THE SILENT PANDEMIC

The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the Mental Health and Psychosocial Wellbeing of Children in Conflict-Affected Countries

World Vision
Method

We spoke to:

- 220 children
- 287 parents and carers
- 245 adolescents and young people
- 44 child protection experts and community leaders

In six conflict-affected countries, to see how they’d been affected by COVID-19.
Needs

Needs for psychosocial support: 57% (70% for refugees; 43% for host communities)

What children said they needed:

- 1.2% family support
- 0.3% health services
- 17.5% education
- 24% basic services

57% psychosocial support. This rose to 70% for displaced children, three times the pre-COVID-19 estimate of 22%. This means 456 MILLION CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WORLDWIDE ARE CURRENTLY LIKELY TO BE IN NEED OF MENTAL HEALTH AND PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT.
Impact

12% of children living in conflict-affected regions said they were continuously feeling extremely sad and fearful, and could be at risk of developing moderate to severe mental health disorders such as depression and anxiety.

This is a 33% increase prior to the pandemic, WHO estimated 9% of children and adults in conflict settings.
Most children and parent feared contracting COVID-19 themselves or that relatives may die from the virus. 40% of children and 48% of parents indicated that COVID-19 is the main risk affecting their emotions.
Recommendations

USD 1.4 billion is needed to reach the 456 million children living in fragile and conflict-affected regions who are in need of mental health and psychosocial support.

Currently, funding for mental health and psychosocial support makes up JUST 1% of all humanitarian health funding.

Recommendations:
1) **Stop fighting** and adhere to International Humanitarian Law and International Human Rights Law
2) **Prioritize MHPSS** in Humanitarian Response Plans & have a subsection with: targets, funding and reporting, so that needs are highlighted, and funding gaps addressed
3) Recognise MHPSS as a **right for children** and their families, as a life-saving intervention in emergency responses, development and peacebuilding
4) **Integrated** across sectors (including child protection, livelihoods, and education) – with communities playing a role in design and implementation
5) Draft **National Mental Health strategies** (specific lines in education, health and protection)
6) Step up international collaboration to **accelerate vaccine rollout in fragile and conflict-affected countries**.
To read the full report head to:
• https://www.warchild.nl/documents/217/The_Silent_Pandemic.pdf

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