



LEADING MINDS

20 ONLINE 20

Yearbook



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Introduction

Leading Minds Online, like many good things, was born out of necessity. After a successful inaugural Leading Minds Conference at UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti in Florence, Italy in November 2019, the office's convening team began 2020 gearing up for the second annual conference. The COVID pandemic that began in late 2019 put a stop to that. Although we harboured hopes in early 2020 that a face-to-face conference might still take place later in the year, the rapid spread of the virus across the world and the strict lockdown measures imposed in Italy and elsewhere from March 2020 soon clarified that no such gathering would take place.

So we took our convening online, convinced that the philosophy that underpinned the Leading Minds convening in 2019 - to bring experts from all walks of life – young people, academics, practitioners, policymakers, businesses, the media, civil society and UNICEF's own expert staff – around the current and next-generation challenges and opportunities for children could be just as relevant online as it is in person. Hence Leading Minds Online was born on 6 May 2020, with our first webcast series focused on experts' opinions on the implications of COVID-19 on children's lives and futures.

Our series was wide-ranging. We began by looking at how at that moment in time, children and young people in high and middle-income countries were faring as their world began to go online. We ended ten webcasts later looking at how Africa, the youngest continent and one with the least access to essential services and the Internet, was coping with the COVID pandemic. In between, our experts examined pressing issues for children and young people in the COVID era such as domestic violence, financial support, learning, hand hygiene, economics, health, climate change and the infodemic and misinformation.

Each webcast benefited from an eclectic panel of Leading Minds from all continents. We are truly grateful to the 50 plus inaugural Leading Minds alumni for their insights and time taken to discuss these topics and their implications for children.

They say it takes a village to raise a child. And it took an online village to raise Leading Minds Online (LMO). Those who did so most directly can be seen at the conclusion of the report, and their contributions have all been invaluable. But there were many others who contributed in complementary roles that were also precious both within UNICEF and outside, to which the LMO team expresses its gratitude. This yearbook summarizes their contributions to each of the webcasts and highlights the recommendations of each virtual event.

As a new year unfolds, the COVID pandemic remains with us. LMO will continue to follow up on its evolving impact on children's lives across the world. The platform will also address other issues pertinent to the present and future of children and seek to engage and incorporate their voices ever more strongly.

Thank you for supporting us in 2020. We look forward to continuing with you, our viewers, on this journey in 2021.

The Leading Minds Online team at UNICEF Innocenti.

What the Experts Say: COVID-19 and Children Online

The COVID-19 pandemic and the mobility restrictions imposed across the world have resulted in an unprecedented reliance on information and communications technology. Children's ability to access digital technology has significantly determined whether they can continue their education, seek information, enjoy online entertainment, and stay in touch with family and friends. Conversely, those without quality digital access are increasingly at a disadvantage, particularly in low-income countries and remote and marginalized communities with limited online access. The world is beginning to realize the enormous benefits of digital access and its potential for realizing the rights of children. At the same time, there remain concerns about online safety for children, the quality of information and platforms they can access, and health risks associated with prolonged time online.

Leading Minds Online convenes an expert panel to discuss how the pandemic has influenced children's engagement online and what can be done to bridge the digital divide.

Meet the panel experts



Vikram Patel, Professor of Global Health, Harvard Medical School, USA

Vikram co-founded the Centre for Global Mental Health at London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. He has worked on mental disorders, community interventions, and child health.



Patrick Burton, Executive Director, Center for Justice and Crime Prevention, South Africa

Patrick has extensive experience in child and youth victimisation, school violence, youth resilience, and how young people navigate their online safety.



Mizuko Ito, Director, Connected Learning Lab, University of California, USA

Mizuko is a cultural anthropologist specializing in learning and new media, particularly among young people in Japan and the US.



Nighat Dad, Executive Director Digital Rights Foundation, Pakistan

Nighat is a lawyer and a human rights advocate. She was named a 2015 TIME Next Generation Leader for helping women in Pakistan fight online harassment.



Daniel Kardefelt-Winther, Digital Research Specialist, UNICEF Innocenti, Italy

Daniel leads research on Children and Digital Technologies and brings experience in cross-national comparative evidence-generation projects.

Webcast Summary: Coronavirus and Children Online

COVID-19 has led to children communicating, learning and playing online more than ever. While this offers many benefits, there are concerns about their exposure to risks, mental health, the quality of their online schooling and the digital divide. Leading Minds Online explores the opportunities and risks that have emerged from this seismic shift in how millions of children live their lives.

Bridging the Digital Divide

Access to and use of ICT is uneven among children and teachers, with their digital divide resulting from the same inequities prevalent in the offline world: poverty; lack of access to adequate infrastructure; discriminatory gender norms; and marginalization of the most vulnerable.

Listen to the 'COVID Generation'

Children and young people have known for years what many adults are only now realizing: the internet is a great space for learning and social interaction in a new and vibrant way. Yet their voices are largely absent from the digital debate. Our experts agree that this must change.

From Gaming to Learning

Children's activities online can be conducive to learning, even things they do 'for fun'. They are mainly motivated by the online world's blend of learning, socializing & play, which are conducive to learning and skills development.



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1.5 billion children are in lock-down, 60% of whom are online.

While children are currently less affected by the virus itself, they are greatly affected by its secondary effects, like recession, limited or no schooling, and rising violence.

As children live more of their lives online, we must consider ways to protect them, their data, and their privacy, while taking advantage of opportunities for play, friendship, & learning.

Lockdowns reinforce the essentiality of equitable access to the internet.

Young people are inheriting a world with many challenges, and are demanding to be part of the solution, including in the online debate. They want a healthy internet that respects their privacy, keeps them safe, and allows them to be included and respected.



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What the Experts Say: COVID-19 and Violence in the Home

Reports of a 'perfect storm' are brewing for millions of children and women around the world, who are staying indoors. COVID-19 has unleashed a wave of international concern about increasing violence within the home. Across the globe, countries are expanding helplines and online support platforms as media reporting on family violence worldwide rises. The UN Secretary General has called for an urgent domestic violence 'ceasefire' and 146 governments have signed a pledge reaffirming their support to survivors as part of their COVID-19 response. This is not new, but the pandemic has unveiled what has been hidden in plain sight – the high levels of violence that children and women experience in the very place of refuge from this novel coronavirus: the home.

Leading Minds Online explores why some measures taken to contain the 2019 coronavirus could magnify the risk factors for violence against children and women. What can be done to prevent this violence and support survivors now and post-COVID-19?

Meet the panel experts



Alessandra Guedes, Manager, Gender and Development, UNICEF, Italy

Alessandra leads research on gender equity within child protection, focusing on linkages between violence against children and violence against women.



Shanaaz Mathews, Director, Children's Institute, University of Cape Town, South Africa

Shanaaz has led national studies on intimate femicide; psychosocial needs post child sexual assault; and child victims of domestic violence.



Dipak Naker, Co-Founder and Co-Director, Raising Voices, Uganda

Dipak has designed an award-winning campaign and developed a method for preventing school violence rolling out in 1,000 Ugandan schools.



Cornelius Williams, Associate Director and Global Chief of Child Protection, UNICEF, New York

Cornelius is a child rights advocate with over 25 years of experience in child protection programming in humanitarian settings on the African continent.



Najat M'jid, SRSG on Violence Against Children, Morocco

Najat is a pediatrician devoted to children's rights. She previously served as UN SR on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography.



Emily Esplen, Adviser, Ending Violence Against Women and Girls, DFID, UK

Emily advises the UK Department for International Development and Deputy and is Head of the Violence Against Women and Girls team.

Webcast Summary: Coronavirus and Violence in the Home

Measures to contain COVID-19 can create a 'perfect storm' for children and women who are at risk of violence in the home, potentially increasing the incidence of harm and abuse. Leading Minds Online looks at violence in the home before, during, and after the pandemic, and how it can be addressed.

Violence in the home is not a new problem

Lockdowns do not cause violence - violence in the home existed long before COVID-19. But the risks are now heightened. If the unequal power relations between adults and children, women and men, that are at the root of violence are left unchecked, violence is likely to persist.

Structural solutions to structural problems

Structural conditions, such as gender inequality and weak legal sanctions, enable violence in the home. To address violence, we must transform the structures which create it in the first place. Prevention and response services must be spread across multiple sectors, including schools, community initiatives and health services.

Access to essential services for survivors

Services to respond to violence survivors (including child protection, helplines and shelters) should be considered essential and receive adequate funding and support both during and after the pandemic.



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Violence against children and violence against women intersect and feed each other.

Available administrative data represent only the tip of the iceberg of violence in the home, as many victims of violence do not seek help.

Children who witness violence are far more likely to be involved in violence later in life, either as perpetrators or as victims.

Teachers, social workers, and health workers play an essential role in the detection and prevention of violence, and need support during COVID-19, e.g. personal protective equipment, financial assistance, online tools.

Violence is a learned behaviour that can be unlearned. Change is possible with sound policies and interventions.



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What the Experts Say: COVID-19 and Support for Families

Warnings from a new analysis by UNICEF and Save the Children show the economic fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic could push up to 86 million more children into household poverty by the end of 2020 - an increase of 15 per cent. Getting the right social protection initiatives in place has never mattered as much as it does today. Studies show that the total number of children living below the national poverty line in low- and middle-income countries could reach 672 million by year-end. Nearly two-thirds of these children live in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. Countries across Europe and Central Asia could see the most significant increase, up to 44 per cent across the region. Latin America and the Caribbean could see a 22 per cent increase.

Looking at how stimulus packages measure up, Leading Minds Online asked panelists:

- In the rush to protect lives from the virus, who is protecting livelihoods, and how?
- What does history tell us about previous global emergencies and fiscal crises?
- Is the future of social protection under threat as we hurtle towards economic crisis?

Meet the panel experts



Natalia Winder-Rossi, Associate Director, Social Policy, UNICEF, New York

Natalia has served in a number of UNICEF social protection functions. She previously worked at the IADB on social protection in Latin America.



Dominic Richardson, Chief, Social and Economic Policy, UNICEF Innocenti, Italy

Dominic oversees research on cash transfer and cash plus programmes, multiple overlapping deprivation analysis, and family and child well-being.



Ulrika Lång, Senior Policy Advisor, SIDA, Sweden

Ulrika advises on institutional development and social security in the Africa Department at the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency.



Gordana Matković, Executive Director, Center for Social Policy, Serbia

Gordana leads the Center for Social Policy and has consulted for the World Bank, UNDP, UNICEF and other national and international organizations.



Ugo Gentilini, Global Lead, Social Assistance, World Bank, USA

Ugo is a senior economist at the World Bank. He is passionate about social protection with emphasis on urbanization, disaster risk, fragile states and food security.



Joan Nyanyuki, Executive Director of the African Child Forum, Ethiopia

Joan has built a reputation as a gender justice champion. She has held leadership roles for Amnesty International and the Coalition on Violence Against Women.

Webcast Summary: Coronavirus and Support for Families

The socioeconomic fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic means that an additional **86 million children** may fall into poverty in 2020. Leading Minds Online asks how social protection can help to prevent this and secure a brighter future for every child.

Avoid doing harm in the rush to save lives

Livelihoods have been severely impacted by COVID-19 containment measures. Children are suffering from losses of family income and related impacts, including increases in violence and limited learning opportunities. Measures to address pandemics and economic crises must be adapted to the specific needs of children.

Put investments in children at the top of the agenda

Amid the global economic crisis, lower remittances and other financial inflows, including funding from donors, countries must prioritize investments in children and ensure that these are adequately funded.

Social protection is an investment for the future

Developing human capital through investing in children is a global public good that the world cannot afford to ignore. Social protection not only supports this, but it also promotes social cohesion, closes equity gaps, and secures the well-being of future generations. What's more, it has an economic benefit: **for every \$1 spent on cash transfers, up to \$2.52 is added to local economies.**



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\$1: the average amount per person that low-income countries spend on social protection.

Fiscal stimulus is notably less effective than social protection to protect families and children during crises.

Only **2%** of sub-Saharan Africa's population is covered by COVID-19 cash transfers.

'Building back better' requires going further than short-term support; it also requires investment in sustainable social protection systems.

Political will and commitment to social protection is essential but often lacking.

Faced with financial constraints, governments must make better use of available funds, including addressing issues such as corruption and waste.

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What the Experts Say: COVID-19 and Remote Learning

For months, the majority of the world's schoolchildren – some 1.6 billion at the peak of the pandemic – have been out of school, leaving parents, teachers and children grappling with remote learning during the pandemic. Never has the gap between children who have access to technology and learning tools and those who do not been more glaring. In 71 countries, less than half the population has access to the internet. In sub-Saharan Africa, this ratio is less than one quarter. Despite this disparity, most countries are using remote learning solutions to deliver some form of education for students at home.

Even before lockdowns, the world already faced a learning crisis, with more than 50 per cent of children in low- and middle-income countries unable to read by the age of 10, and the learning poverty rate reaching 93 per cent in the worst performing contexts. How can schools better address learning poverty in the COVID-19 era? Leading Minds Online asks how the pandemic and school closures are deepening the learning crisis.

Meet the panel experts



Henrietta H. Fore, Executive Director, UNICEF, New York

Henrietta has championed economic development, education, disaster relief, and health in the public, private and non-profit sectors for over four decades.



Mariya Gabriel, European Commissioner, Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth, Bulgaria

Mariya was previously a Member of the European Parliament and Vice-President of the European People's Party. She is now VP of EPP Women.



Julia Gillard, Board Chair, Global Partnership for Education, Australia

Julia joined the Global Partnership for Education as Chair of the Board of Directors in 2014, and is former Prime Minister of Australia.



Robert Jenkins, Chief, Education and Associate Director, UNICEF, New York

Robert brings over 20 years of experience in international development and humanitarian programming in Africa, Asia and the Middle East.



David Sengh, Minister of Basic and Senior Secondary Education, Sierra Leone

David leads education efforts and serves as Chief Innovation Officer for the nation's Directorate of Science, Technology, and Innovation.



Jaime Saavedra Chanduvi, Global Director, Education, World Bank, USA

Jaime previously served as Minister of Education in Peru. He has led pivotal work in the areas of poverty and inequality and the economics of education.



Mathieu Brossard, Chief, Education, UNICEF Innocenti, Italy

Matt joined first UNICEF as Senior Advisor in the Education Section. He previously served at the World Bank as Senior Education Economist.

Webcast Summary: Coronavirus and Remote Learning

While some semblance of normality slowly begins to return in Europe and elsewhere following lockdowns, schools remain closed in many countries despite [evidence](#) showing that children are not primary drivers of the virus. Leading Minds Online asks how schools can become safer and better at addressing learning poverty when they reopen.

Technology must complement teachers for learning

The pandemic has shown both the enduring value of teachers and the potential of technology to assist in remote learning. Going forward, blending high- and low-tech solutions will be critical to support effective learning for children and young people.

Focus on those most vulnerable to reach everyone

Learning loss will be greatest for marginalized children – including girls and migrant children. We must take the opportunities of remote learning solutions and the return to school to focus on these children, and to make learning sensitive to gender, discrimination, and poverty.

Resilient schools go beyond learning

To build back better, we must provide a full range of support to children that leverages the unique role of school - as a place of shelter, safety, nutrition, play, and growth as well as learning. This means not only mitigating risk for the return to school, but also better measuring and monitoring learning, sharing what works, and teaching at the right level and pace.



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The [twin shocks](#) of school closures and economic recession have huge impacts on the education experience. The longer they go on, the greater the impact on economic prosperity.

Governments and partners are using a range of mediums to support remote learning, including the Internet, TV, radio, and paper-based learning packs.

Learning goes beyond the school walls and requires stronger, more effective education systems.

Equitable education requires investments in connectivity, [safe digital learning](#), upskilling educators, and [support for teachers and parents](#).

Education is not only a human right, but also an economic investment. We must invest today to protect our future and prosperity tomorrow.

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What the Experts Say: COVID-19 and Hand Hygiene

The humble habit of handwashing is key to addressing the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. Yet 40 per cent of the world's population still do not have a place to wash their hands with soap and water. In the 60 countries with the least access, 2 out of 3 people – 1 billion in total – lack basic facilities at home. Early in the pandemic, handwashing was heavily promoted. But as more countries ease lockdown restrictions, populations move around, and children go back to school and out to play, the risk of slipping out of good practices rises, even in countries with ample access to quality hygiene facilities.

There is an urgent need to expand access, promote use, and explore innovative solutions to enable hand hygiene where clean water remains in short supply. This is among the greatest challenges in global public health. But it also represents an opportunity to revolutionize hygiene in homes and classrooms, markets and mosques, bars and buses. Leading Minds Online asks a panel of experts what history has taught us and what actions are urgently required to change the future of hand health in the COVID-19 era.

Meet the panel experts



Parameswaran Iyer, Secretary, Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation, India

Param leads the Swachh Bharat Mission and the National Rural Drinking Water Program. He previously served as Manager for Water at the World Bank.



Naoko Yamamoto, Assistant Director-General, WHO, Japan

Naoko most recently led Universal Health Coverage at the World Health Organization. She brings nearly 30 years of experience in health leadership.



Erin McCusker, Global Head of SATO Tap, LIXIL, USA

Erin works to provide innovative and accessible solutions to basic sanitation for all and is Chairwoman of the public-private Toilet Board Coalition.



Robert Dreibelbis, Associate Professor, London School of Hygiene Tropical Medicine, UK

Robert guides various studies on the determinants of water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and develops and evaluates behaviour change interventions.



Kelly-Ann Naylor, Associate Director, WASH, UNICEF, New York

Kelly-Ann has decades of experience in water, sanitation, and hygiene, in Central Africa, South Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean and North America.



Sachin Tendulkar, Regional Ambassador for UNICEF South Asia, India

Sachin is former professional cricketer. He has directed his celebrity in service of sanitation campaigns as a UNICEF Ambassador for South Asia.

Webcast Summary: Coronavirus and Hand Hygiene

Hand hygiene is a simple and effective way to stop the spread of COVID-19, yet only 60% of the world's population have a place to wash their hands. With the pandemic showing no signs of abating, Leading Minds Online explores why it is imperative to keep handwashing going – and to create a golden opportunity to promote behavior change and push through effective policy measures now.

Leadership on every level

Political commitment and investment from the top down to the village level is essential to supporting hygiene during a pandemic and beyond. Being 'vocal about local' can help even the smallest communities make an impact. Developing standard operating procedures that can be scaled and localized is essential from the highest to local levels.

Moving past fear-based motivation

Long-term, sustainable, system-wide solutions to promote clean public spaces, running water, and soap will require large-scale behavior change, education, and investment on local and national levels. We must not lose this opportunity and the current momentum to build better infrastructure and cultural changes promoting hygiene in the home and public spaces.

Looking at supply and demand

COVID-19 has created a rise in demand for hand hygiene, but we must meet that demand with the right supply of soap, water and handwashing stations especially in the effort to close gaps in large-scale social inequalities.

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40% of the world's population still do not have a place to wash their hands.

In least-developed contexts, three-quarters of people lack basic handwashing facilities at home.

Two-thirds of women but only one-third of men wash their hands after using the toilet. Data show that younger men tend to be bigger risk-takers taught not to fear germs, whereas women tend to have been socialized as caretakers with a duty of keeping the family healthy. Promoting hygiene education and behavioural change can improve this.

Hand hygiene is a human rights issue but also an issue of how we handle waste. We need solutions for not only hygiene but for sanitation and the environment.

Children have the potential to play a huge role in promoting handwashing and hygiene on a family and community level.



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What the Experts Say: COVID-19 and Economic Impact

While children and young people have been spared the full force of the 2019 coronavirus itself, the worst is yet to come for this generation as the global economy enters uncharted territory. Latest projections from UNICEF and partners indicate that nearly half a billion children will live in poor households by the end of 2020. Lockdowns to control the pandemic are having severe repercussions as they cascade down, with children being twice as likely to end up in poverty than other groups and prospects for young people drastically reduced.

In Europe and North America alone, some 90 million full-time jobs were lost in the second quarter, according to the ILO. The COVID-19 global recession not only threatens to erode global development but is predicted to have a broader and deeper impact than the 2008 financial crisis as it hits both supply and demand chains as well as informal sectors across the world.

But does it have to be as bad as it seems? Leading Minds Online asks a panel of experts where the global economy stands now, what lies ahead and how do we make the best of the worst that is to come for children and young people.

Meet the panel experts



Jayati Ghosh, Professor, University of Massachusetts at Amherst, USA

Jayati has consulted for ILO, UNDP, UNCTAD, UN-DESA, UNRISD, and UN Women. She is a Professor of Economics at the University of Massachusetts.



Sacha Nauta, Public Policy Editor, The Economist, Netherlands

Sacha writes about societal change, particularly how issues around gender and diversity are reshaping business, finance, and economics.



Dominic Richardson, Chief, Social and Economic Policy, UNICEF Innocenti, Italy

Dominic leads UNICEF research on cash transfers and cash plus programmes, multiple overlapping deprivation analysis, and family and child well-being.



Ian Goldin, Professor, Oxford University, UK

Ian is the founding Director of the Oxford Martin School. Formerly, he was Vice President of the World Bank and an adviser to Nelson Mandela.



Joel Kibazo, Africa analyst, formerly of FTI and ADB, UK

Joel was Managing Director-Africa at FTI Consulting; Director of External Relations and Communications at the African Development Bank, and Director of Communications and Public Affairs at the Commonwealth Secretariat.

Webcast Summary: Coronavirus and Economic Impact

While children and young people have been spared the full force of coronavirus itself, the worst is yet to come for this generation as the global economy enters uncharted territory. Leading Minds Online asks how can we protect children from the effects of the economic downturn?

This is a crisis like no other

The economic impacts of the COVID pandemic are only just beginning to be felt, but we can [learn from previous crises](#) and recognise that austerity does not work. Instead, we should focus on balancing economic stimulus and supporting children and their families directly. A long adjustment period for children lies ahead, many of whom have no safety net to fall back on.

Trust in institutions

Countries that are coping better are taking rules and international advice seriously. To respond to this crisis, we must listen to the experts. This includes advice on managing money - we cannot overspend too quickly, 'tighten belts' too quickly, or reduce development assistance when low-income countries need the support most.

Future-proof childhood

We cannot afford to make the same mistakes made in previous crises like the 2008 financial crash. We must increase spending and strengthen interventions for children of all ages. Many responses so far have been insufficient to meet a crisis of this magnitude.



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1.2 billion children are now living in some form of poverty.

In Europe and North America, 90 million full-time jobs were lost from March to June.

This pandemic has shown the significance of the care economy, but countries are not recognising or rewarding care work, which falls disproportionately on women.

Women's jobs are being lost at a higher rate than men's, with the service sector and care economy significantly exposed to financial shocks.

Recovery in terms of annual growth will likely be V-shaped, but GDP per capita may take up to a decade to recover.

For the youngest children, opening pre-schooling is critical. Young children cannot remote learn as well as older children and their care needs will prevent some parents working from home or returning to work.



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What the Experts Say: COVID-19 and Child Health

In the early months of the COVID pandemic it appeared that children were less directly affected by the virus than other age groups. However, emerging data suggest children and young people's health may be more directly impacted by COVID-19 than originally anticipated and severe cases of the pandemic have been reported among children.

And if COVID has been kinder in health terms, it has also pushed children into the shadows – they are barred from play, from school and more critically, barred from health clinics with routine health services grind to a halt. Measures to address COVID-19 have sometimes crowded out other vital health interventions for children, such as vaccines or maternal and newborn care, threatening to undermine progress on child health and survival.

Leading Minds Online asks a panel of experts to discuss how the COVID pandemic is affecting children's health, and what the future might hold as the pandemic rages on.

Meet the panel experts



Heidi Larson, Professor, Risk and Decision Science, LSHTM, UK

Heidi heads the Vaccine Confidence Project. She previously served on the GAVI Advocacy Task Force and WHO SAGE Working Group on vaccine hesitancy.



Raji Tajudeen, Head, Division of Public Health Institutes and Research, Africa CDC, Ethiopia

Raji is a pediatrician who works to strengthen the National Public Health Institutes across the 55 African Union Member States.



Luwei Pearson, Associate Director and Chief of Health Programme, UNICEF, New York

Luwei is a maternal and newborn health specialist who has devoted two decades to supporting the health of women and children around the world.



David Nabarro, Special Envoy of WHO Director-General on COVID-19, Switzerland

David has served in numerous senior roles in the World Health Organisation, leading work on health crises, food security and nutrition, and climate change.

Webcast Summary: Coronavirus and Child Health

While the prevalence of COVID-19 is not as high among children, their caseload is rising. More young people are becoming infected, but little is known about the impact of COVID-19 on their health.

Even with a vaccine, COVID-19 may be here to stay

The pandemic is showing no signs of abating. Containing the virus will take an array of actions, including mass vaccine rollout, increased testing, preventive measures, and healthcare investment.

Collecting and sharing disaggregated data essential

Initial modelling exercises have proven quite different from real time data monitoring. Collaboration and coordination across borders on responses and information sharing are key to better understanding the pandemic's evolution. Quality disaggregated data is imperative to successful public health responses.

Rapid, reliable testing is crucial to contain the virus

To contain the virus, we need to know who is infected. The emergence of rapid, reliable, and non-invasive tests are a game changer to keep institutions and the economy open.

Keep health services open, no matter what

Lessons about Ebola in West Africa highlight the need to keep routine health services open, including immunization and maternity services, even as case numbers rise.

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This is just the beginning. COVID-19 may be this decade's HIV. If so, we will have to live with its impacts for a long time. This will have a huge effect on children in almost all dimensions of their lives – health, education, protection, and participation.

In the USA, more than 10% of cases are among children compared to just 2% in April.

Children can have a significant role in COVID transmission, as found in a new study from India.

Confusing messages on COVID and its impact create space for misunderstanding and mistrust. Trust must be built and rebuilt through evidence-based health messages and effective services.

Collective action and political will are urgently needed to put vulnerable people, including children and women, at the centre of our health response.

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[UNICEF-IRC.ORG/COVID19](https://www.unicef-irc.org/covid19)

What the Experts Say: COVID-19 and the Climate Crisis

The year 2020 has seen the world in the grip of an unprecedented crisis as the COVID pandemic spread to every continent and country, wreaking death and havoc. In the midst of this maelstrom, however, another potentially even deadlier and more disruptive threat – climate change – continues to percolate. Although from March to May, greenhouse gases fell by an astonishing 17 per cent, largely due to subdued economic activity related to the pandemic, this respite is likely to be short lived – the right result, for the wrong reasons. Meanwhile, progress towards the 2015 Paris Agreement remains woefully inadequate across the world, and the prospect of averting a disastrous rise in the global climate is rapidly diminishing as the point of no return draws nearer. If 2019 was the year when climate change made a big splash on the global stage, 2020 has seen its star clouded by the pandemic.

Leading Minds Online asks a panel of experts to discuss how the COVID pandemic has affected global and national efforts to address climate change, and how children – who have contributed the least to climate change but who will suffer its effect hardest and longest – can potentially make the biggest difference to changing the game.

Meet the panel experts



Anthony Nyong, Director, Climate Change and Green Growth, AfDB, Côte d'Ivoire

Anthony has 30 years of experience in environmental and natural resource management, social safeguards, renewable energy, and green growth.



Beth Doherty, Climate activist, Ireland

Beth is a co-founder of School Strikes for Climate Ireland and member of Fridays for Future. She has written on the failure of the Irish government to meet climate goals.



Gautam Narasimhan, Senior Adviser, Climate, Energy and Environment; UNICEF, New York

Gautam is an environmental engineer in the fields of water treatment, air pollution control, waste management and scalable energy solutions. He leads UNICEF's work on climate, energy and environment.



Vandana Shiva, Environmental activist and scholar, India

Vandana is a scholar, environmental activist, and food sovereignty advocate. She has written more than twenty books and is a figure of the anti-globalization movement.

Webcast Summary: Coronavirus and the Climate Crisis

From March to May, the world stood still. The impossible seemed possible: greenhouse gasses fell by 17%. The right result but for the wrong reasons. Has COVID-19 changed climate change? Can children - who have left the least damage on the planet - now make the biggest difference? Leading Minds Online investigates.

COVID stimulus plans must include greening plans

In response to COVID-19, world leaders mobilized over \$10 trillion to support economies and provide safety nets. This shows us that the political will – and crucially funds – can be secured to address global issues, such as climate change. COVID stimulus plans can and must include structural changes to reduce greenhouse gases and invest in greening options. As yet, this opportunity is [not being fully grasped](#).

COVID is an opportunity to tackle inequalities and intersecting crises

COVID-19 has shone a light on the impacts of the climate crisis and the need for climate action. Both the pandemic and the climate crisis converge and interact with each other, impacting on child health, therefore the solutions must converge.

Sustainable development and responding to COVID are not mutually exclusive

The same systems that created the climate crisis are deepening the inequalities caused by the COVID crisis. We must learn from the pandemic to better understand where inequalities come from and how they can be reduced.

[WATCH THE RECORDING: YOUTUBE.COM/UNICEFINNOCENTI](https://www.youtube.com/UNICEFINNOCENTI) 

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Young people are very concerned about climate change. The point of no return is not far off and they will bear its effects longest and hardest.

The climate crisis is no less urgent than the pandemic and it will likely affect children in the long-term more than COVID-19.

The COVID response fund is borrowed from children's future. We owe it to them to ensure this is serving their needs and the longer-term effects of climate change.

To address the climate crisis, systemic changes are needed in food production, energy generation, transport patterns, and personal choices.

When someone studies 2020 in history class in the future, will they see that we did what is necessary to preserve our future?

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What the Experts Say: COVID-19, the Infodemic and Fake News

This golden age of innovation, with a flourishing of new technologies and online platforms, has created extraordinary opportunities for children and young people to enrich their knowledge and information, their social networks, and their solidarity and civic activism like never before. But those same technologies are used, abused and misused to promote fake messages and harm – leading to hate speech, racism, and hostility. Consequences are often dangerous to democracies, mental health and children and young people.

The infodemic that has spread at the same rate as the COVID-19 pandemic has brought this into sharp relief. Leading Minds Online asks panel experts why the infodemic and fake news has exploded in 2020 when evidence and facts matter more than ever as the world struggles to fight a global pandemic.

And how can children and young people develop the ability to decipher disinformation and misinformation?

Meet the panel experts



Maria Ressa, Chief Executive Officer, Rappler, Philippines

Maria has led the fight for press freedom for nearly 35 years. She has received the prestigious Golden Pen of Freedom Award, among other distinctions.



Guy Berger, Director of Freedom of Expression, UNESCO, France

Guy is responsible for UNESCO's global work on press freedom, safety of journalists, internet freedom, media pluralism and independence, gender and media, media and information literacy, and journalism education.



Angus Thomson, Senior Social Scientist, Demand for Immunization, UNICEF, Switzerland

Angus provides technical guidance in vaccination acceptance and uptake, behavioral insights, and digital engagement, and supports UNICEF stewardship of the Inter-agency Hub for Vaccination Acceptance and Demand (the Hub).



Claire Wardle, Strategic Direction and Research, First Draft, USA

Claire works is the U.S. Director of First Draft working improve the quality of information online and was previously Research Director at the Tow Center for Digital Journalism at Columbia Journalism School.

Summary Report: Coronavirus, the Infodemic and Fake News

New technologies have created extraordinary opportunities for children and young people to enrich their knowledge. But those same technologies are used to promote misinformation and disinformation. Addressing the pandemic requires accurate and scientific information available to all. With children and young people increasingly online, Leading Minds Online looks at ways to support them distinguish fact from fiction.

There is no silver bullet to tackling misinformation

There is no quick fix to navigating this digital dilemma, and it will take all stakeholders, including governments, tech companies, parents, schools, communities, the media, and young people. Regulating the supply side of information is essential but must be complemented by building resilience among young end-users.

Children are a key part of the solution

Protecting and supporting children's rights to seek, receive, and share accurate information is critical, including teaching them how to discern and respond to misinformation. As digital natives, young people can also serve as teachers for older generations who are often less familiar with new ways of communicating.

Inoculation against misinformation

Innovations in education improve our ability to decipher facts from fiction. But we can go a step further by creating a generalized immunity to misinformation, fostering critical thinking among children and young people.

[WATCH THE RECORDING: YOUTUBE.COM/UNICEFINNOCENTI](https://www.youtube.com/UNICEFINNOCENTI) 

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Exercising the freedoms to seek, receive, and share information is fundamental to children's development as autonomous and ethical members of society.

A [new study by UNESCO](#) looks at how to balance freedom of expression on the one hand and combat misinformation on the other, and argues that these are complementary and not dichotomous.

People who push misinformation often use visuals because they are immediate and easy to understand and so spread more quickly. Those combatting misinformation should use these tools more.

Social media addiction is a phenomenon of everyday life for many. We should use emotions and visuals to counteract this.

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[UNICEF-IRC.ORG/COVID19](https://www.unicef-irc.org/covid19)

What the Experts Say: COVID-19 with a Focus on Sub-saharan Africa

Feared to be the worst hit by COVID-19 due to weak health infrastructure in many countries, Africa is instead receiving praise for waging an effective campaign against the pandemic. The youngest continent on earth, with the average age just 18 years old, sub-Saharan Africa has experienced only a fraction of the death toll elsewhere in the world.

While Africa may be winning the numbers game, it has come at a massive cost and the real losses are only just being counted. Among them are 250 million more children out of school, a first-ever recorded economic recession for the continent. Added to the climate crisis that is making vast swathes of the continent unlivable, a perfect storm is looming. With aid budgets shrinking in donor countries, can Africa benefit from African solutions and investments to continue to build its human capital and reap the long-awaited 'demographic dividend'?

Leading Minds Online asks our panelists if youth leadership today will bring a brighter tomorrow on poverty, climate action, and governance and we explore some out-of-the-box approaches for the region to avoid financial ruin.

Meet the panel experts



Ndoni Mcunu, Climate scientist, CEO, Black Women in Science, South Africa

Ndoni founded Black Women in Science and was selected as a Mandela Washington Fellow 2017 for her work in civic leadership development.



Mohamed Fall, Regional Director for Eastern and Southern Africa, UNICEF, Kenya

Mohamed is responsible for leadership to 21 country offices and for UNICEF representation with governments, donors, civil society and the private sector.



Eugenie Kodogo, PhD Candidate, China-Africa relations, Scuola Normale Superiore, Italy

Eugenie researches China's investments in Sub-Saharan Africa with a focus on how the domestic political context of host nations shapes the nature and trajectory of Sino-African investment relations.



Elhadj As Sy, former Secretary-General of IFRC & Red Crescent, Senegal

Elhadj is a humanitarian aid expert and former Secretary-General of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC).

Webcast Summary: Coronavirus and sub-Saharan Africa

Africa was expected to be the worst hit, but instead it is waging an effective campaign against the pandemic. The youngest continent on earth, with the average age just 18 years old, sub-Saharan Africa has experienced only a fraction of the death toll elsewhere in the world. But this has come at a massive cost to children and young people.

Solidarity is essential for progress against the pandemic

COVID-19 is a reminder that no one is safe until we all are safe. International solidarity and sharing as an investment in future resources can consequently leverage the most innovative and transformative ways to move forward.

Investing in human capital is key

Key solutions lie in the quality of human capital. Young people are a lever for change but Africa's young population – its potential demographic dividend that can lead the continent into prosperity and stability – remains a neglected asset. Adopting out-of-the-box solutions can help, including cash transfers; debt relief; and measures to support learning and job creation.

Youth leadership to break cycle of panic and neglect

Young Africans have lost faith in the older generation leading to a breakdown of leadership and an erosion of trust between governments and citizens. Youth are crying out for accountable leaders who deliver on promises, invest where it matters most (like education and protection), and create an environment of peace and stability.

[WATCH THE RECORDING: YOUTUBE.COM/UNICEFINNOCENTI](https://www.youtube.com/UNICEFINNOCENTI) 



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The COVID-19 pandemic is an opportunity to narrow those gaps that existed in Africa and elsewhere before the crisis.

A shock does not have to become a crisis. Early action, preparedness, and regular investment will sustain progress in Africa.

The game changer will be to stop talking about Africa as the continent to be saved. Young Africans need to be central to solutions.

Local solutions that incorporate green jobs that benefit the worst off will trigger more active engagement on climate action on the African continent.

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Thank you

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