**WHY? YOUNG PEOPLE’S VOICES MATTER**

Nearly 30 per cent of the South African population is between the ages of 10-24 years. While young people are generally viewed as agents of change, the country’s high levels of unemployment, violence, HIV and teenage pregnancy are posing challenges to youth development. Government and partners recognize the need to support and invest in young people, and numerous policies and programmes exist. Yet frequently, the voices and opinions of the young people themselves are not always meaningfully taken into account. In this complex and fast moving era, the problems and concerns of young people vary dramatically from one generation to the next. There is ever more reason to ensure we listen to young people, and learn not only of their needs, but also their ideas, as we work with them to find solutions to the challenges we face.

**WHAT? U-REPORT – A TOOL TO COMMUNICATE AND DRIVE POSITIVE CHANGE**

Administered by young people for young people, U-Report is an innovative, user-centred social monitoring tool for community participation. It is designed to address issues that young people care about, so that marginalized groups and their communities have a voice on issues that matter to them, and a chance to influence positive change. Managed by UNICEF and partners and used in countries around the world, U-Report offers a forum to amplify young people’s voices through local and national media; provides real-time alerts to key stakeholders about their needs; and feeds back ideas and information to the U-Reporters, thus empowering them to work for change and drive improvements in their respective localities.

As of March 2017, U-Report had over 3 million users in 34 countries, with 10 more countries scheduled to launch, including South Africa.

**WHAT FOR? TO IMPROVE THE LIVES OF YOUNG PEOPLE, FOCUSING ON THEIR ISSUES.**

While U-Report can be used to address any issue that affects children and young people, UNICEF and partners use it as a youth-led tool to collect quantifiable data on specific issues that impact the most vulnerable – such as youth unemployment, health, education, violence, substance abuse, and water and sanitation. The information is then shared with young people, the general public and policy makers to raise awareness and leverage the voice and concerns of young people on issues that affect them.

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**U-REPORTERS IN ZIMBABWE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TOTAL # OF U-REPORTERS</th>
<th>RATE BY GENDER</th>
<th>RATE BY AGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>57,250</td>
<td>57% (20-29)</td>
<td>18-24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50,000</td>
<td>53% (30-39)</td>
<td>25-34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43% (40-49)</td>
<td>30-44</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Do you think young people listen when their friends encourage them to go to the clinic for help and information?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATISTICS</th>
<th>LOCATIONS</th>
<th>GENDER</th>
<th>AGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GOOD</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BAD</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
HOW? FREE, VOLUNTARY, ANONYMOUS - IT’S REAL TIME, IT’S NOW.

Responses received from SMS, Facebook Messenger, Twitter and Telegram in the open-source Rapid Pro platform are analysed in real time. The data is mapped at the local level and compiled nationally. Results are displayed through a public website, and anyone can access the data according to age, gender and location. U-Report is anonymous and completely transparent.

- People join by sending U-Report a message via SMS, Facebook, or other web-based channels.
- U-Reporters answer a few questions to build their profile information (age, gender and location).
- Regular polls are sent out to U-Reporters to gather their opinions on issues of social concern in the country.
- Incoming messages are analysed, sorted and displayed on a public website, in real time.
- U-Reporters receive feedback, additional information and results.
- UNICEF and partners work with Government and decision makers to promote positive change with collected data.
- U-Reporters can also send messages to U-Report for free at any time about anything they’d like to discuss.

WHO? GOVERNMENT, DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS AND YOUNG PEOPLE

UNICEF is working with the Department for Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME), the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA) and UNFPA to introduce and scale up U-Report in South Africa. By joining forces, they aim to ensure it is user-friendly, accessible and relevant to youth across the country. Young people rarely have a voice in the decisions that affect their lives, yet they have immense energy, talent and creativity that, if harnessed, can help to find innovative solutions and improve development outcomes. U-Report engages young people directly as U-Reporters and administrators of the platform and discussions.

RESULTS?

In 2016 alone, U-Report received over 30 million messages globally, addressing multiple issues in a range of countries. In Liberia, for example, U-Reporters unveiled sexual abuse of girls in schools in 2015. 13,000 messages were received from young people all over their country, 86 per cent of which affirmed that sex in exchange for grades was an issue in their community. The U-Report team provided the government helpline – which was inundated with calls. U-Reporters used the information to mobilize their communities, and started to work on longer-term solutions with Government.

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

By supporting the scale up of U-Report in South Africa, companies have the opportunity to demonstrate private sector leadership and contribute to concrete, positive change in the way issues affecting young people are identified and addressed across the country. In doing so, you directly support the objectives of the National Development Plan – Vision 2030 as well as the Sustainable Development Goals in South Africa.

WHAT NEXT? SCALING UP U-REPORT IN SOUTH AFRICA

South Africa is a country with a vibrant and active youth population. By scaling the use of U-Report across all provinces, and using it as a mechanism to obtain feedback on whether current programmes and policies are working, UNICEF and partners seek to give young people an opportunity to drive positive change in their communities. U-Report is currently being piloted to grow the number of U-Reporters.

CONTACT US

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