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

Inspiring Children's Futures

Children's Social and Emotional Wellbeing During COVID-19: Providers' and Policymakers' Perspectives on Outcomes, Responses and Prevention

The International **COVID 4P Log Project**

Inspiring children's Futures

LEARNING SERIES | 7 SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

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About the COVID 4P Log Project

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 compounded not only by COVID-19, but also by government responses.

With roughly a third of the global population estimated to be under age 18, children[1] account for a huge proportion of our population. Successful delivery of the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals (henceforth 'SDGs'), which relate to all ages, heavily relies on our ability to effectively and robustly respond to the distinct needs and rights of children. Even prior to COVID-19, our global task to achieve these global goals by 2030 seemed daunting. In the light of COVID-19, achieving the SDGs is even more challenging.

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, innovative and, in some cases, unprecedented 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 on these policies and practices across different cultures and contexts, in 22 countries and five continents.

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.

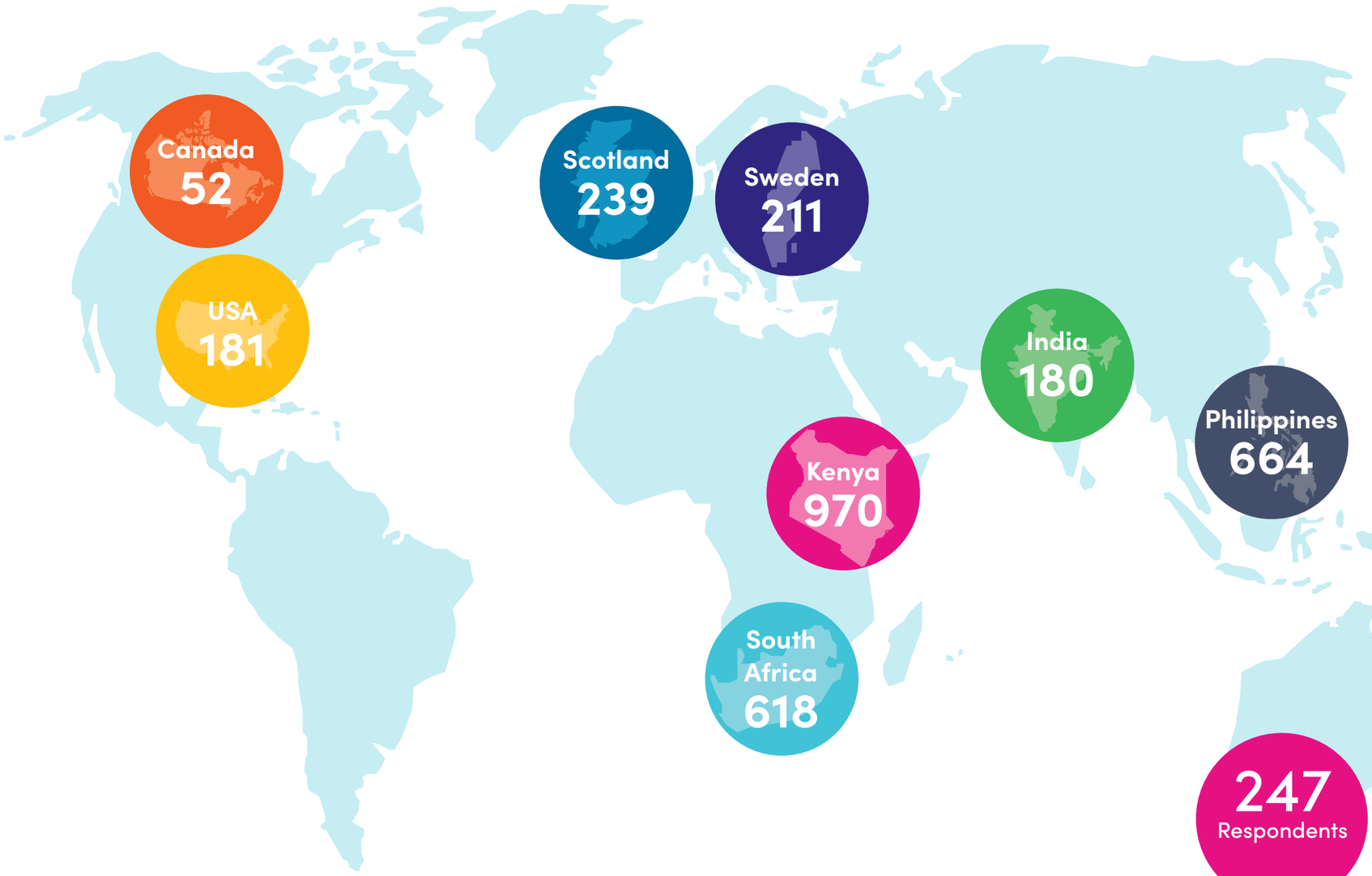
Respondents and Countries Represented in the Eight-Week COVID 4P Log Project

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

Report Summary

This brief report presents the findings from the fifth research theme of the COVID 4P Log Project: 'Prevention: Children's social and emotional wellbeing'. In week 5 of the survey, respondents were posed a series of questions about the impact of the pandemic on children's social and emotional wellbeing; about the extent to which those aspects had been adequately prioritised in responses to the pandemic; as well as about the role of social support and digital technologies in mitigating the adverse consequences of social isolation among children.

The data presented here were collected in the last quarter of 2020.

This report aims to generate new insights, and spark new questions and ideas, to inform, equip and strengthen policy, service and practices for and with children and their families. This report is part of a series of Learning Reports documenting the COVID 4P Log App findings from responses across the eight weeks of questions. This COVID 4P Log Learning Report Series aims to inform and equip those who seek 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'. [2]

2. Davidson, J.; Elsley, S.; Giraldi, M.; Goudie, A.; Hope, K.; Lyth, A.; Van Keirsbilck, B. (June 2019): Justice for Children, Justice for All: The Challenge to Achieve SDG16+ Call to Action. Glasgow: CELCIS - Inspiring Children's Futures, University of Strathclyde. https://www.justice.sdg16.plus/justiceforchildren

Key Messages: Promoting Children's Socio-Emotional Wellbeing During COVID-19

Concerns about Children's Social and Emotional Wellbeing During the Pandemic

Most respondents shared they had become increasingly concerned about children's social and emotional wellbeing during COVID-19, and that it had been given insufficient priority.

'Tangible needs often take precedence over socio-emotional needs. [...]'

Policymaker, Government, India

'These are very critical dimensions of children wellbeing which needs a long term intervention and consistency presence and touch, this is simple because emotions especially are not seen but identified through behaviour. There is a lack of integrated approach/ or collaborative approach in assisting children with these needs [...]'

Service Manager, NGO, South Africa

Respondents shared that the COVID-19 pandemic had negatively impacted children's ability to socialise - resulting in loneliness and isolation; coping skills and psychosocial wellbeing; nutrition; and parent-child relationships. Children with pre-existing mental health conditions and those from economically disadvantaged families were particularly vulnerable to those adverse outcomes.

'Some youth that already struggle with depression and anger and behaviors related to that, are impacted even more negatively because of their inability to have face to face visits with friends and extracurricular group activities'

Service Manager, Government, USA

Wellbeing Initiatives During COVID-19 Amidst Structural Barriers

Despite some positive responses such as awareness-raising and mental health and psychosocial support programmes launched online and in the community, resources were often insufficient to meet the ever-increasing demand for socio-emotional wellbeing support.

'We have collaborated with groups of psychologists and educators to develop information materials helping people to recognize that psychological and mental health are important, and disseminated numbers where people and children can call for advice, and we got some support from a telecommunications company to provide load so that the psychologists can call those requesting counseling. In addition, webinars have been organized by local community organizations to provide expert advice on how to deal better with stress and avoid depression and excessive anxiety'

Policymaker, NGO, Philippines

'I and a team are doing a lot of community sensitization on child rights and educating parents on positive parenting'

Direct Service Provider, NGO, Kenya

'More children and parents are very stressed. There are not enough resources being put into this. There are some NGO efforts to address this but the needs are bigger than what you can put together'

Policymaker, NGO, Philippines

The Need for a Collective, Coordinated and Holistic Response

Respondents highlighted the importance of supporting caregivers' and children's resilience by mobilising child and youth care workers collaborating across sectors, as well as by increasing the availability of educational and social activities in a variety of mediums and formats. Crucial to the success of those wellbeing promotion initiatives are government's responsiveness, adequate relief, financial and human resource support, and collective, multi-stakeholder efforts.

'The outpouring of efforts by individuals, companies and NGO to provide support for children and communities during the pandemic has helped to make our people more resilient. This has also pushed government to become more responsive to the needs of the people'

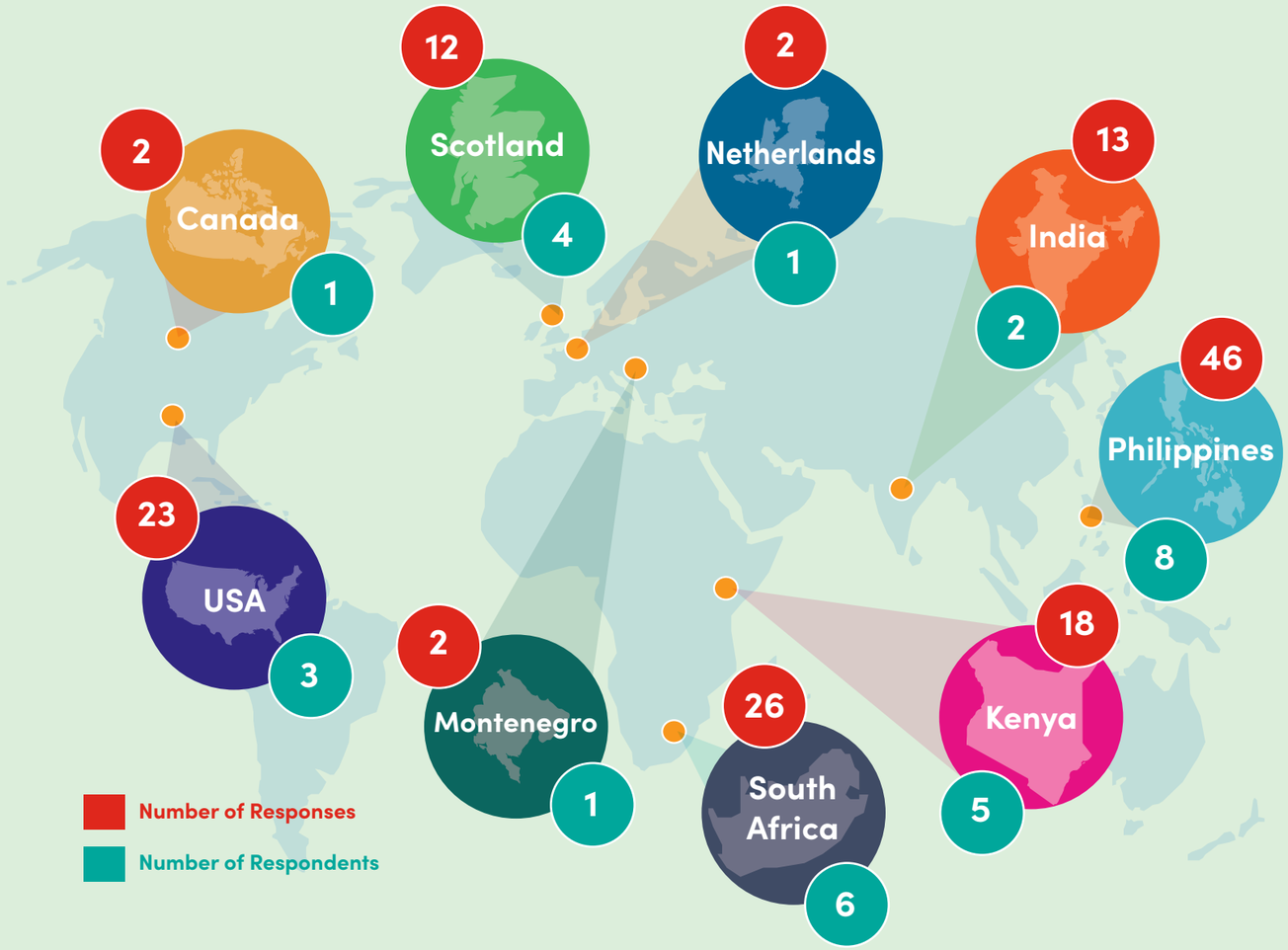
Policymaker, NGO, Philippines

'People seem to have stepped up and offered of themselves in different ways.'

Direct Service Provider, NGO, South Africa

Respondents and Countries Represented in this Report

144 responses from 31 respondents across 9 countries and 4 continents



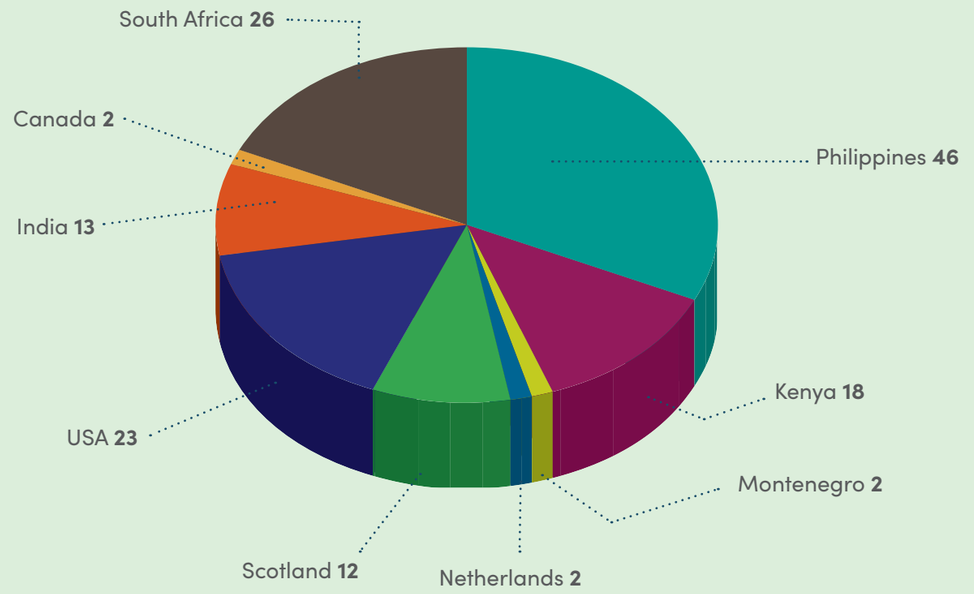
The findings in this Learning Report are based on 144 responses from 31 respondents - including 14 direct service providers, 11 service managers and 6 policymakers (22 women; 8 men; 1 - prefer not to say).

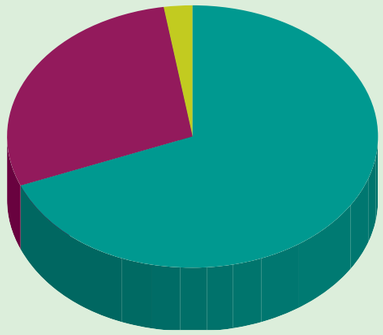
20 (65%) represented NGOs; 5 (16%) - civil society organisations; 2 (6%) - the government; 1 (3%) - the private sector; 2 (6%) - other; 1 (3%) - unknown.

The respondents represented 9 countries:

Canada, India, Kenya, Montenegro, the Netherlands, the Philippines, Scotland, South Africa and the USA.

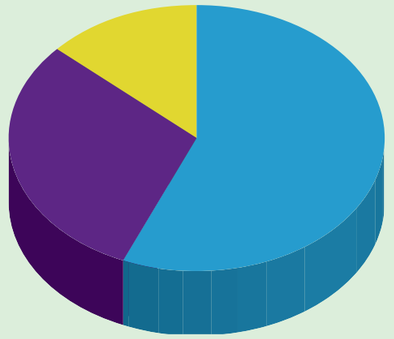
Number of Responses





Respondents by Gender

Women	22
Men	8
Prefer not to say	1



Respondents by Role

Direct Service Providers	14
Service Managers	11
Policymakers	6

In-Depth Findings:

Children's Social and Emotional Wellbeing During COVID-19: Outcomes, Responses and Prevention

Serious concerns about children's social and emotional wellbeing during COVID-19, among many other concerns, were raised by Key Partners through our consultations with them. Their views reinforced the position of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (a body of experts who monitor national implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child) who issued a statement [3] expressing concern about the situation of children globally due to the impact of COVID-19, particularly those in situations of vulnerability. The Committee called for any restrictions to be "necessary, proportionate and kept to an absolute minimum", and explicitly included mental health support, social engagement and caution in use of digital technologies, in its call for alternative solutions to enable children to maintain access to basic service provision, and professional mental health services for their protection. Also, many Key Partners' pre-pandemic reports [4] had previously called for the implementation of cross-cutting wellbeing strategies that strengthen children's emotional and social wellbeing. Feedback from several Key Partners formed the basis of the questions throughout this Learning Report.

The following sections offer an overview of how respondents most commonly answered those questions.

[3] OHCHR (June 2020). Compilation of statements by human rights treaty bodies in the context of COVID-19.

[4] OECD (2019)

QUESTION	NUMBER OF RESPONSES
Have you become more concerned for the social and emotional wellbeing of the children in your care, beyond your pre-COVID19 concerns?	14
If so, which domain(s) of children's well-being are you concerned have been/ may be negatively impacted by the COVID19 pandemic in your country in a serious way? Select all that apply.	15
If none of the above, please specify.	6
Please tell us more about this.	6
If you have concerns about children's social and emotional wellbeing, are these concerns being attended to, by you or wider systems of care, education, and/or support?	12
Please tell us more.	13
To what extent would you say that children's social and emotional wellbeing has been prioritised, in the COVID-19 response, as compared to meeting basic needs?	12
What has been the impact of this on children? Please tell us more.	11
What has helped to support children and families' resilience in the midst of the social and emotional challenges posed by the pandemic?	6

Children's Wellbeing and Resilience

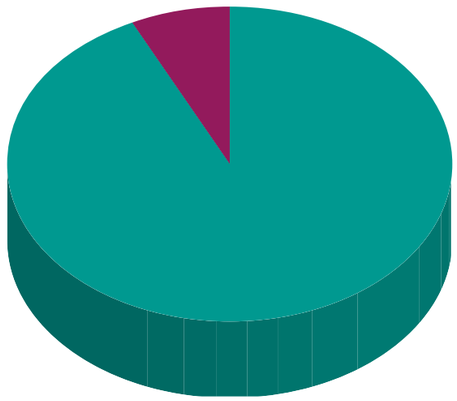
A series of survey questions directly enquired about children's socio-emotional wellbeing and resilience, as well as about the extent to which those had been prioritised during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Concerns about Children's Social and Emotional Wellbeing During the Pandemic

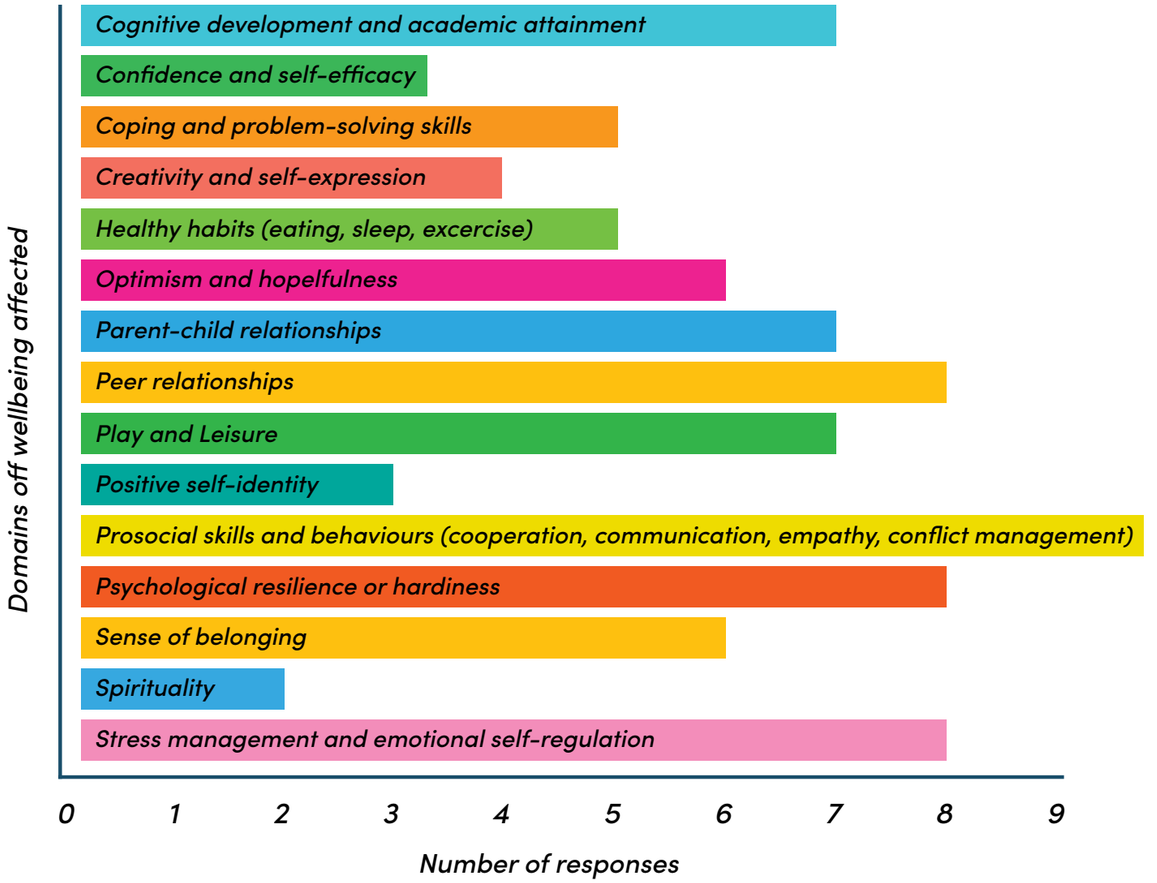
Almost all (13 out of 14) respondents shared they had become more concerned for the social and emotional wellbeing of the children in their care, beyond their pre-COVID19 concerns.

Have you become more concerned for the social and emotional wellbeing of the children in your care, beyond your pre-COVID19 concerns?

Yes	13
Not Applicable	1



Which domain(s) of children's wellbeing are you concerned have been/may be negatively impacted by the COVID19 pandemic in your country in a serious way? Select all that apply.



Respondents stated a wide range of domains of children's wellbeing had been negatively affected during the pandemic – including academic attainment, problem-solving skills and stress management, peer relationships, resilience and play and leisure.

> *'The problem lies in the disjointed and incoherence of policies and systems in place. The government is only slowly recognizing how to operationalize the concept of whole-government approach to health and education which is key to truly delivering for children's well-being and legal rights.'*
>
> Service Manager, Civil Society Organisation, Philippines

In the follow-up free-text questions, respondents also mentioned children's inability to socialise; loneliness and isolation; affected coping skills and psychosocial wellbeing; affected nutrition; and affected parent-child relationships:

'Because of the pandemic, children were not allowed to go out to the communities. Children were not able socialized and develop their well being.'

Direct Service Provider, Civil Society Organisation, Philippines

'The lack of peer social interaction impacts all of the areas noted above and probably more of them to be honest.'

Service Manager, Government, USA

'Most parents work far away from home in order to provide for their families and children. So with the Corona pandemic and lock down regulations placed by the president most parents were far away from their children hence parent and child relationships were affected by it.'

Direct Service Provider, NGO, South Africa

'Families that have been impacted by COVID-19 Infection pandemic have been found to be more likely than others to be self isolating and in turn the children of that family are deprived of their normal routines and are at their loneliest so all of the above would have a negative impact on them'

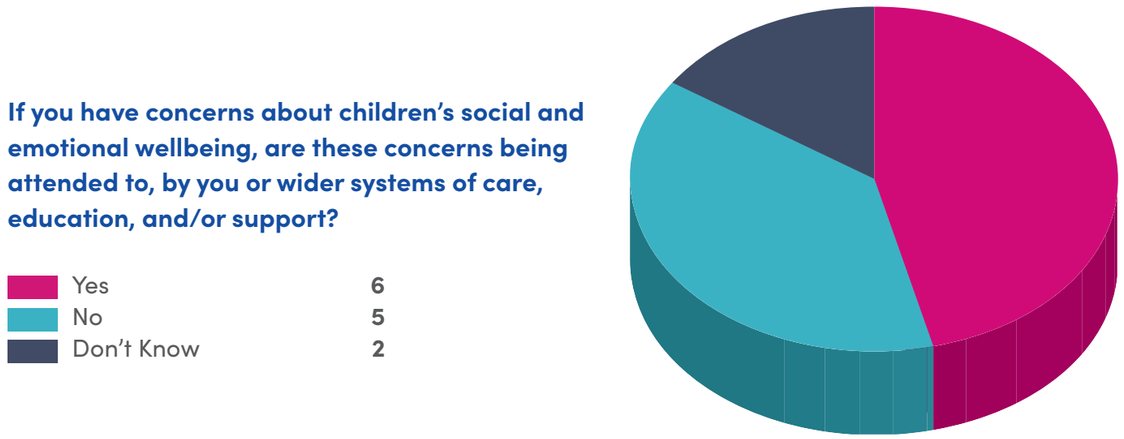
Direct Service Provider, NGO, Scotland

'I wonder about these for children across ages. For instance, infant and young children might have missed out on some services that have irreversible impacts. For instance, in healthcare, the lack of nutrition support for children in their first 1,000 days of life. While a year of non-optimal online education and lack of play and recreation might be short but I believe what the children missed would have a huge impact on their coping skills and psychosocial well-being moving forward.'

Service Manager, Civil Society Organisation, Philippines

Addressing Concerns about Children's Social and Emotional Wellbeing During COVID-19

If you have concerns about children's social and emotional wellbeing, are these concerns being attended to, by you or wider systems of care, education, and/or support?



6 (46%) respondents believed their concerns about children's social and emotional wellbeing were being attended to, by themselves or the wider systems of care, while 5 (38%) replied with 'No'

Several respondents shared how concerns about children's social and emotional wellbeing had been attended to in their own work and/or within wider systems of care. The examples provided include:

Awareness-raising, Education, Signposting and Referrals:

'We have collaborated with groups of psychologists and educators to develop information materials helping people to recognize that psychological and mental health are important, and disseminated numbers where people and children can call for advice, and we got some support from a telecommunications company to provide load so that the psychologists can call those requesting counseling. In addition, webinars have been organized by local community organizations to provide expert advice on how to deal better with stress and avoid depression and excessive anxiety'

Policymaker, NGO, Philippines

'I and a team are doing a lot of community sensitization on child rights and educating parents on positive parenting'

Direct Service Provider, NGO, Kenya

Child and Youth Care Workers:

'through child and youth care workers in schools and communities'

Service Manager, NGO, South Africa

Mental Health and Psychosocial Support:

'Yes, many MHPSS interventions have been initiated. But it is out of reach and non-contextualised for most children.'

Policymaker, Government, India

Concerns about the Adequacy of Responses

Importantly, several respondents shared concerns about the adequacy of such responses. Those concerns included the lack of an integrated and collaborative approach; the inability to reach all children in need; and the insufficient services to address children's social and emotional wellbeing:

'These are very critical dimensions of children wellbeing which needs a long term intervention and consistency presence and touch, this is simple because emotions especially are not seen but identified through behaviour. There is a lack of integrated approach/ or collaborative approach in assisting children with these needs. Practitioners are underestimating each other and private sector systems are not in congruent wit government systems which makes it difficult to see positive outcomes after interventions effort.'

Service Manager, NGO, South Africa

'There is already a growing recognition about the impact of COVID-19 to the Social and emotional well-being of children but the service is available and the measures in place is still lacking'

Policymaker, Civil Society Organisation, Philippines

'There are many service providers in our schools and communities who are reaching out and providing support but it is not enough and children are falling through the cracks.'

Service Manager, Education, Canada

'No'- not because there is a complete ignorance of these concerns. In the Philippines, advocacy groups and NGOs providing services are vibrant and able to identify and advocate to government of these. In addition, I believe that as my mentor used to tell me we, advocates and activists do not have the monopoly of love of country, as there are people in the government who are working hard for the people, even behind the scenes. The problem lies in the disjointed and incoherence of policies and systems in place. The government is only slowly recognizing how to operationalize the concept of whole-government approach to health and education which is key to truly delivering for children's well-being and legal rights.'

Service Manager, Civil Society Organisation, Philippines

Also, a policymaker working at an NGO in the Philippines shared concerns about the negative impact of home schooling on children and parents:

'Have raised with the Education department how they are unwittingly contributing to child abuse with all the modules they left for parents to assist the learners with. The volume is just so unreasonable, stressing both parent and learner that they clash due to tight deadlines. In the end, it results to forcing the child to comply with the modules deadline, sometimes even get spanking.'

Policymaker, NGO, Philippines

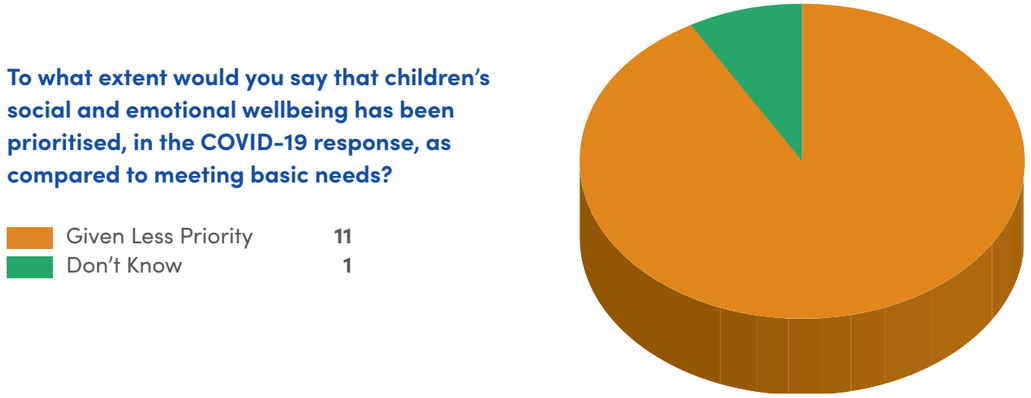
A service manager working for the government in the USA, on the other hand, cautioned that community resources had been 'stretched':

'I don't have a lot of detailed information about how other entities may be intervening but on a local level, I can say share my observation that community support has been greatly stretched and in some instances has ceased to exist due to the overwhelming demands on resources to maintain those supports'

Service Manager, Government, USA

Prioritising Children's Social and Emotional Wellbeing

To what extent would you say that children's social and emotional wellbeing has been prioritised, in the COVID-19 response, as compared to meeting basic needs?



11 (92%) respondents who completed this question indicated children's social and emotional wellbeing had been given less priority compared to meeting children's basic needs.

Several respondents discussed how the insufficient prioritisation of children's social and emotional needs during the pandemic had negatively impacted children and families by, for example, increasing stress, increasing mental health problems and straining parent-child relationships:

'Increase in mental health concerns and parent child relational problems'

Service Manager, NGO, United States

'Are coping on their own especially those whose parents or breadwinners are experiencing difficulties in finding a source of income for the basic needs of their respective families.'

Service Manager, Civil Society Organisation, Philippines

Three respondents stated that there were insufficient resources and support available to support those needs:

'More children and parents are very stressed. There are not enough resources being put into this. There are some NGO efforts to address this but the needs are bigger than what you can put together'

Policymaker, NGO, Philippines

'Children who are empowered are you speaking out. They are bringing the issue for discussion and action. However, Those who Need help the most Do not get the needed support'

Policymaker, Civil Society Organisation, Philippines

'Practitioners of children's wellbeing are not considered as essential service providers even prior to covid. This invisibility made it difficult to make their services a priority, even when the country's meager resources could only afford to provide relief for only the most basic of necessities.'

Service Manager, Civil Society Organisation, Philippines

Two respondents, a government policymaker from India and a government service manager from the USA emphasised that attending children's basic needs took precedence over their socio-emotional needs:

'Tangible needs often take precedence over socio-emotional needs. In Rajasthan, where it is difficult to meet the tangible needs of children, it is often difficult to prioritize advocacy for the emotional well-being. Because interventions of emotional well-being alone can't do justice to socio-economic distress.'

Policymaker, Government, India

'The social and emotional well-being of children has been a priority that takes second chair to basic needs being met. While there are creative individuals who try and provide social opportunities for their children or neighborhood, the pockets of this type of initiative are scattered and few and tend more toward more densely populated areas.'

Service Manager, Government, USA

Several responses were received to the question, 'What has helped to support children and families' resilience in the midst of the social and emotional challenges posed by the pandemic?': support by child and youth care workers; collective efforts and government's responsiveness; relief, financial and livelihood support; online educational and social activities; and support for caregivers.

'A number of things that o can think of:

There is a grant per family to help with basics. Not a lot-350.00zar. Charitable organizations who provided food and food parcels. My ow organisation doing the same.

Child and youth care workers trained to assist families using social media platform and sms services.

Child and youth care workers going out and assisting as emergencies required this.'

Direct Service Provider, NGO, South Africa

'Church families and internet initiatives launched by individual parents or other volunteers who want to ensure that children still have opportunities to socialize. However this varies by community and neighborhoods and is also limited by access to internet and fiscal ability of the children's families'

Service Manager, Government, USA

'Supporting parents and caregivers is important. For example, Working parents who are given flexible working hours or those who are able to keep their jobs, are more equipped with knowledge and skills to Overcome the social and emotional challenges faced by children'

Policymaker, Civil Society Organisation, Philippines

'The outpouring of efforts by individuals, companies and NGO to provide support for children and communities during the pandemic has helped to make our people more resilient. This has also pushed government to become more responsive to the needs of the people'

Policymaker, NGO, Philippines

Key Actions to Prioritise Children's Social and Emotional Wellbeing During COVID-19

www.InspiringChildrensFutures.org

The Impact of Social Isolation on Children's Wellbeing

QUESTION	NUMBER OF RESPONSES
If the children you work with have faced increased social isolation, how has this affected their social and emotional wellbeing?	6
If applicable, please tell us more about this, including examples of any impact on children.	4
What has been helpful in preventing the potential negative effect of social isolation on children's wellbeing?	4

'[...] the more we (youth workers) engaged with each young persons guardian/parents...the relationship with each young person became stronger and reinforced. This holistic approach to working with young people throughout and after the pandemic has encouraged me to incorporate intergenerational youth work with guardian/parents involvement as a requirement.'

Direct Service Provider, NGO, Scotland

Very few responses were received to the questions concerning the impact of social isolation on children's social and emotional wellbeing.

All 6 respondents who completed this question stated social isolation had negatively affected children's social and emotional wellbeing. The free-text responses related to: changed routines, pressures and stigma; mental health and conduct problems; restricted visitors in mental health ward; and the lack of trust between young people and adults, including decision-makers:

'Family members working now part time or lost job or reduced earnings. Less food or things in home. Disrupted schooling and new social distancing routines. Catch up on school work. Feel no time for extra support in school. teachers and other who get infected. Children and family infected. death of people they know. Stigma to children who had family members infected or who themselves infected.'

Service Manager, NGO, South Africa

'Some youth that already struggle with depression and anger and behaviors related to that, are impacted even more negatively because of their inability to have face to face visits with friends and extracurricular group activities'

Service Manager, Government, USA

'In my experience supporting children and young people, I view their social and emotional wellbeing as very much inter related and can be developed more fully through time, but only when in social surroundings that encourage interactions and generate feelings. I have noticed that the specific group of young people that i support, do not approach or converse as much as we did before the pandemic. It feels as if they are more reluctant to approach myself or other youth workers when they need advice, support or assistance. Its as if there has been a breach of trust between adult youth worker and young persons....with the breach being Covid19. After discussion with the young people, they have indicated that the high profile experts, scientists and politicians that they are educated to believe and trust in...have only succeeded in making our young people feel insecure, anxious and confused, with regards to the many changing rules, guidelines and expectations'

Direct Service Provider, NGO, Scotland

Four responses were received regarding ways to prevent those negative impacts. Those concerned the role of child and youth care workers; organising social activities online with youth and foster parents; remaining involved with young people; and using social media:

'deploying child and youth care workers in communities and schools'

Service Manager, NGO, South Africa

'Staff have worked very diligently along with foster parents and residential placement staff to set up zoom calls and activities with family and friends thru zoom. They have been very creative in some of their ideas such as a scavenger hunt between friends using zoom; all the youth have to run and find items and bring them up to the camera. Or sharing an art project class via zoom.'

Service Manager, Government, USA

'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) arnt [aren't] really supposed to care (outwith usual youth group times). This has had a productive and positive impact, particularly in an individual capacity. A further positive outcome from this was.....that the more we (youth workers) engaged with each young persons guardian/parents...the relationship with each young person became stronger and reinforced. This holistic approach to working with young people throughout and after the pandemic has encouraged me to incorporate intergenerational youth work with guardian/parents involvement as a requirement.'

Direct Service Provider, NGO, Scotland

'Social media and zoom etc'

Direct Service Provider, NGO, Scotland

The Role of Communities and Other Informal Supports During COVID-19

QUESTION	NUMBER OF RESPONSES
How have the informal support networks that families rely on (for example, kin, neighbours, school, friends, and/or community) changed during the pandemic?	4
What has been the role of the community in promoting the social and emotional wellbeing of children and families affected by the pandemic?	4

Very few responses were received about the role of the community and other informal supports during the pandemic. Regarding the role of the community, the responses concerned the lack of a unified response; support for children's activities; support from businesses; and village elders helping with child abuse cases and referrals:

'Not much from the community because of fear of COVID and the social. The community leaders who could be seen taking action are the village elders in case of child abuse, and referral.'

Service Manager, NGO, Kenya

'There are pockets of support such as a local business that offered free connections to their WiFi in order for families to sit in the parking lot of that business so that children could do schoolwork and have video chats with friends. However there is not a unified response and it is left up to individuals to provide this type of opportunity for children to socialize etc'

Service Manager, Government, USA

'Supporting children and young people's activities through the regular channels - schools, sports and playgrounds.'

Policymaker, Academia, Netherlands

Regarding the role of informal supports, the responses indicated that people had stepped up and helped; social circles had grown smaller; social distancing was a challenge; and that not much had changed due to the partial lockdown:

'People seem to have stepped up and offered of themselves in different ways.'

Direct Service Provider, NGO, South Africa

'Informal support have changed alot because children know they rights and kin, neighbour and friends cannot correct them any more. A child will argue out about his right. Children were more glued to the TV and their phones. Schools were closed down so no support from school. Because of social distance no one want another person's child in his house.'

Service Manager, NGO, Kenya

'The circles have grown smaller due to the need to protect the health and well-being of so many of the supporters of this type of network'

Service Manager, Government, USA

'Not that much - we are in partial lockdown so children go to school, neighbours can have contact and children can play outside and go to sports.'

Policymaker, Academia, Netherlands

The Role of Digital Technologies

QUESTION	NUMBER OF RESPONSES
Have you seen a role for digital technologies to enable better support during this pandemic?	8
Please tell us more about this.	5
Have you started using any (other) new digital tools in your work that you anticipate may be useful to continue using post-COVID?	8
Please tell us more about this.	6

8 (100%) of the respondents believed digital technologies enabled better support for children during the pandemic, and 7 (88%) had started using new digital tools in their work that they anticipated would be helpful to continue using post-COVID19.

Very few free-text responses were received regarding the role of digital technologies. The utility of digital technologies in supporting children's wellbeing was recognised in the areas of online education, coping support, counselling and communication. However, some limitations were also noted:

'In a limited way, technology can help children cope up with the stresses they experience, especially if their online time is properly managed.'

Policymaker, NGO, Philippines

'The only confirmed evidence was to communicate with them, however being in the same space with them was absent of which observation is an important part when dealing with children emotions'

Service Manager, NGO, South Africa

'I use cellphone for counseling. I also use for sharing information sometimes I accept calls because somebody just need someone to listen to him/her.'

Policymaker, NGO, Philippines

'Through online education'

Direct Service Provider, NGO, Kenya

Respondents shared they had used WhatsApp, Zoom, MS teams, Facebook, Google Suite, Webex and others in their work.

A Note of Caution

While the survey 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 survey engaged practitioners and policymakers only. The findings may not reflect children's or their caregivers' views.
- The findings reported here have been produced by the COVID 4P Log research team and, due to the format of the smartphone app survey, the findings cannot be shared with the respondents for commentary or review.
- The 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 respondents had difficulties with engaging with the app due to workload pressures and technical issues, which might have affected their response rates.

Summary

Aligned with the fifth research theme of the COVID 4P Log Project, 'Prevention: Children's social and emotional wellbeing', this report captured the key findings from 31 respondents' views and experiences of the multitude of negative effects the pandemic had had on children's mental, social and emotional wellbeing. Using a bespoke smartphone app survey, the project aimed to understand what has been done to promote children's and families' resilience in the midst of the myriad of challenges posed by the pandemic and its severe consequences for people's livelihoods, safety, relationships and mental wellbeing.

Collected in the last quarter of 2020, the responses from 31 service providers and policymakers from several countries – Kenya, the Philippines, South Africa, Scotland, India, the USA, Canada, the Netherlands and Montenegro – reflected respondents' increased concerns that, despite the profoundly negative and far-reaching impact of the pandemic on children's social and emotional wellbeing, those needs were given insufficient priority. Children's ability to socialise; their coping skills and stress management; nutrition; hopefulness; creativity and self-expression; and parent-child relationships were all reported as negatively impacted.

Despite some positive responses such as awareness-raising and mental health and psychosocial support programmes, most respondents believed resources were often insufficient to meet the demand for socio-emotional wellbeing support. While relatively few, the responses in this survey unequivocally call for more dedicated action on promoting children's social and emotional wellbeing during and post-COVID19 by leveraging financial and livelihood support; scaling up support from child and youth care workers; mobilising community support; and harnessing digital technologies to engage children and their caregivers. The responses also underscore the increasingly valuable role of digital technologies in promoting children's overall health and wellbeing.

Our hope is that this COVID 4P Log Learning Report series will generate new insights, and spark new questions and ideas to strengthen policy, service and practice with, and for, children and their families.

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

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