



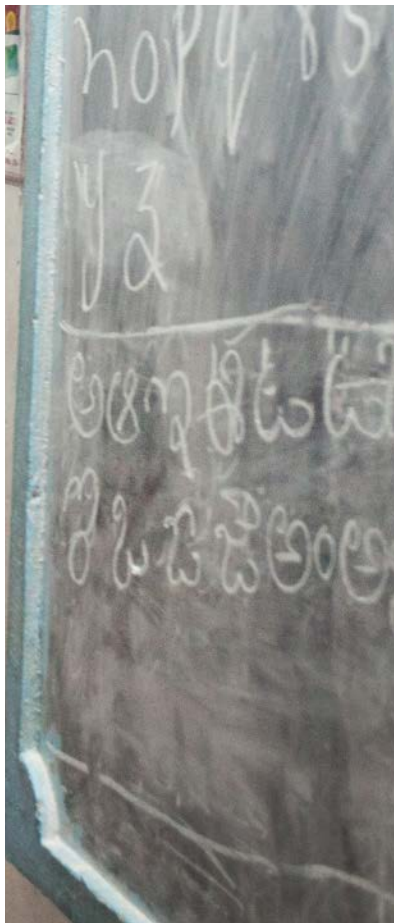
IMPACT OF THE PANDEMIC ON CHILDREN





CHILDREN'S CARE INTERNATIONAL HAS BEEN FIGHTING CHILD EXPLOITATION WORLDWIDE FOR THE PAST 20 YEARS.

aipe-cci.org



BACKGROUND

Since March 11, 2020, several measures have been put in place around the world to stop the spread of the SARS-Cov-2 virus (COVID-19). The impact of these measures varies enormously from one country to another, from one community to another, and even from one age group to another. Children have not been spared; they are also affected by these health measures.

Children's Care International (CCI) has been fighting child exploitation worldwide for the past 20 years. With the help of its dedicated partners, it is actively involved in a variety of projects aimed at protecting children's rights and improving their living conditions. At the same time, CCI works locally to raise awareness and educate Canadians about the rights of children around the world.



IMPACT

OF HEALTH MEASURES ON CHILDREN

Health measures put in place since the beginning of the pandemic have transformed the living environments and daily lives of children and their families around the world. This unprecedented situation is likely to have an impact on their health, development, safety and well-being. However, although the virus has hit all continents and virtually all countries, it has impacted the world's populations disproportionately. Moreover, it must be noted that social inequalities have been amplified by the crisis. While its impact is common to all children in the world, those in disadvantaged countries generally face greater challenges.

«ACCORDING TO UNICEF, 139 MILLION CHILDREN WORLDWIDE HAVE LIVED UNDER NATIONAL LOCKDOWN CONDITIONS FOR AT LEAST 9 MONTHS SINCE COVID-19 WAS PRONOUNCED A PANDEMIC ON MARCH 11, 2020¹.»

1-In French only: UNICEF. COVID-19: La santé mentale et le bien-être des enfants en danger. (Children's health and their well-being are in danger due to COVID-19) March 4, 2021: < <https://www.unicef.fr/article/covid-19-la-sante-mentale-et-le-bien-etre-des-enfants-en-danger> >

IMPACT

ON YOUNG PEOPLE'S PHYSICAL HEALTH

In general, young people are hardly affected by the virus itself. However, they are very likely to face its collateral impacts:

- The closing of schools is disrupting children's routines—their increasingly sedentary daily life leads to physical health problems.
- The physical health of mothers and children is facing serious problems due to reduced access to essential reproductive, maternal, neonatal and child health care. The lack of trained staff during childbirth can cause significant problems and creates a lack of access to certain treatments, such as treatment for pneumonia.
- According to a UNICEF study of 140 countries, more than a third of them have experienced a decline in their provision of health care to children.



**ONE-THIRD OF
THE COUNTRIES
STUDIED BY UNICEF
REGISTERED A
DECREASE OF AT
LEAST 10% IN THEIR
PROVISION OF HEALTH
CARE TO CHILDREN².**



IN 2020, SIX TO SEVEN MILLION CHILDREN COULD BE ADDED TO THE NUMBER OF THOSE UNDER 5 SUFFERING FROM WASTING OR ACUTE MALNUTRITION, AN INCREASE OF 14%³.

CHILDREN LIVING IN EXTREME POVERTY OFTEN DO NOT HAVE ACCESS TO CLEAN WATER OR EDUCATION, LET ALONE HEALTH CARE OR HEALTHY EATING.

IN 135 COUNTRIES, A 40% DECREASE IN NUTRITION SERVICES HAS BEEN OBSERVED IN WOMEN AND CHILDREN⁴.

³-In French only: Alice Chantal Tchandem Kamgang, OMS : enfants et adolescents, des sacrifiés de la COVID-19 dans le monde?, 19 novembre 2020, Radio canada international. (WHO: Have the world's children and adolescents become its COVID-19 casualties?) <<https://www.rcinet.ca/fr/2020/11/19/oms-enfants-et-adolescents-des-sacrifies-de-la-covid-19-dans-le-monde/>>

⁴-Alice Chantal Tchandem Kamgang. Idem

IMPACT

ON THE PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALTH OF CHILDREN



The health crisis has had serious effects on the psychological health of children:

- Decrease in social workers' home visits, which are essential for child development, particularly in disadvantaged areas.
- Increased stress on children due to disturbances in their living environment and daily life, which also affects their cognitive development and triggers longer-term mental health illnesses.
- Difficulty socializing, concentrating and being motivated to continue their education.
- Reduced social contact due to closure of child care, schools, playgrounds, libraries and community organizations.
- Increased social isolation.
- Side effects of wearing a mask: headaches, difficulty concentrating, discomfort, learning difficulties and drowsiness/fatigue⁵.

IMPACT

ON CHILDREN'S EDUCATION

Their academic path has also been shaken:

- Interest in reading, writing and mathematics has decreased⁶.
- Dropout rates, particularly in poorer countries, have increased.
- Learning inequalities, particularly among the most vulnerable children, have worsened.
- Disadvantaged families have experienced difficulties in accessing technological equipment and the Internet for distance learning.
- Delays in education have increased.
- Children with disabilities or special needs have found it difficult to adapt to distance learning.

In any event, the sporadic closures of schools are a setback for some considering all the progress made in recent years to make education accessible to all. In some African countries, schools had to close again in December 2020 to try to stem the second wave of the coronavirus.



**«AROUND 214 MILLION CHILDREN WORLDWIDE
– 1 IN 7 – HAVE MISSED MORE THAN THREE-
QUARTERS OF THEIR IN-PERSON SCHOOLING
COURSES⁷.»**



**IN BANGLADESH, MYANMAR
AND INDIA, INTERNET POWER
WAS CUT OFF EARLY IN THE
PANDEMIC. HENCE ONLINE
EDUCATION AND TRAINING HAVE
BECOME VERY DIFFICULT, IF NOT
IMPOSSIBLE, IN SOME AREAS.**

**346 MILLION YOUNG PEOPLE
DO NOT HAVE ACCESS TO THE
INTERNET TO CONTINUE THEIR
EDUCATION THROUGH DISTANCE
LEARNING⁸.**

**IN 2019, 83% OF EUROPEAN
HOUSEHOLDS HAD ACCESS TO
THE INTERNET COMPARED TO
LESS THAN 28% IN AFRICA⁹.**

7-UNICEF: COVID-19: Schools for more than 168 million children globally have been completely closed for almost a full year, says UNICEF March 2, 2021: <<https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/schools-more-168-million-children-globally-have-been-completely-closed>>

8-In French only: UNICEF: COVID-19: La santé mentale et le bien-être des enfants en danger. (Children's health and their well-being are in danger due to COVID-19) March 4, 2021: <<https://www.unicef.org/fr/coronavirus/proteger-les-enfants-les-plus-vulnerables-des-effets-de-la-maladie-a-coronavirus-covid-19>>

9-French only: UN News. Internet : 4,1 milliards de personnes en ligne mais recul de l'utilisation par les femmes dans les pays pauvres (Internet: 4.1 billion people online but decrease of women's use in poor countries).United Nations. November 6, 2019: <<https://news.un.org/fr/story/2019/11/1055481>>

IMPACT

ON THE SAFETY AND EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN

Despite financial support provided by some governments, families in precarious situations are struggling to provide for themselves. More families have been affected, and this has had a disastrous effect on children.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), in the first six months of 2020 alone, the pandemic has thrown an additional 150 million children into poverty, an increase of 15% over the previous year.

For many children, school provides a safety net, as well as food, health and stimulation services. Many impacts on their safety due to the pandemic can be noticed :

- Cases of online sexual exploitation increase once schools are closed.
- Witnessing or being a victim of violence, abuse or negligence because of confinement becomes much more likely.
- When schools are closed, there are less available resources through which violence can be reported¹⁰.
- Girls run a greater risk of having to face gender-related violence as well as early and/or forced marriages¹¹.
- The number of children in dangerous employment or forced to join armed groups in conflict-affected countries is increased.

FOUR MILLION GIRLS THROUGHOUT THE WORLD ARE AT RISK OF AN EARLY MARRIAGE IN THE NEXT TWO YEARS¹².

SINCE THE CRISIS BEGAN, 64% OF SOUTH ASIAN CHILDREN HAVE HAD TO ENDURE SEVERE VIOLENCE DONE UNTO THEM¹³.



10- UNICEF. 150 million additional children plunged into poverty due to COVID-19, UNICEF, Save the Children say. September 17, 2020.<<https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/150-million-additional-children-plunged-poverty-due-covid-19-unicef-save-children>>

11-UNICEF. Idem

12-Batha, Emma. Coronavirus puts four million girls at risk of child marriage. Reuters. May 14, 2020: <<https://www.reuters.com/places/africa/article/us-health-coronavirus-childmarriage-trfn/coronavirus-puts-four-million-girls-at-risk-of-child-marriage-idUSKBN22Q3P6>>

13-Myers, Lindsey. "Remembering the Missing Children in Times of a Pandemic". Children's Care International. May 27, 2020:<<https://www.aipe-cci.org/en/rememering-the-missing-children-in-times-of-a-pandemic/>>



DEFENDING CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

Children's rights are being significantly eroded in the current context. Education and awareness are therefore even more important in order to counter the effects of the pandemic and health measures mandated as a result. Both locally and globally, individuals and communities can take concrete actions that will have a positive impact on the protection of at-risk children.



«IF WE DON'T ACT NOW, THIS HEALTH
CRISIS RISKS BECOMING A CHILD RIGHTS
CRISIS¹⁴.»

ON A LOCAL SCALE

- Listen to the needs and concerns of those around you.
- Offer a listening-ear and support to children who are experiencing a lot of change and uncertainty at this particular time.
- Encourage children to stay in school; their place is in school, not at work.

RESOURCES AVAILABLE IN THE PROVINCE OF QUEBEC

Kids Help Phone:
1 800 668-6868
kidscanaday.ca
(throughout Canada)

Tel-Jeunes:
1 800 263-2266
teljeunes.com
(for kids)

Ligne Parents:
1 800 361-5085
ligneparents.com
(for parents)

ON A GLOBAL SCALE

- Buy local to support local businesses and reduce the financial impact of the crisis on these businesses.
- Consume fair trade products.
- [Read our capsule](#) on fair trade to learn more about its impact on children's rights.



THROUGH EDUCATION AND AWARENESS

Raising the awareness of those around us allows us to reflect, collectively, on the real issues we are currently facing. Among other things, gender inequalities are exacerbated by the pandemic, both locally and internationally. Several studies have shown that the pandemic affects women and men unequally. More jobs have been lost among women, in addition to the increased risk of early marriage and girl labor as discussed above. The gains made in recent years are at risk. It is therefore essential that we act to protect these rights and continue the struggle.

WHY CHOOSE FAIR TRADE?

This type of commerce promotes fair wages and decent working conditions



It guarantees that the product is not produced by child exploitation



This way, parents can safely provide for their families, and children are protected from exploitation



CONCLUSION

Given that the magnitude of the impact on children is already being felt, and as social inequalities are being exacerbated, the crisis calls for greater solidarity between countries, both North and South.

According to UNICEF, in the lead-up to the COVID-19 pandemic, the year 2020 already ranked as a record year for the number of people in need of humanitarian assistance. This global health crisis will increase the vulnerability of children in countries affected by crises of all kinds. The full impact on vulnerable populations will not be known for months, if not years. This is why everyone's commitment and solidarity is more important than ever.

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Québec