An Analysis of the Rights of the Child and the Importance of Inclusive Social Protection

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Introduction

Over 42 percent of the world today is made up of children and young people under the age of 25.[1] These young individuals, however, continue to have some of the lowest levels of social protection in the world, especially in areas such as hunger given that 45% of all child deaths across the world are related to undernutrition,[2] poverty given that there is a two times higher likelihood of children finding himself as extremely poor compared to adults,[3] quality education given the many disruptions in education due to COVID-19, social equity,[4] and much more. Youth often are forgotten in policy and their voices remain unheard across many sectors whether that be civil society, academia, or even business. Moreover, due to the fact that many children are unable to vote across the world, youth are especially underrepresented and unheard in governmental systems which prevents meaningful protection of children and a lack of action regarding issues that primarily impact young people.[5] Young people today desperately need better representation and more protections for their well-being in order to create a more equitable society where all people are respected and treated equally, which children's rights can be the key to due to the positive impact on all people through the expansion and protection of the rights of young people.[6] Thus, this report aims to investigate some concerns presented by young people from all over the world, representing different life experiences and priorities, an analysis of existing work to better protect young people in the United States of America specifically, as well as some policy and implementation recommendations to best support and celebrate young people across the world along with case studies of successful attempts at social protection of young people.

[1] "Chart: How Is the World's Youth Population Changing?." 17 Apr. 2017, https://blogs.worldbank.org/opendata/chart-how-worlds-youth-population-changing. Accessed 3 Feb. 2023.
[2] "World Poverty Facts | Children International | Global Hunger Statistics." https://www.children.org/global-poverty/global-poverty-facts/facts-about-world-poverty-and-hunger. Accessed 3 Feb. 2023.
[3] "1 in 6 children lives in extreme poverty, World Bank-UNICEF ...." 20 Oct. 2020, https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2020/10/20/1-in-6-children-lives-in-extreme-poverty-world-bank-unicef-analysis-shows. Accessed 3 Feb. 2023.
[4] "Fiscal Equity and Social Outcomes for Children - UNICEF." 31 Aug. 2021, https://www.unicef.org/reports/fiscal-equity-and-social-outcomes-children. Accessed 3 Feb. 2023.
[5] "Global Report on Protecting Young People in Civic Space." https://www.un.org/youthenvoy/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Global-Report-on-Protecting.-Young-People-in-Civic-Space.pdf. Accessed 3 Feb. 2023.
[6] "Children's Human Rights - Amnesty International." https://www.amnesty.org/en/what-we-do/child-rights/. Accessed 3 Feb. 2023.

Unresolved Concerns and Barriers to Child Social Protection Along With Policy Recommendations for the Elimination or Reduction in these Concerns

The COVID-19 pandemic greatly worsened the well-being and experiences of young people across the world, often leading to high levels of social disadvantagement through a disconnection from conventional methods of empowerment and connection. Although the consequences of COVID-19 are highly stratified across country and socioeconomic boundaries, children faced, by and large, many adverse consequences due to this pandemic, devastating them through these challenging times.[7] [8] Particularly of concern are the devastating impacts of isolation and its resultant influence on education, economic instability, mental health, and substance abuse.[9] [10] [11]

Quarantine forced many people, especially children, into isolation, in order to prevent the spread of COVID-19; however, it also greatly limited and diminished the social connection vital to child development, which has been proven to lead to lasting social and mental health effects over these last 3 years of the COVID-19 pandemic.[12] Thus, many of the rights guaranteed to children by the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* were reduced or almost eliminated such as access to information, access to education, the right to play, protection from sexual abuse,[13] protection from exploitation,[14] and the protection from harmful drugs. It is thus of immense importance that action is taken immediately to help promote reintegration and communication endeavors between young people, fostering social skills and connection between people to hopefully reverse some of the concerns created by the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, the

[7] "COVID-19 and Children's Rights - Human Rights Watch." 9 Apr. 2020, https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/04/09/covid-19-and-childrens-rights. Accessed 3 Feb. 2023.
[8] "COVID-19's Devastating Impact on Children - Human Rights Watch." 9 Apr. 2020, https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/04/09/covid-19s-devastating-impact-children. Accessed 3 Feb. 2023.
[9] "The hidden impact of COVID-19 on children's education." https://healtheducationresources.unesco.org/library/documents/hidden-impact-covid-19-childrens-education. Accessed 3 Feb. 2023.
[10] "COVID-19 & Substance Use | National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)." 25 Feb. 2022, https://nida.nih.gov/research-topics/comorbidity/covid-19-substance-use. Accessed 3 Feb. 2023.
[11] "Young workers hit hard by the COVID-19 economy." 14 Oct. 2020, https://www.epi.org/publication/young-workers-covid-recession/. Accessed 3 Feb. 2023.
[12] "Social Connectedness, Excessive Screen Time During COVID-19 ...." 7 Jul. 2021, https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fhumd.2021.684137/full. Accessed 3 Feb. 2023.
[13] "Why did COVID-19 supercharge online sexual exploitation of ...." 17 May. 2021, https://www.end-violence.org/articles/why-did-covid-19-supercharge-online-sexual-exploitation-children. Accessed 3 Feb. 2023.
[14] "Surge in violence against children must be addressed with a rights ...." 29 Mar. 2021, https://www.ohchr.org/en/stories/2021/03/surge-violence-against-children-must-be-addressed-rights-based-approach. Accessed 3 Feb. 2023.

implementation of recommendations set forth by the National Association for the Education of Young Children into school-based education can be extremely useful in bridging the gap in social skills caused by the pandemic and allow for a reduction of the isolation felt by young people across the world.[15] Efforts to makeup for education gaps caused by school closures are also of utmost importance; however, it is of significant importance that the burden of making up for these impacts is not placed on already exhausted teachers who have supported children through the COVID-19 pandemic. Policy recommendations made by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development and the World Bank can be especially useful for countries to be able to best support the reintegration of children back into education.[16] [17] These policies can be especially useful where parental involvement is available to support children and where governmental funding is able to provide support services to children; however, in many countries, such as low and middle income countries, this can be impossible. In these circumstances, recommendations made by We Are Teachers can be useful in helping educators and administrators best support these children, while not forcing teachers to take on as large of a burden.[18] [19]

Economic instability during the COVID-19 pandemic most affected young people just entering the workforce, especially those between 16 and 24. This led to a loss in entry-level positions for young people, which can have devastating impacts on the future job prospects of young people.[20] This damage can be long-lasting and greatly limit the ability of young people to reintegrate. Efforts to reduce youth unemployment can be difficult and sometimes not effective, but country-level policies such as those implemented by the EU and evaluated by the StyleHandbook can prove to be effective, especially those that particularly provide jobs for young people and

[15] "Articles for Families on Behavior and Development - NAEYC."
https://www.naeyc.org/our-work/families/behavior-and-development. Accessed 3 Feb. 2023.
[16] "3. Addressing learning gaps now will minimise disruption in students ...."
https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/8ab5c27b-en/index.html?itemId=/content/component/8ab5c27b-en. Accessed 3 Feb. 2023.
[17] "Education Response and Recovery During and After COVID-19." 30 Mar. 2021,
https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/education/brief/mission-recovering-education-in-2021. Accessed 3 Feb. 2023.
[18] "What Schools Can Do To Make Up For COVID-19 Learning Loss." 14 Sep. 2020,
https://www.weareteachers.com/make-up-for-covid-19-learning-loss/. Accessed 3 Feb. 2023.
[19] "Why Individualized Learning is Not the Answer To "Learning Loss" =." 22 Apr. 2021,
https://www.weareteachers.com/individualized-learning-learning-loss/. Accessed 3 Feb. 2023.
[20] "54.4 percent of 16- to 24-year-olds employed in July 2021, up from ...."
https://www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2021/54-4-percent-of-16-to-24-year-olds-employed-in-july-2021-up-from-46-7-percent-in-july-2020.htm. Accessed 3 Feb. 2023.

help lessen the economic damages caused COVID-19.[21] Through programs such as these, youth can be better empowered to take and do well in jobs, setting them up for a lifetime of success in the economy. Moreover, efforts made by businesses to create jobs specifically for young people and recruit from educational institutions, especially junior/community colleges, can also be extremely effective in specifically helping young people.[22]

Youth substance abuse and mental health concern rates have also dramatically increased during the course of the pandemic and continue to rise or stay at dangerously high levels. A recent World Health Organization report indicates that the pandemic caused nearly a 25% increase in prevalence of depression and anxiety across the world.[23] Moreover, due to the trauma caused by the pandemic, youth are likely to continue to have their mental health be further eroded over time.[24] [25] Policy and implementation efforts to improve youth mental health overtime has had positive and negative effects and continues to demonstrate ambivalent results. However, one effective example of policy that can be extremely effective in supporting people through mental health and substance abuse concerns are efforts to create national lifelines, suicide hotlines, and substance abuse hotlines such as the 988 hotline in the United States. By properly staffing these hotlines with certified counselors, governments can constantly provide assistance to those in need anonymously, which has been proven to be incredibly effective.[26]

An Evaluation of Social Protection Systems for Children in the United States

Throughout the course of history, the United States government has implemented several programs in an attempt to bolster children's social protection.

One very notable example includes;

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[21] "What policies are effective in combatting youth unemployment?." 29 Aug. 2017, https://style-handbook.eu/contents-list/which-countries-perform-best-and-why/what-policies-are-effective-in-combatting-youth-unemployment/. Accessed 3 Feb. 2023.

[22] "Employers Partner with Community Colleges to Fill the Talent Pipeline." https://www.shrm.org/hr-today/news/all-things-work/pages/employers-partner-with-community-colleges-.aspx. Accessed 3 Feb. 2023.

[23] "COVID-19 pandemic triggers 25% increase in prevalence of anxiety ...." 2 Mar. 2022, https://www.who.int/news/item/02-03-2022-covid-19-pandemic-triggers-25-increase-in-prevalence-of-anxiety-and-depression-worldwide. Accessed 3 Feb. 2023.

[24] "Pandemic accelerated youth mental health crisis | News." https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/news/hsph-in-the-news/covid-youth-mental-health-crisis/. Accessed 3 Feb. 2023.

[25] "New CDC data illuminate youth mental health threats during the ...." 31 Mar. 2022, https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2022/p0331-youth-mental-health-covid-19.html. Accessed 3 Feb. 2023.

[26]

- The Drug Abuse Resistance Education (D.A.R.E) program. Although this program was engendered by local officials in the Los Angeles police department, it was officially adopted by the Ronald Reagan administration in 1986 as part of the infamous "War on Drugs." This program was geared towards K-12 school-aged children in American public schools. In this program, D.A.R.E workshops were delivered by policemen and law enforcement officials who would go into classrooms with the aim of teaching school kids how to simply reject drugs, substances, and gang culture. For years, the D.A.R.E program maintained the appearance of success; however, this program was ultimately a failure. According to studies conducted by the Department of Justice, after ten-thirty years of the D.A.R.E program, the program had no meaningful effect on children's drug use, attitude towards drugs, and self esteem.[27] There are two main reasons for this program's failure. The first reason is that the program was led by police officers, who tended to approach the critical problem of drug use in children with a punitive attitude, rather than licensed addiction specialists. The second reason is that the program utilized fear mongering tactics rather than honesty when educating children about the effects of harmful drugs and substances. Today, the D.A.R.E program has been revamped with the attempt to rectify the aforementioned reasons for its previous failure. The new program, Keepin' it REAL, now is led by licensed professionals who implement interactive sessions, as opposed to the former lecture sessions, with children to enable them to practice communication and decision making skills in these complex situations. According to recent research, this new program has caused the children who participate in it to have a much higher rate of discontinuing drugs and substances than the children who do not participate in it.[28]

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[27] "Past and Future Directions of the D.A.R.E.® Program." 27 Sep. 1994, https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/Digitization/152055NCJRS.pdf. Accessed 3 Feb. 2023.
[28] "Promoting reduced and discontinued substance use among ...." https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/17096196/. Accessed 3 Feb. 2023.