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<p><u>AFRICA</u></p> <p><u>AMERICAS</u></p> <p><u>ASIA</u></p> <p><u>EUROPE</u></p> <p><u>PACIFIC</u></p> <p><u>INFO</u></p>
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✓ UPCOMING EVENTS FOR MAY 2020

DATE	EVENT	LOCATION
3 May 2020	World Press Freedom Day	Melaka, Malaysia
15 May 2020	International Day of Families	Melaka, Malaysia
17 May 2020	World Telecommunication and Information Society Day	Melaka, Malaysia
21 May 2020	World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development	Melaka, Malaysia
29 May 2020	International Day of UN Peacekeepers	Melaka, Malaysia
31 May 2020	World No-Tobacco Day	Melaka, Malaysia



✓ GHANA: NYA TARGETS SLUMS IN COVID-19 PREVENTION CAMPAIGN

Accra, 29 April 2020 - THE National Youth Authority (NYA) is resourcing slum dwellers in the Eastern Region, to take up the campaign against the spread of coronavirus pandemic.

The slum dwellers, made up mostly of the youth, have been encouraged to educate their peers about the need to adhere to protocols and government directives aimed at combating the pandemic, which has claimed thousands of lives across the world.

Currently, Ghana's Covid-19 cases have hit 1,671. According to the Ghana Health Service, the country has also recorded 188 recoveries and 16

deaths.

Although Greater Accra remains Ghana's epicentre with 1,433 cases, the Eastern region has the third highest with 57, right after the Ashanti region which has 84 confirmed cases.

The Eastern Regional Director of the National Youth Authority, Marian Mansa Mina, while expressing optimism about the impact of the public education said, the authority will intensify the program until the country wins the fight against Covid-19.

"It is obvious that when it comes to the NYA, our stakeholders are the youth, and because of this

pandemic, they are now home. Schools have also closed and people are staying home to protect themselves so why not use the youth to spread the campaign?"

"Currently, so many corporate organisations are helping and we believe the youth can help too, that is why the NYA has decided to resource them. This is a voluntary exercise and no one will be paid. We are teaching them about the virus, so they can go out and teach others," she said.

All the youth volunteers, according to the Regional Director, will spend twenty-one days in targeted communities as part of

efforts to send the message to the doorsteps of people.

"This is a 21-day program. The education will be done four times a day and concentration is going to be at the slums. This is mainly because of the lifestyle of the people.

"We are also confident that when the people see familiar faces explaining the dangers of this pandemic and how to fight it, they will be more willing to follow laid down protocols and directives."

[MyJoyOnline]

✓ NAMIBIA: AFRICA'S YOUNGEST APPOINTED MINISTER

Windhoek, 4 April 2020 - FOR a brilliant 23-year-old who is fresh from law school, there are quite a good number of prospects. But it is highly unlikely than any of those prospects would have something to do with becoming an actual member of a country's parliament as a minister appointed by the President.

However, it is not 'highly unlikely' if you are Emma Theofilus who was recently appointed Namibia's Information and Technology Deputy Minister at just 23 years of age.

The law graduate who can be considered Africa's youngest member of parliament was part of President Hage Geingob's list of eight non-voting members announced on Sunday and sworn in

Monday, March 22.

An avid debater, Emma has previously served in various positions at Nanso High School as Deputy Mayor and Deputy Speaker of the Children's Parliament of Namibia.

She has also worked with various youth groups, such as Global Shapers Windhoek. She shone in those ranks and her effort appear to have earned her a spot in the nation's parliament.

"As a former debater and law graduate, you can expect robust debates in parliament. As long as I have the support and guidance, I do not think I would go wrong. I will bank on the experience I have, but I am also willing to take advice and guidance from those that have been there

before me," she is quoted as saying by local media.

As expected, many have questioned the rationale behind her ministerial appointment, citing reservations tied to experience and suitability for the role. But Emma has been quick to quiet those concerns. She maintains that anyone is able to learn, understand and acquaint themselves with the task at hand to be able to do a job.

"I do not think I am special, I do not think I am inexperienced, and I do not think being young or female has anything to do with my appointment. Anything I set myself to and any environment I want to work into, I can do it; so the issue of inexperience does not hold any water," she says.

However, she also admits

that she will not go into the ministry thinking "I know it all", but would acquaint herself with the work already done. Emma says she is not oblivious of the fact that there is more than meets the eye in terms of a deputy ministerial post and that the portfolio requires a lot of coordination.

"Of course the minister, being the head and political appointee, and the deputy minister allow the whole ministerial position to function. It is a supporting role, just like any law has supporting regulations to allow it to function," she says.

"I do not think being a deputy minister is a role that cannot be brought to life, the person should know what they have planned for that position and anybody can do it.



It is not an insignificant role,” she added.

As her first assignment, the incoming deputy minister said she will push for the finalisation of certain critical bills her ministry is busy with. She said some of the bills to be tabled include

access to information and the cyber bill, which are pertinent.

“The Ministry of Information and Communication Technology has an important role to disseminate information of

the government. I feel that needs to be improved so that people know exactly what government plans are underway and the role the government plays,” she said.

She stressed that as a nation, access to

information is important, in terms of human rights and thus it would be a task she would take on in her position.

[WeeTracker Media]

✓ NIGERIA: YOUTH MINISTRY TRAINS OVER 3,000 ONLINE IN DIGITAL SKILLS

Abuja, 4 April 2020 - THE Minister of Youth and Sports Development, Mr. Sunday Dare, has expressed satisfaction that 3,000 Nigerian youths have so far taken advantage of the ministry’ online training and attained competency badges under the ministry’s DY.ng initiative.

The minister disclosed this during the maiden digital conversations with the Nigerian youth hangout on Zoom on Friday.

The programme focused on digital skills prospects for Nigerian youths.

The minister said the training, a product of the ministry’s collaboration with IBM, has been hugely

beneficial to a large number of Nigerian youths who have taken their time to tap into the free online courses during the COVID-19 shutdown to learn and acquire skills in areas of their choice.

More youths continue to sign up for the training, which started two weeks ago when the COVID-19 crisis began in Nigeria, even as it crossed the 3,000 beneficiaries milestone.

The minister urged those that are yet to sign up for the free training to tap into the opportunity during this period, “the badges could add to your curriculum vitae and serve as an added advantage in the job and entrepreneurial market,

which is that the skills will give our youth what we call AA – Added Advantage, to their degrees or diplomas.”

The DY.ng initiative comprises of both online and offline trainings in a wide range of areas such as Web Development, Cloud, Blockchain, Enterprise Design Thinking, Data Science and Analytics, Artificial Intelligence, Coding, Internet of Things, APIs and Microservices, Containers and Kubernetes, Cybersecurity, Quantum Computing, DevOps, amongst others.

The courses are to be delivered to over 500,000 Nigerian youths in various centres across the country over the next two years but

due to the national shutdown only the online are currently accessible and the rate at which our youths are studying is nothing short of impressive.

Meanwhile, the ministry has continued to work to deliver industry desired skills and training opportunities to the youth through its DEEL programme which was launched at The Ministry’s Africa Youth Day celebration in Abuja last year.

The DEEL programme is set to equip the Nigerian youth with Digital Skills, Employability, Entrepreneurship and Leadership skills.

[The Nation]

✓ SOUTH AFRICA: CHILDREN ARE STILL LOCKED UP IN PRISON THIS FREEDOM DAY

Pretoria, 27 April 2020 - ON Monday we ‘celebrated’ Freedom Day, and in typical South African fashion, memes and jokes were trending about freedom under lockdown. But confinement is no laughing matter for the hundreds of children in South Africa who are truly locked down.

Freedom, one of the most fundamental words in the human rights vocabulary, has become relative. So, although all of us are experiencing restrictions on

our liberty, we are still relatively free compared with those who are deprived of their liberty by an order of court.

In 2019 the United Nations concluded a Global Study on Children Deprived of their Liberty. It found that more than 400,000 children are locked up in detention facilities on any given day and this number grows to millions if one adds children in refugee detention centres, and children in institutions.

The global study found that detention has a profound impact on the mental health of children, at a time when their brains are in a rapid stage of development. This is a perennial cause of deep concern, but right now, during the worldwide Covid-19 crisis, in some countries, we are witnessing a crisis due to overcrowding, disease spread, and even an inability to provide sufficient food to child detainees. To be more accurate, we are not witnessing it, because these

children are hidden from sight.

In a humanitarian crisis caused by infectious disease, there is an inevitable limitation of rights. But it is vitally important that we remain vigilant that these limitations are reasonable, proportionate, time-bound and non-discriminatory. We need to ensure that public health policy is balanced with human rights, including children’s rights.

In international law, the



Convention on the Rights of the Child requires that children should not be detained, “except as a measure of last resort, and for the shortest appropriate period of time”. The Committee on the Rights of the Child, which oversees the implementation of the convention, issued a statement on 8 April, calling on states to “release children in all forms of detention, when ever possible, and provide children who cannot be released with the means to maintain regular contact with their families”.

UNICEF and the Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action have issued guidance regarding children in detention in the past week, and states are being urged to act through three main strategies – preventing any new detentions, releasing children who are currently detained and thereby reducing overcrowding, and ensuring the rights of those remaining in detention.

Many states have started releasing child detainees, including countries as diverse as Australia, Cambodia, Iran and some states of the United States. Although the media carried stories on Monday that sentenced prisoners had been released in South Africa, no mention was made of children. Surprisingly, it seems they were not selected as a category for release.

The data presented by South Africa to the UN Global Study on Children Deprived of their Liberty indicated that there were 1,267 children deprived of their

liberty in the country in June 2018. There were 862 children detained awaiting trial – 110 of whom were in correctional facilities (sometimes referred to as prisons), and 752 in child and youth care centres, run by the Department of Social Development. There were 405 children serving sentences, 132 of whom were in correctional facilities and 273 in child and youth care centres.

June 2018 was the last date on which comparable figures for children deprived of their liberty in South Africa have been in the public domain. This is a concern – data collection and management is essential for an effective system at any time – but it is even more crucial when governments must act in a crisis.

South Africa’s Constitution echoes the Convention on the Rights of the Child that child detention must be a measure of last resort and for the shortest possible period of time. According to the Child Justice Act, children awaiting trial in a child and youth care centre must be brought to court every 30 days, and children in correctional centres must be brought to court every 14 days. This is important so that children can report any concerns at their places of detention, and also for the opportunity to have their detention reconsidered.

At the beginning of lockdown, on 26 March, the Ministry of Justice issued regulations that prevented awaiting-trial detainees held in correctional centres being brought to court, unless for a first appearance, bail

application or where special arrangements had been made. They also required that all matters where children were detained in child and youth care centres were to “be remanded *in absentia*”. The regulations significantly limited the rights of children in correctional centres as they missed their fortnightly opportunity to appear before a magistrate. They also affected the rights of some children in child and youth care centres who may have been due for their monthly appearance in court during that time. But such limitations seemed reasonable and proportionate as they were time-bound. However, as the three weeks became five weeks and with no clear end of lockdown in sight, it is time for changes to be made. The Ministry of Justice is considering urgent measures to allow courts to consider the release of children who are awaiting trial. This will be a welcome adjustment, and the officials should work speedily to get the cases before the courts, and the courts must consider the release of children within the international and constitutional framework.

While the work to release children who are awaiting trial continues, the government should also turn its attention to sentenced children. Correctional Services should consider the immediate release of some categories of child offenders, or introduce early parole procedures. The law does not include parole for children serving sentences in child and youth care centres, but provisions of

the Children’s Act could be used to allow their early release. Monitoring and support in the community could also be introduced for those children released, where this is considered necessary – and it is work that non-governmental organisations could assist with. In the meanwhile, for those children who remain in detention, contact with their families is vitally important. The Committee on the Rights of the Child has advised that “children should at all times be allowed to maintain regular contact with their families, and if not in person, through electronic communication or telephone. If the period of emergency, disaster or state-ordered confinement is extended, consideration should be given to reassessing the measures that prohibit such visits”.

In 2019, South Africa ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture, which requires oversight mechanisms for all persons in places of detention. South Africa’s oversight mechanism for correctional centres is the Office of the Inspecting Judge of Prisons. But other detention centres reside under the oversight mechanisms set up under the South African Human Rights Commission. As Level 4 of the lockdown signals the return of the Chapter 9 institutions to work, it is hoped that they will be visiting the 31 child and youth care centres holding child detainees throughout the country, and ensuring that the rights of all children in those centres are protected.

[Daily Maverick]



✓ TANZANIA: GOVERNMENT TRAINS YOUTH ON OIL AND GAS EXPLORATION

Dodoma, 23 April 2020 - SPECIALISED oil and gas exploration fields now have every reason to smile after the government trained more than 350 youth on the fields that have been conferred with International Accreditation Certificates that enable them to work anywhere in the world.

The training was conducted by the Tanzania Petroleum Development Corporation (TPDC) in collaboration with the Vocational Educational and Training Authority (VETA) and International Oil Companies (IOC's) at a cost of US \$ 4 million.

According to the Energy Ministry, the government through mentioned colleges have also been conducting trainings to qualified Tanzanians in the oil and gas fields, whereas a number of graduates and trainers have benefited.

"All these are done to ensure the country has a good number of qualified personnel in the sector.

VETA has been conducting regular vocational trainings to youth in Lindi and Mtwara regions to enable them secure jobs at oil and gas exploration companies," the ministry stated in its written response to a question from Special Seats legislator, Shamsia Mtamba (CUF).

In her basic question, the MP requested the government to construct a technical college which will specifically offer courses and trainings on oil and gas, taking into consideration that most of the gas

discoveries in Tanzania have been found in Mtwara and Lindi regions.

The ministry highlighted that apart from youth training, VETA, TPDC and IOC have been providing capacity building trainings to entrepreneurs on how to offer various services to people working on natural gas exploration projects. Such trainings have so far benefitted more than 195 entrepreneurs in Lindi and Mtwara regions.

"TPDC has established 32 oil and gas clubs at different primary and secondary schools in the particular regions.

The move aims to educate students on various matters related to the field as well as how oil and gas can economically benefit individuals and the nation," stated the ministry.

Statistics by the Energy Ministry indicates that until March 2020, Tanzania had 57.54 trillion cubic feet of proven natural gas reserves. The natural gas reserves were discovered at various gas exploration fields conducted in deep sea.

The use of gas from natural gas fields in Mnazi Bay and Songo Songo Island started in 2004 and 2006 respectively.

TPDC has already supplied the energy through a network of pipelines to 72 houses at TPDC Estate and 24 housing units at Twiga Estate in Mikocheni.

According to residents who use the energy, its price is 40 per cent cheaper than

other sources of energy like charcoal and Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG).

The cooperation said recently that plans are underway to connect 200 houses along the gas supply network by June, this year.

[All Africa]

NEWS



✓ **BRAZIL: ADVENTIST YOUTH SUPPLY BLOOD BANKS ACROSS BRAZIL**

Brasilia, 16 April 2020 - THE effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have reached blood banks across Brazil, according to health officials. Since much of the population is following shelter-in-place orders, blood donations have decreased, and blood banks are suffering from low inventories.

Regional health officials reported that Rio de Janeiro saw a 50-percent drop in blood donations. São Paulo reported a 30-percent drop, and a 25-percent drop was reported in the capital city of Brasilia. At the same time, the demand for blood in health facilities across the country remains high.

Thinking of ways to serve in these challenging times, young Seventh-day Adventist church members across the country have been organizing to support blood banks in major cities. In São Paulo, for instance, a group named “Doadores ADV” (“Adventist

Donors”) creates schedules to line up volunteer donors in various blood banks across the area.

“We also provide transportation to potential donors from their homes to the nearest blood bank and back,” organizers reported.

In the northern city of Manaus, Adventists have scheduled blood donors’ visits at a local blood bank for every Saturday until the end of 2020. “We plan to donate 4,000 blood bags before the end of the year,” leaders behind the initiative said.

Local and regional drives are part of a more comprehensive initiative across the region, which zeroes in on Jesus’ sacrifice and His followers’ desire to sacrifice something for Him. This year, blood drives were combined with an annual collection drive that takes place around Easter, which seeks to provide comfort and

essential items to people in need.

To ensure the safety of everyone involved in these initiatives, young people are encouraged to donate individually to avoid crowding in blood centers, which are working only by appointment. Organizers advise potential donors to contact their nearest blood bank directly in those places where schedules have not been set.

“We are following all the regulations and standards set by the Ministry of Health,” organizers emphasized.

At the same time, government officials reminded potential donors that a blood bank is one of the safest places to be. “If there is a protected place, it is the blood bank,” said David Uip, a physician and coordinator of the São Paulo Coronavirus Contingency Center.

“Everything is very sterile there, and we strictly follow the health guidelines.”

The Adventist-sponsored blood donor drive was born out of an Adventist youth initiative in 2005. Since then, it has provided Brazilian health centers with thousands of blood and bone marrow donors. Most donations take place around Easter, even though dozens of initiatives take place throughout the year.

The drive combines a community service initiative with the core of the gospel message, leaders said.

“It’s about following the example of Jesus,” they said. “As our drive motto says, ‘He gave it all so you could give away a little.’”

[Adventist Review]

✓ **CANADA: TRUDEAU ISSUES 'CALL-TO-ARMS' TO STUDENTS AFTER \$9B PACKAGE**

Ottawa, 25 April 2020 - IN a move to show Canadians the potential benefits of the \$9 billion package for students having a difficulty finding summer jobs, prime minister Justin Trudeau issues a call-to-arms to those youth on Saturday, urging them to seek work in sectors strained by COVID-19 this summer.

The statement comes after the April 22 funding announcement, which in part supports about \$1,250 in monthly benefits per person from May to August for students who graduated

stretching back to 2019. Trudeau said Saturday that it’s now time for these students to step up and look to fill jobs in areas like medical and senior care - as well as in sectors like agriculture.

“We need your help, too,” Trudeau said to Canada’s youth in his daily press conference. “This is a moment in our country’s history that we will look back on and ask each of ourselves what we did for our community... What did we do to serve our country, to help the world?”

“And as you look at what you can do this summer, please remember there are seniors who need your help,” he continued. “There are frontline workers - including in our medical professions - who could use a helping hand. There are agricultural farmers and producers who’d love to see you step up to help feed Canadians.”

The struggles of all three sectors mentioned have been well publicized, but the situation in senior care homes is especially dire. Both Quebec premier

Francois Legault and Ontario premier Doug Ford have asked Ottawa for more direct intervention - such as Quebec’s April 23 request for 1,000 military personnel to help out.

Trudeau has announced sending some support to these provinces, but added he will not interfere in an area where the jurisdiction is clearly provincial. He added that - while Ottawa is looking at further support, including sending in more military - that it “can’t be more than a short-term answer.”



“Canadians are asking themselves hard questions,” Trudeau said. “We have to answer those questions. We have to find better answers

than the ones we have now... The situation in our long-term care facilities in different parts of this country is absolutely

unacceptable.”

[Delta Optimist]

✓ CAYMAN ISLANDS: EDUCATION MINISTRY TO TRACK STUDENT ‘LEARNING LOSS’

George Town, 28 April 2020 - THE Ministry of Education is implementing methods of tracking ‘learning loss’ for students who have spent the last several weeks being schooled at home during the COVID-19 lockdown.

The ministry, in a statement released Tuesday, said it was “essential” that all primary and secondary schools develop a ‘COVID-19 Education Response Plan’ for the 2020/2021 and 2021/2022 academic years which addresses the loss of learning that will have occurred whilst schools are physically closed to students.

Last week, the ministry officially announced that educational facilities in the Cayman Islands would remain closed until at least the end of the current academic year.

“Monitoring of student progress and achievement during this pandemic is critical. It is recognised that the quality of student learning will not be consistent across households and may not be of the same high quality as provided in schools,” the ministry said in its statement Tuesday.

It added, “Monitoring student progress and achievement will provide the foundation for understanding students’ needs and methods required to address them.”

The ministry is requiring principals of each public and private school to provide “a template to monitor students throughout the pandemic”. These reports must be completed and submitted by each principal by 5pm every Friday, from 1 May to 26 June.

Public school principals are being asked to submit the reports to their respective senior school improvement officer, while the heads of private schools should send them to the education strategy officer in the Ministry of Education.

Once those reports are submitted, a combined report will be presented to the chief officer for education in the Ministry of Education by the following Tuesday of each week.

“The necessary social isolation measures implemented will disrupt school-based education for an extended period of time and will limit opportunities for students to learn in a classroom setting during the period of the shelter-in-place and social distancing orders,” Lyneth Monteith, acting chief officer in the Ministry of Education, said in the statement.

She added, “Recognising these unfortunate effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ministry is moving into the next phase of our education continuity planning. Learning loss for

students is a crucial area to address as we navigate this pandemic. As this pandemic continues to impact the world, it is essential to attend to the educational needs of our children and youth.”

The ministry has issued a policy guidance document to each school.

The guidance from the ministry also addresses ensuring children who regularly received free meals at school can continue to do so, especially at a time when their parents or guardians may be newly unemployed or struggling to provide nutritious meals for their families.

“Monitoring students throughout this pandemic is essential for ensuring students receive meals,” the ministry said.

The ministry also urged schools to make “every reasonable effort to track every student enrolled” to check on their health and welfare. If students cannot be contacted or tracked, the schools are being advised to email Department of Educational Services truancy officers, who may refer cases to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) or Department of Children and Family Services, if necessary, the ministry noted.

The ministry also addressed preparations for the

reopening of schools “to ensure operational readiness once the ‘all clear’ is received from all relevant government authorities”.

Checks would include staff planning, enrolment changes, school sanitation, staff awareness training and provision of special resources to support a range of behaviours displayed by staff and students that are associated with negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the ministry stated.

The statement also quoted Edna Moyle Primary School principal Danielle Duran, who said, “As a full-time educator and mother of two school-aged children, I wholeheartedly empathize with parents and families in relation to the challenges they now face with supporting distance learning at home.

However, I do believe it is crucial that we do our very best to continue providing opportunities for distance learning. We were already pushing extremely hard to get our students up to speed prior to the pandemic.

“Now we are losing critical face-to-face learning time and therefore cannot afford to suspend all activities. Our teachers are working diligently to support students while also maintaining their own personal obligations. We have had a number of changes over the last few



weeks and it is still a work in progress. With this policy guidance, we have added support to review the efficiency of our online

learning platform and to provide parents with as much support as possible. Most importantly to ensure the well-being of our

students remain our top priority.”

[Cayman Compass]

✓ COLOMBIA: YOUTH PUSH THEIR GOVERNMENT TO ADDRESS DEFORESTATION

Bogota, 29 April 2020 - A group of Colombian children and young adults sued their country’s government for making climate change worse by failing to stop deforestation – and they won.

Camila Bustos is a student at Yale Law School and was one of the young plaintiffs in the 2018 case.

“Essentially we were arguing that deforestation in the Amazon is violating our

constitutional right to a healthy environment,” she says, “which in turn threatens other rights such as the right to life, water, food and health.”

Colombia’s Supreme Court ruled in their favor. It ordered municipalities to update their land management plans and develop concrete strategies to reduce deforestation.

The government has been slow in making progress to

comply with the ruling.

Bustos says deforestation in Colombia is a complex social, economic, and political problem, and it won’t be solved overnight. But she says this legal verdict is an important step in the right direction.

“It’s part of a larger puzzle of addressing climate change, and it’s part of the toolkit that we have to tackle this crisis,” Bustos says. “And it has definitely

raised a lot of awareness and put a lot of pressure on the national government.”

And she says it’s yet another example of how young people around the world are leading the charge and demanding climate action.

[Yale Climate Connections]

✓ USA: TAP YOUTH TALENT TO TACKLE COVID-19 CRISIS AND BEYOND

New York, 27 April 2020 - EVEN amidst the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, countries must do more to harness the talents of young people to address the crisis and its aftermath, the UN Secretary-General told the Security Council on Monday during a videoconference meeting to review the five years since its adoption of a landmark resolution on youth, peace and security.

António Guterres said despite youth engagement during this period – including in the 2016 peace process in Colombia and in shaping the Global Compact on Refugees two years later – opportunities for them to contribute remain inadequate.

“The world cannot afford a lost generation of youth, their lives set back by COVID-19 and their voices stifled by a lack of

participation”, he said.

“Let us do far more to tap their talents as we tackle the pandemic and chart a recovery that leads to a more peaceful, sustainable and equitable future for all”.

In presenting his first report on Security Council Resolution 2250, the UN chief listed how COVID-19 has impacted the world’s young people, with more than 1.5 billion of them now out of the classroom.

Youth were already confronting numerous challenges even before the pandemic, including in accessing education, or through being affected by violence and conflict. Those pressing for peace or upholding human rights have been threatened.

Despite these obstacles, young people across the world have joined the

common fight against the coronavirus disease, supporting both frontline workers and people in need. And they continue to push for change.

Gatwal Augustine Gatkuoth Yul, from South Sudan, spent his formative years in a refugee camp in Uganda. He founded the Young-adult Empowerment Initiative (YEI), which supports young refugees in building peace and “unlearning” violence.

Mr. Yul said despite relative peace in his homeland, inter-clan violence, cattle raids and child abductions are among the security issues that persist.

“South Sudan’s youth are not asking for more policy documents and resolutions. We are asking for proactive involvement of youth in all levels of decision-making,” he told ambassadors.

UN Youth Envoy, Jayathma Wickramanayake, spoke of the need for more meaningful partnerships between young people and the civil society organizations and government institutions that work on the youth, peace and security (YPS) agenda.

“To date, there are no national action plans on YPS but I’m pleased to note that in some countries, these are in the process of development”, she reported.

“For a national roadmap to be successful, a participatory, transparent and youth-led process with adequate resources are needed.”

The UN Secretary-General issued a four-point call to action for the Council, urging members to do more to address the various challenges facing young people. He also called for



investment in youth participation, but also in their organizations and initiatives.

“We must strengthen human rights protections and protect the civic space on which youth participation depends”, he continued.

“And fourth, we must emerge from the COVID-19 crisis with a determination to recover better – massively increasing our investment in young people’s capacities as we deliver the Sustainable Development Goals”.

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are considered the blueprint for a better future for all people and the planet.

The deadline to achieve the SDGs is 2030.

[UN News]

NEWS



✓ BAHRAIN: LABOR, YOUTH MINISTRIES SIGN MOU

Manama, 14 April 2020 - LABOR and Social Development Ministry and Youth and Sports Ministry signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) according to which the Youth Ministry will use the electronic system for Non-Government Organizations (NGOs).

The MoU came in implementation of the

decision of the cabinet and within the framework of the support of His Highness Shaikh Nasser bin Hamad Al Khalifa, His Majesty the King's Representative for Humanitarian and Youth Affairs, National Security Advisor and Supreme Council for Youth and Sports Affairs (SCYS) Chairman.

Labor Minister Jameel bin

Mohammed Ali Humaidan, and Youth Minister Aymen Tawfiq Almoayyed, signed the MoU.

The MoU stated that the Labor Ministry will provide Youth Ministry with all necessary information to activate the system in order to perform financial and administrative control procedures on national clubs and youth

empowerment centers.

It also stipulates that the Labor Ministry should receive requests from clubs and youth empowerment centers, and manage the electronic system technically, while Youth Ministry will follow up on all requests in the system.

[News of Bahrain]

✓ BRUNEI: YOUTH FACING UNEMPLOYMENT

Bandar Seri Begawan, 4 April 2020 - TO the outside world, Brunei, the tiny Southeast Asian monarchy, looks like a Shangri La. The country, with a population of less than half a million, has one of the highest gross domestic product (GDP) levels per capita in the world. The benevolent Sultan, once the richest man in the world, has ensured free health and education and highly subsidised food and housing for his subjects.

However, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) 2019 country report, indicating that Brunei has the highest youth unemployment rate among ASEAN nations has raised some troubling questions regarding the economic health of the country and its dependence on the oil and gas sector.

The IMF report says that unemployment has increased to 9.3 percent in 2017 from 6.9 percent in 2014 when the Labour Force Survey was last conducted. The youth unemployment rate increased from 25.3 percent to 28.9 percent, the highest among ASEAN member

states.

According to the Global Least and Stressful Cities Ranking, the capital Bandar Seri Begawan has the second-highest unemployment (6.74 percent) rate among Asian cities.

Dr Abdul Haq, an Indian doctor, who has worked in Brunei for more than 10 years, says this is the result of a combination of multiple factors.

"Somewhere, the government subsidy is also responsible for it. When you're assured of certain things, then you don't look at other avenues of employment. In Brunei, everybody wants a government job, which is a sort of guarantee of a secured future. This is the reason why Bruneian youth don't prefer the private sector because salaries and perks are not as attractive as what is offered in the public sector. Besides, work in the private sector is more demanding," Dr Haq said.

Mr Dean, a fitness instructor, says that "while the numbers are definitely against us because it's based

on per capita, there are definitely issues regarding mismatched skills and irrelevant qualifications. Efforts by the government to encourage self-sustainability has fallen on plenty of deaf ears."

He said people are still waiting for government positions. The mentality of graduates, for example, is still "there are no jobs for me after this" which clearly indicates how many feel that their education entitles them to job security. "Those who do go into the private sector, see it as a mere stepping stone or temporary solution until a government vacancy appears. And this isn't always a graduate problem," he added.

Hafiz Jawawi, an entrepreneur, blaming this mindset in his Facebook post says parents are also a part of the problem as they think a real job or 'work' is when you work for Shell or the government.

However, a former journalist, who doesn't want to be named, has a contrarian view and blames over-reliance on the hydrocarbon sector.

"The economy is just broken and is too skewed in one direction. Too much emphasis on the hydrocarbon sector has not only shrunk the job market but also made different clusters of the economy stagnant," she said, adding that "outside of oil and gas, what do we have? What job opportunities are there?"

Siti Fatimahwati and Dr Siti Rozaidah of Universiti Brunei Darussalam (UBD) in their seminal work 'Addressing issues of unemployment in Brunei: The mismatch between employers' expectations and employees' aspirations', write that the majority of young people seek prestigious jobs and there seems to be a risk-aversion attitude among them. Most young people aspire to jobs that are in the professional, managerial or technical sector, and they have less preference for manual work.

"High income, job security and prestige are the most common characteristics of jobs aspired to by the young people in Brunei. This is a reflection of the social and cultural norms of a rentier



state whereby a job of high income and prestige is preferred over a job that can lead to personal, career development and progression," explained Siti Fatimahwati and Dr Siti Rozaidah.

They say this mindset of relying on government jobs is responsible for a lower preference for jobs in the private sector and other sectors, such as construction and farming, which are considered demeaning and usually done by foreign workers.

They say too much reliance on government jobs has created a culture of risk aversion towards employability among youth. A study by Low et al. (2013) on the mindset of young Bruneians towards entrepreneurship revealed that in a survey of 1,051 youths, only 19 percent wanted to become entrepreneurs whereas 67 percent preferred to work as government employees.

The minuscule private

sector and youth lacking employability skills has further aggravated the situation.

A large proportion of employers say that they had difficulties with recruitment due to the shortage of candidates with the right skills and the shortage of skilful employees in a given field, write Siti Fatimahwati and Dr Siti Rozaidah.

Cognisant of the issue of unemployment, the Sultan of Brunei announced numerous steps towards resolving the problem.

In his New Year's Eve speech, the Sultan announced the establishment of the Manpower Planning and Employment Council (MPEC) for promoting cooperation between industries and educational institutions, to ensure that local graduates from universities and institutes of technical education are employable.

He also touched on the issue of the youth mindset by

cautioning jobseekers against being too particular about employment in industries or private companies, and also advised local entrepreneurs to avoid the practice of letting foreigners run their businesses.

A social media consultant commented that in the good old days when oil was hitting more than US\$140 per barrel everything was hunky-dory.

"The continuous slump in oil prices has created new challenges for the government. Brunei needs to rethink its policy of reliance on the oil and gas sector, which accounts for more than 60 percent of its GDP and over 90 percent of total exports," he said.

While the government has been talking about diversifying the economy for the longest time, promoting tourism and inviting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), it has remained confined to speeches. Nothing concrete

has been done on the ground, he added.

"Being very small in terms of population and size of the economy, Brunei has always feared that if it opens its door to FDI and a foreign workforce it might get overwhelmed," he said, adding that Brunei should learn from Gulf countries, which through diversification have reduced their dependence on the oil and gas sector. Even a country like Saudi Arabia has started diversifying its economy.

Now the time has come for Brunei to introduce major reforms as the IMF has already warned that growth alone may not solve the problem and has recommended a structural labour market reform.

"The notion that Brunei is a utopia that is shielded from turbulent economic and natural forces no longer exists today," he added.

[The ASEAN Post]

✓ CAMBODIA: MINISTRY DISCUSSES CONTRIBUTION TO VULNERABLE CAMBODIANS

Phnom Penh, 29 April 2020 - THE Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation yesterday held a press conference about the present achievements and future goals of the ministry.

Held at the Office of the Council of Ministers, Social Affairs Ministry spokesman Touch Channy said the ministry is working on helping vulnerable people, such as those living in poverty, women, children, the elderly, persons with disabilities, HIV patients and so on.

"We have been working on helping orphans, children victimised by child labour and children diagnosed with HIV," said Mr Channy.

"We have established centres that provide assistance for women, children and persons with disabilities, mental health problems and drug addiction issues. These are all controlled by the government, private sectors and non-profit organisations," he said.

Mr Channy noted: "There are eight government-

controlled drug rehabilitational centres throughout the Kingdom whereas seven centres are run by organisations and private partners. We also have centres and provincial departments for rehabilitation and veterans."

In April last year, the ministry inaugurated a medical treatment and care facility for the mentally ill in Kandal province's Kandal Stung district.

A cash subsidy programme for pregnant women, which seeks to promote the

welfare of impoverished mothers and children, was also launched last year.

"There are three phases in the programme. First, the pregnant woman will receive cash support of \$10 for up to four times each time she comes for a prenatal care visit. Once the woman gives birth, she will receive a one-time payment of \$50, and will receive \$10 each time she goes for a post-delivery checkup until the baby reaches two years of age," noted Mr Channy.

"As of yesterday, more than



\$4 million has been disbursed to 84,776 mothers and children, with the figures rising every day,” said Mr Channy.

[Khmer Times]

✓ JORDAN: MINISTRY LAUNCHES BUNDLE OF CULTURAL PROJECTS FOR YOUTH

Amman, 28 April 2020 - THE Ministry of Culture on Monday launched the second “cultural adaptation” bundle, which includes cultural and creative programmes targeting all segments of Jordanian society during Ramadan.

During a press briefing at the National Centre for Security and Crisis Management, Culture Minister Bassem Tweissi said that the ministry’s

creative projects offer “wide options” for youth and contribute to developing their talents and abilities, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

The second bundle is an addition to national efforts that seek to alleviate the effects of social distancing and to ensure the best utilisation of time, Tweissi said.

The bundle was launched in

conjunction with the holy month of Ramadan and includes a cultural programme for governorates and a platform for training on arts and cultural industries, as well as a platform offering some 5,000 free digital books.

The ministry is also launching an award for diary writing during the coronavirus, the minister added.

The bundle also includes a programme that aims to shed light on Jordanian heritage from the ministry’s archive, Tweissi said.

The third bundle will be launched to mark Eid Al Fitr and Independence Day, he added.

[Jordan Times]

✓ QATAR: COMMITTED TO PROVIDING CONDUCIVE ENVIRONMENT TO YOUTH PARTICIPATION

Doha, 29 April 2020 -THE State of Qatar has reaffirmed its commitment to continue efforts to provide an environment conducive to youth participation in the development process, noting at the same time the unprecedented challenges posed by the emerging coronavirus especially since the youth category was not isolated from its catastrophic effects, pointing to its efforts to provide education services for children and youth.

This came in a statement sent by H E Ambassador Sheikha Alia Ahmed bin Saif Al Thani, Permanent Representative of the State of Qatar to the United Nations and to the UN Security Council, which held a virtual meeting "Towards the fifth anniversary of the youth and peace and security agenda: accelerating implementation of resolutions 2250 and 2419".

Her Excellency stated that

Qatar was one of the first countries in the region to respond by taking precautionary measures with social distancing to limit the spread of the virus, Qatar was also at the forefront of countries at the regional level that took early measures for a smooth transition to distance education, through Internet in response to current conditions.

Her Excellency stressed that the protection and promotion of the right to education is one of the priorities of the State of Qatar, whether under normal or emergency conditions, explaining that the State of Qatar has worked for several years to harness technology to develop the educational process and ensure its continuity and keep pace with challenges.

She pointed to the mechanism of work for distance education developed by the Ministry of Education and Higher

Education, and has activated electronic platforms for that, while working to take into account the comprehensiveness of education for all students in the distance learning process, including students with disabilities of all groups.

She noted that the State of Qatar has not neglected the provision of laptop computers and tablets for some groups of students in the event that it is not available to ensure that no one is left behind in the distance education process.

On the international level, Her Excellency praised the intensified efforts by the State of Qatar to provide development and relief assistance that takes into account the priority of education and the importance of access to technology in learning operations, through development assistance provided by Qatar Fund For Development (QFFD) in

various parts of the world, which accompanies the challenges arising under the difficult circumstances caused by social distancing, quarantine and school closures.

She referred to the Qatari institutions, including Education Above All Foundation, which is working to develop pilot programs to facilitate the process of distance education in homes, including the early emergency response of the Foundation by collecting distance learning resources in different languages in order to assist parents in distance learning process.

Ambassador Sheikha Alia Ahmed bin Saif Al Thani, Permanent Representative of the State of Qatar to the United Nations, also noted that the Qatari Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in cooperation with the Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development, organized the second youth edition of the



Doha Forum in November 2019, in which in-depth discussions were launched on the current issues of concern to youth, as the forum provided an open platform for youth to express their views on contemporary issues, including peace and security issues, in preparation for the Doha Forum held in December 2019.

The Ambassador added, "Combating the pandemic of the coronavirus requires, in addition to cooperation and collaboration on the international level, provision of a safe environment and remove all obstacles and conditions that would prevent a strong and effective response, as well as require activating and supporting the pivotal role of youth in this response." In this context, HE the Ambassador stressed the support of the State of Qatar to the international calls for ceasefire in conflict areas, which would provide an opportunity to focus on efforts to face the Covid 19-pandemic.

She reaffirmed the State of Qatar on the pivotal role of youth in peace processes, which the international community unanimously agreed five years ago when adopting Security Council Resolution 2250 (2015) and on their important role in activating UN calls for ceasefire.

Her Excellency also expressed the pleasure of the State of Qatar to host, in cooperation with the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Youth, the high-level global conference on comprehensive peace paths for youth.

She added that the holding of the conference comes within the framework of continuing efforts and building on the achievements of the first international conference on youth participation in the peace paths held in Helsinki in 2019.

In this context, she expressed her appreciation to the partners of the State of Qatar, Finland and Colombia and the Office of the Secretary-General's envoy on youth for their efforts and cooperation in preparing for the next conference, which comes to commemorate the five-year anniversary of the adoption of Security Council Resolution 2250 and the passage of 20 years since the adoption of Security Council Resolution 1325, as well as 25 years since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, as the conference will focus, among other topics, on the participation of young women in peace processes, whether through panel discussions, or by taking into account gender equality in all stages of preparing for the conference, besides implementing it and following its outputs.

Concluding the statement, Her Excellency reiterated the commitment of the State of Qatar to continue its efforts to provide a stimulating environment for youth participation in the development process, and to provide support at the national, regional and international levels to enable them to contribute effectively to peacebuilding and to actively engage in efforts to meet the challenges facing our world today.

[The Peninsula Qatar]

NEWS



✓ DENMARK: P3 DR, KEEPING A YOUTH STATION ON AIR FOR YOUNG LISTENERS

Copenhagen, 8 April 2020 - 'Pelle Peter on P3' is the programme where radio host, Pelle Peter Jencel, normally broadcasts every day on DR P3. Right now he is not in the studio at DR, Denmark!

No – as so many others – he spends this time on lockdown due to Coronavirus in his apartment in Copenhagen with his wife, the journalist Maria Jencel.

Even though they knew each other well before, they have gotten to know each other even better in the last few weeks.

Their entire apartment has been converted into a radio studio, the couple, over a week, spends 15 hours broadcasting live 'P3 youth radio' every Monday to Friday from 15.00 to 18.00.

The programme is called 'Quarantine' and the two of

them are the team behind it. Pelle is the host and Maria is the producer.

"This is a very new way of working together. During the Coronavirus crises many families are experiencing working together in new ways and that is certainly the case with us...I think we are making the best of it and we are having a good time doing it", says Pelle Peter over the phone.

At the moment 75% of DR employees are working from home as best they can.

The hosts and producers at P3 wanted to send as many hours to their young audience as possible who for the most part lives alone. They should not be left with only social media to get them through the day – in spite of the difficulties of getting the logistics in order at P3.

"The condition was that we

had to broadcast from somewhere else other than the studio at DR. Our boss called us to ask if we as a couple could broadcast from the apartment. Not many radio couples can do that without involving a lot of other people. We can do it and we both thought that it was a really good idea", says Pelle Peter.

So these days they are broadcasting from the kitchen, where the equipment has been set up.

Pelle Peter can look out of the window, when he is on the air. Maria sits 5-6 meters away in the living room. She can take phone calls and get the next guests ready over the phone, when her husband asks Coronavirus challenged listeners to call in and join the programme.

"Maria is far enough away from me, so she can talk on the phone and work the PC,

when I am live in the kitchen. I am used to having everything lined up in advance – I cannot really do that now, but then we can do some other stuff. Our ambition is to be present in our listener's lives during the Coronavirus mess", said Pelle Peter.

The next step is to get a webcam up and running, so their listeners can see, what they are doing in the apartment when they are on the air. "Actually the biggest challenge in all of this is the working hours. It is hard to actually take time off in the apartment. We are talking about the days show all day until we are on the air... it can get a bit exhausting in the end, but we were never in any doubt, when they asked us if we would do it. This is a one in a lifetime experience", says Pelle Peter.

[Radiodays Europe]

✓ FRANCE: HUMAN RIGHTS TRAINERS IN UKRAINE MEET ONLINE

Strasbourg, 23 April 2020 - ALMOST 5 months since the initial seminar of the Long-Term Training Course for Trainers on Human Rights Education with Young People in Ukraine, the participants and trainers reconnected for their mid-term meeting.

The planned meeting due to the COVID-19 pandemic was replaced partially by online discussions, keeping the initial purpose to get updates and provide support for the participants in their development as Human Rights trainers.

Twenty-six participants and

trainers connected to discuss their learning achievements so far and to address potential problems with the projects.

The participants highlighted that most of their challenges for implementing their learning projects are due to the pandemic, often resulting with cancellations or postponement of the activities. In some cases, the available funding for Human Rights Education activities has also been frozen.

However, the meeting also concluded that during these times it is visible more than

ever the need for Human Rights Education as a way to address the growing social inequalities, discrimination and hate speech present on social media.

Similar meetings were proposed for the upcoming period in order to provide space for networking and peer support among participants.

The overall aim of the LTTC is to support the implementation and development of youth policy and youth work in Ukraine through quality non-formal education activities

using a human rights-based approach and quality standards of the Council of Europe.

[Council of Europe]



✓ GREECE: FINDING SOLUTIONS TO GREECE'S REFUGEE EDUCATION CRISIS

Athens, 27 April 2020 - OUR research concludes that 20 million euros are needed to keep crucial educational programmes for children on the Greek islands running beyond June.

Vital education services for thousands of refugee children on the Greek islands will end in June without urgent action from the international community, a new report from Theirworld warns today.

With the refugee crisis in the islands at breaking point, our research says that vulnerable children who have often fled conflict in Syria or Afghanistan are in danger of being abandoned by donors.

They also face the additional threat of the coronavirus, which the Greek government has described as a "ticking health bomb" in island refugee camps.

Funding for existing education programmes will run out when the Greek school year closes at the end of June. But major donors such as the European Union, the UK and Scandinavian countries are nowhere near reaching agreement on an extension.

Theirworld's research has concluded that 20 million euros are needed to safely

keep open educational programmes operated by UNICEF and UNHCR and local aid groups for another two years.

Closure would deprive children of badly-needed classes which give them a sense of normality and the chance to at least imagine a better future.

"Even if only for a few hours a day, these classes offer a stark contrast to their existence in overcrowded camps blighted by poor diet, sanitation, high tension and sometimes violence," said Justin van Fleet, President of Theirworld.

"In the big picture this is not a great deal of money - but it would go a long way towards not only making life bearable for children who have already endured so much but also towards investing in a safer and healthier long-term solution."

To make matter worse, Covid-19 is now threatening to take hold among a refugee population of 42,000 on the islands that has no access to healthcare. Their News has been reporting on the education crisis on the islands and the effect of coronavirus.

Theirworld is supporting appeals by UNHCR and UNICEF for \$1.5 million in emergency funds to extend remote learning for refugee

children whose education has almost entirely been stopped by the pandemic.

As of late 2019, less than a third of 5,300 school-age refugee children on the islands were receiving any schooling. There are now likely to be close to 6,000 as refugee numbers have continued to rise.

The 80-page report - Finding Solutions to Greece's Refugee Education Crisis - was written by international education expert Maysa Jalbout and is based on extensive visits to Greece and dozens of interviews with key players in government, aid agencies and local NGOs.

Its three-point proposal calls on the international community to recognise the pressure and drain on Greece's education system and to more actively support the country's efforts with refugees over the next five years.

At the same time, it says the Greek government needs to demonstrate more thorough planning that the international community could then get behind.

The report also urges donor countries to make greater investment in the region to tackle the refugee problem closer to home. This would include fulfilling the very public pledge made in 2016 to educate every single

Syrian refugee child, which would bring major improvements in Greece.

Refugees on the islands - chiefly Lesbos, Kos, Samos and Chios - arrive after often perilous boat journeys from Turkey. Some have gone without schooling for a year or more on their journey or because of conflict.

Numbers swelled earlier this year, with the Moria camp on Lesbos now "home" to 20,000 people, when it was designed for 2,500.

Families can become stuck on the islands in dire conditions for up to 18 months, even though they were meant to be little more than a way station under a deal for migrants reached between the EU and Turkey.

A total of 76,000 refugees have so far been transferred to the mainland where many hope for transfer to other European countries.

Theirworld has been helping UNHCR, UNICEF and partner organisations to send girls and boys to non-formal school classes on the islands. That includes support for the Tapuat Centre near the Moria camp on Lesbos.

[ReliefWeb]

✓ SWITZERLAND: YOUNG WORKERS WILL BE HIT HARD BY COVID-19'S ECONOMIC FALLOUT

Geneva, April 2020 - The International Labour Organization (ILO), said young people will be hit very hard by the economic

fallout of the COVID-19 crisis; and gave reasons why the pandemic will particularly have severe impact on the youth.

"The COVID-19 emergency is affecting almost everyone in the world, regardless of age, income or country. However, young people are

likely to be particularly hard hit by the economic fallout of the crisis." ILO said It pointed out that crises



fall hardest on the most vulnerable, and the young people make up one such group, particularly when it comes to the social and economic impact of the virus pandemic.

The ILO also hinted that making the transition into decent employment is a tough challenge for young people, even in the best economic times.

According to the organisation, young workers

are affected more than their older, more experienced colleagues by recessions, adding that younger workers are often the first to have their hours cut or be laid off.

Also, the ILO explained that three in four young people work in the informal economy; particularly in low- and middle-income countries, with little or no savings, while they can't afford to take time off to self-isolate.

Again, it stated that many young workers are in "non-standard forms of employment", such as part-time, temporary or 'gig' work, adding that such jobs are often low paid, with irregular hours, poor job security, and little or no social protection (paid leave, pensions, sick leave, etc).

The ILO also explained that young people commonly work in sectors and industries that are

particularly vulnerable to the COVID-19 pandemic; while they are more at risk than any other age group from automation.

[UN News]

✓ UNITED KINGDOM: WHY DO SOME YOUNG PEOPLE DIE OF CORONAVIRUS?

London, 9 April 2020 - IT remains one of the biggest puzzles of the Covid-19 pandemic. The disease generally causes serious problems only in older people or those with underlying health problems.

But occasionally it strikes down young, apparently fit individuals, including medical staff exposed to patients with the virus.

In some cases, previously undiagnosed conditions are later revealed but in others no such explanations are available, leaving scientists struggling to find reasons for the behaviour of the coronavirus.

Several theories have been proposed. Some researchers believe the amount of virus that infects an individual may have crucial outcomes. Get a huge dose and your outcome may be worse. Others argue that genetic susceptibility may be involved: in other words, that there are individuals whose genetic makeup leaves them more vulnerable to the virus as it spreads through their bodies.

This latter idea is favoured by virologist Michael Skinner at Imperial College London. "It is very possible that some of us could have a particular genetic makeup that makes it more likely that we will respond badly to an infection with this coronavirus," he said.

An example of such susceptibility is provided by the herpes simplex virus, which causes cold sores. In some people, a mutation that affects cell receptors known as TLR3, in their central nervous system, leaves them unable to deal with the worst impact of the virus: they contract a disease called herpes simplex encephalitis, which can lead to seizures and convulsions in children.

"It could be that we are seeing a similar sort of susceptibility in some individuals who get Covid-19, and that leads them to suffer more acutely from serious side-effects," added Skinner.

Others, however, suggest that the amount of virus that a person is infected with could be a crucial factor in

determining their outcome. Such individuals are said to be affected by a high viral load.

"A person with a high viral load has more virus particles than one with a low load," said virologist Alison Sinclair at Sussex University.

"We do not yet know what impact viral load has on the symptoms of a person infected with Covid-19. Whether there is a link between a high viral load and worse outcomes is going to be important to find out."

This point was backed by Edward Parker at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

"For Covid-19, early reports from China suggest that the viral load is higher in patients with more severe disease, which is also the case for Sars and influenza.

"So it is crucial for us to limit all possible exposures to Covid-19, and if we are feeling unwell we need to observe strict self-isolation measures to limit our

chance of infecting others."

[The Guardian]



✓ AUSTRALIA: A CHANCE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE TO MAKE THEIR VOICES HEARD

Ballarat, 28 April 2020 - MENTAL health and stress are top issues concerning young people in Ballarat, survey results show, and these feelings are likely to be amplified during the coronavirus pandemic.

Young people in Ballarat are encouraged to have a say on how they are feeling during this time through the Mission Australia Youth Survey.

Mission Australia state leader Michele Leonard said it was 'crucial' to listen to what young people had to say on issues that affected them, their networks and the nation, especially during times of increasing uncertainty.

"In this rapidly changing world, young voices matter. Now more than ever, we need to hear from Ballarat young people about the issues that are affecting

them," she said.

"During this period where many young people are adapting to change, it's important that they have meaningful opportunities like the Youth Survey to share their thoughts, concerns and aspirations.

"Their responses are important in shaping policy and service changes that affect them."

Survey results released earlier this year showed coping with stress was a top issue of personal concern.

More than half of survey participants aged 15 to 19 in Ballarat reported they were extremely or very concerned about coping with stress in 2019.

Close to four in 10 reported feeling extremely or very concerned about mental health, which was also

reported as the second most important issue in Australia.

The environment was reported as the most important issue by young people in Ballarat.

Ms Leonard said the youth survey provided a forum for young people to highlight their personal aspirations and concerns, and express the issues they thought were important in Australia today.

"In a climate where young people are actively seeking out opportunities to make their views known, the Youth Survey 2020 offers a safe and reliable platform to speak up," she said.

"Their valuable insights provide up-to-date evidence to inform advocacy and policy change on the issues that affect their lives."

The 2020 Youth Survey

questions will continue a focus on mental health and well-being, including a further look into how young people seek help.

It will also ask new questions around discrimination, transition to employment, financial concerns and exclusion.

Mission Australia's Youth Survey 2020 is open to all young people aged 15 to 19 years-old who are living in Australia.

Visit: www.missionaustralia.com.au/youthsurvey to take part, before it closes on August 14.

The results will be analysed and released before the end of the year.

[The Courier]

✓ FIJI: IMPACT OF COVID-19 COULD BE FELT FOR YEARS TO COME

Suva, 30 April 2020 - A youth leader in Fiji says young people are likely to bear the brunt of the Covid-19 pandemic with more than 150,000 workers already impacted across the country.

The tourism industry this week announced that about 40,000 of its workers are either on reduced hours, reduced salaries or rotational shifts.

Broderick Mervyn said the majority of the industry's workforce were young people and he was concerned at the devastating economic impact this would have on them.

Mr Mervyn, who is the coordinator for Ignite4Change, said the consequences would affect generations to come.

"A lot of young people that are in the employment sector will be losing their jobs thus resulting in youth unemployment which will be at an all-time high given that a lot of these young people are employed in the tourism sector."

Tourism was one of the biggest revenue earners for the Fiji's economy.

This week the Fiji Hotel and Tourism Association revealed 60,000 visitors had

arrived in the country between January and March last year but only about 28,000 visited in the same period this year.

Chief executive Fantasha Lockington said there were a number of vulnerable groups hard hit.

"This can include anything from tour operators, dive businesses, transport providers, the boat transfers if you are food manufacture or food provider, restaurants, bars, spas all these activities would have dried up now and these people have either shut down their business or

closed to sustain their livelihood or just trying to survive and many of these workers have been sent home."

Ms Lockington said around 900,000 tourists visited Fiji in 2019.

She said the industry had projected a three-percent growth for this year - they were expecting 937,000 visitors.

"Last year from January to June we brought in over 400,000 visitors, and in that six months they spent around \$FJ1 billion and so in the six months



comparison, we have just only gone through three months. If you look at last year's six months, we have a lot of filling up to do."

Broderick Mervyn said many young people employed in the tourism industry were breadwinners for their families.

Mr Mervyn said young people were still recovering from the recent Cyclone Harold which caused widespread damage to their homes and food gardens.

He said he was also concerned that many young people in Fiji would not be able to return to school due to the pandemic.

The government closed all schools in the country until mid-June.

Mr Mervyn said it was evident the mental health of young people would be significantly affected due to the crisis.

"The extraordinary changes arising from Covid-19 have

contributed to the closing of educational establishments. Students were now forced to continue with their education from home.

"Especially vulnerable are those who do not have access to energy, smartphones or networking to pursue the online lessons as offered in many industrialized and urban contexts."

Youth advocate Jone Biunaivalu agreed with Mr Mervyn and said he was working with Ignite4Change and other educational institutions and organisations "to foster learning for children and young people during the Covid-19 crisis."

Mr Biunaivalu said he believed education was key to Fiji's socio-economic growth and development. He welcomed initiatives by the Commonwealth of Learning and USP Global organisations to help youths across Fiji.

"The current reaction to a

modern tech-savvy environment and youths growing up with technology as their standard mode of learning, communication and socialising interconnectedness, is indicative that young people's positive uptake of technology is important.

"Commonly, we place a strong degree of focus on the effect of technology on social connections, the idea that we may communicate with others digitally or disengage in that way."

Meanwhile, Broderick Mervyn called on young Fijians to adhere to the government's restrictions imposed due to Covid-19.

Almost 2000 people had been arrested by police for breaching curfew including social gatherings and loitering, more than half of them were youths.

This week, Police Commissioner Sitiveni Qiliho called on parents and community leaders to closely monitor their

children during the restrictions.

"It's a difficult task for police and it's not good that many young people are being arrested from the streets because they are where they are not supposed to be.

"The first question we ask is where are their parents and what are they doing."

Mr Mervyn said medical officials, including doctors and nurses, and the security forces could not succeed in ensuring the safety of the nation without the public's help.

He said everyone, including young people, played an important role in helping the government tackle the pandemic.

"The sooner the coronavirus was gone, the sooner Fijians could return to their normal lives," he said.

[RNZ]

✓ **NEW ZEALAND: SOME YOUTH IN STATE CARE FEELING 'OVERWHELMED'**

Wellington, 24 April 2020 - AN independent advocacy group and Oranga Tamariki say while some youth in state care remain hopeful during the Covid-19 lockdown, others are anxious, miss family and lack access to technology.

A survey by VOYCE Whakarongo Mai, an advocacy service for people in state care, found youth in care were persevering overall. However, they were also missing friends and family. Some were frustrated at the lack of access to devices and the

internet.

"Hang in there, it won't be forever," said one respondent.

"Talk to friends and family over the phone," said another.

The advocacy service's CEO Tracie Shipton said for youth in care, not being able to see their biological family was "a big issue" as some would only be able to see them a handful of times a year during arranged visits.

"Young people already feel disconnected. It's very rare for a young person not to hold a huge love for their family still despite what circumstances that've meant they've come into care.

[The lockdown] further isolates them," Ms Shipton said.

But, she said the upside was most young in care said they felt safe where they were.

"And they felt the same as other people in that everyone is in the same

situation.

"This isn't just something happening to them. It's just got that complicating factor of not seeing their families and not being able to have the visits."

The survey collected responses from 25 respondents aged five to 23.

Ms Shipton said she noticed some excitement at first from youth in care because they were getting a break from school. However, by the second week, they were starting to get anxious about



how long the lockdown was going to last and when they'd be able to visit their family.

She said VOYCE was "literally contacting every young person in care that they can" to reassure them there was someone they could talk to.

"Young people who go into care—just the mere fact that they don't live with their families and there's been a process by which they are removed—no matter what, that has some effect.

"Once we were able to let them know that things would carry on... access will still be by phone, if you can't visit, visits will be organised... we started to see things start to settle down a bit.

"But, it is an anxious time for people who have suffered trauma."

She said being able to keep the young people connected to others was challenging when there were issues with access to technology.

Easing the digital divide had become a key area of advocacy for the organisation during the pandemic. Vodafone New Zealand Foundation offered support by donating cellphones, with VOYCE currently organising its distribution.

Oranga Tamariki said it was also hearing similar trends about the experiences of kids in care during lockdown from their youth advisory group, VOYCE and children's charity Barnardos.

Alison McDonald, deputy

chief executive of services for children and families for Oranga Tamariki South, said many of the young people who gave feedback were enjoying having time to relax, were watching movies and TV, playing online games and connecting with others in their bubble.

"While some were hopeful we'll get through this, others were feeling overwhelmed, alone and sad, and worried about things like the health of others and falling behind at school," she said.

"At the same time, many were missing hanging out with their friends, having contact with family, being at school and talking to support people like counsellors and teachers."

Ms McDonald said this was particularly the case for young people who had limited or no way to get online. She said Oranga Tamariki was providing increased access to the internet and equipment where it could.

Oranga Tamariki collected feedback from 36 young people during their first week in lockdown.

Ms McDonald also said the number of reports of concern about the wellbeing of a young person over the lockdown period was similar to the April school holidays last year which saw about a 45 per cent decrease from normal.

Oranga Tamariki received about 87,000 reports of concern in the 2018/19 financial year—an average of over 7000 a month—regarding nearly 62,700

children. About 41,700 reports were referred for further action.

Oranga Tamariki had not yet collated data about the number of reports made during lockdown requiring further action as the lockdown situation was ongoing.

Ms McDonald said similar extended holiday periods can mean fewer see a young person.

"Similarly, the Level 4 lockdown has changed who contacts Oranga Tamariki," she said.

"Teachers and school principals are no longer physically seeing children. Children and young people are in their bubble and they're having fewer interactions with adults outside of their immediate family or bubble.

"Our social workers have been intensifying their support during lockdown to make sure young people in care, and their caregivers and families, have the support they need."

She said "regular check-ins" would also be conducted as the country prepares for Alert Level 3.

VOYCE also didn't report an increase in advocacy requests from young people already in care.

Normally, the organisation would receive various requests from young people who, for example, ask about their rights or ask for help with particular issues or incidents. During lockdown, advocacy requests ranged from wanting emotional support to asking about living arrangements and

processes.

Ms Shipton said being proactive by reaching out to youth in care had "a profound effect on not having an increase at this time".

In the meantime, she said VOYCE was doing what it could under Alert Level 4 restrictions through digital activities and workshops, with their survey informing some of the projects.

"It's not to say that caregivers don't do a terrific job of including them and looking after them, but this highlights the difference in living situations," Ms Shipton said.

"For young people in care it's really important they have an opportunity to connect again with other people in care.

"They're really loving the contact they've been having and meeting people in a totally different way."

[1 News]



✓ VANUATU: PROVIDING FOOD SECURITY IN THE FACE OF A GLOBAL HEALTH CRISIS

Port Vila, 13 April 2020 - CONFRONTED with the possibility of food shortages because of the global effects of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak, some individuals engaged in a Baha'i-inspired educational program called Preparation for Social Action (PSA) have taken steps to protect their communities.

"My group is constantly thinking of ways it can serve our community, and now that the coronavirus is coming, what should we do?" says one participant from Tanna, Vanuatu. "We cannot sit idly and do nothing about it. We need to actively arise and serve our society."

The PSA program, which has been implemented in 17 countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Pacific, raises capacity in young people to apply knowledge drawn from both science and religion for the development of their communities.

Although Vanuatu has no

confirmed cases of the coronavirus so far, the effects on international travel and trade have caused economic hardship and reduced food imports.

Measures taken by the government to prevent the disease from spreading have required the usual activities of the PSA programs to cease, but groups of participants are taking steps to not only maintain food supplies for their fellow citizens, but also to encourage others in their countries to do the same. Many participants are now expanding personal gardens and planting crops that can be harvested quickly, so as to create reliable sources of food over the coming months of uncertainty.

Recent natural disasters in Vanuatu have only exacerbated the current crisis. The northern islands of the country were struck last week by a devastating storm, Cyclone Harold, while Tanna has experienced volcanic ash-fall that has damaged crops. Nevertheless, the

degree of unity and collective action fostered through the educational activities of the Baha'i community, including PSA, has enabled many people to respond swiftly and to begin rebuilding and replanting.

"I feel it is our responsibility to share our knowledge and experiences," says Anika Naiu, a PSA student in Tanna. "You know, it is easy to lose hope, for example, during a cyclone or because of the coronavirus. We need to be a source of courage and hope to the other members of our community so that they do not focus too much on these challenges, but think of what they can do to move forward. It brings me a lot of joy to serve my fellow brothers and sisters."

The capacities developed through the PSA program are proving essential in other countries where it is offered. A group of participants in Uganda, with support from the Kimanya-Ngeyo Foundation, which implements the program in

the country, is making use of local radio to promote awareness about food production.

This organization, inspired by the initiative of the youth, is now using its resources to ensure that food production continues and stores of food maintained over time. It is, for example, offering its own land for planting and making funds available to purchase seeds.

"There is a direct relationship between hope, an attitude of service to others, and constructive action," says a representative of the Foundation for the Betterment of Society, another organization that offers PSA in Vanuatu.

"When we put the needs of others above our own, this brings hope. And, when we remember our spiritual reality, our sense of hope is strengthened, regardless of our physical condition."

[Baha'i World News Service]

✓ TONGA: YOUTH SHOWING LEADERSHIP POST-CYCLONE HAROLD

Nuku'alofa, 16 April 2020 - A group of youth volunteers in Tonga are doing their bit to rebuild the country post-Cyclone Harold.

Disaster resilience is one of the main jobs for the Community Integrated Vulnerability Assessment group or CIVA in the village of Fasi.

Founder of CIVA, Fe'iloakitau Kaho Tevi, said the group started in 2017

and since then had been active in preparation for cyclones, help during the event and post-clean up.

Mr Tevi said the young people assessed which families were in need of assistance in Fasi and then worked together to generate funds to buy supplies or prepare homes with corrugated iron material as shutters ahead of an approaching cyclone.

"We help the elderly people in our community, widows, large families with young children, the unemployed and those who have difficulties sourcing basic necessities such as water."

"Before Cyclone Gita, we identified ten families that needed help. The youth were able to collect \$TOP300 to buy items useful during and after a cyclone such as candles, canned food, biscuits, water

and matches," he said.

"This year we have identified just over 20 families that need the assistance."

CIVA also helped those evacuating from their homes to evacuation centres and shifted items into containers at the church compound [All Saints, Anglican] so that they were ready to be used after the cyclone.



Eleni Levin-Tevi from CIVA said the programme was initiated to promote good leadership where young people are mentored and empowered to identify issues affecting their communities.

"I want the youth to own these issues that are in their homes and become proactive in leading the movement to address the issues with whatever resources they have and can source."

Mr Tevi said the young people are senior high school students, with majority balancing a job as well.

"Not many of the members in the group are unemployed. Some of them are seasonal workers, they are all active members of the community and the youth group, so they are well supported, even financially."

The youth from Fasi's All Saints Anglican Church who were behind CIVA were also running a campaign called "No Pelesitiki" [plastic] to reduce and eliminate single use plastic products from Tonga and promote local and traditional replacements.

The king tides that coincided with Tropical Cyclone Harold last week also washed up plastic litter to the seafront of Nuku'alofa.

The team got approval from the National Emergency and Management Office to pick up rubbish as well as comply to the Covid-19 restrictions of only 20 people at a time in the

location and keeping to the social distancing rule.

"The amount of litter was overwhelming at first. We just stood there looking at all the rubbish for a few minutes, trying to figure out how and where to start." Mrs Levin-Tevi said.

"We are calling on all youth groups and community leaders around Tonga to join us in tending to our seashores."

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