**SG Report: Key messages**

*COVID-19 is a health crisis that risks evolving into a broader child-rights crisis.*

* The socio-economic impact of the virus – and of the containment and mitigation measures we’re seeing around the world – is potentially catastrophic for many children.
* Hundreds of thousands of additional child deaths could occur this year, compared to a pre-pandemic scenario, as a result of the looming global recession. This would effectively reverse – in one single year – the last 2 to 3 years of progress in reducing infant mortality.
* 188 countries have imposed countrywide school closures, affecting more than 1.5 billion children and youth.
* Nearly 369 million children across 143 countries who normally rely on school meals for a reliable source of daily nutrition must now look to other sources.
* As the world focuses on the daily counts of COVID-19 infections and deaths, these numbers deserve equal attention.

*The impact of COVID-19 on children’s poverty, survival and health, learning, and safety is far-reaching.*

* Millions of households will be pushed into poverty as the world economy is tipped into a major recession. Such income shocks at the household level, even if only temporary, can have devastating effects on children, particularly those living in poor households with limited assets. Reduced household income will force poor families to cut back on essential health and food expenditures.
* Health services are being directly disrupted by the pandemic, leading to reduced access to essential reproductive, maternal, newborn and child health interventions, the suspension of all polio vaccination campaigns worldwide, the suspension of measles immunization campaigns in at least 23 countries, and curtailed access to medicines and care for children and adolescents with chronic illnesses, including those living with HIV.
* The potential losses that may accrue in learning for children and young people, and for the development of their human capital, are hard to fathom. Distance learning is only available to some. Girls have less access to digital technology than boys so can expect to miss out on more instruction. Children with disabilities and special needs are especially hard to serve through distance programmes.
* Millions of children will likely drop out of school altogether. That possibility becomes greater the longer schools are closed and the deeper the economic contraction wrought by the pandemic.
* Social distancing measures and movement restrictions are leaving children anxious and uncertain about their future. For children facing extreme deprivations, acute stress can impair their cognitive development and trigger longer-term mental health challenges.

*All children, of all ages, and in all countries, are being affected but some children are destined to bear the greatest costs in ways that permanently alter the trajectories of their lives.*

* The effects of COVID-19 are expected to be most damaging for children in the poorest countries, and on the poorest households within countries.
* Children and families living in slums, refugee and displacement camps, and areas of active conflict are particularly vulnerable. Standard social distancing and lockdown measures risk accelerating the spread of the pandemic among these populations, who often lack piped water and hand-washing facilities at home, and rely on communal sanitation facilities.
* Also vulnerable are children with disabilities and children living in institutions and detention facilities. Their continued care is easily put in jeopardy at a time of crisis.

*This outcome can be avoided with immediate and sustained mitigating actions.*

**We need more information**: It is time to look beyond daily data on new infections and deaths to analyse the broader effects of the pandemic. An optimal response to COVID-19 in any setting must balance multiple risks to save the most lives.

**We need more solidarity**: The COVID-19 pandemic is a test of our solidarity: within local communities, the scientific research community, and the community of nations. Children offer a common cause that can stoke a greater sense of union among people.

**And we need more action**: Governments around the world are taking wide-ranging actions to contain and mitigate the pandemic. But these actions must be accompanied by additional steps to counter unintended effects on children. It is particularly urgent to:

* Rollout or expand social assistance to families, preferably through the use of universal child grants.
* Secure food supply chains and local food markets, to protect children from a food security crisis.
* Prioritize the continuity of child-centred services.
* Put in place specific protections for vulnerable children including migrants, the displaced, refugees, minorities, slum-dwellers, children living with disabilities, children caught in armed conflict, and children in institutions.
* Provide practical support to parents and caregivers, including how to talk about the pandemic with children, how to manage their own mental health and the mental health of their children, and tools to help support their children’s learning.
* Prioritize the restoration of child services as lockdown measures wind down.
* Ensure that children, adolescents and young people have access to COVID-19 testing, treatment and vaccines as and when they become available.