

EPISODE 15: INCREASED RISK TO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

School closures and other challenges have seriously disrupted young people's and children's lives. There is an increase in early, unwanted pregnancies; gender-based violence and HIV infections. Let's hear how they feel about it, and try to answer their questions.

RADIO:

Start with playing the 'COVID-19 – Together we can beat it' song.

Welcome to the 15th of our 'COVID-19 – Together we can beat it' radio programmes. Hard to believe that we have been together for this long already!

These programmes are brought to you by MIET Africa in partnership with the Ministry of Education, to strengthen the SADC Region's response to COVID-19, with funding from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation.

As you all know, the COVID-19 pandemic has created many challenges for our country, our communities and every one of us. In this programme, we talk about these and find solutions together.

Keep listening and have your say! Phone us on XXX, SMS us on XXX or send a WhatsApp message on XXX to be part of this conversation.

And remember our PRIZES for lucky winners! At the end of this programme, we'll ask a question about today's topic. The first FIVE listeners who SMS or WhatsApp the right answer, will get a FutureLife-Now! drawstring backpack and water bottle. So keep listening, and send us your answers!

Over the past 12 weeks, we've discussed the COVID-19 disease and how to protect ourselves against it. We've also looked at some of the challenges which the COVID-19 pandemic has brought. We've talked about myths and misinformation, school closures, challenges for people with disabilities and how to cope with anxiety and depression.

This week we talk about children, adolescents and youths – the young people who are our country's future. They are already at risk in so many ways, and the COVID-19 pandemic's impact on them has been huge.

Let's think of some of the many challenges:

- School closures, which have affected 92% of learners across the world, have affected our children's and youths' studies and they have lost a lot of learning time.
- Feeding schemes stopped providing much-needed nutrition to many children, and health services and access to essential medication were disrupted.
- Some learners are battling to get back to school because of their families' financial difficulties.
- Young girls have been more at risk of sexual abuse and gender-based violence. And in all SADC countries, there have been alarming increases in unintended pregnancies and inter-generational marriages. UN agencies also expect a rise in HIV infections.
- Because of the negative impact on countries' economies and large-scale job losses, young people's chances of getting a job after school have been reduced.
- As we heard last week, all these challenges, coupled with the forced isolation of children and young people, have led to anxiety and depression, and some learners don't even want to go back to school.

We all want **XXX [Country's name]** to be a country in which children, adolescents and young people are healthy and resilient. We want them to be able to reach their full potential, so that they can make their dreams come true and contribute to the development of their community and our country. COVID-19 has clearly made this more difficult.

So let's look at what exactly is happening in our country; and at how children and young people can cope with these challenges. In next week's programme, we will talk about how parents and adults can help children and young people get through this difficult time.

It's now time for me to hear from the people who know what is really happening on the ground, and who can help us to find solutions: I'm talking of our panellists and of course, you, our listeners.

So, let's talk about it! And keep your calls coming.

<Introduce panellists: An education or youth development specialist and a youth facilitator>

QUESTIONS TO THE PANELLISTS:

<Maybe alternate questions between panellists, and only ask all the questions if you don't get many calls from listeners. Their questions/contributions come first!>

Education/youth development specialist

- 1 We've mentioned some of the challenges that face youth across SADC countries at this time. Is the situation similar in our country? Please share with us what is happening in our country and what the impact on children and youth has been.
- 2 Do you have any suggestions for how children and youth can best get through this time?
- 3 We understand that our government, local communities and NGOs are battling to cope with a large number of challenges at this time. Do you know of any programmes that are specifically for children and youth? If so, please tell us about them.

Youth

- 1 As a young person, you know best how COVID-19 has put you and other youths at risk. Please tell us about your experience, and those of other young people around you.
- 2 From what you know, what are the biggest risks that children and youth face?
- 3 Just for interest, do you think there have been any positives for children and young people?
- 4 Young people are often resilient, and manage to lift themselves out of difficult challenges. What have you seen around you? Are young people making plans to cope with challenges?
- 5 How are you coping yourself? Do you have any advice for other young people? How can they protect themselves against risks and try to cope with the challenges that they face?

<AT END OF PROGRAMME:>

The moment that you've waited for - Our prize-winning question:

Name one negative impact that school closures during COVID-19 has had on children and youth.

SMS or WhatsApp your answer to us NOW. Also give us your name, age and where you live. We'll announce the lucky winners' names next week, and tell you how we'll get your prizes to you.

<FOR HOST: Some potential answers:

- Learning time was disrupted.
- School-feeding schemes were interrupted
- Young girls have been more at risk of sexual violence and gender-based violence.
- There have been more unwanted/unintended pregnancies.
- There have been more intergenerational marriages (between young girls and older men)
- Some learners have not gone back to school.
- HIV infections have increased.

Use your discretion! If the answer shows the person listened and got the message, accept it!>

SMSes TOPIC 16:

SMS 1

The COVID-19 pandemic and school closures have put many young people like you at risk. Maybe some of your existing problems became worse, or there could be new risks. To hear what is happening to other young people and get advice, tune in to XXXXXXXX THIS XXXXday from XXXXXXXX. To stop getting the SMSes send 'stop' to XXXXX (266 characters no spaces).

SMS 2

The COVID-19 pandemic has probably interrupted your studies. Maybe you were a victim of gender-based violence. You may be pregnant. Maybe you could not access health services or medication, and worry about your health. Perhaps you are not able to go back to school. If you battle to cope, speak to someone you trust: A youth facilitator, a parent, a friend or a trusted teacher (Characters without spaces 312, with spaces 377)