COVID-19 and its impact on children and adolescents

The COVID-19 pandemic is having significant impacts on Latin American and Caribbean girls, boys and adolescents.

For example, the United Nations Population Fund has estimated that there may have been as many as a half million additional early pregnancies in 2020 owing to difficulties in obtaining contraceptives or gaining access to sexual and reproductive health services and to the fact that lockdowns may have increased girls’ and adolescents’ exposure to domestic sexual violence and abuse.

Most countries in the region suspended in-person classes for all education levels and there are concerns that many students will never go back to school.

While online learning platforms emerged as the dominant alternative, major gaps in actual access to digital forms of communication remain, especially in the case of the poorest children and adolescents and those living in rural areas.
Moreover, the loss of so many jobs and sources of income, together with related economic insecurity have heightened the risk of child labour, sexual exploitation and child marriage.

**Actions**

Among the actions and policies governments can adopt to reduce Covid-19’s impact on children are:

- **Cash transfers**
- **Online learning**
- **Protection to orphans**
- **Healthcare services**
- **Domestic violence attention**
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