UNICEF Innocenti is undertaking a wide range of research projects to provide evidence needed to inform UNICEF and its partner’s work to respond to immediate and longer term consequences of the pandemic. Longer-term works will be undertaken as more information and evidence come to light.

**RESEARCH**

**SHORT TERM PROJECTS**

**Identifying good practices for equitable remote learning during COVID-19 school closures**
Rapid analysis of promising remote learning practices during school closures and how it affects all children, including those most vulnerable without electricity. Builds on data collected from country offices and other sources.

**Parental engagement in children’s learning: Insights for remote learning response during COVID-19**
Rapid analysis using MICS 6 data on the potential of child-oriented books at home and the parental role for learning, especially with no access to technology.

**Social protection for families and children: considerations for a post COVID-19 response**
Comparative research will determine what social protection changes we may see in different countries when seeking to protect children from the health and financial crisis.

**PRINCIPLES OF COVID-19 RESEARCH**
Understand & interpret existing evidence collected under differing circumstances
Focus on vulnerable groups & children
Gender & intergenerational lens
Child-focused
Action, policy, & impact oriented

**RESEARCH PROMOTION**
Blogs, webinars, & other communications products are disseminating and promoting the new research. The communications team scans for & highlights key publications & data sources from partner organisations.

For more contact drichardson@unicef.org

UNICEF-IRC.ORG/COVID19
The importance of children’s internet access during COVID-19
Analysis of new data from Global Kids Online and EU Kids Online on: children’s internet access, proportion of children accessing health information online, and extent to which they are able to verify the truth of online information.

Estimating the impact of COVID-19 on violence prevalence
Three sources of data will be analyzed to estimate the impact of COVID-19 on the prevalence of violence: big data and social media; helpline data; existing nationally representative data sets (MICS, DHS).

COVID-19 RESEARCH PROJECTS

Identifying good practices for equitable remote learning during COVID-19 school closures

Parental engagement in children’s learning

Social protection for families & children: considerations for a post COVID-19 response

The importance of children’s internet access during COVID-19

LONG TERM PROJECTS

Learning from COVID-19 on providing continued education for all in times of school closures
Investigating the impacts of COVID-19 school closures on education and other outcomes and what works to provide continued learning during crises. The research will draw on available data and ongoing Innocenti research.

Children’s experiences and views of COVID-19
Children’s voices on this global issue must be heard and considered when formulating responses. Focusing on the most vulnerable children, primary research will ask: How do children experience the COVID-19 situation?

COVID-19 lessons on providing assistive technology to persons with disability in humanitarian response
This study will help us better understand how assistive technology is provisioned in humanitarian response and will study coordination and national governance challenges.

Children’s use of digital technology during COVID-19
Online surveys across eleven European countries will help understand: what digital engagement looks like during COVID-19; how it has changed; and what support children need to take advantage of the internet during lockdowns.
EVIDENCE SYNTHESIS

Pandemics and child protection, a rapid review
A review of existing literature and evidence to support evidence needs for COVID-19 child protection. It will define a methodology to undertake such reviews in other areas outside Innocenti’s work streams.

Epidemiology of COVID-19 among children and adolescents
Review of evidence on COVID-19 child and adolescent epidemiological patterns/health outcomes and interactions with other co-morbidities and vulnerabilities, disaggregating by age, sex, and geography.

Review of emerging evidence on mental health among children and adolescents in the context of COVID-19
A review of emerging evidence, interventions, and lessons to inform policy and programmes.

Review of emerging evidence on social impacts of COVID-19 on children, families, and communities
A review of emerging evidence and implications for programmes and policy.

COVID-19 and Children Open Evidence Repository
An externally searchable repository of scientific evidence related to COVID-19 and children.

ETHICS

Ethical considerations for evidence generation involving children on COVID-19
This work explores the ethical considerations when undertaking evidence generation involving children on COVID-19.

Ethical issues in the use of digital technology for contact tracing and surveillance
High quality data is essential to support decision makers’ response to COVID-19, but the collation and use of personally identifiable data may pose significant risks to children’s rights.

LEADING MINDS ONLINE

The new ‘Coronavirus & Children Series: What the experts say’ will host expert consultations to garner expertise and experience on pandemics, responses and effects on children, and support efforts by our research teams, research teams, other UNICEF divisions, and external partners.

PAST AND UPCOMING LEADING MINDS ONLINE

6 May: COVID-19 & Children Online WATCH NOW

21 May: COVID-19 & Violence REGISTER NOW

Future Coronavirus & Children Series will explore pressing topics like mental health, the societal impact of the pandemic, economic crisis and social protection, continued learning, WASH, and fragile settings.

COVID-19 WEBSITE

Visit our dedicated COVID-19 and Children website for:

Research Agenda
Research Publications
Blogs and Thinkpieces
Online Events
Good Reads
+ more
Identifying “Good Practices” for Equitable Remote Learning During COVID-19 School Closures

Rapid analysis of remote learning promising practices (online learning, digital tools, TV/radio based teaching, “take-home” package for parental education) for continued education during school closures and how it affects all children, including the most vulnerable children without electricity/connectivity. The research will build on the data currently collected from country offices and other sources and will be done in collaboration with UNICEF HQ.

What are the promising practices for government and UNICEF responses for continued education for all during the closures of school by COVID 19, including for the most vulnerable?

RATIONALE

UNICEF has the largest global education presence of any international agency with over 790 staff in 144 countries. Around the world, governments are closing schools, putting 87% of the world’s children out-of-school (as of March 26 2020). Measures and tools (see education toolkit COVID-19) exist for the continuation of learning. Responses include technologies to facilitate remote learning but which are often not accessible to marginalized children, leading to the increase of inequity of learning. The analysis will inform tangible recommendations to governments and country offices in their education response to the crisis for children in different situations. Innocenti is well placed to provide these answers based on its research capacity and ongoing support to data collection questionnaires to COs and the review of costing/modeling tool (‘RELEARN’) developed by ESARO.

HOW WILL THE STUDY ADDRESS THE QUESTION?

Mapping of Government and UNICEF responses to the remote learning decision tree developed by PD-Education. Analysis will rely on data collected by UNICEF offices from the education response questionnaire and secondary data analysis on the use of TV, radio, and technology (from household surveys), and school closures (UNESCO and UNICEF corporate questionnaire on socio-economic impacts).

METHODOLOGY AND DATA SOURCES

- Mapping countries, by socio-economic status, region, electricity and technology penetration.
- Mapping UNICEF responses and statistical analysis correlating responses to COVID-19 exposure over time, school closures, technological penetration.
- Statistical analysis to estimate potential for negative equity effects for responses based on variations in electricity, technology, and internet across and within countries.

Social Protection for Families and Children: Considerations for a post-COVID-19 Response

Rapid comparative research will determine what social protection changes we might expect to see in different countries, based on national preconditions (social, economic, public policy practice) and exposure to COVID-19, when seeking to protect children from the effects of a health crisis accompanied by a financial crisis in the short and long term. The report will draw on lessons from previous social protection responses to the 2008-13 global financial crises, previous health and economic crises, and early responses to COVID-19 in a selection of countries (see Gentilini, others).

- What are the national and household level economic and social vulnerabilities related to the COVID-19 pandemic?

- What is the role of social protection in preventing or treating social and economic risks at household and national levels following the COVID-19 pandemic?
  - Is fiscal stimulus the answer? If so, how should it be delivered and to whom?

- What is the case for business supports, grants, or main government responses being implemented?
  - To what extent does mortgage, rent, and tax relief protect from default, poverty, or undermine the contributions to social protection? What is the roll for catch-up on tax or SI contributions?

- What is the role of social services?
  - What are the effects on service administration (e.g. capacity)?

RATIONALE

The global health pandemic has led to countries adopting population health mitigation strategies, such as health advice, travel restrictions, social distancing decrees, and initial public policy responses to mitigate and protect against the predicted economic fallout that could follow. The study examines the economic and social vulnerabilities of countries based on demographic, health, and economic preconditions and makes recommendations for responses and reforms to address these vulnerabilities. The study will provide timely guidance on how countries can assess their economic and social risks and determine optimal social protection responses to the COVID-19 pandemic.

RESOURCES

All members of the Social & Economic Policy team will contribute to this work. Staff time will be redirected towards this effort & funding is required to enable this work.

TIMELINE

3-4 weeks in April 2020
Weeks 1 & 2: review of literature & data collation
Weeks 3 & 4: Writing report & policy recommendations

PARTNERSHIPS

UNICEF HQ, Regional Offices, Country Offices, National Committees, academic partners

RESEARCH LEADS

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Social Protection for Families and Children: Considerations for a post-COVID-19 Response

HOW WILL THE STUDY ADDRESS THE QUESTION?

Cross-country comparisons of vulnerabilities and policy responses will be done within each world region. The study will primarily be desk-based with three main components:

- Literature review of direct and indirect effects of legislative and policy responses to previous financial and health crises
- Collation and analysis of quantitative and secondary data on demographic, health and economic preconditions and COVID-19 burden in each country
- Qualitative/normative assessments of social protection typologies and recommendations for optimal response

It will be tailored to provide evidence that can feed into rapid assessment tools for informing immediate and long-term social protection responses.

METHODOLOGY AND DATA SOURCES

The research will use quantitative methods for secondary data collection and analysis. The team will collect statistics related to the national preconditions that increase or lessen the susceptibility to the health, economic, and social shocks of COVID-19, e.g. numbers of intergenerational households, Average Rate Indexes, growth rates and other economic conditions (such as government debts, current account deficits, poverty), and other social statistics related to mental health and intimate partner violence. Data analyses will include descriptive statistics and graphs.

Data sources include the World Bank, IMF, WHO, Eurostat, European health surveys, demographic and health surveys, and national household surveys. Data on policy responses will be obtained from global policy trackers run by the World Bank, IMF, University of Oxford, Teneo, and others.
Learning from the COVID-19 Crisis on Providing Continued Education for All in Times of School Closures

This research will investigate the impacts of COVID-19 school closures on education and cross-sectoral outcomes and what works to provide continued learning during crises. To complement the global understanding of the impact and response to COVID-19 in education, the research will draw on country and regional initiatives, as well as ongoing Innocenti research on innovation in education programmes, such as digital learning platforms, to understand their use during times when schools have to close.

- What is the impact of the COVID-19 school closures on education and cross sectoral outcomes?
- What works to make education systems resilient and able to continue children’s learning during times of crisis and school closures?

RATIONALE

To help contain the spread of COVID-19, schools around the world have closed, affecting 1.6 billion learners (UNESCO). Varied delivery channels (see education toolkit COVID-19) exist for remote learning. Responses include technologies with the promise to facilitate remote learning but which are often not accessible to marginalized children, leading to the increase of inequity of learning and progress towards SDGs. The research will provide evidence-based solutions to governments and education actors to improve equitable education and other outcomes when schools have to close. The project will draw on existing research conducted by the office on innovation in education (e.g. Akelius).

HOW WILL THE STUDY ADDRESS THE QUESTION?

- The impact of different types of responses on education (learning, retention, drop-outs etc.) and cross-sectoral outcomes (e.g. nutrition, health, social policy).
- What is the impact of school reopening strategies on education and other outcomes (focus on vulnerable groups)?
- What remote learning programmes work for the most disadvantaged and least able to access electricity and technology? What are the costs of remote learning?
- How did school closures change education systems? How persistent are those changes?

METHODOLOGY AND DATA SOURCES

Mixed methods research including quasi-experimental analysis where applicable and feasible. Research will link to existing UNICEF partnerships (e.g. Learning Passport) with case studies on their use during COVID-19. Data sources include: UNICEF COVID-19 education response, secondary impacts datasets, DHS, MICS, LSMS, UIS, UNESCO-UNICEF-World Bank MoE questionnaire, regional and country data.

RESOURCES

Shifting focus of staff currently supporting innovations in education research

TIMELINE

6 months.
First briefs available 30 June.

PARTNERSHIPS

UNICEF Education section,
UNICEF Division of Data, Analytics, Planning & Monitoring (DAPM), UNICEF Data & Analytics section, Regional Offices

RESEARCH LEADS

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Children’s Experiences and Views of COVID-19 and Responses

- How do children experience the COVID-19 situation? How has it affected them? What are the key issues from their perspective?
- What are children’s ideas and proposals for responses to the current situation and how situations like this could be handled better in the future?

UNICEF is in an ideal position to generate answers to these questions, given its role and reach. However, there are substantial inherent risks. It requires careful preparation, as well as necessary skills and safeguards. Evidence-gathering from children on this issue must be conducted: ethically (including considering appropriate timing, contexts, and methods); to a high standard so that evidence is robust and reliable; and in a systematic, coherent way to avoid duplication of effort and to maximize value.

RATIONALE
Children’s voices on this global issue must be heard and considered when formulating responses. This includes giving children the opportunity to be involved in designing responses. In particular, we need to understand the experiences and views of children in groups who may be hardest hit by these events, including (but not limited to): migrant children; children in institutions and reception facilities; children with disabilities or chronic health conditions; children in poverty; orphaned children; homeless children.

HOW WILL THE STUDY ADDRESS THE QUESTION?
- Devise an approach to evidence-gathering from children about this issue that meets requirements regarding ethics, quality and coherence.
- Conduct primary research in selected contexts, working with research partners (within and outside UNICEF) to pilot approaches and gather an initial set of evidence.
- Share materials and guidance that can be used by others in the organisation who wish to replicate the approach.
- Act as a central point for coordination of this initiative and collation of evidence gathered.

Through this approach we will create a unique, high-quality and valuable database that can help to inform responses.

METHODOLOGY AND DATA SOURCES
The work will be primarily qualitative. We will develop and pilot a range of methods (traditional and digital) to involve children. These will take into consideration different age groups and contexts. The aim is to ensure that evidence gathered can be presented in a coherent way to create a bigger picture. Ethical considerations will be central to the methodology.
COVID-19 Lessons on Providing Assistive Technology to Persons with Disability in Humanitarian Response

This research will investigate how assistive technology (AT), such as wheelchairs, prosthetics, eyeglasses, and hearing aids, is provisioned in humanitarian response planning and action, including during the COVID-19 pandemic. The work will help better account for any levels of unmet need, as well as review barriers and enablers to optimize access to AT in humanitarian settings. Case studies will document the extent to which disability inclusion is present in humanitarian response planning. The work will include a review of the role of Organisation of Persons with Disabilities (DPOs), government, and international agencies in negotiating provision during pandemics.

- What are the coordination and governance challenges around COVID-19 for AT provision?
- What are the likely and realised impacts of COVID-19 on AT provision for different groups?

RATIONALE

More than one billion people today live with some form of disability. This figure is estimated to double by 2050. Many need AT to lead productive, inclusive, and dignified lives. Over 900 million people today do not have access to the AT they require. We know little about the provisions of AT in humanitarian settings. However, we do know that the majority of people with disabilities (80 per cent) live in low and middle-income countries where service systems, including for AT, are often under pressure and have limited capacity to meet the needs of the population. Persons with disabilities:

- are disproportionately represented among older populations, who are also at increased risk of COVID-19. ~46% of the world’s over 60 population have disabilities.
- may have underlying health conditions that increase their risk of complications from COVID-19.
- are disproportionately represented among people living in poverty. The impacts of COVID-19 are likely to be worse for people in lower socio-economic groups.

HOW WILL THE STUDY ADDRESS THE QUESTION?

A literature and evidence review will study the extent to which health pandemics disrupt the AT ‘ecosystem’ provision as well as factors that enable it. Informed by data, the results will assist humanitarian actors in strategic planning of AT and fill a knowledge gap in current humanitarian guidance on inclusion of persons with disabilities.

METHODOLOGY AND DATA SOURCES

The work is a mix of ongoing literature review and in-country research in three target countries. The case studies will involve interviews with key stakeholders and a review of relevant national and organisational policy, planning, project, and monitoring documentation. This will begin to close evidence gaps and supplement the findings of the literature review. The research will also use available data, e.g. MICS-6.
Children’s use of digital technology during COVID-19

Primary research using nationally representative online panel surveys with 500 children and parents across (at least) 11 European countries will determine if and how children’s and parent’s engagement with digital technology has changed during lockdown. It will consider how children are using digital technology to meet their current needs (for education, information, social interaction and play) and if this is having positive or negative outcomes. The study will be led by the EU Kids Online network, coordinated by the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission, with UNICEF Innocenti’s support and partial financing. Comparisons of data collected by Global Kids Online/EU Kids Online from 2018/2019 will be used for trend analysis, comparing the current results to the situation pre-COVID.

- How do children use digital technologies during lockdown?
- Have children’s and parents’ attitudes towards digital technology and certain online activities changed compared to pre-lockdown?
- Are digital technologies helping to meet the needs of children during the pandemic?

RATIONALE

Most children in Europe (and beyond) are locked down at home. Schooling, leisure time, and social connection take place at home via digital media for most. Children are now more than ever consumers of digital media and content. Based on prior research, we expect that the more activities children engage in online, the more online risks they encounter (inappropriate content, commercial pressure, unwanted contact, cyberbullying). At the same time, they also have new opportunities to benefit. It is essential to generate comparable cross-national data to inform stakeholders of the current trends and possible impacts of COVID-19 on children’s digital experiences, as well as insights into how digital technologies can be used to support children during stressful life events.

HOW WILL THE STUDY ADDRESS THE QUESTION?

Cross-country comparisons of survey data will be done between the participating countries. Where data exists from 2018/2019, trend analyses will also be conducted. The study will be quantitative, generating descriptive statistics and complex modelling that help respond to the main research questions. The analysis is complemented by qualitative interviews with families in select countries. Follow-up studies are planned for early 2021 to enable trend analysis in post-COVID settings.

METHODOLOGY AND DATA SOURCES

The research will use online panel surveys for primary data collection, through engaging children and parents directly. The survey will draw on UNICEF’s Global Kids Online survey and incorporate COVID-specific elements. Qualitative methods will be used in a sub-set of countries.

RESOURCES

Funded by European Commission’s Joint Research Centre & EU Kids Online. UNICEF Innocenti will fund the Italian study & the German study (supported by German NatComm).

TIMELINE

Data collection June/July 2020
Analysis & writing July-Oct 2020

PARTNERSHIPS

UNICEF National Committees, EU Kids Online network, European Commission’s Joint Research Centre

RESEARCH LEADS

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Ethical Issues in the Use of Digital Technology for Contact Tracing and Surveillance

The response to COVID-19 has seen an unprecedented rapid scaling of technologies to support digital contact tracing and surveillance. The more we know about how to contain the outbreak, the more we can mitigate the impacts. Accessible, high quality data based on a foundation of widespread testing is essential to support decision makers in government and development agencies, such as UNICEF, to better understand the issues facing children, plan appropriate action, monitor progress, and ensure no-one is left behind. This technology can also meet demand from communities for information on how to keep themselves safe.

- What are the key considerations that should be considered in the use of digital contact tracing and surveillance for public health strategies?
- What are the key considerations for children and their communities?

RATIONALE

The collation and use of personally identifiable data may pose significant risks to children’s rights:

- Misuse of data (by authorised users or illegally).
- Infringement of rights in the collection and use of data (discrimination, restrictions, and privacy loss).
- Potential unknown long-term repercussions and risks to children from the changes surveillance and the accumulation of data over time.

While digital risks in the current environment are not wholly new, they are unprecedented in terms of speed, scale, and invasiveness. There are more and varied players making decisions about how data is used and how these risks are assessed and handled. We need to engage with a broader set of government and industry partners to ensure children’s rights are not overlooked.

Although children are subject to many of the same risks as adults when it comes to digital technologies, they also need specific consideration, such as:

- inclusion in discussions on the impacts and accuracy of technologies used and data collected.
- children may be more vulnerable to public dissemination of their status and movements, and are likely to experience greater longer term impacts of reductions in privacy rights and other negative by-products of surveillance.
- children are more likely to be effective carriers of COVID-19, yet are less likely to fall ill. Contact tracing and other protections may need to be different than for adults.

HOW WILL THE STUDY ADDRESS THE QUESTION?

The study will review existing literature and debates to unpack the critical issues and considerations in the implementation and application of these technologies to contact tracing and surveillance with a child focused lens.
What are the effects of epidemics and pandemics on child protection outcomes?

What are the effects of containment measures on child protection outcomes?

What does the evidence say about the effects on vulnerable children and adolescents?

RATIONALE

Policy guidance and media commentary suggest that the COVID-19 virus and control measures could have short and long-term impacts on families & children due to multiple stresses. These disruptions can have negative consequences for children’s well-being, development, and protection, particularly for those already vulnerable to socio-economic exclusion and those who live in overcrowded settings. Competition for scarce resources, limited access to social supports or safe spaces could increase risks of child abuse, neglect, exploitation, and violence. These impacts have gendered and generational consequences, including domestic violence faced by women and girls in particular, and the potential impacts of illness or death of caregivers, a parent, or grandparent. This review seeks to provide rapid evidence on the potential child protection risks, which can then be fed into decision-making processes.

HOW WILL THE STUDY ADDRESS THE QUESTION?

We will follow the guidance and principles on evidence synthesis to produce a rapid review. The final product will be a report synthesizing the findings of studies on the agreed research question. The synthesis will draw on studies and systematic reviews of previous pandemics and epidemics, including:

- Child protection effects of COVID-19, Ebola, SARS, MERS, H1N1, Zika, HIV/AIDS and their infection control methods.
- Focus on children and adolescents (0-19 years of age).
- Effects on individual child-level outcomes, including unpaid work, child labour, child marriage, and violence exposure.

Recommendations and implications will be presented in a manner that can easily inform decision-making and policy. Where evidence is available, we will highlight the risks and effects on particular vulnerable sub-groups of children by:

- Conducting systematic searches in a limited number of databases.
- Screening studies according pre-defined inclusion criteria.
- Extracting key data, including: year, country of study, crisis event, design and method, participants, key results.
- A narrative synthesis (thematic analysis) of the key findings in the literature.
- Limitations: not comprehensive, no quality appraisal.

RESOURCES

1 team leader, 2 expert advisors, 3 researchers. The team leader will provide the methodological lead & will ensure quality control.

TIMELINE

Estimated 24 days

PARTNERSHIPS

Sandy Oliver & Claire Stansfield from EPPI-Centre, a leading evidence synthesis centre based at University College London, will provide expert advice on overall methodology & search strategy.

RESEARCH LEAD

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Leading Minds Online | COVID-19 and Children | What the Experts Say

The unprecedented global COVID-19 pandemic has changed the world within a few short weeks. For convening, face-to-face meetings are no longer possible and may not be for some time. Leading Minds Online will host rapid expert consultations to garner expertise and experience on pandemics, responses and effects on children, and support efforts by our research teams and other UNICEF divisions.

Leading Minds Online draws on the Leading Minds brand, which is synonymous with high quality convening. Given the momentous changes that the world is experiencing, including a potentially historic depression, it is highly uncertain that face-to-face convening will be viable for UNICEF Innocenti soon.

- **Collate knowledge on pandemics, responses, and effects on children and adolescents**
- **Gather experience and expertise on policy and programmes from practitioners and policy makers**
- **Consolidate and disseminate evidence and knowledge for wider uptake**

**METHODS**

Leading Minds Online will use the same blend of convening from its inaugural conference, bringing together knowledge brokers, policymakers, civil society, foundations, and young people to connect, share, and explore recommendations.

Each online convening will generally follow a common format. After a brief introduction, the first 30 minutes will be devoted to a moderated CNN-style panel discussion with 4-5 leading minds on a COVID-19 related topic. This will be followed by a moderated open discussion in which UNICEF staff, partners, donors, and others can pose questions to the experts. The total time for each session of online convening will be 50 minutes max. If appropriate, consideration will be given to including a 7-minute keynote address.

Panelists will be sent detailed briefing packs on the format and questions. They will be given 2-3 minutes for their responses & will be held strictly to time.

All partners will be invited to participate in these discussions through ZOOM or other media, and to ask questions via a chat room moderated by the Convening team. The facilitators will relay a selection of these comments and questions as appropriate in the discussion.

A summary of the sessions will be shared within 48 hours of the convening with next steps outlined. Sessions will be recorded and available within 24 hours.

A schedule of events will be available on our website.

**POSSIBLE CONVENINGS**

- COVID-19 & Children Online
- COVID-19 & Child Mental Health
- COVID-19 & Societal Impact
- COVID-19 & Violence
- COVID-19, Economic Crisis & Social Protection
- COVID-19 & Continued Learning
- COVID-19 & Children in Fragile Settings
- COVID-19 & WASH

**TIMELINE**

Bi-weekly sessions, starting May 2020

**PARTNERSHIPS**

UNICEF HQ & other offices, National Committees, academic partners, Governments, civil society, partners, foundations, philanthropists, young people

**LEADS**

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