Mainstreaming Adolescent Participation in Indonesia for Disaster Preparedness, Response and Recovery

Summary

→ **Programming objective**
Strengthen the participation and rights of the most vulnerable adolescents so they can generate solutions and influence decisions that impact their health, safety, education and well-being – including before, during and after emergencies.

→ **UNICEF Indonesia approach**
Holistic integration of meaningful adolescent participation into disaster preparedness, response, recovery planning and action. This includes risk reduction and mitigation, mainstreaming adolescent participatory processes in school curricula and emergency response protocols, and expanding adolescent participation in UNICEF’s multisectoral programming.

This case study series shows how to accelerate results for adolescents in humanitarian and protracted crises in support of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including Gender Equality (SDG 5); Reduced Inequality (SDG 10); Climate Action (SDG 13) and Partnerships for the Goals (SDG 17).
Young people in Indonesia have a strong economic foundation on which to build their futures. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, this middle-income country’s economy had an annual growth rate of nearly five percent. But with Indonesia’s more than 17,000 islands forming part of the Ring of Fire, a considerable risk of natural disasters threatens the country’s long-term prosperity and the survival and full development of its nearly 46 million adolescent girls and boys. As with many countries across the globe, climate change has been identified as a top concern by young people in Indonesia (U-Report 2021). Their concern and motivation to address this issue make them crucial elements in the sustainable development of the country.

Ensuring that adolescents in Indonesia are safe, protected and prepared before, during, and after hazardous events has been at the forefront of efforts by UNICEF and government partners. Examples of these efforts include supporting school safety guidance and curricula; providing post-disaster school tents, Adolescent Kits and School-in-a-Box kits; and offering emergency response training that includes addressing psychosocial concerns.

Previously, such initiatives were developed by adults for adolescents but not with them, even though young people’s needs differ from those of adults and vary depending on a range of factors.

For instance, in focusing on adolescents, young people with disabilities may require different risk reduction strategies than many of their peers; adolescents in rural villages may have different emergency safety needs than those living in cities.

UNICEF Indonesia is doing things differently, by listening to and partnering with adolescent girls and boys to inform programmes and ensure that they are truly responsive to their needs.

Context

2,000+ disaster events reported in 2020

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Event</th>
<th>Number</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Earthquakes</td>
<td>2,000+</td>
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<td>Volcanic eruptions</td>
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<td>Floods</td>
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<td>Droughts</td>
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<td>Landslides</td>
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<td>Tidal waves</td>
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<td>Tsunamis</td>
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<td>COVID-19 pandemic</td>
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Humanitarian response, disaster risk reduction (DRR) and recovery increasingly recognize adolescent participation as necessary during planning, budgeting, implementation and monitoring, in order to achieve short- and long-term outcomes critical to their development.
In the past decade, UNICEF Indonesia has accelerated its efforts for early citizenship engagement, recognizing that investing in adolescents will have significant long-term benefits.

These actions aim to advance adolescents’ right to be heard, which is guaranteed in Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified by the Government of Indonesia in 2005. While participation is articulated in national policy, mainstreaming adolescents’ viewpoints and solutions into formal decision-making spaces in a meaningful way is a more complex endeavor. It has required collaboration, targeted strategies, resources and guidance.

In 2021, UNICEF Indonesia embedded adolescent participation into its five-year programming strategy as a cross-sectoral approach. This integration was sparked by the positive results achieved through adolescent-centered programmes, including through the implementation of UNICEF’s Adolescent Kit for Expression and Innovation. The Adolescent Kit has served as a catalyst for a wider focus on adolescent engagement.

Using UNICEF’s Adolescent Kit for Expression and Innovation in Emergencies

UNICEF’s Adolescent Kit is an adaptable package of guidance, tools, activities and supplies to support adolescents aged 10-19 years, especially those affected by humanitarian and protracted crises. The Adolescent Kit was developed through human-centered design processes, with adolescents, and focuses on developing their skills and competencies to express themselves, participate in decisions that affect their lives and contribute to positive change in their communities.

UNICEF Indonesia’s Programming Strategic Plan

UNICEF Indonesia’s Programming Strategic Plan aims that by 2025 children and adolescent girls and boys will benefit from:

- evidence-based planning and public expenditure,
- reliable data, and
- an expanded universal social protection system that accounts for environmental risks and disasters.

To reach this goal, UNICEF Indonesia has prioritized building partnerships at all levels to strengthen meaningful adolescent participation in decisions that affect their rights and welfare, including environmental rights.

The UNICEF Adolescent Kit for Expression and Innovation aims to develop 10 core competencies:

- Communication and expression
- Identity and self-esteem
- Leadership and influence
- Coping with stress and managing emotions
- Problem-solving and managing conflict
- Empathy and respect
- Critical thinking and decision-making
- Cooperation and teamwork
- Hope for the future and goal-setting
- Creativity and innovation
Adolescent Kit activities center around Adolescent Circles, or groups of adolescents who gather to learn, practice skills, socialize, express themselves, build teams and take action in their communities. Activities take a four-phase approach (see right), using an iterative process to identify and find solutions for issues of concern.

In Indonesia, the Adolescent Kit has been integrated into programming to address the growing risk of hazardous events and disasters that adolescents face, by:

- Strengthening adolescents’ policy knowledge and skills for identifying disaster risk,
- Supporting them to develop realistic solutions through innovative approaches, and
- Providing guidance for them to influence meaningful social and political change.

The Adolescent Kit was initially designed as a targeted emergency response activity that could be used after a disaster to ensure that the voices of young people are included in the response and recovery. UNICEF Indonesia recognized its wider potential and a need for longer-term adolescent engagement, and the Adolescent Circles approach was integrated across all sectors that UNICEF focuses on, including education, child protection and social policy.

Since 2015, UNICEF Indonesia and its partners have used the Adolescent Kit process in more than 30 villages in 8 districts to assess and address disaster risk, respond to emergencies and take action to prevent child marriage (see below). UNICEF contextualized this resource to meet the diverse needs of adolescents in Indonesia by adding material on disaster risk reduction (DRR), child marriage and menstrual hygiene management (MHM).

To implement the Adolescent Kit across the country, UNICEF Indonesia has trained partners including ChildFund; the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology’s (MoECRT’s) National Secretariat for Safe Schools; the Indonesian Red Cross Society; and Gerakan Pramuka Indonesia (the Indonesian Scout Movement). These partners have trained adult facilitators in villages to work alongside more than 3,300 adolescent participants. UNICEF and its partners have brokered connections between the adolescents, parents, schools and government officials from the local to the national level to implement their solutions in response to issues including climate change and gender inequality.

The Adolescent Kit’s adaptability has helped in mainstreaming its use. In 2020, for example, UNICEF Indonesia used a modified, digital version of the Adolescent Kit for psychosocial support interventions as part of its COVID-19 response. This included hosting youth-led online sessions on mental health awareness and support for young people feeling isolated and vulnerable during the lockdowns across Indonesia.
Addressing disaster risk

UNICEF Indonesia’s humanitarian efforts have engaged adolescents to participate in Adolescent Circles in their cities and villages, to identify and address the issues with the greatest impact on their lives. Their concerns have included drought, floods, volcano eruptions, tsunamis and earthquakes.12

An internal UNICEF evaluation in 2019 highlighted how the Adolescent Kit activities helped build adolescent girls’ and boys’ capacities in communication, expression, self-esteem, creativity and skills to identify disaster vulnerabilities, challenges and solutions.13 Responsive action by adults to implement adolescents’ solutions, however, proved to be difficult due to lack of funds, social norms that undervalue adolescents’ contributions, and complex budgeting procedures at the sub-national level. The evaluation found that only 4 of 41 Adolescent Circles were able to access local decision-makers and community members, share their ideas and see them realized at the village level. (See the examples at right, as well as a video by adolescents in Nusa Tenggara Timur [NTT] province on their solutions in Kupang14).

The evaluation identified important areas for future focus, including:

▶ Greater investment in building the capacities of youth facilitators,
▶ Behaviour change strategies that identify and shift negative social norms around the role that adolescents can play in their communities, and
▶ Stronger external support from partners.

The findings showed that active support from partner organizations or UNICEF was a critical factor for motivating Adolescent Circle activities, building connections with decision-makers, gaining influence and achieving outcomes.

Responding to emergencies

In 2018, in cooperation with the MoECRT’s National Secretariat for Safe Schools, the Adolescent Kit methodology was incorporated into sub-national emergency response. This official MoECRT repository of learning materials was also used during the 2020 COVID-19 school closures.

Since 2018, UNICEF Indonesia has been conducting Adolescent Kit trainings with emergency focal points from 10 high-risk provinces. The focal points learn about the Adolescent Kit and, more broadly, how to incorporate adolescent-responsive activities into emergency situations. This has helped to target responses to the unique vulnerabilities of adolescents. For instance, having established Adolescent Circles with trained facilitators allowed for adolescent-specific interventions during the Boyolali (Central Java) emergency resulting from the eruption of Mt. Merapi, and during the Mt. Agung eruption response in Bali.

Adolescents take action, adults listen

In a village in Kupang, adolescents used the Adolescent Kit to identify local hazards and risks that were negatively impacting their lives.17 Through discussion, peer interviews, and hazard and capacity mapping, an Adolescent Circle determined that water supply problems in their village — exacerbated by drought — hampered school attendance. Girls, often tasked with fetching water over long distances, were the most affected.

The adolescents came up with the idea to install drilled wells with motor pumps, and worked with their parents to advocate for their solution in the village council. As a result, five wells were installed in the village, with funding from local development budgets.

The village head realized that adolescent girls and boys have unique needs and ideas, often different from those of adults, and can contribute to local DRR strategies, plans and budgeting. Village leaders formalized adolescent engagement in local disaster planning and monitoring processes, with support from the District Ministry of Education and Culture in Kupang.

The adolescents said they gained confidence from the experience, and felt empowered to raise their voices on issues affecting their lives. This was especially the case for the girls, whose voices are often less heard in the community than those of boys.

Children of farmers share their climate concerns

Working through Adolescent Circles in partnership with ChildFund, young people used Community Digital Storytelling (CDST) to make films that shared their concerns on the changing climate, including their anxiety about the future as children of farmers. For instance, one photo-video story showed how crop failures resulting from erratic rainfall and floods affect adolescents and their families’ nutrition and livelihoods.15

The adolescents discussed ideas for how they could be supported at a film screening with Government representatives responsible for health, agriculture, education and social affairs in their district. The discussion led to adolescents being included in official decision-making at the village level, and helped to shift adults’ perceptions of the value of young people’s active participation in their communities.

The advocacy network Children in a Changing Climate used the videos (and 15 others made by adolescents and youth as part of a national CDST programme) to advocate for child-centred disaster risk reduction and climate change policies, healthy environments for children and child rights. (See their YouTube channel16).
Reducing child marriage

Young people in Central Sulawesi and Mamuju identified child marriage as a priority issue in their communities. Nearly 250 adolescent girls and boys participated in Adolescent Circle activities to develop key competencies and learn new skills to engage with their communities, raise their voices and address child marriage, including after natural disasters. For instance, adolescent participants planned and implemented campaigns and community events to raise awareness of child marriage in their community.

Adolescent Kit activities are also being used in wider efforts by UNICEF Indonesia, civil society and government partners to address harmful gender and social norms that uphold child marriage. In 2018, a four-month series of village-level dialogues with religious and community leaders was held, with heightened adolescent engagement. UNICEF found that this approach reduced the proportion of people in the community who believed that child marriage was acceptable, from 97.2 to 85.6 percent, and increased awareness that children remaining in school and efforts to promote girls’ empowerment can help reduce child marriage. The activities, facilitated through the Adolescent Kit, resulted in changes in local budgeting that allowed for ongoing activities, for and by adolescents, to prevent and respond to child marriage.

Mainstreaming Adolescent Participation in Emergency Preparedness and Response

Shifting widespread beliefs and behaviours so that adolescent participation is valued is a complex undertaking, as beliefs are often acquired from an early age and are embedded within systems of learning. UNICEF Indonesia has partnered with the MoECRT’s National Secretariat for Safe Schools, teacher training colleges, and district education offices to mainstream adolescent participation into schools and learning programmes.

Despite growing attention to the value of adolescent participation, meaningful and widespread representation in civic spaces is still lacking. Young people participating in the 30th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 2019 reiterated this as their key message in a 12-point statement presented to the Minister of Women and Children, the Minister of Women’s Empowerment and Child Protection, the Governor of Central Java, the Mayor of Surakarta and UNICEF representatives. Addressing adolescents’ concerns is critical for their development, as the issues that affect them most can have a negative impact throughout their lives (see right).

Adolescent participation in nationwide systems

To embed adolescent participation in school management and local-level policymaking processes, Adolescent Kit activities have been added to the national Comprehensive School Safety (CSS) curriculum. This enables adolescents learn to identify key disaster risks in their communities and present solutions to schools and local stakeholders.

Since 2018, the Adolescent Kit has been adopted as part of extracurricular activities in junior secondary schools in three districts and eight villages. Some of the solutions proposed by adolescents in local planning meetings, such as an electric water pump in Oletsala village in the Kupang District, have been funded by local government budgets. In other locations, adolescent involvement has been mandated in local planning and policy development processes.

UNICEF is currently supporting the Ministry of National Development Planning/National Development Planning Agency in Indonesia to conduct a study of different participation platforms for adolescents and the engagement levels they can reach. The study seeks to understand if this engagement is meaningful and improves adolescent well-being. It will be finalized in late 2021 (See 2020 U-Report survey to right).
Adolescent participation in life skills education curricula

UNICEF Indonesia has adapted the Adolescent Kit activities into its life skills education (LSE) curriculum in South Sulawesi and West Papua provinces, with a focus on reaching the most vulnerable adolescents living in areas prone to disasters, climate change impacts and other shocks. The classes in South Sulawesi and West Papua have been adapted in partnership with a teacher training college and through a human-centred design assessment of the curriculum, conducted with students and teachers. Adolescent Kit activities have also been included as part of the central accreditation system at the MoECRT, enabling teachers who teach LSE to receive incentives.

The curriculum has mainstreamed key twenty-first century skills – such as problem-solving, communication and conflict resolution – across all topics, including sexual and reproductive health and rights, sanitation, violence prevention, gender, human rights, body confidence and HIV/AIDS. As part of the curriculum, adolescents are planning and implementing initiatives to disseminate knowledge to their peers and other community members on topics they find most pressing, including menstrual hygiene management, bullying and child marriage prevention.

UNICEF Indonesia is currently expanding its sub-national-level efforts to promote greater adolescent participation, in order to take them nationwide. It is developing an e-learning module for teacher development, with more than 14,000 teachers registered, and digitizing the Indonesian Bahasa version of the Adolescent Kit.

Mainstreaming Adolescent Participation Across Sectors

UNICEF Indonesia’s experience using Adolescent Circles in reducing disaster risk, improving response and engaging adolescents in co-creation, advocacy and research has shown that adolescent participation can accelerate programming results. UNICEF Indonesia has therefore developed and resourced a strategic, cross-sectoral approach aimed at integrating adolescent participation through civil society and government partnerships.

The 2021-2025 Country Programme Strategy prioritizes the routine engagement of children and adolescents in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of its programming. Multiple sectors have included adolescent engagement activities:

- The child protection team and industry partners are building and enhancing their skills and capacities to use online platforms to increase adolescent safety. The sector is partnering with adolescents to find ways to reduce violence and harmful social attitudes and beliefs, with a focus on promoting positive gender norms.

- The climate, emergencies and disaster risk reduction (DRR) team is promoting child-centred risk management policies and mainstreaming targeted activities on environment and climate action with and for adolescents. It is working to ensure that adolescents are mobilized as active stakeholders in government planning, budget development and policymaking.

- The communication for development (C4D) team is working with adolescents on research and C4D activities, including on social media, to identify, stop and correct misinformation, including on the Indonesia COVID-19 response and vaccine promotion.

- The health team is incorporating child and adolescent voices in programme development through national consultations and adolescent-led research. It is building South-South networks with countries in the region facing similar health threats from environmental degradation and the climate crisis. This will allow UNICEF to better understand and address the unique health needs of adolescents and how they affect their development, nutrition, education and well-being.

- The education team is focused strengthening life skills, twenty-first century skills, digital capacities and entrepreneurship for adolescents in Indonesia, with special attention to reaching the most vulnerable girls and boys, including those with disabilities. It is engaging adolescents in decision-making and developing innovative solutions that can be taken to scale.

- The nutrition team is linking its education and social behaviour change communication interventions to gender-transformative school health programming in primary and secondary schools. The aim is to scale up essential nutrition services for adolescents (including pregnant and lactating mothers) through gender-transformative technical guidelines and capacity development products at the national and sub-national levels.

- The social policy team is promoting civic awareness of adolescents’ rights to participate in decisions that affect them, by building the capacity of relevant sub-national government partners to work with adolescents in a participatory, meaningful and inclusive manner.

- The water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) team is increasing its collaboration with non-traditional actors, including the most vulnerable adolescents, through consultations and participation in programme design. In its national programming, it is ensuring that technological and financial innovations are designed to strengthen the voice of adolescents.

14,000+ teachers registered for UNICEF Indonesia’s e-learning module for teacher development, with a focus on adolescent participation
Key Lessons Learned

Create an enabling environment for adolescent participation

An enabling environment for meaningful adolescent participation relies on both adults and adolescents having the skills, knowledge and resources they need, especially in facilitation roles. For instance, Adolescent Circles are often supported by local youth and adult facilitators who not only need to understand how adolescent participation can reduce disaster risk and improve community response, but also have speaking and facilitation skills so they can fully support adolescent girls and boys in realizing their solutions.

UNICEF found it valuable to map the local ecosystem and identify sustainable entry points before implementing Adolescent Kit activities. This includes accounting for:

- Knowledge of local social and political contexts – including social norms around adolescents and their role in the community – to ensure that activities keep adolescents safe and protected;
- Strengthening the capacities of national partners and local champions in Adolescent Kit processes, especially in the Taking Action phase;
- Adequate time to develop facilitator skills for local implementation, and the ability to measure them;
- Time and support to develop realistic action planning between national partners and local facilitators;
- A realistic timeline for Adolescent Circle activities based on participants’ family and school obligations; and
- Sufficient human and financial resources to support adolescents acting on their solutions.

Link adolescent participation to civic and community engagement

As identified, the greatest area for growth is in the Adolescent Kit’s Taking Action phase. Knowing this, more attention is required during training and planning to identify and work with local policymakers who are open to supporting adolescent participation in decision-making. Building relationships between adolescents and decision-makers early in the Adolescent Circles process can help to connect their solutions to local government priorities, funding and available support.
As many issues raised by local Adolescent Circles are experienced by other young people throughout Indonesia, connecting local ideas to national plans, budgets and policies is valuable for wider systemic change. This can be done by supporting adolescent group members to engage in national youth networks, participate in youth conferences, and advocate at national and international policymaking events.

Include systematic monitoring and evaluation of adolescent participation

Being able to systematically monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of adolescent participation locally and nationally requires integrating monitoring and evaluation (M&E) processes into planning with local facilitators and adolescents. In the past few years, UNICEF and its partners have developed key resources that can help guide meaningful adolescent participation and civic engagement programming, as well as monitoring and evaluating efforts:

- UNICEF’s Conceptual Framework for Measuring Outcomes of Adolescent Participation,
- UNICEF Guidance Note: Adolescent participation in UNICEF monitoring and evaluation,
- UNICEF’s Engaged and heard! Guidelines on adolescent participation and civic engagement (pp. 28–29),
- The Inter-Agency Standing Committee’s With Us and for Us: IASC guidelines on working with and for young people in humanitarian and protracted crises (p. 82).

Support safe digital spaces while recognizing the digital divide

The COVID-19 pandemic response highlighted how digital technologies can increase engagement opportunities for hard-to-reach adolescents – but also how inequalities in access to technology can preclude that involvement. While many Adolescent Circle activities are designed to be in-person, UNICEF has been able to share Adolescent Kit activities online. It recognizes that improvements are required to meaningfully engage young people on digital platforms. There is a need for more opportunities to build skills, enhance participation, interact and drive more child- and adolescent-led programmes. It will be critical to overcome barriers that exclude those without access to digital technology, while developing creative digital content using the Adolescent Kit.

Conclusion

Almost a third of Indonesia’s 270 million inhabitants are under 18 years old. They are the ones who will benefit most from reducing disaster risks that adversely impact their education, health, well-being and prosperity.

Not only do they have a right to participate in shaping decisions that affect them, but their contributions are also making a difference, contributing to better-prepared households, more resilient schools and communities, and safer societies. Adolescent engagement activities can help adolescents develop foundational life skills and access opportunities to influence policies, especially when activities are contextually appropriate, meaningful and supported by adult champions who are responsive to adolescents’ ideas.

UNICEF Indonesia’s experience with the Adolescent Kit – piloted first in humanitarian and protracted crises and then in other sectors – shows how investment in one sector can lead to expansion. In many cases, investing in disaster preparedness and identifying risks has linked to wider, cross-sectoral work in areas adolescents themselves are concerned about, such as child marriage, education and health. The sectors were able to adopt and adapt proven coaching and mentorship models for the Adolescent Circles, use translated resources, and build their programmes using lessons learned from evaluating Adolescent Kit activities.
Having this baseline means that UNICEF Indonesia has been able to rapidly adapt activities during the COVID-19 pandemic, to continue partnering with adolescents as part of the response. This experience shows that due to the multiple risks adolescents face in Indonesia, having targeted, cross-sectoral and institutionalized approaches to preparedness, response and recovery can accelerate efforts to address the unique needs of adolescents in diverse disaster situations.

The key lesson is that investment in adolescent participation is vital as Indonesia faces an increase in hazardous events. While ensuring that adolescents can contribute to developing solutions can be a complex endeavor, it is crucial not only for Indonesia’s long-term economic prosperity, but in order to build a safer, healthier and more just world for adolescents.

Further Readings and Information
- UNICEF Indonesia – English | Bahasa Indonesia
- Adolescent Kit for Expression and Innovation
- Blog: ‘Adolescents Take Action, Adults Listen’
- Engaged and Heard! UNICEF guidelines on adolescent participation and civic engagement
- Interagency Standing Committee, With and for Us: IASC guidelines on working with and for young people in humanitarian and protracted crises
- UNICEF, Conceptual Framework for Measuring Outcomes of Adolescent Participation
- UNICEF Guidance Note: Adolescent participation in UNICEF monitoring and evaluation
- UNICEF Evaluation Office, ‘Adolescent Kit for Expression and Innovation: Innovation case study’
- United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, Words into Action Guidelines: Engaging children and youth in disaster risk reduction and resilience building

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Endnotes

2 A seismically active area on the rim of the Pacific Ocean, with high earthquake and volcano activity (www.britannica.com/place/Ring-of-Fire).
3 Of Indonesia’s total population, 18 percent is 10-19 years old, while nearly 25 percent (75 million young people) is 9-24 years old, belonging to Generation Z (https://setkab.go.id/en/statistics-indonesia-releases-2020-census-results).
5 ASEAN Safe Schools Initiative (ASSI) (https://aseansafeschoolsinitiative.org)
10 The Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment no. 12, The right of the child to be heard, CRC/C/GC/12, 1 July 2009, www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/AdvanceVersions/CRC-C-GC-12.pdf.
11 See https://adolescentkit.org.
16 UNICEF Indonesia, ‘Youth Voices from the Frontline: Community digital storytelling initiative’, www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLBz0Ovfc35a-OQdbzC9ZNq3eNbtXle4k.
20 While the examples listed here highlight actions specific to adolescents, many of them also include younger children and older youth.

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