

▶ Youth Employment in Times of COVID

A global review of COVID-19 policy responses to tackle (un)employment and disadvantage among young people

Anna Barford, Adam Coutts, and Garima Sahai





International
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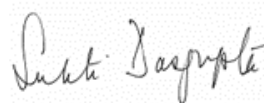
► Preface

Recycling youth employment policies and interventions that may not have worked pre-pandemic will definitely not work in the post COVID-19 era. There is therefore a need to learn from experience and explore alternative ways to address the ever increasing youth employment challenge.

This paper was written to document, understand and learn from policies that selected countries put in place to address the negative effects of the crisis arising from the COVID 19 pandemic on youth employment. The study confirms previous ILO analyses that young people have been hit hard in both economic and social terms. It highlights that young women have been more severely impacted by the crisis in terms of job losses and reduced incomes than young men and points to a major gap in the policy response to address these youth related challenges. It also recognizes that pre-pandemic, the labour market situation and opportunities for many young people were already precarious and insecure. These findings explain the concept of a “COVID-19 or lockdown generation” that has slowly emerged in the media to describe how young people may be scarred for decades to come, in terms of labour market and mental health outcomes.

The main lesson learned over the past decades and during the COVID 19 crisis is the need for integrated policy responses. This requires intensive cooperation between government departments. The Pandemic has in some cases increased recognition that the policies of one government department, such as that of health, have both direct and indirect social and economic implications for non-health departments and ministries, such as that of labour and social affairs. This is opening the door for more integrated and cooperative forms of policymaking, design, implementation and data sharing. Whether these collaborations and networks can be maintained remains to be seen.

Recovery (from COVID 19) policy responses for youth employment need an integrated approach that include the whole-of government, social partners and other relevant stakeholders, developed in close dialogue with young people. At the same time as there is a need to adapt policy responses to the fact that there is not yet a “post-crisis” situation, as the yo-yoing in and out of lockdown continue, particularly as new variants emerge and immunization strategies are delayed. This is why this study has zoomed into many different policy responses, including on income support, gender biases, informality, health, mental health, etc. to understand if there are any lessons learned to the ongoing policy responses to mitigate the negative effect of the Pandemic on youth employment.



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Drs. Barford and Coutts gathered evidence from interviews with regional ILO representatives and the Argentine Ministry of Labour. The main literature review was conducted by Dr. Sahai, which was supplemented by Drs. Barford and Coutts. All authors contributed to the write up.



► Executive Summary

Policy responses to counter the public health crisis created by the COVID-19 pandemic and the social and economic knock-on effects of this have had significant impacts on the lives and livelihoods of young people around the world. These impacts were unintended but unfortunately have come to characterize a global and protracted economic crisis which is unlike any since the Second World War. The pandemic and associated restrictions have exacerbated pre-existing youth employment challenges, impacting some young people worse than others, especially young women. Despite trillions of dollars being spent in one year of the response, it is anticipated that the social and economic impacts of the pandemic may persist for years.

The pandemic has had mixed effects on countries, communities and citizens. High-income countries, such as Belgium, the United Kingdom and the United States, have been badly affected by COVID-19, with

hundreds of thousands dying since March 2020. Low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), including Thailand and Viet Nam, have experienced low mortality rates thanks to effective lockdown and strict border control policies. Most countries have now experienced a second and subsequent waves of the virus and multiple lockdowns, exacerbated by the delta variant. Above all, there are inequities in mortality and morbidity outcomes, with the economically

disadvantaged, ethnic minority communities and those living in overcrowded conditions significantly more affected by COVID-19.^{1, 2}

Social and economic impacts

Nearly all countries have been negatively impacted by the social and economic effects of policy efforts to contain COVID-19. Pandemic response policies have led to business closures, redundancies and increasing rates of job insecurity, informality and long-term unemployment. Even those that have experienced minimal public health effects of COVID-19, like New Zealand, have not seen their economies and labour markets fully return to a pre-pandemic state.

Across countries, young people have not escaped the economic and social impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Even pre-pandemic the labour market situation and opportunities for many young people were already precarious and insecure. Now, with closures in sectors that traditionally employ the youth labour force, such as retail, tourism and consumer services, younger staff are often the first to be made redundant, moved onto insecure work contracts or not find jobs at all. Informality, inactivity and job insecurity have all increased. During 2020 global youth employment fell by 8.7 per cent, while adults experienced a 3.7 per cent drop.³ In middle-income countries, country-level data show that as a demographic group, young women have been particularly impacted by declines in employment.⁴

The concept of a “COVID-19 or lockdown generation” has emerged in the media to describe how young people may be scarred for decades to come, in terms of labour market and mental health outcomes. Governments, social partners and other actors including multilateral organizations have a vital role to play in offsetting the economic and social shock of the pandemic on young people.

¹ Kumanan Rasanathan, “Global Health and its Discontents”, Lancet 397, No. 10284: (2021): 1543–1544.

² Rohini Mathur et al., “Ethnic Differences in SARS-CoV-2 Infection and COVID-19-related Hospitalisation, Intensive Care Unit Admission, and Death in 17 Million Adults in England”, Lancet 397, No. 10286 (2021): 1711–1724.

³ Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities, *How COVID-19 is changing the world: a statistical perspective Volume III*, (2021); p 21

⁴ ILO, *Statistical brief: An update on the youth labour market impact of the COVID-19 crisis*, (2021c).

The response: commonalities and gaps

A range of policies have been introduced: emergency public health response of containment which have led to business closures and home working, are accompanied by massive investments in active labour market programmes (ALMPs) and job protection programmes. Social dialogue between workers, employers and governments has informed policies which seek to minimize macroeconomic damage and stabilize national economies through large-scale spending on business and financial institutions. In most countries there is *a recognition visible in recovery policies that the health of the economy and the health of a population are inherently linked*.

A common feature and a major gap in the policy response is that young women have been more severely impacted in terms of job losses and reduced incomes than young men.⁵ In general, they have seen their domestic and caring responsibilities dramatically increase with little support offered in pandemic response policies.⁶ In 2020 global female employment declined by 5 per cent, whereas for males the reduction was less at 3.9 per cent.⁷ While women comprise only 39 per cent of workers globally, they are concentrated in sectors which have been substantially affected by business failure, such as in the hotel, retail and food services sectors.^{8,9} In addition to labour market disruption caused by pandemic and lockdown policy responses, adolescent girls and young women have also experienced a “shadow pandemic” of domestic violence, increased care-giving work and risk of early marriage.¹⁰

A second common characteristic of response policies is a “one-size-fits-all” approach. The COVID-19 pandemic manifested exponentially and aggravated pre-existing social and economic challenges, as well as catalysing new ones. This exposed the fragility and inadequacy of pre-pandemic policies and has left governments trying to play catch up, in response to multiple and rapidly changing population needs. In emergency mode, many countries adopted universal ‘broad brush’ policies to support entire populations, with the result that the specific needs of vulnerable groups, such as young people, were often overlooked. It is apparent that there is ‘policy inertia’ or path dependency in many countries, in that youth-specific response policies are largely an extension, or “repackaging”, of policies that existed pre pandemic. These policies have not been adequately adapted and properly financed to respond to the severity of impacts and the long-term nature of the economic, labour market and social challenges now facing young people.

► The situation of young women in the pandemic shows how multiple forms of gendered disadvantage remain. Young women still lack access to education and job opportunities, continually confront gendered divisions of labour, high rates of labour market informality and shoulder most household responsibilities and domestic work.

A third aspect of the pandemic response is social dialogue, which has featured in many countries in which state and government institutions, employers (business) and workers’ representatives (unions) have become

⁵ ILO, *ILO Monitor: COVID-19 and the World of Work. Seventh Edition*, (2021a).

⁶ UNICEF and International Rescue Committee, *COVID-19*, (2020).

⁷ ILO, *ILO Monitor. Seventh Edition*; p. 9, (2021a).

⁸ Deepa Mahajan, Olivia White, Anu Madgavkar and Mekala Krishnan, “[Don’t Let the Pandemic Set Back Gender Equality](#)”. Harvard Business Review, (16 September 2020).

⁹ ILO, *ILO Monitor: COVID-19 and the World of Work. Seventh Edition*, (2021a).

¹⁰ UN Women, “[The Shadow Pandemic: Violence against Women during COVID-19](#)”.

essential in helping to shape economic and social policy responses. Furthermore, crisis responses from business, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and government, sometimes in partnership with one another, have seen these diverse institutions collaborate to support and protect workers.

In a number of countries and regions, the pandemic has necessitated greater cooperation between government departments. There is a recognition that the policies of one department, such as that of health, have both direct and indirect social and economic implications for non-health departments and ministries, such as that of labour and social affairs. This has led to more holistic and cooperative forms of policymaking, design, implementation and data sharing. Whether these new collaborations and networks can be maintained remains to be seen.

A major gap in the global response are policies to address the situation facing young people in countries affected by conflict, humanitarian and natural disasters, such as the Middle East and North Africa. In these fragile contexts it is not a matter of young people losing or not being able to find jobs; it is that millions may never finish junior or secondary schooling and fall into child labour, the informal labour market and homelessness – all drivers of exploitation, poverty and limited life chances. We have found little evidence, policy recognition or response to the effects of the pandemic on the livelihoods of young refugees or any policies aimed at addressing increased rates of child labour.^{11, 12}

Existing and future economic, social and labour market policies, particularly in countries and regions with large youth populations, need to be far more age and gender sensitive. They must also include indicators, such as mental health, well-being and informality, to monitor trends, impacts and policy effectiveness in order to provide a more accurate account of the situation. Recovery policies, such as ALMPs, should be based on better evidence of what works, and be designed for the long term, specifically targeting the most vulnerable members of the diverse global youth population. ‘Repacking’ policies and interventions that did not work pre-pandemic will certainly not work in the post COVID-19 era. These recommendations will help to prevent further economic and social disadvantage and promote a more healthy and equitable economic recovery for young people.

¹¹ ILO, [COVID-19 Impact on Child Labour and Forced Labour](#), (2020f).

¹² ILO and UNICEF, [COVID-19 and Child Labour](#), (2020).

► Acronyms

ALMP	Active labour market programme
CBJ	Central Bank of Jordan
CBN	Central Bank of Nigeria
GDP	gross domestic product
IDR	Indonesian rupiah
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INR	Indian national rupee
JD	Jordanian dinar
LMICs	low- and middle-income countries
MSME	micro, small and medium-sized enterprises
MYR	Malaysian ringgit
NGN	Nigerian naira
NEET	not in employment, education or training
NGO	non-governmental organization
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PHP	Philippine peso
SAR	Saudi Arabian riyal
SME	small and medium-sized enterprises
TVET	technical and vocational education and training
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme



Zimbabwe © ILO / KB Mpofo

► 1. Background and objectives

When the COVID-19 pandemic began, the employment situation facing young people¹³ around the world had still not fully recovered from the fallout of the 2008 financial crisis. Between 2012 and 2019, the global youth unemployment rate actually increased from 13.4 per cent to 13.6 per cent.¹⁴ These aggregate figures mask considerable geographical variation and inequalities, with the youth unemployment rate ranging from 10.8 per cent in Africa to 22.9 per cent in the Arab States.¹⁵ In addition, the share of young people not in employment education or training (NEET)¹⁶ did not fall significantly over the period. Even before the Covid-19 pandemic hit in 2020, over one-fifth of young people worldwide were classed as NEET, and two out of every three were young women. As the pandemic spread, the prevalence of NEET status, labour market inactivity, and informal work amongst young people all increased even more than youth unemployment, which was itself also rising globally.

Young people have felt the effects of pandemic response policies via a number of pathways. Lockdown and containment policies led to business closures, redundancies and a lack of jobs for people to take up. These containment policies led to social isolation and loneliness, which generated negative impacts on mental health and well-being. Young people have been forced to remain at home, stuck with their parents 24/7 and cut off from their friends and sports activities. For those children and young people living in disadvantaged circumstances, who do not have ready access to internet connections, laptops and computers at home to do schoolwork or a room to escape from home life, the situation is even worse and more damaging to their well-being. As a result, the prevalence of mental health issues, especially anxiety, stress and depression, has risen among young people, creating extra burdens and costs for social protection and health services.^{17, 18, 19}

Available data show that there has been an increase in youth unemployment globally and within countries but, more significantly, an increase in inactivity since February 2020 with the loss of work for young people especially concentrated among young women in middle-income countries.^{20, 21} In LMICs, high rates of labour market informality and a lack of formal job opportunities have led to young people exiting or delaying entry into the labour market, whereas higher income countries with larger formal sectors saw also significant increases in youth unemployment.²²

The concept of a “COVID-19 or lockdown generation” has emerged to describe the economic and labour market scarring that may impact young people in the coming years, if robust policies to offset the damage caused by the pandemic are not introduced. National governments are debating and developing policy options to respond to the opportunities and challenges in the world of work; for example, how to introduce digital transformation to workplaces (Appendix 1). Trade unions and employers’ organizations have contributed to determining the type and detail of responses. In addition, bilateral and

¹³ We define young people as those aged 15 to 24 years old.

¹⁴ ILO, *Global Employment Trends for Youth 2020*; p. 149, (2020I).

¹⁵ ILO, *Global Employment Trends for Youth 2020*; p. 13, (2020I).

¹⁶ From Niall O’Higgins et al., *A NEET Overview: Trends, Issues and Policies Regarding Young People Who Are Neither in Education, Employment nor Training*, forthcoming. NEETs are young people who are not in employment, education or training. The NEET rate is the total number of young people who are NEET expressed as a proportion of the total population.

¹⁷ Roshni Chakraborty and Fiona Samuels, “[Impact of COVID-19 on Adolescent Mental Health in Viet Nam and Tanzania: A Rapid Review](#)”, Overseas Development Institute Working Paper No. 600, (2021).

¹⁸ Kathryn Mansfield et al. (2021), “[Indirect Acute Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Physical and Mental Health in the UK: A Population-based Study](#)”, *Lancet, Digital Health* 3, Issue 4 (2021): e217–e230.

¹⁹ Ru Jia et al., “[Mental Health in the UK during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Cross-sectional Analyses from a Community Cohort Study](#)”, *BMJ* 10, Issue 9 (2020).

²⁰ ILO, *Skills Development in the Time of COVID-19*, (2021b).

²¹ ILO, *ILO Monitor: COVID-19 and the World of Work. Seventh Edition. Seventh Edition*, (2021a).

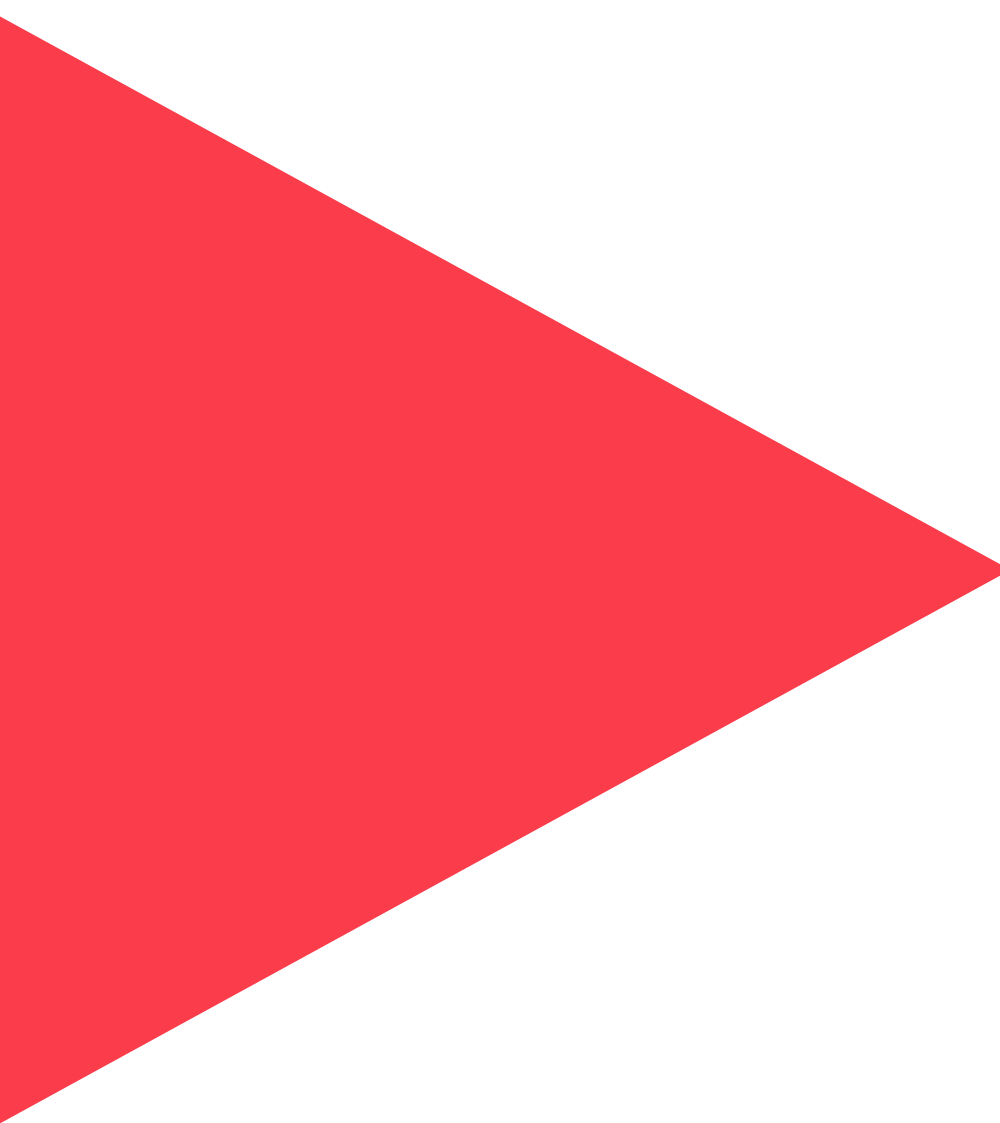
²² ILO, *ILO Monitor: COVID-19 and the World of Work. Seventh Edition. Seventh Edition*, (2021a).

multilateral development partners, including United Nations agencies, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, have intervened using their own distinctive approaches to addressing diverse and uneven impacts of COVID-19.

In this context, this paper aims to:

1. Provide a summary of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on young people in terms of lives and livelihoods;
2. Outline the variety of policy measures to address youth employment challenges at national level according to the ILO categorization of interventions. These measures include direct responses to lockdown measures, responses to economic depression arising from reduced activity and recovery measures;
3. Discuss comparative country experiences in order to identify gaps and commonalities in the policy responses;
4. Identify future challenges and implications for the design of recovery policies.

Section 2 discusses the impact of the pandemic on young people. It points to the pre-pandemic vulnerabilities of young people, which have been further exacerbated by the pandemic. Young people are a heterogeneous group in which unemployment has increased more rapidly than in other age groups. Inactivity rates have also increased rapidly, especially among young women. Section 3 reviews policy measures in response to the social and economic fallout from COVID-19. These policies include attempts to stimulate economies and employment demand; support and protect enterprises, jobs and incomes; and those that emphasize efforts to promote social dialogue in order to explore policy options to tackle the pandemic fallout. Section 4 concludes, highlighting the gaps in policy and evidence, as well as identifying future challenges for policy development.



► 2. Impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic

2.1 Overview of impacts

Even before the pandemic began, large sections of the youth population were socially and economically disadvantaged. They were more likely to be in the informal sector and earn less than older adult workers, or to be inactive.^{23, 24} An important caveat is that those who were economically inactive but in education were not necessarily at a greater disadvantage, though education systems have also been heavily disrupted by COVID-19. Since COVID-19 reached pandemic proportions, young people have been less directly impacted by illness, death and long COVID than older cohorts. Still, many young people have suffered directly from COVID-19, and many more have family and friends – on whom they may depend for social and emotional support – who have suffered or died during the past year. Young people have been highly impacted by the national lockdowns, containment policies and travel restrictions to slow the spread of COVID-19 which alter many dimensions of daily life. This includes the delivery of young people's education and training, and their transitions into the labour market. Since the pandemic began, more than one in six young people globally were made redundant and ceased working.^{25, 26} Even before the crisis, more than 267 million young people found themselves in the category of NEET and 68 million were unemployed.²⁷

A variety of measures are needed to observe the full impacts of COVID-19 on young people's lives and livelihoods. Unemployment statistics alone – which describe being without work, but actively seeking and ready to start work – do not capture the full impact and diverse pandemic experiences of young people. This is especially true given the significant increases in labour market inactivity associated with COVID-19 (figure 1).²⁸ Whereas in HICs, unemployed status can bring access to state welfare, in states which offer minimal social protection not working is less of an option, thus informal, poverty-income activities are taken on more readily. These regional differences are reflected by the large range in informal employment rate for young people by region, from 33 per cent in Europe and Central Asia, to 93 per cent in Africa.²⁹ Other relevant statistical measures of young people's situations include: underemployment (inability to find enough work), in-work poverty (working but not earning enough money to pay rent and bills), inability to work (due to restrictions), leaving education, work or training to become NEET,³⁰ work becoming more demanding (whether due to additional demands in an existing job or taking on new roles, such as carer or home educator), doing other activities while waiting for work (volunteering,³¹ waiting and extending education³²), and wider impacts on mental health and well-being. Complementing statistical analyses, qualitative approaches offer insights into the experiences, causal pathways, and personal meaning associated with labour market trends.

²³ Anna Barford and Rachel Coombe, [Getting By: Young People's Working Lives](#), (2019).

²⁴ Brendan Burchell et al., ["Self-employment Programmes for Young People: A Review of the Context, Policies and Evidence"](#), ILO Employment Working Paper No. 198, (2015).

²⁵ ILO, [ILO Monitor: COVID-19 and the World of Work. Fourth Edition](#); p. 3, (2020h).

²⁶ Katarzyna Cieslik, Anna Barford and Bhaskar Vira, "Sustainable Development Target 8.6: Young People not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) in Sub-Saharan Africa", (2021).

²⁷ ILO, [ILO Monitor: COVID-19 and the World of Work. Fourth Edition](#); p. 3, (2020h).

²⁸ ILO, [ILO Monitor: COVID-19 and the World of Work. Seventh Edition](#), (2021a).

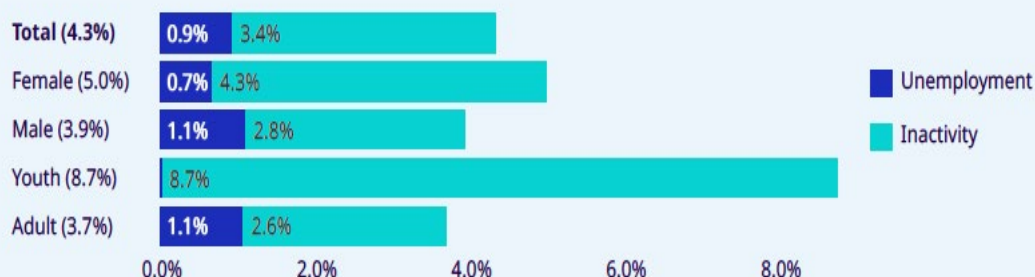
²⁹ ILO, [ILO Monitor: COVID-19 and the World of Work. Fourth Edition](#), (2020h).

³⁰ O'Higgins et al., "A NEET Overview".

³¹ Anna Barford, Rachel Coombe and Rachel Proefke, ["Against the Odds: Young People's High Aspirations and Societal Contributions amid a Decent Work Shortage"](#), *Geoforum* 121 (2021): 162–172.

³² Jeffrey, Craig. Timepass, (2010).

► Figure 1. Global percentage changes in unemployment and inactivity by sex and age (2020)



Source: ILO, *ILO Monitor: COVID-19 and the World of Work. Seventh Edition*, (2021a).³³

The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on young people's livelihoods have been more severe than for older adults, there is also great unevenness between young people. In the short period between February and April 2020, young people's labour participation rates decreased by varying amounts. In Canada there was a 11.7 percentage point reduction, the figure for the United States was 7.5 percentage points, for Australia 7.1 percentage points, and for the Republic of Korea a much lower 1.9 percentage points.³⁴ By May 2020, early findings from the Global Survey on Youth and COVID-19³⁵ showed that even young people who had not lost their job nevertheless had less work, experiencing an average 23 per cent reduction of working hours.³⁶ As hours of work and number of job opportunities contract, and individuals spent more time out of work, the prospect of (re)entering the labour market becomes increasingly challenging due to heightened competition for work. In this context, young people who were already described as NEET pre pandemic will face tough competition for jobs from the better trained, more experienced and so more readily employable new NEETs.³⁷ Overall, there is a significant danger of generational "scarring", with young people facing protracted periods of unemployment and inactivity, finding it hard to re-enter the labour market, and possibly being overtaken by younger and better qualified cohorts. As we write, a third wave of COVID-19 is rapidly spreading in twelve African countries.³⁸ As such, the impacts detailed in this chapter may shift and worsen in the coming months as repeated outbreaks are likely to deplete household savings, shrink opportunities, and diminish young people's aspirations.

2.2 Restricted international movement

The disruption caused by the closure of national borders and lockdown policies has had a significant impact on young people, and some young people have been worse affected than others. It is estimated that more than forty percent of young people who had a job pre pandemic – that was 178 million young

³³ Note: that this graph compares the situation in 2020 to a hypothetical "no pandemic scenario". Unemployment means being without work but actively searching for and being ready to start work; inactivity is also referred to as being outside the labour force, and means being "jobless but not available and/or not looking for a job". The percentages reported in parentheses next to the name of the demographic group show total employment loss for that group. Reproduced from the source: ILO, *ILO Monitor: COVID-19 and the World of Work. Seventh Edition*, (2021a).

³⁴ ILO, *ILO Monitor: COVID-19 and the World of Work. Fourth Edition*, (2020h).

³⁵ ILO and the Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth partners conducted a >12,000 person survey in April-May 2020, entitled the "Global Survey on Youth and COVID 19". Note that educated young people and young people with internet access were overrepresented in this survey. For more information, see: ILO, *Youth and COVID-19: impacts on jobs, education, rights and mental well-being. Survey report 2020*. (2020k).

³⁶ ILO, *ILO Monitor: COVID-19 and the World of Work. Fourth Edition*, (2020h).

³⁷ Rowan Light, "Catching the Tide: New Directions for Youth NEET Policy after COVID-19", Maxim Institute Discussion Paper, (21 September 2020).

³⁸ WHO. *Africa faces steepest COVID-19 surge yet*, 24 June 2021, (2021).

workers – were employed in the most affected sectors, namely retail, services and tourism.³⁹ These sectors have already been exposed to multiple lockdowns, enforced closure of non-essential businesses and travel bans. Furthermore, many young people migrate for work, and travel restrictions have stemmed would-be migrants. For young people who have already moved country, especially refugees, may find their work and income affected often with no savings to draw upon.

The tourist industry, a major employer for young people, has been especially impacted by international travel bans and restrictions to domestic mobility. The scale of this impact is immense, with a 74 per cent decrease in international arrivals during 2020 compared to 2019, and financial losses 11 times greater than in 2008 following the global financial crisis.⁴⁰ Young women dominate the tourism workforce, which is run predominantly by micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs).⁴¹ In South Africa in 2018 tourism generated 740,000 direct jobs, and more than 1.5 million jobs economy-wide.⁴² Any downturn in the sector has significant consequences for a multitude of associated industries and services. Small island states are especially vulnerable to the economic shocks of COVID-19 travel restrictions, as tourism makes up very high shares of their total exports, reaching 90 per cent in Saint Lucia, 88 per cent in Palau, and 86 per cent in the Bahamas.⁴³ The uneven sectoral impact translates into uneven impacts on the young workers over-represented in highly impacted industries.

Young people traditionally have a higher propensity to migrate internationally and internally for employment. In August 2013, it is estimated that, globally, 27 million young people (around 10 per cent of the overall 232 million international migrants)⁴⁴ had emigrated in search of work, providing informal familial welfare via remittances.⁴⁵ Distinct and historically established regional migration patterns exist. For example, young Venezuelans leave their home country for other countries in South America or the Caribbean while Hondurans, Salvadoreans and Guatemalans often head northwards to Mexico and the United States.⁴⁶ The closure of borders in Southern Africa prevented Zimbabweans from migrating to South Africa, with knock-on impacts of missed earnings and unsent remittances.⁴⁷ Internal migration has periodically been prevented by domestic travel restrictions, impacting migration for seasonal work. Those who have migrated may live in overcrowded conditions increasing the risk of contagion; in Sub Saharan Africa a new wave of urban to rural migration has sprung up in response to disease risk and limited opportunities in the cities, resulting in a greater reliance on rural livelihoods.⁴⁸ This review has not identified any substantial policy or research focus on how young people, or would-be migrants, have been affected by containment policies and travel restrictions.

Within countries, unemployment and redundancies are unevenly distributed throughout populations. Amongst young people, immigrants including refugees, are likely to fare worse. With 48 per cent of Syrian refugees living in Jordan under the age of 15, this is a young population.⁴⁹ Syrians in Jordan have fared worse than the host population, with a higher proportion of Syrians (35 per cent) than Jordanians (17 per cent) permanently losing their jobs during the pandemic. In addition, median monthly incomes fell substantially – to 215 Jordanian dinars (JD) by –March 2020 from JD368 in the 12 preceding months (falling US\$519 to US\$303).⁵⁰ Pre pandemic, in 2017-18, roughly 80 per cent of Syrian refugees in Jordan lived in poverty and

³⁹ ILO, *ILO Monitor: COVID-19 and the World of Work. Fourth Edition*, (2020h).

⁴⁰ United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), *World Tourism Barometer and Statistical Annex*, (January 2021).

⁴¹ UN, *Policy Brief: COVID-19 and Transforming Tourism*, (2020b).

⁴² Department of Tourism, Republic of South Africa. *Tourism Industry Survey of South Africa: COVID-19*, (April 2020).

⁴³ UN, *Policy Brief: COVID-19 and Transforming Tourism*, (2020b).

⁴⁴ Figure derived from <https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/labour-migration/policy-areas/youth-and-migration/lang--en/index.htm>

⁴⁵ ILO, “Why Do Young People Migrate?”.

⁴⁶ Personal communication with ILO, (16 March 2021).

⁴⁷ Personal communication with ILO, (9 March 2021).

⁴⁸ FAO. *Migrant workers and remittances in the context of COVID-19 in sub-Saharan Africa*, (2020).

⁴⁹ Åge A. Tiltne, Huafeng Zhang and Jon Pedersen. *The living conditions of Syrian refugees in Jordan Results from the 2017-2018 survey of Syrian refugees inside and outside camps*, Fafo report, (April 2019).


⁵⁰ ILO and Fafo, *Impact of COVID-19 on Syrian refugees and host communities in Jordan and Lebanon*, Evidence brief for policy, (2020a).

only two per cent had savings.⁵¹ For Syrian refugees living in Jordan, COVID-19 has been accompanied by additional challenges falling incomes especially for informal workers, lack of health protection in the workplace, fear of future job losses.⁵² The effect of workplace closures has therefore not only meant increases in unemployment but, crucially, has resulted in increased inactivity and decreases in both monthly incomes and working hours.

2.3 Young women and COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has particularly affected young women – more so than older women or young men. The pandemic has impacted women by changing employment, shrinking incomes, and increased domestic and caring responsibilities,⁵³ a gendered impact that was not observed in the wake of the global financial crisis of 2008.⁵⁴ While global female employment rates have decreased by five per cent during the past year, the equivalent decrease for men was less at 3.9 per cent.⁵⁵ This is in part because young women, in particular, are overrepresented in the sectors worst hit by the pandemic, such as accommodation and food services, which recorded employment declines exceeding 20 per cent during 2020.⁵⁶ When earning opportunities and cash flow are constrained, young women (and young men) may be pushed into more

dangerous activities. One such (reported) example is some young women in Uganda, due to a lack of money have used sex to pay for *boda boda* or motorcycle taxi rides, contributing to, among other dangerous outcomes, the rising HIV cases.⁵⁷ Furthermore, as care work increases, young women may find they have less time to work or sleep.

 Young women are over-represented in the sectors worst hit by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Young people, especially girls, will experience the impacts of disrupted education and training systems now and into the future. Pre COVID-19 already 258 million

children of primary and secondary school ages, did not attend school – and 24 million learners who have now paused their educations may never return.⁵⁸ As schools and training centers have sporadically closed their doors, the learning of those who were in education has been halted or offered remotely. In many LMICs, the electrical grid and internet access are not universally accessible, and can be unreliable.⁵⁹ There is also a dearth of distance learning tools and resources, which creates further difficulties in providing remote learning and training. These factors mean that many young people expect their education and training to be delayed or not completed at all as a result of the pandemic.^{60, 61} During crises girls are often the first to be removed from education, in order to save money on fees, support their household through often unpaid work, or sometimes to ease household finances through marriage.⁶² Girls are at greater risk than boys of not returning to primary and secondary school; whereas young men are at a more likely than young women to never return to their university studies.⁶³

⁵¹ Åge A. Tiltnes, Huafeng Zhang and Jon Pedersen. *The living conditions of Syrian refugees in Jordan Results from the 2017-2018 survey of Syrian refugees inside and outside camps*, Fafo report, (April 2019).

⁵² ILO and Fafo, *Impact of COVID-19 on Syrian refugees and host communities in Jordan and Lebanon*, Evidence brief for policy, (2020b).

⁵³ UNICEF and International Rescue Committee, *COVID-19 – GBV Risks to Adolescent Girls and Interventions to Protect and Empower Them*.

⁵⁴ Zsoka Koczan, “Not All in this Together? Early Estimates of the Unequal Labour Market Effects of Covid-19”, European Bank of Reconstruction and Development Working Paper No. 249, (2020).

⁵⁵ ILO, *ILO Monitor: COVID-19 and the World of Work. Seventh Edition*, (2021a).

⁵⁶ ILO, *ILO Monitor: COVID-19 and the World of Work. Seventh Edition*, (2021a).

⁵⁷ Okiror, Samuel. ‘Sex for a fare’ motorcycle taxis threaten Uganda’s fight against Aids’, (3 June 2021).

⁵⁸ UNESCO. *How many students are at risk of not returning to school?*, (2020).

⁵⁹ ILO, *Skills Development in the Time of COVID-19*, (2021b).

⁶⁰ ILO, *Skills Development in the Time of COVID-19*, (2021b).

⁶¹ ILO, *ILO Monitor: COVID-19 and the World of Work. Seventh Edition*, (2021a).

⁶² Barford, Anna et al. *Young people and climate change*, (2021).

⁶³ UNESCO. *How many students are at risk of not returning to school?*, (2020).



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In addition to the direct livelihood impacts of COVID-19 on work and learning, adolescent girls and young women are experiencing increases in violence, early marriage, and unintended pregnancy. Mobility constraints arising from the pandemic have meant an increase in exposure to domestic abuse.⁶⁴ Vulnerability to domestic violence has increased with job losses and associated increases in economic insecurity and household debt.⁶⁵ Social support has become constrained due to the limitations placed on family and friendship networks by lockdown measures. As evidenced during the Ebola outbreak, adolescent girls and young women tend to face increased sexual exploitation and abuse during crises, including commercial sexual exploitation, with perpetrators grooming families which are facing economic hardship to induce them to sell their female children, or online grooming where girls have internet access.⁶⁶ Girls and young women are particularly vulnerable to early, and sometimes forced marriage,⁶⁷ and may also face unintended pregnancies as 47 million women in LMICs may find that lockdowns have disrupted their access to contraception.⁶⁸ Violence, unintended pregnancies, and early marriage are likely to have knock on effects of the trajectories of these young women's lives and opportunities for work.

⁶⁴ UNICEF and International Rescue Committee, [COVID-19 – GBV Risks to Adolescent Girls and Interventions to Protect and Empower Them](#).

⁶⁵ Sharma, Amalesh and Sourav Bikash Borah, [Covid-19 and Domestic Violence: an Indirect Path to Social and Economic Crisis](#), (2020).

⁶⁶ UNICEF and International Rescue Committee, [COVID-19 – GBV Risks to Adolescent Girls and Interventions to Protect and Empower Them](#).

⁶⁷ UNESCO, [How many students are at risk of not returning to school?](#), (2020).

⁶⁸ UN, [COVID-19 could lead to millions of unintended pregnancies, new UN-backed data reveals](#), (2020c).

2.4 Mental health and well-being impacts

The global COVID-19 pandemic, the responses of lockdown and social distancing, and increased economic insecurity have contributed to a deterioration of mental health and well-being.⁶⁹ Over a hundred years of research demonstrates that unemployment adversely affects mental and physical health.^{70, 71} Lockdown policy responses have led to business closures and redundancies have consequently exacerbated mental health issues, especially anxiety, stress and depression among young people.^{72, 73} In addition, lockdowns and social distancing measures in and of themselves have detracted from social cohesion, damaging mental health and well-being. Young people's mental health has been more severely compromised than that of the older generations, threatening to add further challenges to young people's search for employment⁷⁴ given how mental ill-health is also a key influence on job entry and job retention.⁷⁵

Lockdown policy responses have led to increased mental health issues, especially anxiety, stress and depression among young people



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⁶⁹ Tibor Varga et al., "Loneliness, Worries, Anxiety, and Precautionary Behaviours in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Longitudinal Analysis of 200,000 Western and Northern Europeans", *Lancet Regional Health – Europe 2*, 100020 (2021).

⁷⁰ Gregory C. Murphy and James A. Athanasou, "The Effect of Unemployment on Mental Health", *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology* 72, No. 1 (1999): 83–99.

⁷¹ Karsten Paul and Klaus Moser, "Unemployment Impairs Mental Health: Meta-analyses", *Journal of Vocational Behaviour* 74, No. 3 (2009): 264–282.

⁷² Chakraborty and Samuels, "Impact of COVID-19 on Adolescent Mental Health in Viet Nam and Tanzania".

⁷³ Roger T. Webb, Sally McManus and Rory C. O'Connor, "Evidencing the Detrimental Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Mental Health across Europe", *Lancet Regional Health – Europe 2*, No. 100052 (2021).

⁷⁴ "The Pandemic Has Changed the Shape of Global Happiness", *The Economist*, (20 March 2021).

⁷⁵ Gaston Harnois and Phyllis Gabriel, *Mental Health and Work: Impact, Issues and Good Practices* (WHO and ILO, 2000); Leilei Liang et al., "The Effect of COVID-19 on Youth Mental Health", *Psychiatric Quarterly* 91, No. 3 (2020): 841–852; Deepak Nathiya et al., "Mental Health Problems and Impact on Youth Minds during the COVID-19 Outbreak", *Social Health and Behavior* 3, Issue 3 (2020): 83–88; Chakraborty and Samuels, "Impact of COVID-19 on Adolescent Mental Health in Viet Nam and Tanzania"; NMC Health, *Mental Health and Teenagers: How COVID-19 Can Affect the Young Mind*, (2020).

Analysis of previous public health emergencies demonstrates the distinct impact of economic effects and policy responses on younger people. During the SARS-CoV outbreak in Hong Kong in 2013, young people were found to suffer more from stress, anxiety and post-traumatic symptoms than older individuals.⁷⁶ Given that nearly 50 per cent of mental health conditions tend to develop by 14 years of age, children and young individuals are particularly vulnerable to the mental health impacts of the pandemic.⁷⁷ According to an ILO survey, young women are significantly more likely than young men to display symptoms of anxiety.⁷⁸ Following the onset of COVID-19, 18.9 per cent of children in China reported symptoms of depression, and 22.6 per cent reported symptoms of anxiety.⁷⁹ Another study in China found that depression and anxiety was more common among adolescents than in the general population in March 2020.^{80, 81}

A recent large-scale study in the UK found that one in six (16.0 per cent) children aged between five and 16 years old, both girls and boys, had “a probable mental disorder during the pandemic, compared with one in nine (10.8 per cent) in 2017”.⁸² Young women (aged 17-22) had the highest rate, with 27 per cent displaying probable mental health disorders, compared with 13.3 per cent of young men. Young people with mental health issues were more likely to feel that the national lockdown had worsened their lives, reporting loneliness and difficulties sleeping.⁸³ One probable causal pathway was household finances, as children suffering from mental health issues were more than twice as likely to live in households that had experienced debt.⁸⁴ Another UK study attributed the 80 per cent of young people experiencing pandemic-related declines in mental health to school closures, online learning, increased social media exposure and excessive amounts of screen time. This resulted in feelings of isolation, loss of stability, anxiety, disrupted sleep and depression. For some, the pandemic has also increased exposure domestic abuse.⁸⁵ The mental health impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on young people have been worse than those for older adults, and are highly important for their daily lives, livelihood activities, and futures.

⁷⁶ Chakraborty and Samuels, “[Impact of COVID-19 on Adolescent Mental Health in Viet Nam and Tanzania](#)”.

⁷⁷ ILO, [Youth and COVID-19: Impacts on Jobs, Education, Rights and Mental Well-Being](#), (2020k).

⁷⁸ ILO, [Youth and COVID-19: Impacts on jobs, Education, Rights and Mental Well Being](#), (2020k).

⁷⁹ Xie et al., 2020 in Chakraborty and Samuels, “[Impact of COVID-19 on Adolescent Mental Health in Viet Nam and Tanzania](#)”.

⁸⁰ S.-J. Zhou et al., 2020 in Chakraborty and Samuels, “[Impact of COVID-19 on Adolescent Mental Health in Viet Nam and Tanzania](#)”, (2020).

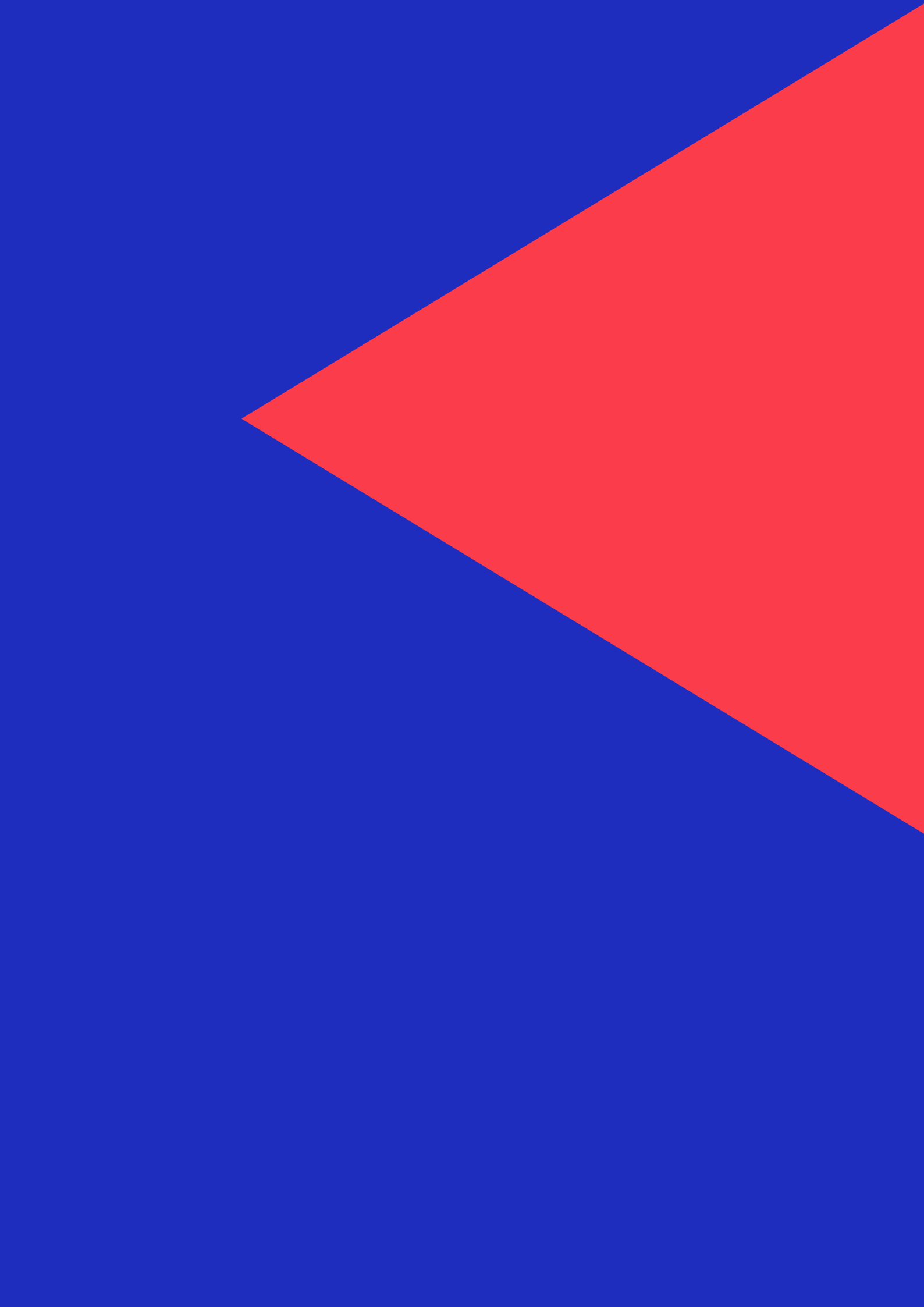
⁸¹ Note that COVID-19 was originally identified in the Wuhan District of China, hence the peaks of cases and deaths were earlier for China than for other countries.

⁸² NatCen Social Research, [Mental Health – Should We be Worried?](#), Society Watch Briefing, p. 8, (2021).

⁸³ NatCen Social Research, [Mental Health](#), p. 4.

⁸⁴ NatCen Social Research, [Mental Health](#), p. 4.

⁸⁵ Chakraborty and Samuels, “[Impact of COVID-19 on Adolescent Mental Health in Viet Nam and Tanzania](#)”.



► 3. Policy responses to young people's pandemic social and economic challenges

The policy and political response to the pandemic has required integrated and multi-level policy design and implementation. These policies, operating from the city, to state, to national level, engage across policy areas, on immediate, medium- and long-term timescales (table 1 shows the suite of policies from the case of the Mexican Government). The COVID-19 pandemic requires a joined-up policy response, which connects ministries to tackle the shared problems which do not fit neatly within single departments.⁸⁶ Within national governments, ministries have needed to co-ordinate their COVID-19 responses. In Indonesia, for example, the Employment Social Security Agency, Coordination Ministry of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Education and Culture, and Ministry of Finance were all involved in the policy response to the social and economic fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic.⁸⁷ In the first phase of the COVID-19 response in, for example, the Southern Cone of South America, measures were generalized and often extensions of pre-existing policies, rather than being focused on specific groups, and young people were among the beneficiaries of these overall policies while not being prioritized.⁸⁸ Returning to Mexico, only a few new policies have been implemented specifically for young people, with the main focus being the *Jóvenes construyendo el futuro* (young people building the future) programme, which provides grants to young people who are classified as NEET. This chapter focuses predominantly on national level policies, often stemming from central banks, ministries of labour, the economy, education, and social affairs; some of these are tailored to young people and others are wider policies which provide for young people to some extent.

While governments have spent trillions of dollars on health of policies – medical services, test and trace facilities, vaccine development and vaccine rollout – other measures attempt to address the wider social and economic impacts (figure 2 in section 3.1).⁸⁹ This chapter examines a variety of policies and approaches which respond, in part, to the social and economic impacts of COVID-19 on young people (also see Appendix 1). The following subsections address four areas of intervention, with these distinct aims:⁹⁰ (1) stimulate the economy and employment; (2) support enterprises, jobs and incomes; (3) protect workers in the workplace; and (4) facilitate social dialogue between governments, industry, and NGOs. The final subsection attends to policies which specifically support more vulnerable young people – specifically young women, refugees, and migrant workers.

⁸⁶ Geoff Mulgan. (2005). [Joined-Up Government: Past, Present, and Future](#), (2005).

⁸⁷ Communication with ILO Regional Office for East and South-East Asia and the Pacific.

⁸⁸ ILO colleagues in the Southern Cone of Latin America (Argentina, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay).

⁸⁹ Ziyad Cassim et al., [The \\$10 Trillion Rescue: How Governments Can Deliver Impact](#) (McKinsey & Company, 2020).

⁹⁰ These four pillars are presented in the ILO's Policy Brief [A Policy Framework for Tackling the Economic and Social Impact of the COVID-19 Crisis](#), (2020b). The following note offers more detail on these four pillars from that policy brief. Pillar 1, on stimulating the economy and employment, includes active fiscal policy, accommodative monetary policy, and lending and financial support to specific sectors, including the health sector. Pillar 2, on supporting enterprises, jobs and incomes, covers measures such as extending social protection, implementing employment retention measures and providing financial, tax and other forms of relief for enterprises. Pillar 3, on protecting workers in the workplace, covers a suite of interventions, such as strengthening occupational health and safety, adapting working arrangements (for instance, promoting teleworking), preventing discrimination and exclusion, providing health access for all and expanding access to paid leave. Pillar 4 promotes reliance on social dialogue in devising solutions and includes strengthening the capacity and resilience of governments and employers' and workers' organizations. Pillar 4 also involves strengthening social dialogue, collective bargaining and labour relations institutions and processes. Other ILO frameworks for analysing policies include the human-centred approach (see ILO, ["A Human-Centred Agenda Needed for a Decent Future of Work"](#)) and the five pillars adopted under the Resolution at the 101st International Labour Conference in June 2012: namely, macro-economic policies, employability, labour market policies, youth entrepreneurship and rights (see ILO, [The Youth Employment Crisis: A Call for Action](#)).

► **Table 1. Examples of joined-up and multi-sector policies in Mexico's COVID-19 response**

Policy	Target group	Extension of pre-COVID-19 policy	New policy response to COVID-19	Details
Financial support	Small enterprises and self-employed people	X	X	New and extended forms of financial support have been made available with a particular emphasis on those impacted by COVID-19, and to small enterprises and self-employed people, including taxi drivers and domestic workers
Education and training: <i>Jóvenes construyendo el futuro</i>	Young NEETs	X		12-month internship programme for young people not in employment, education or training. Currently, the Labour Ministry is working on a strategy to support school leavers into employment or further education
Benefits, welfare and income support	Unemployed people, parents, others	X	X	Mexico City extended its unemployment benefit programme, which reached 95,000 workers; the state of Hidalgo, Yucatán created new unemployment benefit programmes
Apprenticeship schemes	Students	X		There is an existing national apprenticeship programme in Mexico, but the uptake rate is low, at around 4,000 participants; it was not extended
Employment services	Jobseekers, young people	X		Existing public employment services programmes were not reinforced. Some virtual job fairs were organized, a number of which targeted young people
Protecting workers in the workplace	General		X	A health emergency was declared on 30 March 2020. The ensuing extraordinary actions to address the health emergency included the Government of Mexico establishing a <i>Jornada Nacional de Sana Distancia</i> , involving preventive measures to avoid contagion, including in the workplace. Non-essential activities were suspended. For all activities, employers were advised to authorize remote working. Labour inspections backed up these policies. The Ministry of Labour published a guide to occupational safety and health during the COVID-19 pandemic

Note: Table 1 was compiled with the support of the ILO Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean.

Source: Government of Mexico, [El Servicio Nacional de Empleo](#); [Juntos por el Trabajo](#); [COVID-19 Medidas Económicas](#); and [Jóvenes construyendo el futuro](#).

3.1 Stimulating the economy and employment

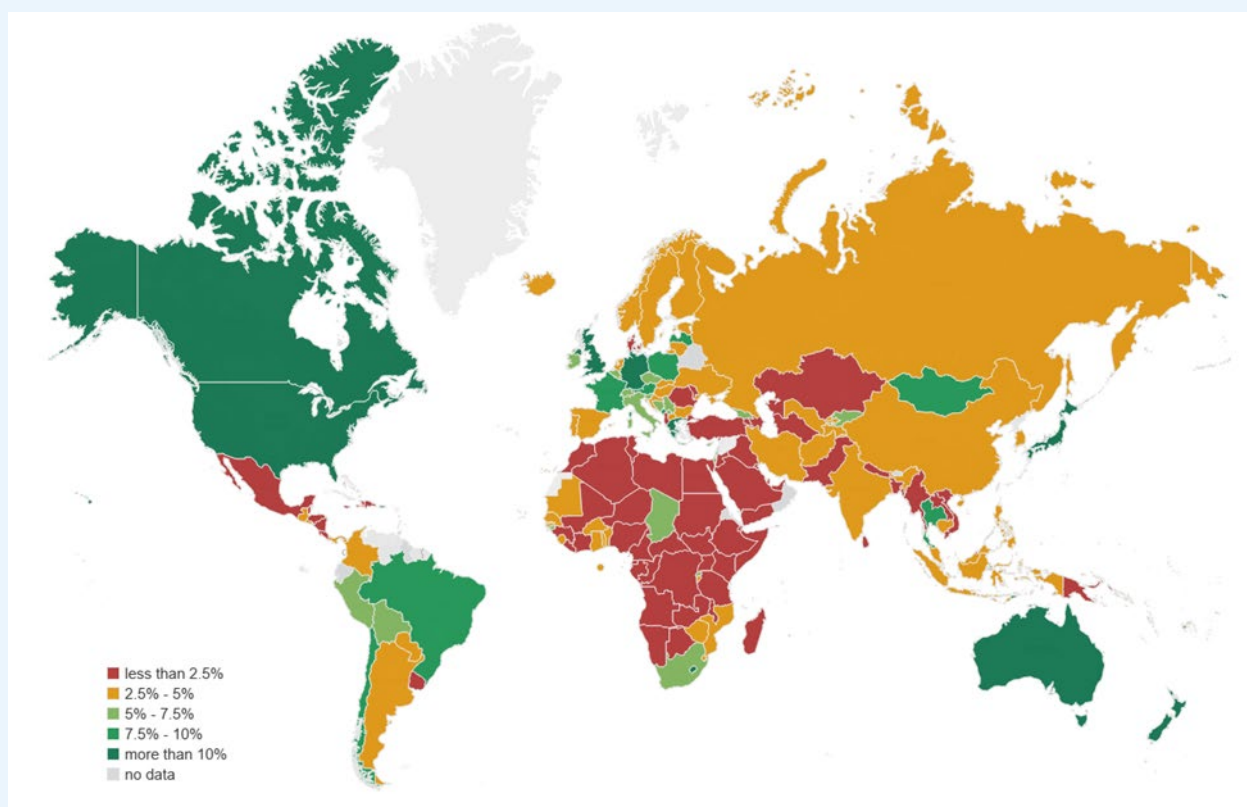
In the context of an economic slump, many governments are working at the macroeconomic level to boost their economies, in hope that this will bring wider social and economic benefits. This is done through active fiscal policies, accommodative monetary policies and sector-specific support.⁹¹ Fiscal policy tools include increased government spending, lost revenues due to tax exemptions, public sector loans, equity injections, and loan guarantees (boxes 1-3 show recent macroeconomic and fiscal policies in India,

⁹¹ Maurice Obstfeld, "[Can Accommodative Monetary Policies Help Explain the Productivity Slowdown?](#)" (IMF, 2018).

Nigeria and Indonesia; also see figure 2).⁹² Progressive taxation and unemployment benefits can stabilize economies by protecting incomes and enabling continued consumption.⁹³

While macroeconomic interventions are not targeted at young people, their aim of supporting the economy and stimulating labour market demand may benefit young people in the medium to long term. The risk, however, with macroeconomic policies is that they are not sensitive to existing social disadvantages or to the distribution of incomes. As such macroeconomic policies may boost the economy but not prevent the worsening of inequalities. The inequality impacts of COVID-19 are already observable, with increases in the Gini coefficient in emerging and developing countries being greater than in previous crises.⁹⁴ As the benefits of macroeconomic policies are unlikely to be equitably according to individuals' needs, macroeconomic measures need to be implemented in parallel with other policy interventions.

► **Figure 2. Forgone revenue and additional spending as a percentage of GDP during 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic**



Source: IMF, "Fiscal Monitor Database of Country Fiscal Measures in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic", 2021.⁹⁵

⁹² ILO, [A Policy Framework for Tackling the Economic and Social Impact of the COVID-19 Crisis](#); p.6, (2020b)

⁹³ ILO, [A Policy Framework for Tackling the Economic and Social Impact of the COVID-19 Crisis](#); p.6, (2020b).

⁹⁴ IMF, [World Economic Outlook: A Long and Difficult Ascent](#), (2020).

⁹⁵ IMF, ["Fiscal Monitor Database of Country Fiscal Measures in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic"](#), March 2021. (2021a)

► **Box 1. Monetary policy in India⁹⁶**

Policy The Indian monetary policy response involved the central monetary agency, the Reserve Bank of India, bringing in new regulations to ease credit for MSMEs and the retail sector. The bank also introduced regulations to allow pauses in loan repayments from both MSMEs and property developers, alongside other actions to support MSMEs and avoid their insolvency. In particular, the threshold for triggering insolvency proceedings for MSMEs was elevated from 100,000 Indian national rupees (INR) to INR10 million (US\$1,400 to US\$140,000).⁹⁷ All new insolvency cases were suspended for six months, and this period could be extended up to a year in total. These suspensions of insolvency cases are intended to avoid companies entering into insolvency proceedings due to the circumstances of default being beyond the control of the individuals involved (known as *force majeure*).

► **Box 2. Interest, credit and liquidity in Nigeria⁹⁸**

The Nigerian Government's response involved several interventions by the Central Bank of Nigeria, including adjusting interest rates, increasing credit and generating liquidity. Interest rates have been decreased from 9 to 5 per cent on all relevant interventions. A targeted credit facility of 50 billion Nigerian naira (NGN) (US\$139 million) was created. In addition, the banking system benefitted from an NGN3.6 trillion liquidity injection (amounting to 2.4 per cent of GDP); within this total were NGN100 billion for the health sector, NGN 2 trillion for manufacturing and NGN 1.5 trillion for affected industries. By September 2020, the Central Bank of Nigeria had spent a total of NGN3.5 trillion on COVID-19 intervention, of which NGN 73.7 billion was allocated as credit for households and SMEs. Finally, the Central Bank of Nigeria is leading the co-ordination of an additional private sector intervention of NGN120 billion (US\$333 million).

► **Box 3. Fiscal policy for social assistance and business support in Indonesia⁹⁹**

The Indonesian case demonstrates how multiple fiscal measures have been simultaneously implemented. The Indonesian response included social and business assistance. In terms of social assistance, wider coverage and additional benefits have been built into pre-existing schemes. For low-income households, support has been offered in the form of food aid, electricity subsidies and conditional cash transfers. Furthermore, unemployment benefits have been expanded and extended to include informal sector workers. Tax relief has been made available both to individuals earning below a certain income and to the highly impacted sector of tourism. For business, corporate income tax has been brought down from 25 to 22 per cent for 2020–21; this tax will reduce even further to 20 per cent in 2022. State-owned enterprises have also received capital injections; while MSMEs have been offered credit guarantees, interest subsidies and loan restructuring.

Most governments have offered economy-wide fiscal stimulus. In the largest economy of the Middle East, oil rich Saudi Arabia, the Government has launched a financial stimulus package for the private sector totalling more than 70 billion Saudi Arabian riyals (SAR) (US\$18.7 billion).¹⁰⁰ This consists of exemptions from and postponement of some government tax payments, fees and other dues, with the aim being to provide liquidity to private sector businesses to prevent closure. In June of 2020, the Saudi Central Bank announced their US\$13.3 billion investment in the banking sector, made to boost liquidity and thus support banks to

⁹⁶ IMF, "Policy Responses to COVID-19 – India", (2021b).

⁹⁷ Currency conversions were done at an exchange rate of INR70 to US\$1.

⁹⁸ IMF, "Policy Responses to COVID-19 – India", (2021b).

⁹⁹ IMF, "Policy Responses to COVID-19 – India", (2021b).

¹⁰⁰ Personal correspondence, ILO, Beirut Office.

offer credit to the private sector.¹⁰¹ Saudi development funds and banks have agreed to postpone repayment of loans in a number of sectors, such as industry and agriculture, among others. King Salman bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud decreed that the Government, through the SANED programme, will provide for 60 percent of salaries for three months for Saudi employees if employers agree to continue to pay once this period ends.¹⁰² The move costed SAR9 billion (US\$2.4 billion).¹⁰³ A royal order was issued in July 2020 which extended fiscal support to private sector employees. This covered covering 70 per cent of those working in the most severely affected private sector establishments and a maximum of 50 per cent of those working in less severely affected private sector companies.¹⁰⁴

Many governments have taken specific measures to support labour market sectors which have been substantially affected. In the Asia and Pacific region, 100 million young people had been employed in wholesale and retail trade, manufacturing, rental and business services.¹⁰⁵ Support for these sectors is crucial to protect current and future jobs in these sectors. An example of such sectoral support is the Indian Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme, which provides liquidity support to 26 sectors through loans that were guaranteed even without collateral. This scheme has now been extended until 31 March 2021.¹⁰⁶ Elsewhere single sectors have been prioritized, for instance tourism.

Tourism has suffered particularly badly during the pandemic. The tourism sector has been supported by policies which reduce costs to the industry and/or to tourists themselves. Indonesia has provided a package of financial support to ten of its primary tourist locations. The package includes 30 per cent reductions in domestic airfares for travel to those destinations; lowered jet fuel prices and airport charges; and reductions in taxes for restaurants and hotels.¹⁰⁷ Jordan too has extended targeted support to its tourism sector, by allowing the payment of 2019 tax liabilities in instalments with no penalty charges, halving the general sales tax, and reducing service taxes for hotels and restaurants to eight and five per cent respectively. The Jordan Loan Guarantee Corporation's initiative on SME loans included a JD150 million (US\$211 million) credit facility specifically for the tourism sector.¹⁰⁸

A similar approach of tax reduction has been used to support the garment industry; for example, the governments of both Indonesia and Cambodia offered 30 per cent tax reductions on the corporate taxation of garment enterprises.¹⁰⁹ The lowering of taxes and charges should ease the economic impact on some businesses, while others are unlikely to survive such an extended period of restrictions.

The Malaysian Government offered a suite of measures to support the tourism, including incentives to tourists to stimulate demand, targeted SME support and skills development. Tourists themselves were offered tax breaks and vouchers and can access a reduction of 1,000 Malaysian ringgits (MYR) (US\$243) in income tax with access to various discount vouchers. SMEs have been supported by micro-credit schemes by a US\$43 million micro-credit scheme for small tourism businesses. Furthermore, the government has postponed taxes by six months for tourism related businesses such as travel agencies, hotels, airlines from April 2020. An education scheme that aims to enhance workers' skills has also been offered to businesses in the tourism sector. Reducing and postponing taxes, and adding subsidies, have been key mechanisms for supporting tourism.¹¹⁰ Because young people are over-represented amongst workers within tourism, these measures to support tourism if effective, could bring benefits young people. However, it will be important to monitor for and respond to uneven age-related impacts within the sector, with young people still likely to lose work as tourist numbers are low, with older adults more likely to be the business owners.

¹⁰¹ Personal correspondence, ILO, Beirut Office.

¹⁰² Personal correspondence, ILO, Beirut Office

¹⁰³ Personal correspondence, ILO, Beirut Office.

¹⁰⁴ Personal correspondence, ILO, Beirut Office.

¹⁰⁵ ILO and ADB, *Tackling the COVID-19 Youth Employment Crisis in Asia and the Pacific*.

¹⁰⁶ KPMG, "India: Government and Institution Measures in Response to COVID-19", (2020).

¹⁰⁷ ILO, *COVID-19 and Employment in the Tourism Sector: Impact and Response in Asia and the Pacific*, (2020e).

¹⁰⁸ IMF, "Policy Responses to COVID-19 – Jordan".

¹⁰⁹ ILO, *Asia-Pacific Employment and Social Outlook: Navigating the Crisis towards a Human-Centred Future of Work*, p. 54, (2020d).

¹¹⁰ ILO, *COVID-19 and Employment in the Tourism Sector*, (2020e)

Fiscal and economic measures taken to stimulate the economy globally have not fully factored in the gendered impact of COVID-19


There is a general lack of gender sensitivity in the fiscal and economic measures to stimulate the economy. UN Women and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) have been tracking 206 countries and territories that have taken a total of 2,517 measures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the 132 countries and territories that adopted 580 fiscal and economic measures to support businesses during the COVID-19 crisis, only 12 per cent aimed to improve women's economic security by ensuring that female-dominated sectors received financial support.¹¹¹ Among

the regions that have taken significant steps to strengthen women's economic security are Latin America and the Caribbean, and Sub-Saharan Africa.¹¹² While the UN Women and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)'s COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker does not disaggregate policies by age, strengthening policy responses that specifically support women could offset some of the negative impacts that younger women have experienced.

3.2 Supporting enterprises, jobs and incomes

Employment retention, and job protection schemes such as furlough and shorter working times have been implemented to support enterprises, jobs and incomes. These interventions overlap with one another, and with other pillars in providing financial support and tax relief for businesses (Box 4). Also included in this subsection are Active Labour Market Programmes (ALMPs, box 5), investing in employment-intensive areas, using public procurement used to support SMEs and female-owned enterprises¹¹³ employment retention measures, and extending social protection. Measures offering support to those already in work, as opposed to new labour market entrants, tend provide greater benefits to older, more established age groups than to young people who are still seeking employment or who have less job security.¹¹⁴

 Measures offering support to those already in work tend to provide greater assistance to older, more established age groups

¹¹¹ UN Women and UNDP, [COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker – Global Factsheets, Version 2](#), (March 2021).

¹¹² UN Women and UNDP, [COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker – Global Factsheets, Version 2](#), (March 2021).

¹¹³ ILO, [A Policy Framework for Tackling the Economic and Social Impact of the COVID-19 Crisis](#); p.8, (2020b).

¹¹⁴ ILO, [ILO Monitor: COVID-19 and the World of Work, Fourth Edition](#), (2020h).

► **Box 4. United Kingdom: Save jobs and livelihoods**^{115, 116}

The United Kingdom's response has been to invest heavily in job protection schemes and extend existing ALMPs, namely Kickstart,¹¹⁷ Restart and Job Entry Targeted Support (JETS).¹¹⁸ As with many countries, these economic responses were initiated during the second wave of coronavirus infections, in September 2020. In an effort to "save jobs and livelihoods", the UK Treasury has invested £2.9 billion (US\$4 billion) in the Restart jobs scheme and £1.4 billion (US\$1.9 billion) to expand existing Jobcentre support. Further extensions were made to the furlough policies, which have helped 9 million people remain in work. In this scheme, 80 per cent of wages are paid by the Government and 20 per cent by employers.

3.2.1 Job retention, income support and social protection

Across countries, a series of large-scale emergency economic response policies have been introduced, including *furlough* and job retention schemes¹¹⁹ to provide employees with subsidized wages and welfare benefits while the businesses and industries in which they work are "mothballed".

A major component of the job retention scheme approach are short-time work policies, which offer shorter working weeks. This means fewer hours worked per person, but more people in employment.¹²⁰ These schemes have been expanded over the course of the pandemic in several countries including Belgium, France, Germany and Italy. In Belgium, for example, 100,000 people were in short-time work in 2009; in April 2020 figure was 1 million (22 per cent of the labour force) engaged in shorter working time arrangements.¹²¹ In Germany, 2.35 million employees (roughly 6 per cent of total employment) have been placed under Kurzarbeit arrangements during the COVID-19 pandemic at an estimated cost of €8.4 billion, considerably more than the 1.4 million people receiving Kurzarbeit at the height of the 2008 financial crisis.¹²²

Cash transfers are another policy response adopted to support those affected by the pandemic. Jordan has scaled up a JD81 million (US\$114 million) its cash transfer programme for the unemployed and self-employed temporarily. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the programme was extended to 100,000 additional families and daily workers. Similarly, Nigeria widened its own conditional cash transfer programme. In India, direct benefits transfers took the form of existing transfers being paid upfront. The PM-KISAN scheme provides for a minimum income to farmers of INR 6,000 (US\$81) annually in three equal instalments. In response to the pandemic, the government provided for farmers to receive the first instalment upfront from April 2020 for a year. The programme is estimated to benefit about 86.9 million farmers.¹²³

National governments have also worked to strengthen existing social protection systems. This has been especially crucial for workers in the informal economy. China, the Philippines and Viet Nam have expanded their healthcare packages to include COVID-19 testing and treatment for informal economy workers. Ecuador created a "contingency benefit" for workers in the informal economy who have been affected by the pandemic while Peru has established a "Stay Home" payment (of about US\$110) for waste pickers when they are in quarantine. In Morocco, income support has been expanded to include informal economy workers.

¹¹⁵ UK Government, Department for Work and Pensions, "[Kickstart Scheme](#)", 25 September 2020, (2020a).

¹¹⁶ UK Government, "[Work and Health Programme \(COVID-19\) Including JETS Provider Guidance](#)", 15 July 2020, (2020c).

¹¹⁷ UK Government, Department for Work and Pensions, "[Kickstart Scheme](#)", 25 September 2020, (2020a).

¹¹⁸ UK Government, "[Work and Health Programme \(COVID-19\) Including JETS Provider Guidance](#)", 15 July 2020, (2020c).

¹¹⁹ OECD, [Job Retention Schemes during the COVID-19 Lockdown and Beyond](#), (2020).

¹²⁰ Brendan Burchell et al., "[Cut Hours, Not People: No Work, Furlough, Short Hours and Mental Health during the COVID-19 Pandemic in the UK](#)", Centre for Business Research, University of Cambridge, Working Paper No. 521, (2020).

¹²¹ Giulia Giupponi and Camille Landais, "[Building Effective Short-time Work Schemes for the COVID-19 Crisis](#)", VOX-EU/CEPR Policy Portal, (1 April 2020).

¹²² Giulia Giupponi and Camille Landais, "[Building Effective Short-time Work Schemes for the COVID-19 Crisis](#)", VOX-EU/CEPR Policy Portal, (1 April 2020).

¹²³ KPMG, "[India: Government and Institution Measures in Response to COVID-19](#)".

Peru and Costa Rica have supported self-employed workers who have lost their jobs by providing for an emergency cash transfer for them.¹²⁴

3.2.2 Active Labour Market Policies

ALMPs are used “to increase employability and reduce the risk of further unemployment”.¹²⁵ This is achieved via interventions which offer job-search assistance, basic skills and vocational training, as well as wage and employment subsidies. They aim to support human capital, labour supply and the general functioning of local labour markets.¹²⁶ Recent labour market analysis by the Office for National Statistics in the United Kingdom shows that over 60 per cent of those made unemployed since the start of the pandemic are young people aged 16 to 24 years old.¹²⁷ This has prompted heavy investment in specific youth-centred policies – ALMPs and apprenticeship schemes.^{128, 129} Currently, no evaluation evidence exists for these programmes and policies but it is plausible that the negative impacts of the pandemic on economic and mental health outcomes could have been far worse had they not been implemented. It remains to be seen whether spending can be maintained against UK Treasury pressure to curtail overall government debt, which stood at 100 per cent of GDP in June 2020.¹³⁰

Examples of ALMPs include Kickstart and Restart in the United Kingdom, the Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme in India, and the German Government's shorter working time policies or Kurzarbeit. These programmes represent massive fiscal investments. In the United Kingdom, the Restart programme alone has a budget of £2.9 billion (US\$5.5 billion). These policies aim to cover key employment sectors and workforces, they are not targeted to specific age groups.

Several LMICs have implemented or strengthened their ALMPs. Indonesia doubled its funding for the Kartu Pra-Kerja (Pre-employment Card Programme) from 10 trillion Indonesian rupiah (IDR) to IDR20 trillion (US\$1.3 billion), which funds skills training of unemployed workers. The programme targets about 5.6 million informal workers and SMEs affected by the pandemic.¹³¹ However, in a number of countries, such as Mexico, ALMP spending has been reduced or crowded out by the need to support emergency public health measures. Spain has also reduced ALMP spending, diverting funds to pay for increased unemployment benefits.¹³²

Employment guarantee programmes have played an important role in some countries. In India, in addition to the INR100 billion (US\$1.33 million) allocated by the Prime Minister Garib Kalyan Yojana scheme to support the informal rural labour markets,¹³³ and the terms of a long-standing rural employment scheme have been improved. The wages paid via the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Act,¹³⁴ increased from INR182 (US\$2.47) to INR202 (US\$2.73) per day.¹³⁵ This employment scheme, which was passed in 2005, is open to all households in which the adults do ‘unskilled manual work’, offering up to 100 days per year of paid work.¹³⁶ The uptake of this programme rose steeply from 1.5 million workers in the year 2019, to 3.5

¹²⁴ ILO, *Extending Social Protection to Informal Workers in the COVID-19 Crisis: Country Responses and Policy Considerations*, (2020g).

¹²⁵ Adam Coutts, David Stuckler and David Cann, “The Health and Wellbeing Effects of Active Labor Market Programs”, in *Interventions and Policies to Enhance Wellbeing*, ed. F.A. Huppert and C. Cooper (London: Wiley, 2014), pp. 465–482; Jochen Kluge et al., “[Interventions to Improve the Labour Market Outcomes of Youth](#)”, *Campbell Systematic Reviews* 12 (2017): 1–291; p. 4.

¹²⁶ Adam Coutts, David Stuckler and David Cann, “The Health and Wellbeing Effects of Active Labor Market Programs”, in *Interventions and Policies to Enhance Wellbeing*, ed. F.A. Huppert and C. Cooper (London: Wiley, 2014), pp. 465–482; Jochen Kluge et al., “[Interventions to Improve the Labour Market Outcomes of Youth](#)”, *Campbell Systematic Reviews* 12 (2017): 1–291.

¹²⁷ ONS, *Coronavirus and the Social Impacts on Young People in Great Britain: 3 April to 10 May 2020*, (22 May 2020).

¹²⁸ Carl Baker et al., *COVID-19 and the Digital Divide*, (17 December 2020).

¹²⁹ UK Government, “[New Major Package to Support Online Learning](#)”, 19 April 2020, (2020b).

¹³⁰ Chris Giles and Adam Samson, “[UK Public Debt Exceeds 100% of GDP for First Time Since 1963](#)”, *Financial Times*, (19 June 2020).

¹³¹ ILO, *Skills Development in the Time of COVID-19*, (2021b).

¹³² OECD, *Scaling Up Policies that Connect People with Jobs in the Recovery from COVID-19*, (April 2021).

¹³³ IMF, “[Policy Responses to COVID-19 – India](#)”, (2021b).

¹³⁴ Ministry of Rural Development, *Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Act*, n.d.

¹³⁵ KPMG, “[India: Government and Institution Measures in Response to COVID-19](#)”.

¹³⁶ Barford, Anna and Coombe, Rachel. *Getting By: young people's working lives*, (2019).

million workers in just 50 days from 1st April to 20th May 2020.¹³⁷ Similarly, the Nigerian Government has started the *Special Public Works Programme* to create jobs.¹³⁸ Whereas in Jordan, the Ministry of Labour is encouraging the uptake of a one-year military service to address youth unemployment.¹³⁹ Several countries have provided direct support to sectors by, for example, subsidizing training. As with the fiscal policies, many of these target groups in which young people are over-represented (unemployed and informal workers), but few specifically target young people as a distinct group.

► **Box 5. Active labour market programmes (ALMPs)**

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) defines ALMPs as

“all social expenditure (other than education) which is aimed at the improvement of the beneficiaries’ prospect of finding gainful employment or to otherwise increase their earnings capacity. This category includes spending on public employment services and administration, labour market training, special programmes for youth when in transition from school to work, labour market programmes to provide or promote employment for unemployed and other persons (excluding young and disabled persons) and special programmes for the disabled.”¹⁴⁰

3.2.3 Education and training

Additional support services have been provided by some countries to support education and training via ALMPs. The Government of Singapore initiated a traineeship scheme to support new graduates in the challenging job market. These 12-month traineeships are hosted by enterprises, with trainees given a monthly training allowance. The Government bears most of the costs, funding 80 per cent of the stipend, with an enterprise providing the remaining 20 per cent of the cost. In the Philippines, the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority has created a 3 billion Philippine peso (PHP) (US\$62 million) “programme to upskill and reskill temporarily laid off workers”, which offers online courses, among other measures.¹⁴¹ Often young people benefit from these measures, as the age group receiving the most formal education and training.

Several policy measures have been implemented to address the severe and ongoing disruptions to education, especially the sudden shift to online teaching and learning. In April 2020, almost every government required schools to close, with many closures lasting for several months.¹⁴² Panama experienced extremely school closures lasting over a year, with education offered via a television channel, online, and by radio instead.¹⁴³ To deliver free education to students from grades 1 to 13, the Ministry of Education in Sri Lanka created a national e-learning portal *E-Thaksalawa*.¹⁴⁴ In another example, the Indonesian Government has been investing in education technology, including online and distance learning. Students can continue their education from home through seven e-learning platforms. In addition, the Ministry of Education and Culture screens educational classes live on the television station *TV Edukasi*. In another initiative, UNICEF, Microsoft and University of Cambridge deployed a pre-existing Learning Passport approach that enables children and youth to continue their education from home through a digital learning platform. The platform also provides key resources to teachers and educators.¹⁴⁵ All these measures, if

¹³⁷ Shukla, Kritika, et al. [Did MGNREGA mitigate the loss in income and unemployment caused by the COVID-19 pandemic?](#), (28 May 2021).

¹³⁸ Akintunde Oyebode, [“Nigeria: What is Most Important Is We Put Millions of Young People in Jobs, and Quickly”](#), *The Africa Report*, (5 August 2020).

¹³⁹ ILO Beirut Office.

¹⁴⁰ OECD, [“Active Labour Market Programmes – Glossary of Statistical Terms”](#), OECD Statistics Portal, accessed 20 May 2021.

¹⁴¹ ILO, [A Quick Reference Guide to Common COVID-19 Policy Responses](#), p. 23, (2020c).

¹⁴² Our world in data. [COVID-19: School and Workplace Closures](#), (2021).

¹⁴³ UNESCO. [COVID-19 Education Response](#), (2021).

¹⁴⁴ Asian Development Bank, [COVID-19 and Education in Asia and the Pacific](#), (2021).

¹⁴⁵ UNICEF, [“UNICEF and Microsoft Launch Global Learning Platform to Help Address COVID-19 Education Crisis”](#), 20 April 2020, (2020a).

effective, will support both young people's learning in the present and their longer-term career prospects avoiding periods of inactivity and their associated economic scarring.

3.2.4 Digital service delivery

In the context of lockdown policies and the ever-greater need for social protection, some governments rolled out services through (largely untested) digital platforms. Many European countries shifted their entire jobseekers and benefits systems online at the start of the pandemic. Mobile telephone technology has been key to the delivery of services and information; for example, Togo implemented a mobile cash transfer scheme for informal workers through its *Programme de Revenu Universel de Solidarité*. In Colombia, Malawi and Morocco, cash transfers were made through mobile phones for those without a formal bank account. The Thai Government created a mobile phone app to enable informal workers to access a monthly allowance of 5,000 Thai baht (US\$160). Although the programme initially targeted 3 million workers, there was much wider take up and 22 million workers have used the app to register to receive allowances via mobile phone.¹⁴⁶ Another example of online service delivery is the Jordanian Ministry of Labour's online platform to protect worker labour and health rights. An online platform was established to (1) receive complaints from workers concerning labour rights violations, and (2) share good practice guides for on COVID-19 safety measures for key sectors including food suppliers, shops, pharmacies, and water, gas, and industrial establishments.¹⁴⁷ Digital provision offers a cheap and COVID-19 safe means of communication and money transfer, yet such provision is rarely universally accessible and can be isolating, subjecting recipients lives to the decisions of an algorithm in place of human understanding and case-by-case decision making.¹⁴⁸

 Governments have resorted to the delivery of services through digital platforms.

3.2.5 Youth-specific policies

While most policy responses to COVID-19 aim for universal crisis coverage, several integrated policy responses have been tailored to young people. The Republic of Korea, for example, piloted a scheme which provided support to 24-year-old residents in the municipality of Seongnam and made one-off cash transfers to young people. The Government redesigned the pilot scheme as a universal cash transfer by the end of August 2020. This scheme accounts for 20 per cent of the Government's total spending on the pandemic response. The Republic of Korea also pledged in May 2020 to provide employment for 550,000 young individuals and assistance for those on low incomes,¹⁴⁹ retraining for workers who have been made redundant and wage support for small merchants. In addition, there are measures to enhance the allowance for young jobseekers.¹⁵⁰ Overall, the Government has created four major supplementary budgets to deal with the pandemic and the fallout from it, totalling 66.8 trillion Korean Republic won (US\$56 billion).¹⁵¹

The Malaysian and Indonesian Governments have also designed some youth-specific policies. In June 2020, the Malaysian Government provided financial incentives to employers to train and then hire 300,000 unemployed young people.¹⁵² Under the scheme, individuals who have dropped out of school and those who have recently graduated would receive MYR600 (US\$146) per month for apprenticeships for up to six months. The Malaysian Government also established a fund of MYR2 billion (US\$487 million) to reskill and upskill

¹⁴⁶ ILO, [Extending Social Protection to Informal Workers in the COVID-19 Crisis; country responses and policy considerations](#), p.5, (2020g).

¹⁴⁷ Tewodros Aragie Kebede, Svein Erik Stave, Maha Kattaa, and Michaela Prokop, *Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on enterprises in Jordan*, n.d.; p. 13.

¹⁴⁸ Barford, Anna and Mia Gray. *Welfare reform and the ethics of care*, in review.

¹⁴⁹ ILO and ADB, [Tackling the COVID-19 Youth Employment Crisis in Asia and the Pacific](#).

¹⁵⁰ ILO and ADB, [Tackling the COVID-19 Youth Employment Crisis in Asia and the Pacific](#).

¹⁵¹ From ILO, [Republic of Korea: A Rapid Assessment of the Employment Impacts of COVID-19](#), p. 11, (2020j).

¹⁵² ILO and ADB, [Tackling the COVID-19 Youth Employment Crisis in Asia and the Pacific](#), p. 24, (2020).

200,000 young workers who are unemployed to improve their chances of getting a job.¹⁵³ The Government of Indonesia has introduced a “Pre-employment Card Programme” aimed at upskilling two million young workers. The scheme will cover the costs of accommodation and transport during training through a lump-sum payment of IDR500,000 (US\$34) per trainee.¹⁵⁴ These schemes are tailored to the particular challenges facing young people, including honing skills and covering basic costs. The effectiveness of these youth-specific schemes is likely only to be evaluated in retrospect.

Another example is the reinforced Youth Guarantee scheme, under which EU Member States provide all young people under 30 years of age with employment, education, apprenticeship or traineeship within four months of either leaving education or becoming newly unemployed.¹⁵⁵ All “EU countries have committed to the implementation of the reinforced Youth Guarantee scheme”, which “steps up the comprehensive job support available to young people across the European Union, now reaching out to a broader target group of 15- to 29-year-olds”.¹⁵⁶ Given the size of the Youth Guarantee scheme and its impact on the NEET, it also serves as an automatic stabilizer.

It remains to be seen whether the substantial fiscal spending on ALMPs and social protection can be maintained to help offset the long-term impacts of the pandemic on the labour market and the well-being of the population. Before moving on to the next section on protecting workers in the workplace, Box 6 presents a case study of a youth-sensitive programme in Argentina aimed at the most disadvantaged young people in society. In this example, many of the policy responses pre-existed this current crisis, and COVID-19 has both constrained existing measures and motivated new policy responses. The Argentine example points to the need for international institutions and government policy to support youth employment and wider social programming and highlights the damage that austerity can inflict on functioning services, especially lower priority areas, which sometimes includes youth employment.

¹⁵³ ILO and ADB, [Tackling the COVID-19 Youth Employment Crisis in Asia and the Pacific](#).

¹⁵⁴ ILO, [Skills Development in the Time of COVID-19](#), (2021b).

¹⁵⁵ European Commission, [“The Reinforced Youth Guarantee”](#), n.p.

¹⁵⁶ European Commission, [“The Reinforced Youth Guarantee”](#), n.p.

► **Box 6. Adapting existing policies to address youth unemployment: a case study of the More and Better Jobs for Youth Programme in Argentina¹⁵⁷**

While this report emphasizes policy responses to COVID-19, of course the pandemic also impacted upon existing policies. In 2008, the Government of Argentina's Ministry of Labour implemented the World Bank-funded *More and Better Jobs for Youth* programme. This programme offers training modules to vulnerable young people (aged 18–24 years old), who have not completed secondary education, on: basic training which teaches job-search and basic skills; TVET in preparation for running one's own business, backed by low-level financial support; wage subsidies; and six months of job skills training. Basic income support is offered while these modules are being completed. Difficulties along the way and an unexpected extension of the *More and Better Jobs for Youth* programme has kept the programme running until 2021, thus overlapping with the labour market impacts of COVID-19.

Alongside the Ministry of Labour, other ministries also provide support. First, in March 2020, the Emergency Family Income was established as a new, unconditional cash transfer from the Social Security Agency, delivered to 5 million people in three installments of 10,000 Argentine pesos (US\$107). Although not specifically targeted at young people, many young people benefited from this due to their informal worker status. Second, *Universal Child Allowance*, also from the Social Security Agency, formed another type of support. This conditional cash transfer, akin to the Brazilian *Bolsa Família*, which requires families to access education and health services, was established in 2009 in response to the global financial crisis. During the COVID-19 crisis, many new families have registered for this benefit. Finally, the *Fostering Social Inclusion* scheme offers two-pronged programmes for (a) the general population and (b) young people. People are paid for six hours of labour per day.

During 2020, people in Argentina were ordered to stay at home for several months to limit the spread of the COVID-19 virus. During this time, the activities of the *More and Better Jobs for Youth* programme paused, but the associated cash transfers continued. Under normal circumstances, payments were conditional upon engagement with programme modules, but this condition was removed due to the impossibility of complying. By September 2020, some training had been moved online. Knowledge economy TVET courses on topics such as data management were delivered online. Other training, such as how to operate machines, could not be virtualized. Finally, the *Fostering Social Inclusion* programme was disrupted by COVID-19 because it relied heavily upon face-to-face interaction, which has been impossible due to restrictions.

The highly infectious nature of the COVID-19 virus led to a new push for online provision of benefits and services to limit contagion. Public officers were working from home at reduced capacity, and people living in vulnerable settlements were hard to reach. The *More and Better Jobs for Youth* programme continued for existing registrants during the pandemic, but struggled to register new people during the past year. The *Public Employment Service*, offering a job-matching service to employers and workers, which previously had no online presence, now exists online. *Emergency Family Income* was already provided online, but more vulnerable people without access to the right technology were hard to reach. Local authorities and social movements became routes to access digitally disconnected people, and they set up benefits transfers to bank accounts. For those without a bank account, a free account is provided.

A persistent challenge is that vulnerable populations often face multiple simultaneous challenges, which a job alone cannot solve. For the future, joined up, complementary services are needed which target work alongside transport, housing, family and health issues. The Ministry of Labour will also extend the *More and Better Job Opportunities for Youth* programme to include other disadvantaged groups: women and workers aged over 45 years.

¹⁵⁷ The case study is based on insights from Diego Guisande of the Argentine Ministry of Labour.

3.3 Protecting workers in the workplace and beyond

During the COVID-19 pandemic the primary concern about workplace health and safety has been the risk of contracting coronavirus, but there has also been widespread recognition of the mental health impacts of pandemic. While many professionals have been able to shift to homeworking in order to follow national guidelines, keyworkers have been obliged to continue to physically go to work, coming into contact with larger numbers of people. Both can cause stress and anxiety, either due to isolation or enhanced exposure to disease risk, alongside the wider social and economic disruptions which also impact upon well-being. Here we consider first the policies which address young people's mental health and well-being, followed by a brief review of physical health policies which are not generally targeted by age group.

3.3.1 Support for young people's mental health

While governments have attempted to support the mental health of young people, the efforts have often been insufficient. The World Health Organization (WHO) states that, although 89 per cent of countries reported that "mental health and psychosocial support is part of their national COVID-19 response plans, only 17 per cent of these countries have full additional funding for these activities".¹⁵⁸ Indeed, the mental health of young people, along with that of the general population, has been badly affected by pandemic response policies, unemployment and inactivity. A review of the potential mental health impacts of COVID-19 in LMICs, provides emerging evidence on the mental health impacts in LMICs.¹⁵⁹ In Bangladesh, for instance, a survey of 10,000 individuals found widespread depression (33 per cent prevalence) and evidence of suicidal ideation (5 per cent prevalence).¹⁶⁰ Elsewhere, large-scale studies are now available showing that the mental health of populations in Europe and the United States has been negatively impacted by COVID-19 response policies.¹⁶¹

Governments have invested in remote mental health services and psychosocial support to try to offset the negative health impacts of lockdown policies and unemployment. The largest of these programmes identified by this review is the UK Government's COVID-19 Mental Health and Wellbeing Recovery Action Plan,¹⁶² which has invested £500 million (US\$694 million) into the provision of mental health services in general and for those affected by the economic downturn. Tele-medicine, online education, and participatory programmes such as digital storytelling are also used to promote well-being. For instance, Egypt, Kenya, Malaysia, Nepal and New Zealand, have increased the number of mental health emergency telephone lines available.¹⁶³ In Nigeria, the COVID-19 Partners in Mental Health, comprising the Association of Psychiatrists, the Association of Psychiatric Nurses, clinical health workers and NGOs, is training government and civil society on mental health, teletherapy and research.¹⁶⁴ The Government of Tanzania and JSI Community Health and Social Welfare Systems Strengthening programme trained community case workers, social workers and other welfare officials in psychosocial support and developed training videos to provide mental health and psychological support services during the COVID-19 pandemic.¹⁶⁵ While there is little evidence on the impact of mental health programmes given that the full effects of the pandemic response are still emerging, yet it is already well-established that mental health and well-being can also be supported upstream through policies which actively promote greater economic equality.¹⁶⁶

¹⁵⁸ WHO, *COVID-19 Disrupting Mental Health Services in Most Countries, WHO Survey*, (2020; np).

¹⁵⁹ Lola Kola et al., "COVID-19 Mental Health Impact and Responses in Low-income and Middle-income Countries: Reimagining Global Mental Health", *Lancet, Psychiatry* 8, Issue 6, 535–550, (2021d).

¹⁶⁰ Mohammed A. Mamun et al., "The COVID-19 Pandemic and Serious Psychological Consequences in Bangladesh: A Population-based Nationwide Study", *Journal of Affective Disorders* 279 (2020): 462–472.

¹⁶¹ UK Government, *COVID-19 Mental Health and Wellbeing Recovery Action Plan*, (2021).

¹⁶² UK Government, *COVID-19 Mental Health and Wellbeing Recovery Action Plan*, (2021).

¹⁶³ UN, *Policy Brief: COVID-19 and the Need for Action on Mental Health*, (2020a).

¹⁶⁴ UN, *Policy Brief: COVID-19 and the Need for Action on Mental Health*, (2020a)

¹⁶⁵ Chakraborty and Samuels, "Impact of COVID-19 on Adolescent Mental Health in Viet Nam and Tanzania".

¹⁶⁶ Wilkinson, Richard and Kate Pickett. *The Spirit Level*, (2009).

At times essential parts of the health service have been sidelined due to the urgency of disease control, nevertheless there have been responses to the mental health impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. In the wake of the Malaysian Government classifying services for children with disabilities as non-essential during the COVID-19 pandemic, UNICEF and the Malaysian National Early Childhood Intervention Council came forward with an initiative to provide mental health and psychosocial support services online and via telephone.¹⁶⁷ The initiative trains psychosocial support providers in digital service delivery and provides psychosocial support to children with disabilities and their parents. Between April and August 2020, the initiative provided support to 971 individuals (488 children and 483 parents), double the number of individuals who were being supported when the pandemic hit in March 2020.¹⁶⁸

Social media, sometimes thought to cause anxiety amongst young people, has also been harnessed as part of the response. In Viet Nam, the Ministry of Health and UNICEF have launched the *Kindness is Contagious* campaign, which aims to promote dialogue between policymakers and adolescents on mental health issues.¹⁶⁹ The initiative seeks to foster positive thinking and creativity by asking adolescents to share their stories, photos, videos, ideas and messages through social media platforms (TikTok, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, among others) with the hashtag #long_tot_de_lay or "share kindness". The programme has involved a range of individuals – activists, policymakers, artists and social media influencers – engaging with the youth messages on social media, TV and radio talk shows. While this approach faces the limitations of digital service delivery set out previously – that digital access is not universal and that the quality of interaction can differ greatly between remote and in-person interactions – it nevertheless has potential to reach and support thousands of young people who otherwise may have no support at all.

3.3.2 Support for young people's physical health

While young people as a group have been less impacted by the direct physical health impacts of COVID-19 infection than older adults,¹⁷⁰ health protection in the workplace and beyond is nonetheless necessary. Some sub-groups of young people are particularly exposed to the physical health risks of COVID-19. This includes young people (a) with pre-existing health conditions which heighten their vulnerability to severe illness,¹⁷¹ (b) whose work puts them increased contact with other people or potentially infected items,¹⁷² (c) who are overrepresented within the informal workforce which is known to have weaker health and safety standards,¹⁷³ (d) who are compelled to work to make a living despite the risks, (e) without the means to access the recommended hygiene equipment and washing facilities, and (f) who work and live in a close quarters with others making it difficult to socially distance or to self-isolate. Lastly, as wealthy countries progress their vaccinations, young people are often low priority for vaccinations,¹⁷⁴ making them increasingly vulnerable relative to the wider population.

In anticipation of outbreaks of infectious disease, the Occupational Safety and Health Convention (No.155) and accompanying recommendations on rights, roles and responsibilities (No.164), support the protection of workers in the workplace.¹⁷⁵ Key features are the responsibility of employers to keep work equipment safe to use, the provision of free protective wear to workers, provision of necessary health and safety information and training to staff, and that workers should comply with rules to keep themselves and one another safe.¹⁷⁶

¹⁶⁷ Chakraborty, Roshni, and Fiona Samuels. "Impact of COVID-19 on Adolescent Mental Health in Viet Nam and Tanzania: A Rapid Review", (2021).

¹⁶⁸ Chakraborty, Roshni, and Fiona Samuels. "Impact of COVID-19 on Adolescent Mental Health in Viet Nam and Tanzania: A Rapid Review", (2021).

¹⁶⁹ UNICEF, "[UNICEF and the Ministry of Health Launch the 'Kindness is Contagious' Campaign in Viet Nam](#)", 6 May 2020, (2020b).

¹⁷⁰ Ward, Joseph et al., "[Risk factors for intensive care admission and death amongst children and young people admitted to hospital with COVID-19 and PIMS-TS in England during the first pandemic year](#)", unpublished.

¹⁷¹ Ward, Joseph et al., "[Risk factors for intensive care admission and death amongst children and young people admitted to hospital with COVID-19 and PIMS-TS in England during the first pandemic year](#)", unpublished.

¹⁷² Barford, A. [Informal work in a circular economy: waste collection, insecurity and COVID19](#), (2020).

¹⁷³ ILO, "[Women and men in the informal economy: a statistical picture](#)", (2018).

¹⁷⁴ BBC, "[Covid vaccine: How many people in the UK have been vaccinated so far?](#)", (9 July 2021).

¹⁷⁵ ILO, [In the face of a pandemic: Ensuring Safety and Health at Work.](#), (2020i).

¹⁷⁶ ILO, [In the face of a pandemic: Ensuring Safety and Health at Work.](#) (2020i).

As expected, this review found little evidence of policies which singled out young people for targeted health protection at work given that most approaches to COVID-19 disease control are necessarily universal in their application, with additional protections – or shielding – for the medically vulnerable. Informal young workers who do not benefit from strong health and safety standards at work, do risky work, and have little savings have been compelled to work in more risky conditions. Despite some patchy interventions, overall marginalized informal workers' physical health has not been well protected before or during the COVID-19 pandemic.¹⁷⁷

3.4 Supporting social dialogue, government and inter-agency collaboration

Social dialogue includes “negotiation, consultation and exchange of information between or among representatives of governments, workers and employers on issues of common interest in the areas of economic, labour and social policy”, the subject of social dialogue can range in scale from a single enterprise, to an industrial sector, up to national policy.¹⁷⁸ This review has identified a few examples of social dialogue (additional examples and references in Appendix 1) that specifically address the needs of young people, yet the processes of engaging diverse stakeholders in designing and fine tuning policy responses are central to ensuring that the needs of more disadvantaged sub-groups are fully recognised and addressed.

During the first months of the COVID-19 pandemic, social dialogue between governments, national level organisations, and other parties focused on emergency responses.¹⁷⁹ From early March to early June 2020, the vast majority of countries (134 of 188) had some form of social dialogue, be that bipartite, tripartite, or a combination of both. Within this, interventions supporting enterprises, jobs and incomes, and those protecting workers in the workplace, came from bipartite discussions between workers and employers. Interventions aimed at stimulating the economy or boosting social dialogue tended to stem from cross-sectoral social dialogue. In over half of these countries this process generated tangible outcomes such as guidelines, agreements, declarations, or codes of conduct. At this stage, very few of these outcomes (8 percent) addressed the challenges faced by migrant, informal, freelance, or self-employed workers.¹⁸⁰

As the pandemic progressed and social dialogue continued, it's focus shifted. From 1 February 2020 to 31 January 2021, there were 381 outcomes from high level social dialogues across 102 countries.¹⁸¹ These outcomes – typically agreements and joint statements – can be categorised as (i) emergency and adjustment responses often agreed through bipartite dialogues early in the COVID-19 pandemic, and (ii) more comprehensive recovery plans which have emerged as the pandemic progressed.¹⁸² Emergency measures responded to the immediate needs resulting from the virus threat and lockdowns; adjustment measures have aimed for mid-term solutions to enable work during a disruptive pandemic; recovery measures work on longer time frames of two years or more to support ‘dynamic resilience’. There is a geography to these different responses: Middle Eastern, African, and Asia Pacific social dialogues tended towards emergency and adaptive responses, whereas the Americas had a greater focus on crisis recovery. Overall, Europe and Central Asia reported the most outcomes from social dialogue, of which most (117) were adjustment measures, accompanied by a sizeable number of emergency (75) and recovery (60) responses. In contrast, the Arab States reported only two social dialogue outcomes from February 2020 to January 2021.¹⁸³

Social dialogue has underpinned some decisions which improve the outcomes for workers. For instance in Oman, a tripartite committee was formed by the Government to address issues of employers' non-conformity with the labour law and the adopted measures to combat COVID-19. Through its active participation in the committee and social dialogue between the different parties, the General Federation of

¹⁷⁷ Chen, Marty. “COVID-19 intensifies global need to support informal workers in their struggle, (2020).

¹⁷⁸ ILO, *A Policy Framework for Tackling the Economic and Social Impact of the COVID-19 Crisis*; p. 14, (2020b).

¹⁷⁹ ILO, *Peak-level social dialogue as a governance tool* (2020m).

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ ILO, *Social dialogue one year after the outbreak* (2021d).

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

Oman Workers managed to successfully reinstate the workers of 13 companies which had terminated workers' contracts.¹⁸⁴ In the Occupied Palestinian Territories,¹⁸⁵ social dialogue has also played a key role. During the very early stages of the outbreak, the ILO supported the Ministry of Labour and social partners in developing the Emergency Response Plan for the labour sector, to protect the Palestinian labour market from the worst impacts of COVID-19.¹⁸⁶ Tripartite social dialogue was also at the heart of the tripartite agreement reached in March 2020 and the revitalization of the tripartite Labour Policies Committee in August 2020. Through the signed tripartite agreement, employers committed to pay at least 50 per cent of all workers' wages (with a minimum of US\$305) for the months of March and April 2020, while ensuring that the remaining wages will be paid after the lockdown is eased. This agreement covered wage employees working in tourism, hospitality, retail and wholesale trade, and manufacturing.

With the ILO's support, the Occupied Palestinian Territories have also adopted a National Employment Strategy (2021–2025), developed through tripartite social dialogue and the involvement of relevant government, employers' and employee representatives, while this is a national strategy that applies to all men and women, it still provides for targeted support directed towards less advantaged groups, including youth, with the aim of supporting their smooth transition to the labour market and leaving no one behind. The strategy was launched by the Palestinian Prime Minister in the first ever national social dialogue conference in March 2021.¹⁸⁷

Some social dialogue processes include young people,¹⁸⁸ and young people have also led their own COVID-19 responses. Engaging young people in defining the issues and solutions is likely to lead to more effective outcomes.¹⁸⁹ In the Philippines, the Government has engaged with over 400 youth leaders to develop actionable recommendations on a range of topics, such as education, agricultural livelihoods, social protection and MSMEs. In other cases, young people have led interventions themselves. For example, in Bangladesh, Mindo, a mental health service with young people at the helm provides mental health support and food to individuals from low-income households free of charge.¹⁹⁰ In Cambodia, through SPEAK, young people led efforts to manufacture and sell masks through their e-commerce platform. In Bhutan, Bundle, a delivery system led by young individuals, is being employed to deliver groceries and personal protective equipment. In Singapore, Advisory Singapore and National Youth Council Singapore responded to the impacts of the pandemic on students' education and job prospects with a virtual mentorship programme that dispenses career-related advice. In Viet Nam, the Ho Chi Minh Communist Youth Union came together with the Hanoi Students' Association and the Hanoi Youth Federation to link young individuals with job opportunities. In the Philippines, Help From Home, a youth-led volunteer group, is signposting and guiding daily wage-earners who have lost work. The impetus that COVID-19 has provided to the formation and creation of partnerships and collaborations between different entities to support workers is a small yet significant positive outcome of the pandemic.¹⁹¹

Beyond formal policy interventions, many businesses have also partnered to respond to the pandemic. The ILO has analysed many examples of how the private sector has been key in efforts toward recovery in many countries. Yet others, including fast moving consumer good company, Unilever, for example, partnered with several NGOs and the World Economic Forum's COVID Action Platform (the ILO is also a member of the COVID Action Platform). With these partners, and as a multinational company selling food, drink, and hygiene products such as soap, they have leveraged their large scale and extensive supply chains to donate €100 million (US\$120 million) worth of products to those most in need.¹⁹² Similarly, Dow is

¹⁸⁴ ILO Beirut Office.

¹⁸⁵ ILO Beirut Office.

¹⁸⁶ European Joint Programming, Result Oriented Framework of the European Joint Strategy in Support of Palestine 2017-2020, Annual Report, Volume 1, p. 4, (17 November 2020).

¹⁸⁷ ILO Beirut Office.

¹⁸⁸ See ILO and ADB, [Tackling the COVID-19 Youth Employment Crisis in Asia and the Pacific](#) for details of the range of responses outlined here.

¹⁸⁹ Barford, Anna, and Katarzyna Cieslik. *Making A Life: A Youth Employment Agenda*, (2019).

¹⁹⁰ ILO and ADB, [Tackling the COVID-19 Youth Employment Crisis in Asia and the Pacific](#).

¹⁹¹ ILO and ADB, [Tackling the COVID-19 Youth Employment Crisis in Asia and the Pacific](#).


¹⁹² Unilever, "Putting purpose into practice: our [COVID-19](#) response".

working to assist in relief efforts for waste pickers globally by raising money and gathering supplies of personal protective equipment. For example, Dow, in partnership with an NGO, set up a fund to provide masks, gloves and education for waste pickers in Haiti. In addition, Dow, in partnership with a private foundation (Avina) in Latin America, has set up an emergency fund to support waste pickers who lost their jobs due to the pandemic.¹⁹³ In another example, Unilever has collaborated with NGOs like Restless Development to launch the “Youth Power Hack” to engage young people’s voices and solutions. Run online, this initiative focuses on developing youth-led solutions to diverse issues ranging from health, to climate, to education, to gender equality, engaging young people in India, Indonesia, Nigeria, and the Philippines, and South Africa.¹⁹⁴

3.5 Targeting policy to the most impacted young people

This section focuses on the extent to which policies have addressed the uneven impacts of the pandemic between different groups of young people. Amongst young people, girls and women,¹⁹⁵ asylum seekers, migrant workers, people living with disabilities, and people categorized as NEET for an extended period are amongst the groups who are especially vulnerable to the social and economic impacts of the COVID-19

pandemic. The intersection of these characteristics will likely further exacerbate the labour market vulnerability of the individuals involved. As demonstrated above, countries are impacted differently and are responding differently, so country of residence and nationality also influence the type and level of support available to young people. This short sub-section highlights some oversights and considers a few policies which have been tailored to address persistent inequalities, showing the possibility of responsive policy.

 Interventions sensitive to pre-existing inequalities are crucial for a balanced and inclusive recovery.

Policy measures that are gender sensitive are important to ensure a more fair and inclusive recovery from the pandemic.¹⁹⁶ However, according to UN Women and UNDP, government policies to address the situation of women globally remain grossly insufficient and uneven across regions, as well as across policy measures. The 2020 *COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker – Global Factsheets* finds that, of the 2,517 measures tracked across 206 countries, only 992 measures in 164 countries are gender-sensitive. Further, one-fifth of countries and territories analysed (41 out of 206) did not register any gender-sensitive measures in response to COVID-19.¹⁹⁷ Here, gender-sensitive means “directly address[ing] the specific risks and challenges that women and girls face”.¹⁹⁸ Gender sensitive social protection and labour market measures target unpaid care and women’s economic security; gender sensitive fiscal and economic measures support to female-dominated sectors of the economy, as this may enhance women’s employment and financial security.¹⁹⁹ Although the *Global Gender Response Tracker* does not attend to age, young women are overrepresented in the hardest hit by sectors, concentrated in informal jobs with least protection and safety nets. The pandemic has exacerbated pre-existing inequalities. Without targeted policy support, young women will be especially impacted by pandemic induced economic insecurity.

For forced and voluntary migrants, a number of policy measures have boosted their protection, rights and recognition. In Kenya, the UNHCR partnered to offer young people training in suicide prevention, in response to increased risk of suicide during 2020; while in Honduras, the UNHCR launched the *Youth Artistic Collective*

¹⁹³ Cunningham, Kaily. “[Dow assists in several relief efforts for waste pickers globally](#)”, (2020).

¹⁹⁴ Restless Development, “[Youth Power Hacks](#)”, (2020).

¹⁹⁵ ILO, [A Policy Framework for Tackling the Economic and Social Impact of the COVID-19 Crisis](#), (2020b).

¹⁹⁶ ILO, *A Gender-responsive Employment Recovery: Building Back Fairer* (2020a).

¹⁹⁷ UN Women and UNDP, [COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker – Global Factsheets, Version 2](#).

¹⁹⁸ UN Women and UNDP, [COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker – Global Factsheets. Version 2; n.p.](#)

¹⁹⁹ Ibid, n.p.

to address the youth-specific risks of forced recruitment and grievous bodily harm.²⁰⁰ Non age specific policies include some countries fast-tracking the process for work licenses and skills recognition, to enable asylum seekers to enter the labour market.²⁰¹ One such example is how the Irish authorities included refugee doctors and healthcare professionals in their pandemic response, people who previously did not have permission to practice in Ireland.²⁰² Portugal extended rights to migrants and asylum seekers, in the form of temporary full citizenship rights which includes access to health care.²⁰³ Where the prospects and impacts on these groups have not been carefully considered, for example with policies concerned with citizens and not migrant workers, these groups may face worse outcomes, especially if this reinforces pre-existing discrimination. The same may be said for other marginalised and discriminated against groups – without purposeful policy which aims to support those facing the worst impacts from the pandemic, built upon inclusive social dialogue, there will be gaps and oversights which mean pre-existing inequalities are further entrenched.



²⁰⁰ UNHCR. [Age, Gender and Diversity Accountability Report 2020](#), (2021).

²⁰¹ ILO, [Skills Development in the Time of COVID-19](#), p. 30, (2021b).

²⁰² ILO, [Skills Development in the Time of COVID-19](#), p. 30, (2021b).

²⁰³ Da Silva, Chantal. [Portugal's COVID-19 Strategy to Treat Immigrants Like Citizens is Working](#), (2020).

► 4. Towards equitable and youth-sensitive policy responses: addressing gaps in policy, evidence and future challenges

► Box 7. Summary: gaps in policy, evidence and future challenges regarding young people and COVID-19 policy response

Policy gaps

- Patchy policy attention is paid to young people and the specific challenges they face.
- Limited focus on the situation and challenges that young women face during the pandemic.
- Inclusive policies are needed, addressing specific needs, vulnerabilities, and aspirations.
- Little attention given to new surges in informality among young people and increases in child labour.
- Limited focus on displaced people and those in conflict zones.

Evidence gaps

- No policy evaluations have taken place on pandemic responses, with the exception of the impact of furlough schemes in Europe on mental health.²⁰⁴
- Little indication of which policy interventions have worked, why and for whom across countries.

Pressing issues

- Potentially reduced fiscal space and budgets for large-scale youth employment programmes as governments may seek to claw back recovery spending.
- Consideration is needed on how to respond to a protracted crisis with continued yo-yoing in and out of lockdown situations, particularly as new variants emerge.

Recommendations

- Policies should take into account the particular challenges faced by young people as a broad group, and within that group those who have been worst affected by this crisis including young women, informal workers, child labourers, displaced persons, migrant workers, people living in conflict zones, people living with disabilities, and other vulnerable groups.
- COVID-19 policy responses for youth employment require an integrated, whole-of government approach, developed in close dialogue with young people, social partners and other stakeholders.
- There is a need to plan for a protracted crisis and lagged economic effects. Tapering off financial and job protection schemes is preferable to a “cliff edge scenario” in which financial support ends abruptly, in order to prevent further social and economic impacts.
- Social protection systems and ALMPs need to be strengthened to maintain employability skills and protect mental health and well-being.
- The regular collection of relevant labour market data is needed to strengthen the monitoring of impacts of the crisis on young people and policy effectiveness. Indicators on mental health, well-being, informality, disguised labour, in-work poverty and inactivity are needed.
- Evaluations of economic and social policy response and interventions should be set up – the pandemic provides a natural experimental setting.

²⁰⁴ Burchell et al., “[Cut Hours, Not People](#)”.

4.1 Future challenges and policy recommendations

This report has provided a snapshot account of the types of government response to the social and economic impacts of the pandemic, policy and evidence gaps, and future challenges (Box 7). Key gaps in the response have been detailed, such as a limited policy focus on gendered dimensions of the pandemic impact. The specific challenges facing young people have also been overlooked in the general social and economic response policies. In framing emergency policies to address the needs of whole populations, the specific needs of particular groups, such as young people or sub-groups of young people, have at times “fallen through the cracks”. In addition, given the ongoing and dynamic nature of the crisis, many response policies are yet to fully embed themselves or be evaluated. It is therefore difficult to accurately assess their impact and effectiveness, or determine *what has and has not worked*. However, what is clear is that without these policies and government intervention the situation of young people would have been far worse in terms of the social and economic impacts.

There are a number of current and future challenges which will affect the social and economic well-being of young people in the coming years. We outline these challenges and propose a series of recommendations for policy decision-makers to consider when designing and implementing pandemic recovery policies.

4.2 Medium- to long-term policy design needed

First, the pandemic is far from over as countries continue to yo-yo in and out of waves of COVID-19 surges, lockdowns and containment policies.

Given the protracted nature of the crisis, more medium- to long-term economic policies need to be budgeted for and adopted. For example, job protection, furlough schemes and unemployment insurance need to be either maintained or tapered off gradually, rather than cutting off abruptly, to prevent people falling into poverty. A recent OECD report states that governments had started to adopt more medium- to long-term strategies, particularly on ALMPs. However, “only about half had already adopted a new strategy by November 2020”.²⁰⁵ The authors suggest that constant day-to-day COVID-19 crisis management has prevented many governments from planning medium- to long-term economic and labour market policies. Despite this, many countries remain committed to controlling the pandemic via vaccination campaigns. It is hoped that these will lead to “a return to normal” for economies and labour markets.

4.3 Reduced fiscal space for future social and economic policies

Many countries have spent billions on the COVID-19 response. As the IMF recently commented, “spend as much as you can and then spend a little bit more”.²⁰⁶ However, this spending may pose significant challenges for the financing of future social and economic policies. For example, the OECD forecasts that debt levels will rise by 18 percentage points of GDP. In G7 countries, net debt is either already above 100 per cent of GDP or is expected to exceed GDP.²⁰⁷ The United Kingdom has already expended twice the amount that it spent on tackling the 2008 financial crisis, with £300 billion (US\$417 billion) or 15 per cent of national income invested in the current response. The design of medium- to long-term social protection and labour market policies needs to carefully monitor available fiscal space, especially in LMICs and emerging economies.

4.4 Increase policy sensitivity to young people, especially young women

The majority of COVID-19 employment and labour market policy responses have attended to the wider challenges of the pandemic, often without a sensitivity to the specific pandemic-induced challenges faced by young people. Young people are covered within the ambit of the policy responses by virtue of

²⁰⁵ OECD, [Scaling Up Policies that Connect People with Jobs in the Recovery from COVID-19](#).

²⁰⁶ Reuters, [“Spend as Much as You Can,” IMF Head Urges Governments Worldwide](#), (15 January 2021).

²⁰⁷ Matthew Keep, [“The Budget Deficit: A Short Guide”](#), House of Commons Briefing Paper No. 06167, (21 May 2021).

being in the general populations. The difficulty with this approach is that young people face distinct challenges which disadvantage them in comparison to older adults – including having less work experience and financial capital, weaker social networks and being prone to higher levels of informality and in-work poverty.²⁰⁸ For instance, lockdown measures which allow teleworking helped those already in work but not the young people who are actively seeking work, just leaving school or university, or entering newly created jobs. This group are often ineligible for unemployment benefits, having not yet worked for the necessary period to qualify them for welfare. Not focusing on young people specifically in policy measures means that young are left out as they are overrepresented amongst those not eligible for policy benefits.

Job retention and furlough schemes can only benefit those who are already in a job. As young people are often in search for their first job, such schemes tend to leave young people out, and benefit older age groups who are fully eligible to receive these benefits due to longer service. If recovery packages and “build back better” policies are to become more equitable, governments need to specifically adopt a more human- and youth-centred approach, as advocated by the ILO.²⁰⁹ Without this, there is a risk that young people will be left behind in the recovery, further exacerbating intergenerational inequalities. A youth-policy tracker, similar to that set up by UNDP, is a potential tool to advocate for and monitor progress on the inclusion of the needs of young people and women in policy design, implementation and impact. Protecting young women from the negative social and economic impacts of the pandemic has not received adequate attention in the response. Even though the pandemic has further exposed the crucial role that millions of young women (and some young men) play in terms of unpaid care, it has still received little policy attention in the pandemic response.

4.5 Invest in integrated youth employment policy

Moving forwards, there is a need to invest a lot more in youth-sensitive policy, and for this policy to take an integrated approach to addressing the multiple and intersecting ways in which the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted young people’s livelihoods. Active labour market policies (ALMPs) are a key tool in such an integrated response. The current evidence on the impact of ALMPs to enhance the employment chances and outcomes of young people is mixed and intervention effect sizes small.²¹⁰ While ALMPs have positive effects on employment and earnings for young people,²¹¹ a major issue within existing evaluations of ALMPs is that little is known about intervention quality, why interventions work, or more specifically which active elements generate changes in participants’ behaviour and attitudes.^{212, 213} Nevertheless, there is a growing body of evidence which explains why ALMPs can promote quicker labour market entry and offset the health damaging effects of unemployment.^{214, 215} Empirical evidence from the financial crisis of 2008 showed how countries which invested more in ALMPs had lower rates of suicide. Those who found themselves unemployed as a result of the financial crisis were better able to deal with being unemployed and experienced less mental health effects than those in countries where the government had lower ALMPs spending.²¹⁶

In contexts where there are few jobs, these programmes will become a major part of pandemic recovery policies as they are able to maintain people’s employability and skills while protecting their mental health

²⁰⁸ Anna Barford, Rachel Coombe and Rachel Proefke, “Youth Experiences of the Decent Work Deficit”, *Geography* 105, Issue 2 (2020).

²⁰⁹ ILO, “A Human-centred Agenda needed for a Decent Future of Work”, (2019).

²¹⁰ David Card, Jochen Kluge and Andrea Weber, “What Works? A Meta Analysis of Recent Active Labor Market Program Evaluations”, *Journal of the European Economic Association* 16, Issue 3 (2018): 894–931.

²¹¹ Kluge et al., “Interventions to Improve the Labour Market Outcomes of Youth”.

²¹² Coutts et al., “The Health and Wellbeing Effects of Active Labour Market Programs”, (2014).

²¹³ Senhu Wang et al., “Can Active Labour Market Programmes Emulate the Mental Health Benefits of Regular Paid Employment? Longitudinal Evidence from the United Kingdom”, *Work, Employment and Society* (October 2020).

²¹⁴ Adam Coutts, *Active Labour Market Programmes (ALMPs) and Health: An Evidence-base*, (2009); Coutts et al., “The Health and Wellbeing Effects of Active Labour Market Programs”.

²¹⁵ Wang et al., “Can Active Labour Market Programmes Emulate the Mental Health Benefits of Regular Paid Employment?”.

²¹⁶ David Stuckler et al., “The Public Health Effect of Economic Crises and Alternative Policy Responses in Europe: An Empirical Analysis”, *Lancet* 374, Issue 9686 (2009): 315–323.

and well-being. The best available evidence comes from the JOBS II intervention studies, which have been replicated in Finland, Germany, Holland, Ireland, South Africa, the United Kingdom and the United States.²¹⁷ These randomized control trial evaluations show that these interventions can protect against the adverse health consequences of unemployment and enhance confidence, aspirations and motivation, as well as improving job-search behaviours and networking.²¹⁸ All these elements have been found to increase both participants' employability and their chances of people finding a job. These interventions and evaluation evidence demonstrate that more holistic and joined-up policy design can be highly effective.

A positive development from the pandemic response is the more holistic forms of policymaking, implementation and data sharing that have emerged. The crisis has forced health and non-health departments and ministries within government, as well as multilateral agencies, to strengthen links and work packages between themselves. A multidimensional crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, has necessitated coordination and cooperation between ministries of public health, labour, finance and other key government departments. Whether these new collaborations and networks can be maintained remains to be seen. Joined-up policy should extend outside of government to engage in a wider social dialogue. Conversation, co-ordination and co-operation is needed between young people, youth-NGOs, trade unions, employer organizations, and policy makers, in order to design inclusive and youth-sensitive COVID-19 pandemic responses to address the suite of pressing issues faced by young people today.

4.6 Enhance monitoring and indicators of policy impacts and trends

As the evidence shows, young people have been forced into the informal economy and inactivity. However, many countries still tend to use unemployment and employment statistics as their main sources for situation monitoring. In order to provide more accurate accounts of the impacts of policies on young people, governments should report on a broader set of indicators.

In addition, a wealth of evidence shows that the mental health and well-being of millions of people has suffered during the pandemic; children, adolescents and the young in particular have been severely impacted by lockdown policies and the inability to find jobs.^{219, 220} However, within LMICs we know little about the mental health situation facing young people because reliable monitoring and data on the extent of these impacts are scarce. Factoring in mental health and well-being indicators and outcomes into employment policies for young people, for example, is important in order to demonstrate the wider effectiveness of pandemic recovery policies.^{221, 222} The United Kingdom's recent *Mental Health Recovery Action Plan* provides an example of how governments could approach and prepare for the recovery response to a potential mental health pandemic.²²³

²¹⁷ Richard Price and Amiram Vinokur, "The JOBS Program: Impact on Job Seeker Motivation, Reemployment, and Mental Health", in [Oxford Handbook of Job Loss and Job Search](#), edited by U.-C. Klehe and E. Van Hooft (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

²¹⁸ Price and Vinokur "The JOBS Program".

²¹⁹ Kola et al., "[COVID-19 Mental Health Impact and Responses in Low-income and Middle-income Countries](#)".

²²⁰ Oye Gureje, "[Coronavirus Disease 2019 Pandemic in Low- and Middle-Income Countries: The Pivotal Place of Social Psychiatry](#)", *World Social Psychiatry* 2 (2020): 94–96.

²²¹ Varga et al., "[Loneliness, Worries, Anxiety, and Precautionary Behaviours in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)".

²²² Webb, McManus and O'Connor, "[Evidencing the Detrimental Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Mental Health across Europe](#)".

²²³ UK Government, [COVID-19 Mental Health and Wellbeing Recovery Action Plan](#), (2021).

The inclusion of mental health and well-being indicators in social and economic recovery policies also fits into the ongoing broader policy agenda.²²⁴ Over recent years there has been increasing emphasis by national governments, such as those of New Zealand and the United Kingdom, and multilateral agencies, such as the OECD and the World Bank, on the links between the economy, health and well-being – *the beyond GDP agenda*.^{225, 226} Future social and economic response policies should encourage non-health sector ministries and government departments to factor in the impacts of their policies on mental health and well-being.

²²⁴ All-Party Parliamentary Group on Wellbeing Economics, [A Spending Review to Increase Wellbeing: An Open Letter to the Chancellor](#), (May 2019).

²²⁵ OECD, [“Putting Well-being Metrics into Policy Action, 3–4 October 2019”](#). (2019b)

²²⁶ OECD, [“Measuring Well-being and Progress: Well-being Research”](#), (2019a)

► Appendix 1: Summary of selected policy responses to COVID-19 affecting young people

The table below summarizes selected policies that address the four pillars of COVID-19 policy support and extends them to include our own additional categories, such as mental health. The policies shared here are selected for their diversity, to showcase some of the types of response that have been implemented or proposed to date. Policies are presented from a range of geographical, economic, political and disease-impacted settings. Some of the examples presented here are generic policies aimed broadly at the economy or a specific sector, and these are included because they may particularly benefit young people. Other policies presented here have youth-sensitive or youth-targeted elements. Presenting these together demonstrates how some policies respond to the needs of young people. The table also details whether a policy is an extension of an existing policy or a return to an older policy, in which case some of the details, infrastructure and know-how may have already been in place, allowing for quicker decision-making and rollout. A final caveat is that, given the ever-changing real world context referred to, it is possible that the precise details reported here will shift with time; the main learning opportunities here are general insights into the types, forms and focus of policies responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Monetary and fiscal policies <i>(selected examples)</i>			
Country	Target (including whether youth focused/youth sensitive)	Extension of pre-existing policy	Details
India	MSMEs	X	The Central Monetary Agency and the Reserve Bank of India together brought in new regulations to boost credit availability for MSMEs and for retailers. MSMEs were also protected by measures to avert insolvency – by interventions such as increasing the threshold for default to one hundred times the previous level. As of late March 2020, any new insolvency cases were paused for six to twelve months. Any loans received to support MSMEs in responding to COVID-19 issues were not included in any default calculations.
Nigeria			The Central Bank of Nigeria has introduced various measures to manage the economic fallout from COVID-19. This increased reducing their own interest rates from 9 to 5 per cent; putting NGN50 billion (US\$139 million) into a credit facility; making a liquidity injection into the banking at a value of 2.4 per cent of GDP with targetted support for health, manufacturing, and other impacted sectors.

Sectoral support (selected examples)			
Indonesia	Tourism sector		The Indonesian Government has provided financial support for ten tourist locations. The measures included subsidizing air travel prices to the selected locations by around one third between March and May 2020. The government also reduced fuel prices for aircraft and lowered airport charges in nine airports for that period. Further, the government also supported restaurants and hotels in the selected locations by subsidizing the taxes they owed to the regional governments.
Jordan	Tourism sector		The Jordanian state provided for the tourism sector to pay its outstanding taxes from 2019 in batches, over a period of time, without having to pay any punitive charges for this delayed payment. It also slashed its taxes – the sales tax was reduced from 16 to 8 percent, and the service tax levied on hotels and restaurants was dropped from 10 to 5 per cent. It also provided for a credit amount of JD150 million (US\$211 million) as part of its Loan Guarantee Corporation's initiative on credit for SMEs
Singapore	Airlines		The Singapore government provided financial support of 187 million Singapore dollars to the airlines sector to cover costs such as landing and parking, rent for airports and to support their partners such as ground handlers and cargo agents.
Active Labour Market Programmes (selected examples)			
European Union	Young people	X	The ' <i>reinforced</i> ' <i>European Youth Guarantee</i> scheme, is an extension of the pre-existing <i>European Youth Guarantee</i> . This commitment, agreed in October 2020, from all European Union Member States guarantees that within four months of leaving education or becoming unemployed will be offered good quality education, apprenticeship, traineeship or employment. Part of the reinforcement of this scheme was to extend the eligibility to 15-29 year olds. Given the size of the <i>Youth Guarantee</i> scheme and its engagement of young people classified as NEET it also serves as an automatic economic stabilizer.
Indonesia	Unemployed and temporary workers, young people	X	<i>Kartu Pra-Kerja</i> (Pre-employment Card Programme) budget was doubled. The programme provides subsidized vouchers for skilling and reskilling unemployed people for about 5.6 million informal workers and SMEs who have suffered on account of COVID-19. By financing the costs of accommodation and transport through a lumpsum allowance of IDR500,000 (US\$34) per participant, the programme aims at supporting the upskilling of 2 million young workers.
Jordan	Young people		The Ministry of Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship has implemented the <i>Jordan Youth, Technology and Jobs Project</i> , the objective of which is to improve digitally-enabled income opportunities while simultaneously expanding digitized government services in Jordan.

Jordan	Young people	X	In September 2019 the Jordanian the Ministry of Labour announced a plan to reinstate a one-year military service for young men aged 25-29, with the aim of containing youth unemployment in the aftermath of the pandemic.
Malaysia	Young people		The government of Malaysia provided financial incentives to employers to train 300,000 unemployed young people and recruit them. Under the scheme, both individuals who have dropped out of school and those who have graduated would receive MYR600 (US\$146) per month for apprenticeships for up to six months. The Malaysian Government also established a fund of MYR2 billion (US\$487 million) to reskill and upskill 200,000 young workers who are unemployed to improve their chances of getting a job.
Mongolia	Young people		Support for youth employment is provided, financed by 500 billion Mongolian tugriks (MNT). The programme offers young people a two-month training course to develop the skills and knowledge required to implement large-scale projects. Once the training is complete, the participants receive a certificate and MNT1 million; they are also prioritized for jobs in organizations that implement large-scale projects.
Republic of Korea	Young people		The Republic of Korea pledged in May 2020 to provide employment for 550,000 young individuals and assistance for those on low incomes, retraining for workers who have been made redundant and wage support for small merchants. In addition, there are measures to enhance the allowance for young jobseekers.
Social protection (selected examples)			
Argentina	Unemployed persons, informal and domestic workers and women	X	Argentina scaled up cash and in-kind social protection for women, including those in the informal economy. On 21 April 2020, a new unconditional one-off cash transfer, <i>Emergency Family Income</i> , was launched targeting households of unemployed, informal and domestic workers, with women as the primary recipients. Benefit levels are set at 10,000 Argentine pesos (about US\$132, roughly equivalent to 75 per cent of the monthly national minimum wage). According to the latest data from the Ministry of Economy, women comprise around 60 per cent of recipients.
Australia	Young people		Australia has provided for income support for unemployed young people who are seeking work. Young people between the ages of 16 and 21 who are looking for a job can avail a youth allowance, and those who are 22 and over can access an additional 550 Australian dollars per fortnight.
Pakistan	Families in need of income	X	Launched on April 1, 2020, Pakistan is using digital technology to rapidly roll out the <i>Ehsaas Emergency Cash</i> programme, reaching 16.9 million families in need of livelihood support. Some 4.5 million existing female beneficiaries will receive top-up benefits for a period of four months.

Republic of Korea	Young people		The Government piloted a scheme which targeted only all 24-year-old residents in one municipality of Korea (Seongnam) and made a one-off cash transfer to each of them. Leveraging this experience, the Government redesigned the scheme as a universal cash transfer by the end of August 2020. The scheme accounts for 20 per cent of the country's total supplementary response spending and is reported to have propped up consumption in the second and third quarters of 2020.
United Kingdom	All workers	X	All workers who fell outside the ambit of workers who could receive sickness benefits such as digital platform workers were provided with sickness benefits. The move ensured that workers in all forms of employment including new forms were protected.
Prevention of discrimination and exclusion (<i>selected examples</i>)			
Ireland	Refugees		Ireland included refugee doctors and healthcare professionals in their pandemic response who so far did not have the permit to work in these professions in the country.
Jordan	Vulnerable children and adolescents	X	Jordan UNICEF's <i>Makani</i> (My Safe Space) supports vulnerable children and adolescents, adapting an existing service for a COVID-19 virtual response. In pre-pandemic times, vulnerable children and young people accessed learning opportunities, child protection and psychosocial services in community centres across Jordan. With the national lockdown, <i>Makani's</i> community centres closed. <i>Makani</i> then worked with community-based facilitators to disseminate information about COVID-19 protective measures, distribute hygiene kits and school materials, message children and parents with advice on coping with the lockdown and provide remote learning support via social media and mobile phones.
Beyond the workplace: mental health support (<i>selected examples</i>)			
Nigeria	Government and civil society		The Nigerian Association of Psychiatrists, the Association of Psychiatric Nurses, clinical health workers and major mental health NGOs came together to form the COVID-19 Partners in Mental Health. They work with both government and civil society to offer training on mental health, teletherapy and research.
Viet Nam	Trade unions and social partners		Quan Tam Network, a collaboration between the Research and Training Center for Community Development and the Viet Nam Women's Union, created a community support programme for individuals with severe mental illness and shared information about mental health and COVID-19, creating online groups on social media and instant messaging apps, such as WhatsApp, where members can communicate with each other.

Beyond the workplace: skills training and education (<i>selected examples</i>)			
Armenia	Teachers, young people		During the pandemic, the government provided online training to TVET teachers via the National Centre for Educational Technology Development. The course aimed at introducing teachers to learning technologies and acquainting them with the experience of e-learning. 158 TVET teachers received online training in e-learning.
Belgium	Teachers, young people		Belgium supported teachers (primary, secondary and TVET) through creating online resources. For example, the Flemish Ministry of Education, created a portal where it had dedicated resources for online teaching during the pandemic.
Malta	Learners, young people	X	The Malta government provided for each student being contacted to ensure they were aware of the available learning solutions. For example, <i>Jobsplus</i> (the Public Employment Service) reached out to individuals in courses or awaiting to begin a course to appraise them of the learning options available. In another example, the Institute of Tourism Studies contacted all its students to check and support them in their learning.
Philippines	Workers		In the Philippines, the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority has initiated a PHP3 billion programme to upskill and reskill temporarily laid off workers, including through online courses.
Portugal	Firms		The Government offers financial support for employee training in its overall support package of COVID-19 measures. Under various government schemes, private firms can request funding so that their workers can use their free time for reskilling and upskilling purposes by taking part in training measures, thus promoting lifelong learning.
Republic of Korea	Teachers		The Ministry of Employment and Labour developed guiding manuals on best practices for online teaching. This was shared through their online support centre established in April 2020.
Singapore	Trainees, young people		The Government of Singapore has instituted a traineeship scheme to support up-skilling of new graduates. Under the scheme, the government will provide for 80 percent of the traineeship allowance provided to the trainee during a 12 months training program at a host enterprise. The host enterprise will fund the remaining 20 percent of the trainee's allowance.
Sri Lanka	Learners, young people		To deliver free education to students from grades 1 to 13, the Ministry of Education in Sri Lanka created a national e-learning portal, <i>E-Thaksalawa</i> . In addition, the Sri Lankan Telecommunication Regulatory Commission worked with telephone companies to support data access for children who were learning from home. This initiative was led by the Information and Communication Technology Branch within the Ministry of Education.

Uzbekistan	Teachers, young people		The Ministry of National Education has created e-training manuals and video blogs for teachers which it has shared online.
Uzbekistan	Learners and their parents, young people		The Uzbekistan government developed ways to support the students as well as their parents in e-learning and assessment. They developed a call centre and a “Telegram bot” to answer doubts and questions around e-learning and online assessments,
Social dialogue (selected examples) Additional examples can be found in the following two documents: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ILO, 2020m, Research Brief, Peak-level social dialogue as a governance tool during the COVID-19 pandemic: Global and regional trends and policy issues, https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_dialogue/---dialogue/documents/briefingnote/wcms_759072.pdf ILO, 2021d, Research Brief, Social dialogue one year after the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic: Spotlight on outcomes, https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_dialogue/---dialogue/documents/publication/wcms_802527.pdf 			
International	Businesses, young people, NGOs		<p>Unilever and Uber came together to protect drivers (and customers) by supplying drivers with hygiene kits. The partnership, which started in the United Kingdom, has now reached countries across Africa, Europe and the Middle East. Similarly, Unilever and the Indian hospitality company OYO partnered to deliver hygiene education to staff, and hygiene kits for its staff and customers in India.</p> <p>Unilever collaborated with the Restless Development NGO to launch the online “Youth Power Hack”. The aim of the hacks is to position young people at the forefront of development solutions on a wide array of topics, including health, education and gender equality.</p>
Nigeria	Young people		IBM and the Federal Ministry of Youth and Sports Development partnered to create an online platform through which young people could be trained.
Philippines	Young people, government		The Government of Philippines engaged more than 400 young leaders from a wide variety of institutions in a public consultation to develop practical steps to support Philippines’ recovery from the pandemic on various fronts. Proposals focused on themes including education, social protection, agricultural livelihoods and MSMEs.
Viet Nam	Young people, trade unions, government		<p>The government, the Ho Chi Minh Communist Youth Union, the Hanoi Students’ Association and the Hanoi Youth Federation partnered to put young people looking for jobs in touch with potential employers.</p> <p>The <i>Kindness is Contagious</i> campaign of the Vietnamese Ministry of Health (MOH) and UNICEF Viet Nam aims to create dialogue between adolescents and policymakers about the mental health impacts of the pandemic. The aim is to promote positive thinking and encourage creativity. Adolescents share their stories, photos, videos, ideas and messages via social media platforms (using the hashtag #long_tot_de_lay, which translates as “share kindness”). In the words of the campaign, “UNICEF and MOH want to give young people an opportunity to raise their voices and position themselves as leaders to fight anxiety and support each other”. Activists, artists and social media influencers have been contracted to respond to the messages uploaded, hosting TV and radio talk shows with policymakers to extend the dialogue.</p>

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