



# Twitter chat report on Youth voices amidst the COVID-19 pandemic

## Background

The world is currently grappling with the COVID-19 pandemic that has severely stretched the health care systems of most countries and significantly compromised the social and economic order at micro and macro levels. One of the greatest constituency at risk of infection is the young people. Concerns continue to be raised on the low risk perception among young people as evidenced by incidences of breach or circumvention of preventive measures such as physical distancing and staying at home where possible. Similarly, the disruption of education with the closure of schools also comes with possible Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR)

risks such as teenage/early unintended pregnancies, Gender Based Violence (GBV) and new HIV infections due to limited engagement of young people and existence of fewer safety nets at home or community level compared to the school environment. Additionally, the loss of livelihoods is due to the economic effects of the epidemic is likely to expose young people to mental health challenges and may also drive them to crime.

These challenges coupled by the need to discern the real concerns around COVID19 among young people necessitated UNFPA in collaboration with the State Department for Youth Affairs, the National Youth Council, Ministry of Health, the Boda Boda Safety Association (BAK) and the UNFPA Youth Advisory Panel to convene a twitter chat.

## Objectives

The twitter chat which took place on Thursday 30th April 2020 between 11:00am-12:00pm was mainly aimed at:

- Providing young people, policy makers and stakeholders working in the youth space an opportunity to deliberate on the Impact of COVID-19 on young people
- Exploring ways through which young people can play an active role in flattening the COVID 19 curve

## Panelists



**Raymond Ochieng**  
Secretary  
State Department for Youth Affairs  
@Rochieng

Panelist



**Roy Sasaka**  
CEO  
National Youth Council  
@RoySasaka

Panelist



**Dr. Anne Mwangi**  
Head of Division of Adolescent  
and School Health  
Ministry of Health  
@Amwannie2003

Panelist



**Dr. Olajide Ademola**  
Representative  
UNFPA  
@OlajideDemola

Moderator



**Kevin Mubadi**  
Chair  
Boda Boda Safety Association  
of Kenya  
@MubadiKevin

Panelist



**Faith Opiyo**  
Chair  
UNFPA Youth Advisory Panel

@beingFao

Panelist



**Wanja Maina**  
UNFPA  
Youth Advisory Panel

@wanjaah

Panelist



## Key Issues Raised

### COVID19 and Livelihoods among the young people

- Covid-19 pandemic has disrupted livelihoods and economic engagements of most of the youth leaving them no sources of income
- With over 70% of the population being below the age of 35, majority of those affected are youthful with a sizeable number of them working in the service industry which has closed down
- Many young people living with disability are not able to meet their basic needs during this time because most of them are in the informal job market
- Youth in the boda boda sector have also been affected as few people are willing to be transported on boda boda because of fear of being infected

### COVID 19 and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) of young people

- Most empowerment programme for young people on SRHR have been halted compromising access to SRH information and services
- The time barriers resulting from the curfew have equally affected access to SRHR services particularly given the health seeking patterns of young people
- Access to sexual and reproductive health services including family planning has been affected because of the fear of going to health centres and contracting COVID19
- School closure often comes with escalated increase in teenage pregnancy and this is likely to be the case during COVID 19 close down unless parents meaningfully engage and provide guidance to the adolescents
- Women and girls are at higher risks of gender based violence and other harmful practices due to enforced restriction of movement and curfew.

### COVID 19 and Mental health issues among young people

- The Covid-19 pandemic has potentially escalated mental health issues amongst the youth and anecdotal evidence points to rising number of suicide cases resulting from pressures of loss of jobs. Many youths are also battling depression during this period.

- Loss of livelihoods, disruption of education and interference of social interaction has escalated mental health challenges among young people.
- Fears that come with the pandemic and the experiences of going to quarantine or isolation centers equally pose mental health challenges and need to be addressed

### Stereotyping of young people on matters relating to COVID 19

- Youth are stereotyped as a liability during the pandemic yet many are on the frontline battling the Covid-19 pandemic
- Some youth in Kibera have been first responders leading efforts to distribute food and even masks in the community
- In Kilifi, some youth are designing IEC Materials on COVID19 using community perspectives to facilitate awareness creation and behavioral change
- Other youth networks have launched online sessions to empower other young people on SRHR
- Some of the youth in the boda boda sector have borne the brunt of police brutality despite coming out to help ferry pregnant women to health facilities
- There is need to harness the energy and risk taking abilities of adolescents and young people to produce positive results
- There is need to coordinate efforts of young people in responding to COVID19



## Recommendations

- There is a need to set up a COVID19 Youth Advisory Response Secretariat to galvanize youth response to COVID19 nationally. The State Department of Youth and the National Youth Council to provide a lead in this.
- Committees both in the national government and county governments that are dealing with COVID 19 should ensure that there are youths in the committee and youths should be the leaders of those committees.
- Enhancing safety and preparedness of health care workers to manage Covid19 is one key step of ensuring continuity of SRH services for young people. MoH, can also leverage on CHVs to sensitize young people on COVID19 and ensure distribution of commodities like condoms
- Leverage on technology to bridge the gap in provision of COVID19, SRHR and mental health information and services among the youth. Use of social media platforms, hotlines, and virtual meetings e.g. webinars, and posterings can change the tide.
- Young people should take advantage of existing empowerment platforms such as Ajira Digital and Youth COVID 19 challenge by GOK.
- The government should explore lifting the curfew should for industries operating at night to minimize disruption of sources of livelihoods among the youth
- Young people in entrepreneurship should take advantage of the prevailing conditions to leverage on technology to advertise and sell their products and services
- Government should channel more local manufacturing opportunities such as those of PPEs to young people to support their livelihoods.
- There is need to immediately roll out cash transfer programs where the youth undertake community based interventions and get paid for instance through the voucher system



- The Youth fund should explore providing safety nets to struggling SMEs & support emerging youth SMEs such as the ones producing sanitizers or masks
- Considering their huge numbers and grassroots reach use Boda Bodas to pass information on Covid-19 to the lowest level possible.
- There is a need to bring all youth innovations together for maximum impact
- Service providers must be trained on sign language so that they can offer the right service and information to persons with hearing impairment
- Parents need to be empowered to meaningfully engage and communicate with young people especially on matters of sexuality, during this COVID19 period.

Ademola Olajide Retweeted

 **Kevin Mubadi** @MubadiKevin · Apr 30

Replying to @rochieng @OlajideDemola and 4 others

Yes I want to sincerely Thank @SDY\_Ke for their support and recognition in supporting @BodaAssnofKenya to reach out to the youths in the bodaboda sector. This will lead to a better working condition. @UNFPAKen #YouthVoices

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Ademola Olajide Retweeted

 **Roy Sasaka Telewa** @RoySasaka · Apr 30

Replying to @OlajideDemola @AMwannie2003 and 4 others

A3. At this point in time, physical sensitization support would be a challenge however, by extension use of social media platforms, virtual meetings e.g webinars, postering. Engage the youth as partners to participate on above.

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Ademola Olajide Retweeted

 **Ray Ochieng** @rochieng · Apr 30

Replying to @OlajideDemola @UNFPAKen and 4 others

A3. MOH has a burden to sensitize all Kenyans not only youth. They can be supported in collaborations on sensitization and supply support on SRH . Like the supply of sanitary pads to the young women which may now not be their top priority during COVID19 @UNFPAKen #YouthVoices

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