

YOUTH LED SOLUTIONS TO COVID-19—Lockdown Live

To write this report, The Youth Café and Sussex Writes at the University of Sussex joined forces to address the challenges that young people are facing due to COVID-19. The Lockdown Live series was an initiative planned to create awareness about the global situation of the world in the wake of COVID-19.

Depression, stress and anxiety among the youth are the most common psychological disturbances during this Covid-19 pandemic, according to a report by The Youth Café, a Kenyan based Pan-African nonprofit organization. It further states that Covid-19 has created uncertainties about the future amongst the youth.

Government measures to control the spread of the pandemic such as lockdowns, quarantines and cessation of movement, led to massive job losses.

A Series of events /webinars were carried out to address issues that have emerged across platforms as a result of COVID-19 pandemic. The intention was to help find a coping mechanism for the situation as well as find solutions to emerging problems. Key focuses on strengthening meaningful engagement with the youth, amplifying their voice and actions in supporting the expansion of civic spaces and advancing civic engagement.

The objective of the initiative was to understand the struggle regarding learning, mental health and misinformation.

Willice Onyango, the Executive Director of The Youth Café, said they organized 15 Zoom webinars, in which participants from different nations participated and freely talked about their challenges. They also did over 100 Facebook live events on the impact of Covid-19 on the youth.

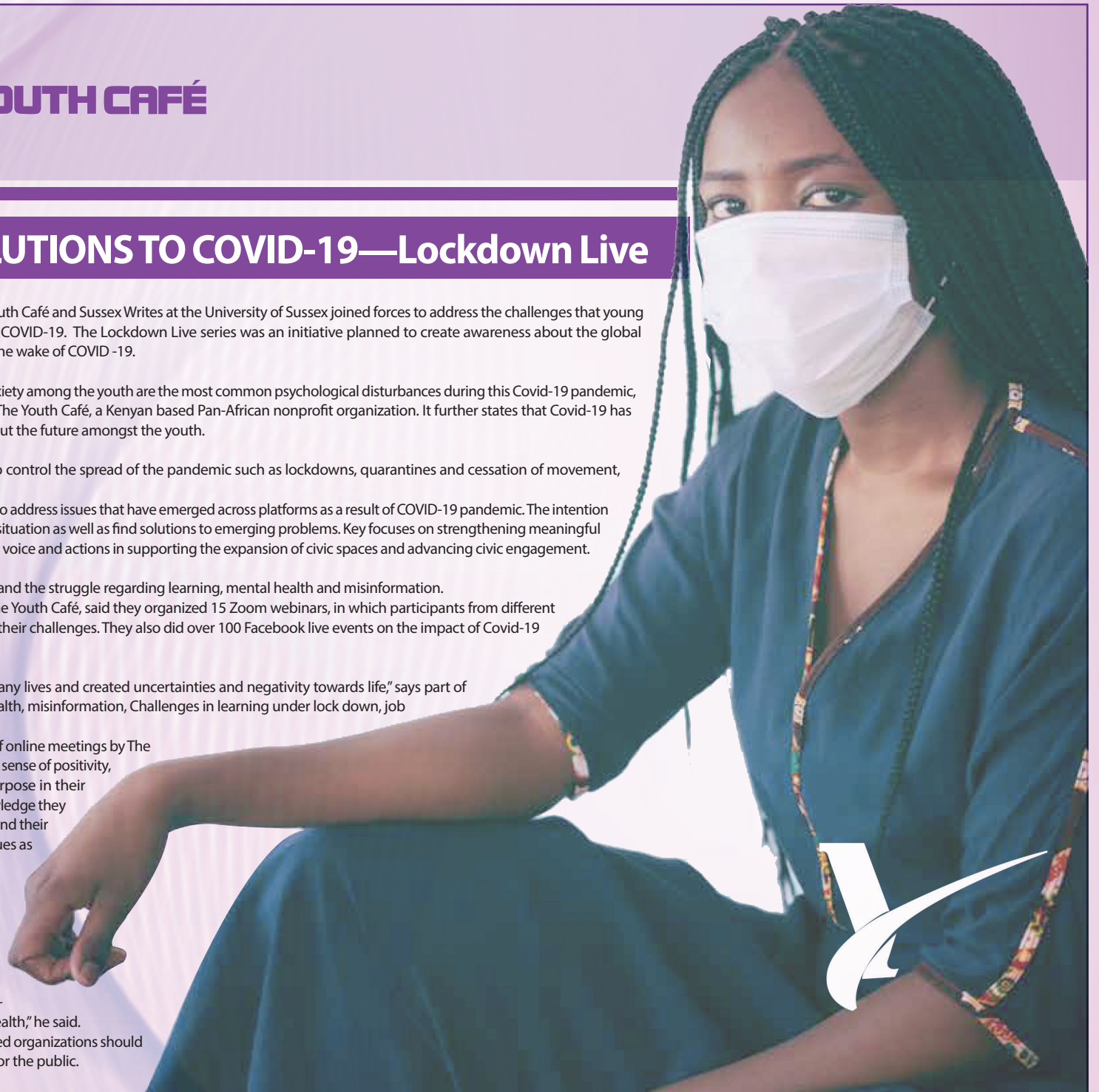
“This pandemic has resulted in the loss of many lives and created uncertainties and negativity towards life,” says part of the report. The key issues include; mental health, misinformation, Challenges in learning under lock down, job losses and loss of life.

The participants who took part in the series of online meetings by The Youth Café reported to have received a greater sense of positivity, togetherness as well as new insight and purpose in their lives. This was as a result of the wealth of knowledge they were equipped with on coping mechanisms and their involvement in providing solutions to the issues as a result of Covid-19

However, Onyango realized that although Covid-19 was tough on the youth, it has also exposed the mental challenges that existed even before the pandemic.

“Mental health is a serious issue that individuals should acknowledge. This calls for awareness and intentionality in managing our health,” he said.

He added that the governments and associated organizations should develop elaborate mental health programs for the public.



Lockdown Live : Finding Solutions to COVID-19

GENERATED



105
Videos (Including
15 Zoom Webinars)



4
Expert Interviews



53
Participants/Panelists



100+
Social Media Posts



745,000
Impressions



105,000
Facebook Live Views

#LockdownLive #VoiceoftheYouth

1. LEARNING IN THE LOCKDOWN

Schools have made unforeseen and abrupt alterations like school closure and suspension of learning for others. While some schools decided to embrace learning through lockdown, it is a challenging and adaptive issue that teachers and students have to grapple with in this period.

Issues raised

According to Jennifer; the founder of Teach for Change Nigeria; the lack of access to laptops and internet enabled phones by some students and teachers in public schools made it difficult for learning as many missed out due to the technological divide and social class differences.

In Nigeria; Schools left with fewer resources due to budget cuts and indefinite closure, denied the students reliant on school resources access to the internet.

Lack of electricity supply in many home settings hampered digital learning. While those in areas with limited essential services such as water have to spend time to fetch water instead.

COVID-19 has exposed the intersectionality of social issues; such as gender, poverty and regressive political decisions.

Recommendations

Governments in different countries should develop ways to support online learning like providing free internet and technology hardware to students. They should ensure use of radio and mobile phones in areas without internet and for people without computers or laptops.

Learners could take advantage of the free online learning resources in different websites and YouTube to learn new skills, especially using technology, that will help them in future work.

Learners without constant access to online resources could form alliances in their capacities to bring fellow students together and

“Acknowledging mental challenges and actively seeking help is the most important step in the process. Having a strong support system lessens the likelihood of mental issues,” he said.

The Youth Café will make use of the research in its decision making, webinars for peer discussions, expert opinions, survey tools and the perspectives of our team members presented as blogs.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also brought to light other emerging issues like; Gender Based Violence, rise in teenage pregnancies, Domestic violence and Corruption (Covid-19 Funds). These topics are areas that The Youth Café can offer its expertise on and an opportunity to make key contributions through research.

There is an ongoing investigation on alleged misappropriation of COVID 19 funds in Kenya which exposes the lack of transparency and accountability in the management of the funds. The Youth café continues to engage youth to track COVID-19 funds through the Action for Transparency (A4T) portal, despite increasing difficulties in accessing information on their allocation and utilization.



learn through discussion in small groups.

Parents should actively play a role in their children's life and education

Economic support for workers during COVID-19, especially working families, will lead to better educational outcomes for young people, as poverty remains the biggest issue for learning in lockdown.

2. MENTAL HEALTH

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the physical health of people and their psychological abilities as well. This demands that people start conversations on mental health and how it affected them. In a recent KFF poll, nearly half (45%) of adults in the United States reported that their mental health has been negatively impacted due to worry and stress over the virus. As the pandemic wears on, it is likely the mental health burden will increase as measures taken to slow the spread of the virus, such as social distancing, business and school closures, and shelter-in-place orders, lead to greater isolation and potential financial distress. A large study in Amhara Regional State, Ethiopia, in April 2020, reported an estimated 33% prevalence rate of symptoms consistent with depressive disorder, 14 a 3-fold increase compared to estimates from Ethiopia before the epidemic.

In conjunction with Sussex Writes from Sussex University, we invited youths from all over the world to join us in conversations on mental health.

The youth say anxiety has gotten the better part since many youths are grappling with fear of losing their life.

They are seeking that Mental health services conducted in different places should consider the differences in the planning and execution to various audiences and groups, emotions and feelings of both men and women.

Recommendation

The youth want Mental health as a serious issue to be given proper public awareness through Governments and associated organizations should develop elaborate mental health programs for people. Governments need to adopt an immediate implementation and operational mental health emergency plan and take responsibility to transmit centralized basic indications to services and to the general population.

As a way of handling mental health issues, the public has been called to develop a sense of normalcy during the pandemic which helps increase positivity towards life. People can go about their day to day activities for example; operate businesses, attend church, go to work so long as they take precautionary measures while in public places by wearing masks and keeping social distance.

Acknowledging mental challenges and actively seeking for help is the most important step in the process. There is a need to have a strong support system to lessen the likelihood of mental issues.

Taking care of our physical health often translates to elevated mental wellbeing. As such, people should exercise and eat healthily.

3. MISINFORMATION

There is great danger in miscommunication as it leads to arrogance and ignorance, hence more exposure to COVID-19.

Existing falsehoods about the nature of the disease, its prevalence, and cures are desperate attempts to ignore the glaring pandemic.

Issues raised

Religious leaders can play a role in spreading accurate information to people. Some people believe that faith supersedes the information given by medical professionals.

Most people rely on twitter for timely information, international communication which enables comparison solution sharing as they educate the public from home.

By using trusted organizations like WHO which are now running their social media pages to counter the misinformation

Relaying information that is culturally inclusive and free from ambiguity so that it's not easily misinterpreted

Using authentic information that is scientific, ethical and that which has supportive information

Recommendations

There is a need for the public to be clear on the information they consume and disseminate as well as be vigilant in calling out false information to prevent a dis-empowering cycle.

Reliable sources of information should be the reference point of all information shared.

The only way to defeat COVID-19 is to embrace all the preventative measures by the government

POST COVID FUTURES

The Coronavirus pandemic has turned many lives upside down with many people being fired due to business closure, minimal resources and disease risk. According to the International Labour Organization; the turnover rates are exceptionally high in institutions where work cannot be done remotely.

Today, many youths who set up their own businesses entered the cultural and creative industries, which is now curtailed by the ongoing pandemic.

COVID-19 has prompted many businesses to have a strong online presence although that may not be the bulk of their work.

Government interventions, including but not limited to wide-ranging and reactive stimulus packages and tax breaks, especially for SMEs and lower and middle-income citizens, will help protect and in turn grow the economy.

The disruption of urban commerce functions has translated to some opportunities, such as online commerce.

According to the World Economic Forum the emphasis on online services today begs for operational changes for many businesses; the post-COVID phase will involve changing the structure of businesses and adapting to the adjustments.

Issues Raised

The challenges people face in different countries are the same with different magnitudes. If we are to overcome, we need more than coping or overcoming, we need to adapt.

The major lesson that COVID-19 has taught us is that we need to be ready to embrace change and uncertainty that comes with it.

Staying at home with friends and families has also taught many people the importance of cultivating good relationships.

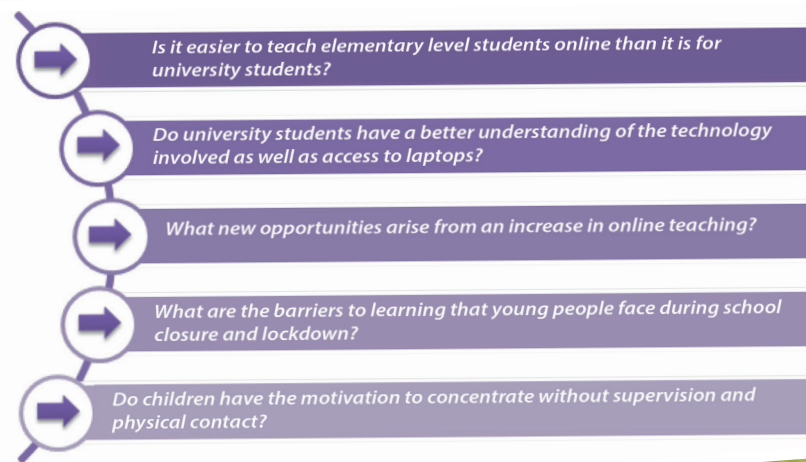
It has defined the idea of capitalism and its place in a pandemic prone world. It is an essential lesson for policy makers that international environmental conventions need reforms.

We need to formulate sustainable policy, rebuild after the pandemic, and take responsible consumption and production seriously.

Today there are less carbon emissions; reduced human activity has enabled flora and fauna to thrive thanks to Coronavirus. In China, carbon emissions were down an estimated 18 percent between early February and mid-March due to falls in coal consumption and industrial output, according to calculations first published by climate science and policy website CarbonBrief. That slowdown caused the world's largest emitter to avoid some 250 million metric tonnes of carbon pollution

Local investment and nationalism have been significant as opposed to debt, import, and Foreign Direct Investment dependency.

Agricultural produce reduces dependency and allows us to grow ourselves locally rather than internationally.



The initiatives developed after Coronavirus will depend on the depth of research and the adoption of reasonable measures that will improve the lives of people.

Recommendations

With many employment hurdles, people could use the time to develop their skills.

There is a need for Automation and dematerialization of businesses, increase in creativity is an important factor going forward for many businesses.

Benefits of the Research

Adaptation of a new normal that could help people stay vigilant despite the uncertainty that looms.

As a tech savvy generation, the youth can take advantage of the various services on the internet to discover new talents and pick up new habits.

Combating misinformation has helped families in various areas manage their activities without risking their lives. The lessons that the youth have learned in this Covid 19 period on communication are likely to help in analyzing different scenarios in the future.

The pandemic has caused unwanted changes in many societal structures, and adapting to the new situation will require a new mindset. Even though there are many negatives that COVID-19 has exposed, it has also shown the importance of family, global connectivity and good international relations.

To build on the success of the Lockdown Live series, The Youth Cafe will seek funding to expand its global campaign for international cooperation in building a successful post-COVID future, with a particular emphasis on improving access to education and mental health support and on expanding media information literacy. Finally, we anticipate more productive conversations that will empower, inform and influence.

About The Youth Cafe:

The Youth Café is a not-for-profit pan-African youth organization founded in Kenya in 2012 and officially registered in 2014. Since our founding, our strategy has always been to look at today's youth bulge as an opportunity for development and economic growth. This is why we are seen as the lead organisation for implementing multidisciplinary and multi-perspective projects including Peace and Security, Preventing Violent Extremism; Governance and Political Inclusion (Remittances and Accountability); Culture, Arts, and Sports; Education and Skills; Business, Job Creation and Entrepreneurship, Universal Health Coverage, Environmental Preservation and Climate Change. We aim to model, inform, and advance youth-led approaches to sustainable development, environmental stewardship, social equity, democratic governance, and economic viability by utilizing innovative research, media, policy, advocacy, as well as cross-cultural and intergenerational partnerships. To date, we have reached 1.6 million young people across Africa.

Context and bases for the establishment for The Youth Cafe: Young people make up the bulk of Africa's total population with an estimated 75% of the continent's population below the age of 35. From a demographic point of view, this calls for a paradigm shift towards the recognition and support of the youth to harness their potential to foster community resilience, propose innovative solutions, drive social progress, youth empowerment and inspire political change. Young people are a tremendous and essential asset worth investing in. We hope to open the door to an unparalleled multiplier effect as our message spreads.

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