



# GENDER EQUALITY

UPDATE 18: YOUTH LEADERSHIP

JUNE 9, 2020



## BACKGROUND

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in severe economic and social impacts around the world. Young people are particularly vulnerable to the disruptions the pandemic has caused, and many are now at risk of being left behind in education, economic opportunities, and health and wellbeing during a crucial stage of their life development. Young people<sup>1</sup> are more likely to be unemployed or to be in precarious job contracts and working arrangements, and thus, lack adequate social protection. At the same time, young people are responding to the crisis through public health promotion, volunteering and innovation. Young people will form a key element in an inclusive recovery and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) during this Decade of Action<sup>2</sup>.



Photo: Merit Maharjan/UN Women

## EMERGING ISSUES RAISED BY YOUTH<sup>3</sup>

- **MIGRATION:** Young returning migrants, including their families, are facing discrimination, violence, and stigmatisation. This group is severely impacted by the virus, as the majority of persons infected are young returning migrants.
- **LIVELIHOOD:** Youth are raising the urgent need to address unemployment and sources of livelihood.
- **SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH:** Civil society organisations report an increase in unwanted pregnancies and maternal deaths due to the closure of health centres and abortion services. Women and girls in rural areas are also facing difficulties in accessing sanitary pads. These are not recognised as an essential item by the Government, which affects their availability.
- **ENGAGING MEN AND BOYS:** Male role models promoting a society where men respect and support women are lacking.
- **WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP:** Arenas for young women to exercise voice and take part in decision making are lacking.

<sup>1</sup> The Government of Nepal defines youth as individuals aged from 16 to 40.

<sup>2</sup> UN DESA Policy Brief No. 67: Protecting and mobilizing Youth in COVID-19 Response.

<sup>3</sup> Presented during Gender and Humanitarian Action Team Meetings (April – June 2020)

## RECOMMENDATIONS FROM YOUTH:

### IMMEDIATE RELIEF:

- The government should **include sanitary pads** in the list of essential items for women, adolescent girls, and sexual and gender minorities.
- The government should put in place **measures for survivors/victims of violence** to safely access support services and justice.
- The **coordination** between municipalities to address the issue of returning migrants should be improved to contain transmission and protect the rights of migrants.

### EARLY RECOVERY:

- The burden of **unpaid care work** must be recognised to promote sustainable solutions for women and girls.
- **Employment programmes** for youth must be ensured to secure sources of livelihood and stimulate economic growth.

## YOUTH INITIATIVES RESPONDING TO COVID-19<sup>3</sup>

### ONLINE DISCUSSIONS ON MENSTRUAL HEALTH

To address the unavailability of sanitary pads and stigma around menstrual health, Pad2Go has focused on addressing harmful practices in menstrual health through weekly discussions on social media.

*Pad2Go is a social enterprise aiming to create a positive change in the menstrual health sector through innovative ideas and outreach programs. They also provide sanitary vending machines and organise dialogues in schools with male and female students to normalize the conversations around menstrual health.*

## PERCEPTION SURVEY ON WOMEN'S COPING MECHANISMS DURING COVID-19

To bridge the gap in data on women and girls, Ujyalo Foundation is currently undertaking a perception survey to explore women's coping mechanisms in the current COVID-19 context, including a mapping of online skills to bridge the digital divide. The organisation is also facilitating discussions for young women on self-care and mental health.

*Ujyalo Foundation is a feminist organisation working for young women's leadership and economic empowerment. The organisation is also working with Deputy Mayors and women leaders in all provinces to establish online social networks groups to share information and organize discussions on online safety.*

## YOUTH DIALOGUE TO PROMOTE SOCIAL COHESION

When Muslim and Hindu youth clashed in Kaprivastu and Udaypur, AYON member organisations facilitated a radio dialogue between the two groups to decrease tensions and ensure social cohesion.

*AYON is a national network of 92 youth-led organizations in Nepal. It aims to bring youth organizations together to provide a common platform for collaboration, cooperation, joint actions.*

## STRENGTHENING REPORTING SYSTEMS AND DATA COLLECTION IN PROVINCE 7

UNDP Accelerator Lab in Nepal has partnered with **Cellapp Innovations**, a youth led enterprise, to develop an application called "SmartPalika" to assist the local governments in Sudurpaschim Province in COVID-19 preparedness and response. The application has features related to pre-reporting of immigrants, quarantine management, as well as communication and coordination between local governments and the federal government.

<sup>3</sup> Presented during the sixth Gender and Humanitarian Action Team Meeting on 21 May 2020.

## GLOBAL POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FROM YOUTH<sup>4</sup>

1

Provide universal health coverage, including for all young persons, and ensure that health systems effectively meet the needs of youth in the time of COVID-19 and throughout the recovery phase, including public health promotion, testing and treatment, and provision of mental health services.



2

Promote accurate public health information through various communication tools and empower young people to make evidence-based decisions regarding their health, while also proactively contributing to prevention and mitigation.



3

Maintain or increase funding and investments in young people's health, education and skills development, entrepreneurship, and expand their employment opportunities, improve work conditions, and enhance their civic participation.



4

Adapt the delivery of education, through digital and non-digital methods from early childhood to tertiary education to ensure continued skills acquisition and learning, with particular attention to the needs of young women and girls.



5

Develop policies that reach vulnerable and marginalised youth, including migrants and refugees, youth living in rural areas, adolescent girls and young women, indigenous and ethnic minority youth, young persons with disabilities, young people living with HIV/AIDS, young people of different sexual orientations and gender identities, and homeless youth.



6

Strengthen national capacities to collect, analyse and disseminate data disaggregated by age, gender, and other population characteristics, especially for addressing the most marginalized and vulnerable youth groups during and after this pandemic.



7

Ensure that social protection systems include all young people, with special attention to those who are not covered by current social protection measures.



8

Consult and engage youth in the development of health, economic and social interventions in response to COVID-19 and in its recovery.



9

Promote innovation by youth for the prevention and treatment of COVID-19, and the management of its corollary socioeconomic impacts.



10

Respect, promote and protect the human rights of young people, including the right to non-discrimination.



<sup>4</sup> UN DESA Policy Brief No. 67, *Protecting and Mobilizing Youth in COVID-19 Response*

*This Gender and Equality Update has been consolidated by UN Women on behalf of the Gender in Humanitarian Action Task Team (GIHA TT). The Task Team is chaired by UN Women and organized in close cooperation with the Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizens (MOWCSC), Development Partners and Civil Society Organizations that includes diverse women and excluded groups and their wider networks.*

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