World Children’s Day 2021

THE IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON CHILDREN IN UGANDA

Creativity Contest

unicef | for every child
November 20\textsuperscript{th} is a very important day. It is World Children’s Day, a day for children by children. It is a fun day for children, with a serious message.

For the second year, we celebrate World Children’s Day amidst a global COVID-19 pandemic. UNICEF and partners have organized a nationwide contest for written stories and poems, drawings, paintings, short video clips, and photographs by children aged 20 years and below, highlighting how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted their lives, education, family, and dreams. Through their submissions, suggestions on what stakeholders can do to better handle crises like these in the future.
FOREWORD

Every year on 20 November, UNICEF celebrates World Children’s Day, a day for children by children where we highlight critical issues affecting children’s lives.

November 20th is an important date as it is the date in 1959 when the UN General Assembly adopted the Declaration of the Rights of the Child. It is also the date in 1989 when the UN General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Celebrating these key milestones amidst the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) pandemic reminds us of the continuous need to always engage children and young people as advocates of their own rights. At UNICEF, we strongly believe that children’s voices matter and are critical in decision making and identifying possible solutions to challenges that they face.

COVID-19 has shown us how inequality affects the rights of every child. Children and young people are raising voices on the issues that matter to their generation and calling for adults to listen to them and create a better future.

This year we have provided an opportunity for children around the country, including refugees and children with disabilities, to share their views on how COVID-19 has impacted their lives. We also asked them to come up with solutions that policy makers, political leaders and stakeholders could explore to make children’s lives better.
The World Children’s Day Creativity Contest builds on UNICEF’s digital storytelling programme where some children, especially those in remote parts of the country and refugee children, have undergone a rigorous training. In addition, they have been equipped with skills in areas of communication, photography, design and layout, videography, and social media. Skills which are all critical to creating meaningful engagement opportunities for children and young people to advocate for children’s rights, tell their stories, and participate in decision-making processes.

As UNICEF it is our role to provide platforms for young people so we can amplify their voices. We do this through media engagement, social media, events, polls but also through this contest.

I am excited to see that 343 children and young people participated in the World Children’s Day Creativity Contest by submitting entries to categories that included photography, videography, drawing/illustrations, and writing.

To us, everyone is a winner because winning is not everything, but participation is.

I implore all of us to read through these amazing submissions by our children because they reflect their personal stories or stories of other children in their community. In addition, as Uganda recovers from the pandemic, adopting some of the creative solutions proposed by the participants will go a long way in building back better, across all sectors.

UNICEF is committed to continue working with children and young people across the country to explore their creative skills and to give them platforms to speak out.

It is my sincere hope this publication is being read by many mothers and fathers, teachers, nurses and doctors, government leaders and civil society activists, religious and community elders, businesses leaders and media professionals, as well as young people and children themselves. World Children’s Day offers each of us an inspirational entry-point to advocate, promote and celebrate children’s rights, translating into dialogues and actions that will build a better world for children.

I congratulate all the participants of this contest, but also the parents and guardians who provided consent to allow their children and young people submit their entries to UNICEF.

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Dr. Munir Safieldin
UNICEF Representative in Uganda
Dear contestants,

Thank you for taking part in this amazing contest under the theme – ‘The Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on children in Uganda.’ This was a timely theme, because everyone has been affected by the pandemic in one way or the other. Thank you for taking off time from your busy schedules to be part of the contest.

It was also very refreshing to hear from the children. Thank you UNICEF for joining the rest of the world in commemorating World Children’s Day through events that engage children and young people as advocates of their own rights. And also not letting the children be the hidden victims of the pandemic. You gave children an opportunity to express themselves. It was not only a sharing process, but also an expression of pain and challenges through drawing and painting, photography, written story or poem and videography categories. This acted as a healing intervention.

In a competition, we will always have those who perform better than others. Thank you for taking part in this contest. You are all the best in what you participated in.

Your participation in this contest was an expression of your self-esteem, confidence and self-worth. And this will forever not be taken for granted.

Thank you once again.

It was observed that the participants had great stories to share, but the work was hurriedly done. And this of course affected the final marks.

There was evidence of adult influence which is not entirely bad, but it is good when children are given an opportunity to express themselves in a way that they best understand.

Thanks parents and guardians for supporting the participants.

The following criteria was used:

- Originality
- Appeal
- Interest
- Creativity
- Story line

Compiled by Jovita Ajuna of Auntie Jovita Children’s Foundation

November 16, 2021
This map does not reflect a position by UNICEF on the legal status of any country or territory or the delimitation of any frontiers.

Source: UNICEF, 2021
PHOTOGRAPHY

......is the only language that can be understood anywhere in the world

Destin Sparks
FIRST RUNNER UP
MERCY D. WANYENZE, 11

SECOND RUNNER UP
ROBERT AKIM, 19

WINNER
SOPHIA NASSALI, 12
What is left in my head is imagination. Everyday I wake up in the morning and have my breakfast. And then I do my house work that is assigned to me. There is no more schooling so I decided to teach myself pretending I am in class, imagining my favourite English teacher is with me every morning as she used to do. I pray that COVID-19 ends soon so that I can go back to my class. I am not even sure that I will pass Primary Six.
ACTIVITIES DURING THE COVID-19 LOCKDOWN

Farming: At my father’s farm I play a role of feeding the animals. I also keep myself busy by weeding the maize for it to grow well.

During the lockdown, I learnt new skills during the first lockdown like making babies’ dresses.
SECOND RUNNER UP

ROBERT AKIM

HOW THE PANDEMIC HAS AFFECTED MY LIFE, EDUCATION, FAMILY AND DREAMS.

First and foremost, it has introduced me to various economic activities like small scale farming which I used not to do while at school.

It has also enabled me to know my relatives which I never knew before through visitation.

It has greatly affected my education because I could have finished some levels in the years we have spent on lock down.

Concerning my dream, COVID has really affected it. According to me if COVID wasn’t there, by 2025 I could be completing my Diploma then graduated to the next class but with COVID, it has being locked down.

19 YEARS OLD

KOBOKO DISTRICT
If it's a good movie, the sound could go off and the audience would still have a pretty clear idea of what was going on.

~ Alfred Hitchcock ~
WINNERS
NTUTU SAMALIE, 08
NAMARA YVETTE, 06

FIRST RUNNER UP
EVELYN NADUNGA MISHEAL, 12

SECOND RUNNER UP
JOSEPHINE ANGUTARU, 15
WINNERS
NTUTU SAMALIE & NAMARA YVETTE

A SHORT VIDEO CLIP OF THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON OUR LIVES, EDUCATION AND FAMILY.

In this video we share with you how the pandemic has affected our social lives and school attendance. We also talk about the preventive measures and how people can protect themselves against the virus.

This is how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted our lives - Samalie and Yvette share their story
https://youtu.be/b8-vUwm9AOc
WE HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO GO AND SEE OUR GRANDPARENTS, OUR UNCLEs OUR COUSINS AND OUR NEPHEWS

~ YVETTE

I ENCOURAGE UGANDANS ABOVE 18 YEARS TO GO AND GET VACCINATED

~ SAMALIE
My name is Nadunga Evelyn Misheal, my friends call me Eva. I am in primary six at Ebenezer Primary School in Busajabwankuba, Mbale district. I have not been in school because of COVID-19 which has exposed me to child labor and child poverty. My parents lost their jobs and I don’t go to school anymore because of the pandemic. I can’t afford to study on zoom and if it wasn’t for the pandemic, I would have been in school. I wish I could go back to school; I wish my parents didn’t lose their jobs. My dream is to be Human rights lawyer so I can show justice and fight violence against children and women.

“The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed me to child labour,” Evelyn Nadunga, 12 years
https://youtu.be/it9rkwuVpXI
AFTER 2 YEARS I’M STILL IN PRIMARY SIX HOW CAN I ACCESS QUALITY EDUCATION YET I AM AT HOME? YET MY DREAM IS TO BE A LAWYER

COVID-19 IS EXPOSING ME TO CHILD LABOR AND CHILD POVERTY YET I DESERVE THE BEST
SECOND RUNNER UP
JOSEPHINE ANGUTARU

THE EFFECT OF COVID-19 LOCKDOWN ON DREAMS OF AN ADOLESCENT GIRL

I am Angutaru Josephine, aged 15 years from Yumbe district. As an adolescent girl, I tell my COVID-19 lockdown story in a short video. I know many adolescents will relate to it. It reflects the experiences that I and other adolescent girls in my village have faced during the 2 years of school closure in Uganda. I appeal whoever watches this video to do something they can to protect the girl child, keep them in school and help child mothers go back to school when schools open again in Uganda.

“School is the safest place for us to enjoy our rights,” Angutaru Josephine, 15 years
https://youtu.be/1cBO8ORwt4g
EDUCATION HAS BECOME EXPENSIVE FOR ME COS TO ACCESS LEARNING THESE DAYS IT NEEDS MONEY AND MY PARENTS DON’T HAVE THAT MUCH INCOME

...FOR US ADOLESCENTS, SCHOOL IS SAFEST PLACE FOR US TO ENJOY OUR RIGHTS
I found I could say things with color and shapes that I couldn’t say any other way – things I had no words for.

~ Georgia O’Keeffe ~
WINNER
DAVID MENGA, 14

FIRST RUNNER UP
EMMANUEL MUKISA, 15

SECOND RUNNER UP
ASHAHIID JUMA 19
MY DREAM HIDDEN BEHIND FACE MASK

Before COVID-19 I dwelt in a better life full of expectations to be an important person in life, I and my parents we were fighting together to achieve our goals.

My dreams of being artist were huge and prestigious. I was happier that I could fulfil my wishes. As I knew through my art, drawing and painting, I’ll also be someone better in future.

Unfortunately the gloomy weather changed the situation and affected the whole world, unbreakable chains tied my life dreams collapsed turned into blank and zero. The storm clouds loomed the large part of my hopes and ambitions, this gruesome virus perished my thoughts and locked my dreams behind the facemasks, the light went far from me, smiling turned into tears and regrets. My rooms became my cell. Fears and doubts consumed my hopes, many questions engraved in my head without answers, I am spent of living and desperation took a throne. Oooh God! who will free us from this calamity?
HOME TURNED INTO SCHOOL

In the first lock down when they sent us back home, I learnt many things like cooking new foods, weeding and doing exercises like huddle race. I even got extra time to study my books and make comics.

The second lock down was very stressing and tiresome because my parents and guardians were not working and the dry season had struck. My cousin brother and I would wake up at 4 o’clock to fetch water for the whole the family. There was extremely no time to sit down. We would sleep at ten o’clock, 11:00 pm and sometimes 12:00 am.

This made me very angry because I did not get time to read books, do revision or practice my talent which is drawing. And the worst thing is that my uncle paid for me online studying which doubled the stress. The teachers would give us exercises but I didn’t do them not because I didn’t want to do them but because time didn’t allow.

I wish the minister of education instructed schools to give us holiday packages before the lockdown to keep us busy instead of online studying. This affected my family very much, I live in a foster family we didn’t get time to play together and eat together as a family. All this was replaced with online studying, fetching water and taking our younger brother to study which was 4 kilometres and getting milk required walking 5 kilometres.
PAIN OF THE GIRL CHILD

A pencil drawing describing the pain of the girl child wearing a mask of Two thousand Uganda shillings (2000) being forced on by a man’s hands on the mouth, showing how COVID-19 has affected the girl child.
All I need is a sheet of paper and something to write with, and then I can turn the world upside down.

Friedrich Nietzsche
WINNER

Morris

20 years old

Ntoroko District

1st Runner Up

Merveille K Bitondo

19 years old

Mbarara District

2nd Runner Up

Pearl Nsimire

14 years old

Kabarole District
Winner

MORRIS

20 years old
Ntoroko District

The voice of the unheard African girl during the COVID-19 pandemic

I am the sixth born of my family, born with seven girls and two boys. Growing up with one parent and also within a home which is financially disadvantaged and poverty stricken has been our fate. Growing up through thorns and stones has been the opportunity nature has given to our innocent lives; in these trying moments of COVID-19 pandemic. My mother is a serial charcoal seller and celebrated woman who has spent over two decades in rent. Parenting 9 children, and yet the same woman is battling a chronic disease.

Before the pandemic life was hard but now it is very hard because everything is based on survival for the fittest.

Before COVID-19 I used to go to Karugutu S.S.S for my A-levels. But everything has changed, the traditional way of learning and reading has changed from classroom based
to online way. Learning via zoom, radios and TVs. Can a poor mother’s daughter access these platforms? No way, I couldn’t access any because my family is financially disadvantaged and poverty stricken. Learning materials were supplied by government, only a handful of students got access to them. We live in a hard-to-reach area on the hills of Mt. Rwenzori, where telecom network is fluctuating. Do you expect me to have an internet connection by zoom class time? Of course, no. Whether you accessed these learning materials or not, did you attend your online classes or not, UNEB will subject us to the same exam and the same grading scale, whether rich or poor. And this is how I failed my A-level exams, with one principal pass. A dream to be a medic is gone forever.

The security of my sisters has been at stake in these trying moments. She mounts hills, slithers in the river like a snake as well as fighting huge pressure from greedy men as they stick their lips staring. She faces a lot of inadequacies varying from home to school, they have no cloth to cover their nakedness.

I seek oh! To be heard at least once our plight for the future has met quite a few challenges here and they are due to COVID-19 pandemic. We beseech oh! UNICEF to support girls in my home and my district; because *Patience my elder sister dropped out of school, *Joanita our neighbour got pregnant, *Doreen our first born got raped. *Jakie has simultaneously suffered from gender-based violence, whereas *Susan a 12 year old HIV/AIDS positive cannot access his medication for ARVs due to travel restrictions. Also remember *Sarah is now an orphan having lost her mother to the pandemic in January 2021.

Come for our rescue, our girls are bleeding severely in my district yet our political leaders mind less about these incidences. This young generation is decaying, remember they are always telling us we are the leaders of tomorrow, they cannot prepare us for tomorrow. Please UNICEF, see how you will embrace us, soothing pain away, acting like a balm to our confused hearts! My question to you is “How fast will you do this?”

* NAMES CHANGED TO PROTECT IDENTITY
Kasangadjo Bitondo

First Runner Up

KASANGADJO BITONDO

My COVID-19 experience

I’m a Congolese refugee living in Mbarara and 4th born in a family of 7 children. I’m an S.6 student who loves reading and writing stories. In 2017, we managed to escape from a burning house that killed 2 of my brothers and left our father with serious burns. Since then, the tragedy has haunted us as the loss was immense and we miss our brothers every single day. News about COVID-19 reminded me of what had happened to us back in Congo and the thought of experiencing the same thing again terrified me the most. I couldn’t imagine how life would change if COVID-19 reached Uganda, the only country that gave us safety. I have to admit that I was so scared, everyone around me pretended that things were as usual, but deep inside I knew that life wouldn’t be the same again since news from the globe about COVID were terrifying. Shortly, we heard that COVID-19 was nearer to Uganda and to make the matter worse, our relatives in Congo told us that there
were cases of COVID which was the worst news ever to our family. This was no longer a joke since conditions worsened and we had to reach out to our people that we had left behind.

On 18th March of 2020, the Ugandan president announced a total lockdown that called for the closure of schools in the country. After returning from school, I cried like a baby since I knew there was no more schooling. At home, I found when most of the people had been stopped from working and we could see news on TV how new cases were being reported and people dying every day due to COVID. I kept on praying that my siblings wouldn’t be infected as the number of confirmed cases kept on increasing which worsened the situation since there was absolutely nothing to stop it from spreading. As days went by, I became wary as there was no change. Some girls gave up and got married while others got pregnant. For my case, I spent time with my family during lockdown and got to discover the unknown experiences. Despite the kind of poverty we were in, we tried very much to survive and live happily at home. Amidst this struggle, Mbarara got to receive new COVID cases where my little brother Daniel got infected. This news freaked me out since I was one of those who were in direct physical contact with him. In a few days, his state worsened such that his face was feverish, eyes reddish and bedridden. This depressed me since I couldn’t stand looking at my brother’s state in which he had a cavernous cough that was heartbreaking and painful to hear. Every time he coughed, we had to give him fresh water and then apply cold compresses to his forehead and wrists. His body temperatures were so high such that all the compresses could be hot in a minute. Thereafter, Daniel’s temperature began to drop and was no longer weak which was a relief to see him getting better and regaining appetite. Amidst all sorrows, I continued praying for my brother plus other COVID victims and never lost faith in God. Finally with much respect and pleasure I thank the Ugandan government for its efforts to fight, control and prevent the spread of COVID-19.

God Bless
My COVID-19 experience

On 18th March, 2020, His Excellency Kaguta Museveni announced the closure of schools due to COVID-19. So we sadly went back home.

On 27th March, 2020, Uganda registered her first COVID-19 case. The virus that once seemed like a dream far away was now within us. It was like a nightmare come true. Moreover, when I looked at how the virus was spreading, I was terrified. This was neither a bad dream or a joke, but a terrible reality.

Even after a months time, the president said that we were to continue in a lockdown due to the alarming spread of COVID-19. This was when I totally lost my hopes. Reading books became boring, after all who knew whether schools would ever resume? It was such a devastating experience, with the number of
people dying due to COVID-19 increasing every hour. Life was so scary. Amidst all this, I never gave up my faith in God. I continued praying for God’s intervention in our lives.

The lockdown kept being pushed on for eleven months until the president announced that schools would re-open on 12th April, 2021. To me, that was the proverbial light at the end of the tunnel. I was overjoyed and kept my fingers crossed that the schedule would not be changed because that was where the remaining flicker of hope for studies lay.

The first days of the term at school were going on smoothly until we started getting COVID-19 cases among students. This was so scary, I was so worried about our health. I thought, “What if we all contract the virus and die?” I was so worried that I even started praying that schools would close again. A few weeks later, the president announced another lockdown to reduce the spread of the virus. I made a huge sigh of relief because I was hopeful that the risks of contracting corona virus at home were less compared to school, since we would interact with a smaller number of people. This time round, I came back home with a lot of positivity because I had realised that I obviously have to consider my health first!

Luckily, our school has continued to share with us work on the website in order for us to keep updated with our education. I have got enough time to evaluate the impact of the lockdown to my life and realized that the positives outweigh the negatives. I have had enough time to re-think about my ambitions, dreams and improve my talents such as public speech, debate, writing, dancing, singing and associating with people online who have added so much value to my life through mentorship. I have gotten enough time to be with my family, grow spiritually with them and enjoy each sweet moment with them.

When I chose to look at my glass of life as half full rather than half empty, my life became worthwhile despite the lockdown. I continue praying that everything gets back to normal at God’s right time.