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Introduction

Welcome

Welcome to the first Global Forum for Children and Youth (CY21), which will take place virtually from 7 to 9 December 2021. The Global Forum will become the place that establishes the state of the world’s children and young people on a regular basis and brings decision makers and influencers together with young voices to invest in children and make meaningful change.

Overview

The Global Forum for Children and Youth will bring together children and young people themselves, along with leaders across the United Nations, government, business, and civil society, as well as authors, artists and influencers, to:

- Focus on the urgent needs of children and young people
- Commit to actions to improve child rights and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
- Gather the money and resources needed to achieve results

Why another global event?

This is not just another global event. This is about bringing people together to find new and radical solutions to problems we have long been trying to solve. Importantly, this event is about action. It is about making sure the right decisions are made, the money is available to make them happen and that the promises made are kept.

The right time is now

As COVID-19 vaccines are being distributed and administered, it is possible to imagine an end to the pandemic. But fast action is still needed to prevent children and young people from suffering the lasting effects this pandemic has had on their childhood. Going back to normal will not be enough. We need the recovery to bring us the fairer, greener future as laid out in the SDGs. We must change our world, and we must do it now.

Now is the time to demand that the rights and needs of children are no longer overlooked.

Please join us in making CY21 a huge, global success. This is an opportunity for us all to work together, to listen to one another and be creative in our thinking and committed to the actions needed to solve these problems.

How you can get involved

- Tell people about the Global Forum for Children and Youth via your social media and with your contacts.
- Participate online, offer your ideas, questions, key messages during the Global Forum via social media.
- Engage with your families, your friends, your school, youth networks and the decision-makers of the locality you live in on the important themes discussed during the event!
Getting Started

*Nothing about us, without us!* Children and young people are at the centre of the conversation. The Global Forum for Children and Youth will create the first annual moment for the world to listen to children and young people and work with them to find sustainable solutions.

1. **Co-Creation** – Children and youth have co-created CY21, advising on themes, content, and speakers.

2. **Consultation** – Children and youth were consulted throughout the development of the Spotlight and Plenary sessions.

3. **Contribution** – Children and youth are contributing as panellists, speakers, and moderators across most sessions.

*Your participation is helping make this critical event a success in building a future fit for every child, for every young person.*
Who: is at the table

We ask partners in government, business, philanthropy and civil society and all others with a stake in the future of childhood to join us at this critical moment, bringing their expertise, influence and commitment to bear for children and young people around the world.

Specifically, we invite all to:

• Support the call to put children and young people at the centre of plans to recover and rebuild
• Work together to build commitments that progress child rights and achieve SDGs and other global goals
• Announce those commitments as part of the event
• Encourage additional partners, influencers and others to join

Our Partners

Governments & Policymakers

• The governments of Botswana and Sweden
• National Leaders, Prime Ministers, Presidents
• Ministers and Representatives
• International Leaders
• UN representatives
• The Elders

Experts

• Children and young people
• Parents and carers
• Educators
• Organisations that work for and with children
• Researchers and academics who study issues related to children

Business & Institutions

• Corporate CEOs
• International Financial Institutions
• Academic Institutions
• Political Institutions

Individuals

• Philanthropists & donors who have resources to share
• Actors, poets, artists who can reach a large audience
• Organisers, leaders and influencers who can amplify messages and organise actions at scale
What: is the focus each day

Day 1
The World at Large
Global issues such as climate and conflict that affect the lives and future of all people.

Day 2
The World Around the Child
National and local essential services for children such as education, healthcare, and social supports.

Day 3
The World of the Child
Issues that can affect children’s daily lives, like violence and mental health.

Within these tracks, the issues that matter most to children and young people and require urgent attention to meet the ambition of the SDGs include:

- taking effective action on [climate change];
- responding to [humanitarian] crises;
- recouping COVID-related learning losses and reimagining [education] more broadly;
- supporting families living in or at increased risk of poverty and strengthening care systems, including family-friendly policies;
- and supporting the [mental health] of children, young people, parents, and caretakers.
Where: are the discussions

CY21 will feature a range of sessions, enabling participants to select the topics and opportunities of most interest to them. Session types include:

**Plenary sessions**
Featuring thought leaders, children and youth and other participants; only one session at a time to ensure full audience attention; open to media; organised by UNICEF event team and co-hosts.

**Spotlight sessions**
Featuring thought leaders, children and youth and other speakers; 2-3 sessions at a time to ensure large audience attention; open to media; organised by UNICEF event team and session co-leads.

**TED Talks**
Get inspired by tuning in to one of the TED Talks by children and young people at the event. Hear their experiences on many of the themes raised during CY21.

**Community sessions**
Featuring a variety of participants. These sessions are organised by partners. There can be multiple sessions running at any one time and they can be on or off the record.
How: I can get involved
#ChildYouthForum

Social media

- **Children takeover** – Ask the organization or network you are involved with if you can take over their social channel for the day to do live commentary on the Forum.
- **Amplify event on social media** – Use your social channels to amplify youth voices before, during and after the event. Go to the end of this guide to see what children are saying. Tag your local organisations.
- **Tweet and comment on the live event** – Using the hashtag #ChildYouthForum to join the conversation during the event, ask questions, make comments, give inputs and feedback.

Start a local conversation

- If you’re feeling inspired so far, why not **approach your school, university or local community organization** to bring people together to engage with the content and topics of CY21 and how they impact you and your peers. This could take the from of a viewing followed by a discussion, a debate, or a school assembly. Don’t be afraid to get creative and incorporate art, spoken word, music or other creative forms.
- **Decide on your topic/s** – What is important to young people in your region, what topic(s) can you take action on locally.
- **Invitations** – **if possible, you could** invite some local experts who can speak on the topic, be they children, academics, researchers, or other organizations working on the topic. Invite children and young people who are interested (try to reach those children who don’t often have a chance to engage in this type of event. Invite decision makers who can influence the issue (like a school principal, local counselor, business leader, etc.).
- **Spread awareness** – work with your school/university media, local community forums and social media to share the outcomes and raise further awareness.
Engagement Tips

- Stay safe—make sure you protect your privacy and check your settings on social media and if you are doing anything in person (like hosting a discussion) work with a trusted adult to help make sure that everyone has a safe and enjoyable time.
- Use everyday language when communicating with people—not everyone is an expert on these topics.
- Be positive, warm, inspiring
- Respect differences of opinion and make sure that that even when there is disagreement, people are respectful of each other.
- Be constructive
- Use forward-thinking language
- Use real words and stories but respect people’s right to privacy
Getting Prepared: 3 Day Agenda

What is on the agenda

Climate Change

The global climate crisis is a child rights crisis. It poses a major threat to children’s survival, health, education, development, and future potential. This is especially true for the most vulnerable children, who overwhelmingly live in areas that are more vulnerable to climate shocks.

Even under the most optimistic forecasts, the repercussions of climate change will worsen in the near term, with extreme weather events such as hurricanes, droughts and floods destroying the clinics and schools that children rely on for their health and development. These weather events also cause contamination in water and sanitation facilities – leading to diseases such as cholera and diarrhoea, the latter of which is still a top killer of children worldwide.

In recent years, we have seen children and young people unite in a call for action. However, many governments, businesses and other institutions have not listened to or responded to these demands adequately. The COP16 Accord calls for public and private sector donors to supply $100 billion per year to developing countries to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement – a target that has yet to be met. Additional investment will be required at the national, corporate, and individual levels to truly realize the fairer, greener future envisioned by the Global Goals. Learn more

Key facts.

- Around 450 million children live in areas of high or extremely high-water vulnerability. This means they do not have enough water to meet their everyday needs. (UNICEF)
- The first 20 years of this century have seen a “staggering” rise in climate disasters, there were 7,348 recorded disaster events worldwide, during the last two decades. Approximately 1.23 million people died. (UNDRR)
- It is estimated that approximately 90% of climate-related health effects will be borne by children under five years of age. (UNICEF)
- Global surface temperature was 1.09°C higher in the decade between 2011-2020 than between 1850-1900. The past five years have been the hottest on record since 1850 (IPCC)

Be Inspired by Others

Climate Activists in action

Resource Yourself

Toolkit for young climate activists
Voices of Youth Climate Toolkit

Sessions to attend

Post-COP26: How climate adaptation action can help the most at risk
Child protection in climate related disasters: A perspective
Showcasing YOMA (Youth Agency Market Place)
Theresa Rose Sebastian, India

For me, my journey began in 2018 with the floods in my native home of Kerala, in India. These floods were extremely dangerous and unfortunately took the lives of hundreds and left more missing. I was lucky and only had financial losses. But the fear of wondering what will happen when I wake up, is a fear I haven’t forgotten.

When I returned to Ireland, where I study, I knew I had to do something. I was extremely privileged being able to return to Ireland “unscathed” when my home was in ruins. I educated myself and decided, if this is the fight to protect the land and people I love, then this is the fight I shall fight.

I have been working in this sphere for 3 years now. My journey has taught me the importance of communities and grassroot actions. It has shown me the power of education. I have learned skills of negotiating, planning and organising - key skills I wouldn’t have picked up otherwise.

It has shown me how important my values are to me and the circles I engage myself in. My journey has also given me the opportunity to have met, worked with and befriended some of the most beautiful, inspiring and passionate people I have ever met. I wouldn’t change a thing!

But I do not want to be campaigning for climate justice when I am supposed to be teaching my kids how to draw. I do not want to be organising talks and strikes when I should be preparing for my wedding day. I do not want to have to pull an oxygen mask over my child’s face as I show them the leftovers of what used to be my home in India.

I want the future to be clean, to be sustainable. I want a future without injustices, without fossil fuels and where communities are taking the lead. I want to reinvent the way we see our political systems - with more circular communication styles. I no longer want to see profit and greed over the good of the people. I want a justice-oriented world, a justice filled future.

As a youth activist, what was your experience of COP26 and the surrounding events? To be quite honest, I came to COP26 with hope. Most would have called me naive for doing so, but I still came with the hope that governments would finally tear away from their greed and work to create a better world. The truth is now, I am heartbroken, disappointed and betrayed. I have met with island & Global South negotiators who have told me that the richer countries spend more time debating the existence of a comma than they do discussing how they can contribute to the change. Even within the 4 walls of COP26, young people and frontline communities were unable to access the negotiation spaces. Deliberately or not, this greatly restricted the involvement of civil society, young people and frontline communities in COP26.

What is your opinion on the agreement? The agreement itself has good and bad elements to it, but it isn’t enough. It is barely keeping the trajectory to a 1.5-degree world alive. They called it a compromise, but I call it a loosely tied raft that is barely holding the futures of our island nations, indigenous and frontline communities together. Many island nations expressed their pain of returning to their homes knowing that this agreement didn’t protect them. Many of these nations are watching their homes being washed away every day, and watching their culture and history follow suit.

What is next for the climate movement and your own activism after Glasgow? For me personally, Glasgow has shown me quite clearly that justice and change will never come from these elite spaces where government leaders whine over a comma. It will come from the people. We can and we will unite together to dismantle this oppressive system and achieve true and just liberation for all. We are our own hope. We are the present and we will create a just and sustainable future. You are a part of the change; you are a part of the hope, and you can join us.

Theresa Rose Sebastian
What is on the agenda

Violence Against Children

Violence against children takes many forms. It can be physical, emotional or sexual. It happens in all countries and any setting – in a child’s home, community, school and online. In some parts of the world, violent discipline is socially accepted and common. And for many girls and boys, violence comes at the hands of the people they trust – their parents or caregivers, teachers, peers and neighbours.

But the most devastating types of violence are often hidden from public view. Perpetrators go to great lengths to conceal their acts, leaving children – especially those who lack the capacity to report or even understand their experience – vulnerable to further exposure.

Violence affects all children. But children living with disabilities or HIV and AIDS, those suffering extreme poverty, girls and boys in institutional care, and children separated from their families or on the move – as migrants, refugees or asylum seekers – face the greatest risk. Sexual orientation, gender identity and belonging to a marginalized social or ethnic group also heightens a child’s chance of suffering violence. Learn more

Key facts.

- Some 15 million adolescent girls aged 15–19 have experienced forced sex in their lifetime. (UNICEF)
- In a majority of countries, more than 2 in 3 children are subjected to violent discipline by caregivers (UNICEF)
- Globally, half of students aged 13–15 experience peer-to-peer violence in and around school. (UNICEF)
- Every 7 minutes, somewhere in the world, an adolescent is killed by an act of violence. (UNICEF)
- Worldwide, 3 in 4 young children are regularly subjected to violent discipline by their caregivers. (UNICEF)

Be Inspired by Others

Gender based violence – A Story of Hope in Lebanon

Resource Yourself

Cyberbullying: What is it and how to stop it
End Violence in School
End Violence Against Children Podcast

Sessions to attend

Online harms to children and the movement to keep kids safe
Disrupting Harm: Evidence on online child sexual exploitation and abuse
The experience of marginalized children
Together to #ENDviolence
Impacts of conflict and COVID-19 on violence against children
Messages from children and youth in Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon & Syria

Images with captions:
1. Violence breaks my trust with others. Hasan, 13, Syria
2. Together we volunteer to build our society. Shadi, 14, Syria
3. Don’t sell yourself short. Rawan
4. Today’s youth, tomorrow’s leaders. Saber, 24, Zaatari Camp, Jordan
5. Don’t make fun of others, be their support system. Layan, 10, Syria
6. The way you think, decides your happiness or sadness, be positive’ ABDullah, 19, Syria
7. Violence destroys my personality and my dignity. Samer, 13, Syria
8. Together we volunteer to build our society. Shadi, 14, Syria
9. Don’t sell yourself short. Rawan
10. Today’s youth, tomorrow’s leaders. Saber, 24, Zaatari Camp, Jordan
11. Don’t make fun of others, be their support system. Layan, 10, Syria
12. The way you think, decides your happiness or sadness, be positive’ ABDullah, 19, Syria

Images with quotes:
1. Youth have an important role in leading change in our societies. Mohammed, 20, Syria
2. Having a mental issue is not a bad thing. I just need the right mental care’ Yazan, 14, Syria
3. Don’t be miserable, life has beautiful moments. Ayah, 11, Syria
4. Violence breaks my trust with others. Hasan, Syria
5. By working together, we will build a life. Lujain, 10, Syria
6. Don’t let violence get to you, you’re the leaders of tomorrow. Mothuen, 16, Syria
7. Listen to the voices of young people. Hussien, 24, Iraq
8. Don’t ever underestimate yourself’ Farah, 23, Jordan
9. Be a good and do good so you can succeed in life’ Bisher, 11, Syria
10. If poverty was a man, I’d have killed him’ Jaafar, 25, Iraq
11. Our strengths come from our weaknesses. Abdalhade, 22, Syria
12. Don’t ever underestimate yourself’ Farah, 23, Jordan

Images with messages:
1. Stop violence against children. Rana, 24, Lebanon
2. Listen to the youth. Latifa, Lebanon
3. If you have money that you can help people with, please give it. Abdelghani, 14, Syria
4. Don’t ever underestimate yourself’ Farah, 23, Jordan
5. To be mentally healthy means you can think clearly. Mahmoud, 14, Syria
6. Be a good and do good so you can succeed in life’ Bisher, 11, Syria
7. Our strengths come from our weaknesses. Abdalhade, 22, Syria
8. #Children Are Our Future
What is on the agenda

Learning and Skilling

The COVID-19 pandemic has sharpened the world’s focus on education and heightened awareness of the inequities in access to quality learning, including gender disparities in education and the digital divide. Schools for more than 168 million children globally have been closed for almost a full year. With every day that goes by, these children will fall further behind and the most vulnerable will pay the heaviest price.

At the same time, it has also generated unique momentum for change and shown that we have the tools we need to craft a modern education that builds the skills children and adolescents need – including in literacy and numeracy, and transferable, digital, entrepreneurial, and job-specific skills.

With the stakes so high, the world should not spare any effort to keep the schools open or prioritize them in reopening plans. Children cannot afford another year of school closures; especially the poorest and most marginalized ones. Learn more

Key facts.

- An estimated 617 million children and adolescents around the world are unable to reach minimum proficiency levels in reading and mathematics, even though two thirds of them are in school. (UNICEF)
- By 2030, it is estimated that 825 million children will not acquire the basic secondary-level skills – like transferable, digital and job-specific skills – needed to support lifelong learning and employment. (UNICEF)
- Through the COVID-19 pandemic, 191 countries have implemented countrywide school closures, affecting 1.6 billion learners worldwide. (UN)
- 2.2 billion — or two-thirds of children and young people aged 25 years or less — do not have internet access at home (UNICEF)
- Education for children in emergency situations is severely underfunded and under-resourced. Currently only 2.6 per cent of humanitarian funds go to education. (UNICEF)

Be Inspired by Others

Plan International Activists Changing Our World #EducationShiftsPower
Tech Trailblazers from around the world
#Transformededucation UNGEI Education Activists in action

Resource Yourself


Sessions to attend

Not letting it go: Remediing pandemic learning losses
Digital learning 2.0: Scaling up learning and skills
Skills4Girls! Girl-centered solutions for empowerment
Here is what children & young people from Latin America are saying about their education.

“Education has to prepare us to become global citizens, there are many realities that we do not consider, learning programs such as culture or sexuality are not updated, they remain in the basics.” Emely (Costa Rica)

“Schools are now teaching us to become employees, to follow orders, they need to encourage divergent thinking, encourage leadership.” Paulina (Mexico)

“Mental health is very important. Most adolescents have suffered during the pandemic and now going back to school is difficult for them. We need to have hope and trust that things will get better, and we will survive.” Annabella (Venezuela)

“Ideal education should contemplate four axes: environmental education, emotional education, sexual and reproductive education and intercultural or pluricultural education.” Alejandro (Ecuador)

“Most adults believe that not listening to young people is fine, we have to listen without making remarks, or commenting, that does not let us learn.” Diego (Paraguay)

“Accessibility - create spaces where all can participate.” Eileen (Guatemala)

“Something that no longer works in schools is to believe that all children and adolescents have access to connectivity, in my class we were 36 classmates and during the pandemic we only connected 5 to classes.” Juan Felipe (Colombia)

“It’s important to think about how people living in rural areas are going to be able to access these new methods of virtual education.” Jesús (Ecuador)

“I want an innovative education, innovating in the way of teaching, not only theoretical education, but a practical education, a transformative education where we become agents of change.” Anna (Bolivia)
What is on the agenda

Mental Health

Poor mental health in childhood and adolescence prevents children from fulfilling their rights and reaching their true potential. All children and adolescents, and their parents and caregivers, are at risk of poor mental health outcomes. However, risks are particularly acute for the most vulnerable, for example, those who live in humanitarian emergencies in poverty, those facing violence, neglect, and abuse in the home, or those living with disabilities. In different contexts, race and gender can also play a role in determining mental health outcomes.

Early childhood issues around the absences of nurturing caregiving and or regular exposure to adverse or harmful experiences in childhood (from birth to age 18) can cause an ongoing stress response and have serious impacts on children’s immediate and long-term health, development, and wellbeing.

Adolescence is a time of significant psychological, physical, and social change which can also heighten the risk of mental health and psychosocial problems. COVID-19 has put the mental health and well-being of an entire generation at risk with the potential for long-term poor mental health consequences among children, young people, and their parents and caregivers across all corners of the globe.

Worldwide, the majority of those who need mental health care do not have access to good quality support and services. Learn more

Key facts.

- It is estimated that 166 million or more than 13% of adolescents aged 10-19 live with a diagnosed mental disorder as defined by World Health Organisation (UNICEF)
- Anxiety and depression make up about 40 per cent of these diagnosed mental disorders. Depression alone is on track to be the leading disease burden in the next ten years. (UNICEF)
- An estimated 45,800 adolescents die from suicide each year, or more than 1 person every 11 minutes. (UNICEF)
- Half of all mental health conditions start by 14 years of age but most cases, while treatable, go undetected and untreated. Suicide is the third leading cause of death in 15-19 year-olds. (WHO)

Be Inspired by Others

#EnMiMente - Conversaciones sobre salud mental con adolescentes de la región

Resource Yourself

Voices of Youth Breaking the Stigma

Sessions to attend

The role of girl led action in shaping adolescent policies
Future of youth mental health: What’s participation, really?
I Support My Friends’ innovation sprint pilot in Lebanon

What’s on your mind?

Hear us roar
Peachy Liv uses her platform to advocate for children’s rights

Olivina Maskan, also known as Peachy Liv, is 18-year-old activist and content-creator from Indonesia. Her purpose in life is to contribute as much as possible in progressing the world’s quality of education and supporting social equality by utilizing the power of social media channels. Read her blog for World Children’s Day and discover other young leaders advocating for children’s rights here.

“What effect does constant depressing news cause for young people during the pandemic? I had never once questioned the notion that children should be the ones fighting for change until my 9-year-old brother said, ‘It hurts me to be born in a chaotic world... I have to be a hero that defeats all the bad people and makes them cry!’ As he broke down crying in front of me, my heart broke to know that children feel the burden of fixing issues we did not cause.

Young people could easily believe that the other guys must be entirely bad and wrong if we are the good guys. Is it good for us to grow up so sure of our righteousness that we forget how we, too, have flaws to reflect on and improve? Young activists should be confident but willing to listen empathetically and see wrong from right while acknowledging subjectivity. The good guy vs. bad guy paradigm is detrimental to conversation and negotiation with the opposite side, which we need most.

How do we know if a child is ready to be a change-maker? As children, we should wait until we develop the emotional capacity to understand nuance, gray areas, and why people could differ in opinion. That way, when we are speaking up, it is driven by our moral compass, open-mindedness, and values instead of rage.

How do we know if we have found those personal values? Finding what matters most to me came from the unpleasant experiences I faced in school, which shook me to the core and left a burning desire to stop the harmful cultures occurring in the education system. I asked myself, ‘How do I reimagine the future of education? And what skills could I utilize in bringing that vision to reality?’

First, education should be free of cheating culture. So, I created a campaign called ‘#JujurItuKeren’, which led 7,000 Indonesian students to advocate against this issue. Second, students should be taught learning skills and techniques. Through my YouTube account, Peachy Liv, I created hundreds of videos about social and educational issues that have impacted more than 54 million young viewers. Third, learning should be driven by curiosity instead of competition to get the highest grades. So, I published two educational books, You(th) and You(th) Academia, about how young people could use emotional intelligence and curiosity in developing personal strengths. Lastly, every child should be equipped with critical thinking skills. Therefore, I co-founded an organization called Arise Arose that has impacted 18,000 people.

After four years of working alone, I got more involved in UNICEF and U-Report’s events, facing new opportunities and challenges. Have you ever felt nervous when people start calling you a young activist? That is how I felt when I first got appointed to be a U-Report Ambassador. The word “activist” was overwhelming because being surrounded by so many exceptional activists made me anxious about whether I could be as impressive as them. But I realized that driving change is not about competition to be the most outstanding; it is about collaboration. I reflected, ‘What role do I have in the bigger fight of activism?’ I am an ideator, creator, and leader. From then on, I focused on participating in the bigger picture by combining my skills with others to fight for a common cause.

“Child activists should not feel guilty for taking breaks and enjoying the process. Remember that our fight is a generational marathon, not a one-time race!”
Get Inspired by activists around the world

- Adolescent Girl Toolkit from Iraq
- Reimagine youth skills in Nigeria
- UNICEF Youth Advocates 2021
- Generation COVID
- Voice of Youth on Mental Health
- Indigenous Activists & Movements You Should Know About
- Save the Children Sweden online abuse Nya #Nätsmart: Vågledning för vuxna
- Plan International Activism Blog
- WASH Young Changemakers in East Asia and the Pacific
- WVI Philippines teen fighting online sexual exploitation
- Kesehatan Mental Penting: Kenapa? (satupersen.net)
How to guides and toolkits

The Convention on the Rights of the Child
Save the Children Child Rights Resource Centre
UNICEF Youth Advocacy Guide & Workbook written by African Youth
ENGAGED AND HEARD! Guidelines on Adolescent Participation and Civic Engagement
Blogging 101 - A Voices Of Youth Beginners Guide To Blogging
Plan International Advocacy Toolkit
The Lazy Person’s Guide to Saving the World
SOS Children’s Villages CYPA_toolkit
One Step Beyond: Advocacy handbook for young people and children by Save the Children’s Global Task Group on Violence against Children

Only together can we ensure a future fit for every child
Convention on the Rights of the Child
Thank you