

#CovidUnder19 : A rights-based lens for investing in children's mental health in building back better

COVID and Children's Rights
Focus on Children's Mental Health
Council of Europe Webinar Series
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Terre des hommes



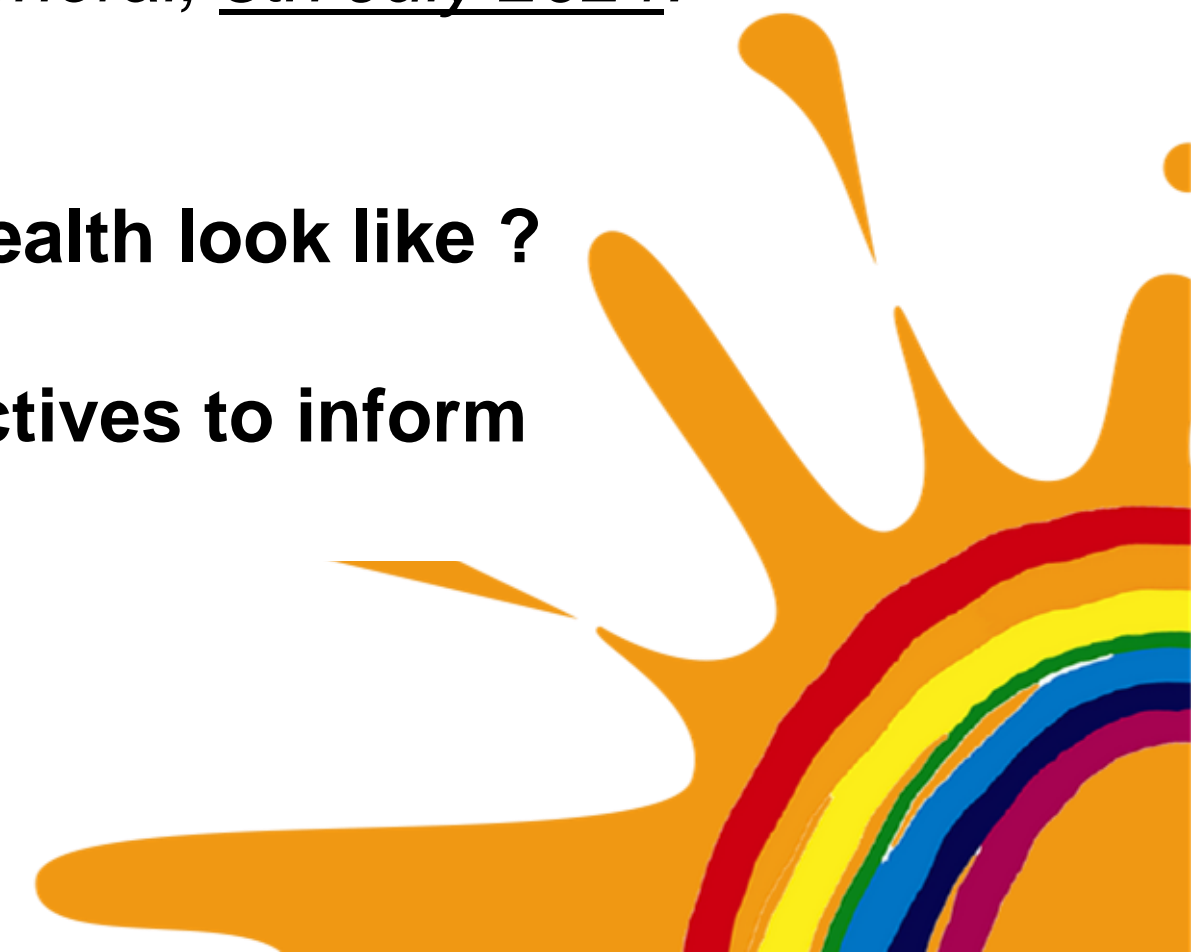
Background : Mental health in the Covid world

*"One day – hopefully soon – the pandemic will be behind us, but the **psychological scars will remain** for those who have lost loved ones, health workers who have been stretched beyond breaking point, and the millions of people of all ages confronted with months of loneliness and isolation."* – Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Closing remarks during 74th World Health Assembly

"As we consider investing in a strong recovery, support for children's mental well-being must be a priority [..] I also urge those in authority to take children's views and experiences into account" – Antonio Gueterres, UN Secretary General, 8th July 2021.

=> What does a rights-based lens to children's mental health look like ?

=> And how can we centre children's views and perspectives to inform mental health policy & practice?

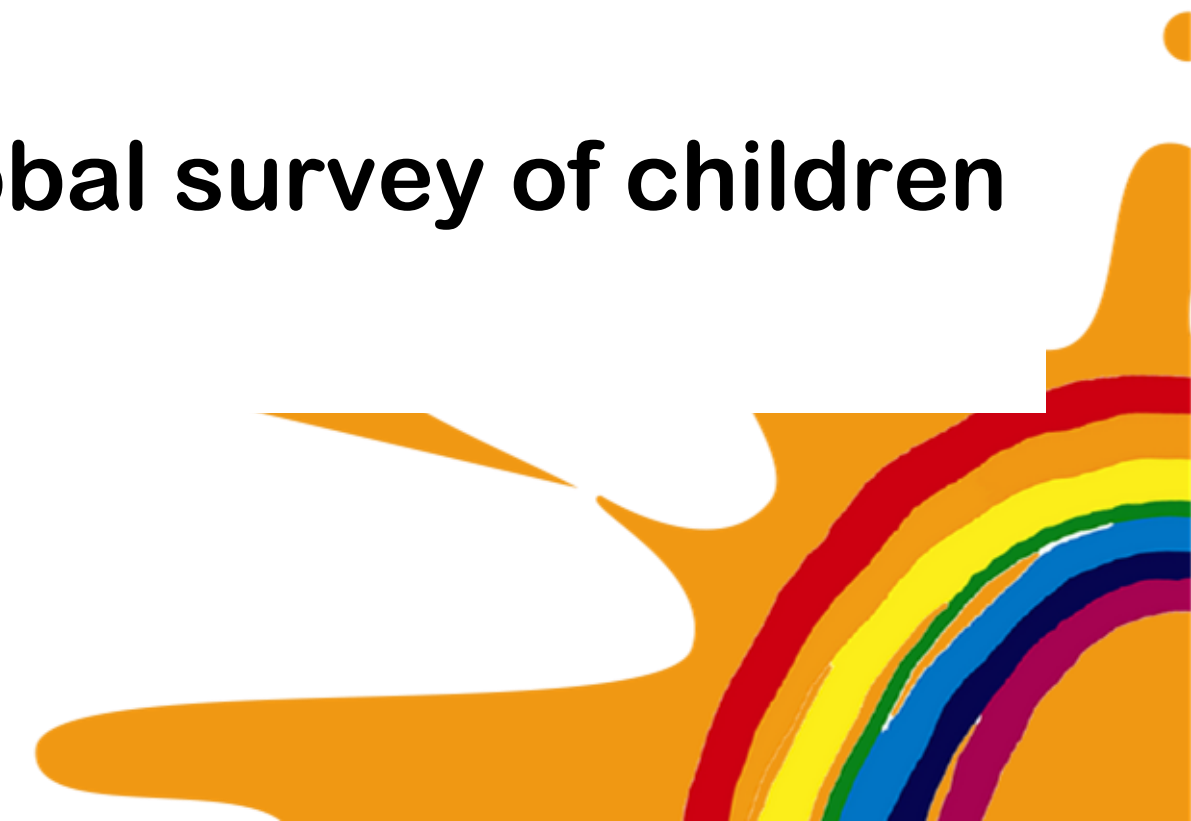


What is #CovidUnder19?

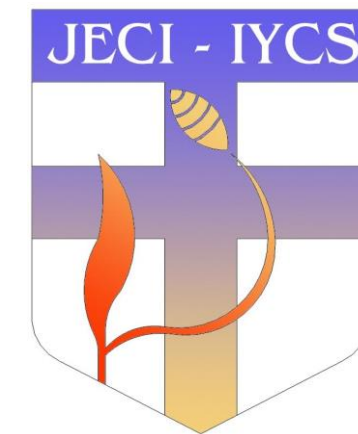
#CovidUnder19 aims to create spaces for children across the globe to be meaningfully involved in the discussions about responses to the Covid-19 pandemic and to contribute towards shaping the post-Covid-19 world.

The initiative seeks to understand children's views and experiences about life under Coronavirus, and amplify their voices to inform policymakers, professionals working with children, and governments.

In 2020, #CovidUnder19 conducted the largest global survey of children during Covid using participatory methods



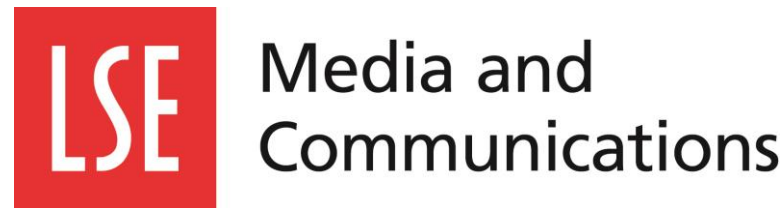
#CovidUnder19 Partners in 2020




Group Development Pakistan



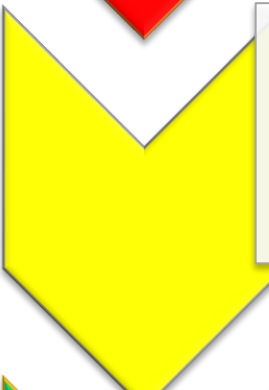
TEENS4WORLD



Child-rights based methodology (Queen's University Belfast)




Co-creation of survey with experts and children : 270 children aged 8-17 in 28 countries contributed



Translation into 28 languages + easy-read version;
Dissemination of survey online & offline (frontline practitioners)



Children as co-researchers – children involved in quantitative and qualitative data interpretation

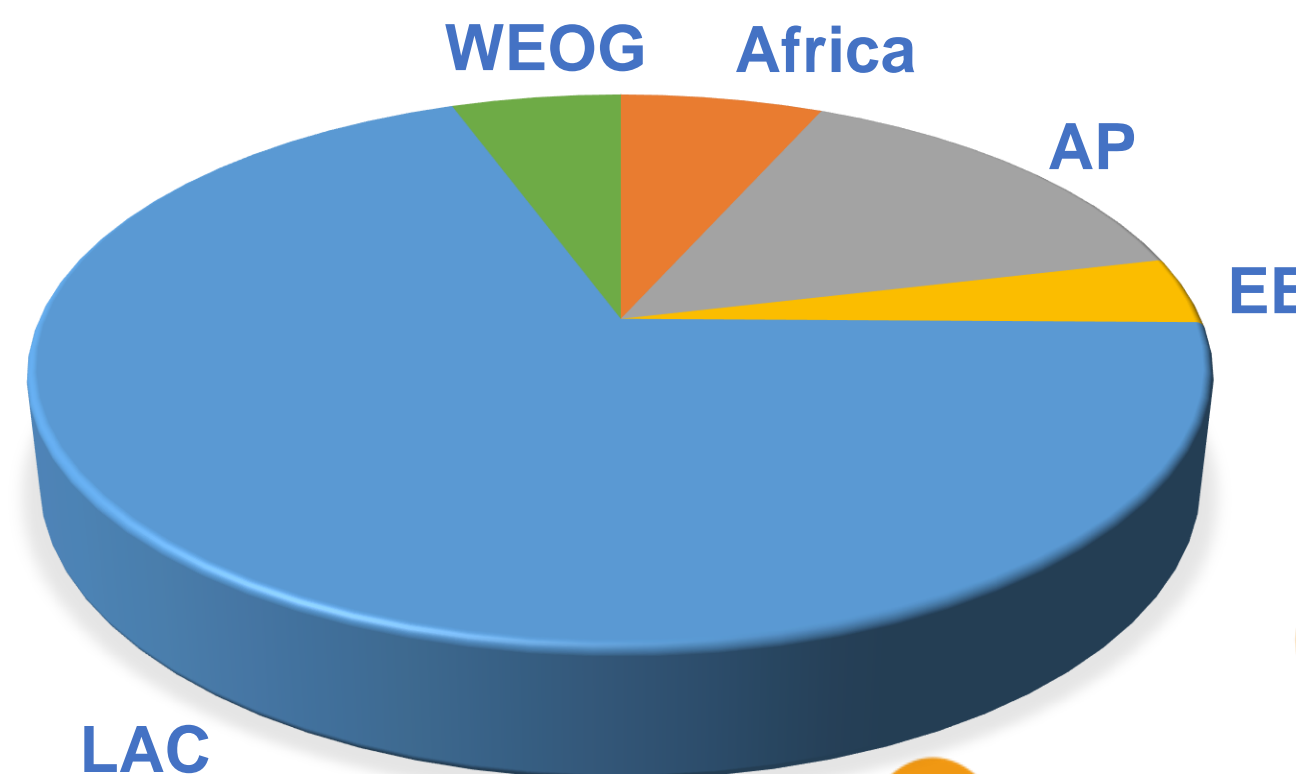
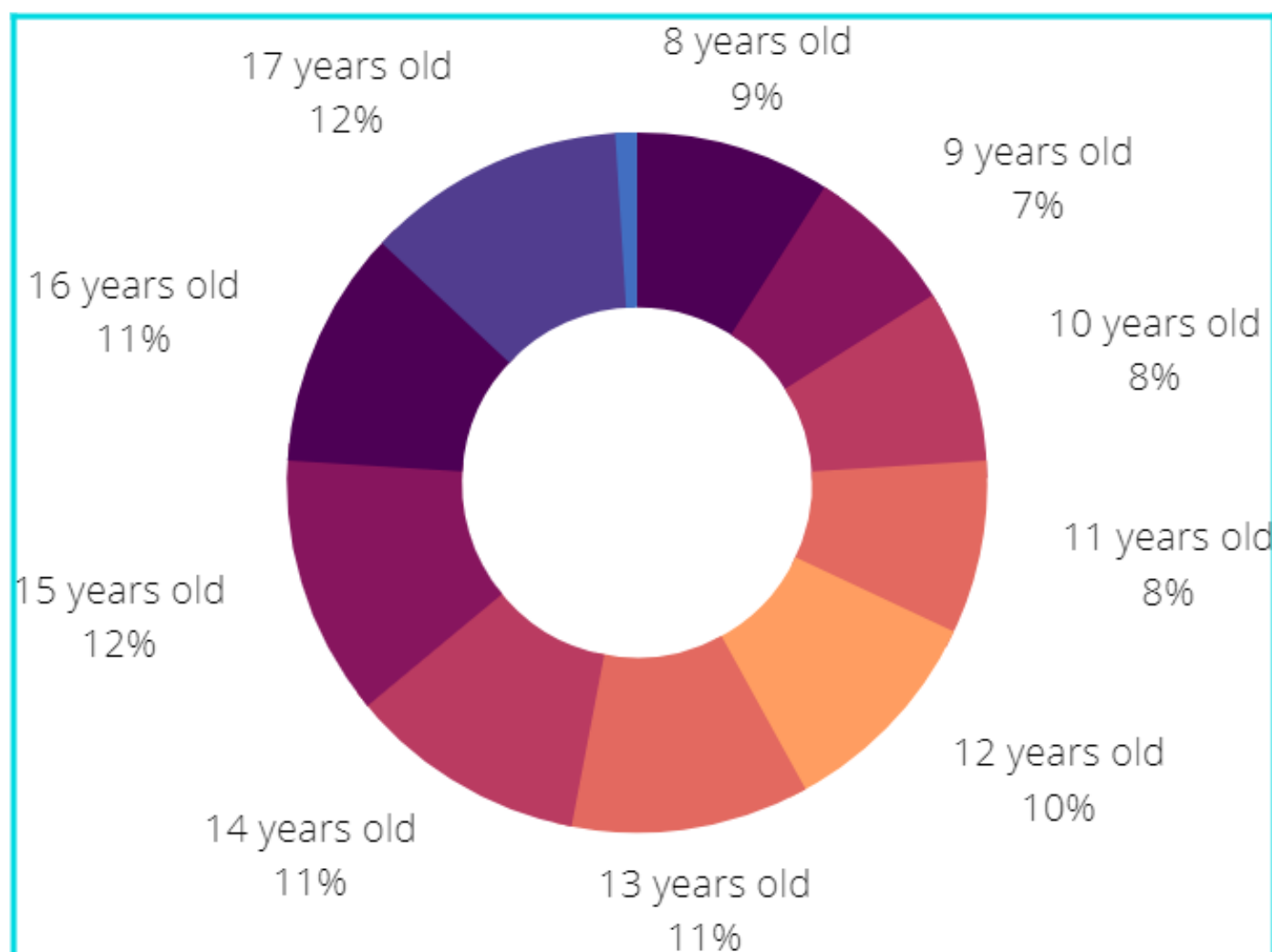


Use of global and national datasets to inform child rights advocacy in pandemic recovery & response

Who completed the survey?

26,258 girls and boys from 137 countries aged 8-17

Largest global survey of children during Covid using participatory methodology

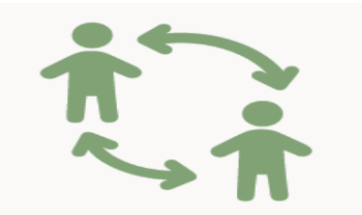


Tdh's MHPSS well-being pillars



Feeling safe :

- Access to information / daily routine even in case of quarantine (access to play, socialisation, learning) and stress management / access to basic needs
- Ensure that their basic needs are met with dignity
- Predictability
- Feeling of calm
- Sense of controlled ability to manage the risk



Feeling connected

- Supporting caregivers/supporting families/isolated people
- Information on services and how to access them (quarantine / isolation...)
- Help children and youth to keep connections with their friends



Feeling worthy

- Support the action and engagement of communities and families , youths
- Importance of individual and collective efficacy /livelihoods



Feeling respected

- Non-discrimination/dignity in basic services
- To be consulted and treated with dignity during humanitarian interventions
- Be involved in feedback mechanisms and participation in decision making



A sense of hope



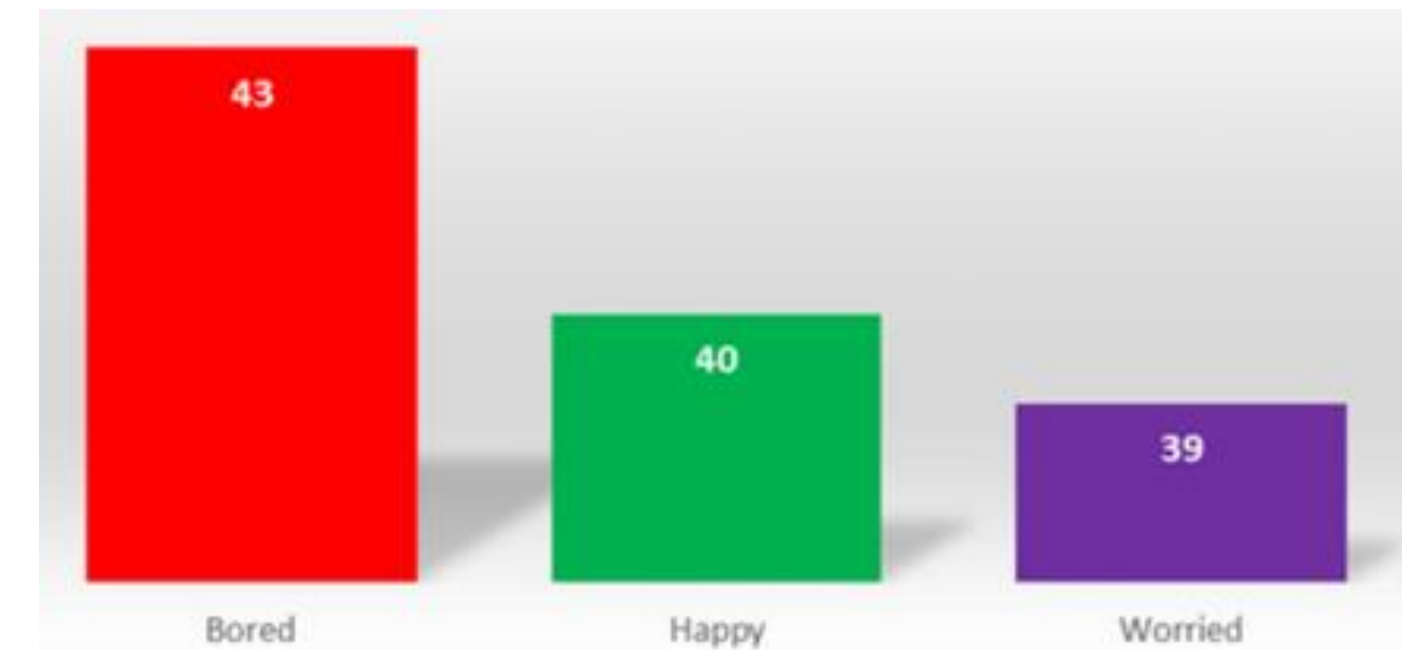
A snapshot of children's feelings: June-July 2020

“It is much nicer now. My parents are home, they do work but it is nice to know that they are home more and that you know that they are there. Meeting online with friends is easy and fun and you actually talk to them more than before Corona.”

(Girl, 8, The Netherlands)

“Please consider that while parents suffer a lot under the weight of tax, furlough and the loss of jobs, we as their kids almost feel more helpless in witnessing these problems because we can't do anything to help our family members out whereas we might be able to if we were able to go out and work or volunteer.”

(non-binary child, 17, UK)



- **Implications for children's mental health :** Younger children (8-13 year olds) and children living at home tended to report more positive feelings of the initial lockdown experience; older children experienced loss of hope & helplessness, limited feelings of self-worth

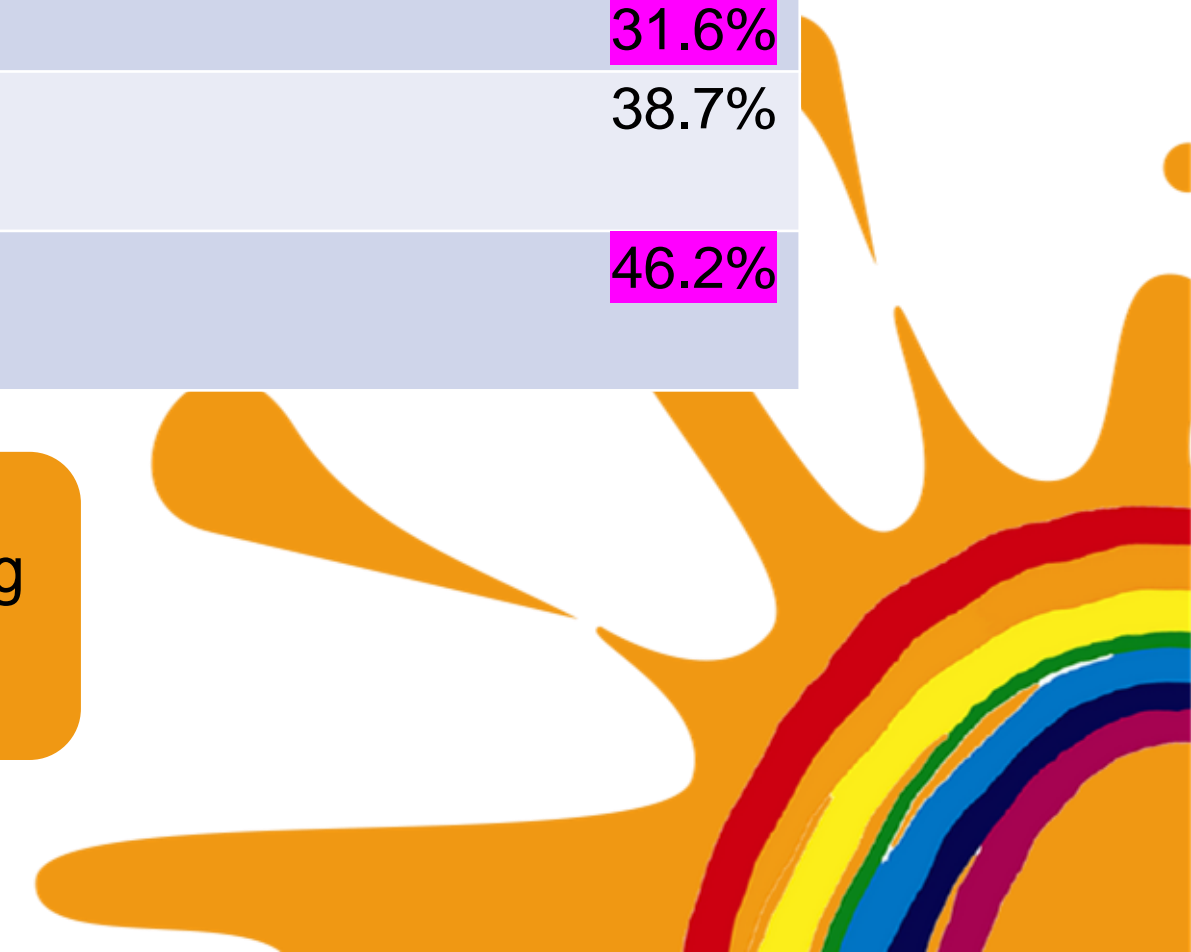


Access to education (Arts. 28-29)

Globally: 61% of children said they were getting a better education before Coronavirus

UN Regions	Thinking about my life since Coronavirus began....	
	I am getting a good education	I am confident I will get the grades I deserve for my study
	Better before Coronavirus	Better before Coronavirus
African Group	76.3%	60.1%
Asia-Pacific Group	63.2%	51.7%
Eastern European Group	59.4%	31.6%
Latin American and Caribbean Group	58.6%	38.7%
Western European and Others Group	65.1%	46.2%

➤ **Implications for children's mental health** : Basic needs + rights not being met; anxiety about the future

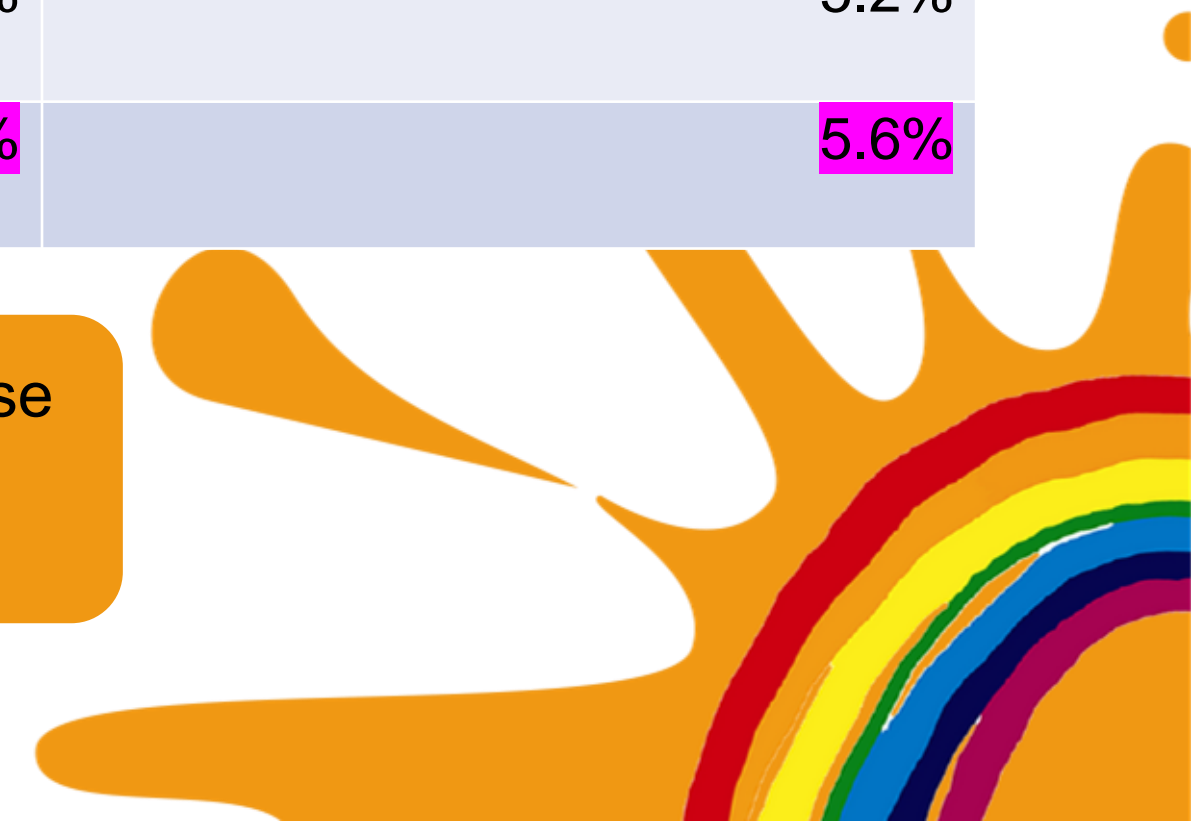


Adequate standard of living (Art. 27)

Globally: 41% of all children said their family had less money to meet their needs since coronavirus.

UN Regions	Thinking about my life since Coronavirus began.....:		
	The people I live with have enough money to meet my needs		
	Less than before	Same as before	More than before
African Group	57.2%	36.7%	6.1%
Asia-Pacific Group	42.8%	48.8%	8.5%
Eastern European Group	16.4%	79.4%	4.2%
Latin American and Caribbean Group	41.5%	53.3%	5.2%
Western European and Others Group	21.6%	72.8%	5.6%

- **Implications for children's mental health** : negative impact on children's sense of having their needs met with dignity; increased anxiety due to unpredictable future; decreased sense of self-worth and self-efficacy



Access to health (Art. 24)

Globally: 21% of children said access to medical help was better before Covid-19.

We are likely to be experiencing worry, anxiety and fear and this can include the types of fear that are very similar to those experienced by adults, such as a fear of dying, a fear of relatives dying, or a fear of what it means to receive medical treatment.'(Girl, 15, India)

UN Regions	Thinking about my life since Coronavirus began.....:		
	Less than before	Same as before	More than before
	I can access medical help if I need it		
African Group	29.7%	44.8%	25.5%
Asia-Pacific Group	27.2%	42.6%	30.1%
Eastern European Group	22.4%	69.6%	8.0%
Latin American and Caribbean Group	19.7%	62.5%	17.7%
Western European and Others Group	17.2%	70.8%	12.0%

- **Implications for children's mental health** : Basic needs + rights not being met with dignity; fear and stress related to access to information

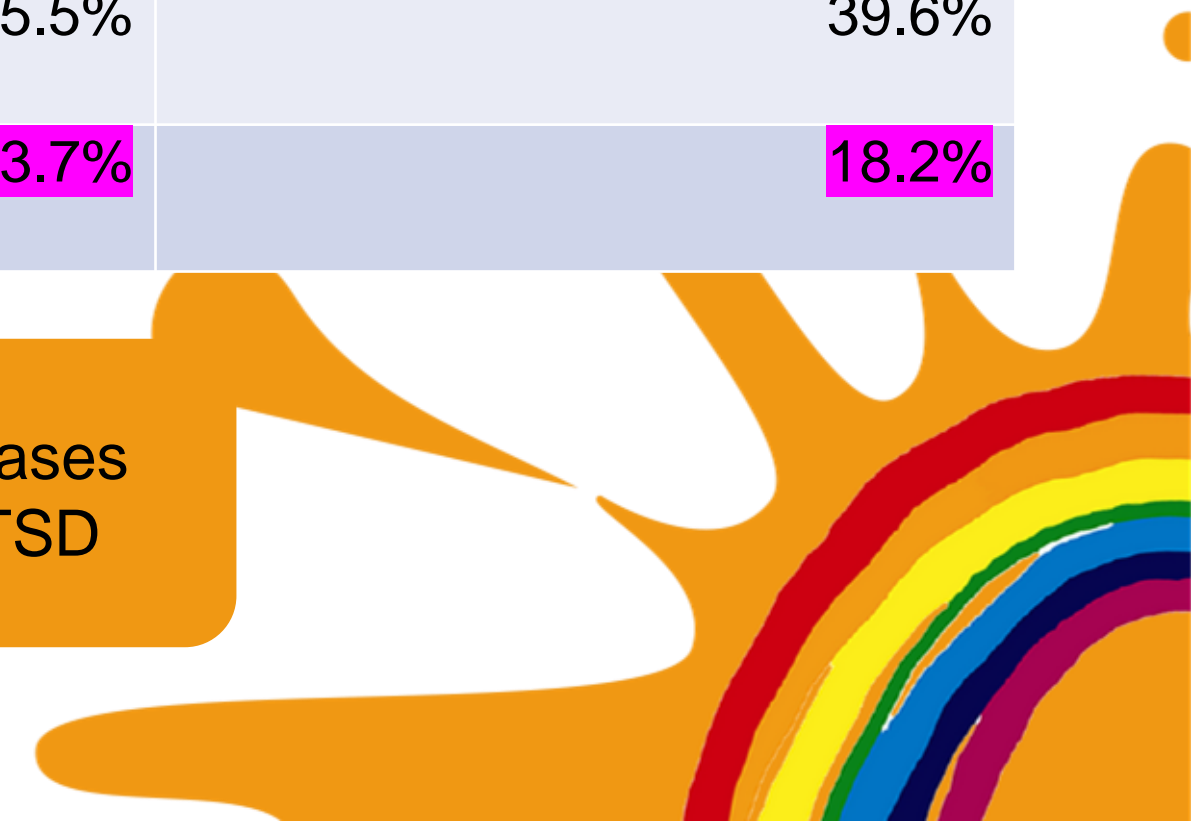
Protection from violence (Art. 19)

Globally: 9% of all children reported hearing, witnessing or experiencing more violence since the start of the pandemic

“In case of quarrels or violence in the family I can not ask for help, because they cannot help me to go in another place. This is an issue, all the people are in quarantine. Many emergency phone numbers for certain issues are not working at the moment, or you keep calling and nobody answers.” (Girl, 10, Moldova)

UN Regions	Thinking about my life since Coronavirus began.....:		
	I feel safe at home/place where I live		
	Less than before	Same as before	More than before
African Group	27.4%	41.7%	30.9%
Asia-Pacific Group	17.2%	46.9%	36.0%
Eastern European Group	6.1%	82.4%	11.6%
Latin American and Caribbean Group	4.9%	55.5%	39.6%
Western European and Others Group	8.1%	73.7%	18.2%

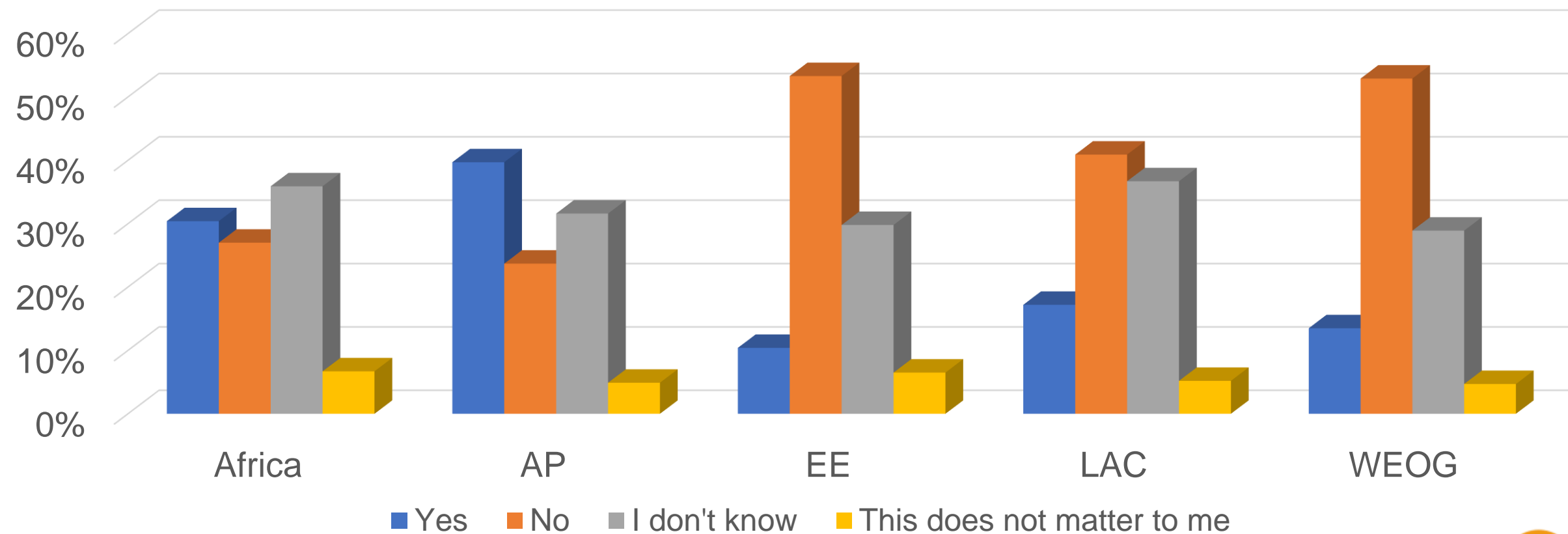
- **Implications for children’s mental health** : increased exposure to violence increases mental health issues in the immediate and long term, including anxiety, stress, PTSD



Right to be heard (Art. 12)

Globally: 38% of children did not feel that their governments were listening to them when making decisions about coronavirus

Do you think your government is listening to children when it is making decisions about how to handle the Coronavirus crisis?



➤ **Implications for children's mental health** : not being treated with respect; no agency to be part of positive changes.

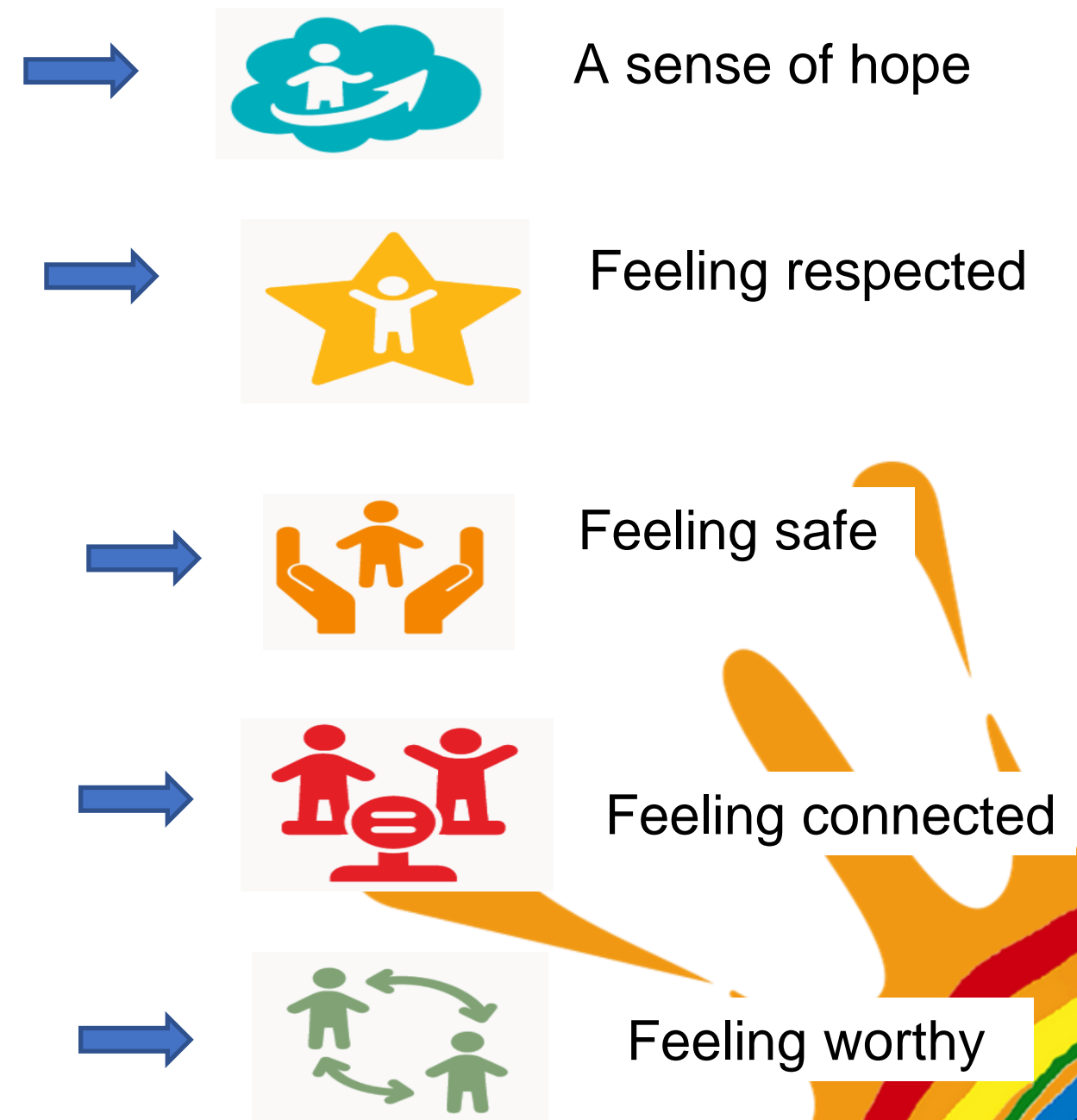


Conclusions

It is imperative to ensure a rights-based approach to children's mental health in building back better.

Concretely:

- 1) **Listening to children** about their experiences of Covid, and to **demonstrate that governments are taking children's perspectives into consideration** when making decisions about pandemic response and recovery
- 2) **Investing in child protection and children's well-being** through targeted actions to :
 - **Prevent violence** against children as a critical strategy in preventing mental health problems (short & long-term);
 - **Develop integrated, contextual mainstreamed MHPSS** support, for children & caregivers, online and offline, including in schools, primary healthcare settings etc; including adequate training;
 - **Bolster educational inclusion and attainment** through tailored reintegration & catch-up programmes
 - **Ensure access to age-appropriate, reliable information** for children about how to seek support;
 - **Reinforce** social protection & livelihood



Thank you

Access the full results of the survey here:

<https://www.tdh.ch/en/media-library/documents/covidunder19-results>

Follow us on @CovidUnder19

