Reimagining Humanitarian Action in South Asia

Preliminary Documentation of Adolescent and Youth Engagement Policy and Practice and Related Recommendations

"commutiny"
the youth collective

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CONTENTS

Acronyms

General comment: In this study, adolescents and young people refers to the 10–24 age group. The sub-categories are early adolescents (10–14), late adolescents (15–19), and youth (20–24). Young people is used as a noun across the report, and youth is used as an adjective covering the same age group (20–24), generally not including older young people for the purposes of this report, even though exact demarcation around practice is impossible. The word adolescents will sometimes be used to include both adolescents and young people.

ADAP : Adolescent Development and Participation

CCCs : Core Commitments for Children (in Emergencies)

CSO : civil society organization

DRR : Disaster Risk Reduction

IASC : Inter-Agency Standing Committee

MOWCA : Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (Bangladesh)

NDMA : National Disaster Management Authority (Pakistan)

ROSA : Regional Office for South Asia (UNICEF)

UNSC : United Nations Security Council

Acknowledgements

"We must involve young people in policy making and get their feedback. We may think the policies we are making are good for them, but if they don't want that there is no point. We must listen to their voices and understand what they need. This should be a continuous process, and not a one-time thing."

**Dr Zoya Rizvi, Deputy Commissioner,
Ministry of Health and Family Welfare,
Government of India**[1]

"Most often than not during a crisis, say COVID or during the 2002 Gujarat riots, protection takes precedence over participation. When it comes to adolescents and their issues, we view them from an adult's lens and not theirs. And the solutioning is therefore by us, as adults."

Waqar Qazi, Founder Director, Urja Ghar, India[2]

"There is a cost implication, obviously, to bringing one more stakeholder to the table – especially when it is young people. Because you must build their capacities and bring them to a level playing field, in order for them to meaningfully engage. Otherwise, the engagement is not going to be worth your time – or their time. And therefore, people resist including young people in their programming."

**Inter-governmental Agency representative,
Female, India**[3]

Executive Summary

I. Background

Armed conflict, natural hazards including climate change, internal displacement, refugee crises, and, most recently, the COVID-19 public health crisis have had varying adverse impact on all countries in South Asia. In any kind of emergency, institutions and communities often build solidarity to enable them to emerge from the crises. However, these crises almost always worsen existing scarcity and unequal distribution of resources, and create social tensions around access, with specific implications for adolescents' and young people's wellbeing.

Humanitarian contexts adversely affect adolescents' and young people's growth and development, negatively impact their mental and physical health and wellbeing, and often limit access to critical services such as education, healthcare, child protection and social protection. For girls, those in low-income communities, adolescents living in poverty, and other marginalized groups, vulnerabilities are often multiplied. Adolescents and young people therefore need a differentiated focus during emergencies, with their aspirations, issues and capabilities at the centre of response.

A common characteristic of decision making in humanitarian contexts is the premium given to efficiency over participation and inclusion. Even when relevant and necessary decisions are made on lockdowns and so on, what the COVID-19 experience showed was that the inadequate involvement of communities, including adolescents, on how these decisions are framed and implemented, can result in further vulnerabilities and discrimination.

The focus of *Reimagining Humanitarian Action in South Asia: Preliminary Documentation of Adolescent and Youth Engagement Policy and Practice and Related Recommendations* is to understand the extent to which adolescents' and young people's issues, agency and influence are prioritized in resolving concerns and enabling collaborative decisions within humanitarian response. The study also examines how young people themselves have taken a lead in responding to issues, with or without adult support. It particularly examines how the pressure of adult-centric cultures that already limit young people's agency in development contexts, often worsens during emergencies.

How do we then ensure and establish pathways for resilience and empowerment during humanitarian response, particularly for those most affected, and those most marginalized – socially, economically and politically? This study intends to inform strategic, policy-led approaches to enabling meaningful adolescent and youth engagement and empowerment such that they lead, co-create and influence humanitarian response.

The study connects UNICEF and inter-agency mandates for adolescent and young people's empowerment and participation in emergency settings to prevalent and proposed policy and practice. UNICEF's Core Commitments for Children (CCCs) in Humanitarian Action establishes the importance of rights-based and equity-based approaches to humanitarian response with and for children, ensuring their participation in humanitarian action and the accountability of duty bearers to realizing these approaches. The United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security equally establishes the key role that young people play in conflict resolution and peacebuilding. Guidance for realizing these principles is offered through the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) *Guidelines on Working with and for Young People in Humanitarian and Protracted Crises.* UNICEF's *Engaged and Heard: Guidelines for Adolescent Participation and Civic Engagement* in its *Adolescent Participation in Peacebuilding and Humanitarian Action* booklet provides further principles and guidance.

The springboard for this study was the implementation of the innovative online and offline adolescent-led enquiry process titled *SParking Wellbeing*, undertaken as a youth engagement response to COVID-19, which subsequently generated conversations around mainstreaming youth engagement in humanitarian response.

II. About this report

In 2020, the Adolescent Development and Participation (ADAP) section at the UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia (ROSA), in collaboration with

country offices in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Pakistan invested in *SParking Wellbeing: A Toolkit for Adolescent-Led Appreciative Enquiry*, during Humanitarian Response, as part of their adolescent and youth engagement strategy during the COVID-19 response. Based on capacities built among adolescents for social enquiry through the *SParking Wellbeing* toolkit, the five countries conducted enquiries by and with adolescents to inform the response, culminating in a report of the same name[4]. The present report is a preliminary documentation in the five countries that underwent the process, with the aim of understanding broad perceptions, policies and practices in humanitarian settings that enable and realize adolescent and youth engagement in emergencies, through *SParking Wellbeing* or similar processes.

The UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia (ROSA) undertook the study in partnership with ComMutiny - The Youth Collective, which brings in decades of experience in youth-centric development and empowerment.

The objectives of this study are to:

- Increase understanding on why adolescent and youth engagement and participation is important during humanitarian crises.
- Examine the current policy, practice and institutional environment for adolescent and youth engagement and participation during humanitarian crises.
- Identify the policy, institutional and socio-cultural barriers and opportunities to adolescent and youth engagement and participation.
- Develop actionable recommendations for stakeholders to integrate meaningful adolescent and youth engagement and participation as part of humanitarian policy and practice.

Qualitative interviews and focus group discussions were conducted with 45 adult stakeholders and 64 adolescents and young people across the five South Asian countries. Respondents consisted of UNICEF national staff including Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), Education and Adolescent specialists, staff of the UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia (ROSA), youth facilitators, civil society organization (CSO) heads who were involved in the *SParking Wellbeing* process, CSO humanitarian actors, and government decision makers from central/state/national governments. Among the 64 adolescent respondents were 44 adolescent enquirers from Afghanistan, India, Pakistan, and Bhutan, who conducted the Appreciative Enquiry, and 20 adolescents from Bangladesh, who responded to the Appreciative Enquiry.

III. Main findings

A. Perceptions about young people that inform humanitarian and development policies and practice

To analyse national humanitarian and youth policies and practices, the study utilized a model of six youth development lenses that reflect the way adolescents and young people are viewed in humanitarian and development settings. This framework (elaborated in Chapter 2) helps us identify the assumptions that determine the way we work with, and for, young people.

This youth development model consists of the following lenses:

- a **deficit lens** that perceives young people as difficult, rebellious and a problem to be solved, particularly relevant to humanitarian settings where young people have been part of, or led, social movements and protests in response to such contexts,
- a **protection lens** that sees young people as vulnerable and in need of protection, a lens that is predominant in humanitarian contexts, with specific implications for girls, adolescents with disabilities and other groups seen as specifically `vulnerable',
- a **beneficiary lens** that sees young people as beneficiaries of adult welfare, which once again foregrounds the victimhood of girls and other vulnerable groups,
- an **instrumentalist lens**, that sees young people serving adult-led social, political and economic agendas; this includes seeing young people through an economistic lens, as contributing to the productivity and economy of a nation, with scarce focus on their own aspirations,
- an **assets lens** that perceives young people as those with potential, builds their capacities and supports the realization of their aspirations through youth-partnered and youth-led agendas, often detached from public policy, and,
- a **rights lens** that explicitly recognizes young people as rights-holders and perceives public officers as principally duty bearers; viewed through this lens, we perceive distinct accountability of duty bearers to rights-holders in all initiatives where young people can be leaders, co-creators or influencers.

These lenses also apply differentially to diverse adolescents and young people – with girls, those living with disability, those in low-income groups, LGBTQI groups and other specific social cohorts and interest groups affected differently across multiple intersectional realities.

In the visioning of adolescents and young people as partners in humanitarian action, we need to ensure that it is their agency that drives decisions on their voluntary involvement, that their agency is exercised authentically in driving community practice and policy decisions, and that their actions are not driven by adults and pre-determined mandates. We need to factor in intersectionality and the multiple ways in which humanitarian contexts affect young girls, low-income groups, adolescents on the move, and the various combinations of these identities. We need to ensure that we achieve these targets in contexts of protracted humanitarian contexts.

A rapid desk review of existing Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and humanitarian policies of the five South Asian countries which are part of the current study shows existing trends and potential for shifting our perceptions to a **rights-based development lens**, and to further reflect international commitments for youth-centric emergency response. The study shows that so far, in humanitarian and DRR policies, young people are predominantly identified through protection or beneficiary lenses, as recipients of services and resources during a disaster. In other cases they are exhorted, in an instrumentalist sense, to be volunteers who can contribute time and energy to disaster response, often serving adult-led agendas. Conversely, youth policies in the five countries had a much stronger articulation of young people seen through assets or rights-based lenses; however, humanitarian response was barely a focus within the youth policies.

While good practices exist of genuinely adolescent-centric humanitarian response driven by specific professional groups and even individuals, stronger evidence is needed of systematic, institutionally driven commitments and strategies for adolescent- and youth-led engagement and participation in humanitarian contexts. There is no strong evidence of policy or practice that makes explicit and differentiated investment in adolescent and young people's growth and resilience during humanitarian response, or that invests in spaces and processes that ensure safety and wellbeing in ways that adequately respond to young people's own aspirations and issues. Young people are often not seen as meaningful partners in development, with voice and capabilities to influence. Although age is on their side, young people are still primarily seen as *instruments* of change and not as *influencers* of change.

B. Adolescent engagement and participation strategies

The study highlights practices, tools and techniques that enable empowerment and meaningful engagement of young people in humanitarian response. It analyses a range of structural, policy and technical factors that can enable systematic methodologies for realizing adolescent and young people's engagement in humanitarian settings.

Anecdotal evidence from the five countries has shown how adolescents and young people have played a proactive role and made positive contributions to their communities during humanitarian crises including during the COVID-19 pandemic. They have responded through initiatives to provide relief to the vulnerable and marginalized, developing content for social media, raising awareness about the pandemic and supporting less privileged peers during the shift to online teaching by helping with their studies.

In contexts of conflict and protracted crises, adolescents and young people have often been at the forefront of humanitarian action, driving their own initiatives, and playing a key role in social cohesion and peacebuilding. The role of sports and other social networks have often been critical to youth-led humanitarian initiatives.

However, spaces for adolescents and young people to express their views on broader policy and practice matters closed up even more during COVID-19, due to restrictions placed on public meetings and face-to-face interactions.

The *SParking Wellbeing* adolescent-led enquiry process during COVID-19 was specially designed to build resilience of adolescents, support them to cope, respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and influence relevant decisions being made by public, non-governmental and private authorities. It proved successful in building adolescent capacities and in providing them with opportunities to reflect and act on their current contexts. It helped enhance capacities such as empathy, negotiation, communication and critical thinking, enabled inter-generational dialogue and provided adolescents a space to voice their concerns. It also became a catalyst for young people to advocate for their rights as an essential part of responsive humanitarian action.

Key recommendations

The recommendations in this report address the
roles of multiple stakeholders, including the United
Nations, in establishing rights-based policies and
commitments needed for meaningful and sustained
adolescent engagement and participation that
is critical for responsive humanitarian action.
These must be realized through programmes,
structures and mechanisms, and adequate budgets.
Mainstreaming adolescent engagement includes
providing opportunities for adolescents to engage
with communities as changemakers, and formal
or non-formal inter-generational structures where
adolescents are listened to, and their opinions
considered when taking decisions that impact
their lives. Processes and tools such as *SParking
Wellbeing*, which help develop adolescent capacities
to be informed and engaged, and enable them to
communicate their needs, aspirations and anxieties
with adults,[5] should be embedded into policies
and programmes. Adult stakeholders who engage
with adolescents must be capacitated to create
empowering spaces with and for adolescents.
Investment in capacity building of peer and adult
humanitarian workers and youth development
practitioners is critical to enable these processes.

CHAPTER 1
Mainstreaming adolescent engagement and participation in humanitarian contexts: Rationale, design and background for the study

1.1 Rationale for the study

Adolescent engagement is defined at ADAP UNICEF ROSA as "adolescents developing sustained connections in their lives that enhance their sense of belonging and wellbeing. This can occur within themselves, in the immediate world around them, in society and the world. These sustained connections may be emotional, psychological, or cognitive, and can be personal or social. It can involve enhancing self-awareness, and enhancing social, political economic and ecological awareness of the world around them and can often lead to social action."[6]

Adolescent engagement can be a result of meaningful adolescent participation in their communities and institutions, including government. Our focus in this study was to understand how we can create enabling environments in communities and institutions to make adolescents and young people aware that they are being heard, and to own humanitarian action and decisions.

The COVID-19 pandemic is a humanitarian crisis that has adversely impacted countries economically, socially and psychologically. In South Asia, factors such as large population size, weak health facilities, high poverty rates, low literacy, school dropouts, poor socio-economic conditions and inadequate social protection systems meant that the overall wellbeing of citizens, and more specifically that of young people, was deeply affected. The already stressed services in health, education, child protection and social protection were even more overwhelmed. Burdens multiplied, in prevailing contexts of protracted conflict and humanitarian crises. According to a UNICEF ROSA study conducted in 2020[7] focusing on the six most populous countries of South Asia – Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka – approximately 420 million children were affected by school closures since the beginning of the pandemic, and an estimated 9 million (50% of whom are girls) are expected to drop out of schools permanently. This is accompanied by a significant increase in child marriages[8], adolescent pregnancies, maternal and neo-natal deaths, and is likely to have an adverse impact on cognitive skills, prospects of decent employment, and social and emotional wellbeing of children and young people. Violence against adolescents and young people, particularly girls, has also increased[9].

Countries have an obligation to support adolescents and young people to cope with these significant adverse impacts. This requires an integrated approach to the supply of goods and services in education, health care and child protection. While appreciating the benefits of youth-led voluntary work, it is equally important to build their resilience and sense of identity and purpose, create cohesive connections among peers, communities and service providers, develop their awareness and understanding of the world around them, and encourage their ownership of policies and programmes that are meant to benefit them.

The *SParking Wellbeing* partnership between UNICEF ROSA's ADAP section and ComMutiny - The Youth Collective was one of several efforts to support adolescent resilience and aspiration-based response to the COVID-19 crisis. It was designed to enhance adolescent engagement and leadership and reflected the firm belief that young people must play a key role in understanding this new context, participating and partnering in actions that support response and recovery, and benefit from the response and recovery. It also helped create an environment that is responsive to adolescent vulnerabilities, and facilitates them to influence decisions. The *SParking Wellbeing* process was a blended process, which brought young people together through digital and offline means, for interaction and co-creation.

The current study builds a case for enhanced investment in adolescent engagement and participation during humanitarian crises, grounded on the experience of the *SParking Wellbeing* tool and process, and other similar adolescent engagement initiatives across the five countries under study.

1.2 Design of the study

Building on the learning arising from implementation of the *SParking Wellbeing* adolescent-led appreciative enquiry, the study focused on respondents who were involved in this process or other similar processes in humanitarian contexts.

Sixty-four adolescents (28 boys and 36 girls) were engaged through focus group discussions (FGDs). These included adolescent enquirers from Afghanistan, India and Pakistan, and adolescent

respondents from Bangladesh. These FGDs were all conducted online. In Bhutan, owing to the lack of internet connectivity and the inability therefore to conduct online FGDs, four individual online interviews were conducted with adolescent enquirers. Adolescents who participated in the study included vulnerable sections of the population such as Internally Displaced Persons, returnees, and young people from low-income and marginalized communities.

Forty-five adult stakeholders were interviewed through qualitative interviews, which were held online. They were as follows:

- Youth facilitators who were involved in the *SParking Wellbeing* process.
- Government decision makers from central/ state/provincial governments. In each country,

between one and three representatives from the Ministries of Health, Education, Women and Child Development, or Youth Affairs, were interviewed.
- UNICEF regional and national staff from country offices who were involved with the *SParking Wellbeing* process, and DRR, Education, Emergency and ADAP staff.
- CSO heads who were involved in this and other adolescent engagement processes in humanitarian contexts.
- CSO humanitarian actors.

Respondents for the study were selected purposively by the UNICEF country offices, based on the guidelines provided by the research team from ComMutiny and the ADAP Regional Advisor, UNICEF ROSA.

Table 1: Adolescent enquirers by gender						
Countries	Adolescents	Youth Facilitators	Government Decision Makers	UNICEF Staff	CSO Heads	CSO Humanitarian Actors
Afghanistan	20 (13 boys, 7 girls)	3	3	2	2	1
Bangladesh	21 (9 boys, 12 girls)	3	1	4	2	1
Bhutan	4 (2 boys, 2 girls)	2	1	1	2	1
India	10 (1 boy, 9 girls)	2	2	2	1	1
Pakistan	9 (3 boys, 6 girls)	2	0	3	1	1
ROSA	-	-	-	1	-	-
Total	**64 (28 boys, 36 girls)**	**12**	**7**	**13**	**8**	**5**

1.2.1 Primary research process

All interviews and FGD guidelines were prepared and administered in English and translated into local languages where necessary (see Annexures for interview and FGD schedules). In Afghanistan, a few of the interviews and all the FGDs were conducted in the local language (with translation support provided by the UNICEF country office). In India and Bangladesh, interviews and FGDs were conducted in the local languages by the research team.

All the interviews and FGDs were held online. The entire set of interviews and FGDs took place between November 2020 and December 2021. The research process took place in parallel across the different countries.

The interviews and FGDs were transcribed and translated into English where necessary. The transcripts were then coded thematically.

1.2.2 The team

The research team from ComMutiny - The Youth Collective comprised a senior consultant, one senior team member of ComMutiny[10], two interns and two advisors. The advisors from ComMutiny included the lead of the *SParking Wellbeing* process, and a member of ComMutiny - The Youth Collective's Board of Trustees, who was also Advisor to the entire *SParking Wellbeing* project. The Regional Advisor, ADAP, UNICEF ROSA was an integral part of the team and involved in every stage of the study.

1.2.3 Ethical considerations

For adolescents under 18 years of age, informed written consent was obtained from their parents/ legal guardians through the UNICEF country offices. Informed written consent was sought from adolescents above 18 years of age via UNICEF country offices.

Consent was obtained from respondents to record the interviews and FGDs for internal purposes only. Where necessary, we assured the confidentiality of identities, to enable adolescents, staff and officials to speak openly and in constructive ways.

1.2.4 Limitations of the study

It was a small preliminary documentation undertaken online during the pandemic. In some countries, certain categories of respondents were not available. Therefore, the sample may not fully represent all the stakeholders, and this may compromise the generalizability of the study. Given that it was a qualitative assessment which elicited self-reported responses, the possibility of social desirability[11] in the answers cannot be ruled out. For the desk review, national level policies were analysed. Sub-national policies were not studied, except for Pakistan, where, in the absence of a national youth policy, we reviewed the Punjab Youth Policy as an existing, finalized sub-national policy.

1.3 Young people's right to engage and participate during humanitarian crises - International policy contexts

This section describes the key international commitments to children and young people affected by humanitarian crises. These commitments frame the international policy context for this study and are referred to in other sections of this report.

1.3.1 Commitments for children in humanitarian action

UNICEF's Core Commitments for Children (CCCs) in Humanitarian Action – a global UNICEF policy and framework for protecting the rights of children affected by humanitarian crises – places children and women at the centre of humanitarian action, as active participants rather than recipients of assistance. The CCCs adopt a human rights-based approach to programming and within this, UNICEF, with the support of its partners[12], is committed to:

- Promoting the participation of children, adolescents, women and affected populations, including in the analysis, design and monitoring of humanitarian programmes
- Advocating for the rights and voices of children and women as an integral component of

humanitarian action.
This is realized through the following commitments:
1. **Access to information and services:** Adolescent girls and boys have safe access to gender-responsive and inclusive services and programmes that promote their participation and respond to their rights and needs.
2. **Capacity development:** Adolescent girls and boys have equitable access to capacity-building opportunities, including skills development to make informed decisions on issues related to their lives, and be effective agents of change within their communities.
3. **Adolescent development and participation:** Adolescent girls and boys are engaged in the design and implementation of humanitarian programmes and peacebuilding initiatives.

1.3.2 United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250: Youth, Peace and Security[13]

UNSC Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security, unanimously adopted in 2015, underscores the role and positive contributions of young people in preventing and resolving conflict and in building and maintaining peace. The resolution encourages member states to include young people in decision making across these areas, and to ensure inclusive and responsive peace and reconciliation policies. The resolution is complemented by UNSCR 2535 that calls for the institutionalization of UNSCR 2250.

1.3.3 Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Guidelines on Working with and for Young People[14]

The IASC *Guidelines on Working with and for Young People in Humanitarian and Protracted Crises* provides one possible framework for operationalizing the CCCs, by articulating key principles of programming with and for young people, identifying strategic areas of their participation in preparedness, response and recovery, and providing entry points for working with and for young people at every stage of the humanitarian programme cycle i.e. needs assessment and analysis, strategic planning, resource mobilization, implementation and monitoring, operational peer review and evaluation.

1.3.4 Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) UNICEF Guidance[15]

The UNICEF *Guidance on Accountability to Affected Populations* (AAP) highlights practical methods for inclusive emergency response that encourages participation and empowers people, including adolescents and young people, to state their needs, to have their voices heard and to take part in

decisions that affect them. It highlights UNICEF's conviction that communities, including adolescents and young people, feel that they can advocate for children's rights and the rights of their community. It also asserts that these requirements are non-negotiable. As the AAP guidance states: "our success in achieving them will depend on making sure that UNICEF at every level – locally, nationally and globally – is listening and acting on these voices."[16]

1.3.5 Guidelines on Adolescent Participation and Civic Engagement

Essential criteria informing meaningful participation as indicated in UNICEF's *Engaged and Heard – Guidelines for Adolescent Participation and Civic Engagement*[17] include **space** (safe and inclusive opportunities that give adolescents space and time to form and express their views and opinions), **voice** (so that expressions of views are facilitated freely, in a medium of choice), **audience** (who is willing to listen to their views) and **influence** (which requires that their views are actively listened to, acted upon and they receive feedback about the outcomes and extent of their influence). The *Engaged and Heard* brochure *on Adolescent Participation in Peacebuilding and Humanitarian Action* states that acknowledging adolescents' role as rights-holders "can make a difference for fostering peace and social cohesion and improving the quality and impact of emergency response." The guidance suggests practices for adolescent participation and civic engagement in peacebuilding and/or humanitarian action.

1.3.6 UNICEF Framework on Transferable Skills[18]

UNICEF's *Global Framework on Transferable Skills* defines transferable skills as "cognitive (thinking, ability to problem-solve, make informed choices and set plans and goals), social (interacting with others including the ability to communicate, collaborate, resolve conflicts and negotiate) and emotional (understanding and regulating one's emotions, coping with stress, understanding the emotions of others and the ability to empathise with others)."[19]

In the context of humanitarian crises, transferable skills contribute significantly to adolescent wellbeing: they "support crisis-affected young people to cope with trauma and build resilience, which supports them to heal and be ready to learn."[20] The *Global Framework on Transferable Skills* also points out: "by socially and emotionally engaging with others in a healthy way, children and youth are more readily able to make meaning out of the adversity they experience and to restore purpose and hope."[21]

1.4 Positive outcomes of adolescent engagement and participation – Learning from *SParking Wellbeing*

The *SParking Wellbeing* toolkit and process was an effort to demonstrate how the international commitments towards adolescent engagement and participation could be met in practical, responsive ways. It complemented global UNICEF initiatives such as the *Expression and Innovation Toolkit*, and was designed to support adolescent-led, empathetic enquiry and action that can lead to adolescent-owned and engaged response.

The primary objective of the process was enhancing young people's capabilities as social enquirers – shaping and implementing enquiries, analysing the findings, understanding the impacts of COVID-19 through a critical lens, finding solutions, influencing decision making and in the process, their futures. The secondary objectives of the process were to help develop and demonstrate good practices and build a case for greater investment in adolescent engagement during humanitarian crises by:

- Placing adolescents at the centre of shaping dialogue, enquiry and solutions as well as policy influence around economic, political, social, ecological and psychological impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and other humanitarian contexts.
- Generating evidence on the impact of adolescent engagement and participation both on their abilities, attitudes and aspirations, and on results in humanitarian action.

Capacities that were sought to be built through the *SParking Wellbeing* process include:

- Curiosity: a genuine interest in discovery and learning.
- Empathy and self-awareness: an understanding of identities, intersectionalities, privileges and disenfranchisement.
- Critical thinking: beyond linear, cause and effect patterns.
- Research and data analysis skills: systematic investigation to identify patterns, and draw conclusions.
- Ability to interpret stories: looking beyond the obvious, applying critical enquiry to information
- Systems thinking: solving problems by identifying interrelations and interdependence.

The process enabled deep conversations and strengthened peer-to-peer and inter-generational dialogue and understanding, during a crisis that affected adolescents across countries like no other in recent history. Processes such as this, delivered

systematically and optimally, help generate aspiration-based evidence for more effective programming and policies, support a narrative shift around positive adolescent engagement and active citizenship, and help develop nuanced understandings of adolescent experiences and perceptions. Focusing on the positives and using this as a platform to build future directions, is a constructive way to address challenges, and therefore fosters social hope and optimism, which in turn contribute to wellbeing.

This adolescent-led process was supported through the capacity building of youth facilitators, a specific professional category of peer (youth) and adult youth development practitioners, and subsequently, mentorship and coaching of young people for the process. The enquiry was designed not just to inform programme and policy makers with authentic adolescent voices, but also to empower, engage and build resilience and self-discovery among adolescent enquirers and participants, with the agency to discover and apply scientific methods, and take charge of their problems by recommending potential solutions and thinking about action plans. These align well with the IASC guidelines which highlight strategic areas for meaningful participation of young people in influencing policy, building skills and capacities, addressing social norms, and providing mechanisms and opportunities for participation in humanitarian contexts.

The *SParking Wellbeing* toolkit and process helped adolescents deepen their engagement with key facets of wellbeing, including health and nutrition, relationships and security, story consumption, and education and skills to transition to employment, and begin on a journey to advocate for their rights as an essential part of humanitarian action.

The findings[22] provide a nuanced understanding of adolescent experiences during COVID-19. For example, their ability to express their personal experiences helped them highlight how power relations within households and education impacted their wellbeing, how school closures have a direct impact on educational attainment, and how their wellbeing was impacted by factors such as increased incidents of child abuse, gender-based violence, lack of contact with friends, and information overload. A deeper understanding also emerged of the impact of the pandemic on adolescents' mental health.

Recommendations made by adolescents as part of the *SParking Wellbeing* process reinforce what UNICEF's *Global Framework on Transferable Skills* highlights – that the opportunity to engage with others in constructive ways helps adolescents feel hopeful and give them a sense of purpose. They were able to offer informed solutions that would address challenges faced by adolescents, including suggestions to re-open schools where possible and create spaces for peer learning to reach those without access to education. The realization that the pandemic had a greater adverse impact on the marginalized was reflected in recommendations on how to address the digital divide, and how to provide better access to health care for minority groups. The immediacy and urgency of the need for resolutions was consistently highlighted.

It is encouraging to know that in each of the countries, government and UNICEF representatives, CSO partners and adolescents themselves recognised the benefits of adolescent participation through tools such as *SParking Wellbeing* and made recommendations on how to strengthen this engagement through policy commitments, and in practice.

1.5 Summary and conclusions

Adolescents' right to meaningfully participate in decisions that affect their lives as leaders and influencers is a fundamental right, and is a part of international commitments and guidelines for children and adolescents during humanitarian crises. It is reflected in UNICEF's Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action, UNSC Resolution 2250: Youth, Peace and Security, IASC Guidelines on Working with and for Young People in Humanitarian and Protracted Crises, UNICEF's *Engaged and Heard: Guidelines for Adolescent Participation and Civic Engagement,* and the *Engaged and Heard* brochure *Adolescent Participation in Peacebuilding and Humanitarian Action.*

To adhere to these, national public policies and UNICEF country level institutional policies must advance adolescent engagement and participation in humanitarian action related decision-making. There is sufficient anecdotal evidence to suggest that adolescent participation can positively impact their wellbeing and improve the quality of humanitarian response. The experience of the *SParking Wellbeing* process has shown that such initiatives can help build adolescent capacities and transferable skills – which are a key to their wellbeing and the wellbeing of their communities, thus contributing to their growth into resilient, responsible and empathetic adults.

CHAPTER 2
Existing policies and practices for adolescent engagement and participation in humanitarian action

In this chapter, we review selected Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), humanitarian and youth policies and practices of the five countries under study, to understand the lenses through which young people are viewed and planned for, their role in influencing policy, and their engagement in humanitarian action.

The UNICEF South Asia model for perceptions of young people describes six lenses that stakeholders wear to view young people. Youth-engaging stakeholders include youth facilitators/youth workers[23], civil society organizations, inter-governmental agencies and the government. The way we view adolescents and young people has a direct influence on the way we plan and deliver with, and for, them.

We use these lenses to analyse national humanitarian and youth policies and practice with respect to young people in humanitarian contexts.

Deficit lens: "Young people are a problem and need to be controlled"
Young people are seen as difficult and rebellious by virtue of their age, and in need of adult control. This lens has been particularly foregrounded in relation to young people in contact with the law, and even young people from low-income communities. It is also common to see this lens being applied to youth movements, and youth-led protests in global history, specifically relevant to humanitarian contexts. Often, youth policies have been shaped to address this "problem".

Protection lens: "Young people are vulnerable and inexperienced, and we need to protect them"
Our role is to protect young people. Often this also results in well-meaning restrictions on the right to participation, as adults feel youth participation can increase protection risks for adolescents and young people. The perception for the need for protection is often enhanced in humanitarian contexts. The fact that restrictions on participation often result in greater protection vulnerabilities are not often acknowledged when young people are perceived through this lens.

Beneficiary lens: "Young people are beneficiaries of our welfare. Adults know what's best for young people. They are too young and inexperienced to know"
This lens once again has a paternalistic attitude towards adolescents and young people where they do not have a space to voice their opinions on the design and delivery of the services they receive. In education, this is called the "banking model"[24] (Paulo Freire) where young people are seen as receptacles for adult-created and delivered knowledge, without young people's participation in the creation of knowledge, or the review of learning.

Instrumentalist lens: "They are productive citizens who can contribute to our economy and society"
Young people are seen as serving instrumentalist functions – serving society as productive citizens, economically and socially ("demographic dividend"), often serving development agendas not defined by them. Young people as volunteers serving the social good, young people as economic actors contributing to a better economy, and so on. The economistic lens is a specific form of the instrumentalist lens where young people are seen as contributing to the economic productivity of the nation.

Assets lens: Young people are seen as leaders, co-creators and influencers with a clear stake in the processes and strategies. Young people are assets, and their personal development and growth is the foundation of these initiatives, built on self to society paradigms that links self-discovery to social action. Young people work in ecosystems where they are able to drive their own aspirations. This lens does not often include those youth groups who, due to various reasons, are unable to be assets to society, such as those with chronic and severe physical or mental medical conditions, but who nevertheless have rights. Initiatives and policies that reflect this lens also do not often engage the public sector and duty bearers in broader policy-level resolutions.

Rights lens: Young people are explicitly seen as rights holders in relation to economic, psycho-social, educational, political and ecological rights. They exercise their rights, and receive rights-based support for autonomy and agency, and opportunities to participate in informed youth-led or youth-partnered decision making. They are consulted and engaged throughout decision making processes in communities and institutions, in both humanitarian and development settings, in order that they receive responsive services. Adults, particularly public functionaries, view themselves as duty bearers.

Design principles of assets-based and rights-based development practice include being empathetic to, and honouring, young people's feelings; promoting inter-generational solidarity and partnership; creating spaces and opportunities for young people; including the most marginalized, to strengthen their potential for agency and ownership; including diverse young people and their voices in decision making; facilitating critical thinking and reflective action; and providing safety and security[25]. It is about fostering young people's emotional and intellectual growth, and social and political education. The **rights lens** additionally implies young people's ability to influence public and community decisions that affect their lives.

An analysis of the national DRR, humanitarian response, and youth policies and plans across Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Pakistan shows that while young people have been recognized as stakeholders in disaster risk reduction and humanitarian assistance-related policies, programmes and interventions, authentic, rights-based engagement that demonstrates a youth-centric lens in policy and practice processes, is still emerging, and not yet established. While youth policies reflect more rights-based language, there is little reference to humanitarian response in most youth policies.

2.1 Afghanistan

Afghanistan has been affected by 40 years of war, natural disasters and poverty, and millions have been affected and displaced over the years. The country has the second highest number of people in emergency food insecurity in the world[26]. Conflict continues to drive extreme physical and psychological harm and civilian casualties remain staggeringly high.

Amidst all this, Afghanistan's adolescents and young people who constitute two-thirds of the country's population face challenges including economic hardships, social trauma and displacement[27]. Potential for the 'radicalization' and militarization of young minds has also been noted[28]. Being a hierarchical and patriarchal society, decision making is mainly in the hands of elders, leading to young people's exclusion from decision making processes, even on matters that affect them directly.

With households resorting to negative coping mechanisms including requiring children to marry early to offset financial burdens, decline in the nutritional status of children, and 3.9 million out-of-school children (60% of them being adolescent girls), the additional stress of the pandemic has meant not just a health crisis but a crisis which is multi-dimensional in nature. The anticipated economic fallout of the pandemic is expected to result in millions more early marriages - since families are more likely to marry off daughters in times of economic stress, to alleviate the perceived burden of caring for them. Girls' vulnerability to child marriage has therefore worsened.[29]

2.1.1 Policy

Afghanistan's *Strategic National Action Plan (SNAP) for Disaster Risk Reduction,* 2011[30] (that prevailed at the time of writing) mentions young people mainly as beneficiaries and recipients of information on disaster awareness and preparedness. It noted: "Currently, the National Disaster Management Plan has been pursuing activities to increase disaster awareness and preparedness among teachers and school children." The country's *National Youth Policy* that prevailed at the time of this report mentions youth participation in disaster management through "supporting disaster risk reduction and preparedness amongst communities at risk of natural disasters." It provides no further clarity on the nature of response, or the role of interventions in proactively building young people's resilience and empowerment.

Afghanistan National Youth Policy (ANYP) at the time of writing, on the other hand, advocated for the need for adolescent and youth viewpoints on programmes, especially those developed for them, "to be kept in mind by government and civil society organizations during design, implementation and evaluation."[31] It views youth participation as "an intrinsic part of decision making processes from the very beginning at both national and sub-national levels." In a message from government in the NYP, there is official acknowledgement that "the role of intelligent and educated youth in formulating this policy was critical and with their comprehensive and active participation, they will help the responsible entities implement this policy properly."[32]

While the youth policy upheld the rights of young people to participate in policy development, programme design, implementation, evaluation and decision making in development contexts through a **rights lens**, this was not reflected in the country's humanitarian policies and programmes. When it comes to disasters, the primary perspective that is used to view youth seems to be that of a **protection lens**.

2.1.2 Practice

The primary research undertaken through qualitative interviews with adult stakeholders from various sectors shows that in practice, adolescent engagement in humanitarian response has been largely through issue-based training on knowledge about COVID-19, and mechanisms such as the Model United Nations programmes. During the pandemic, most training and engagement efforts focused on developing adolescents' knowledge and awareness on COVID-19, encouraging them to become messengers of COVID-19 awareness in their communities and providing livelihood opportunities such as mask-making and tailoring. Additionally, young people have been provided services like online education, and opportunities to address their mental health concerns through a youth helpline. These examples indicate that adolescents have been viewed mainly through **protection and instrumentalist lenses** and not necessarily seen as rights-holders. This prevents the development of nuanced policies and practices.

For example, solutions for distance learning through online classes, radio and television lacked a proper grasp of students' ability to access books, digital devices or internet connectivity, and the impact of increased time spent at home – doing various chores (particularly for girls) or working to supplement family incomes (particularly for boys).[33]

In Afghanistan, community participation in education is formalized through school management 'Shuras' – parent-teacher-student councils which have been in place since 2012.

"During the pandemic, the student representatives organized and facilitated self-study and small group studies across the province ensuring the continued process of learning. This was organized after adolescents themselves gave their feedback on how they wanted to continue their access to education."
– Education Department official, Afghanistan[34]

The school 'Shuras' have given young people an opportunity to respond to the needs of their peers during the pandemic. This inter-generational structure is a foundation to potentially formalize the process of more substantive adolescent engagement and participation.

There are also examples of how young people contribute to, and often lead, peacebuilding efforts. Findings from a research study undertaken in 2018 by the United Network of Young Peacebuilders in four countries including Afghanistan, indicate that young people from Afghanistan are involved in organising debates on relevant topics such as human rights, extremism, migration to sharpen critical analysis and public speaking skills, book reading circles, and participate in youth groups and platforms that advocate for inclusion of young people in peace-building and decision making processes, through activities such as Marches for Peace.[35]

Another good practice that can be built on is the Adolescent and Youth Network (AYN) - a network of over 60 capacitated adolescents across five regions in Afghanistan supported by UNICEF Afghanistan, which has enabled opportunities for young people to be enquirers and influencers in their community and contributors to decision making. In some provinces, they also implemented the *SParking Wellbeing* toolkit. The Multi-Purpose Adolescent Groups (MAGS) set up in pre-COVID settings were also active in similar ways.

"They (the AYN) are active and have a good reputation in the community. They submitted several proposals (during the pandemic) which include painting with messages across the city walls or putting up an exhibition to raise awareness which we have analysed and are in the process of supporting financially if we have the budgets."
– Inter-governmental agency representative, Afghanistan[36]

2.2 Bangladesh

Bangladesh hosts one of the world's largest refugee populations; more than 900,000 Rohingya refugees living in Cox's Bazar district depend on humanitarian assistance to meet their needs. Other crises that impact the country are climate-related disasters, including floods and cyclones.[37] Climate-related emergencies result in large-scale migration of children, including adolescents, from climate-affected areas to urban areas, which is leading to increased vulnerabilities including child labour, and violence against children.[38]

Young people between the ages of 15 and 24 years make up nearly one-third of the population in the country[39], indicating the enormous potential of a young population. But, Bangladesh has the third highest prevalence of child marriage in the world, with 59 per cent girls married before they turn 18

and 22 per cent before they turn 15[40]. Young girls between the ages of 15 and 19 have an 82.3 per cent adolescent fertility rate[41]. Increased violence against women and children has also been noted during the pandemic. While there are second chance education options at primary level, secondary school age out-of-school adolescents have almost no alternative pathways for skills training beyond formal education. While access to skills education and training is a concern for girls and boys, girls' participation in education and training is extremely low at 25 per cent and alignment with the rapidly changing market demand is weak. The proportion of young people (15-24) who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) is 32 per cent, among which the proportion of girls is significantly higher.[42]

The pandemic has intensified risks both for the local population and for refugees. Among the local community, children in poor households are at risk of undernutrition due to the disruption of school feeding programmes because of school closures. There has been a noticeable increase in the percentage of households adopting consumption-based coping strategies.[43] Children in the Rohingya refugee camps struggled to access education even before the pandemic, but during the pandemic students were forced to shift to distance education or caregiver-led learning, resulting in even greater disadvantage. Educational institutions normally act as a protection mechanism, and when children are forced to stay home, they face increased risks such as domestic violence. They are also less able to receive adequate supervision, which increases risks of dangers and injuries and exposes them to neglect, risks of trafficking, and/or child labour.[44]

2.2.1 Policy

In Bangladesh's *National Plan for Disaster Management,* 2016-2020, young people are mentioned along with women and persons with disability as beneficiaries, recipients of data and capacity tools[45] and resources during a disaster. At the same time, the stated intent to promote young people's leadership is encouraging. The *National Plan for Disaster Management,* 2016-2020, states: "Adopting an inclusive approach – via multi-sector/stakeholder DRR platforms, both at national and local levels – is particularly important. It should embrace the leadership of persons with disability, women, children and youth and the significant contribution of the private sector."[46]

The National Disaster Management Council (NDMC) in Bangladesh is an inter-disciplinary and multi-sectoral body with participation from all concerned ministries, except the Youth Ministry.[47] This is perhaps indicative of the gap between policy and action. Including the Youth Ministry in the NDMC might enhance the potential of realizing the policy's intent to "embrace leadership" of young people. The vision of the Bangladesh National Youth Policy is of "Moral, humane and forward-looking youth capable of boosting prosperity and glory of Bangladesh."[48] While the policy does emphasize training young people in disaster management, there is no reference to mechanisms or activities that will facilitate their engagement. The policy primarily focuses on providing services or training to young people to work towards the nation's development, and thus seems to be viewing young people primarily through an **instrumentalist lens**.

Currently, the country is for the first time developing a National Adolescent Strategy with financial support from UNICEF. In this policy, Bangladesh will focus on five areas concerning adolescents – health, wellbeing, nutrition, transition to work and participation in decision making processes. According to S. M. Latif, Deputy Secretary and Project Director, Ministry of Women and Child Affairs (MoWCA), this policy has been informed by good practices and strategies adopted by neighbouring countries and by the voices of adolescents.[49]

The strategy, which was in the final stages of development at the time the COVID-19 pandemic began, has incorporated a humanitarian crisis component.

"Some of the members during a meeting of the technical committee developing the strategy raised the need for incorporating COVID-19 in the strategy. However, adolescent participation has not yet been clearly mentioned because following the approval of the policy, the Costed Action Plan will have to be developed which is the document that will detail the processes of adolescent participation in humanitarian action."
– Muhammad Omar Faruque Akhund, Adolescent Empowerment Officer, UNICEF[50]

A draft Education Act is also available, though the research team did not have access to the document at the time of the research. The Act can hopefully benefit from the learnings of this present study.

One key drawback is the absence of references in policy documents to the large refugee populations in Bangladesh.

While existing policies primarily view participation from **protection and beneficiary lenses**, there is an effort to integrate rights-based approaches as part of humanitarian action in the National Adolescent Strategy under development.

2.2.2 Practice

Bangladesh has an extensive network of almost 5000 adolescent clubs across the country. By the end of 2019, UNICEF had set up around 2,500 learning centres, each equipped with a handwashing station providing soap and clean water, which made it possible to reach thousands of Rohingya children with lessons on good health and hygiene [51]. Although these centres shut down during COVID-19, children had already been prepared for hygiene safety, and became influencers in their own families during the pandemic.

Young people from these clubs demonstrated leadership through peer-to-peer engagement during the pandemic, reflective of how such a structure can provide opportunities for them to take initiative during a crisis.

"I had trained a peer leader in life skills education, and she took it upon herself to develop an existing app into Bangla to enable other young people to benefit from life skills education – how to get births registered, information on child marriage, trafficking, and so on."

– Joeita Jafrin, Child Rights Facilitator, Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, Bangladesh[52]

UNICEF worked with these adolescent clubs to raise awareness on COVID-19 mitigation by transforming the clubs to virtual clubs. Virtual club members reached out to other adolescents, as well as to community members and parents. UNICEF supported the clubs in implementing the Standardized Adolescent Empowerment Package (SAEP)[53] and gender transformative life skills education with Rohingya children and adolescents in the camps, and with other adolescents in the host community. They also increased adolescents' knowledge by disseminating messages on the pandemic and the ill effects of child marriage, SRHR and access to health and other services.

In Cox's Bazar, UNICEF, with support from the Instrument Contributing to Development and Peace (IcSP) has initiated the implementation of the 'MeWeUs' curriculum that aims to equip adolescents and youth with skills focused on social cohesion in their communities and enabling them to become leaders or agents of change. The curriculum is a component of the `Social Cohesion and Resilience' curriculum.[54]

In Cox's Bazar, community engagement programmes are being implemented by UNICEF and its partners through the Multipurpose Child and Adolescent Centres that have been set up. Adolescents are provided opportunities to participate in the design and implementation of these programmes: the "adolescent-friendly programming provides a fun and engaging way for them to build their competencies and participate in community decision making and action."[55] Through the Social Hubs established here in 2019, adolescents could play a role in promoting social cohesion and peacebuilding within and among communities. This case study clearly demonstrates the use of the **assets lens**, with efforts being made to embed a **rights-based lens**.

The National Alliance of Humanitarian Actors (NAHAB), a humanitarian assistance organization, strongly recognizes young people's capabilities, and typically involves adolescents as volunteers in delivering surveys and programmes. As stated by the Chairperson of NAHAB Ehsanur Rahman:[56]

"In all disaster responses, the young take lead and come to the frontline. We have found that adolescents and youth are proactive and tech savvy, and it is these skills that enable young people to undertake quick needs assessments that will contribute to designing interventions."

In order for youth-led and informed initiatives to be genuinely rights-based, young people engaging in these initiatives need to be able to independently define and implement assessments, initiatives and reviews that are informed by youth interests, and their aspirations need to inform policy through intentional participation mechanisms.

Interviews with stakeholders revealed that while there are clear steps on initiatives demonstrating an **assets lens**, embedding a genuinely **rights-based lens** is still work-in-progress. Support to adolescent clubs and the inclusion of diverse groups of adolescents as members, will determine the efficacy and scope for them to influence policy. Specific processes and programmes that will help build adolescent capacities to understand issues and have an informed voice in the resolution of these issues would be critical.

Overall, Bangladesh's humanitarian and disaster practices see young people through a **beneficiary or instrumentalist lens**.

2.3 Bhutan

The introduction of the innovative and forward-looking 'Gross National Happiness Index' in Bhutan way back in 1972 saw development as a holistic process. Bhutan's humanitarian crisis comes from a range of threats and challenges caused by climate change. While parts of the country experience heavy rainfall leading to flash floods and landslides

due to melting Himalayan glaciers, other parts of Bhutan face water scarcity as streams dry up. Bhutan's primary income-generating industries – hydropower, agriculture and tourism – are all negatively affected by these natural disasters.[57] COVID-19 has compounded the vulnerabilities of climate change and other factors, with a particular impact on its young people, who make up about a third of the population.[58]

When the pandemic led to school closures, learning was disrupted for almost 180,000 children of whom 74,726 also missed out on regular school meals. When classes 9-12 resumed in July, 7902 students did not return to school. During the pandemic, 684 children (258 females) and 327 adults (120 females) availed remote counselling and psychosocial support.[59]

2.3.1 Policy

Adolescents and young people are not specifically mentioned in the country's *Disaster Risk Management Strategy*, except in reference to how they can contribute by generating awareness during a crisis.[60]

On the other hand, the draft *National Youth Policy*, being prepared by the Ministry of Education, Government of Bhutan, 2020, foregrounds the need for adolescent participation in decision making processes.[61] The current policy, *National Youth Policy,* 2011 was reviewed by young people who also informed the recommendations.

"The previous version was adult-led. In the revised version, young people are a critical partner in terms of reviewing the policy."
- Sonam Wangchuk, Youth and Adolescent Development Officer, UNICEF Bhutan[62]

The draft NYP states that "*youth shall be consulted and engaged in any Government policy planning, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation, and programmes concerning them – at national and local levels – ensuring the engagement of youth with disabilities, young women, young monks and nuns, rural youth, and out-of-school youth.*"

The draft policy also recognizes that "*young people's participation and civic engagement is fundamental to their wellbeing, especially on matters that affect them. Acknowledging young people as change-makers, and valuing their participation in the nation's progress, are essential aspects of good governance and GNH (Gross National Happiness).*"[63] This is demonstrative of the country's resolve to create mechanisms for enabling youth voices to influence policy, including a resolve to include the voices of marginalized groups.[64]

While this is reflective of an **assets lens**, though not fully a **rights lens**, in the context of emergency situations the policy seems to view them mainly from a **beneficiary lens**, that is, providing 'support measures and services' to fulfil their needs.

2.3.2 Practice

Stakeholders including government and civil society have focused on priming adolescents to be reflective and learn from their immediate surroundings, and this has supported them to develop a critical perspective of society and of themselves.

Young people are encouraged to volunteer with the army and police through the 'Desuung Integrated Training Programme' launched in 2011. Volunteers are initiated into basic disaster response, and the country sees this as preparation for them to take responsibility and respond during humanitarian crises.[65] Volunteers are also involved with hygiene and water management in communities. While participation is encouraged through young people's engagement in disseminating information and messages, this volunteerism is seen as primarily contributing to nation-building and is more aligned with an **instrumentalist, 'problem-solver' lens**.

It is noteworthy that despite the challenges of the pandemic, efforts have been made to ensure that an enabling environment exists for youth leadership to be developed and realised.

"We have proposed a budget to conduct youth leadership training in two centres, where young people can bring up issues associated with the pandemic and work on them. The programme will allow young people to submit proposals for which the government will provide a budget and enable young people to take the lead in executing them."
- Reena Thapa, Career Education and Counselling Division, Government of Bhutan[66]

With 8000 volunteers as part of its Young Volunteers in Action (Y-VIA) network, Bhutan's Youth Development Fund has ensured that their approach with young people exemplifies an asset lens, ensures adolescent growth and optimizes their potential as change agents.

"From among members of our volunteer group, a girl submitted a proposal to the Youth Development Fund to facilitate online classes for young people in rural areas. She succeeded in mobilizing almost 30 young people whom she taught at community centres while observing social distancing norms. Some of our volunteers have also developed

entrepreneurial skills by picking up floriculture, preparing and selling homemade chips."
- Jigme Thinley, Programme Coordinator, Youth Development Fund (YDF)[67]

Related more to climate adaptability and reviving rural economies, YDF began the My Happy Village programme, which has 21 villages in a trail. One of the critical learnings of this youth-engaged project is that what young people wanted in their villages in order to return were not the stereotypical modernity, but rather 'human connection', and expertise, such as in micro-finance. Part of this project is the programme for 'earth ambassadors,' where young people discover the natural world around them, the role of water, the earth and the importance of bio-diversity. They also discover, as a carbon negative country, the effects of the world's actions on global warming and learn about the agricultural practices in their communities,[68] critical awareness that will lead to a generation of climate-change-aware young leaders. Support for the replication of such good practices is vital.

Rights-based practices are also being developed. Civil society organizations have focused on creating processes and interventions that prepare young people to take on democratic leadership roles and have created spaces for them to share their perspectives and voice with policy makers.

"We have created platforms to engage young people to present their voice to stakeholders and in the process, develop confidence in being able to share original thoughts and ideas that can influence policy. We have focused on building the capacity of the youth first, providing them that platform to voice, and then enabling them to act on issues. This framework is helpful for sustained engagement, not just involving youth based on your convenience, a tendency we also have a lot of."
– Chencho Lhamu, Director, Programme and Development, Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy[69]

Although participation of young people has not largely been envisaged from a humanitarian response and management point of view, considering the climate change threats to the country, some evidence exists, of creating a generation of climate-friendly leaders. There are indications of ongoing, sustained engagement with young people to help build their leadership and involve them at the stage of policy development at national and local levels, therefore moving towards a **rights lens**.

2.4 India

In India, 27 out of its 29 states and seven union territories are exposed to recurrent natural hazards such as cyclones, earthquakes, landslides, floods and droughts. In addition, almost one third of the country is also affected by civil strife.[70]

An Asian Development Bank (ADB) and International Labour Organization (ILO) report 2020 titled *Tackling the COVID-19 Youth Employment Crisis in Asia and the Pacific* estimates job losses for 4.1 million youth in India.[71] A survey of 23 states among school children (grades 1 to 12) conducted in April 2020, found that only 43.9 per cent of them have access to smartphones, another 43.9 per cent of them have access to basic phones, while a significant 12 per cent do not have access to either smartphones or basic phones.[72]

According to data reported by Childline India Foundation, a nodal agency of the Union Ministry of Women and Child Development protecting children in distress, out of 92,203 interventions made during the lockdown, some 5,584 (35 per cent) were related to child marriages. Of this number, 97 per cent were minors (18 years and below) and 91 per cent were girls.[73] During the lockdown, the ongoing anti-child marriages programmes were disrupted.

2.4.1 Policy

India's disaster management policy, as laid out in the *National Disaster Management Plan* ;, seems to view young people through **beneficiary and instrumentalist lenses**, with yet some way to go in establishing **assets and rights lenses**.[74] The policy focuses on training youth for community-based disaster management – floods, earthquakes, fire and other calamities. To move beyond merely a notional representation of adolescent and youth participation, further specifics are required on training provision, and an acute understanding of the vulnerabilities and aspirations of young people, including systematic and inclusive channels to enable their voice in developing and implementing disaster management policy and practice.

The *National Youth Policy* of India has seen three revisions – in 1988, 2003 and 2014. The theme of 'disaster management' appears for the first time only in the *National Youth Policy 2014*, where the word 'disaster' is mentioned, with reference to organizations like the Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS), National Service Scheme (NSS) and the National Cadet Corps (NCC), as bodies involving young people in "various initiatives like rural development, environment protection, blood donation, immunization, disaster management etc."[75] This policy continues to view young people from an **instrumentalist lens** – as those who work towards "'fostering national and social values among the youth and developing a sense of responsibility towards the nation". These

youth bodies have great potential to foreground the narrative of youth participation, but their engagement presently is largely service-oriented.

While policies recognize young people's dynamism and have viewed them as a resource in responding to crises, there is no documented evidence of how their voices are informing policy, how the policies are being implemented, and what mechanisms there are for their participation in planning and review of policy implementation.

2.4.2 Practice

While there is a positive intent to engage young people and hear their voices, the COVID-19 experience showed that there is no systematic or planned engagement of young people, even as they participated in webinars, consultations, workshops, trainings, etc. Unless there are policy commitments and sustained mechanisms that allow adolescents and young people to engage as leaders, co-creators and influencers in humanitarian response, and regularly participate and inform revisions of policies and interventions, young people's ability to influence policies and programmes will remain mere rhetoric.

As part of this study, a government representative interviewed gave several examples of how members of youth clubs volunteered during crises, including the pandemic. However, their voluntary role was limited to the implementation phase of the humanitarian programme cycle. By developing policies that promote their involvement in the other stages of the humanitarian cycle such as needs assessment, programme design, and evaluation, the focus can be shifted to **assets and rights lenses**.

"We have 14,000 youth clubs in the state (of Punjab) and they have been involved in cleaning roads and drains, and debris clearing during disasters; and during COVID-19, for spreading awareness."
- D.P.S Kharbanda, Director of Sports and Youth Affairs, Government of Punjab[76]

Awareness of these limitations, and intentions to move to more concrete forms of adolescent and youth engagement in policy, is however present.

"During national Adolescent Health Day, we conducted webinars with young people where we learnt that limited access to mental health services (during the pandemic) was a huge gap. I would say there is no direct way to listen to adolescents, so these virtual dialogues helped."
- Dr Zoya Ali Rizvi, Deputy Commissioner, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India[77]

Many civil society organizations are adopting **asset and rights lenses** to understand adolescents' and young people's aspirations and enable young people to take leadership roles in development contexts, and these efforts have borne fruit during crises such as COVID-19. Many lessons for replication can be learnt through these practices.

"In our day-to-day engagement with young people, we ensure that they play an active role in the design and development of our programmes. We enable a dialogue so that we reach a consensus and then move forward."
- Sayantani Basak, Programme Officer, Prantakatha[78]

Such mechanisms incorporating their involvement in design and development ensure young people's participation and ownership of initiatives during humanitarian crises.

Another example is ComMutiny - The Youth Collective's 'Be A Jagrik'[79] project that enables young people to reflect on personal and social challenges through constitutional literacy and child rights awareness, develop capacities and take real-world actions to address these. Young people are capacitated to develop 21st century skills of decision making, communication, empathy, critical thinking and negotiation, and enabled to be active citizens in their communities. Many of these Jagriks were involved in relief and recovery efforts during the second wave, and this is another example of how investing in young people in development contexts often leads to them being active in humanitarian situations, as they proactively choose to volunteer and lead social actions during crisis situations such as the pandemic.

Civil society organizations such as Goonj[80] have always viewed young people as central to their work as volunteers. It is these young people who are leading the organization's humanitarian action work.

"We have enough examples where someone came as a volunteer at a young age, studied further and returned to lead a new chapter of our organization. I don't remember ever hiring a senior person in any domain of our work. It has always been a volunteer, who has returned."
- Anshu Gupta, Director, Goonj[81]

Inter-governmental organizations have largely relied on government supported youth programmes and civil society networks to enable participation of young people during the pandemic.

"We have engaged youth networks like the NYKS, NSS, Bharat Scouts and Guides across the country

during the pandemic, recognizing these networks as potential for expanding and taking initiatives to scale. The opportunity that we saw was that the NSS and NYKS and large-scale youth networks of even civil society organizations, were relying on young people, on their digital connect, networking capabilities, like never before, to disseminate information –evidence-based information – around the COVID-19 pandemic and so, the reliance on youth networks definitely rose."

- Manasa Priya Vasudevan, Adolescent and Youth Development Specialist, UNICEF India[82]

Generation Unlimited (GenU) is a global multi-sector partnership in which UNICEF plays a key role, to meet the urgent need for expanded education, training and employment opportunities, for young people aged 10 to 24.[83] GenU's India chapter YuWaah's vision is to connect young people to aspirational socio-economic opportunities and engage them as changemakers. To achieve this, YuWaah has set up Young People's Action Team (Y-PAT)[84] as the primary youth partner, which in turn informs the amplification of YuWaah's vision.

UNICEF is supporting Y-PAT members to design and implement their own projects to enhance their potential as changemakers. For instance, a Y-PAT member who is a refugee is creating capacity building sessions for her community on enhancing 21st century skills, especially amplification, communication and advocacy for civic engagement.

The focus is on providing these Y-PAT members with safe supportive spaces and time to form and express their views in ways that are most suitable to them and a willing audience of relevant stakeholders, who will actively listen to and consider their views seriously while making decisions. While Y-PAT is a structure set up to support development situations, the impact will very likely cascade into emergency contexts as well.

A specific response by UNICEF India to the COVID-19 context was the 'Young Warriors' movement, launched in May 2021, when India was amid the pandemic's deadly second surge. 'Young Warriors' is a multi-stakeholder coalition to catalyze a pan-India movement to engage five million young people to lead action against COVID-19, and impact 50 million people. Capacity building sessions are undertaken with these young warriors, to prepare them to participate in relief and response initiatives undertaken by UNICEF.

A range of vibrant CSOs in India reflect a distinct **rights lens** in their work, with an even broader group of CSOs developing asset-based approaches to

youth development. Inter-governmental agencies seem to predominantly adopt an **assets lens**, with some move towards a **rights lens** by facilitating participation of young people in policy advocacy, programme design and implementation. However, major public sector trends continue to reflect an **instrumentalist lens**, where young people are seen as serving broader national development and humanitarian agendas.

2.5 Pakistan

Pakistan is affected by recurrent natural disasters and an ongoing nutrition crisis. The country also hosts the second-largest number of refugees in the world, predominantly from Afghanistan. Vulnerabilities are exacerbated by pervasive poverty and inadequate access to basic services, including safe water, sanitation and health care, in many communities. Women and girls also face grave protection risks, including gender-based violence and harmful practices such as early and forced marriage.[85]

Sixty-four per cent of the country's population is under 30 years of age. A survey revealed that 29 out of 100 young people are illiterate and only 6 per cent have more than 12 years of education. According to a UNDP study, 42 million children are now out of school, while 17 million children under five are missing routine vaccinations. An additional 2.45 million people – beyond the existing 40 million – now suffer food insecurity.[86]

The impact of COVID-19 on the country's population has been significant. Crimes against women and children have seen a 200 per cent rise since the outbreak. Globally, Pakistan is expected to have the highest number of school drop-outs due to the pandemic.[87]

2.5.1 Policy

Young people are mentioned in the *National Disaster Response Plan* (NDRP), 2010, prepared by the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA). The document mentions young people in the context of organizing training on first aid, search and rescue efforts for government departments, emergency response activities and organizing awareness programmes.[88]

In Pakistan's *National Disaster Management Plan, Main Volume,* 2012[89], young people in colleges and universities have been identified as recipients of training modules on fire prevention, rescue, bomb reconnaissance/disposal, casualty handling. The plan does not however mention modalities for the delivery of training. While it is encouraging that young people have been identified as a separate

cohort, they are still seen through an **instrumentalist lens.**

Pakistan's *National Disaster Management Plan: Instructor's guide on Community Based Disaster Management,* 2012[90] states: "The Community Disaster Risk Management Committee needs to be structured to allocate clear responsibilities to the members and to relate their responsibilities. If there are existing groups within the community such as youth groups or women's groups, the Community Disaster Risk Management Committee can be structured by utilizing such existing groups." The term "utilizing" indicates an instrumentalist approach to working with these groups. However, the plan does not indicate how youth groups will be identified and be made a part of the community structure.

The *National Disaster Management Plan, Volume I: Human Resource Development Plan,* 2012,[91] prepared by the NDMA, which focuses on capacity building through training and research for disaster preparedness of stakeholder groups, makes no mention of adolescents and young people.

The NDMA prepares a *National Monsoon Contingency Plan* (NMCP) each year, which lays down guidelines for all stakeholders for mitigation of likely hazards, preparedness, and an effective and timely response. While the NMCP 2021's[92] stated aim is "preparing guidelines for relevant stakeholders," adolescents and youth have not been mentioned anywhere in this plan.

In 2009, the government approved a *National Youth Policy.* However, following the dissolution of the Ministry of Youth Affairs a year later, youth matters were devolved to the four provinces of Punjab, Sindh, Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and the two territories of Gilgit Baltistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir. Punjab is the only province with a youth policy[93]. Sindh province has a draft youth policy, 2012, while the other regions and territories are engaged in consultation and drafting processes.

2.5.2 Practice

Pakistan has the world's second-highest number of out-of-school children, an estimated 44 per cent of children aged 5 to 16[94]. It is expected that due to the pandemic, another one million children will drop out from primary and secondary education. Benevolent and hierarchical, as opposed to empowerment-focussed, mindsets of adult stakeholders that restrict participation of young people and their access to education, especially those of girls, exacerbate this problem.

Recognizing this, CSOs and inter-governmental agencies seem to be focusing on capacity building and training of adult stakeholders such as teachers and parents, to create enabling spaces for young people's continued learning.

"We began a programme called 'Sayani Saheli' (wise friend) to focus on girls' education and livelihood training. This has been running since 2018. We have reached almost 35,000 girls. We identified girls in the neighbourhood who had dropped out of school in the past two years, and this has become a second chance programme of sorts."

– Baela Raza Jamil, CEO of
Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi (ITA)[95]

Our study shows that young people's engagement during humanitarian crises was largely as participants in awareness programmes, life skills training, and as recipients of relief efforts. Feedback on the success of all programmes targeting young people was mostly sought from parents and teachers, rather than young people themselves. Therefore, they do not seem to have a voice in either designing the programmes or at the time of evaluation.

Youth led initiatives such as the Youth Alliance for Human Rights (YAHR),[96] Khadim ul Khalq,[97] and organizations such as Islamic Relief Worldwide[98] are either directly working in communities to promote peace and social cohesion through dialogue or supporting the formation of village youth groups to do this.

Inter-governmental agencies with local partner support have created spaces that have enabled youth participation, which is a conscious effort to break away from tradition and an attempt to create opportunities for young people to take initiative.

"During one of our programmes in this pandemic, we had a 'youth innovation challenge' that saw young people submit innovative ideas, for which we made available some seed funding. They are now undertaking those projects."

– Erum Burki, Education Officer,
UNICEF, Pakistan[99]

Other activities organized by them include creating modules and trainings for adolescents to hold inter-generational dialogue in community spaces, enabling young people to identify issues, take up social action projects, and advocate for their own rights by engaging with duty bearers.

The Pakistan School Safety Framework (PSSF) is an initiative by the National Disaster Management Authority, Government of Pakistan with support from UNICEF. It aims at providing training in risk

reduction to engage adolescents at the middle school and secondary school levels. Children and young people are also a mandatory part of the School Safety Committee and are engaged in monitoring and evaluating self-assessment processes. The main role of an internal evaluators' team is to check the effectiveness of safety procedures and processes, reduce vulnerabilities and to ensure that the school meets the minimum standards which render a school 'satisfactorily safe' for its functioning against any disaster.

"PSSF is a project which sees youth as agents of change and partners in creating the change we need to address the problems. The target group is younger family members, because evidence supports that they are the best change agents, both in the homes and in communities. Through them, the information gets passed on to communities, building awareness of measures that need to be taken before, during and after major natural and human induced risks to people. The trainings develop skills and are a preparation for safety, security, for mitigating and effectively responding to any unforeseen natural or human-induced disaster. In addition, having young people voice their opinions provides unique insights into the strengths and weaknesses of the programme, and proves that they can be partners for positive change if given meaningful opportunities."

– Masooma Qazilbash, Programme Specialist (DRR), UNICEF Pakistan[100]

The Girl Guides and Boy Scouts also play their part during humanitarian situations in organizing and guiding people in crisis situations and supporting with traffic and security management during key events.

Initiatives such as Tiger Force,[101] set up to respond to COVID-19, is largely delivered by young people, and assists district administration and local government in relief activities.

There is a laudable focus provided by government, civil society and inter-governmental agencies on education as a priority strategy and setting in place mechanisms and strategies for engagement in education settings, reflecting **instrumentalist and assets lenses**. Their engagement and participation in humanitarian policymaking and programme design, implementation, and evaluation is limited at present, with greater limitations set on girls.

2.6 Summary and conclusions

UNICEF's Adolescent Development and Participation (ADAP) section is committed to mainstreaming adolescent-centric, rights-based policies and programmes in humanitarian crises, in line with

UNICEF's Core Commitments for Children (CCCs) in humanitarian settings and IASC *Guidelines on Working with and for Adolescents and Young People in Humanitarian and Protracted Crises*. This requires that adolescents have a voice, can influence policies and programmes, and are at the centre of decisions that affect them.

The policy analysis for this study reveals that most policies for young people are developed from a **beneficiary or instrumentalist lens**. While in a few countries young people have contributed to policy development, in most contexts, mechanisms for their engagement and participation in policy development and review and in development and humanitarian response are not clearly laid out. There is even less evidence existing for how the most marginalized, who are the least buffered by unresponsive policy, are involved in policy processes.

Youth policies of most countries on the other hand reflect more assets or rights-based approaches. In terms of practice, evidence indicates that while there are several examples of a youth-centric development lens, such as the *SParking Wellbeing* process, the *Adolescent Kit for Expression and Innovation*, DRR initiatives, and a few others, there was no systematic engagement of adolescents using an adolescent-centric, rights-based approach, during the COVID-19 crisis.

It was also noted how different groups of stakeholders may apply different lenses to planning humanitarian action.

The matrix on the following page provides a summary of the different lenses that stakeholders including civil society, inter-governmental agencies, governments, and youth workers wear, through which they view young people's engagement and participation in humanitarian action.

To better integrate the assets and rights-based lenses into policies and programmes, stakeholders could ask the following questions:

- How are young people involved? As leaders? Co-Creators? Influencers?
- Are young people demonstrating their agency in decisions around any of the above forms of engagement in humanitarian response?
- Do the varied interventions create empowering spaces for young people to negotiate and have a say in decision making? Is the engagement of young people building their transferable skills and providing access to opportunities that enable them to emerge as leaders in their own right?

Table 2: Lenses of Viewing Young People

Policy and Practice	Lenses of Viewing Young People
Afghanistan	
DRR Policy: Strategic National Action Plan, 2011	**Protection lens:** The policy views young people mainly as recipients of information on disaster awareness and preparedness
Youth Policy: National Youth Policy, 2014	**Rights lens:** It views youth participation as rights holders and an intrinsic part of decision making processes from the very beginning at both national and sub-national levels
Practice of adolescent participation in humanitarian action	**Protection and instrumentalist lenses:** During COVID 19, young people were primarily engaged in income generation activities like mask-making and tailoring, and provided with health awareness. **Assets and rights lenses:** Young people across 5000 adolescent clubs exemplified leadership through peer-to-peer engagement during the pandemic. Engagement with decision makers was also enabled.
Bangladesh	
DRR Policy: National Plan for Disaster Management, 2016-2020	**Beneficiary lens:** Young people are mentioned along with women and persons with disability as recipients of tools, resources and capacities during a crisis.
Youth Policy: National Youth Policy, 2017	**Instrumentalist lens:** Focus is on providing services or training to young people to work towards the nation's development, without specifying mechanisms for facilitating youth-centric engagement and participation.
Youth Policy: National Youth Policy, 2017	**Potential assets and rights lenses:** Draft National Adolescent Strategy being developed for the first time in the country. The focus is likely to be on health, wellbeing, nutrition, transition to work, and participation in decision making processes.
Practice of adolescent participation in humanitarian action	**Protection and instrumentalist lenses:** During COVID 19, young people were primarily engaged in income generation activities like mask-making and tailoring, and provided with health awareness. **Assets and rights lenses:** Young people across 5000 adolescent clubs exemplified leadership through peer-to-peer engagement during the pandemic. Engagement with decision makers was also enabled.
Bhutan	
DRR Policy: Disaster Risk Management Strategy	**Protection and Beneficiary lenses:** Reflected in the intent to provide 'support measures and services' to fulfil young people's needs and generating awareness during a crisis
Youth Policy: National Youth Policy (draft) 2020	**Assets and rights lenses:** Foregrounds the need for adolescent and youth participation in decision making processes.
Practice of adolescent participation in humanitarian action	**Assets lens:** There is thrust on ongoing, sustained engagement with young people to help build their leadership in development contexts. This then capacitates them to intervene and act during a crisis.
India	
DRR Policy: National Disaster Management Plan, 2019	**Instrumentalist lens:** Focus is on training youth for community-based disaster management. Mechanisms for their participation in decision making are not mentioned.
Youth Policy: National Youth Policy, 2014	**Instrumentalist lens:** The emphasis is on fostering national and social values and developing a sense of responsibility towards the nation, among young people.
Practice of adolescent participation in humanitarian action	**Instrumentalist and assets lenses:** There are several examples of practices which focus on the needs and aspirations of young people and involve them in programme implementation. Their involvement in programming across the development-humanitarian nexus and ability to rise to the occasion has been of critical value in situations of emergency and natural disasters. Evidence of representative engagement in influencing broader policy decisions is less clear, but a move towards a rights approach is clearly possible.

Policy and Practice	Lenses of Viewing Young People
Pakistan	
DRR Policy: National Disaster Management Plan, 2012	**Beneficiary lens:** Young people in colleges and universities as recipients of training modules on fire prevention, rescue, bomb reconnaissance/disposal, casualty handling.
Youth Policy: The country has no national youth policy	**Rights lens:** Punjab Youth Policy that policies, strategies and programmes would be designed with and for young people, and that young people would be involved in decision making and as active participants in their own development. Sindh province has a draft youth policy and other states and territories are in the process of developing one.
Practice of adolescent participation in humanitarian action	**Protection and Instrumentalist lenses:** Young people are recipients of education services which is a priority in the country; their engagement in humanitarian crises is primarily as volunteers who raise awareness. **Rights lens:** In the Pakistan School Safety Framework (PSSF), an initiative supported by UNICEF, young people are seen as agents of change and partners in decision making.

III CHAPTER 3
Translating policy into practice: The tools

The previous chapter looked at humanitarian policy and initiatives through six youth development lenses. We highlighted the rights lens as the one that promotes the most evolved forms of adolescent engagement and participation. It proactively engages with them as rights holders. In this chapter, we look at the tools and methods that enable rights-based practices. We focus specifically on the *SParking Wellbeing* process, and its benefit to young people's lives and responsive humanitarian action. These benefits include informed adolescent and youth-led decisions regarding their contribution to humanitarian outcomes, through social action. We also describe existing strategies and tools such as UNICEF's *Adolescent Kit for Expression and Innovation*, U-Report, and country specific DRR tools and strategies for engagement of young people during humanitarian crises. These tools are being used across different sectors, by various stakeholders.

3.1 Enhancing adolescent engagement and participation through *SParking Wellbeing*

This tool was designed and piloted in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic, by the ADAP section at UNICEF ROSA, in partnership with ComMutiny - The Youth Collective. The purpose was to facilitate adolescents to go beyond merely being subjects of enquiries and instead play a more proactive role as enquirers. It would further facilitate them to be influencers, in positively changing their realities and influencing change. The tool was designed to enable adolescents to identify personal and societal concerns, understand aspects of wellbeing, and realize their potential as changemakers and influencers. Across countries, four facets of adolescent wellbeing were enquired into – education and transition to employment, health and nutrition, relationships and security, and story consumption. Bhutan introduced a fifth facet – substance misuse.

A total of 266 (adolescents and youth) enquirers conducted the appreciative enquiry as a part of the pilot. They collected responses from approximately 3200 adolescents and adults across the five countries. They were mentored by 41 adult youth facilitators. Facilitators mobilized and trained adolescents who in turn administered the tool with other adolescents, caregivers, community leaders and duty bearers.

The UNICEF ROSA and ComMutiny - The Youth Collective supported the country offices and facilitators prior to and during the roll-out of the tool. The *SParking Wellbeing* process was undertaken with partners who had a shared vision for and expertise in adolescent empowerment and participation.

The journey culminated with a sharing of findings, recommendations and social change ideas designed by the adolescent enquirers themselves. Processes such as these can help to create a narrative shift around positive adolescent engagement and active citizenship – by enabling dialogue around issues that impact young people, and by the actions that they take.

Perspectives of adolescents and adults involved with the *SParking Wellbeing* process have revealed that the tool gave adolescents hope at a stressful time in their lives – by giving them an opportunity to meet and listen to others, obtain different viewpoints, find time to reflect and think about their futures, and to act and influence change.

"I felt like a reporter in this (appreciative enquiry) journey. This also helped me reflect on what I want to become when I grow up. The journey helped me gain perspectives on the possibilities that lie ahead for me… The lockdown meant that I was not aware of how people were dealing with this pandemic. However, through this opportunity, I got to speak, for example to two adolescents who were unable to continue their education, and was able to facilitate their access to continued learning through tuition classes."
– Adolescent enquirer, Female, India[102]

"A process such as this (adolescent-led appreciative enquiry) allows them (adolescents) to think about themselves, about their community and environment, and also ask themselves what their role in society is. And they also think, what are some solutions they could probably come up with, based on the experience of listening to others, rather than identifying solutions only by themselves."
– CSO representative, Afghanistan[103]

FGDs conducted with adolescent enquirers and adolescent respondents revealed that other than for selective instances such as the use of the *SParking Wellbeing* process, most adolescents had no opportunity to engage in processes that

allowed them to be heard during the pandemic, although many decisions taken during this specific humanitarian crisis directly affected them. This was true across genders and geographies.

The toolkit has the advantage of being used both online and offline, allowing for expanded participation, community engagement and reach, while ensuring deep involvement and sustained impact. In the rest of this chapter, we will highlight the positive impact and potential of this tool in enhancing engagement and participation during humanitarian crises, drawing from the experience of using it during the COVID-19 pandemic.

3.1.1 Adolescent capacities built through the *SParking Wellbeing* process: What adolescents say

The IASC Youth Guidelines highlight how the ability to express one's opinions, analyse information and take decisions during humanitarian and protracted crises settings is a critical component of humanitarian programming. It leads to adolescent and youth empowerment in emergency contexts.

The *SParking Wellbeing* process gave adolescent respondents the opportunity to express their opinions to their peers. It enabled enquirers to build skills to analyse the information they collected and use this information to take decisions regarding actions they would take to respond to the pandemic. The toolkit encouraged adolescents to speak to adults, and this inter-generational conversation helped negotiate rigid age-based and gender-based hierarchies, to begin a conversation on young people's needs and priorities.

During the FGDs, adolescents shared that the opportunity to speak to their peers and adults enabled them to understand societal concerns better. Most adolescents believed that their engagement with the tool and research process enabled them to develop critical inquiry skills, and produce evidence that enabled a grounded and nuanced understanding of the impact of COVID-19. They were excited about the possibility of applying the process of appreciative enquiry in all spheres of their lives – family, school, friends and community.

Enhancing capacities

Adolescents spoke of enhanced capacities of confidence, empathy, teamwork, and being able to learn about issues in society, systems and communities.

"Before we begin any activity, we think of questions such as `How am I supposed to do it?', `Why should I do it?' ... The appreciative enquiry process was

stimulating for me...Besides learning abundant skills in this programme, the process helped me solve problems (`How am I supposed to do it?' and `Why should I do it?'). Most importantly, participating in this programme taught me to think and run such programmes in my own community. It helped me communicate with different people, interview different people, and ask them about how they are coping with their problems. I feel the process enabled me to become a critical thinker..."
    – Adolescent enquirer, Female, Afghanistan[104]

"Earlier, I never used to talk with people that much because I never used to go out into the community. (This process) enabled us to ask questions...I gained the confidence to be able to talk to people in my community."
    – Adolescent enquirer, Male, Bhutan[105]

Some participants spoke of how interactions with other adolescents gave them confidence, and a sense of belonging to a peer group. Working in groups enabled them to strengthen their skills of teamwork, collaborative decision making and negotiation, which are essential 21st century skills.

"I have few friends and I am an introvert. They don't really call me out... But this (the *SParking Wellbeing* process) had a lot of teamwork. And we could really connect with each other. I (would) go out occasionally. This process made me do that."
    – Adolescent enquirer, Male, Bhutan[106]

Understanding the community

Adolescents spoke of their ability to understand themselves, but also to see beyond their own experiences and perceive issues that affect their communities. Those from privileged backgrounds were able to understand issues and concerns from the lens of privilege and question the status quo.

"This process helped me understand the importance of a community, of connecting with each other, understanding each other, especially during a crisis. It reminded me about how important it is to get out of your bubble and understand how others are experiencing their lives."
    – Adolescent enquirer, Female, Pakistan[107]

"I could learn how to interview different people, young generation, old generation and child generation and it was really interesting for me. I could learn about different kinds of people, and how different people are leaving Afghanistan for different economic opportunities, and they have problems in their life, and I could understand that there are lots of people who don't have anything to eat and have most of the problems of life. It was a very good learning for me. Kabul was new for me,

because I didn't live in Kabul before that, and it was a big challenge for me to visit different people."
> – Adolescent enquirer, Female, Afghanistan[108]

3.1.2 How the tool helped partners strengthen their response

The research revealed how the tool has potential to enhance existing interventions and, in the process, contribute to skill building of adolescents, youth workers and facilitators. Stakeholders reflected on the adaptability of the tool across sectors and across institutional hierarchies – education, health, child protection, and adolescent participation among others. They also spoke about how it would facilitate adolescent engagement in planning and review by allowing for inter-generational dialogue.

"I didn't know anything regarding Appreciative Enquiry but after undergoing this training, I learned that to start any implementation, undertaking research or social mapping, something like this is very important. If we do not know what problems adolescents face, how can we design programmes for them?"
> – Samir Kumar Paul, Programme Officer, Youth Development, JAAGO Foundation, Bangladesh[109]

"Since I've experienced this (*SParking Wellbeing* tool) I've got a lot of information, which was covered and buried in the lives of the students, which they were not able to share. And this inquiry has helped me as a teacher, as I was able to understand the situations students were facing, in an in-depth manner."
> – Sangay Tenzin, Youth Facilitator, Youth Development Fund, Bhutan[110]

Stakeholders who weren't directly associated with the process too saw value in the ability of the tool to inspire more adolescent-led interventions, and to contribute to policies.

"This tool allowed the government to understand the impact of COVID-19 on adolescents. This process of an adolescent-led enquiry is new and can actually change the mindset of many people about adolescents, at the community level and at the family level."
> – Education Department officer, Afghanistan[111]

Youth facilitators spoke about how the *SParking Wellbeing* process helped build their capacities and supported their personal and professional growth, including connecting them to regional communities of youth development practice.

"It was a very new experience for the children, and even for me, we all learned a lot. By working together with youth facilitators on an international

scale, we got to learn about their backgrounds, and their work. This helped to keep us motivated and gave us something positive, at a time when most things were negative."
> - Sayantani Basak, Programme Officer, Prantakatha, India[112]

"The whole process was quite challenging for me, but I learnt a lot. It will be helpful for me both in my personal and professional life. The deeper you go into it, the more you will learn."
> - Priyanka Das Roy, Youth Facilitator, Ministry of Women and Child Affairs, Bangladesh[113]

Many spoke of how the tool would enable adults to deepen their understanding of young people.

"I am aspiring to use this in my daily life. As a class teacher, sometimes we come across a problem with students, and we directly assess the students based on their appearance, or on one-time actions that they have committed, but we rarely go deep and ask questions and see their problems inside out. And I think this enquiry can be used not only by teachers, but even by parents, and relatives. I think this is going to give a comprehensive understanding about the problems they (adolescents) have, and the situations they are facing."
> - Sangay Tenzin, Youth Facilitator, Youth Development Fund, Bhutan[114]

3.1.3 Quality of adolescent-led research outputs

The social hierarchies characterizing society in South Asia often inhibit young people from authentically sharing their concerns and needs with adults during research and enquiries, with adolescents often reiterating responses that are expected of them. The *SParking Wellbeing* tool and approach, in contrast, created a safe space for adolescents to speak to peers, especially on issues that are not so easy to discuss openly. Examples include discussions about their relationships with parents and other adults at home, and their mental health concerns. Thus, insights that tools such as this reveal may be closer to adolescent reality than adult-led research.

To illustrate, in Afghanistan, the adolescent-led appreciative enquiry revealed that almost 72 percent adolescents experienced mental health issues such as stress and anxiety. Similarly, in an U-Report poll conducted in South Asia during COVID-19 among adolescents and young people across the region, 59 per cent of the respondents reported feeling either stressed, sad or angry. On the other hand, in another adult-led research study[115] conducted amongst guardians, only 28 per cent reported that

their children's wellbeing has been affected during the pandemic. This divergence indicates crucial differences between adolescent-led and adult-led enquiries and marks the importance of listening to young people on their own realities. The potential gaps in adults' understanding of adolescent experiences need to be factored in. There may be other differences as well, for instance perhaps the stigma attached to mental health is stronger among adults than among adolescents.

"I think our access to information from them (adolescents) is getting filtered. It is reaching us through various studies. Across several webinars, young people stressed issues of mental health. We are already talking to a couple of our partners to not only create a youth parliament but also have a mechanism in which they talk to various youth groups in various states to collect inputs and put it across to us…So we can think back and re-plan our programme which is already underway in several districts in the country."

- Dr Zoya Ali Rizvi, Deputy Commissioner, Ministry of Health, India[116]

This is indicative of how data from adolescent-led enquiries can contribute to government decision making.

3.1.4 Adolescent actions resulting from the *SParking Wellbeing* process

Adolescent enquirers developed the skills to ask questions, assess the challenges in society, understand effects of COVID-19 on adults and children, and analyse how different issues are inter-connected. They then took leadership to respond to concerns expressed by other adolescents and adults, whom they interviewed as part of the Appreciative Enquiry process. These included both on-ground and online efforts, and individual as well as group actions. Educational support to other young people, online fundraising campaigns, and awareness campaigns on safety protocols for COVID, were among actions undertaken by adolescent enquirers as a result of the *SParking Wellbeing* process.

In Bhutan, adolescent enquirers were able to influence local government planning, and the *SParking Wellbeing* process has been replicated in the country's Boy Scouts programme. In Afghanistan, voices of adult enquirers informed the global UNICEF strategic plan and girls' empowerment programmes.[117] Adolescent enquirers in Afghanistan were able to influence UNICEF responses to COVID-19 in several ways.

"One young person proposed that we should run a project on awareness about food and maintaining a proper diet. COVID-19 affected the health of many people and this young person wanted to run an awareness campaign about healthy diets. He proposed that we could approach health facilitators from UNICEF and the government, and seek their support in facilitating this awareness."

– Peer youth facilitator, Afghanistan[118]

"Some of the adolescents have begun fundraising initiatives and purchasing gifts for Internally Displaced Persons and returnees. These are effects of the training (Appreciative Enquiry process). And now they have taken up these actions collectively."

- Inter-governmental representative, Afghanistan[119]

"[Following the *Sparking Wellbeing* process,] I gathered adolescents and adults in my community and sensitized them on COVID-19, since many were dismissive of the virus. I also approached decision makers in my community – political leaders and some religious scholars - requesting them too to spread awareness, and we noticed that more people were listening and wearing masks after that."

- Adolescent enquirer, Male, India[120]

Many have taken to social media to create spaces for young people to talk about issues concerning them and understand issues trending in the country. This is as a result of the *SParking Wellbeing* process.

"One adolescent girl started an initiative called 'Express Yourself Community', which is conducted online on a weekly or fortnightly basis. She organizes sessions for youth. Our organization has tied up with this initiative and has been conducting 'youth addas[121] through this."

- Kuldeep Sikarwar, Programme Manager, Anhad Pravah, India[122]

The pandemic had posed many challenges, in terms of affecting the livelihoods of families. Young people took action to facilitate access to basic needs.

"I came across a harrowing situation. There was a family I met who had lost everything, their livelihood etc. Even their children's education stopped, there was no food in the house. I started giving them rations and helped their children in their studies through tuition classes."

- Adolescent enquirer, Female, India[123]

3.2 Other Tools and Strategies for Engagement and Participation

Across countries, interviews with stakeholders have revealed that strategies for engagement of young people during the COVID-19 pandemic have predominantly consisted of volunteer work,

engagement through online platforms such as webinars, some level of consultation in the development of programmes and policies, and peer-to-peer engagement. These strategies created some spaces for young people to voice their views on larger issues that concern them. However, there is potential for enhancing the use of intentional methodologies and tools that systematically engage, informed and empower adolescents and young people. Some examples are outlined below.

3.2.1 UNICEF's *Adolescent Kit for Expression and Innovation* (Adolescent Kit)[124]

This is a package of guidance, tools, activities and supplies for supporting adolescents aged 10-17 who are affected by conflict, poverty, and other humanitarian crises. It provides an innovative approach to working with adolescents in humanitarian situations that can be used by programme managers or those directly engaging with young people in vulnerable development contexts. This includes teachers, youth facilitators and volunteers, in communities and across verticals of education, child protection and youth development.

The kit was co-developed with adolescents from across the world. Through arts and innovation, it aims to bring about a positive change in their lives by creating opportunities that enable them to express themselves, experiment and solve issues during disasters. This process leads to development of transferrable skills in adolescents, helps them build resilience and engage positively with their communities.

Although there is no evidence of systematic use of the Expression and Innovation Toolkit during COVID-19 in any of the five countries studied, perhaps owing to lack of sustained investment and advocacy for its use, we found that the pedagogy was used as part of DRR efforts by UNICEF Pakistan, through the Pakistan School Safety Framework (PSSF) (described in Chapter 2, Section 2.5.2 of this report).

The PSSF uses pedagogies such as art competitions, debates and discussions to engage young people, enable them to ask questions, and learn through dialogue. Additionally, short animation films were made and disseminated on themes such as floods, earthquakes, displacement and general risks like fire, drowning, electrocution, snake/insect bite and road accidents[125], all of which have been identified as common causes of child suffering and death.

3.2.2 U-Report

Developed by UNICEF and its partners, U-Report has a global footprint across 55 countries. It is an open-source mobile messaging programme, and as a free resource, can be used by adolescents and young people to express their opinions and experiences on issues that matter to them. Participation is encouraged through the same social media platforms such as Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp, Viber that young people already use, and SMS for those without access to the internet. This ensures a wider reach, more participation and inclusion.

Mechanisms include 'feedback' where information collected has the potential to shape policies and programmes, 'live chats' that act as a complaints mechanism and a platform for young people to express themselves freely without fear of judgment, 'self-skilling' that allows young people to navigate content and self-educate, and 'community action' that enables young people bring in change in community settings through social action.

Data is collected anonymously, and initial data provided in real-time. Adolescents and young people can also access poll results and further disseminate the information in their respective communities. Additionally, with the platform acting as an interface for users to share their perspectives on issues that matter to them, the tool becomes a space for adolescents and young people to express their aspirations and needs.

U-Report has been used extensively in Afghanistan, Bangladesh and India, reaching 205,537[126], 548,119[127] and 955,456[128] young people respectively in these countries. In some contexts, SMS-enabled U-Report that does not require a smartphone or internet connectivity, has enabled reaching those harder to reach. Localized use of U-Report, such as in the refugee setting of Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh, enabled data collection on specific contexts, and for specific cohorts. UNICEF ROSA also delivers U-Report polls in English and nine South Asian local languages. It was also used during COVID-19 and other crises where U-Report deployment was possible, to gather just-in-time information to understand adolescents' and young people's immediate needs and inform regional guidance and programming.

Some evidence exists of how the data gathered through U-Report has been used to influence policy, programme design and advocacy. In some countries, completion of the feedback loop for one poll (that is, ensuring action on findings) is critical to begin the next poll. This ensures that young people receive direct benefits from their engagement and

responses for former polls, prior to fresh initiatives. U-Report has significant potential to systematically provide timely information to different stakeholders, including government, civil society and inter-governmental bodies, about many aspects of adolescents' and young people's lives during a humanitarian crisis. This could include information about their needs and aspirations, anxieties and challenges, learning aspirations, and social actions that they undertake.

3.3 Summary and conclusions

The *SParking Wellbeing* toolkit contributed to adolescent development, enhancing their transferrable skills and capacities. It also built the capacities of youth facilitators/youth workers, that is, youth development and engagement professionals who support young people on their journeys of self-empowerment and action.

Adolescents and adults involved with the *SParking Wellbeing* process and tool believe that it helped enhance key adolescent capacities such as empathy, negotiation and communication, and strengthen partners' and adolescents' response to the COVID-19 crisis. The process enabled inter-generational dialogue, gave adolescents a space to voice their concerns, and an opportunity to think about their current situation and their futures, and how they would like to take action to influence these. Many of them undertook social actions as innovators and changemakers.

For all other stakeholders associated with the process, either directly or indirectly, the tool is seen as having potential to be used in several spaces – either in individual conversations or in institutional and non-institutional settings – to enhance adolescent and youth empowerment.

All young people have a right to quality social engagement that helps them overcome challenges, and participate in creating solutions. The *SParking Wellbeing* process and other tools and techniques supported by UNICEF are steps towards ensuring that young people have increased agency and value, and a greater role in influencing the narrative. The process helps them develop an enhanced understanding of self, through transformative capacity building processes, and of society, through real-world actions.

IV CHAPTER 4
Key strategic and cultural factors that facilitate or limit adolescent engagement and participation in humanitarian contexts

There are significant challenges that need to be overcome for rights-based adolescent engagement and participation to become the norm. In this chapter we highlight some of the significant factors that limit or facilitate adolescent engagement and participation in humanitarian contexts. We will describe these factors under the categories of inclusion; efficiency versus inclusion; intent and practice.

4.1 Addressing the paradox: Inclusion of adolescents and young people in hierarchical societies

Hierarchy is embedded into the social fabric of South Asia, as in many other parts of the world, and this hierarchy is antithetical to the idea of including young people's voices in decision making. We found evidence of this in each of the countries.

Assumptions about young people's lack of knowledge and experience to contribute to decision making, fail to acknowledge their felt experiences and expertise regarding their own lives. They also deny young people the fundamental right of participation, and our duty in creating an enabling environment and building capacities for this participation. The perception of a youth facilitator below was reflected in many conversations we had in all five countries during the research:

"If we try to ask adolescents or young people to engage with the design for our projects, unfortunately they have less awareness and knowledge about how to create or even how to design."
– Youth facilitator, Afghanistan[129]

Awareness was evident across countries on often intentional exclusion of young people from decision making processes.

Adult professionals reiterated how young people are sidelined in decision making, and there is lack of faith in adolescent views. Peer youth facilitators and adolescents echoed the same sentiment:

"The elders usually think that they have a lot of knowledge and experience. That young people are less experienced. They usually do not listen to what we say." An adolescent from Bangladesh said, "As we are very young, they (Panchayat leaders) are not interested to listen to our voices."
- Adolescent, Bangladesh[130]

This attitude is also underpinned by the fact that many adults feel the need to play a protective role when involving adolescents. As shared by a civil society leader,

"Most often than not during a crisis, say COVID or the 2002 Gujarat riots, protection takes precedence over participation."
– Waqar Qazi, Founder-Director, Urja Ghar, India[131]

Patriarchal worldviews and practices add another dimension to this issue, with adolescent girls typically having even less agency, and getting fewer opportunities than boys.

"I faced negative perceptions from my family and community as well. For example, if I return from the club or any programme after dusk, all the community people criticize me. But for a boy it is not a problem. Sometimes parents are favourable, but due to community pressure they also forbid their daughters. I think the perception of the community people towards girls needs to change."
– Adolescent, Female, Bangladesh[132]

"Their parents don't allow them to make decisions, especially for girls. They don't give the right or the freedom to make decisions for their own wellbeing. Decisions about their life are taken by the elder members of their families, mostly their brother or their father."
– Joeita Jafrin, Child Rights Facilitator, Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, Bangladesh[133]

All the stakeholders, including adolescents, who participated in the study were very clear that for this to change, it is critical to change mindsets and attitudes of parents, duty bearers and communities towards adolescents and young people.

"There has to be an appreciation by adults that young people can be productive, that the energy of the young people is not just to create chaos and havoc in society. What they need is proper guidance to channel that energy to productive use."
– Chencho Lhamu, Director, Programme and Development, Bhutan Centre for Media Studies[134]

"Our parents should be educated, or they should be taught ways to handle or guide their children. These days, adolescents have everything, they google

Nothing For Us, Without Us

"I think all school-going students must be asked if they even want to come back to school. Because it is the students who spend most of their time in schools, it is made for them. However, it is experts who decide who should be coming to school, when should they be opened etc. But through this process what we don't realise is that shutting schools has affected students. I personally know some students from government schools who do not have any online classes, so their education has stopped completely. Even their parents do not teach them much. Nobody is worried about this, nobody cares. So, it is important to ask such students – what do they want? How do they want to study? Should schools be reopened?"

– Adolescent enquirer, India[136]

"I believe that if decisions are being made for us, our opinions must also be considered. For example, it has been difficult to stay within my home for the past six-seven months and if during this period, older people are getting a chance to go out a few times, so should we."

– Adolescent enquirer, India[137]

something and understand it. However, there is no change in the perspectives of parents."
- Adolescent enquirer, Male, Pakistan[135]

4.2 Walking the thin line between efficiency and inclusion

Humanitarian crises require swift, decisive responses. Time is of the essence when designing and delivering programmes during an emergency. Inclusive decision-making on the other hand, requires having the luxury of time – time to identify who needs to be involved, provision of information, ensuring meaningful representation of diverse stakeholders, considering and responding to everyone's views and opinions, and making decisions that lead to enhanced wellbeing for everyone.

Respondents acknowledged that during the pandemic, the need to be efficient often came at the cost of inclusion, often because it was not possible to make time for such consultative processes, particularly with young people.

"We do pay a kind of lip service to involving them at every stage in design, but especially when there is an emergency, and because of how quickly things have to be designed and delivered, we do not have that kind of rigorous process to involve the real stakeholders…Involvement of youth can always be improved. Because of the shortage of time and pressure that we were in, in this context it was so much more difficult."
– Inter-governmental agency representative, Pakistan[138]

While the use of technology proved to be a boon to many as it enabled programmes to continue when face-to-face interaction was not possible,

yet it was a bane too, in that technology excluded large numbers of marginalized adolescents. These include rural and urban adolescents who are at the bottom of the pyramid; and girls, whose access to phones and internet is generally limited, due to the patriarchal social setup in all five countries that participated in this study.

"We could not reach all the children (through the Appreciative Enquiry) due to things being online. We could not get the diversity we were trying to bring. We had to leave out a lot of children. We could work only with those who had at least one phone or a smartphone."
- Sayantani Basak, Programme Manager, Prantakatha, India[139]

Not only did the shift to online programming affect girls' participation in decision making, it significantly reduced the ability to engage with girls in regular programming; As a UNICEF staff member said:

"It's one of those really alarming issues for us that we've shifted so completely online, widening the inequities in the current socio-economic fabric. Since the pandemic, it's become very difficult to balance out the girl to boy ratio. How many people have ownership of, or even access to, shared devices? How many young girls were also juggling with domestic chores? … A lot of [girls] are getting left behind and will continue to get left behind unless blended approaches are adopted, and the efficacy of these approaches very carefully studied."
– Manasa Priya Vasudevan, Adolescent and Youth Development Specialist, UNICEF India[142]

The representative also noted how girls' participation in volunteer work was also curtailed

Participation Denied

"The challenge is reaching out to these young people, especially girls. How will we reach that adolescent girl sitting at home, how will she be able to access? We did this survey which showed that households have access to smartphones. But when you dig deeper, it's usually the male member or the father figure who has access to that smartphone. And that young girl is able to access that phone much less compared to even young boys or brothers. We say we have deep penetration, without understanding how it impacts at the household level, and decision making. There's such a huge potential there – 26.8 million women, young girls between the ages of 10 to 24, who are neither going to any school nor any education, they don't have any employment, nor are they in any training programme, so they're just sitting at home. That's a huge untapped resource that we have, and how to effectively reach out to these girls sitting at home is the biggest challenge. We have some successes, but we still have a long way to go."

– Erum Burki, Education Officer, UNICEF, Pakistan[140]

"It was not possible for us to reach the most marginalized adolescent girls from vulnerable areas, because they had no internet connections or devices...We are not digitized and so were unable to reach them in the pandemic situation. COVID-19 destroyed all our initiatives."

– Jerina Jahan Bhuiyan, Programme Manager, Center for Mass Education in Science, Bangladesh[141]

during the lockdown, making volunteer work largely a `male' effort during the pandemic. To overcome these challenges, platforms like U-Report which are designed to reach individuals who do not have access to smartphones, have a wider reach than many tech-based innovations, and could be used to listen to young people's opinions and perspectives on issues that affect them. In Bangladesh for example, the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs developed an app which their peer leaders were able to use to facilitate sessions for marginalized rural adolescents. Peer Educators can also be trained to use U-Report to reach adolescent who do not have access to any phones at all. They can be supported financially with internet data packs, so that they are willing to take on this additional role.

4.3 Bridging the gap between intent and practice - With resources, mechanisms and processes that enhance participation

Lack of adequate resources and capacities was recognized by respondents as a critical roadblock in engaging adolescents in humanitarian response.

Humanitarian response, which is efficiency-driven, fails to acknowledge the long-term linkages, between participation and efficiency. Often therefore there is a crucial gap between intent and practice. To bridge the gap, appropriate mechanisms, structures, processes and resources need to be deployed, and greater convergence brought about.

Some critical factors in this direction were highlighted by UNICEF and CSO representatives, as discussed below[144]:

A. Operationalization of existing policy mandates: The advantage of an effective backbone of policy mandates can be realized only when they are resourced and implemented. This was highlighted by senior managers, such as Veera Mendonca, Officer in Charge (OIC), Representative, UNICEF, Bangladesh, who observed: "There are so many policies in the country. There is an adolescent policy, a skills policy. A standardised adolescent empowerment package was approved. What is needed is resources for operationalizing these.[145]"
B. Sustained engagement with adolescent and youth-led structures: Greater attention is

Enabling online engagement of rural communities: Accelerating protection for children

"Rural adolescents in our country hardly have smartphones. They are not using the Zoom app and so I had to physically train the peer leader, and she helped others to run the Zoom app... After the COVID-19 pandemic, this app was developed in the local language, Bangla, as part of the Accelerating Protection for Children (APC) [programme], a project supported by UNICEF. All the life-skills based education, on issues such as dowry, child marriage, birth registration, and trafficking, have been included in that digital platform for adolescents. The peer leaders were able to conduct those sessions with the help of that app."

- Joeita Jafrin, Child Rights Facilitator, Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, Bangladesh[143]

needed for sustained engagement with existing adolescent and youth-led structures, to ensure their participation in policy and practice initiatives. As an intergovernmental representative from Pakistan[146] noted: "We now have adolescent groups already formed. It is usually very difficult to access such groups in a short time with limited resources. And usually the programmers prefer to sort of bypass this step [of youth participation in design], they come up with a design which they think is suitable for adolescents, and most of the time, it is not. Mostly because when we programme for them, we are short of time and of resources."

C. Support for adolescent and youth-led initiatives: There is need to focus more on supporting adolescent and youth-led initiatives. An inter-governmental representative[147] highlighted how more attention should be given to youth-led initiatives where young people take the effort to design and cost initiatives and submit to agencies: "During the pandemic, the Adolescent Youth Network had submitted very good proposals. On raising awareness of the public and on providing hygiene kits - particularly for the most vulnerable people of the community. It was our failure that we couldn't support their projects. What was stopping us was also the lack of budgets."

D. Budgets and financing: The need to recognize participation as a process and principle that has cost implications was raised by a UNICEF representative[148]: "There is no systematic budget or financing for adolescent participation. If Child Protection has close to nothing, we have nothing. There is no money being put on this. Even with initiatives like NSS and NYKS, there is Rs.100 per young person."

E. Recognition of the importance of creating an enabling environment: There is a need to recognize that creating an enabling environment is an important role for programme planners. As a CSO head from Afghanistan[149], expressed: "Extensive work needs to be done to integrate this (adolescent engagement and participation) and make it part of the responsibilities of local level or community level platforms, to create that enabling environment."

F. Creation of adequate structures and processes: There is a need to set up adequate structures and processes which would enable partners to reach adolescents, and ensure their participation. This requires recognition of the value of adolescent engagement processes, and investment in these processes. As a humanitarian actor stated: "At the community or government level unfortunately, there are no mechanisms and systems to provide these adolescents and young people a platform where they can express their needs, express their viewpoints. It could be at the community level, at government level, or civil society level through some committees, or through a kind of representation system and mechanism."

G. Greater convergence across ministries: There is need for greater convergence between ministries, so that resources can be optimally used, accountability and ownership established, and duplication avoided. Where possible, embedding processes into existing programmes rather than creating new ones has a better chance of success. Cross-sectoral ministries such as children's and youth ministries often lack clout and ability to influence over effective adolescent and youth rights mechanisms. Convergence established in development contexts would greatly facilitate continuity of coordinated response during humanitarian action. This involves a coordinated approach to adolescent engagement and participation. As an Inter-governmental agency representative in Pakistan[150] noted: "With the government, the structure is complex. We do not have a central authority or central platform, which could be used to outreach adolescents at mass. In the provinces, we have a different structure, and in the Federation, there is a different structure. So, it is difficult to create that governance, and ownership."

H. Capacity building of duty bearers: Often duty bearers lack the capacity to engage with adolescents effectively. As a youth facilitator stated: "The capacity of organizations and government departments, is not that high, to engage adolescents to their full potential. A very low percentage of adolescents participate, and even when they do, they have quite a low role in decision making. That's unfortunately the situation." As Dr Zoya Ali Rizvi, Deputy Commissioner, Ministry of Health, Government of India stated[151]: "An important part is teaching them (duty bearers) how to interact with adolescents or youth. You must be non-judgmental, empathetic, listen to them and give them time, because often it is just that they need someone unbiased to listen to them, and give them information. So the first step in capacity building is to learn to be non-judgmental."

4.4 Summary and conclusions

There is a need to ensure that efficient decision making and inclusion of adolescents get equal priority. Including adolescents in decisions made about their lives is their fundamental right. Such inclusion would also ensure that decisions taken respond to their needs and are therefore likely to be more effective.

Processes that meaningfully build inter-generational solidarity are critical, to overcome the hierarchical cultures that inhibit meaningful youth engagement. Greater inter-generational understanding will also lead to greater likelihood of shifting from the predominantly beneficiary or instrumentalist lenses through which young people are viewed, to an authentically rights-based lens.

Replicating informed, quality-assured youth engagement processes such as *SParking Wellbeing* would also enhance capacities to implement youth-centric strategies.

CHAPTER 5
Key recommendations: Enabling adolescent engagement and participation in humanitarian contexts

This chapter offers recommendations on policy and programmes that will enhance adolescent engagement and participation in humanitarian contexts; and on the role of governments, United Nations agencies, CSOs, private sector organizations and institutional donors in facilitating this.

5.1 Develop and implement youth-centric humanitarian policies

Current humanitarian policies view young people mainly from a beneficiary or instrumentalist lens. Governments have a key role to play in developing enabling, rights-based policies that further adolescents' right to participate and influence decisions that impact them and reflect their needs and aspirations. The role of United Nations agencies is to create policy deliberations around the frameworks and planning guidelines that already exist, in order to foreground adolescent rights and needs in humanitarian contexts. This includes (but is not limited to) the Core Commitments for Children (CCCs) in Humanitarian Action, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) *Guidelines on Working With and For Young People in Humanitarian and Protracted Crises*, the *Engaged and Heard Guidelines on Adolescent Participation and Civic Engagement,* and *the Global Framework on Transferable Skills.*

For policies and programmes to be adolescent and youth-centric, the United Nations system, governments and participating stakeholders must ensure the following:

- Explicitly recognize the rights of young people in the formulation of humanitarian programmes, laws and policies.
- Ensure meaningful adolescent and youth participation from all diverse affected social groups in the formulation and review of humanitarian programmes and policies.
- Provide special provisions in policies, programs and budgets for the inclusion of and participation of marginalized groups such as low-income adolescent groups, girls and those living with disability, in recognition that adolescents and young people are not a homogenous group.
- Ensure specific provisions that enable systematic adolescent and youth participation in humanitarian contexts.

- Clearly spell out principles, mechanisms, structures, tools and programmes that will facilitate adolescent engagement and participation at the time of policy development. Review, decision making and programme implementation must be clearly spelt out in these policies.
- Develop mechanisms and structures for convergence across various adolescent engaging ministries such as Health, Education, Youth Affairs, Women and Child Development, for resources sharing, strategic planning and implementation, and programming that stems from adolescent needs, aspirations, and priorities.
- Create effective linkages for service provision for adolescents and necessary advocacy for ensuring continuation of these services.

Role of United Nations agencies in developing and implementing youth-centric humanitarian policies
- Map existing policy mandates and practices for the realization of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Settings for adolescent engagement and participation and develop systematic technical assistance mechanisms for implementing the CCCs, including through the implementation of the IASC Youth Guidelines, and safe spaces.
- Ensure the strengthening of government, United Nations, civil society and private sector partnerships to realize adolescent-centric emergency response.

5.2 Create structures and safe and empowering spaces for adolescents in humanitarian contexts

Safe, empowering and inclusive spaces must be created for adolescents to meet, connect with each other, discuss issues that matter, and freely express their opinions. Complemented by capacity building processes, this will help enhance their confidence, and feelings of self-worth, so that they are able to speak up, ask questions – even difficult questions – and influence decisions that affect their lives. Since political and social vulnerabilities very often heighten during emergencies, it is important for them to be able to have safe channels of communication about their needs and concerns. To achieve this, it is critical to,
- Establish quality-assured, responsive,

community-based adolescent-friendly spaces, co-designed with adolescents and youth in development and fragile contexts. These would ensure their resilience and coping capacities in the event of humanitarian crises. Chapter 3 of this report offers examples from each of the five countries of adolescent clubs, networks and groups set up during development contexts, which benefited youth-led work during the COVID-19 response.

- Ensure similar co-designed spaces, capacities and structures for adolescent engagement and participation in all humanitarian and protracted crises settings including interanlly displaced person (IDP) camps, refugee camps and similar settings, as relevant. Assess practicality, possibilities, and safeguarding issues with young people themselves.
- Ensure formal marginality mapping exercises to mobilize adolescents from diverse groups. Conduct these assessments with the participation of diverse groups of adolescents and youth.
- Ensure diverse, practical and safe blended modes of engagement and participation, including face-to-face and digital modes, so that all young people are practically engaged.
- Make special provisions for engagement and participation of vulnerable groups such as girls, and adolescents living with disability.
- Develop capacities of adults to engage with marginalized groups as genuine partners in humanitarian contexts.
- Focus on building deep self-awareness of adolescents, raising awareness about their rights, developing their leadership skills, and enhancing their knowledge about issues that impact them directly.
- Provide adolescents with access to confidential, non-public, and safeguarded mechanisms for communication, and child and youth-friendly information about the specific humanitarian context.

Role of United Nations agencies in creating safe spaces
- Advocate with governments and civil society on the centrality of adolescent engagement and participation in humanitarian settings.
- Put in place adolescent and youth participatory review mechanisms for safe spaces and engagement.
- Create effective linkages for service provision for adolescents and necessary advocacy for ensuring continuation of these services.

Role of governments in creating safe spaces
- Mandate the creation of, and investment in, safe space.

- Allocate budgets for the design and implementation of quality-assured adolescent-centric programming informed by professional youth development practice.
- Map all youth-engaging officers and build their capacities for professional youth engagement.
- Implement and monitor safeguarded channels of communication for adolescents.
- Develop adolescent-friendly information provision and adolescent-led information creation during humanitarian response.

Role of CSOs in creating safe spaces
- Set up safe, inclusive spaces that enable adolescent engagement and participation during development and humanitarian contexts, including advocating for such mainstream mechanisms.
- Design and implement technically rigorous and quality-assured adolescent-centric programmes for these spaces and advocate for investment, design and implementation of these processes.
- Build capacities of staff, and advocate for building capacities of staff in State mechanisms for implementing adolescent-centric approaches and creating an enabling environment for adolescents to be authentically empowered.
- Ensure quality and effectiveness of safe, confidential communication channels and advocate for such mechanisms.
- Develop, and advocate for the development of, adolescent-friendly information provision and adolescent-led information creation during humanitarian response.

5.3 Provide opportunities for adolescents to engage with communities

Engaging with communities and undertaking social action will have both immediate and long-term positive impacts for adolescents and society. For adolescents, it helps builds key skills and capacities including leadership, teamwork and cooperation, empathy, communication, a sense of belonging, feeling loved and respected. It instils a sense of ownership and responsibility for themselves and communities they are part of. The practice of taking citizenship action early on will ensure they grow into responsible and caring adults. To support adolescents to do this, it is critical to:

- Provide opportunities for adolescents to volunteer in existing initiatives, as well as design and lead individual and collective social action projects in communities.
- Integrate these opportunities into existing structures such as school curricula, and programme designs of community-based adolescent friendly spaces.

- Build capacities of adolescents to design, implement, monitor, and evaluate these projects, through training and mentoring.

Role of United Nations agencies in fostering adolescent engagement in communities
- Collect and analyse data about the impact of adolescent actions on humanitarian situations and use this to build a case for greater investment in adolescent engagement and participation.
- Invest in the development and implementation of adolescent-centric tools such as *SParking Wellbeing* and the *Expression and Innovation Toolkit* that enable engagement with communities.

Role of governments in fostering community engagement
- Include clear policy mandates for youth engagement in communities.
- Provide opportunities for adolescents who are part of their existing adolescent and youth-engaging structures (e.g., NYKS in India) to lead, co-create and influence actions in humanitarian response.
- Build capacities of both adult and peer youth-engaging professionals to mentor adolescents on citizenship action.

Role of CSOs in fostering adolescent and youth engagement
- Include adolescent and youth engagement and social action projects in the design of programmes they implement with adolescents, and advocate for mainstreaming these approaches.
- Build capacities of youth-engaging professionals to mentor adolescents who undertake citizenship actions, and advocate for investment in mainstreaming capacity building for youth-engaging professionals.
- Build capacities of youth-led grassroots organizations.

Role of private sector in fostering adolescent and youth engagement
- Enhance the vision and mission of adolescent and youth-centric humanitarian action through sponsorships, youth-centric skills curriculum and creating employment opportunities for adolescents and young people.

5.4 Facilitate inter-generational solidarity and adolescent and youth interaction with decision-makers

In order to enable more empathetic engagement between adolescents and young people, and adults:
- Establish formal training and capacity building

of adult functionaries and decision makers, on adolescent engagement and participation in institutional settings in shaping humanitarian response.
- Establish inter-generational committees comprising government representatives, community members and adolescents, representing the diversity of adolescents and young people and where they can express their needs, be heard by decision makers, and be part of decisions that impact them.
- Clarify decision making processes, and listen to adolescent voices, particularly in decisions that directly and indirectly impact their lives such as the decision to open/close schools, markets, and parks during the pandemic, or the kind of health services they need.
- Ensure representation of adolescents from existing structures such as clubs and schools, and diverse groups including the most marginalized, established through formal marginality mapping processes.
- Monitor and review the quality and impact of adolescent/youth and adult engagement.

Role of United Nations agencies in promoting inter-generational solidarity
- Roll out global guidance and policies on youth engagement and participation.
- Establish capacity building regimes among functionaries for adolescent engagement and participation in humanitarian response.
- Provide technical guidance for governments on ensuring systematic youth engagement and participation mechanisms during humanitarian action; support the formulation of policies and mechanisms for inter-generational planning, implementation and review.

Role of governments in promoting inter-generational solidarity
- Ensure policies and investment in capacity building of functionaries for inter-generational planning, implementation and review.
- Mandate the creation of committees at village/district/provincial/state/national levels, and ensure policies, capacities, procedures and protocols that enable their meaningful implementation. Work with adolescents and young people as meaningful partners in the design and delivery of committees.

Role of CSOs in promoting inter-generational solidarity
- Advocate for public sector replication of good practices among CSOs on building inter-generational solidarity.
- Build capacities of adolescents to be able to place their opinions and perspectives effectively,

and influence decisions, and advocate for mainstreaming such capacity building mechanisms.

- Amplify adolescent needs and challenges during humanitarian crises, taking advantage of direct and continuous access to adolescents and young people through CSO programmes.
- Build capacities of adults and youth-engaging professionals, so that they are more open and respectful of adolescent perspectives and opinions.
- Ensure specific strategies for building inter-generational solidarity between most marginalized groups and decision making spaces, and advocate for mainstreaming these approaches.

5.5 Build capacities of adults for adolescent engagement and participation in humanitarian settings

To establish a systems approach to adolescent engagement and participation in humanitarian settings, formal and invested capacity building regimes need to be set in place. This would ensure capacities and accountabilities for adolescent engagement and participation. States should be the primary implementer, working with the support of CSOs and inter-governmental agencies to:

- Design and roll-out short courses, certificate programmes and trainings for youth development practitioners, focusing on principles of adolescent-centric development, systems thinking, deep self-awareness, programme design and facilitation, and adolescent engagement and participation in humanitarian settings. CSOs can play a key role as design and training partners.
- Invest in capacity building of youth-engaging professionals such as teachers, counsellors, duty bearers and frontline workers. Institutional stakeholders, including the government and United Nations agencies, are to support this process.

5.6 Develop capacities of adolescents

To cope with the challenges, fear, trauma and uncertainty that humanitarian crises inevitably bring, it is important to enhance adolescents' agency, and build their resilience. Capacities that enable them to engage and participate meaningfully in decisions that impact their lives must be built. For this to happen, it is critical to:

- Design curricula that develop competency based learning and transferable skills, and roll out in schools and adolescent-friendly spaces.
- Develop capacity building regimes that reflect the specific roles of adolescents and young

people in community action, reflection, and solutions.

- Establish roles for young people within humanitarian project activities that facilitate their voluntary and proactive participation as leaders, co-creators and influencers.
- Train young people as peer facilitators, and mentors for younger adolescents.
- Ensure quality assurance and supervision, and safeguarding mechanisms, for all capacity building processes for adolescents.

5.7 Allocate Budgets for Adolescent Engagement and Participation, and Build Partnerships

In each of the countries that participated in the study, a running theme was the need for all stakeholders including governments and United Nations agencies to allocate budgets for adolescent engagement and participation, and investment in priorities that young people set through this engagement. For this to happen, it is critical to:

- Enhance budget allocations by United Nations agencies, governments and CSOs so that adolescents can participate effectively during humanitarian contexts. Funds will be deployed towards:
  » The set up and sustenance of structures and spaces such as adolescent clubs and networks. Funds are needed for programming as well as salaries of facilitators.
  » Capacity building of adolescents, youth development practitioners and youth-engaging officers.
  » Small seed funding or stipends to adolescents for social action projects and innovations led by them.
  » Design, pilot and roll out adolescent engagement tools and processes such as *SParking Wellbeing* and *Adolescent Kit for Expression and Innovation*.
- United Nations agencies to build strategic and resource mobilization partnerships with the private sector and institutional donors to help expand the support network for adolescents. This would be through the development, piloting and scaling up of evidence-based, locally-owned structures, processes and tools that will ensure effective participation.
- United Nations agencies and governments to set up new, and strengthen existing, multi-stakeholder, inter agency, inter-generational humanitarian action coalitions which have a shared vision for adolescent engagement and participation.
- Ensure convergence between different United Nations agencies, and within UNICEF.

5.8 Set up mechanisms to regularly monitor the quantity and quality of adolescent engagement and participation in humanitarian contexts

Given the swiftness of responses required during humanitarian crises, to ensure that adolescent voices are heard, and mechanisms to support their participation function effectively, it would be essential that feedback about their engagement and participation is generated at regular intervals during the crisis. To do this, it is necessary to:

- Adapt lean data approaches[152] to collect data from adolescents and adults about fulfilment of adolescents and young people's social, political, economic and emotion needs and issues, and adolescent engagement and participation in resolving these issues in decision making structures and processes. The data can be collected through phone-based surveys using a series of few, simple questions. The analysis would feed into making necessary course corrections during programme implementation. Develop localized systems for the use of U-Report and other youth engagement methodologies for obtaining feedback.
- Fund the development and piloting of survey tools, including identifying which types of questions work best in which type of format[153] (SMS, IVR, call centre) and advocate with governments and CSO partners to use the tool to inform the design and implementation of adolescent programmes, including participation approaches.
- Ensure disaggregation of data for girls, those living in poverty, those living with disabilities, and other vulnerable and marginalized groups who are: a. facing vulnerabilities, b. reached by programs, and c. reached as co-creators and influencers through participation programmes.

CHAPTER 6
Conclusion

VI

This study is a preliminary attempt to connect the dots across adolescent and youth engagement practices, policies and impacts in humanitarian action in five selected countries of South Asia. The study aims to help build an evidence-based and policy-led approach to systematic, democratic and inter-generational modalities for transformational humanitarian action.

Adolescent engagement and participation in humanitarian contexts is not just a pragmatic means of achieving responsive results, but also an ethical imperative. It foregrounds the rights of adolescents and young people to participate in defining the direction and focus of humanitarian action.

This study has demonstrated that there are clear directions being built in selected contexts for authentically youth-engaged and participatory policies and practices. However, what is less clear is systematic, institutional approaches to mainstream these good practices based on the commitments stated in the UNCRC, and global, regional and national UNICEF policies. Further partnerships and systematic collaboration are also called for among multiple stakeholders in making this possible.

Evidence from the various stakeholders makes it clear that these processes, mainstreamed in systematic ways, can provide transformational results and impacts for young people and communities in humanitarian settings. The recommendations guide us to practical ways of making this a reality.

Annexures

Annex 1:
Interview guide for adult respondents[154]

1. Please tell us a little bit about your work, and specifically about your work with adolescents.

Probe Questions:
- In your district, through your interventions, how many adolescents do you work with? How do you reach out to them/engage with them?
- How does the work you do, impact adolescents?
- Has the pandemic affected this engagement in terms of numbers and the approach?

2. The COVID-19 crisis has been like no other in terms of its scale and the impact. In your or your government's experience, how has it affected adolescents that you work with in terms of their wellbeing – health, nutrition, education, information/story consumption, protection? (probe for positive and negative impacts with examples)

Most probably, the respondent who will be representing a particular sector (education, health, etc.) will respond from a specific lens. If not, we will seek specific sector-wise examples

Probe questions:
- How did you make that assessment?
- Probe for whether the assessment is basis some formal process of engaging with adolescents or not. Ask for examples.

3. How are adolescents seen as active participants in design and implementation of your policies and programmes/areas of work?

Probe Questions:
- What are the current ways in which the government is investing in adolescent engagement and agency?
- What are the current policies, processes, systems and tools for youth engagement during humanitarian crises that you have developed?

4. Can you share some of your successes and failures in engaging young people so that they can participate, take decisions, and lead processes which contribute to their wellbeing?

Probe questions:
- What are some of the best practices you are aware of especially during humanitarian crises?
- Probe for capacities of youth facilitators and duty bearers to facilitate adolescent engagement

5. What were some of the key decisions you took that impacted adolescents during the pandemic?

For government stakeholders, we will seek both positive and negative impacts of their approach/ decisions.
Each facet will be discussed further according to the expertise of the respondent.

6. You have recently been involved in the Appreciative Enquiry (AE) process. What was your experience of the tool?

Probe questions:
- How do you think the AE process helped adolescents?
  (In terms of how they felt, how it helped build their ownership and capacities to understand themselves and their peers, in terms of giving them an opportunity to build their confidence because they spoke to adults etc.)
- What according to you were some of the challenges?
  (In terms of not being able to mobilize adolescents easily, adolescents not having the time, the time needed to build capacities of both adult facilitators and adolescents, the experience of the Youth Facilitators and the CSOs in using such tools, etc.)

If the respondent is NOT familiar with the tool, Have you heard of any tools (questionnaires, survey, consultations, interviews, group discussions, etc) to engage young people during a humanitarian crisis? If yes, could you give us an example and elaborate on the process of engagement through this tool? If you haven't heard, do you think there is a need for such a tool to enhance engagement/participation of adolescents?

7. The AE process has thrown up the following results in the four areas of education and transition

to employment, health and nutrition, relationships and security and story consumption:

(Respondent is presented with qualitative and quantitative data consolidated from the respective country)

Is there something you heard from this that you didn't know of before?

8. You just mentioned some of the key decisions you took on education/ health/ relationships/ story consumption. Now that you have heard from adolescents and their caregivers, what would you do differently?

Probe questions:
• In terms of engagement of adolescents is there something that could have changed in terms of approach/decisions/engagement/services/ strategies? Why/why not?
• Is there anything you would do differently? Why/ why not?
• What, if anything, would change in terms of the way you involve young people? Why/ why not?

9. Given your experience with the AE tool, what changes do you think need to be made for it to become an effective one for adolescent engagement? OR

Given your familiarity with the AE tool now, how do you think this can be made more effective for adolescent engagement?

10. How do you think we could advocate for such kinds of adolescent engagement tools?

11. You have talked about the advantages of involving adolescents when taking decisions and designing programmes and policies that impact their wellbeing. What are some of the reasons for not being able to do so?

Probe questions:
• lack of time
• lack of resources
• capacities of youth facilitators/ duty bearers (for govt.) to be able to design of   consultative processes for adolescents
• attitudes of adults towards adolescents - lack of belief in their agency
• not having a structure that helps us easily reach adolescents and their care givers
• lack of capacity amongst adolescents to take decisions for their wellbeing
• perhaps also the perception that this brings no value?

12. What do you think will need to be done to enhance adolescent engagement during humanitarian crises in terms of the following: Please suggest concrete, actionable recommendations on:
• Policies (youth engagement and participation), systems (organizational/institutional thinking), structures (existence of adolescent reference groups/youth councils, etc.) and processes (the decision making process; who all are consulted) programs (such as formation of youth clubs where adolescents engage regularly, take action, undertake projects, engage with duty bearers)
• Capacities that need to be built amongst adolescents and adult stakeholders

Annex 2:
Guide for focus group discussions with adolescents

1. Session name – Introduction

Establish the purpose of the FGD:

Say: "You have all been trained in the Appreciative Enquiry exercise and have administered the same with your peers and adults. Today, we will discuss how the experience has been for you, what you have understood for yourself from this exercise, what challenges you faced and how you think this exercise will help you, and other adolescents in your country to engage better with issues you face, be involved with decisions that are made for you by families, communities and government.

2. Ice breaker: (If videos are working and bandwidth is good)

Peek-a-boo-bingo

Say: We will begin this discussion with a small activity. This game is called the peek-a-boo-bingo. All of you will keep your palms on the camera in such a way that your face will not be visible.

Then, I will read out a few statements and if they hold true in your case, you will remove your palms from the camera so we can all see you. And when you do this please share your name, age and where you are from (for the first statement only) No peeking!

Let's play!

Statement 1 – Your name starts with an 'A' to H'/ I to P/Q to Z (These can be asked basis the names of adolescents already mentioned in their respective Zoom IDs). Need alternatives for Bangla and Pashtun (can seek the translator's support during the FGD process)
Statement 2 – You love to read
Statement 3 – You love to spend time with friends
Statement 4 – You eat a lot of green vegetables in your daily diet!
Statement 5 – You watch a lot of TV

Note: In the case of participants who have come together and logged in from two devices as two groups, the cameras needn't be covered with their palms. As and when the statement is called out, if applicable, they could simply raise their hands and give out their name, age and area they belong to.

Say: Thank you for playing this game. Hope you had fun!

If the bandwidth is low, and participants find it difficult to turn on their videos, ask them to mute themselves. Ask participants to only share their names each time a statement holds true in their case.

3. Activity – Four corners

Ask: How was the Appreciative Enquiry process for you?

Say: Imagine there are four corners in a room and you have to choose any one corner. The corners are labelled 'Achievement', 'Fun', 'Challenge' and 'Learning'.

Explain each of the corners.

Based on your experience of the AE exercise, choose any one corner and tell us why you chose that corner?

Note: Facilitator to go around the room and ask each adolescent which corner they would choose. Write down names of adolescents in the corners depending on what each participant chooses.

Once each participant chooses her/his corner, ask the following questions about why they chose that particular corner:
• Why was it fun for you?
• Why did you feel a sense of achievement? What do you think you achieved?
• Why was it a challenge?
• What did you learn from this process?

After each participant has had her/his chance to share, thank them and inform them that we will be using the 'break out rooms' feature for this session, a feature on Zoom where we will go into different rooms representing the feelings we choose. In the rooms, we will discuss a few things and come back to the main room to share what we discussed.

Note: Two breakout rooms should be created.

Note: If participants have come together in a physical set up, after they choose their corner, the groups should be organized by the facilitator present in the room in such a manner that they are a part of either break out rooms.

On the other hand, if participants have logged in from their individual devices, they can simply be sent into either of the two rooms.

This section will take 45 minutes.

4. In the breakout rooms

1. During this pandemic, did you find any opportunities to participate effectively?
- In terms of sharing your views and opinions, having a space to share them, having someone around who would listen (parent, friend, community members, neighbours, decision makers, etc.?
- Were your views considered?
- In terms of taking decisions/actions related to your health, education, nutrition, watching/reading something of your choice.

2. How was this experience for you? What about this process worked for you? What about it didn't work for you?
- In terms of being a part of a process such as this where you were enquirers.
- In terms of the questions.
- In terms of your engagement/involvement with peers/adults and access to them.
- How was it for you when you got the chance to ask questions of someone else and learn something about another person in terms of how they are affected by this pandemic?
- Have you been involved in a process where your views have been taken, your feelings have been asked about, you have been involved with taking decisions about your life and those of other adolescents? Give examples.

3. Did you take any actions after you completed the enquiries? (Probe: In your family/ neighbourhood/ larger community space)
- What actions did you take?
- Did you talk to any decision makers? Who did you talk to?
- Were you involved in any kind of relief measures? If yes, what were they?
- How did it make you feel?
- How did others respond?

4. What do you think you gained while being a part of this process?
- Do you think you gained any new capacities/ skills like confidence, ability to communicate, awareness, listening, getting to know others and their problems/how they are coping during the pandemic? Why/how do you say so?
- Did you make any new relationships? If yes, what kinds of relationships?

5. What challenges did you face while doing the Appreciative Enquiry?
- In terms of your capacities/skills (did you feel underconfident/unable to communicate/didn't feel that you had enough awareness/inability to listen or be listened to)

- Did you feel others weren't responsive enough? If so, why did you feel so?
- Did you feel unable to talk to decision makers/ engage at the community level/talk to peers/ parents and other adults?

6. What could have been done to help you overcome these challenges?
- Do you feel someone could have supported you? If so who and how?
- How do you think you could have addressed the issue of peers not being responsive/adults not being responsive? (Probe for this if a participant answers to this end)

Once all participants have shared, inform them that they will be returning to the main room where each group's discussions will be summed up and shared.

Each group's facilitator will summarize their respective group's discussions and share the same, requesting the other group to add to the discussion, depending on whether they have something new to share/add.

Note: For those participants who have come together in one physical set up, the facilitator can request them all to come together (following all social distancing guidelines)

Say: Now, we have a few more questions. We would like each one of you to share your views so others could listen, be inspired and learn from you.

5. Now, in the plenary itself, ask each adolescent to share:

1.
  a. What issues that you face do you think needs the attention of your family and community? What can they do about it?
  b. What issues that you face do you think needs the attention of your local government or national government? What can they do about it? (Give examples of existing country-specific policies/interventions for young people).

2. During a humanitarian crisis, there are a lot of aspects of one's life that get affected. This includes health, nutrition, education, livelihoods, relationships, security, etc. Given your experience of this pandemic or any other crisis, have you been involved in the decisions that are taken for you and given any opportunities to voice your opinion/ concerns? How do you think adolescents should be engaged/be involved in these decision making processes?
  a. In terms of your ability to voice your opinions/ views, be given a space to express these

opinions/views, be heard by peers, adults, neighbours, community, decision makers, in terms of your views being taken into account.

For each of these, probe for "in what way would you like to be heard/voice your opinions/ensure your opinions are considered?"

3. If you were to undertake the Appreciative Enquiry Process again, what would you do differently?

4. Do you think this is an effective tool to increase participation of young people/ bring out the voices/ concerns of young people? Why/why not?

6. Facilitator to summarize the discussions

7. Closure

Thank the participants.

Endnotes

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[109] Online interview with Samir Kumar Paul, Programme Officer, Youth Development, JAAGO Foundation, on 19 December 2020.

[110] Online interview with Sangay Tenzin, Youth Facilitator, Youth Development Fund, Bhutan, on 16 March 2021.

[111] Online interview with an Education Department officer, Afghanistan, on 28 November 2020.

[112] Online interview with Sayantani Basak, Programme officer, Prantakatha, India, on 15 April 2021.

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[131] Online interview with Waqar Qazi, Founder Director, Urja Ghar, India, on 22 April 2021.

[132] Online FGD with adolescent respondents, Bangladesh, on 13 December 2020.

[133] Online interview with Joeita Jafrin, Child Rights Facilitator, Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, Bangladesh, on 16 December 2020.

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[136] Online FGD with adolescent enquirers, India, on 6 December 2020.

[137] Online FGD with adolescent enquirers, India, on 6 December 2020.

[138] Online interview with Inter-governmental agency representative, Pakistan, on 30 April 2020.

[139] Online interview with Sayantani Basak, Programme Manager, Prantakatha, India on 15 April 2021.

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[141] Online interview with Jerina Jahan Bhuiyan, Programme Manager, Center for Mass Education in Science, Bangladesh, on 13 December 2020.

[142] Online interview with Manasa Priya Vasudevan, Adolescent and Youth Development Specialist, UNICEF India, on 2 March 2021.

[143] Online interview with Joeita Jafrin, Child Rights Facilitator, Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, Bangladesh, on 16 December 2020.

[144] Based on online interviews conducted with the concerned persons, during November 2020 – December 2021.

[145] Online interview with Veera Mendonca, Officer in Charge (OIC), Representative, UNICEF.

[146] Online interview with Inter-governmental agency representative, Pakistan, on 2 May 2021.

[147] Online interview with Inter-governmental agency representative, Afghanistan, on 14 December 2020.

[148] Online interview with Inter-governmental agency representative, India, on 2 March 2021.

[149] Online interview with CSO head, Afghanistan, on 30 November 2020.

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PRELIMINARY DOCUMENTATION OF ADOLESCENT AND YOUTH ENGAGEMENT POLICY
AND PRACTICE AND RELATED RECOMMENDATIONS

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