



Covid-19 and Children: UNICEF

Why in News

Recently, the [United Nations Children's Fund](#) (UNICEF) has released the report “**Averting a lost Covid generation**”, which highlights significant and growing consequences of **Covid-19** on children.

- The report came ahead of the [World Children's Day](#) (20th November).

Key Points

▪ About the Report:

- It is the **first UNICEF report to comprehensively outline** the dire and growing **consequences for children as the [pandemic](#) goes on.**
- It shows that while symptoms among infected children remain mild, **infections are rising** and the longer-term **impact on the education, nutrition and well-being of an entire generation** of children and young people can be life-altering.

▪ Data Analysis:

- Children and adolescents account for **1 in 9 reported Covid-19 infections.**
- As of the **beginning of November 2020**, children and adolescents accounted for **11% of the 25.7 million infections** reported across 87 countries.
- It estimated that **a third of the countries** analysed, **witnessed a drop of at least 10% in coverage of health services** and there was a **40% decline in the coverage of nutrition services** for women and children across 135 countries.
- As of **October 2020**, **265 million children were still missing out on school meals** globally.
- **65 countries** reported a **decrease in-home visits by social workers** in September 2020, compared to 2019.

▪ Concerns:

- These numbers **bust the myth that children are barely affected** by the disease, which has been prevalent throughout the pandemic.
- **Disruptions to key services** and **soaring poverty rates** pose the biggest threat to children and the longer the crisis persists, the deeper its impact on children's education, health, nutrition and well-being.
- **Vulnerabilities of women and children have increased**, as **health services continue to be disrupted and schools shut, denying children free [mid-day meals](#)** offered at schools for underprivileged children.
- While children could **transmit the virus to each other and to older age groups**, there was strong evidence that, with **basic safety measures in place**, the net benefits of keeping schools open outweighed the costs of closing them.

- **Schools are not the main driver of [community transmission](#)**, and children are more likely to get the virus outside of school settings.

▪ India Specific Highlights:

- **Infections in Under 20:**

- As per data from the [Indian Council of Medical Research](#) (ICMR) on the dashboard of the [National Centre for Disease Control](#), 11.89% of Covid-19 cases in India are in under 20.

- **Education:**

- **1.5 million school closures have impacted 247 million** children enrolled in elementary and secondary education and **28 million** children who were attending pre-school education in [Anganwadi Centres](#).

- **Nutrition:**

- An estimated **20 million children under 5** years of age are suffering from **wasting** (low weight for height), over **40 million** children are **chronically malnourished** and more than half of the Indian **women aged 15-49** years are **anaemic**.
- The pandemic has **further exposed the fragility** of children, less by the virus itself but much more by the indirect and long-term fallout.

- **Newborn Mortality:**

- Covid-19 poses a grave threat to the gains made by India in the [Neonatal Mortality Rate](#) (NMR) and **Infant Mortality Rate** (IMR) which saw improvements in recent years.
 - **NMR** is defined as the 'number of deaths during the first 28 completed days of life per 1,000 live births in a given year or period'.
 - **IMR** is defined as the 'number of deaths of children under the age of 1 year per 1000 live births for a given year.'

- **Sanitation:**

- The [socio-economic stress and migration](#) resulting due to the Covid-19 put **access to toilets** and the **practice of using them at risk**.
- The schools which offered **improved access to and quality of water, sanitation and hygiene facilities are closed** and the facilities are not accessed.

- **Recommendations:**

- Ensure all children **learn**, including by closing the [digital divide](#).
- Guarantee access to **nutrition** and **health services** and make **vaccines** affordable and available to every child.
- Support and protect the **mental health** of children and young people and bring an end to abuse, gender-based violence and neglect in childhood.
- Increase access to **safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene** and address **environmental degradation** and [climate change](#).
- Reverse the rise in **child poverty** and ensure an inclusive recovery for all.
- Redouble efforts to protect and support children and their families living through **conflict, disaster and displacement**.

World Children's Day

- It is celebrated on **20th November each year to promote international togetherness and awareness** among children worldwide, and **improve children's welfare**.
- The date of 20th November is an important date because, on this date, the [United Nations General Assembly](#) adopted the **Declaration of the Rights of the Child in 1959** and the **Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989**.
 - Convention on the Rights of the Child **recognises every human being under 18 years old as a child** and is the **world's most widely ratified human rights treaty**.
 - **India ratified it in 1992**.

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