



## INTERNATIONAL WEBINARS AND LIVE EVENTS

### Webinar: Children and Youth During Covid-19: Their Rights and as Human Rights Defenders

29 April 2020, by **ASEAN, Forum ASIA & Child Rights Coalition Asia**

\* Moderated by **Hazelyn Joy Bitaña**, Program Manager, CRC ASIA

*Human rights defenders should be seen as champions of human rights. Children and youth need to be provided with the space to express their views, child-friendly platforms and venues, information about their rights and the situation around them. They should not only be listening, but acting.*

**Main questions:** *What are the challenges faced by children and youth? How the youth activists continue their work? What support do they need? What are the key recommendations for the responsible governmental and intergovernmental bodies? How can we strengthen collaboration between youth, civil society and government?*

**Rosinni Basu**, Regional Advisor on Adolescent Development & Participation, UNICEF

**Features of Meaningful Adolescent Participation:** 1. Space (safe and inclusive opportunity to form and express views); 2. Voice (expression of views must be facilitated freely in a medium of choice); 3. Influence (the view must be acted on as appropriate); 4. Audience (the view must be listened to).

**Engagement Modalities:** Digital media interaction, establishing Caucuses, co-creating content, local planning, volunteerism, campaign engagement, youth champions, seeking up local networks.

**Impact of Covid-19 on child and adolescent well-being:** some overarching concerns:

- Learning & livelihood disruptions – impact on overall wellbeing;
- Breakdown of social networks, peer associations – impact on mental health;
- Increased gender-based violence, rise in domestic violence, limitations to seeking help;
- Children from vulnerable groups (LGBTIQ youth, adolescents with disabilities, religious / ethnic groups) deal with stigma and violence.
- Reduced access to services and supplies affect young people disproportionately;
- Girls at risk of forced marriages, unwanted pregnancies;
- Illegal migration, human trafficking.

### Moving Forward – Building back better post Covid-19:

- Transitioning back to the “new normal”: back to schools, using public transport;
- Reconnect, re-build social networks;
- Understanding and using virtual space for personal growth, engagement, response, including knowing about online safety and protection measures;
- Exploring how to be more connected with your community;
- Dialogue, outreach with duty bearers: how to seek help and provide support.

**Ruthra Mary Ramachandran**, Young Scholar and Activist of Southeast Asian Studies, University of Malaya;

The young will bear the brunt of the Covid-19 **socio-economic fallout**. Covid-19 will exacerbate the gap between skills and employment as the number of available jobs drops

**Certain groups** of youth, comprising of youth with disabilities, migrants, geographically remote communities, or with less digital access are further pushed into dire predicament. It is essential to ensure equal representation of youth's training and participation in the post-Covid environment.

**Consequences of Youth Economic Vulnerabilities:** Financial insecurities among young people; Lack of affordable housing; Contributing to other social problems (drug use and crime), mental health issues. → the consequences do not only impact the individuals, but have a heavy impact on regional and national political and socioeconomic stability.

**Key recommendations:** Strengthen private-public sector partnerships; Invest in deepening and expanding social safety net; Regularisation of the usability of remote work; The need to develop a standard-setting instrument.

**What does the new normal anticipates from the Youth:** Leading adaptively in times of crisis; Entrepreneurial mindset; Creating impactful relationships; Crisis management.



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**Astried Permata**, General Coordinator, Pamflet, Indonesia, speaking on **Covid-19 in Indonesia**

Indonesia is late in responding to Covid-19; Marginalized communities affected the most; escalation in domestic violence by women and children.

**The impact on Human Rights Workers:** trainings and activities postponed; difficult to conduct protest; work patterns change, mental health issues arise. **Things Youth groups do to adapt:** Media briefings, public discussions, IG live collaboration, digital activation, donations, use of social media (Twitter, WhatsApp...). **Main Obstacles:** 1. Bank account imposture; 2. Internet and data privacy; 3. Online gender-based violence; 4. Criminalisations towards expression.

**Conclusions:** wider use of online meeting platforms and video streaming; taking privacy more seriously; youth attempt to achieve social change from their homes; despite all the challenges, youth do not stop.

**Mueda Nawanat**, Young Human Rights Defender, Thailand, speaking on the **situation and challenges faced by young people in Thailand, Myanmar, Laos. The effect of the lockdown:**

- Schools closed until July 2020 – digital divide: students in rural areas cannot access study online.
- Youth activity and action stopped, including capacity building activities.
- The loss of jobs and income by parents.
- Migrant workers can no longer support their families which may lead to drop out of the schools, child labour, and child trafficking.
- Vulnerable groups (stateless people, migrant workers, refugees (Thai-Myanmar border), homeless people) cannot access the state welfare.

**Supporting the community** during the pandemic: the youth translated information about Covid-19 into local languages; the information was spread both online and offline; online Covid-19 awareness activities (a Facebook group, a video, an online flash mob #MobFromHome); made handmade face shields and. **Advocating for change** during the pandemic: fundraising for the communities, sharing and exchanging of food.

**Key recommendations** that need to be considered by ASEAN:

- ASEAN must develop mechanisms for the welfare for the stateless people, migrants, refugees, and homeless so as to protect and support these vulnerable groups.
- ASEAN state must stop the approval of development projects during the lockdown;
- Provide online education for all and ensure freedom of expression.

### Open Forum Questions:

What are some innovative ways to reach children in the rural areas? (→ through local health and social workers). On Education: were children involved in the decision-making on school-closure (→ generally, they were not). What about technical and vocational students for whom the practical experience is essential? (there are online programs that strive to ensure some sort of continued practice online). There is an increased rate of suicides in Thailand – what is the government doing about it? (--The dedicated phone support lines were created). The participation of children and youth with disabilities should also be ensured.

**Closing Remarks** by **Yuyum Fahni Paryani**, Indonesia's Representative to the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC) who provided an overview of existing legal mechanisms on the national, regional and international level, reminding that ASEAN declaration is not legally binding. She also touched upon the topics of mental health issues, post-pandemic situation, and an upcoming ASEAN Declaration Summit on Covid-19 (which will, however not include the discussion of how the vulnerable groups are affected). **Fatimah Zahran** spoke about the importance of access to education and access to information, especially for vulnerable groups, as well as the need of solidarity. She also announced the "Youth: open space – a virtual space for young Southeast Asians to meet, connect, share and converse" coming up on 10 May 2020.