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#COVID UNDER 19

University of Strathclyde Glasgow

Inspiring Children's Futures support(s) the Sustainable Development Goals

Inspiring Children's Futures

Children's Participation: Adults' Perceptions of Child Participation and Young People's Views on Responses during COVID-19

The International **COVID 4P Log Project**

Inspiring children's Futures

LEARNING SERIES 8 PARTICIPATION

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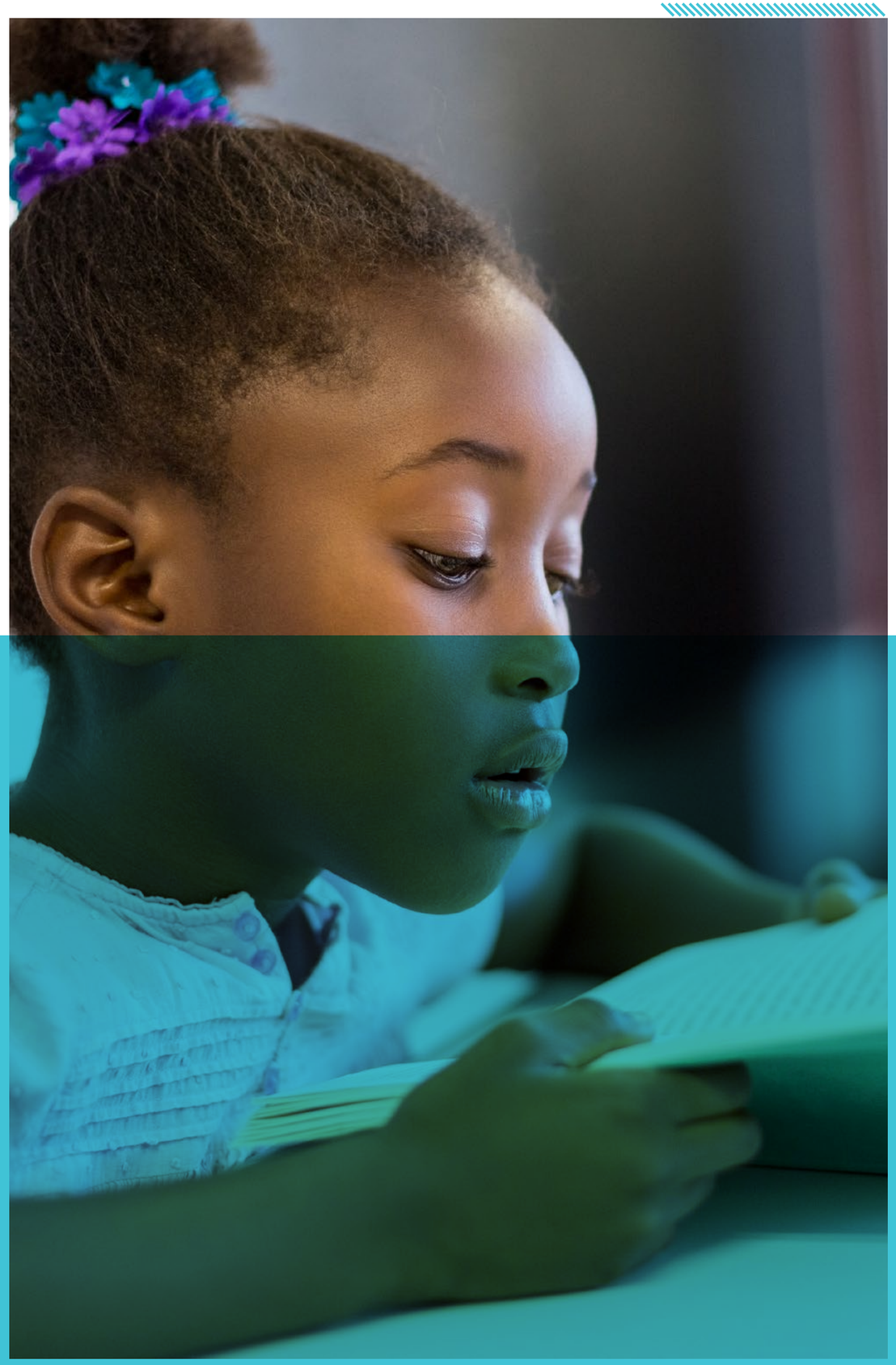


About the Project and Team

This Learning Report is part of a series of thematic reports documenting the COVID 4P Log survey findings from service providers and policymakers from 22 countries and five continents. The project presented in this report drew upon key findings from the COVID 4P Log project pertaining to children's[1] participation to engage young people in discussions about the meaning and implications of those findings.

The COVID 4P Log questions and these findings have been analysed and co-authored by a collaborative, intergenerational partnership of adults and young people.

COVID-19 has abruptly thrust the rights and wellbeing of children and families into greater risk around the world. The impact of COVID-19 on children continues to be vast. Risks posed to children's survival and development, to their special protections, education, health and access to food, for example, are being greatly affected by COVID-19 and by government responses to them.

With about a third of the global population estimated to be under age 18, children account for a large proportion of our population. To effectively mitigate the impact of COVID-19 in the light of protecting children's wellbeing, and ultimately for our collective societal future, policy and practice responses must be distinctively designed to address children's wellbeing needs. Policymakers, and those working with children, are at the heart of pandemic responses as they continue to support children's wellbeing, rise to many new challenges, and respond in new and innovative ways.

To address the impact of COVID-19 on children in the long term, the COVID 4P Log Project sought to better understand the changing demands of policies and practices across different cultures and contexts, in 22 countries and five continents. To do so effectively, we established a broad partnership of 17 international key partners, whose roles span intergovernmental policymaking, child rights advocacy, workforce capacity-building, service delivery, and monitoring roles at UN level. With their active involvement, we designed a novel fast-capture smartphone app called the COVID 4P Log for Children's Wellbeing, which was launched in the last quarter of 2020.

The App captured over 3300 responses from 247 service providers and policymakers from 22 countries - including Kenya, the Philippines, South Africa, Scotland, India, the USA, Canada, and Sweden.

The **Institute for Inspiring Children's Futures** is a joint initiative at the University of Strathclyde, Scotland, with a collective vision of ensuring that children and young people have what they need to reach their full potential, particularly those who face adversity.

We work in partnership with a wide range of partners nationally and internationally. Children's human rights and the UN Sustainable Development Goals are the heart of our work.

1. The term 'children' is used throughout to describe all those under the age of 18 years, in line with the CRC's definition of a child. Where 'young person' is used in the Report, this is reflecting that specific age group only.

THE SMARTPHONE APP

The COVID 4P Log is an Android and iOS smartphone app, free-of-cost to app users, that collected the real-time, anonymous views and experiences of practitioners and policymakers who were working across the globe to support children's wellbeing in the light of COVID-19. In answering a series of questions, these volunteer respondents helped us to better understand the ways practitioners and policymakers were responding to those challenges.

During the last quarter of 2020, practitioners and policymakers were invited to download the app to log a 2-minute response to one main question every day, for eight weeks. The questions were both practice and policy-focused, and based on the '4P' children's human rights framework of Protection, Provision, Prevention, and Participation, in order to better understand the ways practitioners and policymakers around the world were protecting children, providing for their unique needs, enabling their participation in decisions that affect them, and preventing harm, during the COVID-19 pandemic.

RESEARCH THEMES

The smartphone app explored respondents' views of several core areas:

1. Learning from the pandemic so far
2. Protection: Ending violence against children
3. Provision: Access to food, health, education
4. Collaborations, flexibility, transparency and trust: Applying evidence from past emergencies to COVID-19
5. Prevention: Children's social and emotional wellbeing
6. Special considerations: Justice, alternative care and disabilities
7. Participation: Responding to #COVIDUnder19- children and young people's findings
8. Preparing to rebuild post-COVID

OUR KEY PARTNERS

Our 17 international Key Partners range from capacity-building organisations, to international advocacy NGOs and service delivery partnerships, to the UN and other inter-governmental agencies. Their support and close engagement enabled the **Institute for Inspiring Children's Futures** to gather these important insights through the COVID 4P Log smartpone app. Their mention here does not imply endorsement of these findings.

African Child Policy Forum ACPF
AFRICAN PARTNERSHIP to End Violence against Children
BARNAFRID - Swedish National Center on Violence Against Children LINKÖPING UNIVERSITY
CYCNET
DEFENCE FOR CHILDREN INTERNATIONAL
European Social Network
Child Rights Coalition Asia
FICE
child rights connect
Observatory of CHILDREN'S HUMAN RIGHTS Scotland
National Child Welfare Workforce Institute LEARNING, LEADING, CHANGING
OECD INCLUSIVE GROWTH
REPSSI Psychosocial Wellbeing For All Children
University of Strathclyde Glasgow
Terre des hommes Helping children worldwide.
OFFICE OF THE SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN
PATHFINDERS FOR PEACEFUL, JUST AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES Justice for Children Justice for All
GLOBAL SOCIAL SERVICE WORKFORCE ALLIANCE

PROTECTION
PROVISION
PARTICIPATION
PREVENTION

For the wellbeing of our *children*

Children's human rights enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child are sometimes summarised as the four P's: Protection, Provision, Participation and Prevention. The COVID 4P Log uses this 4P conceptual framework to frame the questions we asked practitioners and policymakers. While the 4Ps are not all-encompassing, they offer an accessible lens through which to explore how practitioners and policymakers from different countries, sectors and organisations see children's human rights being realised.

We asked about good practices, and innovations despite the challenges, that ensured children's human rights were upheld across key aspects of children's lives, in particular those of children whose rights are most vulnerable to being violated. In this project, we explore how practitioners and policymakers are upholding the 4Ps, with the following areas of focus:

PROTECTION

We explore children's rights to protection from exploitation, violence and other abuses, and to effective and child-friendly interventions if these occur. Our questions seek to understand what concrete and effective measures have been enacted to protect children from violence during the pandemic.

PROVISION

We explore children's rights to growth and development, including the right to food, health care and education, play and leisure, and provision of targeted assistance—including economic assistance—to families. We also ask about the special considerations for children living in exceptionally difficult conditions, in particular for children involved in justice systems, in alternative care, and with disabilities.

PARTICIPATION

We explore a child's right to express their views freely, and to have their views given due weight when decisions are made that affect them. Children's participation and intergenerational partnerships are essential ingredients for understanding the impact of COVID-19 on children's wellbeing.

PREVENTION

We explore children's rights to social and emotional wellbeing support. Isolation under COVID-19 has been a common reality for many, and social exclusion of children can undermine their wellbeing. Supporting children's social and emotional wellbeing, and that of their families, can prevent further harms.

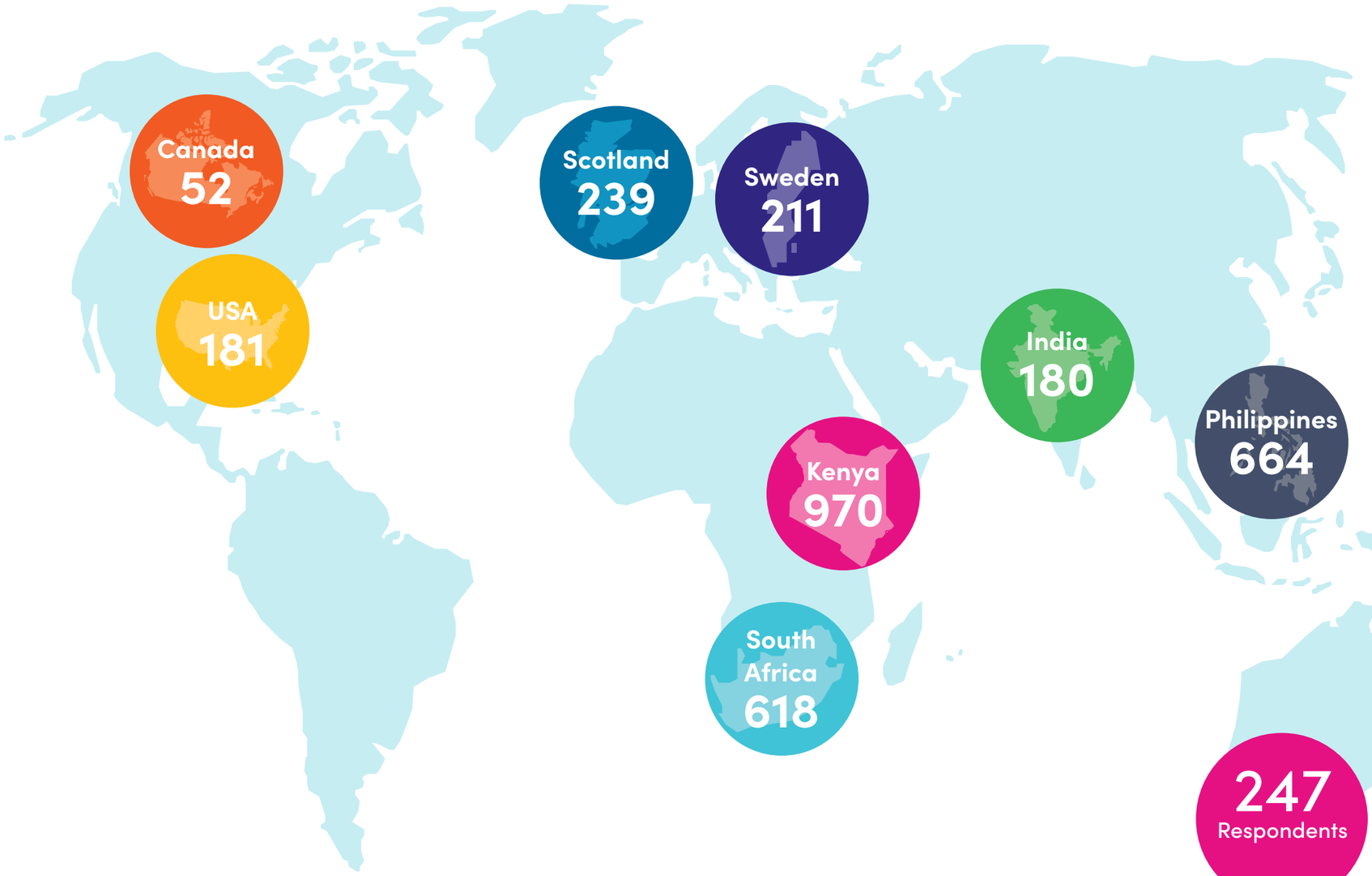
Respondents and Countries Represented in the Eight-Week COVID 4P Log Project

3339 Responses

22 Countries

5 Continents

TOP 8 COUNTRIES BY NUMBER OF RESPONSES



Overall, 247 respondents from 22 countries - including 139 direct service providers, 66 service managers and 42 policymakers - contributed to at least one main app question between the last quarter of 2020 and the first quarter of 2021. 173 respondents were women; 68 - men; 5 - prefer not to say; 1 - other.

The represented countries were (in alphabetical order) Australia, Bangladesh, Belgium, Canada, Ethiopia, Greece, India, Israel, Italy, Kenya, Lebanon, Malawi, Mexico, the Netherlands, Palestine, the Philippines, Montenegro, South Africa, Sweden, United Kingdom (England), United Kingdom (Scotland) and the United States of America (USA).

The top eight countries by highest number of respondents were Kenya (60), the Philippines (48), South Africa (41), Scotland (32), India (14), the USA (12), Canada (11), and Sweden (8).

A total of 3339 responses were generated across the eight weeks of questions - with eight countries, Kenya (970), the Philippines (664), South Africa (618), Scotland (239), Sweden (211), the USA (181), India (180), and Canada (52) - accounting for 93% of all responses.

The remaining countries had the following numbers of respondents and responses, respectively: **Malawi** (2/52), **England, UK** (1/52), **Israel** (1/40), **Montenegro** (1/27), **Greece** (5/13), **Belgium** (1/10), **the Netherlands** (2/10), **Ethiopia** (2/4), **Lebanon** (1/4), **Palestine** (1/4), **Australia** (1/2), **Bangladesh** (1/2), **Italy** (1/2), and **Mexico** (1/2).

169 (68%) respondents worked for NGOs; 31 (13%) - for the government; 22 (9%) - for civil society organisations; 11 (4%) - in the private sector; 10 (4%) - other; and 4 (2%) - unknown.

Respondents represented a range of sectors such as child and youth care, advocacy, community-based services, sexual and reproductive health, mental health, child rights, children and family services, education, social services, working with refugees, juvenile justice, maternal and child health, housing, and others.

247 Respondents

139 Direct Service Providers

66 Service Managers

42 Policymakers

#CovidUnder19 Goal

#CovidUnder19 aims to foster intergenerational partnerships between children, young people and adult members of the child rights community to develop evidence-based advocacy to uphold children's rights in pandemic recovery and response.

In April 2020, Terre des hommes launched the #CovidUnder19 initiative by mobilising a group of young people, child rights activists, civil society organisations and UN stakeholders. The initiative set out to understand children's views and experiences about life under Coronavirus, and amplify their voices to inform policymakers, professionals working with children, and governments. In the Spring of 2020, the initiative launched the "Life Under Coronavirus" global survey to understand children's experiences of the Covid-19 pandemic and their views on how they wish to get involved. The survey was designed with children, for children aged between 8 to 17 years available in 27 different languages alongside an easy to read version.

The #CovidUnder19 Life Under Coronavirus survey was designed in the spirit of the United Nations Convention on Rights of Child. The Centre for Children's Rights at Queen's University, Belfast, employing their unique children's rights-based methodology, designed the survey and analysed and reported the results, working at every stage with children and young people and other partners to make sure that the survey and findings were produced with children for children.

#CovidUnder19 Objectives

- Generate quantitative and qualitative data about how the covid pandemic impacted on children's rights.
- Ensure that children's right to be heard is fulfilled by providing children with opportunities to express themselves about how their rights have been impacted by the pandemic.
- Build children & young people's knowledge, skills and networks in research to empower them to generate evidence-based advocacy messages.
- Co-create with children & young people child-friendly resources to empower children to be agents of change in building back better from the pandemic.
- Nurture spaces of intergenerational dialogue between children and policy-makers to support their views and experiences being taken into account in pandemic recovery and response

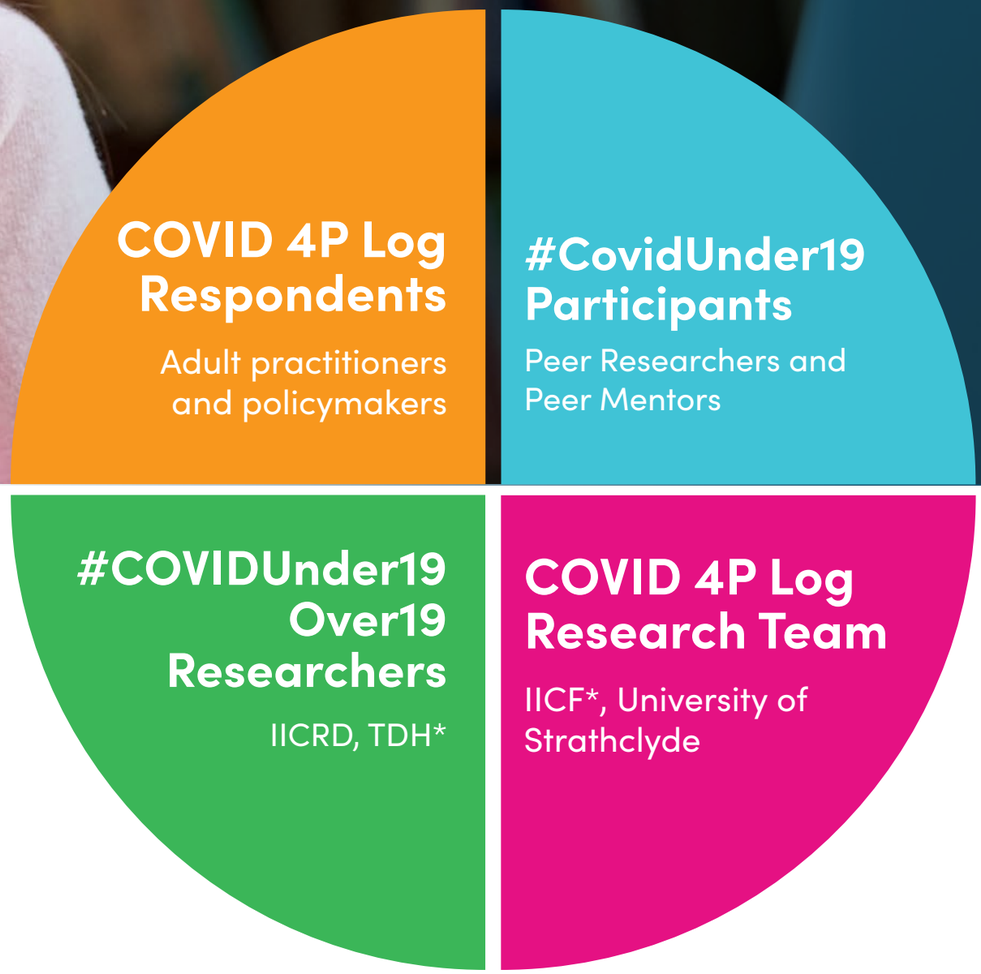
International Institute for Child Rights and Development (IICRD) is a unique hybrid organisation: part academic institution, part non-governmental organization (NGO), affiliated with Royal Roads University in Victoria, Canada, and focused on social innovation and thriving with and for children and youth. For over two decades, IICRD has been a bridge-building organisation working with a wide variety of partners in participatory, applied research, professional education, and community capacity building initiatives. Supporting our capacity to deliver these collaborations on the international scale is IICRD's broad network of Associates, based out of countries in Africa, Asia, South America, Europe, and North America. Our programs and projects catalyse change, healing, and social transformation for children made vulnerable by structural inequalities in contexts such as war, poverty, violence, colonization, and climate change. IICRD worked in partnership with Terre des hommes and Inspiring Children's Futures to lead the participatory data analysis process with the #CovidUnder19 researchers, and to co-write this Learning Report and a peer-reviewed article.

Purpose of this Learning Report

The purpose of this learning report is to share the findings of the COVID 4P Log from the adult respondents, as analysed by young researchers from the #CovidUnder19 project, and in turn, to share these young people's responses to these findings with readers—both young people and adults—in return.

We hope that this approach to analysing and sharing these findings, an approach that also generates new findings, will spark a fresh curiosity about the compelling benefits of young people's insights and engagement. We encourage readers to initiate an ongoing exchange between young people, and adult practitioners and policymakers to support change and solidarity in the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

Groups Represented in this Report



* International Institute for Child Rights and Development; Terre des hommes; Institute for Inspiring Children's Futures at the University of Strathclyde.

Report Summary: Key Messages

COVID 4P Log: Practitioners' and Policymakers' Perspectives:

- Collectively, COVID 4P Log respondents recognised that the meaningful and sustained participation of children in decision-making, including policies, campaigns and services, was vital to protecting the full spectrum of their rights, providing holistic support to meet their needs, and fostering their resilience.
- COVID 4P Log respondents stressed the importance of affirming children's rights by inviting them to make full and meaningful contributions to decisions affecting them, although several respondents shared there were difficulties with upholding child participation during COVID-19.
- Several examples of children's participation were mentioned in the COVID 4P Log: community coordination forums; a youth forum involved in changes to legislation; organising youth-friendly camps; inviting children to speak out and listening to them; press-conferences with children; involvement in research; peer-led tutoring, counselling and advocacy; consulting children about the services they received; and others.
- However, several COVID 4P Log respondents indicated children's views had not been sought during the pandemic regarding decisions affecting them.
- Barriers to child participation included movement restrictions, digital and information exclusion, and the lack of stakeholder consultations.

#CovidUnder19: Young People's Perspectives:

- #CovidUnder19 researchers emphasised the importance of adults listening to children, as they cannot assume that they know what is in children's best interest without listening to their views.
- They also noted that the ideal participation of children is often not actualized in the 'real world'.
- In the COVID-19 responses, they pointed out that children were not engaged in matters that affect their safety and protection; that child-friendly communication about the pandemic was lacking; and they felt that children were not given a chance to feed back on decisions that impact them, such as budget allocations and decisions about closing schools.
- As Under 19s analysed the COVID 4P Log responses, in the concluding recommendations, they highlighted the critical element of active listening and respect for children advocating with and for children to uplift children's rights, and the importance of adults engaging children in everyday activities.
- Under 19s' own recommendations emphasised the importance of including *all* children as meaningful partners, inclusive of disadvantaged groups, educating both children and adults on children's rights and providing platforms in media and policy processes for children to represent themselves in decisions that affect them.

Letter from #CovidUnder19 Young People

Dear Reader

The global pandemic which the world is experiencing has been one of the worst crises humanity has ever seen. While governments and decision makers have been engaged in dealing with vital issues like economy, public health and trade, it is important to understand that the need to focus on the rights of children is urgent to make sure that children, as right holders, are given the rights that they deserve and generations ahead are saved from being pushed into vicious cycles of poverty, discrimination and inequalities. The post pandemic recovery and response must be inclusive of voices of children and youth to make sure that their present and future needs are met appropriately. We have a voice of our own, but at a time when hearing our voice is most important, it is lower than ever.

At a time when the need for directing policies and advocating to secure rights of children globally is necessary, data is the most important tool on which policies and advocacy can be based. As Former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan said, "Without good data, we are flying blind; if you can't see it, you can't solve it." To secure the rights of every child, it is important to build upon data and to ensure that the interpretation of this data is inclusive of children's voices. Governments, data practitioners and civil society organisations hold a great responsibility to ensure inclusion of children in data in a child friendly manner. It is also important to ensure that data which is vital to understanding of the world around them must also be presented to children in a way which is child friendly.

The world today is fragmented and made worse by the pandemic, which has given rise to glaring inequalities and has disproportionately affected the marginalised communities. If we are to build back better from the pandemic, inequalities and gaps must be narrowed through policies based on an inclusive understanding of data.

For us, children and young people, this report has demonstrated hope- seeing the enthusiasm that adults have shared to encourage increased child participation. We feel that when engaging with children, data practitioners must make sure that such an engagement is meaningful, by having an open mind while understanding the diverse opinions of children. It is also important for practitioners to make children's participation inclusive through a gender neutral, simplistic and multilingual approach. Meaningful participation of children also entails educating children about their own rights and building capacities among them so that children are aware and informed about their own rights. This would also mean prioritising voices of children over adults in matters concerning children's rights and placing them at the helm of advocacy where possible. We feel that this report would motivate data practitioners to adopt a more inclusive, meaningful and global approach while engaging with children.

This report highlights important aspects and views of data practitioners in involving children in data collection and dissemination. For an adult reading this report, it highlights the importance of involvement of children in data while shedding light on views of practitioners and children while ensuring children's meaningful involvement. For children and young people reading this report, it is an instance of support and empowerment for children's voices and recommendations to be included in this report meaningfully. It is only when children, young people and adults work together can we ensure a post pandemic world which is inclusive, prosperous and just. This report goes a long way in ensuring that the pillars of the world of tomorrow are built upon voices of children and young people today.

#CovidUnder19 Child and Youth Advisory Group

Findings from the COVID 4P Log Project:

Child Participation during COVID-19

This report is formed from two different data sources: one source is the COVID 4P Log Smartphone App responses from adult practitioners or policymakers working to support children's wellbeing, across 22 countries (please see Box 1 below). The other source is drawn from facilitated discussions with #CovidUnder19 young people, who both analysed a selection of adults' responses and provided their own responses to what the adults have said. While #CovidUnder19 young people informed the questions of the COVID 4P Log smartphone app, they did not use the app and their reflections are based on reviewing the adults' app data.

The COVID 4P Log responses were analysed by #CovidUnder19 Peer Researchers and Peer Mentors who clustered the responses into three sections:

- **Children's Participation in Policy & Practice: Adult Perspectives**
- **What Has Been Done: Participation and Communication/ Steps Already Taken**
- **Recommendations/ Suggestions from Adults'**

The three findings sections of this report were named by #CovidUnder19 Peer Researchers. Additionally, the quotes embedded in each section were categorised by the young people based on their online collaborative dialogue and jamboard decision-making. The quotes were then further analysed by the #CovidUnder19 Over19 researchers (researchers in the project who are over the age of 19) to develop paragraphs which were reviewed and approved by the #CovidUnder19 young people.

After the findings sections, there is a section on the young people's reflections. Here, the #CovidUnder19s shared what was surprising, what was missing, recommendations they have for adult practitioners and policy-makers, and their visions for an ideal practitioner and policy maker. (See Appendix: COVID 4P Log Questions about Child Participation)

FEEDBACK LOOP PROCESS

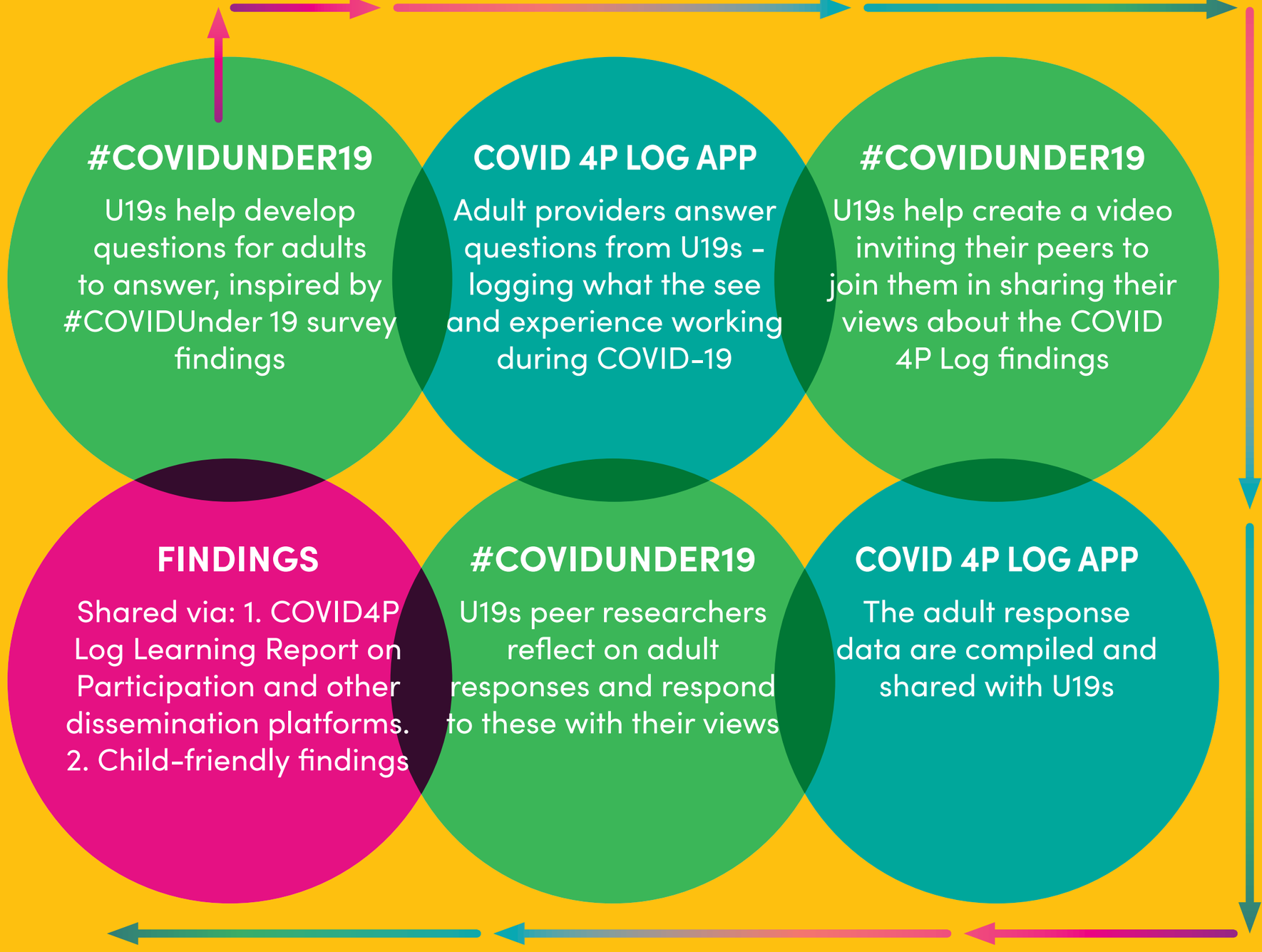


Figure. Overview of methods for the production of the Learning Report

Adults' Perspectives on Children's Participation in Policy and Practice during COVID-19

Adults across a range of public services for children, across 22 countries and 5 continents, voiced a wide array of perspectives on the value and practicality of engaging children and young people in decision-making on policy and practice during COVID-19. COVID 4P Log findings illuminated some promising practices and ideas as well as significant limitations to children's participation.

Several COVID 4P Log respondents highlighted examples in which young people were not engaged. For example, when asked if children's views about education were sought, 80% of study respondents (4 out of 5) responded 'No' and commented "I think their views were never sought" (NGO Direct Service Provider, Kenya) "children's views were not sought" (NGO Service Manager, Montenegro) "they were not involved" (NGO Service Manager, South Africa) and "not to a large extent"(Government Policymaker, Sweden). Additionally, COVID 4P Log respondents suggested increased child protection challenges during the pandemic:

> *"I think during this period many youths have been involved in bad companies... led some to be in early marriages, early pregnancy, and... drug abuse."*
>
> NGO Service Manager, Kenya

Furthermore, when asked if children's views were sought out more broadly in policy and practice, 12 out of 14 respondents who completed Week 7 of the COVID 4P Log left this blank, with only 2 responding with 'yes'. This suggests potential lack of knowledge, understanding, or prioritisation of the question and/or how to answer it, or may also signify a negative response. Another participant stated that "child participation has always been difficult to uphold" (NGO Policymaker, Philippines). This was further reinforced by an example of limited engagement of children in decision-making - possibly suggesting a misalignment between government priorities and children's needs:

> *"government makes decisions without consultation or great thought to the implementation... Children were not asked what they wanted"*
>
> Private Sector Service Provider, UK

However, some respondents did recognise the importance and value of engaging with young people, and encouraging them to share their views. One respondent shared that children's views were shared during press conferences and also in research outputs in their practice. Another respondent, a policymaker from the Philippines, shared examples of mobilisation strategies to engage children despite the COVID-19 related restrictions:

> *"Some children were mobilised online for dialogues through community partners and with some support like communication and food allowance"*
>
> NGO Policymaker, Philippines

U19s Analysis of Adults' Perspectives on What Has Been Done during COVID-19: Participation and Communication/ Steps Already Taken

Adult respondents shared some examples of participation and communication within their own or their sectors' practice. These were analysed and organised by the youth who felt that the highlight was:

> *"The insights of children, their needs and issues, were shared with adult service providers in their communities"*
>
> Civil Society Service Manager, Philippines

Two broader categories of steps already taken by adult respondents, as delineated by the #CovidUnder19 young people were 'Active Child Awareness and Participation' and 'Directly Communicating with Children'.

Encouraging Active Awareness and Child Participation

Respondents shared about activities they were currently involved in or had carried out in the past that served to strengthen child participation and increase awareness about key wellbeing and protection issues concerning children during COVID-19. One participant shared about the importance of engaging youth in awareness activities highlighting protection of children during COVID-19:

> *"The youth are now involved in disseminating information on child abuse and where/who to report cases that they know of. They advocate messages online with their peers"*
>
> NGO Service Manager, Philippines

Using online spaces for advocacy and communication has become increasingly important during COVID-19, as communities have faced movement restrictions. These restrictions have created new challenges for children and exacerbated existing ones, but children and adults have shown creativity and resilience in finding new ways to engage with each other/with others. One participant shared that

> *"The children, even from poor and distant communities, have been continuously involved at varying levels - as key informants, participants and resource persons about their situations and issues"*
>
> Civil Society Service Manager, Philippines

Another argued that it is important to "[allow] children to be part and parcel of decision making on matters concerning COVID-19 prevention." This includes creating space for them to "actively participate in daily activities" and to speak out on matters "affecting them during the period of the pandemic." (NGO Service Manager, Kenya).

Peer-to-peer approaches were also highlighted by respondents as an example of meaningful participation. For example, a Civil Society Service Manager from the Philippines shared that:

"the organisation of peer to peer counselling among children and the multidisciplinary child protection units in hospitals" constituted a method of engaging children as well as providing services 'within children's reach'.

They added that:

> *"The provision of hotlines might not be enough as many times children tend to report late or not at all, what the children need are services within their reach."*
>
> Civil Society Service Manager, Philippines

Peers were also involved in awareness-raising. As one participant shared:

> *"We trained children who willingly volunteer in tutoring other children. It's a peer to peer approach or child to child approach for education and awareness raising on children's rights."*
>
> NGO Service Manager, Philippines

In considering child participation, the importance of engaging at the family level was also expressed by respondents, particularly during COVID-19. These relationships are integral to children's social support environment and may create opportunities for participation. For example, one participant shared:

> *"Normally we work with young people in schools or they drop into our centre. During lockdown we went around to all the families we support to hand out food tokens and offer general support. This led to many conversations with parents and caregivers, deepening relationships with the families of the young people we know. Many felt able to ask for help and support. "*
>
> NGO Direct Service Provider, Scotland

A key element to enhance effectiveness of awareness activities and promotion of child participation is ensuring that direct and creative means of communication are used with children. This was highlighted by participants and analysed by #CovidUnder19 young people.

Directly Communicating with Children

Finding ways to communicate meaningfully with children is also important, whether it be in person or using digital means. One participant, an NGO service provider in Scotland, shared that regular communication with young people was particularly powerful. They stated:

> *"Contacting and chatting with the young people when they are not expecting to communicate appeared to have the best impact on our young people... as it implies that they are considered and thought about at times when you (youth worker) aren't really supposed to care (outwith usual youth group times). This has had a productive and positive impact, particularly in an individual capacity."*
>
> NGO Direct Service Provider, Scotland

The responses also revealed the importance of not only listening to the children but applying what they say in practice and policy. One participant highlighted this, and extended this to the community around them, as well:

> *"We are trying our best to learn from children, from other people, organisations, and also from our [policy] targets in the application of children's participation. This inputs into our continuing work with other stakeholders."*
>
> Civil Society Service Manager, Philippines

Using digital methods, including mobile phones and the Internet, are important means of communicating with children and young people. This has been particularly crucial throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. As one participant from South Africa shared,

> *"We have sent SMS to children asking them how they are coping and also encouraged them to exercise the precautionary measures that are advertised by the government."*
>
> NGO Direct Service Provider, South Africa

#CovidUnder19 young people reviewing quotes highlighted that creative means of communication have been important during COVID-19, but also beyond the pandemic.

Adults' Perspectives: Recommendations for Supporting Participation

Despite some positive examples of commitment to the engagement of children in policy and practice decision-making processes during the pandemic, overall, respondents shared that there was insufficient action taking place with regards to actualizing the participation of children in such fora. The recommendations from adult respondents showed that achieving more meaningful engagement of children and young people should be a priority. Specific recommendations varied from active listening and respect for children, to practical ways to engage them in external events and activities. It was also recognised that adults should listen to children and not assume they know what children want.

The specific recommendations by adults, analysed by #CovidUnder19 young people are presented in the Recommendations section.

#CovidUnder19 Young People's Reflections

#CovidUnder19 young people who participated in the data analysis process reflected on what was surprising about the data, as well as what was missing in their eyes.

What was surprising

One young person shared their surprise that the adults have already done things to encourage child participation (mentoring, teaching, etc.). They shared that:

> *"I have never had child participation contact. It is surprising to see active participation - people asking what children want and what they need."*
>
> Nepal, #COVIDUnder19 Peer Researcher

Another issue that the #CovidUnder19 young people mentioned that adults need to intentionally find out what is best for the children. This requires both considering what is best for the children and asking the children what is best for the children. They emphasised the importance of adults listening to children, as they cannot assume that they know what's in children's best interest within listening to their views.

Finally, a few of the young people shared that they found it surprising how much a child should be valued, compared to how much children are valued in the real world. For example, one young participant shared:

> *"In India, kids are not asked very often for their views."*
>
> India, #COVIDUnder19 Peer Researcher

What was missing

The #CovidUnder19 young people pointed out that some of the quotes didn't mention "who is this message is talking about". The quotes "use words like "them" but who exactly is "them"? The theme of diversity and inclusion also came up as a missing component of the adults' comments related to participation of children during COVID-19. This included various axes of inclusion such as gender, age, background, socioeconomic status and level of ability. One young person shared that noted the importance of inclusive advocacy. They said:

> *"In any sort of advocacy it needs to be accessible to people from all types of background - rich, poor, etc. It is really important to be inclusive (people with disabilities etc.) also need to be a part of the analysis."*
>
> Brazil, #CovidUnder19 Peer Researcher

Another young person pointed out that it was not always clear who COVID 4P Log Respondents were, noting: "most of the quotes did not mention who wrote this, who gave this advice. This makes us curious about the person behind this - what character does the person play and what organisation they are with." (India, #CovidUnder19 Peer Researcher)

What would the #CovidUnder19s have contributed to the conversation if they were listened to?

When asked by the #CovidUnder19 Over19 researchers, 'what opportunities were missed by NOT including children and young people in decision making during COVID-19?', the responses of #CovidUnder19 participants yielded insightful responses about the implications on education, child protection and wider policy responses in their settings. One young person pointed out the rising cases of domestic and gender-based violence; and noted that

> *"children were not consulted about what they need for their safety, how they can obtain safety?"*
>
> Global, #CovidUnder19 Peer Researcher

The U19s also spoke about the failure of governments to use child-friendly communication when discussing the pandemic, particularly around access to education and reliable information about COVID-19. #CovidUnder19 participants noted consulting children would have reduced feelings of fear and misunderstanding during COVID-19. One young person shared,

> *"The actually affected people - the ones who go to school - don't know a lot and don't have a say. They are very condemned by not being able to give feedback."*
>
> #CovidUnder19 Peer Researcher

Another young person echoed this comment, saying:

> *"Children weren't given the opportunity to give enough feedback; the culture of children giving feedback was stopped from the beginning.... the only source of information comes from their parents, especially in lockdown when they are stuck inside. We can't always trust parents to give the right information."*
>
> #CovidUnder19 Peer Researcher

Several respondents spoke about the lack of consultation with children in annual government budget allocations:

> *"Nepal too used to allocate budget to children; this decreased in the time of COVID, and this is a time when we needed more funds allocated to children and youth."*
>
> Nepal #COVIDUnder19 Peer Researcher

Another young person agreed and highlighted the need for direct participation of children in decision making:

> *"India - Annual budget allocations; during covid and post pandemic, allocation of resources to schemes that involve them, allocation of schemes that involve children, programs, and have their direct participation, had it been so, perhaps children could have been able to convene more, where is it that resources should be going? Where is it that this could have been provided to them?"*
>
> #CovidUnder19 Peer Researcher

He emphasised the need to to engage children in order to prioritise children's wellbeing, noting:

> *"Keenly looking at how many resources are allocated...There is a huge scarcity when it comes to allocating resources to children's wellbeing."*
>
> #CovidUnder19 Peer Researcher

Visions for an Ideal Practitioner and Policymaker

After analysing the data, #CovidUnder19 young people collectively reflected on their vision for an ideal practitioner and policymaker.

They discussed what would be needed at the head, heart, ears, and hands, to ensure meaningful child participation.

Ears

- Listen to the good things; discard the bad things
- Kind, not dismissive
- Patient and a lot of care

Head

- Children as meaningful and equal partners
- Ability to simplify information for kids to understand (images, etc)
- Delicate but professional
- Be mindful and supportive of children in all you do

Hands

- Work in grassroots level
- Don’t force contact
- Active listening is an important skill to listen to someone and to be able to question necessary things afterwards or to give good advice
- Good with everyone; don’t harm anyone; use their hand well
- Multilingual or inclusive of many languages
- Full rights by feeling loved by everyone around them; makes me feel more happy
- Take action in the local community around them and have satisfaction in doing so
- Ensuring children understand questions of surveys

Heart

- Kind heart
- Passionate about their job, practical but understanding
- Be able to say you’re in a safe space
- Empathy

Recommendations: Children Asked, and Adults Said:

Adult Respondent Recommendations

Key data-informed best practices and recommendations identified in the adult responses, analysed by young people, across the eight-week COVID 4P Log Project, are presented.

Active Listening and Respect for Children

- Position the child's vision with integrity, listen to the child's story, keeping in mind the protection of the child's image.
- Speak to children independently to gather their views.
- Create safe and private spaces to facilitate children's sharing of their concerns.
- 'Be there' for children, be their 'constant', to nurture trust and encourage sharing.
- Ask children directly and do not assume that as adults we know what they want.

Advocacy

- Identify and mitigate structural and cultural barriers to child participation such as digital and informational exclusion, and movement restrictions, through lobbying and the creative use of technology and community resources.
- Include children in various forms of press freedom.
- Create more children's awareness and participation in order to recognise their presence and their right to be heard.
- Uplift children's rights and ensure that they are not violated. Advocate for them and make sure that every decision taken is in the best interest of the child.
- Leverage the increased public awareness of children's rights during COVID-19 to continue to engage stakeholders in child rights-focused discourse and policy action.

Everyday Activities

- Ask and involve children in planning activities for them.
- Families and communities should work together to facilitate safe ways for children to interact with one another. It should be recognized that the COVID-19 virus is still prevalent.
- Ensure that children can actively participate in daily activities and let them speak on their own about matters affecting them during the period of pandemic.
- Engage all children, including those from impoverished and remote communities.
- Consult all stakeholders, especially the children, before developing a plan.
- Allow children to be part and parcel of decision-making on matters concerning COVID-19 prevention. Ensure children actively participate in daily activities and let them speak on their own about matters affecting them.
- Recognise and nurture children's creativity.
- Empower children's voices and capabilities by involving them in peer-led educational, recreational and advocacy activities.
- Where possible, involve children in intergenerational youth work with adults.

Recommendations: Children Reflected and Said:

Strengthening the Dialogue between Children and Adults

Adult COVID 4P Log respondents remained somewhat hesitant to discuss the issue of children's participation in decision making that impacts them. When the COVID 4P Log sought to query whether children's views were sought out more broadly in policy and practice during the COVID-19 pandemic, 12 out of 14 Week 7 respondents did not answer this question. Only 2 said 'Yes'.

When the #CovidUnder19 Over19 researchers attempted to probe more about children's experience in policymaking, #CovidUnder19 Under19 researchers shared that they had little-to-no experience to draw from. But they were ready. Children and young people emphasised that when given space to participate in a dialogue and when provided adequate guidance, they were ready to provide input and feedback, and engage with adults in decision making. They emphasised the need to invite children into this "unfamiliar territory", while also encouraging adult allies and peer mentors to provide them with appropriate guidance and support.

As adult practitioners and policymakers, key questions to ask are:

- How are we providing space for children to participate in dialogues about issues that affect them?
- In what ways are we listening to children and taking into account their views?
- In what ways are we supporting children to engage meaningfully in policy and decision-making spaces?

COVID-19 has revealed some significant gaps, but these also present an exciting challenge. We have an opportunity to have more meaningful policy making processes through engaging children in decision making. Opportunities for dialogue need to be created. Children are ready.

RECOMMENDATIONS: STRENGTHENING THE DIALOGUE BETWEEN CHILDREN AND ADULTS

Top Ten Recommendations from #CovidUnder19 Young People

(based on their analysis of the COVID 4P Log data)

1. Be open-minded and understanding of different ideas and opinions of the children
2. Apply a gender neutral image, approach, language
3. Include children as meaningful partners
4. Use as many languages as possible to access disadvantaged children and young people
5. Educate children on their rights so that they can participate in decision-making
6. Educate adults as well about children's rights
7. Consult children on decisions concerning their wellbeing
8. Take an inclusive and global approach in terms of child participation
9. Let children speak on their own about matters affecting them on large platforms rather than having adults report on their behalf
10. Include children in different forms of press freedom

Data Analysis Methodology

Our Project Approach

Working from a collaborative, child rights and strength-based approach, a participatory approach rooted in art and play was used to meaningfully engage #CovidUnder19 Peer Researchers and Peer Mentors in developing research questions, data analysis, report writing, and knowledge exchange. While engaging children and young people in participatory research processes has become popular in social research, their role in analysis is often limited. Often, there can be a tendency to "either exclude youth from actual analysis or involve them in ways that are more tokenistic than rigorous" (Liebenberg, Jamal, & Ikeda, 2020, p.2). #CovidUnder19 young people worked in partnership with #CovidUnder19 Over19 researchers as experts with skills, insights, and capacity to actively contribute to analysis. We value involving young people in rigorous data analysis to better ensure findings are more accurate reflections of realities and are more likely to result in actions that can actually benefit young people and the communities around the world. Engagement also supports opportunities for children and young people to be well placed to advocate for resources, policy change, and their rights.

The Steps we Took

Children involved with the #CovidUnder19 project helped to develop questions for adults to answer in the COVID 4P Log app, inspired by the Life Under Coronavirus survey. The adult responses to these questions were then analysed by the COVID 4P Log research team and by U19s, in order to contribute to learning and understanding about children's experiences of the pandemic, and about children's views of adults' experiences.

Together, the COVID 4P Log Research team and #CovidUnder19 Peer Researchers and Peer Mentors co-developed a child-friendly explainer to promote peer-to-peer recruitment of new U19 participants.

Our next step was to hold data analysis sessions with the new co-hort of #CovidUnder19 Peer Researchers and Peer Mentors.

We coordinated five 1.5 hour long sessions with the #CovidUnder19 cohort (mentors and mentees) on data analysis of the COVID 4P Log responses pertinent to child and young people participation. #CovidUnder19 peer mentors, who had already been trained on and engaged in analysis of previous data, were able to co-lead in facilitating training of new young people mentees. Once the new mentees were trained, all #CovidUnder19 researchers worked in collaboration in the rigorous coding and theming process. The sessions focused on (i) introduction to the data and exploring themes; (ii) ideas for the report (summaries and themes); (iii) report review and feedback. The young people also had the opportunity to contribute to writing sections, sharing quotes, and co-designing this report and other upcoming child-friendly dissemination materials. Their active contribution took place both in and outside of the scheduled meetings. For example, one #CovidUnder19 researcher took responsibility for compiling his peers' ideas to write the welcome letter to this report. Fore more information about the feedback loop process, see page 22.

We Drew from the #CovidUnder19 Approach

Our individual and collective experiences as practitioners and researchers support the wealth of evidence documenting the common barriers, and solutions, to children and young people's meaningful engagement in participatory research and consultations. We recognize that the international, remote-working and digital nature of this form of participation may present both logistical as well as socio-emotional barriers for children, young people, and adults. We therefore built on the lessons learned and wise practises from engaging with the #CovidUnder19 young people in participatory data analysis and other meetings, and navigated digital participation barriers by providing multiple opportunities for input from young people, including written, oral, and other, as well as being cognizant that participation for some participants may look different at various points in the process. Further, safeguarding and protection strategies were used to support young people and adults' safety throughout our sessions.

A Note of Caution

While the COVID 4P Log generated useful insights into the respondents' work in relation to children and families, the findings should be interpreted with caution due to a number of factors.

- The numbers of respondents are modest, so the findings may not be representative of the experiences and challenges faced in those countries or sectors.
- The findings reported here have been produced by the #CovidUnder19 young people and the COVID 4P Log research team and, due to the anonymised format of the smartphone app survey, the findings cannot be shared with the provider and policymaker respondents for commentary or review.
- The COVID 4P Log findings are derived from a short-form survey and lack context. Respondents' engagement with the survey varied, which may have affected the completeness of the data.
- We are aware some COVID 4P Log respondents had difficulties with engaging with the app due to workload pressures and technical issues, which might have affected their response rates.

About this Report

This Learning Report has been produced by the Institute for Inspiring Children's Futures at the University of Strathclyde, Scotland, UK. **Inspiring Children's Futures**, with its many partners, has a strong track record of multi-level, multi-sector global engagement, policy development and practice improvement.

This Learning Report is part of a series of reports on the findings of the COVID 4P Log smartphone app survey. Together, the reports from this series form the second of a three-part 'Inspiring Children's Futures in Light of COVID-19' programme.

This programme is gathering evidence on protecting children's wellbeing in past epidemics; informing better policies and practices throughout the COVID-19 pandemic; and influencing change in the long shadow that COVID-19 will cast over the recovery phases ahead.

With our partners, we are strengthening global, national and local approaches to ensure that we are collectively delivering on the Justice for Children, Justice for All SDG 16+ Call to Action to "respond to children's distinct needs, and realise their full range of rights and opportunities, to achieve peaceful, just and inclusive societies for all". [5]

[5] https://www.justice.sdg16.plus/justiceforchildren

Appendix

COVID 4P Log Questions about Child Participation

Relevant questions from other weeks:

- What have you, your team, or your organisation done well, in your support of children's wellbeing during COVID19?
- What would you, your team, or your organisation have done differently, if anything? [to support children's wellbeing during COVID19]
- Please describe the positive collaborations you have seen happening [between national and local government, NGOs, other institutions, and communities during the pandemic]; or those not happening but required.
- Please describe these changed practices [in child protection services during COVID19], and how these have helped children and their families.
- What was the outcome [of your biggest challenge to supporting children during the pandemic]?
- What actions across your sector would have resulted in better outcome(s) for children?
- [what has gone well] What contributed to this?
- What has been helpful in preventing the potential negative effect of social isolation on children's wellbeing?

Week 7 questions:

- Thank you for your commitment! Our Week 7 focus is on children's participation; that is, a child's right to express their views freely and have their views given due weight when decisions are made that affect them. Participation is an essential ingredient for understanding the impact of COVID19 on children's wellbeing. This week's questions are informed by the findings from the #COVIDUnder19 global study of the views of children about life under COVID19. While questions throughout the project have been informed by children's concerns, these questions in particular were developed with children directly, who are keen to hear from you. These children will also advise our research team on the analysis of your answers. Let's get started! Today's question asks: During COVID19, have children's views been sought about policy or practice decisions that affect their lives? [Y/ N/ Don't know/ Not applicable]
- Please tell us more, with an example of how this was done, if you answered 'yes'. If you answered 'no', what were the key barriers that got in the way of seeking children's views? [Open]
- In your example, does the child know the outcome of that decision, and/ or the ways that their views were considered? [Y/ N/ Don't know/ Not applicable]
- Please tell us more about this. [Open]
- Ongoing formal partnerships and spaces of exchange between children and adult decision-makers can be important mechanisms to find wise and collaborative solutions. Are there such partnerships in your field? [Y/ N/ Don't know/ Not applicable]
- If yes, please tell us how these partnerships have informed any COVID19-related decisions. [Open]
- Some policy decisions to address the COVID19 crisis have made life better for children, but some have made life more difficult. Please share information about any processes or mechanisms that capture how COVID-related policies are impacting on children, either positively or negatively? How were children's views taken into account?[Open]
- Are there formally organised processes for children to address any concerns or grievances they might have about COVID19 decisions or policies? [Y/ N/ Don't know/ Not applicable]
- Please tell us more about these processes. Please include an example of how these processes have been used by children, if you can. [Open]
- What challenges have you faced in upholding children's right to education? For example, we know that not all children have been able to attend school or to participate in online classes at home. [Open]
- What support, if any, has been provided to children who, because of COVID19, have not been able to access their education either in person or online? [Open]
- Please give us an example of how children's views were sought in relation to decisions about their education. [Open]
- Please tell us the ways in which these views influenced the decision, if any. [Open]
- Some children with online access have been spending more time online during COVID19. And some children have had more negative experiences online than before COVID19. Have you been concerned about children's experiences online during COVID19? [Y/ N/ Don't know/ Not applicable]
- "If yes, please tell us what has concerned you the most: [Select]

  1. Cyberbullying
  2. Harassment
  3. Hate Speech
  4. Inappropriate Content
  5. Unwanted Contact
  6. Other"

- If other, please describe your concerns. [Open]
- Please tell us what planning, innovations and/ or progress are underway to improve children's experiences online during COVID19. [Open]
- Many children are missing seeing their friends and extended family, and the play and leisure activities they enjoyed before COVID19. Please tell us how the importance of children's friendships and their right to play have been considered in policy and practice decisions during COVID19? [Open]
- Please tell us about any ways that children's friendships and their right to play could be more effectively prioritised in COVID19 responses? [Open]
- Assessing in advance the impact of policy decisions on children, and on their rights, can help anticipate issues, identify creative alternatives, and improve law and policy-making. Has an assessment of the impact on children's rights been undertaken, which has informed a policy decision related to COVID19? [Y/ N/ Don't know/ Not applicable]
- Please tell us more about this, and give us an example if you can. [Open]

Authors:
Sophie Shields, Jennifer Davidson and Dimitar Karadzhov at the **Institute for Inspiring Children's Futures**.

Laura Lee and Laura H.V. Wright, at the **International Institute for Child Rights and Development**.

Kristen Hope-Burchill, Carolina Machado, Ojaswi Niyogi, Prathit Singh, and the #CovidUnder19 Child Advisory Group, at the **#CovidUnder19 initiative**.

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