces¹³¹. At the lower level, the Pakistan Youth Development Index (PYDI) at the district level introduces a culture of evidence-based policy making for youth development under the aegis of the Kamyab Jawan Program¹³².

In addition to the COVID-19 pandemic, Pakistan also experiences smaller and chronic emergencies that are caused by recurrent natural disasters, such as monsoon floods, severe air pollution, drought, and locust infestations. These crises continue to affect children's wellbeing in different parts of the

¹²³ "Investing in Pakistan's Young People - UNICEF." Accessed May 6, 2022.

<https://www.unicef.org/pakistan/media/3311/file/Generation%20Unlimited%20-%20Investing%20in%20Pakistan's%20Young%20People.pdf>.

¹²⁴ Ibid

¹²⁵ "What We Do - UNICEF Pakistan." accessed April 30, 2022, <https://www.unicef.org/pakistan/what-we-do>.

¹²⁶ <https://reliefweb.int/report/pakistan/impact-explosive-violence-students-and-education-kashmir>

¹²⁷ "Pakistan National Human Development Report on Inequality | UNDP in Pakistan," UNDP, accessed April 30, 2022, <https://www.pk.undp.org/content/pakistan/en/home/library/human-development-reports/PKNHDR-inequality.html>.

¹²⁸ "Eng_nydf-2020.Pdf," accessed May 1, 2022, N.d.

https://kamyabjawan.gov.pk/KJAssets/img/docs/eng_nydf-2020.pdf.

¹²⁹ "Kamyab Jawan," accessed May 3, 2022, <https://kamyabjawan.gov.pk/kjhome/About>.

¹³⁰ "National Youth Council of Pakistan | NYCOP," accessed May 1, 2022, <https://www.nycop.org/>.

¹³¹ "Eng_nydf-2020.Pdf," accessed May 1, 2022, https://kamyabjawan.gov.pk/KJAssets/img/docs/eng_nydf-2020.pdf.

¹³² "KJ_Pages.Pdf," n.d.

country.¹³³ Since 2018, the Government of Pakistan has made reforms to improve the socioeconomic conditions of Pakistanis through poverty alleviation, malnutrition, climate change and fiscal policy stabilization. The government's hope is to have a trickle-down effect of improving the lives of adolescents. The previous administration has made noteworthy progress in placing a focus on adolescents for which the new administration may continue to build on. However, the recent political issues happened in Pakistan may affect the enabling environment for adolescent empowerment.

Assessment of UNICEF Strategies and Tools

UNICEF Pakistan's interventions complement the efforts of the government and other national actors, and mainly focus on health, nutrition, protection, WASH, and emergency preparedness. The agency achieves its goals by using various adolescent engagement tools, including UNICEF's SParking Wellbeing and the Adolescent Kit. However, due to some reasons UNICEF discontinued the U-Report in 2019, another engagement tool used in other South Asia countries, whose analysis will be excluded from our analysis. according to its official website, the U-Report had 41,473 users in Pakistan, and the channel was mainly SMS.¹³⁴ However, UNICEF and UNDP are developing a Policy Lab, which will be discussed later in the next section, and has the similar function of collecting data on digital platforms.

The SParking Wellbeing kit centers on peer-to-peer training and community engagement. SParking Wellbeing allows UNICEF and implementing partners to train adolescents who then lead different capacity building campaigns. This process creates a snowball effect that influences and empowers Pakistani adolescents. The SParking Wellbeing kit is a proven, powerful tool for empowering adolescents, especially those who are marginalized because of geographical and digital access issues that prevent extensive engagement.

In Pakistan, UNICEF uses the Adolescent Kit for interventions relating to child rights promotion, life skills development and also used it for resilience-building¹³⁵. More specifically, UNICEF Pakistan uses the kit on identity and self-expression for adolescent boys and girls, as well as intergenerational dialogue. UNICEF's work in this space intends to achieve positive changes in child marriage practices, and to promote adolescents' development of life-skills related to identity, self-esteem, empathy and respect, communication and expression, and coping with stress and managing emotions.¹³⁶

¹³³ "Annual Report 2020.Pdf." Accessed May 6, 2022.

<https://www.unicef.org/pakistan/media/3631/file/Annual%20Report%202020.pdf>.

¹³⁴ "U-Report Pakistan," accessed April 30, 2022, <https://pakistan.ureport.in>.

¹³⁵ "The Kit in Action - Quick Guide," accessed April 30, 2022, <https://www.adolescentkit.org/kit-in-action.html>.

¹³⁶ "Annual Report 2020.Pdf," accessed April 30, 2022,

<https://www.unicef.org/pakistan/media/3631/file/Annual%20Report%202020.pdf>.

Assessment of Adolescent Meaningful Participation Strategies

● Influencing Laws and Policies

Despite the presence of adolescent and youth-centered policies in Pakistan, there are several areas of concern. First, based on the UNDP and Framework’s definition, the National Youth Framework and the National Youth Council target older adolescents, aged 15 to 29. According to Mariyam Irfan, Program Manager at the School of Leadership Foundation, policies that address adolescents under the age of 15 only relate to child protection and education, treating them as beneficiaries.¹³⁷ This can be visualized in the National Plan of Action for Child Protection.¹³⁸ However, though adolescents are in need of protection and services, they can also be contributors, and younger adolescents need improved forms of engagement. Secondly, although there are policies and programs that focus on youth engagement, from our interviews, the team found that implementation is still an issue.¹³⁹ We found that these implementation challenges are related to social norms, geography, and other barriers, such as limited funding and coordination mechanisms at different levels of the society.¹⁴⁰

“Youth policies are there, but what we lack is the implementation of all the policies. There are very strong documents being prepared, but there is very little implementation on them.”

– Muhammad Shahzad Khan, Founder and Executive Director of Chanan Development Organization

“We have, for example, the Act on Education, which is, there should be equal and free education for all children in Pakistan. But there are no policies which are in place for such adolescents as a target group.”

– Mariyam Irfan, Managing Director of School of Leadership Foundation

¹³⁷ Mariyam Irfan, Interview with School of Leadership Foundation Managing Director, Zoom, March 29, 2022

¹³⁸ Sana Younus, Aisha S Chachar, and Ayesha Mian, “Child Protection in Pakistan: Legislation & Implementation” 13 (2018): 4.

¹³⁹ Muhammad Shahzad Khan, Interview with Chanan Development Organization Founder and Executive Director, Zoom, April 13, 2022

¹⁴⁰ Dr. Muhammad Ali Malik, Interview with Deputy Secretary Prime Minister, Kamyab Jawan: Office of the Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Youth Affairs, Zoom, March 30, 2022

UNICEF Pakistan collaborates with Pakistan's government to improve children's lives. The agency's work is informed by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to help children realize their rights under the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).¹⁴¹ Our team's interviews with Tania Humayun, from the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), and Dr. Muhammad Ali Malik, from the Office of the Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Youth Affairs, provided further information on the government's perspective. In these interviews, the government officials referenced an ongoing project with UNICEF and UNDP Pakistan to develop a Policy Lab,¹⁴² an e-platform for



Pakistan, UNICEF Sign MoU to Compile Adolescence Equality Index

Photo from Two Years Progress Report of Kamyab Jawan, National Youth Development Program

adolescents and youth to access and discuss policy with the government, and to provide innovative ideas and policy solutions. Furthermore, UNICEF and the government also signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in February 2021 to compile an Adolescence Equality Index, aimed at looking into the problems, especially vulnerabilities and challenges faced by adolescents aged 10-19 years old, and working to find solutions to inform policies.¹⁴³ According to Dr. Ali Malik, this index will be published in the near future, which shows more focus on adolescents.¹⁴⁴ Another organization working on adolescents' policy advocacy is the Punjab Skills and Development Fund (PSDF), which is Pakistan's largest skills development fund.¹⁴⁵ Mashal Yousaf, the Project Head at PSDF stressed the importance of engagement with policy makers even though it may not produce immediate results.

“We're trying to reach out to the government and see what policy advocacy we can do. How can we create an enabling environment? How can we engage the local NGOs that are already working in these communities to lift the adolescence up? Because there's no one intervention that can ever resolve a problem without a highly integrated approach and integration of stakeholders.”

– Mashal Yousaf, Project Head of Punjab Skills and Development Fund (PSDF)

¹⁴¹ “What We Do,” accessed April 30, 2022, <https://www.unicef.org/pakistan/what-we-do>.

¹⁴² “Concept Policy Lab.Pdf,” n.d.

¹⁴³ APP, “Pakistan, UNICEF Sign MoU to Compile Adolescence Equality Index,” Brecorder, February 4, 2021, <https://www.brecorder.com/news/40059802>.

¹⁴⁴ Dr. Muhammad Ali Malik, Interview with Deputy Secretary Prime Minister, Kamyab Jawan: Office of the Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Youth Affairs, Zoom, March 30, 2022

¹⁴⁵ Mashal Yousaf, Interview with Punjab Skills and Development Fund Head of Research Policy and Donor Management, Zoom, April 11, 2022

● Addressing Social Norms

Pakistan has given great efforts to improve adolescent engagement in the past years. However, there still exist various kinds of harmful social norms that are difficult to change in a short time, which prevent adolescents from participating, especially from marginalized communities. Child marriage, gender-based violence and gender inequality all need attention and require long-time efforts. For example, Pakistan has the 6th highest number of girls married before the age of 18 in the world.¹⁴⁶ There are nearly 19 million child brides in Pakistan and 1 in 6 young women were married in childhood.¹⁴⁷ These problems could even multiply during and after the COVID pandemic.¹⁴⁸

“Even before COVID-19, gender inequality persisted as the most widespread and significant injustice of our time. But this injustice has been multiplied by the impacts of the pandemic. Globally, over 11 million girls may never go back to school after the pandemic. An additional 10 million girls are at risk of child marriage over the next decade. And, according to UNFPA, two million additional cases of female genital mutilation may occur.”

– Catherine Russell, UNICEF Executive Director

During the COVID-19 pandemic, gender inequality, particularly in digital literacy, is one of the most frequently raised concerns.¹⁴⁹ Pakistan is reported to have some of the world's largest mobile gender disparities. In addition to girls, young people with disabilities also have unequal access to the internet and smartphones in Pakistan.¹⁵⁰ Improving digital access has enormous potential for the betterment of adolescents' engagement. Saad Ahmed Khan, a 17-year-old ambassador for Coping with Corona (CWC) campaign, pointed out that adolescents are more willing to attend online activities compared with in-person ones, due to the time commitment and ability to avoid traffic¹⁵¹. Dr. Muhammad Ali Malik, the Deputy Secretary Prime Minister, also discussed the benefits for women in Pakistan to start

¹⁴⁶ “Child Marriage in Pakistan: A Report on Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa 2020,” UN Women – Asia-Pacific, <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2021/01/child-marriage-in-pakistan-a-report-on-punjab-and-khyber-pakhtunkhwa-2020>.

¹⁴⁷ “Child Marriage Country Profile.Pdf,” accessed May 3, 2022, <https://www.unicef.org/pakistan/media/4151/file/Child%20Marriage%20Country%20Profile.pdf>.

¹⁴⁸ “We Must Prioritize Girls in Our COVID-19 Recovery,” accessed May 3, 2022, <https://www.unicef.org/pakistan/press-releases/we-must-prioritize-girls-our-covid-19-recovery>.


¹⁴⁹ Muhammad Shahzad Khan, Interview with Chanan Development Organization Founder and Executive Director, Zoom, April 13, 2022

¹⁵⁰ <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/education-plus-development/2022/04/27/resolving-gender-gaps-in-ict-is-critical-for-a-more-sustainable-future/>

¹⁵¹ Saad Ahmed Khan, Interview with Adolescent, Zoom, April 12, 2022

businesses from home, such as freelancing and e-commerce, to overcome inadequate and opportunity-limiting public transport.¹⁵²

Other chronic social norms, such as child marriage and gender violence, also need to be addressed. According to Tania Humayun from NDMA, in AJK and Hannah, some men reject empowering women and children, and gender and human rights issues are not given enough attention. This makes approaching the right base by government intervention even more challenging.



“There were men who said that their women will not be allowed to access these facilities because we are empowering their youth and their women, and they don't want their women to go on their own and make decisions.”

– Tania Humayun, Humanitarian/Development Sector Specialist in National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) Pakistan



To address this, UNICEF Pakistan, together with UNDP and NDMA, developed women and child friendly spaces with 4 centers in underprivileged areas. The spaces are female-led, have provided 500-800 local awareness sessions across the 4 centers, and have gathered 8000 women in the past 1.5 years¹⁵³. Tania Humayun also shared that, to address the gender-based violence (GBV) issue, in 2015 Pakistan's government completed a regional project on building a school safety framework including awareness sessions on GBV. The partnership then rolled out the framework to different provinces in 2017, piloting 23-38 schools in Balochistan working on GBV issues¹⁵⁴.

Bunyad Literacy Community Council (BLCC/BUNYAD), an NGO working for the promotion of literacy and education, especially of young girls and adolescents living in rural areas, has been working on this since its foundation in 1994.¹⁵⁵ BUNYAD addresses social norms through street theaters, clips, and movies to raise the awareness of harmful issues such as child marriage. The “Improving Adolescents’ Lives in Pakistan” project, a joint-initiative between BUNYAD and UNICEF that lasted from September 2018 to December 2019, conducted 26 street theaters in total, with 1735 participants. It has also completed 73 social action plans both in Rahim Yar Khan and Bahawalpur. Shaheen Attiqur Rahm, Vice Chairperson of BUNYAD, stated that these and other initiatives help girls overcome harmful social norms, such as through non-formal education and financial literacy programs. Rahm noted that after some initiatives, the youth continue “to do the work.” She emphasized that youth “want to change, they want to do something.”¹⁵⁶

¹⁵² Dr. Muhammad Ali Malik, Interview with Deputy Secretary Prime Minister, Kamyab Jawan: Office of the Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Youth Affairs, Zoom, March 30, 2022

¹⁵³ Tania Humayun, Interview with National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) Pakistan Humanitarian/Development Sector Specialist, Zoom, April 13, 2022

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ “Bunyad Literacy Community Council (BLCC /BUNYAD) | UIL,” October 21, 2017, <https://uil.unesco.org/partner/library/bunyad-literacy-community-council-blcc-bunyad-pakistan>.

¹⁵⁶ Shaheen Attiqur Rahm, Interview with Vice Chairperson of BUNYAD, Zoom, April 8, 2022.

● Building Skills and Capacities

While policies and social norms impact the enabling environment for adolescent engagement, capacity and skills building provide adolescents with the tools to be active citizens in their communities. Building the skills and capacities of adolescents and youth is a priority for a variety of actors across Pakistan. Dr. Muhammad Ali Malik, the Deputy Secretary of the Prime Minister's Youth Program (Kamyab Jawan) within the Prime Minister's Office in Pakistan, stressed the significance of building the skills and capacities of young people as a means to facilitate their financial inclusion. As such, employment and economic empowerment is one of the core pillars of the National Youth Framework.¹⁵⁷ Dr. Ali stated that, according to the feedback they have given to the government, "this is what the young people want."¹⁵⁸ A primary objective of this framework is to bridge the gap between education and labor market realities. The necessity of matching skills needed by employers, and skills that are taught in school, was also raised by a number of adolescents serving organizations in Pakistan.

UNICEF Pakistan works with the government and other important stakeholders to build the skills and capacities of young people. The Generation Unlimited (GenU) Youth Challenge is an example of such a collaboration. In conjunction with the United Nations Development Fund (UNDP) and the School of Leadership Foundation, UNICEF Pakistan has launched two rounds of the Youth Challenge. The Youth Challenge invites young innovators from the ages of 10 to 24 to develop solutions to improve education, employment and civic empowerment. The Youth Challenge is part of GenU, a global partnership that aims to prepare young people to become productive and active citizens. It links secondary school education and training to employment and entrepreneurship to enable every young person to succeed in the workplace.¹⁵⁹ The Youth Innovation Labs is another mechanism UNICEF uses to empower and capacitate adolescents and youth through entrepreneurial training and funding for their ideas.¹⁶⁰ UNICEF'S approach to skills and capacities building also encompasses life skills. The CWC campaign, which will be discussed in more detail, is a campaign that builds life skills by empowering young people to participate in emergency response but also providing information on how to cope with and recover from crisis situations.

Despite these efforts, challenges persist. Adolescent serving organizations interviewed voiced concerns about the growing gap between city dwellers and those living in rural provinces, which reinforces inequality. While the economy is recovering from the Covid-19 pandemic, large inequities remain. Poverty rates are much higher in rural areas than urban areas, and they also vary across provinces and districts. In Pakistan, poverty and income disparities are rooted in circumstances that "undermine productivity, resilience, and inclusion." The poor are more likely to live in larger households, have lower educational levels, be less connected to formal job markets, and live in rural areas.¹⁶¹ This

¹⁵⁷ National Youth Framework, pg 12

¹⁵⁸ Dr. Muhammad Ali Malik, Interview with Deputy Secretary Prime Minister, Kamyab Jawan: Office of the Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Youth Affairs, Zoom, March 30, 2022

¹⁵⁹ "Generation Unlimited - Investing in Pakistan's Young People.Pdf," accessed April 30, 2022, <https://www.unicef.org/pakistan/media/3311/file/Generation%20Unlimited%20-%20Investing%20in%20Pakistan's%20Young%20People.pdf>.


¹⁶⁰ "Innovation Labs." Innovation labs | UNICEF Pakistan. Accessed May 6, 2022. <https://www.unicef.org/pakistan/topics/innovation-labs>.

¹⁶¹ Hussain, Khadim, and Nasrin Siddiqua. "Resolving Gender Gaps in ICT Is Critical for a More Sustainable Future." Brookings. Brookings, April 27, 2022. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/education-plus-development/2022/04/27/resolving-gender-gaps-in-ict-is-critical-for-a-more-sustainable-future/>.

affects the outcomes and aspirations of adolescents and this has been echoed by many interviews who all expressed a desire to see UNICEF Pakistan do more for rural and hard to reach provinces and districts so that they do not slip further behind.

● **Supporting Mechanisms and Opportunities for Participation**

The next important piece in our puzzle of creating space for adolescents' engagement is providing adolescents with outlets to engage. In Pakistan, there are a number of community and youth networks that act as supporting mechanisms to create opportunities for adolescent engagement. One such organization is the Chanan Development Association (CDA), whose work consists of addressing harmful social norms such as early and forced child marriage and gender-based violence, capacity building, developing a network for youth led action, and advocacy. CDA works in 110 districts across Pakistan through a network of 360 youth-led organizations with 15,000 active volunteers and more than 100,000 peer educators across Pakistan. Its flagship Annual Peace Festival is one of the instruments CDA uses to catalyze youth engagement. It brings together 600 adolescents and youth from different religions and provinces to engage in dialogue with each other and policy makers about issues affecting their communities with each other and with policy makers. The festival was launched in 2010 and to date has included 5,000 young people¹⁶².



“I think that if UNICEF could engage more and more adolescents, it would divide the pressure and what you call the burden. I think that because I am the only one in Peshawar, it has a lot of burden on me.”


– Saad Ahmed Khan, CWC Ambassador, 17 years old



CDA Director Muhammad expressed a desire for closer collaboration with UNICEF Pakistan to enhance opportunities for both organizations. “We have a huge network at the grassroots with young people and adolescents, so we can use that network and support to help [UNICEF Pakistan] to address issues that it is trying to address.”¹⁶³ Tapping into pre-existing networks of adolescents will help UNICEF Pakistan mobilize more youth.

¹⁶² Interview with Muhammad Shahzad Khan, Founder and Executive Director, Chanan Development Organization, Zoom, April 13, 2022.

¹⁶³ Ibid.



“Based in Lahore, Chanan Development Association (CDA) is working in 110 districts across Pakistan through its network of 360 youth-led organizations, 15,000 active volunteers and more than 100,000 peer educators across Pakistan.”

– The official website of Chanan Development Association (CDA)



The Rural Support Programmes Network (RSPN) also boasts an expansive network that can be leveraged to enhance the landscape for adolescent engagement in Pakistan. RSPN consists of ten-member Rural Support Programmes (RSPs) that promote “social mobilization,” which is the belief that poor people have an innate potential to help themselves through better organization and technical and financial support. Since 2000, RSP has worked closely with the government, donors and communities to promote the RSP approach to community driven development, which gives adolescents and youth the opportunity to contribute to the development of their communities. RSP work covers 4,401 union councils in 149 districts with 496,352 community organizations and over 8.4 million members (organized households), which covers a population of 54 million.¹⁶⁴ Recently, UNICEF Pakistan and RSPN have collaborated on two adolescent engagement projects. The first was entitled “Improving Adolescent Lives in Pakistan, and focused on three areas: early child marriage, teenage pregnancies and girls’ education. The second project covered the same topics as the previous one but also included raising awareness about Covid-19. Ayesha Tariq, Project Manager at RSPN remarked that after the first program, “we realized that just capacitating these adolescents to deliver awareness-raising sessions regarding the three target sectors of the project was not sufficient to bring about change. So, we ensured as part of the second project to include these adolescents and integrate them and incorporate them in our community institutions.” As a result, adolescents were able to discuss issues affecting them and their peers with relevant stakeholders that then took their issues to district level authorities at different departments. Nevertheless, Ayesha recognizes that there are still significant challenges facing adolescents and their meaningful participation in society. In particular, she notes that there is space for UNICEF Pakistan to be more involved with local communities. While UNICEF Pakistan is already highly engaged, Ayesha explained that their work could be better informed by attending community organization meetings to regularly reinforce lessons on child protection and to take note of issues raised by communities.¹⁶⁵ This could also be achieved through the development of a reporting mechanism that enables community organizations to share meeting minutes with UNICEF Pakistan.

Case Example: Coping with Corona Campaign

The Coping with Corona Campaign (CWC) is a joint initiative between UNICEF Pakistan, other UN agencies, adolescent serving organizations, including the School of Leadership Foundation, boy and girl scouts, and the government to combat Covid-19. The objective of the campaign is to empower

¹⁶⁴ “Who We Are: RSPN.” Rural Support Programmes Network. Accessed May 6, 2022. <http://www.rspn.org/index.php/about-us/who-we-are/>.

¹⁶⁵ Interview with Ayesha Tariq, Project Manager at RSPN, Zoom, April 25, 2022.

adolescents and youth to take action in their communities by building their capacities. The campaign consisted of a three-day online training course on Covid-19 prevention and coping mechanisms. Topics covered included stigma and Violence Prevention, Mental Health & Wellbeing, Online Safety, Adolescent Nutrition, and Reproductive Health Rights.¹⁶⁶

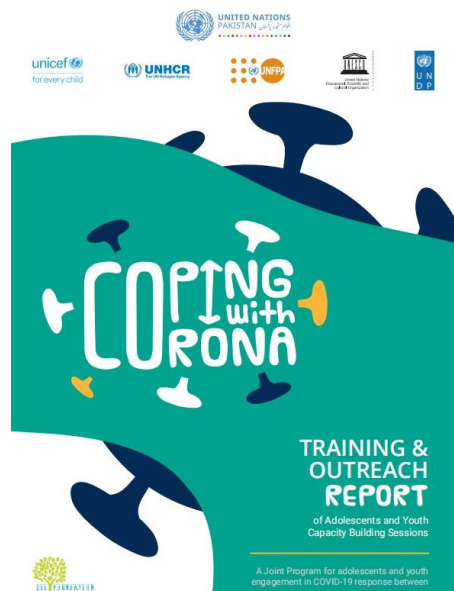


Photo from *Coping with Corona Report*

During the first two rounds of the campaign, CWC selected 238 adolescents and youth from different segments of society, including marginalized communities and refugees to act as ambassadors for the campaign. The 238 ambassadors developed and trained small teams to assist them with the awareness campaign. Through peer-to-peer and community presentations, 15,000 adolescents between the ages of 13 and 19 were reached. An additional 3.2 million people were reached through radio-messages, and 22 million through digital platforms. These figures combined surpassed UNICEF Pakistan's initial target of reaching 5 million people.¹⁶⁷

The campaign provided important insights on the meaningful participation of young people in humanitarian response. It also provided key lessons concerning the four strategic areas.

CWC directly focuses on the strategic areas of addressing social norms, building skills and capacities, and supporting mechanisms and opportunities for participation. Notwithstanding this success, the campaign has challenges accessing marginalized communities.

The Campaign faced challenges reaching minorities due to access issues as many live in hard-to-reach areas.¹⁶⁸ Another other issue highlighted by one of the CWC's adolescent ambassadors Saad Ahmed Khan was that lack of a regional focus:




CWC Youth Ambassadors Executing Activities in Communities

Photo from *Coping with Corona Report*

¹⁶⁶ “Coping with Corona Training and Outreach Report.Pdf,” n.d. pp. 3-13

¹⁶⁷ Interview with Masooma Qazilbash, Mome Saleem, and Zunash Abbasi, UNICEF Pakistan Officers, Zoom, March 22, 2022.

¹⁶⁸ “Coping with Corona Training and Outreach Report.Pdf,” n.d. pp. 18



“I think the information that they provided me was very informative and very inclusive of all the aspects of Covid 19. But I think where it lacked was how to approach our adolescents regionally. Every region has their own way to tackle situations, and I think that's where it lacked. It did not sort of include how we're supposed to deliver the message. I think it did tell us, it did push us to do, but we were kind of left alone in that matter as it did not have. I think that's where [UNICEF] can improve. They can divide all these groups into separate regions, and then tackle them individually.”

– Saad Ahmed Khan, CWC Ambassador, 17 years old



Despite these challenges, the campaign built the capacities of young people through these aforementioned sessions, equipping young people with coping mechanisms for crises, as well as empowering them through this opportunity to take on a leadership role in their communities. Through peer-to-peer contact, young people build coalitions of adolescents and youth to impact their communities. The campaign produced a multiplied impact of continued engagement. For example, CWC ambassador Rameen Kamran developed an initiative to support adolescents of different abilities, while another CWC ambassador, Saad Ahmed Khan, developed a mental health initiative, including establishing a mental health club at his school.

As this case study highlights, and as the other insights gleaned from research, data and interviews reveals, adolescents can be effective participants in emergency situations, and beyond, especially when their capacities are fostered and they are supplied with the appropriate channels to act.

Pakistan - Key Findings and Recommendations



Recommendation 1: Translate policy into interventions and programs to improve full implementation and empower both younger and older adolescents

Challenge:

At the federal level, youth-centric policies are in existence, such as the National Youth Framework which was discussed in the Influencing Laws and Policies Section. However, there is a gap in implementation at the district and provincial level and a lack of focus on young adolescents (ages 10-14). Moreover, youth had limited opportunities to actually influence the creation of these policies.

Mechanisms for Implementation:

- Collaborate with district and provincial authorities, and local and provincial NGOs to understand the ways in which policy can be best adapted to a particular community and what local barriers might be.
- Collaborate with partner and non-partner organizations working on policy advocacy to create opportunities for adolescents to influence policy development. One such organization that is focused on influencing laws and policies is the Chanan Development organization (CDO). UNICEF Pakistan could consider collaborating with CDO to support the implementation of adolescent and youth policies.

Justification:

Despite the existence of federal policies such as the National Youth Framework (Framework) and entities such as the National Youth Council, adolescent serving organizations interviewed have indicated that these policies have not been fully implemented at the provincial level. This can be explained by the due to devolution under 18th Amendment to the Constitution, which complicates coordination across provinces. The government is already working with UNICEF Pakistan to improve its youth policies at a national level, but could strengthen its efforts at the provincial level, especially in more rural areas where tribal customs may supersede national policies. The first recommendation aims to launch activities and programs to adapt the implementation of the policy to such environments. The second recommendation addresses the different types of young people that fall under the adolescent classification. Younger adolescents are often neglected as contributors, so it is important that we focus more on their engagement. UNICEF is uniquely poised to help the government identify different ways to incorporate younger adolescents into policies and programs. Finally, the third recommendation acknowledges the robust networks that exist within Pakistan that can be leveraged to enhance adolescent participation at all levels of government and in decision making. UNICEF can collaborate with other organizations who have large networks in adolescent development and engagement to explore more opportunities. One such organization that is focused on influencing laws and policies is the Chanan Development organization (CDO). UNICEF Pakistan could consider collaborating with CDO to support the implementation of adolescent and youth policies.

Recommendation 2: Mobilize adolescents by including families and communities to overcome geographical and social norms barriers.

Challenge: Geography and social norms remain barriers to the meaningful engagement of marginalized groups. In particular, access to digital technologies and/or connectivity further compound these barriers. It is difficult to mobilize adolescents in rural areas and especially marginalized communities such as girls, disabled, etc, to participate in relevant programs and activities.

Mechanisms for Implementation:

- Tap into community networks and organizations to mobilize adolescents. Interventions should include families and communities and must be tailored to the specific needs of the community, which vary across Pakistan due to its diverse population.
- Improve access to digital technology and digital literacy to support the meaningful engagement of adolescents, and particularly marginalized communities.

- Encourage the use of peer-to-peer, community spaces, etc. to reach the less digitally connected communities
- Advocacy targeted at the government and the general public centered around increasing girls' access to schooling, disability rights, etc.

Justification: Through our interviews, community engagement in Pakistan emerged as an essential conduit for the meaningful engagement of adolescents, especially where access to digital technologies and internet service are challenges. UNICEF Pakistan should continue to partner with such community networks and organizations SOLF and RSPN. Adolescent serving organizations have all suggested increased collaboration with communities, especially in rural areas to increase meaningful engagement of marginalized groups. Improving access to digital technology and digital literacy will support the meaningful engagement of adolescents, and particularly marginalized communities because it will allow adolescents to be engaged from where they are located, but will also help equip them with 21st century skills that will aid in job marketability. While connectivity and access to digital technologies may continue to remain challenges, public-private partnerships may help create opportunities to improve access as well as enhance digital literacy. Nevertheless, direct engagement with marginalized communities, including more in-person programming or inclusion of more marginalized adolescents in peer-trainings so that they can bring back training to their communities is still very desirable according to adolescent serving organizations interviewed.

Recommendation 3: Support adolescents' innovations by directly providing economic opportunities

Challenge: UNICEF Pakistan's programs focus on awareness and capacity building, but there are limited opportunities to support adolescents' innovations, and in particular, their economic empowerment. The financial inclusion of adolescents is needed to promote their meaningful participation. But the government or UNICEF alone will face lots of pressure to create economic opportunities for all of Pakistan's adolescents.

“In Pakistan there's a lot of youth organizations, a lot of passionate young people who know their problems, who want to contribute but they need resources. Rather it could have been a very simple, straightforward process, where UN agencies can directly fund those youth organizations, and they can start working on them.”

– Muhammad Shahzad Khan, Founder and Executive Director of Chanan Development Organization

Mechanisms for Implementation:

- Engaging private sector organizations during the skills training design and development phases as well as facilitating the establishment of Public-Private Partnerships can help to

create economic opportunities for adolescents and youth. UNICEF Pakistan can collaborate with the government and the private sector to facilitate these connections as well as helping adolescents build employable skills.

- UNICEF can also direct funds toward supporting entrepreneurship on a larger scale than existing programs allow through micro-grants and adolescent appropriate livelihood programs. Entrepreneurship and program proposals could be handed in by application. Through a selection process, funding can be directed towards programs raised by organizations or adolescents themselves.
- Advocate for local/national certification of trained adolescents, especially in host communities, so that they have formal recognition of their skills which increases employment opportunities.

● Example from Punjab Skills and Development Fund (PSDF):

“It was an intelligent way of designing a program where you tell the industry that we will provide you, and mobilize the youth for you, who are willing to learn. You will give them the opportunity to get them trained according to your needs, and after that you give us an assurance that you will hire some of the adolescents. So, we were able to achieve a 70 to 80% employment rate to help the youth enter the labor market.”

– Mashal Yousaf, Head of Research Policy and Donor Management in PSDF

PSDF Training EcoSystem.



500+
Training Service Providers



4,000+
New Private Sector Jobs Created in Training
Service Providers Network



90%
Of the Training Service Providers in the
Ecosystem are from the Private Sector



190+Employers
Training Youth in Market Relevant Trades



2,500+Locations
Training across Rural, Semi-urban and
Urban Punjab



Justification:

Resources are required to support the economic empowerment of young people. The most direct and realistic way to support is to provide funding. However, Pakistan has a vast population, which is in the

top five in the world, of which 64 percent is under the age of 30.¹⁶⁹ So this financial burden must be distributed across different actors. UNICEF can accomplish this by creating more livelihood/economic opportunities similar to the Youth Challenge. It can also be done through private sector collaborations. The Punjab Skills and Development Fund has successfully done this through its programs, whose program graduates have subsequently earned 21 billion Rupees in annualized graduate income.¹⁷⁰

Recommendation 4: Consider the timing and scope of adolescent programs and ways to integrate into formal and informal schooling

Challenge: Adolescents have the need to balance the workload of academics, family and other commitments and so training should be well timed and integrated into formal and informal education programming as much as possible. During weekends and summer holidays, when academic stress is less, it would be easier for adolescents to focus on community work or other activities.

“When I was pursuing my community services, it sometimes came in the big days of my academic years. If it came in the working days, I really felt difficult to balance my time between these academy hours. But if we would have it in the summertime, I would devote all my time to this.”

– Rameen Kamran, CWC Ambassador, 15 years old

Mechanisms for Implementation:

- Advocate for local/national certification or accreditation of adolescents that receive humanitarian training or are involved in volunteer humanitarian work. Including these credits in secondary and tertiary school curriculums will enhance the enabling environment to support adolescent engagement.
- Operate programs during times that adolescents have more leisure time, such as weekends and holidays or adjust activities to fluctuate with adolescents' availability
- Include more adolescents in programs to distribute the labor to prevent adolescent participants from being overwhelmed and overburdened.

Justification: The meaningful engagement of adolescents requires a contribution on their parts: their time. Adolescents, like adults, have their own priorities and responsibilities, chief among these responsibilities is school. As such, working with schools to develop or support pre-existing volunteer

¹⁶⁹ “Generation Unlimited - Investing in Pakistan’s Young People.Pdf,” accessed April 30, 2022, <https://www.unicef.org/pakistan/media/3311/file/Generation%20Unlimited%20-%20Investing%20in%20Pakistan's%20Young%20People.pdf>.

¹⁷⁰ “About PSDF | Success Story of Public-Private Partnership,” PSDF (blog), <https://www.psdf.org.pk/about-us/our-company/>.

programs that integrate volunteer activities into the curriculum may help to increase the numbers of adolescents involved in humanitarian response activities. Additionally, by operating programs during more convenient times for adolescents and/or adjusting activities to match adolescents' availability may increase participation and reduce feelings of burnout. This will not only help them gain positive feelings of achievement, but also make sure the investment of time and energy in the program is used fully and effectively.

Recommendation 5: Develop a Systematic Approach to Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) for Adolescent Engagement

Challenge: UNICEF Pakistan has identified feedback mechanisms as an area of opportunity as it works to improve its adolescent engagement efforts.

Mechanisms for Implementation:

- Include M&E throughout the lifecycle of programs. Doing so would allow UNICEF Pakistan to receive feedback at different stages of the program cycle, which will allow it to make adjustments if needed during the project. With respect to evaluations post program implementation, due to access issues, feedback mechanisms should come in a variety of forms, including paper, electronic, phone and home visit surveys to assess participation. Questions should be kept to a minimum to respect adolescent's time.
 - Questions to include might addresses the following OECD criteria for programming in fragile environments: relevance (objectives and the activities of the intervention respond to the needs of the beneficiaries), effectiveness (intervention has met its intended objectives); efficiency (value-for-money); impact (wider effects, positive or negative, produced by intervention either directly or indirectly, intentionally or unintentionally), sustainability (the probability of continued long-term benefits and resilience to risk over time).¹⁷¹
- Utilize third-party organizations to assist with the monitoring and evaluation of programs when necessary. Appendixes C and D includes samples of surveys developed by this capstone group to evaluate the meaningful engagement of adolescents for adolescent serving organizations and adolescents

Justification:

Monitoring and evaluation are important processes that enhance accountability and reporting, learning and impact. It is most effective when it is integrated into every phase of the program cycle, including design and proposal development, start-up and planning, implementation, and at the end of project.¹⁷² Human-centered programming requires that humans, and in this case, adolescents, be at the center of programming that impacts their lives. Getting feedback from adolescents is a critical component of human-centered programming to ensure that programs meet their specific needs.

¹⁷¹ "Back-to-Basics.Pdf," n.d.

¹⁷² Ibid.

SRI LANKA

Sri Lanka Country Context

In Sri Lanka, adolescents represent over 30 percent of the total population.¹⁷³ They are disproportionately affected by humanitarian crises and need specialized care and inclusion in decision-making. UNICEF Sri Lanka works to address these needs by empowering youth to become agents of meaningful change.¹⁷⁴ UNICEF's focus on Disaster Risk Reduction, Emergency Preparedness and Response, Relief, Welfare and Early Recovery, and Recovery, Rehabilitation, and Reconstruction, have played an important role in Sri Lanka's infrastructural development and capacity building.¹⁷⁵ These efforts have facilitated livelihoods restoration during post-crisis phases, and laid a foundation for withstanding future emergencies.

UNICEF uses the Toolkit for Adolescent Engagement and Innovation¹⁷⁶ and the U-Report¹⁷⁷ to build adolescent capacity and resilience, while also gathering feedback for improved programming. The toolkit was first introduced and adapted to Sri Lanka's context in 2019 at child-friendly spaces and clubs.¹⁷⁸ It was used to initially engage 500 adolescent members of various children's clubs that collaborate with Government Child Rights Promotion Officers (CRPOs) to raise awareness on child protection and child rights issues. Based on the experiences and lessons learned, including from adolescents' feedback, UNICEF has adapted the toolkit's content to fit the Sri Lankan context, and also developed a training module in both local languages. This contextualization enables UNICEF to show CRPOs and children's club members how to effectively use the toolkit during a disaster, so that they may respond to the needs of adolescents and ensure their stability and safety. The National Department of Probation and Child Care Services is UNICEF's lead government partner on these initiatives.¹⁷⁹

In Sri Lanka, the U-Report has over 25,000 users and serves as a digital platform for young people to raise their voices and have the issues that they care about addressed.¹⁸⁰ Through this streamlined collection of data,

CELEBRATING
25,000
U-Reporters
IN SRI LANKA

A community of young people
speak out and engage
in issues that they care about.
Because their voice matters!



Photo from U-Report Sri Lanka

¹⁷³ UNICEF, "Emergency Response," Emergency Response, 2021, <https://www.unicef.org/srilanka/emergency-response>.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ UNICEF, "Adolescent Kit," The Adolescent Kit for Expression and Innovation, 2021, <https://adolescentkit.org/>.

¹⁷⁷ UNICEF, "U-Report U-Report Global," UReport, 2021, <https://ureport.in>.

¹⁷⁸ UNICEF, "Country Office Annual Report 2019 - Sri Lanka," 2019.

¹⁷⁹ UNICEF, "Sri Lanka Adolescent Toolkit Case Study," 2019.

¹⁸⁰ UNICEF Sri Lanka Country Office, Foundational Interview, Zoom, March 8, 2022.

UNICEF uses the U-Report as a tool to determine priorities and inform its creation of online surveys and field level research.¹⁸¹ For example, in May 2021, the UNICEF Sri Lanka Country Office used the U-Report to understand what young people think about COVID-19 vaccination and shared these results with the Ministry of Health.¹⁸² According to UNICEF Sri Lanka, its current goals for the U-Report are to capture more adolescent voices and to compile its data into a tool for advocacy.¹⁸³

To improve Sri Lankan adolescents' capacity and prospects for meaningful participation, it is important to improve accessibility to technology, and to design programming that redefines discriminatory social norms against adolescents and marginalized groups. Following COVID-19's push to online education, computer literacy surveys in Sri Lanka found that only 22 percent of households owned a desktop or laptop computer.¹⁸⁴ In 2019, approximately 34 percent of the population had internet access and the use of smartphones was especially limited in rural areas.¹⁸⁵ Given that about 80 percent of Sri Lanka's total population lives in rural settings,¹⁸⁶ incorporating voices from these settings is critical to improving the effectiveness of digital tools, like the U-Report, for adolescent's meaningful engagement in humanitarian emergencies.

Assessment of UNICEF Strategies and Tools

UNICEF Sri Lanka's main strategy for adolescent engagement has been to build skills and capacities. One example includes UNICEF's preparation of adolescents to become agents of change in Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR). With support from the CRPO and District Disaster Management Centers, children's views and voices on divisional level DRR strategies were included in the child centered risk assessments, and UNICEF consulted with more than 350 children to develop the Children's Declaration on DRR.¹⁸⁷ UNICEF has also had success in garnering adolescent engagement through its U-Report. The UNICEF-developed online messaging platform has brought feedback from adolescents on returning to school during COVID 19, opportunities and challenges faced by adolescents and youth, and climate change, from its approximately 25,000 U-Reporters.¹⁸⁸

Despite these great leaps forward in utilizing technology to engage and increase data on adolescents, there is room for improvement in engaging students during times of crisis. As a result of the pandemic, students' attendance in schools has considerably decreased due to social stigma and COVID-19.¹⁸⁹ For example, if a student contracted COVID-19 and returned to school post-recovery, other students refused to associate themselves with that individual, and adolescents and parents were fearful of

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Wimal Nanayakkara, "Closing the Digital Divide in Sri Lanka amid COVID-19," Development Asia, May 19, 2021, <https://development.asia/insight/closing-digital-divide-sri-lanka-amid-covid-19>.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ World Bank, "Rural Population (% of Total Population) - Sri Lanka | Data," The World Bank Data, 2020, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.RUR.TOTL.ZS?locations=LK>.

¹⁸⁷ UNICEF, "Sri Lanka Children's Declaration on Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation," November 2021, <https://www.unicef.org/srilanka/reports/sri-lanka-childrens-declaration-disaster-risk-reduction-and-climate-change-adaptation>.

¹⁸⁸ UNICEF Sri Lanka Country Office, Foundational Interview.

¹⁸⁹ Interview with Sathes Sarmili, Child Protection Officer, UNICEF, Zoom, April 16, 2022.

sending students to public gatherings during the pandemic.¹⁹⁰ Additionally, inequities in access to technology permeate throughout the country due to location, socioeconomic status, and gender, among others. Scaling up innovative strategies to reach the most vulnerable and marginalized, can provide UNICEF with information to better understand its successes and challenges. Partnerships with adolescent serving organizations can create bridges to socially and digitally marginalized communities. For example, World Vision Lanka and ChildFund Sri Lanka assisted UNICEF’s U-Report data collection by facilitating manual distribution of U-Report questions. “In particular places where children do not have access to the internet, we have the printed materials,” ChildFund Sri Lanka, DRR Project Manager, Kaushal Attanayake noted. “We basically accumulate these printed materials so that they can be uploaded again into the internet.”¹⁹¹ On social taboos limiting digital outreach, UNICEF U-Report Consultant, Ravipriya Bandara, also highlighted the importance of partner organizations. “We will have to slowly break that taboo [using digital devices] and until we do that, we need to go through traditional channels of communication like the teacher relationships with events that CSOs have organized.”¹⁹²

Assessment of Adolescent Meaningful Participation Strategies

● Influencing Laws and Policies

Sri Lanka lacks a national child protection framework with accepted guidelines and defined responsibilities for stakeholders to respond to challenges. Despite UNICEF’s efforts to improve social protection, there is insufficient information and data for policymakers to assess and improve existing laws and policies. Coordination between the national, district, and divisional levels is poor, making it difficult to weave in key child protection principles for interconnected sectors in health, education, social protection, and justice, among others.¹⁹³ Adolescents must receive better support for rehabilitation and protection, particularly those who do not have access to resources in schools and are left out of formal institutions such as those with learning disabilities and autism. Significant efforts in coordination and consensus on enforcing child protection laws at the national, district, and divisional governance levels could keep authorities accountable. This, hand in hand with educating children in formal and informal spaces on laws, policies, and resources available for support can bridge the gap between the authorities and adolescents who need assistance. As part of the effort to improve coordination, UNICEF Sri Lanka works with government agencies like the Department of Probation and Child Care Services, as well as the Disaster Management Centers. Furthermore, UNICEF is committed to adolescent engagement through children’s clubs to lead programming that functions as a mechanism to affect the State’s policies. Finally, UNICEF receives recommendations from the government to develop an action plan that addresses their priorities.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Kaushal Attanayake, ChildFund Sri Lanka, Project Manager DRR, Zoom, April 7, 2022.

¹⁹² Ravipriya Bandara, U-Report Consultant, UNICEF Sri Lanka, Zoom, April 7, 2022.

¹⁹³ UNICEF, “Child Protection with Adolescents.,” 2020, <https://www.unicef.org/srilanka/child-protection-adolescents>.

¹⁹⁴ Interview with Watsala Jayamanna, Program Officer on Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience, UNICEF, Zoom, May 2, 2022.

● Addressing Social Norms



AYEVAC at ChildFund Leadership Training

Photo from Sunday Island Online

Corporal punishment in schools and homes are prevalent in Sri Lanka. Social norms tolerate many forms of violence against children including sexual, physical, and emotional violence.¹⁹⁵ In a humanitarian crisis context, some children who are feeling the residual effects of conflict are committing crimes and violent action. UNICEF has been using the Children’s Club as a platform to reach out to

children and teach them social and emotional skills to combat the effects of violence. Currently, the age for criminal responsibility in Sri Lanka is 12 years old.¹⁹⁶ If the age for criminal responsibility is raised from 12 to 18 in the justice system, and there are increased initiatives for students to receive life-skills training in leadership and civic responsibility, it would be possible to avoid unnecessary institutionalization of children and provide opportunities that transform negative adolescent behavior.¹⁹⁷ Additionally, greater efforts to support and educate parents by teaching them how to positively nurture their children without giving punishment in community spaces and in schools could shift cultural and social norms of violence against children. Sri Lanka’s AYEVAAC (Alliance of Youth to End Violence Against Children), is an independent youth-led movement that aims to address these challenges through creative programming and mobilization. AYEVAAC has received support from UNICEF’s implementing partner ChildFund, to build capacity as leaders and determine goals for future programming and advocacy.¹⁹⁸

● Building Skills and Capacities

To improve the meaningful engagement of adolescents in humanitarian contexts, UNICEF Sri Lanka’s main focus has been to build skills and capacities. There are six to seven thousand active children’s clubs in Sri Lanka and these clubs serve as a key focal point for UNICEF to engage adolescents. In collaboration with the Ministry of Women and Child Affairs, UNICEF developed a Child-Centered Disaster Reduction (CCDR) Manual to build the skills of officers who engage children’s club members. Following their training, these officers lead programming to improve children’s emergency preparedness and resilience. Throughout COVID-19, UNICEF has transitioned its programming to

¹⁹⁵ UNICEF, “Child Protection with Adolescents.”

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Lanka Business News, “ChildFund Facilitates Youth to Become Child Protection Advocates to End Violence against Children,” Lanka Business News, April 28, 2022, <https://www.lankabusinessnews.com/childfund-facilitates-youth-to-become-child-protection-advocates-to-end-violence-against-children/>.

virtual formats and supported remote-learning initiatives, like the Ministry of Education's *Learning Recovery Programme*, through funding and teacher capacity building.¹⁹⁹

One of UNICEF Sri Lanka's challenges is the inclusion of marginalized adolescents in opportunities for meaningful participation. UNICEF has identified adolescents with disabilities, girls, and children ages 10-15 as key demographics that need stronger advocacy and participation.²⁰⁰ To overcome this challenge, UNICEF's strategy is to enhance its programming in areas where they have strong existing programs and community connections. They plan to measure children's clubs for participation and to improve adolescents' inclusion in the program design process. UNICEF has also used social media campaigns to encourage participation.²⁰¹

● **Supporting Mechanisms and Opportunities for Participation**

In Sri Lanka, limited in-country mobility due to COVID-19 has reduced UNICEF's adolescent engagement opportunities. By transitioning their programming to a virtual format, some UNICEF districts were able to adapt and continue to offer capacity building opportunities for adolescents and facilitate adolescent feedback mechanisms. Partnerships with organizations like Scouts Association, World Vision Lanka and ChildFund Sri Lanka, whose community relationships and direct communication channels with adolescents through WhatsApp, enabled UNICEF to connect adolescents with these new opportunities.²⁰² UNICEF Sri Lanka encouraged adolescent feedback mechanisms by promoting the U-Report. Speaking about the U-Report's importance, Jathujan Mahendran, U-Report Sri Lanka's Steering Committee Youth Representative, expressed:

“We don't have an open platform to raise our voice, to shout out words...lots of youth want to be with us, to share thoughts and raise their voices. They want to join us on the U-Report.”

– Jathujan Mahendran, U-Report Sri Lanka's Steering Committee Youth Representative

In supporting these new mechanisms and opportunities for meaningful participation, UNICEF Sri Lanka currently faces challenges in representation, advocacy, and maintaining interest levels amongst adolescents and government partners. The digital divide in Sri Lanka prevents adolescents without digital devices from participating in virtual programming or feedback initiatives. Furthermore, the extended lockdown of schools throughout the pandemic has translated to students needing more time to catch up on their coursework. These adolescents have limited availability to get involved in UNICEF's programming.²⁰³ Finally, as it is still in its initial phases, the U-Report has yet to influence

¹⁹⁹ UNICEF, “Education Case Study, Sri Lanka - Minimising Learning Gaps among Early-Grade Learners,” August 19, 2021.

²⁰⁰ UNICEF Sri Lanka Country Office, Foundational Interview.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² Attanayake, ChildFund Sri Lanka, Project Manager DRR.

²⁰³ Winson Gnanathepan, CC-DRR Specialist, World Vision Sri Lanka, April 7, 2022.

change at a national level. Panchal Abeysinghe, Social & Behavior Change Officer at UNICEF raised concerns about the government's response to scale up interventions in the coming months given Sri Lanka's current economic and political climate. As he notes, "One of the main challenges we see at the current context is whether they [the government] would allocate further funds to scale up because they are facing a lot of difficulties in terms of financial allocation. It's not very practical for them because they face a hard economic situation. Engagement of government offices is reduced so ownership of intervention could reduce."²⁰⁴

UNICEF aspires to transform the U-Report into a tool for advocacy, but it faces waning interest from government bodies and watchful interest of adolescents who have yet to see political outcomes arise from their participation. In its campaign for expansion, UNICEF can support the tool's outreach and effectiveness by communicating its efforts for advocacy, assessing different levels of government receptivity to change, and involving adolescents in these processes.

Case Example: Crisis, Disabilities, and the Digital Divide

In 2022, Sri Lanka is experiencing its worst economic crisis since independence in 1948.²⁰⁵ Across the country, Sri Lankans face acute shortages in food, fuel, and other essential items. Amid power cuts and medicine shortages, doctors fear a catastrophic number of deaths that may exceed Sri Lanka's combined toll of COVID-19, the 2004 Tsunami, and Sri Lanka's 26-year armed-conflict.²⁰⁶

In the present situation, adolescents with disabilities are especially vulnerable. Despite Sri Lanka's achievement to increase school attendance to 98 percent for children aged 5-14, Sri Lankans with disabilities still face several barriers to access, participation, and achievement in education.²⁰⁷ Barriers like teachers' limited skills on inclusive teaching, lack of appropriate and accessible infrastructure, and limited scope in curricula, result in adolescents with disabilities unequal access to learning, as well as limited future opportunities for employment.²⁰⁸ Children's clubs, one of UNICEF Sri Lanka's primary mechanisms for providing adolescents with skill building initiatives on DRR, also have objectively less participation by persons with disabilities.²⁰⁹ Furthermore, as Sri Lanka institutes restrictions and lockdowns in times of crisis, adolescents with disabilities' face mobility barriers to access their everyday needs.²¹⁰ "I think in Sri Lanka particularly at the present time with the crisis, there are so many priorities. I'm afraid that disability becomes even less of a priority," said Dr. Padmani Mendis, a disability rights advocate, in an interview.²¹¹ Humanitarian situations, like the current emergency context in Sri Lanka, are facilitating the poverty and dependency that trap persons with disabilities

²⁰⁴ Interview with Panchal Abeysinghe, Program Officer, UNICEF, Zoom, May 2, 2022.

²⁰⁵ AlJazeera, "Timeline of Sri Lanka's Worst Economic Crisis since Independence," April 13, 2022, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/4/13/timeline-of-sri-lankas-worst-economic-crisis-since-independence>.

²⁰⁶ Zabeena Rasheed Kuruwita Rathindra, "Sri Lanka Doctors Warn of 'Catastrophe' as Medicines Run Low," April 11, 2022, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/4/11/sri-lanka-doctors-warn-of-catastrophic-deaths-amid-shortages>.

²⁰⁷ UNICEF ROSA, "Disability-Inclusive Education Practices in Sri Lanka," August 2021.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ UNICEF Sri Lanka Country Office, Foundational Interview.

²¹⁰ Perera, "The Perpetual Marginalization of People with Disabilities."

²¹¹ Padmani Mendis, Disability Rights Advocate, Zoom, May 3, 2022.

throughout their lives. Without visibility, and with limited medical supplies, the health and lives of adolescents with disabilities are at heightened risk.

Responding to the pandemic, increased efforts to digitize Sri Lanka have had significant results. The percentage of people with internet access increased from 34 percent of the population in 2019,²¹² to over 50 percent in 2021.²¹³ Despite this upward trend, almost half of Sri Lanka's population still does not have access to the internet. Additionally, those without access are generally among Sri Lanka's poor and rural communities.²¹⁴ For adolescents with disabilities, the digital divide is two-fold. On one hand, the adolescent's family may not be able to afford digital devices. On the other hand, an adolescent with disabilities and digital access may not have the digital or standard literacy to use these tools. Although digitization carries promise to deliver important programs and services to persons with disabilities, in Sri Lanka, barriers of poverty and literacy that are tied to education needs and social stigma, have made digitization an added barrier that adolescents with disabilities must overcome.²¹⁵

UNICEF Sri Lanka can advance adolescent meaningful participation in humanitarian emergencies, and the rights of adolescents with disabilities, by acknowledging and taking action to confront the digital opportunity gap that these adolescents face. In this particular time of crisis, with various and evolving priorities, Sri Lanka needs to rebuild. "We have to start at the beginning with development. And this is a good opportunity, such a good opportunity, to bring visibility into all those development processes," Dr. Mendis expressed.²¹⁶ Improving government coordination to transform Sri Lanka's "charity-based approach"²¹⁷ to a rights-based approach for persons with disabilities, improving programming for digital and general literacy, and identifying pathways to make children's clubs more accessible and disabilities sensitive²¹⁸, are some solutions that UNICEF can implement. Although technology provides a way to expand adolescent outreach, tools like the U-Report cannot capture the voice of all adolescents if some do not have the means or ability to participate in its polls. "We have to start again," Dr. Mendis affirmed, "and it's a good beginning to consider seeing people with disabilities as citizens of Sri Lanka."²¹⁹

Sri Lanka - Key Findings and Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Improve government coordination to increase inclusivity for adolescents with disabilities and further initiatives for child protection

²¹² Nanayakkara, "Closing the Digital Divide in Sri Lanka amid COVID-19."

²¹³ Simon Kemp, "Digital in Sri Lanka: All the Statistics You Need in 2021," DataReportal – Global Digital Insights, February 12, 2021, <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2021-sri-lanka>.

²¹⁴ Nanayakkara, "Closing the Digital Divide in Sri Lanka amid COVID-19."

²¹⁵ Perera, "The Perpetual Marginalization of People with Disabilities."

²¹⁶ Mendis, Disability Rights Advocate.

²¹⁷ Perera, "The Perpetual Marginalization of People with Disabilities."

²¹⁸ Kasunjith Satanarachchi, Independent Disability Rights Activist, Zoom, May 8, 2022.

²¹⁹ Mendis, Disability Rights Advocate.

Challenge:

Certain pathways for UNICEF programming are limited by disjointed government coordination. The Sri Lankan government's unilateral approach toward Persons with Disabilities, where nearly all matters pertaining to persons with disabilities fall under the Department of Social Services,²²⁰ prevents other agencies from engaging in disability-oriented programming.²²¹ Without cross-cutting initiatives to support adolescents and persons with disabilities, Sri Lanka is unable to implement the CRPD to its full intended capability, and disability rights are under-supported.²²² The isolation of disability programming to Sri Lanka's DSS contributes to a "charity-based" rhetoric,²²³ instead of a rights-based focus, that hinders implementation of holistic programs that support persons with disabilities as citizens. Emphasis must be placed on the rights of these persons. Additionally, as mentioned in our analysis, an absence of critical data limits government coordination for programming on child protection. To improve government responsiveness to this issue, additional evaluation is imperative.

Mechanisms for Implementation:

- Initiate an independent task force with cross-cutting government stakeholders for outcomes related to adolescents with disabilities.
- Include adolescents with diverse disabilities, skills, and identities²²⁴ in the design and implementation of these task forces. Particular focus should be placed on including adolescents with disabilities.
- Conduct an evaluation on the pervasiveness of corporal punishment and abuse, and propose intervention methods.²²⁵
- Create programming for adolescents to become engaged with external community and advocacy groups.

Justification:

UNICEF's initiative to create independent, inter-agency task forces can spur progress and attention on issues that need cross-cutting collaboration but are limited by current government coordination pathways. Although Sri Lanka's MoE does have one branch that focuses on special education, this alone is not enough to address the scope of advocacy and needs that adolescent with disabilities have a right to as citizens. Through the inclusion of adolescents with disabilities in these new task forces' creation and implementation, UNICEF can support adolescent capacity building and encourage the development of government entities that better understand these adolescents' needs. Furthermore, collecting information on and increasing understanding of corporal punishment can provide tangible targets for the government to improve child protection in formal and informal setting. This data can improve government coordination through a fact-based system of accountability. Finally, by creating programs for adolescents to become engaged with external community groups, UNICEF can promote adolescents' advocacy as active citizens.

²²⁰ UNICEF ROSA, "Disability-Inclusive Education Practices in Sri Lanka."

²²¹ Binendri Perera, Lecturer, Faculty of Law at the University of Colombo, Sri Lanka, Zoom, April 9, 2022.

²²² Mendis, Disability Rights Advocate.

²²³ Binendri Perera, Lecturer, Faculty of Law at the University of Colombo, Sri Lanka, Zoom, April 9, 2022.

²²⁴ Kasunjith Satanarachchi, Independent Disability Rights Activist, Zoom, May 8, 2022.

²²⁵ "Country Office Annual Report 2021" (UNICEF, 2021), pp. 1-9.

Recommendation 2: Translate U-Report's adolescent data into advocacy

Challenge:

The U-Report has been an effective tool for gathering feedback and insight from adolescents on issues that they care about. However, implementing partners note that it is difficult to maintain participation with the tool if adolescents do not see that their voices are being heard through tangible political and programming efforts.²²⁶ It is essential that UNICEF maintains participatory interest in the U-Report, to tend to the tool's utility and further its campaign for U-Report expansion and inclusivity.

Mechanisms for Implementation:

- Create an advocacy action plan from U-Report survey data.
- Create an adolescent committee to translate the U-Report findings into cohesive policy recommendations for the government.
- Conduct research on government stakeholder values and receptivity to adolescent participation and leverage this information to inform advocacy targets.
- Run a digital campaign strategy to communicate U-Report advocacy efforts, including championing U-Report role models to adolescents across Sri Lanka.

Justification:

These recommendations will advance UNICEF's utility of the U-Report, adolescent advocacy efforts, and encourage the U-Report's recognition by adolescents as a staple tool for expression and participation. Data-complementary action advocacy plans would detail the steps that UNICEF will take to implement adolescents' ideas and perspectives at an internal and political level. Furthermore, UNICEF's inclusion of adolescents in the advocacy plan's design, and the creation of an adolescent committee to draft U-Report guided policy recommendations, will build adolescent capacity while streamlining the tool's findings and opportunities to key decision makers. This committee can complement the current U-Report Steering Committee's efforts for expanded U-Report participation and survey design²²⁷ by introducing a focus on post-survey, adolescent-informed, advocacy. Finally, UNICEF's initiative to research government stakeholder values and receptivity to adolescent participation can refine advocacy targets and create opportunities for adolescents to get further involved. Deeper understanding of government receptivity can inform post-survey advocacy strategies. One element for strategy consideration is a digital campaign that harnesses social media, the U-Report's findings, and adolescent participation, to target government action. Another digital campaign strategy can be directed toward adolescents to show them that UNICEF supports their voices and that the U-Report is a worthwhile and relatable tool to continue using.

²²⁶ Attanayake, ChildFund Sri Lanka, Project Manager DRR.

²²⁷ UNICEF, "Country Office Annual Report 2021 - Sri Lanka," 2021.

Recommendation 3: Overcome the digital divide through programming and partnerships

Challenge:

Digital gaps exist based on gender, location, poverty, and ability. Therefore, there is a need for literacy and digital literacy programming, information on reliable providers, social reassurance and online safety initiatives, and continued development of non-digital resources. Furthermore, in Sri Lanka, even in locations where adolescents have access to technology such as phones, iPads, and computers, they are not able to use the devices to go online if the services provided by their chosen network are unstable. Social stigmas regarding whether digital tools are appropriate or safe for adolescents also limit these adolescents' opportunity to access the tools.²²⁸

Mechanisms for Implementation:

- Continue and create avenues for literacy and digital literacy with emphasis on persons with disabilities and other digitally marginalized demographics. Working with MoE's initiative for inclusive learning and improving government coordination (as mentioned previously) can create further opportunities for this mechanism.
- Provide information on reliable providers with performance data so communities are informed and can select the provider that is most suitable for them.
- Create and partner on programs that ease social stigmas on digital tool use and address safety and security concerns for parents, teachers, and adolescents. ChildFund for example is designing a campaign for online safety in 2022 and may be suitable for this type of programming partnership.²²⁹
- Continue to develop non-digital resources and identify pathways for these resources to be integrated into programming and other feedback mechanisms. This can be achieved through collaboration with implementing partners and consultation between UNICEF program officers and digitally-focused staff.

Justification:

Avenues for literacy and digital literacy will equip adolescents with the tools and understanding necessary to use and access digital tools and developments. Additionally, providing resources to find reliable providers can close the information gap between community members so that individuals can maximize the benefits of digital devices and be better connected for engagement. Furthermore, programs to address online safety concerns and practices through capacity parent, teacher, and adolescent capacity building may ease social tensions regarding digital access and help adolescents to use and navigate these various online platforms and applications. To meet the immediate and long term needs of those who may not have access to technology or digital literacy, non-digital resources can serve as an alternative or additional means to receive information and engage with UNICEF and the larger community. Ensuring that these resources are maintaining their quality and are easy to integrate with digital resource feedback will improve their utility.

²²⁸ UNICEF Sri Lanka, "Keeping Children in Sri Lanka Safe and Empowered Online," December 2017, <https://www.unicef.org/srilanka/reports/keeping-children-sri-lanka-safe-and-empowered-online>.

²²⁹ Attanayake, ChildFund Sri Lanka, Project Manager DRR.

Recommendation 4: Further include adolescents in UNICEF program design

Challenge:

In UNICEF's programs, adolescents can be further included in the initiative design and evaluation processes. Although the CO has taken initiative to identify adolescent leaders and introduced training for these leaders to design their own initiatives and bring these skills and ideas back to their peers, in line with the CO's goals for improved adolescent engagement at the design level, there is a need to improve opportunities, focus, and inclusion in these efforts.²³⁰ Additionally, these ongoing efforts are provided through children's clubs where some adolescents, particularly adolescents with disabilities, have lower rates of participation.²³¹

Mechanisms for Implementation:

- Create and continue hands-on opportunities for adolescents to learn about program design, monitoring, and evaluation.
- Create spaces and events for adolescents to express their voices. One example is to organize a summer conference where adolescents voice their ideas and needs for policy and programming. The selection would strive to include individuals from all districts in Sri Lanka, and to collaborate with partner organizations to provide training on policy making and programming through human-centered design.
- Provide scholarships and funding for adolescents to participate in these new spaces and events.
- Incorporate curriculum on cross-cultural communication, social inclusion, and allyship to marginalized persons
- Identify the specific barriers that prevent adolescents from participating in children's club facilitated activities.

Justification:

The aforementioned recommendations provide a way for adolescents to grow into leadership roles and not only have a seat at the table, but a voice in the decisions that impact their lives. Engagement can serve as a launchpad for empowerment especially before a humanitarian crisis occurs. Adolescents should feel that they have the adequate skills and tools necessary to understand what to do in all phases of the HPC so that they can prevent disaster, take responsible action, and contribute to recovery. The capacity building initiatives will train adolescents to identify problems and create their own practical solutions in their communities. Through UNICEF-coordinated, intentional spaces for adolescent participation and representation, UNICEF can better inform its own activities and its support for adolescents in their expressed needs. Connecting adolescents with private or federal funding to participate in these new spaces and events guarantees that there are no financial barriers preventing adolescents from participation. Finally, new curriculum focuses and identification of what barriers specifically keep adolescents from participating in ongoing UNICEF efforts and channels for programming will improve inclusivity for these adolescents. For example, since Sri Lanka's ratification of the CPRD in 2016, enabling legislation has not been implemented and low public awareness

²³⁰ UNICEF Sri Lanka Country Office, Check-In Interview, Zoom, May 2, 2022.

²³¹ UNICEF Sri Lanka Country Office, Foundational Interview; UNICEF Sri Lanka Country Office, Check-In Interview.

regarding the needs and rights of persons with disabilities is a probable cause for government inaction.²³² To build inclusive humanitarian response programming, UNICEF should also build inclusive humanitarians. Programming that trains adolescent in life skills like intercultural communication, social inclusion, and allyship, can raise awareness on why persons are marginalized, and stoke intention and receptivity to support those whose voices and needs are not heard.

²³² Mendis, Disability Rights Advocate.

Regional Chapeau

UNICEF ROSA's Current Strategy for Adolescent Engagement

UNICEF ROSA's Adolescent Development and Participation (ADAP) section “champions and guides practical, at-scale programming for adolescents, and is grounded in distinct professional practices and approaches that strengthen rights-based, adolescent-centric, inclusive and gender-transformative strategies.”²³³ As part of its 2022-2025 Strategy Note and Regional Framework, ADAP's sectoral and participation strategies include the following: influencing government policies, legislation and public finance; improving service delivery systems and capacities; fostering cross-sectoral and multi-sectoral programming and partnerships; building the agency of adolescents to claim their rights; fostering innovation for and with adolescents; and generating evidence and data.²³⁴ These strategies exist alongside the aforementioned four strategic areas of meaningful participation.

By 2025, UNICEF ROSA aims for country offices and governments to “demonstrate increased capacity to design and implement rights-based, evidence-based, convergent and adequately invested interventions for adolescents, with formal, inclusive mechanisms for adolescent engagement and participation where young people have increased agency to claim their rights and work in partnership with communities and institutions.”²³⁵ The latter half of this outcome statement is linked to ADAP's core mandate of assuring adolescent-centric programming, with adolescents as rights-holders at the center of decision-making processes.²³⁶ Based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) Article 12 on the right of the child to be heard²³⁷ and related General Comment 20 on the implementation of the rights of the child during adolescence²³⁸, ADAP considers that “without the participation of those that we serve, we cannot deliver effectively.”²³⁹ This engagement places a particular emphasis on adolescent girls, those living with poverty, those living with disabilities, sexual minorities, and ethnic and social minorities.²⁴⁰

In addition to mainstreaming adolescent engagement and participation, one of ADAP's priority issues is youth engagement in emergency response.²⁴¹ The 2021 UNICEF ROSA and ComMutiny - The Youth Collective's “Reimagining Humanitarian Action: A study of young people's engagement during emergencies in South Asia” highlights the following: ²⁴²

²³³ “The Adolescent Development and Participation (ADAP) Section UNICEF Regional Office, South Asia (ROSA) Strategy Note and Regional Framework 2022 – 2025,” 3.

²³⁴ Ibid, 4.

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ Ibid, 6.

²³⁷ “General Comment No. 12 (2009): The Right of the Child to Be Heard” (UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC), July 20, 2009), <https://www.refworld.org/docid/4ae562c52.html>.

²³⁸ “General Comment No. 20 (2016) on the Implementation of the Rights of the Child during Adolescence” (UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC), December 6, 2016), <https://www.refworld.org/docid/589dad3d4.html>.

²³⁹ “The Adolescent Development and Participation (ADAP) Section UNICEF Regional Office, South Asia (ROSA) Strategy Note and Regional Framework 2022 – 2025,” 6.

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

²⁴¹ Ibid, 7.

²⁴² “ReImagining Humanitarian Action: Adolescent and Youth Engagement Policy and Practice During Emergencies and Protracted Crises in South Asia,” 2021, 58.

“...clear directions [are] being built in selected contexts for authentically youth-engaged and participatory policies and practices. However, what has been less clear is systematic, institutional approaches to mainstream these good practices based on the commitments stated in the UNCRC, and global, regional and national UNICEF policies. Further partnerships and systematic collaboration are also called for among multiple stakeholders in making this possible.”

Key Challenges in South Asia

In order to enhance the ability of all South Asian adolescents to fully and meaningfully participate in matters affecting their communities, UNICEF ROSA has identified some of the most difficult challenges, which have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the ADAP Strategy Note and Framework, the health crisis set back much of the progress that had been made with respect to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, resulting in greater inequity and discrimination in South Asia.²⁴³

● Intergenerational Biases and Attitudes

UNICEF ROSA recognizes and considers the established social norms that have consequently produced and reinforced barriers to adolescents' ability to fully and meaningfully participate in decisions and processes. In South Asia, “adolescent voices are suppressed due to age-based social norms and adult interests governing policy spaces.”²⁴⁴ Many parents and adults may view themselves as decision makers and protectors, while criticizing young people as immature and inexperienced. In fact, adolescents across the region have expressed that they do not feel listened to by adults in their families or communities.²⁴⁵ These intergenerational tensions hinder their agency and opportunities to contribute to community solutions.

● Social Structures

It is common that adolescents from socially and economically marginalized communities face additional discrimination and lack further opportunities to engage in solutions and decision making. UNICEF ROSA emphasizes that long-held identity-based attitudes and norms pose a significant challenge to inclusion. Thus, it is critical to take into account adolescents' intersectional identities, including those based on gender, religion, caste, ethnicity, nationality, and disability.

● Economic Inequality

Although the region has experienced significant economic growth, economic inequality in South Asia has also increased. Poverty remains prevalent across the region, with 33 percent of the regional

²⁴³ Strategy Note and Regional Framework 2022 – 2025, 8

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

population living in extreme poverty.²⁴⁶ Limited resources and a lack of economic opportunity among low-income households and marginalized communities can be common factors that often drive families to rely on their children for additional sources of income. Difficult economic conditions may perpetuate practices that encroach on child rights that are enshrined in international law. Especially given the economic hardship that many households faced during the COVID-19 pandemic, instances of inaccessible education, child marriage, and child labor are likely to increase.

Regional Recommendations for Meaningful Adolescent Engagement

Intergenerational attitudes, social structures, and economic inequality represent a few deep-rooted issues that challenge adolescents' meaningful participation in South Asia. However, it is essential to recognize ongoing efforts on the ground that have fueled progressive change in centering the voices of adolescents. In our interviews and research, we have identified the following cross-regional trends to address the aforementioned challenges.

● Intergenerational Biases and Attitudes

Although intergenerational biases and attitudes are context dependent in South Asia, harmful and embedded social perceptions perpetuate common themes that limit adolescents from participating meaningfully. The following recommendations seek to address these themes and support adolescents in their mission to be heard.

Recommendation 1: Support opportunities for adolescents in technology and data

Across the country-case analyses, our team found that UNICEF ROSA and national/local stakeholders can help to overcome intergenerational differences by supporting opportunities for adolescents to utilize technology and data. Throughout the region, there are many examples of youth proving their abilities through creativity and tech savviness.²⁴⁷ For example, in the aftermath of the 2018 floods in Kerala, India, a group of IT students and professionals created an app called "keralarelief.in" that helped supply aid to relief camps based on real time data.²⁴⁸ The government later adopted this tool as a state-run resource after its proven effectiveness in community response efforts. In another instance in Kerala, a group of students used drone technology to trace a youth who got lost while trekking. After their involvement in Kerala's JDNA process, leaders also noted in an interview that "a mobile application for basic early warning would support "last-mile connectivity" needed at the ground level.²⁴⁹" The JDNA interviewees suggested that state governments and local authorities should

²⁴⁶ "The Adolescent Development and Participation (ADAP) Section UNICEF Regional Office, South Asia (ROSA) Strategy Note and Regional Framework 2022 – 2025."

²⁴⁷ Interview with Annie George Joint Disaster Needs Assessment consultant.

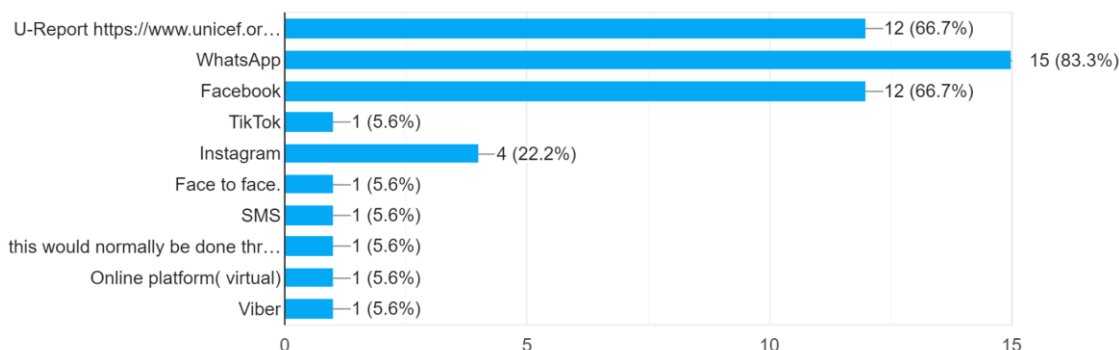
²⁴⁸ Ibid.

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

implement such efforts, as this may enable adolescents to fill an important role in their respective community’s humanitarian response.²⁵⁰

2. What digital technologies or platforms do you use to advertise and engage with youth participants?

18 responses



From our questionnaire, we see that the U-Report, Whatsapp, and Facebook are the top three frequently used platforms for adolescent engagement. To support opportunities for technology and data across the region, understanding which digital platforms are most used for adolescent engagement, and why they are used, can guide UNICEF’s initiatives.

Recommendation 2: Create spaces designated for adolescent participation

Adolescents often face perceptions from adults that they are not mature or experienced enough to take on responsibilities in humanitarian relief.²⁵¹ There is a regional need to create inclusive spaces for adolescents to develop their humanitarian and development skills while also sharing their views as “voices of people on the grassroots level.”²⁵² These unique spaces are becoming more available for adolescents, and important results have since followed. We recommend more of these kinds of spaces, as they can function as opportunities for diverse inclusion, adolescent feedback on UNICEF ongoing prerogatives, and training for adolescents to become outstanding current and future leaders. For example, in Sri Lanka, adolescent-serving non-profit and UNICEF implementation partner, ChildFund, facilitated a leadership training camp for Sri Lanka’s AYEVAAC (Alliance of Youth to End Violence Against Children). The camp had over 100 youth leaders, with representation from all 25 of Sri Lanka’s districts, participate. During the camp, these young leaders determined that island-wide action to prevent online sexual abuse and corporal punishment must be taken.²⁵³ With consideration for these young leaders’ determinations, ChildFund Sri Lanka’s 2022 programming is looking to improve online safety for adolescents so that digital tools can be accessed and used in positive ways.²⁵⁴ In

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

²⁵¹ “ReImagining Humanitarian Action: Adolescent and Youth Engagement Policy and Practice During Emergencies and Protracted Crises in South Asia” (UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia (ROSA), 2021), 16-17.

²⁵² Interview with Akshat Singhal CEO of Green the Gene, March 27, 2022.

²⁵³ Lanka Business News, “ChildFund Facilitates Youth to Become Child Protection Advocates to End Violence against Children.”

²⁵⁴ Attanayake, ChildFund Sri Lanka, Project Manager DRR.

Bangladesh's Cox's Bazar, adolescents, UN agencies, international organizations, and local NGOs work together through the Youth Working Group (YWG) to support, advocate, and coordinate adolescent and youth programming in the refugee camps and host communities.²⁵⁵ Twenty-three active members are involved in this group, and they have not only monthly meetings but also ad hoc meetings two or three times depending on tasks.²⁵⁶ This working group is important to adolescents because it develops a roadmap for adolescent and youth activities and organizes a training on Girl Centered Programme Design as a part of capacity development initiatives.²⁵⁷ When creating these spaces throughout the region, UNICEF ROSA can construct an encouraging adolescent environment by emphasizing participating adolescents' credibility and contributions. Moreover, UNICEF must work to ensure that these types of opportunities, especially at the highest levels of policy and decision making, are inclusive of marginalized adolescent populations.

● Social Structures

Social structure in South Asia is complex and rooted in history and culture. Data and technology can advance structural change and inspire new spaces for change to occur, but it should be noted that these changes will inevitably take time. Presently, data and technology in South Asia are being mainstreamed through government, NGO, and private sector initiatives. The innovative use of these elements can contribute to enabling social dynamics that advance opportunities for adolescent meaningful participation throughout the region.

Recommendation 3: Identify and address data gaps related to adolescent participation

When there are gaps in data related to adolescent participation, UNICEF and its implementing partners have limited scope to effectively address adolescents' needs. In South Asia, social, socio-economic, education, and geographic factors contribute to difficulties in data collection. These difficulties exacerbate UNICEF's outreach potential and result in reduced programming representation for adolescents in marginalized communities and/or hard-to-reach areas.

“There's a dire need of credible data when the policy decision is being made. We need to have an exact number and statistics available to us to make any decision, and in case of preparedness for any unforeseen disaster.”

– Tania Humayun, National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) of Pakistan

²⁵⁵ “Integrated Community and Adolescent Engagement in Humanitarian Response: Meaningful Action in Programming in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh” (UNICEF, 2018), <https://www.unicef.org/media/109926/file/UNICEF-Community-Adolescent-Engagement-In-Humanitarian-Response-Coxs-Bazar-ENG.pdf>.

²⁵⁶ Interview with UNFPA Bangladesh Cox's Bazar Youth Working Group Co-Chair.

²⁵⁷ “Adolescents & Youth in Emergency,”

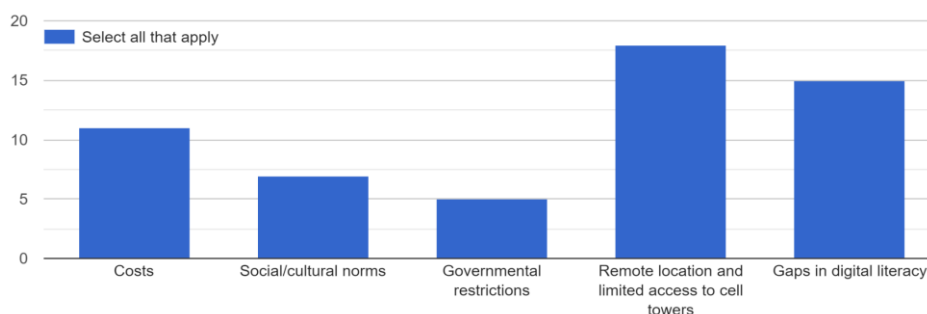
https://fscluster.org/sites/default/files/documents/youth_working_group_overview_february_2020.pdf.

By assessing adolescent participation demographics in its tools for engagement, like the U-Report, manual surveying, and adolescent kit distribution, UNICEF can bolster its engagement data and inform its regional programming directives. Where there are clear gaps in participation for adolescents from varying backgrounds, UNICEF can deploy additional surveying through partnerships, social media, and context-based strategies like connecting through community focal points and leaders. With consideration for South Asia’s diverse policies and cultures, the mechanisms to identify and address these gaps will be different, but the initiative to understand who is reached by UNICEF’s programming, and who is not, has large implications for the inclusiveness and effectiveness of UNICEF ROSA’s humanitarian programming.

Recommendation 4: Advocate for digital infrastructure, use partnerships to fill the gaps

In our *Questionnaire on Adolescent Engagement*, “Remote location and limited access to cell towers,” “Gaps in digital literacy,” and “Costs,” were reported as the top 3 barriers that prevent access to digital technology. In South Asia, these barriers are often linked to social structures and UNICEF ROSA should place great attention and emphasis on these challenges. Through engagement with diverse stakeholders, UNICEF ROSA can progress digital infrastructure advocacy. On one-level UNICEF can help to facilitate private-public partnerships that address device and connection accessibility issues. UNICEF partnerships with implementing organizations can also close this gap, as some organizations like ChildFund Sri Lanka help with data subsidies, digital resource centers, and manual surveying with intent for digital integration.²⁵⁸ We expand more on digital literacy in our next recommendation.

5. What are the barriers preventing access to digital technology in your community?

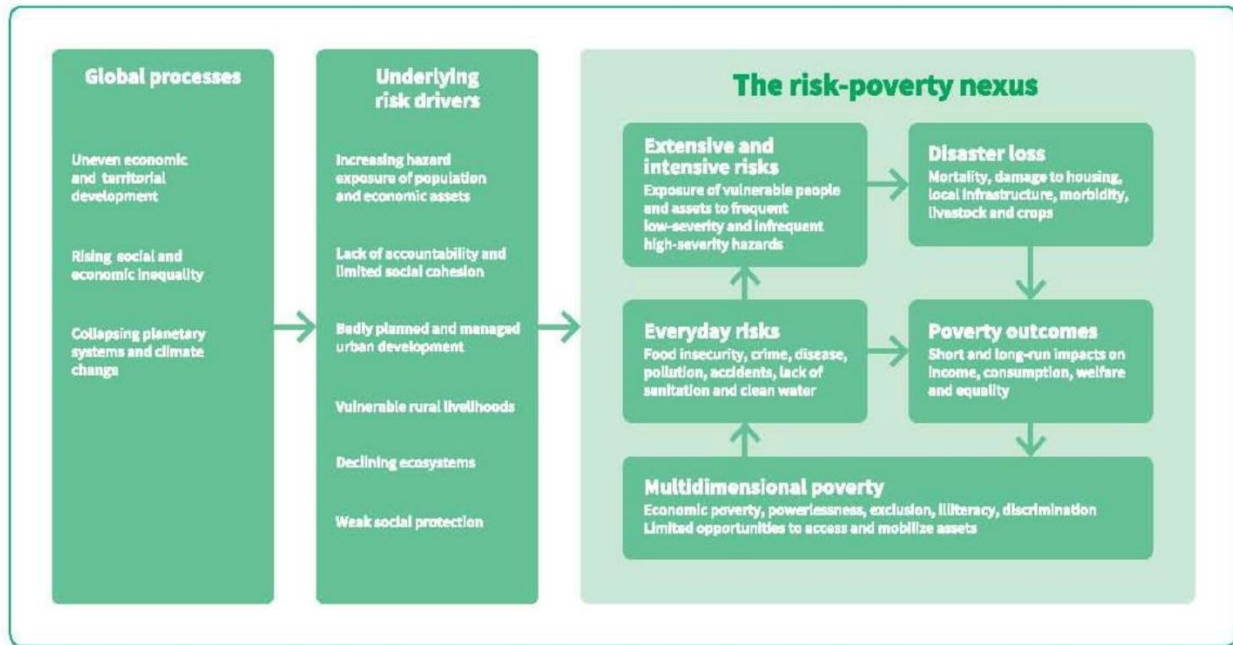


● **Economic Inequality**

Economic equality in South Asia can be improved by expanding initiatives for data, increasing accessibility to technology, and improving meaningful participation pathways for adolescents. Research demonstrates that vulnerability to humanitarian disasters is connected to communities’

²⁵⁸ Attanayake, ChildFund Sri Lanka, Project Manager DRR.

economic stability.²⁵⁹ UNICEF’s regional efforts to combat economic inequality are thus related to preparing communities for crises. Inclusion of adolescents in these efforts will ensure the longevity of these humanitarian programs’ impact, and the effectiveness of their outcomes.



The Disaster-risk Poverty Nexus

Photo from *Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction 2015*

Recommendation 5: Build humanitarian resilience through digital access and literacy

Regionally, digital access is unequal. This disparity is often based on gender, ability, social norms, location, and poverty. Although the nature of these divides differs across the region, digital access is a key thematic issue, and context-driven solutions to address this problem could ultimately enhance South Asian adolescents’ economic security and potential. As mentioned previously, closing the accessibility gap by supporting government digital infrastructure initiatives, and supplying resources to digitally marginalized persons will improve UNICEF’s potential inclusivity across its programming. Furthermore, social taboo toward digital tools is a barrier to South Asian adolescents’ access to digital facilities. Complementing the previous mechanisms on advocacy and partnerships, through education programs that address online safety and increase digital literacy, will allow more members of society to benefit from technology’s connectivity and economic implications. The India-based Hope Foundation’s AI School for Girls is one example of ongoing efforts to combat gender inequality through technology. The training courses in this program have successfully strengthened girls’ digital capabilities and as a direct result, widened their economic opportunities. Research shows that poor

²⁵⁹ United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, “Poverty and Inequality,” PreventionWeb, 2020, <https://www.preventionweb.net/understanding-disaster-risk/risk-drivers/poverty-inequality>.

people generally suffer the most during natural and human disasters.²⁶⁰ Initiatives that address digital access can improve poor communities' economic resilience and thus improve their resilience to humanitarian emergencies as well.

Recommendation 6: Build sustainable communication pathways between adolescents and policymakers

UNICEF's efforts to provide inclusive programming for meaningful participation can have a powerful impact on adolescents by connecting their voices and needs with policymakers. Since mid-2018, UNICEF Sri Lanka has successfully pioneered the Child Friendly City Initiative in the Batticaloa Municipality.²⁶¹ Through this pilot program, adolescents in Batticaloa now have official municipal representation, are asked for feedback that informs government action plans, communicate virtually with the Mayor, and are even consulted in the city's budget design.²⁶² Sri Lanka hopes to scale this initiative up across the country, and its contextual implementation throughout South Asia would be monumental for adolescents.

Streamlined communication to policymakers would be especially important for adolescents from poor communities. In humanitarian emergencies, impoverished communities are often at greatest risk.²⁶³ In the long-term, the establishment of these high-level communication and receptivity pathways can help policy makers to address the under-lying risk factors that intensify poor persons' vulnerability to crisis. Families who are hardest hit by humanitarian emergencies need direct representation to create solutions that work for them in all phases of the Humanitarian Programming Cycle (HPC).



The Child-friendly City Box for Feedback

Photo from Key Milestones in Batticaloa's CFC Journey

²⁶⁰ United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction.

²⁶¹ UNICEF, "Child Friendly Cities Initiative - Sri Lanka," *Child Friendly Cities Initiative* (blog), April 12, 2021, <https://childfriendlycities.org/sri-lanka/>.

²⁶² Ibid.

²⁶³ United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, "Poverty and Inequality."

● Other Opportunities that Can Improve Regional Engagement

In addition to the above recommendations that concurrently improve adolescent meaningful participation and address the identified, three major regional challenges, our team has also determined three general recommendations that can improve ROSA's strategies for regional adolescent engagement.

Recommendation 7: Improve inter-agency collaboration and coordination

An important component of UNICEF's work across the South Asia region is inter-agency collaboration and coordination especially with fellow humanitarian and development UN entities. In Cox's Bazar, for example, we highlighted UNICEF Bangladesh's ongoing collaboration with the ILO on government advocacy and with UNFPA through the YWG. UNFPA in particular underlined the importance of interagency coordination mechanisms, such as working through a life skills curriculum, cross-training based on areas of expertise to reduce duplication, and regular knowledge sharing sessions.²⁶⁴ At the regional level, especially when funds may be constrained due to global humanitarian and other crises, UNICEF ROSA should continue to guide country offices to improve and expand inter-agency collaboration and coordination.

Recommendation 8: Involve adolescents in program design



Human-Centered Design

Photo from UNICEF Human Center Design Report

In some contexts, like Cox's Bazar, adolescent engagement in program design is minimal since many adolescents are not educated and may not have required understanding of program design, planning, and monitoring and evaluation.²⁶⁵ In order to involve adolescents and encourage their meaningful participation, UNICEF should consider expanding the application of Human-Centered Design (HCD) techniques. HCD emphasizes co-idea generation, prototype-building, working directly with beneficiaries, and collaboratively creating innovative solutions.²⁶⁶ Through such processes, UNICEF can engage adolescents in the design and planning phases of humanitarian projects and programs.

²⁶⁴ Interview with UNFPA Bangladesh Cox's Bazar Youth Working Group Co-Chair.

²⁶⁵ Owilli, Interview with UNICEF Bangladesh Cox's Bazar Partner/Adolescent Specialist.

²⁶⁶ "What Is Human-Centered Design?," Design Kit, accessed April 30, 2022, <https://www.designkit.org/human-centered-design>.

Recommendation 9: Provide start-up funds for youth organizations

Adolescent voices can be amplified and their needs better served, if adolescent-founded initiatives and organizations are provided financial support and a publicized platform. During our interview with Muhammad Shahzad Khan from Chanan Development Organization in Pakistan, Khan shared the importance of initial investment on the foundation of youth organizations. Youth have the passion and ability to form their own communities, but due to lack of funds, most of them cannot realize²⁶⁷. UNICEF, through internal channels and mobilization of the private and public sectors could develop funds to support adolescents in their initiatives for community wellbeing. The provision of these funds should be inclusive of gender and context-based equity considerations. This way, UNICEF can encourage and incentivize youth leaders and communities to mainstream the inclusion of marginalized persons as well.

²⁶⁷ Muhammad Shahzad Khan, Interview with Chanan Development Organization Founder and Executive Director, Zoom, April 13, 2022

Conclusion

Humanitarian response processes are incomplete without the voices and perspectives of those most affected. Adolescents should not be treated as passive beneficiaries of relief. They are rights-holders and change agents who have ideas, skills, and experiences to positively contribute to decisions and actions that impact themselves and their communities. Meaningful adolescent engagement and participation are critical for all stages of the humanitarian program cycle.

Our key findings contribute to knowledge creation with and for UNICEF, supplementing the organization's evidence base that informs stronger planning with and for adolescents. We identify challenging policy, programmatic, and resourcing gaps as well as creative opportunities for exploration. Our actionable recommendations then support UNICEF ROSA and country offices to improve and expand adolescent-centric prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery efforts in humanitarian emergency contexts.

This report represents meaningful progress towards more intentional, inclusive, and impactful humanitarian programming so that, ultimately, adolescents in South Asia and across the world can confidently affirm, "Nothing About Us Without Us."

Suggestions for Further Research

Humanitarian agencies and partner organizations can replicate and apply our methodology and analysis to both assess and enhance their adolescent engagement initiatives. However, since we conducted our research within the limitations of the COVID-19 pandemic, we acknowledge that additional field-based studies would be beneficial. The following are preliminary suggestions for further research:

- Expand the application of human-centered design approaches to engage adolescents in humanitarian settings. For example, explore the scope for co-designing digital solutions with end-users, adolescents in this case, from the beginning of project cycles;
- Consider current best practices and gaps in data collection and application processes related to adolescent engagement in a particular setting and/or platform. For example, conduct a thorough analysis on the U-Report to better understand target adolescent groups;
- Explore the active roles that adolescents can play in the prevention of and recovery from natural disasters. For example, use a comprehensive case study of youth involvement in response efforts in Kerala, India to explore the establishment or extension of district-level children's councils, local panchayat members, and/or volunteer forces in other states;
- Assess context-dependent barriers for specific marginalized communities to increase these adolescents' meaningful participation, and particularly emphasize solutions that address multidimensional and intersectional forms of marginalization.

Appendix A

Terms of Reference (TOR)

Background:

In South Asia, there are a staggering 340 million adolescents in South Asia – almost 30 per cent of the total adolescents in the world. At the crossroads between childhood and adulthood, adolescents typically face many changes and uncertainties in their lives. Despite the large young demographic, adolescents in South Asia are still largely invisible and voiceless. They have limited or no access to information and little say in decisions affecting their lives.

Adolescence is a critical transitional phase socially, physiologically, economically and politically. Ensuring that material, emotional and intellectual inputs continue for adolescents during emergencies is critical to sustain their wellbeing and resilience. During the humanitarian response, agencies may deliver programmes targeting young people, and they may also engage them as implementers of activities.

Adolescent as beneficiary: Investing in adolescents strengthens their ability to advance human rights and build a bright future for themselves, their families and entire countries. UNICEF addresses gaps in data to build evidence that drives action where it is most needed. With Governments and other partners, UNICEF works to strengthen health care, education and protection systems to ensure critical supplies and services reach the last mile, even in emergencies.

Adolescents as contributors: During conflicts, natural disasters and other humanitarian emergencies, youth/adolescents offer immense support to the affected communities and service providers. They can be found on the frontlines of response efforts, protecting their communities and environments in various ways as responsible citizens.

The adolescent-centric humanitarian response is based on general adolescent priorities and the principles and actions set out in UNICEF's revised Core Commitments for Children in Emergencies (CCCs), the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) guidelines on working with and for young people in humanitarian and protracted crises, the Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) Framework, and UN Security Council Resolution 2250 on Youth Peace and Security.

Objective:

In a world where 30% of the adolescent's population call South Asia home, this study aims to deepen the understanding of adolescent engagements - both as beneficiary and recipient and identify opportunities for UNICEF to streamline programmes and further strengthen collaboration in humanitarian settings.

Tasks:

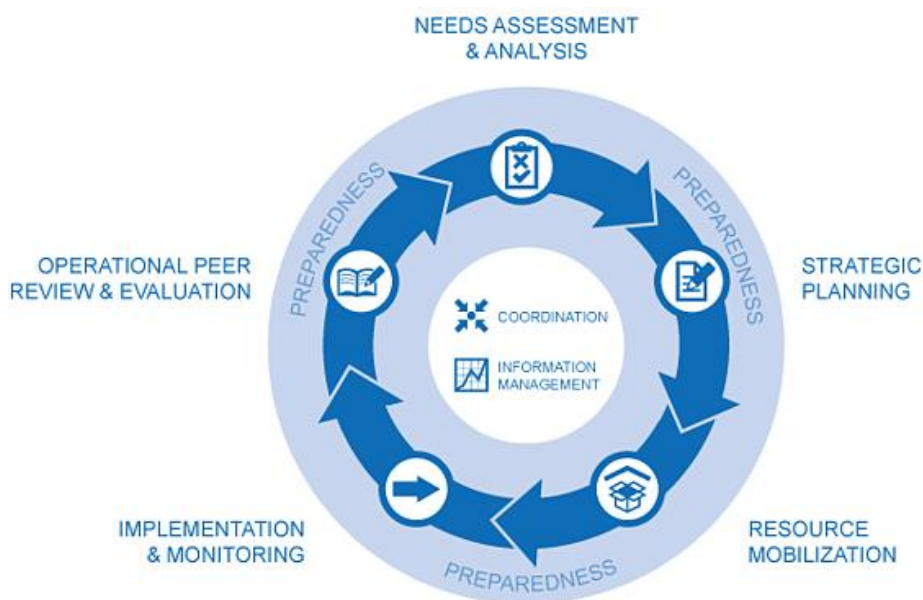
- Assess engagement and involvement of adolescents in humanitarian response in various ways before, during and after emergencies in countries of South Asia - Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

- Take stock on strategies, approaches and deliverables in adolescents' programmes supported by UNICEF in all the countries in South Asia - what worked well and what requires improvement. Students will consider the countries from a thematic lens of ways in which youth are engaging across innovation, advocacy, gender, disability rights and main platforms or channels for connecting with and communicating with and among young people (consider the Scouts, faith-based organizations, specific clubs or media platforms).
- Appraise the application of different tools such as revised CCC, IASC Guidelines, AAP framework etc in the UNICEF supported programmes and analyze how they are interlinked (a cross-reference exercise).
- Recommend ways of improving programmes for adolescents and engaging with adolescents in the process and stages of humanitarian programme cycle – preparedness, needs assessment/analysis, planning/design, implementation, monitoring etc (considering both adolescents beneficiaries and contributors).

Appendix B

Humanitarian Programme Cycle (HPC)²⁶⁸

The Humanitarian Programme Cycle refers to a series of actions undertaken in the management of international humanitarian response operations. To the extent possible, these must be conducted in collaboration with and in support of national and local authorities.



The Humanitarian Programme Cycle

Photo from United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

The actions in the cycle are interrelated and should be managed in a seamless manner using a coherent approach and a common set of tools.

- **Emergency preparedness** is a distinct element of, and underpins, the entire cycle.
- **Timely, coordinated assessments and analysis** identify the needs of affected people and provide the evidence base for planning the response.
- **Coordinated planning** allows for the formulation of strategic objectives, what needs to be done to meet them, and how much it will cost.

²⁶⁸ “The Humanitarian Programme Cycle,” United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs - occupied Palestinian territory, accessed May 1, 2022, <http://www.ochaopt.org/coordination/hpc>.

- **Funding and other resources are mobilized** for the system based on and in support of the strategic response plan.
- **Monitoring of agreed output and outcome indicators** and the tracking of financial information demonstrates results and informs decision-making about the plan.

While implementation of the cycle should be flexible and adaptable to different country situations, it must at a minimum address the above elements. Whenever possible, it should support national and local partners, and complement or build on existing frameworks; it should contribute to a response that builds resilience to future disasters.

Appendix C

Questionnaire on Adolescent Engagement

“Nothing About Us Without Us: Adolescent Engagement in Humanitarian Response” is a research collaboration between UNICEF’s Regional Office for South Asia (ROSA) and Columbia University’s School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA). This research aims to deepen the understanding of adolescent engagement in humanitarian settings and identify opportunities for UNICEF to streamline programmes and further strengthen collaboration. Through this questionnaire, our academic capstone research team strives to provide practical and accessible recommendations to UNICEF ROSA and partner countries.

We invite you to participate in this questionnaire because you are a UNICEF country office or partner/implementing organization staff member in one of UNICEF ROSA's associated countries. Your participation in this questionnaire is voluntary. You may choose not to participate. If you decide to participate in this questionnaire, you may withdraw at any time. If you decide not to participate in this questionnaire or if you withdraw from participating at any time, you will not be penalized. You may also skip any questions that are not relevant or if you prefer not to answer.

This step of our research project involves you filling out this online questionnaire that will take approximately 30 minutes. Your responses will not be shared publicly online, but will be used for our research and analysis purposes. Parts of this information may be included as part of our final report and therefore shared with UNICEF ROSA.

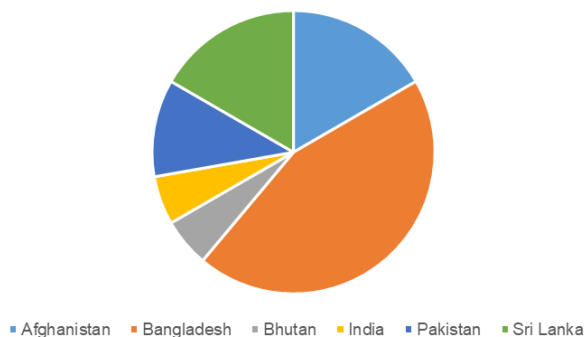
If you have any questions about the research study or this questionnaire, please contact:

Alanoud Hamad, alanoud.hamad@columbia.edu

Nakeisha Jones, nakeisha.jones@columbia.edu

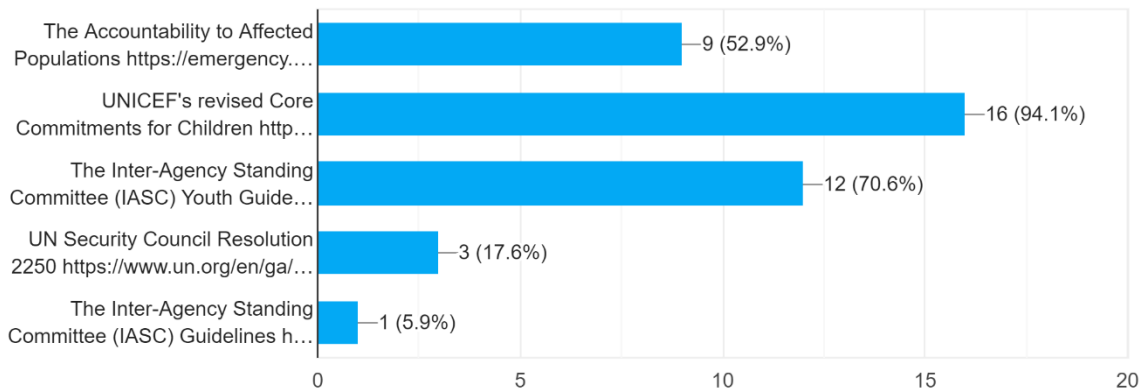
- **ELECTRONIC CONSENT:** We may wish to follow up with respondents for a personal interview. Please click the button below if you are open to scheduling a conversation with one of our researchers. (Agree/Disagree)
- Name, Position, Organization, Country

Country Distribution

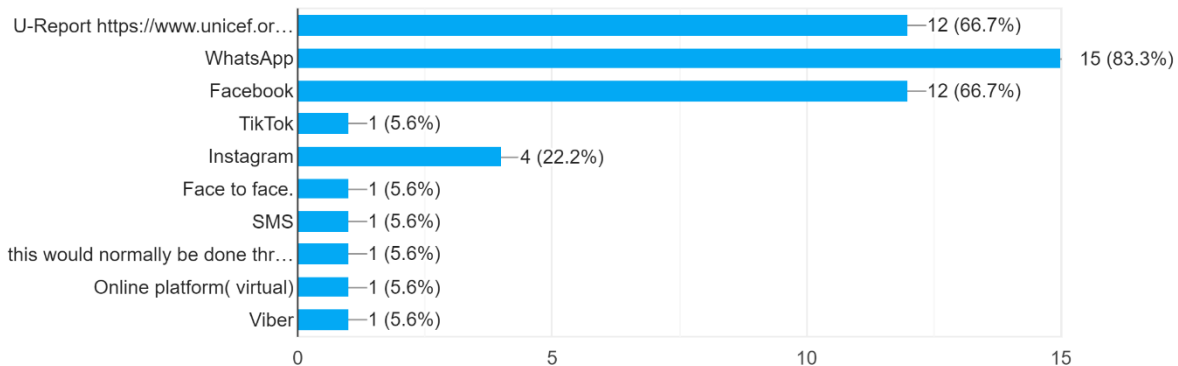


- Your Email Address

- Which of the following international guidelines on adolescent engagement have guided your adolescent engagement strategies and interventions?



- What digital technologies or platforms do you use to advertise and engage with youth participants?



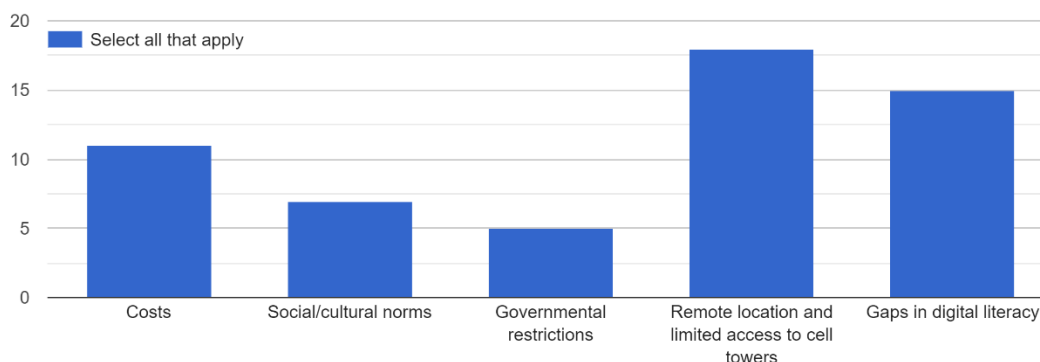
- How does your organization use technology to engage adolescents (particularly those who are part of marginalized communities)? Has this been successful? If yes, what are you doing well? If not, what are areas of improvement?

- *Mobile phones. Bit of IT.*
- *We connected with Adolescents through WhatsApp group.*
- *UNICEF Afghanistan mainly use SMS messaging platform to reach adolescents from different communities. We reached 1.17 million U-Reporters in 2022.*
- *We use low tech as we work in remote areas that have limited access to electricity, internet, radio / television coverage, and telecommunications coverage. Low tech includes rechargeable, portable audio/video systems (projectors, tv screens) that can read usb drives instead of laptops as they are expensive, requires costly maintenance, and are high risk for getting lost. We also distribute video/audio content to beneficiaries through direct data transfer to whatever device they have access to (mobile phone, usb, hard drive, etc). Programs where we have used these types of techs have been very successful where communities have donated learning spaces and electricity to charge and use the audio/video systems. Additionally, as the systems are low tech,*

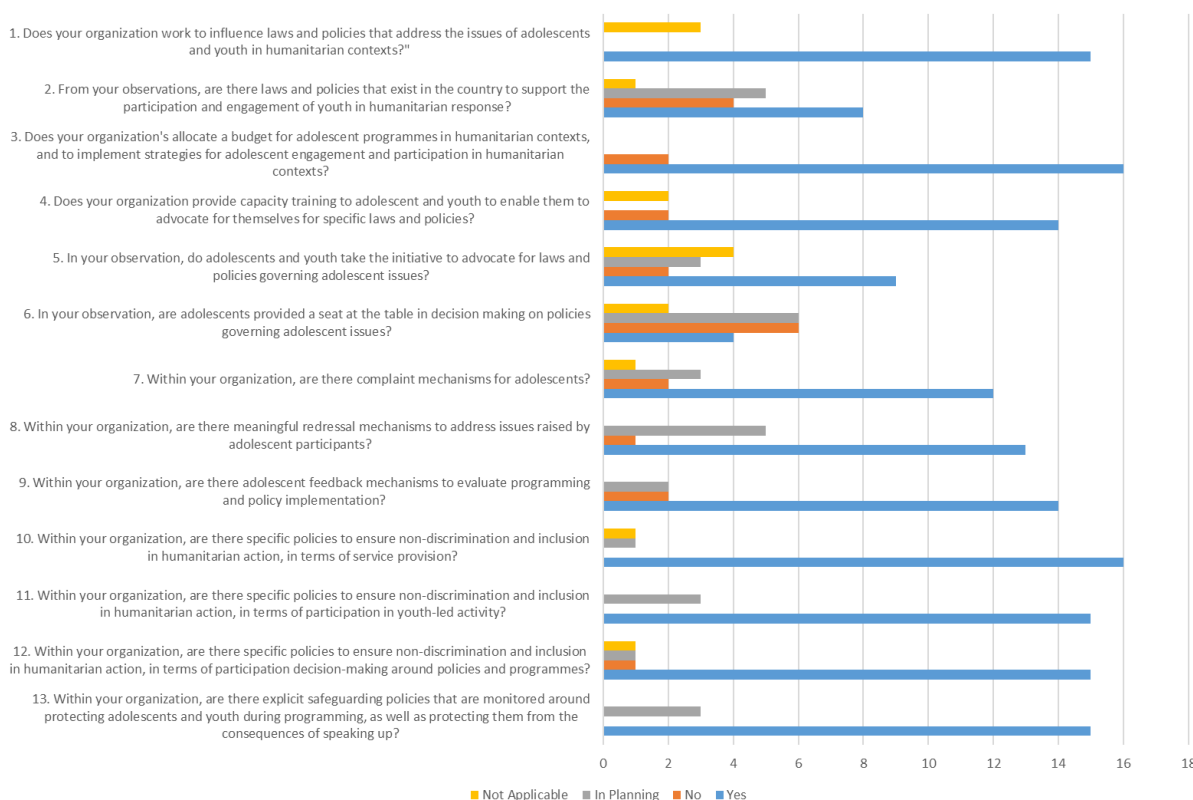
they are much easier to orient the adults who are responsible for operating the equipment, on how to use, troubleshoot, and maintain them even if the person responsible is illiterate.

- *U-Report polls and surveys, has been successful, need to further educate and propagate to audiences that are not encouraging young people to use smart phones*
 - *We have mostly used U-Report, WhatsApp and Facebook as digital tools to engage adolescents. This is an area which require substantial improvement in Sri Lanka due to connectivity and device accessibility issues. In addition, many adolescent girls do not engage through digital media in Sri Lanka.*
 - *We provided tabs in refugee camp and computer in host computer for their capacity building. After having skill orientation, they are transforming their capacities in their personal and professional life.*
 - *Adolescent and youths are taking part in U-reporting using Tablet. Hare the youth and adolescent can express their existing problems regarding family, friends, neighbor, Communities and relatives around their living area. In addition, they come to social hub directly to learn basic knowledge of computer. There is a provision of one computer operator who train them about computer basic knowledge in social hub office depend the group schedule of adolescent and youths.*
 - *Digital portal kamyabjawan.gov.pk and data analytics tools and digital dash board, social media platforms*
 - *We are teaching coding and programming to young people through youth centers. Digital access and divide are an issue and may take time to address it*
 - *1- WASSA with under the support of UNHCR office has started the youth initiative project in 2017 under the name of code4fun with the aim to encourage young talented youth for coding and creativity and covered 372 adolescent girl and boy.
2- Enhance the role of youth in technology and introduce them to social media through establishment of women only café net, where girls feel comfortable. and covered 8646 adolescent girls.
3- Provided ILCD training for 1053 adolescents girl.*
 - *Adolescents and youths are taking part in U-reporting using tab, here the youths and adolescents are can express their existing problems regarding family, friends, neighbor, communities, relatives around their living areas. In addition, they came to social hub directly to learn basic knowledge of Computer. There is a provision of one computer operator who train them about computer basic knowledge in social hub office depending the schedule of adolescents and youth groups.*
 - *BD Betar has formed plenty of groups in remote areas and select a secretary from the adolescents who has access to phone and can operate phone. That Secretary gathers the adolescents in a place, facilitate our radio programmes through a radio which is provided by Betar. That's way we engage marginalized people and we have found it fruitful*
 - *local networks, U-Report, whatsapp, locally developed apps working well. Limited digital connectivity hampers access to and interaction with marginalised communities*
 - *U-Reporters, Advance and Basic Computer training and develop their skill on different essential issues. ICT based skill development training.*
- **If your organization has used a digital platform to advertise events or give information, can you please provide us with a link to your page?**

- What are the barriers preventing access to digital technology in your community? (Select all that apply)



- Please check off all the boxes that represent how your organization has influenced humanitarian and related laws and policies for adolescents, and adolescent engagement and participation in your national, regional, or government setting. (Yes/No, In Planning, and Not Applicable)



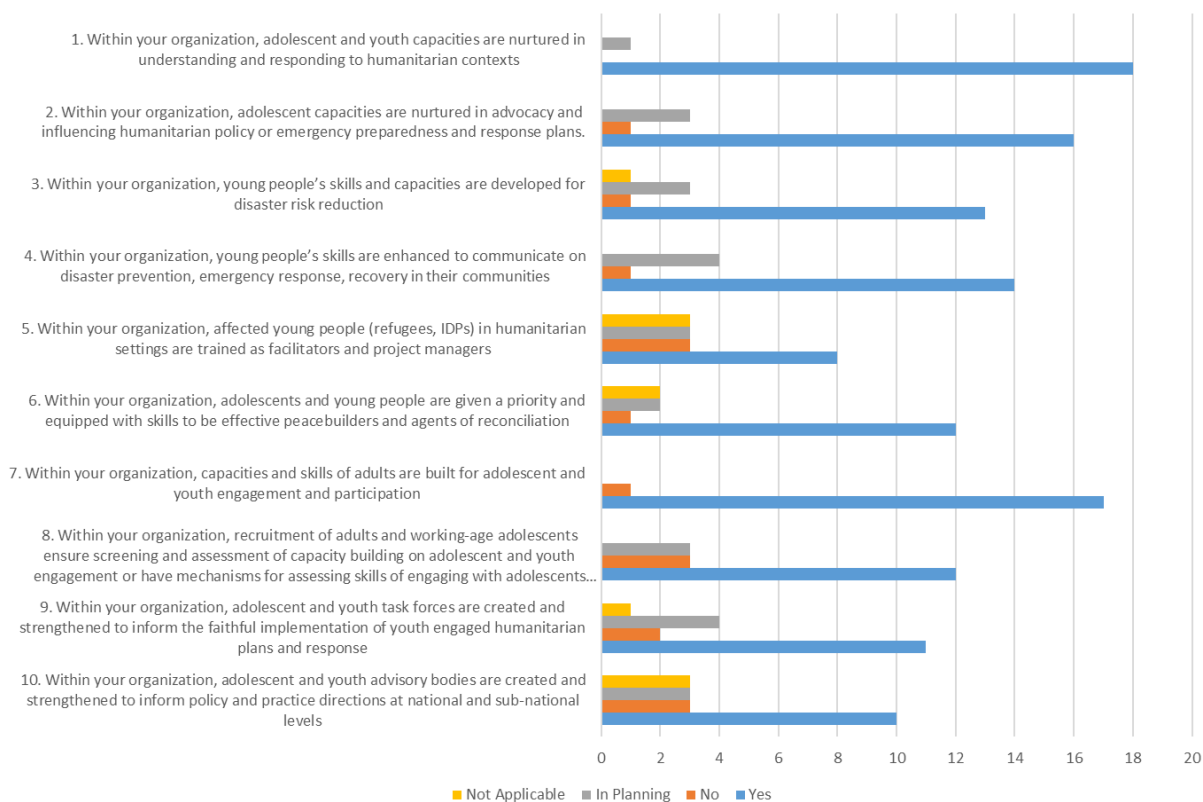
- Please use this space to share any achievements, challenges, or other comments your organization has related to influencing the creation and implementation of laws and policies that promote adolescent engagement.

- *Challenge: getting the government to allocate separate resources for youth/adolescents groups where currently, resources are provided for Shuras/Community councils made up of mostly adults and very few youth/adolescents.*
- *Rural youth linked to local govts & line departments*
- *Adolescent Equality Index, Youth Development Index, Draft bill for National Youth Commission*
- *Betar's adolescent-led programmes are so popular and many adolescents are being aware through our programmes and they raise their voice against the miscreants and violence since they have learnt laws and policies from our programmes*
- *CODEC targeted to trained up 1500 adolescents to improve their capacities through vocational training. Thus, they are getting empower for their personal and professional life.*
- *The current situation in Afghanistan, make lots of challenges for the development and implementation of laws and policies for adolescent engagement.*
- *1- There is no justice and advocacy system*
- *2- The defacto government members are sensitive to GBV, WR, Child marriages, etc...*
- *3- Schools are closed for adolescent girls and it made them unreachable.*
- *Budget constraints and lack of human resources*
- *#Global technology*
- *Achievements: BITA do the work at very conservative area and ensured adolescent & women participants with program activity, re- enroll in school receive the service from Government service center and raise the voice against all kinds of violence. Challenges: Project is very short time, that's why it's difficult to sustain. Recommendation: Project need minimum 02 years for build capacity and sustained the achievement.*
- *We have been advocating for developing charter on childrens' demands in Climate Change adaptation and disaster risk reduction. We launched U-Report poll a inquire about young people's concerns and to gather more consensus on the demands. During this campaign, we observed that young people very much aware about the impact of climate change and disaster on them and were not very interested to participate in the poll. They are rather busy with more current problems on Education or poverty, and therefore it requires to organize more programs that alert and education about the negative consequences that climate change will have on their lives in the future.*
- *Achievements: Adolescent participation in decision-making at lower administration units in Sri Lanka had been achieved through the CC-DRR programme. In addition, UNICEF Sri Lanka Country office together with the Department of Probation and Child Care Services of the Government of Sri Lanka, ChildFund Sri Lanka, World Vision Lanka and 356 adolescents in Children's Clubs developed Sri Lanka Children's Declaration for DRR and CCA in 2020 which is being promoted online (U-Report) to gather more youth/adolescent voices behind it. This Declaration would be advocated at the highest level of the Government of Sri Lanka for it to be approved by the Parliament as a legally binding Charter for children on DRR and CCA by 2027. This would directly influence DRR/CCA laws and policies in Sri Lanka to adopt more child-friendly practices in future.*
- *Challenges: Bringing the same to national level remains a challenge due to many reasons including COVID-19, economic crisis, political instability as well as limited skills among adolescents/youth to engage at such high-level of decision-making.*
- *UNICEF has involved in supporting Deputy Ministry of Youth Affairs to develop Afghanistan National Youth Policy in 2014 and Afghanistan National Youth Strategy (2017-2021). Post*

August 15, 2021, De facto Administration took over power, there is no clear guidance that these policy and strategy are still valid.

- Authorities provide less emphasis, have limited capacity and narrowed down adolescent engagement into few specific forms

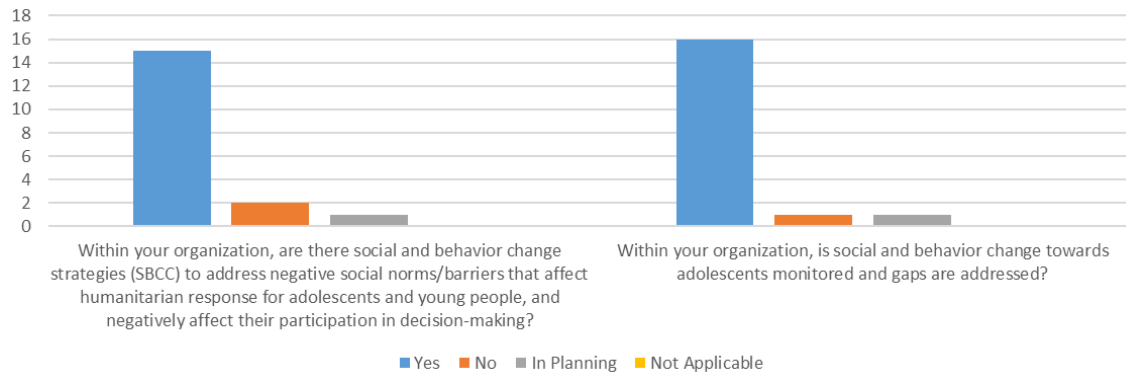
● Please check off all the boxes that represent how your organization has worked to assist adolescents to build their capacities. (Yes/No, In Planning, and Not Applicable)



● Please use this space to share any achievements, challenges, or other comments your organization has related to building the skills and capacities of adolescents.

- Literacy is a challenge for reaching out of school adolescents therefore tools, forms, and trainings are adapted to consider this challenge including having more visual aids, using interactive learning approaches (drawings, games, audio lessons), and simplified forms/trainings that are followed up with regular mentoring to ensure beneficiaries fully understand how to fill required documents and utilize / remember what was provided through the trainings.
- One positive outcome is most Rural youth, esp females have been exposed with these ideas for the first time...
- National Youth Council
- BD Betar has Adolescent Radio Listener Clubs that are facilitated by Betar's staff, but with the time adolescents are capable to conduct a session by themselves.

- CODEC believe that the young people are the most valuable human asset for the country. it is also observed that many young and adolescents and passing a reluctant life. In this regard we targeted to skill up 1500 adolescents to improve their capacities.
 - Conducted 60 community dialogue adolescents meetings
Conducted 238 mentoring sessions (for 2155 adolescent girls and 2535 women)
Established 14 multi-purpose adolescent groups (MAG). (10 adolescent girls and 10 boys per MAG, in totally 280)
Establish 5 adolescent and youth networks (AYN) - 10 members per network = 50 members
Maintain Two CPAN Network
 - Lot of work on skilling programme are been initiated recently. However, one of the major factors is mobilizing resources
 - Social Security, working.
 - Achievements: BITA Provided different types of training for their skill development such as social cohesion and resilience, Adolescent reproductive health, Life skill, Leadership development. They have been taken action for community development with the community engagement.
 - UNICEF Sri Lanka reached more than 25,000 children/adolescents through its CC-DRR programme which aims to build resilient and emergency preparedness capacities of children. The programme ensured the wider recognition for children as agents of change for DRR and CCA and highlighted the importance of continuing to build the capacity of children as 'change agents' and active participants in preparing for disasters in a changing climate, as is being done through the ongoing project where children participate in sub-national level decision-making processes.
 - Adolescent and Youth Task Force within UNICEF is functioning. Members are from programme sections and zonal offices. AY Networks with adolescent and young people are in all 5 zonal offices. In some project areas, we have established Multi-purpose Adolescent Groups with young population from community level. UNICEF together with UNFPA has planned to establish a thematic working group on adolescent and youth under the protection cluster which is focused on youth-specific advocacy, planning and coordination, while addressing the cross-cutting nature of the population group, and works toward advancing the youth agenda in humanitarian settings in line with the Global Compact for young people in Humanitarian Action.
 - We are providing the per-vocational training like Solar, tailoring, cap making, computer, hand loom, beautification, and batiks training for adolescents and youths.
 - We are providing the pre-vocetinal training like solar, tailoring, hand loom, cap making, computer, beautification and batiks training for adolescents and youths.
 - There is a need to improve adolescent participation specially in policy level, and also to create an enabling environment for that
- Please check off all the boxes that represent how your organization has addressed social norms. (Yes/No, In Planning, and Not Applicable)



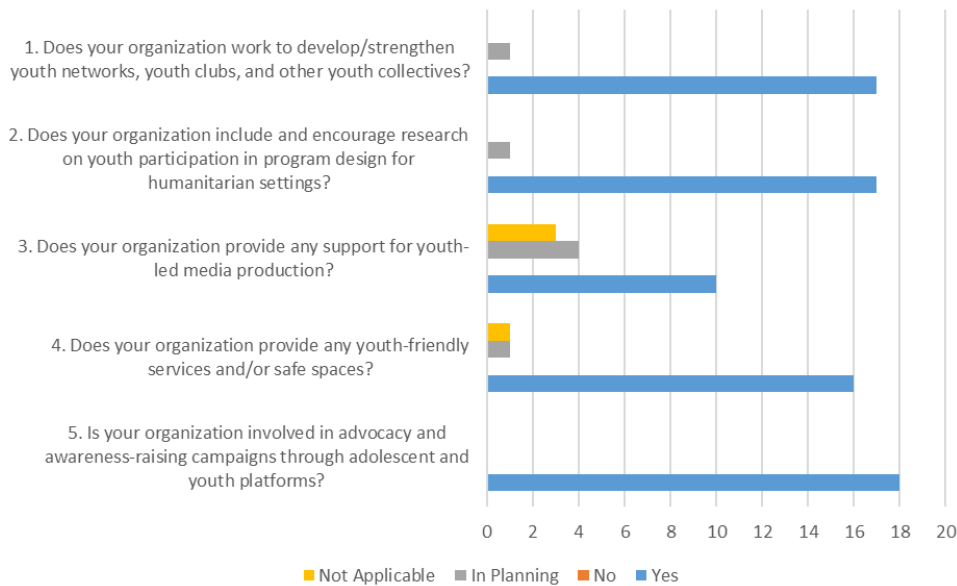
● Please use this space to share any achievements, challenges, or other comments related to how your organization has addressed social norms that hinder adolescent engagement.

- *We have been able to successfully engage with adolescents including older girls, by providing the option for beneficiaries to participate in the program with field staff and beneficiaries of the same gender if they are uncomfortable with mixed groups. Also, by hiring younger field staff from the same areas we work in, they have greater success engaging with adolescents as they understand their challenges, behaviors, and perceptions more than older people or those outside their community/unfamiliar with the local context. Lastly, our adolescents programs include working with adults as well, as building the relationship between adolescents and adults is needed for adolescents to gain community support for youth-lead programs, have their voice be heard when it comes to decision making, peace-building, and community development, and be treated as part of the community.*
- *As this was our first time with Rural youth but in 16 months, time too little...*
- *Parents were not agreed to send their children to the Learning Centers or Clubs but through our IPC sessions and households visits, many parents were convinced to send their children.*
- *Through the youth working group we transformed the good practices and make aware about mal practices in the society.*
- *we work with parents and organized advocacy on the promotion of civic engagement and participation*
- *After receiving difference awareness training, adolescents can realize about the social problems and how to solve it positively. They make understand to their own community about this such as adolescent girl education, stop early marriage, bad effect of use the drugs, domestics violence, Eliminate religious prejudices etc. They raise the voice against any kinds of violence or injustice at their society.*
- *COVID vaccine hesitancy has been a key area of SBC over the last couple of years, though SBC features in all preparedness and response work for all emergency response.*
- *Social norm especially child marriage is addressed by different programme activities. Internal child marriage strategy is developed and jointly with UNFPA child marriage assessment will be conducted in the second quarter of 2022. Summative evaluations are carried for adolescent focused projects (girls' education, prevention of child marriage). Activities on prevention of GBV/harmful practice is ongoing. U-Report polls on youth participation included voices of Afghan girls, voices of youth were conducted in late 2020. Poll on access to basic services for women girls and GBV in communities were conducted in 2021. U-Report poll on adolescent health (information and services) will be sent out in May 2022. IASC guidelines for working*

with and for young people in humanitarian and protracted crisis was rolled out in selected provinces in Jan 2022 and the guidelines was orientated to 100+ INGO/NGO/CSO in April 2022.

- We are providing Life skill Based education for adolescents on the basis of UNICEF Module.
- We are providing the Life skills-based education for adolescents on the basis of Of UNICEF module.
- Organization is working with the communities where engagement of adolescents girls are not encouraged. Organization also works with government institutions to enhance ways of adolescent engagement, not limiting to their mere presence.

● Please check off all the boxes that represent how your organization has implemented to increase opportunities for engagement. (Yes/No, In Planning, and Not Applicable)



● Does your organization have partnerships with youth-led organizations and networks? If so, can you provide a list of your key youth partnerships?

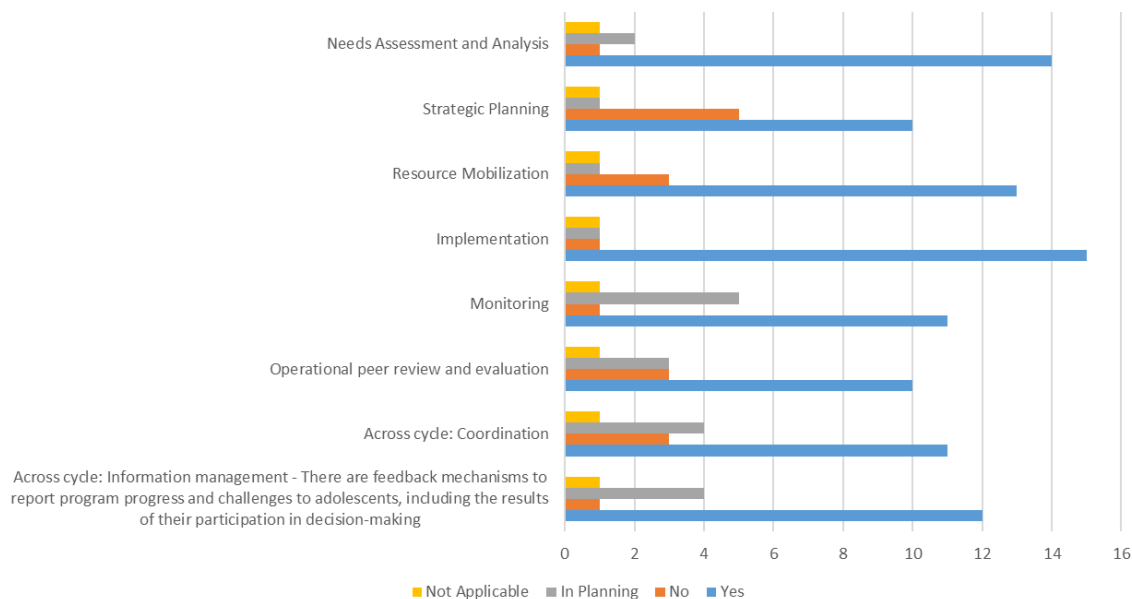
● Please use this space to share any achievements, challenges, or other comments your organization has \ related to your supporting mechanisms and opportunities for adolescent participation.

- A key lesson we have learned is how important it is for adolescents to have access to dedicated, safe spaces within their communities and/or schools where they can participate in programs. It is also important to have options for adolescents to participate at home or in small groups at home, especially when teaching older girls, married girls, and mothers who more often are unable to go outside their homes for multiple hours. adapting programs for illiterate beneficiaries and to the local context is also key to increasing adolescents participation. We have also found that adolescents are willing to spend their time and energy supporting programs that improve their lives and their communities without financial incentives when they are treated with respect, are given proper attention (through regular field visits and mentoring) and non-financial resources (ex: stationary, backpacks, sports kits, art kits), are given space

to make decisions on aspects of the programs (ex: planning activities, schedules, voting system), and are given reasonable and meaningful responsibilities that creates a greater sense of ownership of the program from the adolescents.

- *Linking female groups directly to Urban like minded female organization &Public Dept.*
- *We have to provide information in various formats of programmes so that these can attract adolescents and don't let them feel bored*
- *We have a referral mechanism with government and other line organization.*
- *Participation of adolescent girls and boys during the WASSA projects implementations are visible positive achievement. adolescent girls and boys participated in most of our programs to learn new things and apply them to their social life. It had different impacts on their lives, like being self-sufficient while they are working, being a good friend to others since they had direct communication with educated people, and being aware of their rights when they are participating in GBV programs.*
- *Established network of volunteers through our partner. Have dedicated staff to manage volunteering programme. we work with host of partners to promote engagement and participation.*
- *Always support*
- *Achievements: Adolescent take skill building opportunity from Government and nongovernment and action on social development. make awareness on COVID-19 prevention, child protection, women and adolescent participants to go outside and involve cultural event. which was very difficult in this area, reduce early marriage, child labor. All kind of violence, Skill on computer operation and grow confident to do something to own initiatives and contribution in their society.*
- *Much engagement ongoing and gaining momentum around youth engagement on climate change and climate action*
- *UNICEF has engaged adolescents and youth through the children clubs network as well as through the U-Report platform, with a reach of over 25,000 members each in the two different platforms.*
- *Main challenge is the engagement of girls through digital platforms as well as in children's clubs in some areas where ethnic/religious social norms prohibit girls to engage in groups. UNICEF SLCO is working with partners (both Government and CSO) to overcome this challenge through direct engagement with parents and awareness creation.*
- *Led by the ROSA ADAP adviser/team and in collaboration with Commutiny, a toolkit for adolescent-led enquiry during humanitarian response was used to collect information by adolescent and youth from adolescent youth from different communities including IDP and those who returned from Iran. The ToT to use this toolkit is planned for the partners and youth network members to scale up these activities in 2022.*
- *Achievements: per-vocational training for, PSS session, group meeting, Sports, day observation, drawing completion, Meeting with CBCPC, Meeting with PCGC, Meeting with youths and Adolescent club activities.*
- *Pre-vocational training, PSS session, group meeting, sports, day observations, drawing competition meeting with CBCPC, PCGC and youth and adolescent club activities.*
- *Organization also provides different forms for adolescent and youth engagement, including digital platforms as an evolving way for adolescent and youth engagement*

- Is your organization involved in young people’s participation across the Humanitarian Program Cycle (from preparedness and response, in camp management and other humanitarian settings)? If yes, can you identify the ways in which young people are involved from the checklist below? (Yes/No, In Planning, and Not Applicable)



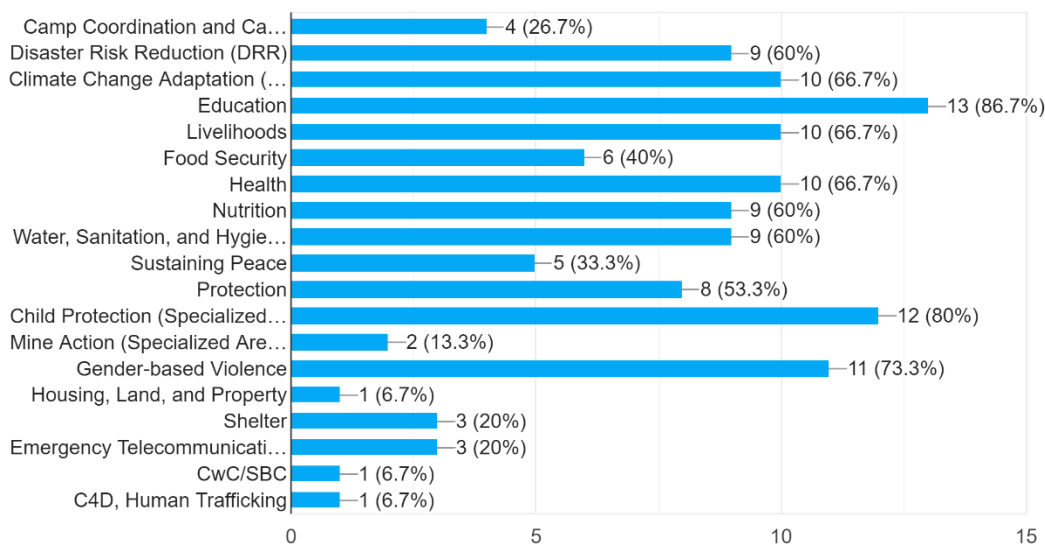
- Please use this space to share any achievements, challenges, or other comments related to how your organization has incorporated young people’s participation across the humanitarian program cycle.

- *In process but the eagerness of the young is contagious*
- *National Youth Council*
- *Betar has been broadcasting and narrowcasting related messages and take feedback regarding their lessons but Betar is not directly implementing or monitoring response programme*
- *The Youth Working Group conduct a regular monthly meeting and prepare an action plan and keep updated regarding young people participation across the humanitarian program cycle.*
- *WASSA has designed all the Project activities in a cultural manner and under the needs of the target stakeholders, and also all activities are planned in a comprehensive and non-discriminatory manner to ensure that the targeted population, particularly women and adolescent girls, regardless of class, disability, language, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or religion, have equal access to all services. the participatory method has created an environment in which target groups can freely express their opinions.*
- *Adolescents take part in consultation to monitoring on this situation support accessing information and services.*
- *CC-DRR programme brought about the change of engaging children in preparedness/HPC in the country. At sub-national levels where the programme was implemented, children representatives engage at decision-making platforms for emergency preparedness.*
- *Young people have been involved in the humanitarian activities through implementing partners in project areas.*
- *Challenges: Late approval of government offices to work in camps.*
- *Late approval of governments offices to work in camp.*

- Is there any additional information you wish to share with the research team about your organization or your perspectives on adolescent engagement?

- *Public sector should be more pro-active & group formation of youth committees encouraged.*
- *The Women Activities & Social Services Association (WASSA) was established in 2002 in Afghanistan, as*
- *the first independent women’s organization in Herat province, committed to seeking ways for women*
- *empowerment in Afghanistan. WASSA aims to promote women equal participation in socio-economic*
- *sectors of the country. WASSA works directly with communities in order to bring change in social attitude*
- *of the community. WASSA strongly supports the adolescent's engagement and is fully committed to their safety and well-being in most of its projects.*
- *Some potential adolescent as a social change agent who do the work for his/her community and reduce the social problems besides their formal education. They inspiring to another adolescent and youth boys and girls' for do better on child protection and remove the social conflict and establish social cohesion and peace.*
- *In UNICEF Afghanistan, adolescent and young people are prioritized for adolescent health and nutrition, menstrual hygiene, protection from GBV and child marriage. In addition, young people's participation and civic engagement has been promoted though capacity building for self-esteem, agency, confidence building, stress management and participate in decision making process. Livelihood training are provided in a small scale and connect the participants with customers and market. Young people are also trained to become a change agent to engage in their own issues and resolve themselves.*

- (OPTIONAL) Please identify below which sector(s)/topic area(s) that your organization has engaged in your current and previous work:



Appendix D

Meaningful Participation Survey for Adolescents

“Nothing About Us Without Us: Adolescent Engagement in Humanitarian Response” is a research collaboration between UNICEF’s Regional Office for South Asia (ROSA) and Columbia University’s School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA). This research aims to deepen the understanding of adolescent engagement in humanitarian settings and identify opportunities for UNICEF to streamline programmes and further strengthen collaboration. Through this questionnaire, our academic capstone research team strives to provide practical and accessible recommendations to UNICEF ROSA and partner countries.

We invite you to participate in this survey because you are an adolescent (ages 10-24) in one of UNICEF ROSA's associated countries (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka) and your experiences and voices matter. We also invite you to share this survey amongst your friends, classmates, and colleagues if they fit the survey's qualifications. Through your responses we hope to provide recommendations that create pathways and opportunities for your meaningful participation in humanitarian settings.

Your participation in this questionnaire is voluntary. You may choose not to participate. If you decide to participate in this questionnaire, you may withdraw at any time. If you decide not to participate in this questionnaire or if you withdraw from participating at any time, you will not be penalized. You may also skip any questions that are not relevant or if you prefer not to answer.

This step of our research project involves you filling out this online open-ended survey that will take approximately 20 minutes. Your responses will not be shared publicly online, but will be used for our research and analysis purposes. Parts of this information may be included as part of our final report and therefore shared with UNICEF ROSA.

If you have any questions about the research study or this questionnaire, please contact:

Alanoud Hamad, alanoud.hamad@columbia.edu

Nakeisha Jones, nakeisha.jones@columbia.edu

- **ELECTRONIC CONSENT:** We may wish to follow up with respondents for a personal interview. Please click the button below if you are open to scheduling a conversation with one of our researchers. (Agree/Disagree)
- Name, Age, Country
- Your Email Address
- What kind of emergencies/crises have your community or country experienced (e.g., natural disasters, COVID-19, and political unrest)?

- How have you seen young people participating during emergencies? (Assistance, decision-making, organization, volunteering etc.)
- Have you participated in a training program or activity focused on disaster risk reduction and/or emergency response? If yes, please describe your experience.
- What do you see as some of the barriers and/or challenges to youth participation?
- How do people in your community usually receive information? (i.e., word of mouth, in schools, digital platforms, UNICEF tools, etc.)
- How do you balance your own responsibilities and priorities with meaningful participation in humanitarian response or other adolescent/youth engagement initiatives? Do you find it easy or difficult? Please explain.
- What are some successes you've seen in adolescent /youth participation as a participant in a program or that you have observed in your community?
- What recommendations do you have for UNICEF and/or adolescent-serving partner organizations in terms of how they can improve their work?
- Please use this space to share any additional comments that you have regarding meaningful participation for adolescents.

Appendix E

Questions for Country Office Teams

- What work has been significant for adolescents in your country? Any specific programs/activities that you would like to highlight?
- Can you share some of your successes and failures (specific activities or programs) in engaging young people so that they can meaningfully participate, make decisions, and lead processes which contribute to their wellbeing?
- What do you think would be the best way to address those challenges?
- What are the best ways to include voices of adolescents in programs and during humanitarian crises, particularly the voices of the most marginalized?
- In our preliminary research, we noticed that some marginalized groups include women and girls, LGBTQI, persons with disabilities, religious and ethnic minorities. Are there strategies your offices have used in the past to include marginalized groups including as partners in development?
- What key adolescent groups do you rely on within your network?
- What does meaningful adolescent engagement look like?
 - How does UNICEF interpret this and do you see differences in how this is viewed by different government sectors and community members (socially and politically)?
- Are you currently working with any particular networks/groups/organizations that support or implement adolescent engagement initiatives?
- How does UNICEF use technology to engage adolescents in your country? Has it been successful? If yes, what are you doing well? If not, what are areas of improvement?
- Are there any gaps in data for the adolescent population?

Appendix F

Questions for Adolescent Serving Organizations

- Please tell us a little bit about your work, and specifically about your work with adolescents.
- Can you give us an example of a current or recent adolescent engagement-related project that you have implemented in partnership with UNICEF or another UN agency? If not, who are you partnering with at the moment?
- How are adolescents seen as active participants in design and implementation of your policies and programs/areas of work?
- Can you share some of your successes and failures (specific activities or programs) in engaging young people so that they can meaningfully participate, make decisions, and lead processes which contribute to their wellbeing?
- How does your organization use technology to engage adolescents (particularly those who are part of marginalized communities)? Has it been successful? If yes, what are you doing well? If not, what are areas of improvement?
- Are entrenched cultural/political/social norms that your organization seeks to address to better engage adolescents? What are the outcomes of these efforts?
- Are there specific strategies your organization is using to include marginalized groups (e.g., women and girls, persons with disabilities, religious and ethnic minorities)?
- What do you think will need to be done to enhance adolescent engagement before, during, and after a humanitarian crisis? Please suggest concrete, actionable recommendations.
- How has your organization influenced the creation and implementation of laws and policies that specifically address adolescents and young people in humanitarian contexts, including policies for ensuring the engagement and participation of adolescents, and/or equipped adolescents to influence the creation and implementation of laws and policies that specifically address adolescents and young people in humanitarian contexts, including policies for ensuring the engagement and participation of adolescents?
- Given your expertise within your organization, do you have any concrete and specific recommendations for UNICEF in terms of how they can improve meaningful engagement of adolescents and/or how your organization's partnership with UNICEF can improve moving forward?