Youth and COVID-19

Response
Resilience
Recovery

Background Note
from the MENA-OECD Governance Programme

Survey on COVID-19 explores the activities ran by youth to mitigate the effects of the crisis

As the COVID-19 crisis is disrupting all lives in an unprecedented manner, the world is tackling the global health emergency and its economic and social impact. The MENA region remains particularly exposed to the risks that the crisis is posing for young people and future generations specifically, due to pre-existing high levels of youth unemployment, high levels of youth employment in the informal sector, challenges in access to education, and large numbers of displaced young people, among others.

As countries move from immediate response efforts to recovery measures, the MENA-OECD Governance Programme continues to provide its expertise and support to governments and civil society in the region in their efforts to build back better from the current crisis.

In this context, and as part of the OECD Public Governance Directorate's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Secretariat launched a survey targeting youth organisations worldwide in mid-April. The survey explores the activities ran by youth organisations to mitigate the effects of the crisis and understand their main concerns in terms of its immediate and long-term implications.

The OECD received 90+ responses from over 40 countries worldwide including nine organisations based in the MENA region. These answers will feed into a policy paper to discuss:

(1) the challenges posed by COVID-19 to young people;

(2) the activities of youth organisations in the crisis response and recovery phases; and

(3) what governments can do, and are doing, to design and deliver inclusive and fair recovery measures and build resilience in partnership with youth.

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COVID-19 crisis will have intergenerational effects

The COVID-19 pandemic has severely affected all age cohorts. While young people are, on average, less severely affected in terms of the physical health impact of the crisis, they will shoulder a significant share of the social and economic costs stemming from the crisis.

- **Education, employment, mental health and disposable income** are the areas in which youth organisations believe it will be most challenging for youth to recover from the crisis (both for respondents worldwide and at the MENA regional level).

- A noticeable share of youth organisations have also expressed **concerns regarding the limitations of individual freedoms** (26% of all respondents, and 33% of MENA respondents).
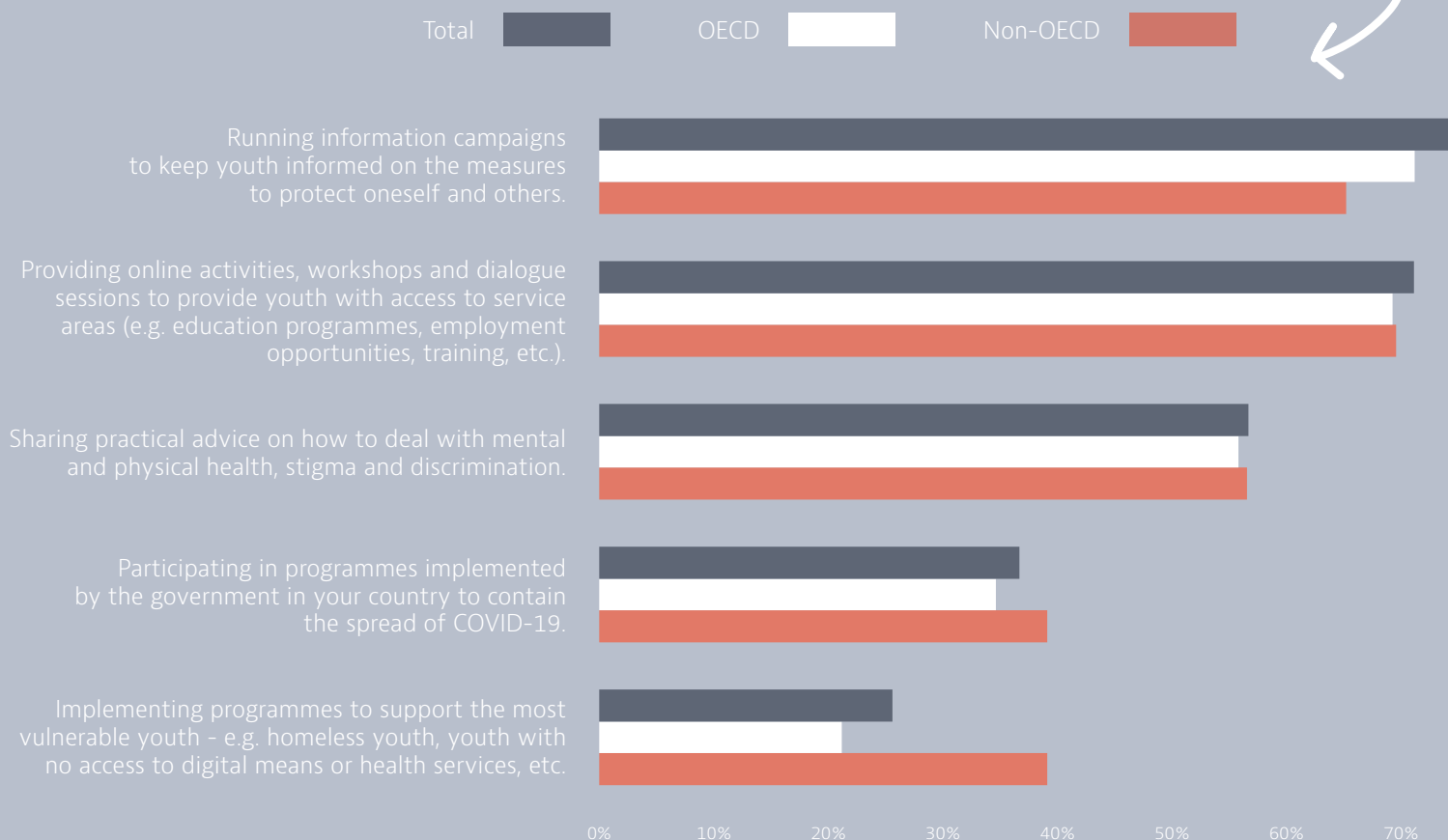
Youth-led organisations have provided considerable help in mitigating the immediate impact of the crisis, also demonstrating intergenerational solidarity (for instance through free virtual tutoring for disadvantaged kids; grocery shopping for the elderly etc.). Several organisations have also shared their ideas to inform long-term recovery plans.

- **74%** of surveyed organisations have run information campaigns to keep youth informed on the measures to protect oneself and others (44% for MENA);

- **71%** have provided online activities/ workshops to provide youth with access to service areas such as education programmes, trainings, etc. (89% for MENA); and

- **57%** have disseminated practical advice on how to deal with mental and physical health, stigma and discrimination (56% for MENA).

Youth organisations are contributing to societal resilience in various ways

Total ▮ OECD ▯ Non-OECD ▮

Running information campaigns to keep youth informed on the measures to protect oneself and others.

Providing online activities, workshops and dialogue sessions to provide youth with access to service areas (e.g. education programmes, employment opportunities, training, etc.).

Sharing practical advice on how to deal with mental and physical health, stigma and discrimination.

Participating in programmes implemented by the government in your country to contain the spread of COVID-19.

Implementing programmes to support the most vulnerable youth - e.g. homeless youth, youth with no access to digital means or health services, etc.

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70%

Note: The graph illustrates the results from 90 answers collected.
Source: OECD COVID-19 & Youth Survey.

Youth organisations in MENA region run numerous activities

- In Lebanon, Masar Association has organised online trainings for youth on mental health, distributed board games to families, and filmed and disseminated videos with youth on how to spend time in lockdown.

- In Morocco, Project Daam is providing research grants for papers on the impact of COVID-19 on vulnerable people (with a focus on youth), and they have provided a series of dialogue sessions on the impact of COVID-19 on vulnerable groups (youth, women, disabled, rural youth etc.), in the hope of informing decision-making.

- In Morocco, Impact for Development has provided a platform to share and disseminate initiatives and data on the current context and how to tackle it.

- In Jordan, Keys for Sustainable Development has conducted awareness-raising campaigns as well as online dialogue sessions on COVID-19.

- In Tunisia, the International Organization For Youth Development has been offering an online course for kids to learn entrepreneurial skills while at home.

Governments can use youth insights to respond to the crisis

Since the outbreak of COVID-19, trust in the national government has increased for **43%** of the surveyed organisations worldwide, and it has remained stable for **36%** of them. Youth organisations that reported an increase in trust generally pointed to the following drivers of governments actions:

- **Effective information and communication,** including transparent, clear and open data;
- **Evidence-based decision-making** resulting in quick and decisive action to protect people;
- **Response measures focused on citizens' wellbeing**, especially the most vulnerable; and
- **Collaboration across public institutions and with civil society organisations.**

However, recent polls at the national level have showed that trust is rather volatile in the current context, and especially as governments begin taking measures for recovery. The recovery measures will have long-term economic, social and environmental consequences that young people and future generations will have to live with. Considerable resources will also be mobilised, bringing questions of intergenerational justice to the forefront.

Respondents' long-term concerns concentrate around the well-being of the elderly, the well-being of youth, and public debt (both for worldwide and MENA respondents), demonstrating concerns about a fair distribution of the costs associated with mitigation and recovery strategies across society.

Governments in the MENA region can consider:

- Building commitments to include youth and intergenerational considerations in the design and implementation of crisis response and recovery measures.

- Leveraging national youth strategies to translate political commitment into actionable plans to guide the implementation of inclusive, effective and fair recovery measures.

- Ensuring that data collected on the impact of the crisis are systematically age-disaggregated and used to inform policy and decision-making.

- Building the capacities of public administrations to manage risk and provide rapid and effective mitigation responses to future shocks and disasters.

- Strengthening partnerships with youth organisations, unorganised youth, volunteers and youth workers to build resilience by ensuring effective engagement and coordination.