# Multi-stakeholder consultations on programming to promote adolescent well-being

# Background Paper 15: Effective policies and programming to promote adolescent well-being:
# Lessons from the background papers

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## Acknowledgements

## Abstract

This paper summarizes key lessons from thirteen background papers (Background Papers 2-14 (BP 2-14)) prepared for the series of multi-stakeholder consultations on programming to promote adolescent well-being that will be held by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (PMNCH) in May and June 2021. The background papers were drafted by leading global experts in adolescent well-being. Key lessons were derived by careful review of the thirteen papers by two of the co-authors of this paper (DR and RH) and were confirmed by the lead authors of the background papers. The background papers and their key lessons were directly informed by the views of adolescents (10-19 years), young adults (20-29 years) and representatives of youth-led networks and organizations. This was achieved through nine youth consultations held in 2020 across all the regions of the world (BP 2); through young adults being co-authors of each of the fifteen background papers; and through a young adult being one of the independent reviewers of each of the papers before their finalization.

The background papers clearly establish the importance of adolescent well-being and demonstrate that there is a growing evidence base that programmes can effectively promote adolescents´ well-being. The papers draw on the definition and conceptual framework for adolescent well-being summarized in BP1. Adolescent well-being is defined as "Adolescents thrive and are able to achieve their full potential". The conceptual framework unpacks this definition, delineating the five domains of adolescent well-being as: good health and optimum nutrition; connectedness, positive values and contribution to society; safety and a supportive environment; learning, competence, education, skills and employability; and agency and resilience.

The background papers confirm that all five domains of adolescent well-being are essential (BP4-8) and, acting synergistically, coordinated programmes to promote adolescent well-being across its five, interconnected domains are likely to be the most effective (eg. BP9). They show that investment in adolescent well-being can be justified based on human rights principles and also based on the economic returns on investment in programming to promote adolescent well-being. These returns are often in the range of five to ten dollars for every one dollar invested (BP3). Thus, the purely economic case for investment in adolescent well-being is compelling. Paper 10 shows that, while various aspects of adolescent well-being are being measured, urgent work is needed to prioritize and harmonize measurement, and to further develop and validate new measures (BP 10).

Papers 12-14 highlight that adolescent well-being is particularly challenged in humanitarian and fragile settings (BP 12) and is being significantly undermined by the COVID-19 pandemic (BP 13) and the climate crisis (BP 14). However, the responses to the climate crisis provide an excellent example of how adolescents and young people can contribute to, or even lead, the response when they have the opportunity to do so. For the rapidly increasing proportion of the world´s adolescents who have access to the internet and digital devices, digital technology provides an opportunity to reach large numbers of adolescents with information, learning and services and to provide them with opportunities to communicate with, learn from, and engage with a much wider circle of people (BP13). However, not all adolescents have access to digital technology, information and services, especially adolescent girls

and young women. Programmes in the digital space must be careful not to exacerbate inequalities because of the digital divide.

Between them, the papers highlight six key lessons for adolescent programming:

1. Programmes must embrace the multidimensional nature of well-being: All five domains are fundamentally important to adolescent well-being, and multi-sectoral collaboration and coordinated programming across the sectors will be essential.

2. Both human rights and economics demand investment in adolescent well-being: Human rights principles, including the right to health, to education, to safety and to participation demand investment in adolescent well-being. There is also a strong economic case for investing public resources in the promotion of adolescent well-being.

3. Capture impact: There are ways to measure adolescent well-being, though further efforts are urgently needed to prioritize and harmonize measurement, and to further develop and validate new measures. Measures must capture the heterogeneity of adolescents, including by age, gender, disability status, location, marital status and wealth, among others.

4. "Nothing about us, without us": The active engagement of empowered adolescents and youth in all their diversity in programme design, implementation, programme governance, monitoring and evaluation contributes to better outcomes.

5. Consider context: Programmes to promote adolescent well-being must acknowledge and address adolescent diversity. In particular, humanitarian and fragile settings, the COVID-19 pandemic and the climate crisis pose critical challenges for adolescent well-being and require tailored responses.

6. Digital technologies provide both opportunities and threats to adolescent well-being: Digital technologies provide important opportunities for adolescent programming, though care must be taken to ensure that the use of technology-based programming does not exacerbate inequalities for disadvantaged adolescents. Further research is required to better understand the ways in which digital transformations can positively and negatively affect adolescent well-being.

## 1. Introduction

It is increasingly accepted that the well-being of adolescents (10-19 years) is a human right that will be critical to future economic development and to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.[1,2] However, how should adolescent well-being be defined? In 2020, the UN H6+ Technical Working Group for Adolescent Health and Well-being and partners published a new definition and conceptual framework for adolescent well-being (Box 1 and Table 1).[3]

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**Box 1. The UN H6+ Technical Working Group for Adolescent Health and Well-being´s Definition of adolescent well-being**[3]

*Adolescents thrive and are able to achieve their full potential.*

**Expanded definition**
*Adolescents have the support, confidence and resources to thrive in contexts of secure and healthy relationships, realising their full potential and rights.*

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**Table 1. The five domains of adolescent well-being that underpin the adolescent well-being framework** [3]

| Good health and optimum nutrition | Connectedness, positive values and contribution to society | Safety and a supportive environment | Learning, competence, education, skills and employability | Agency and resilience |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| • Physical health and capacities<br>• Mental health and capacities<br>• Optimal nutritional status and diet | • Connectedness<br>• Values<br>• Attitudes<br>• Interpersonal skills<br>• Activity<br>• Change and development | • Safety<br>• Material conditions<br>• Equity<br>• Equality<br>• Non-discrimination<br>• Privacy<br>• Responsiveness | • Learning<br>• Education<br>• Resources, life skills and competencies<br>• Skills<br>• Employability<br>• Confidence | • Agency<br>• Identity<br>• Purpose<br>• Resilience<br>• Fulfilment |

A series of multi-stakeholder consultations that will include representatives of national and local governments, youth networks, UN agencies, NGOs (including youth-led and youth-serving organizations), professional associations, academics, donors and foundations will be held in May/June 2021. Their purpose will be to refine and clarify the key practical steps necessary for effective programming to promote adolescent well-being. Fifteen background papers have been prepared to support these consultations (Table 2). This, the fifteenth paper, synthesizes six key lessons from the other fourteen papers to inform future policies and programming for adolescent well-being.

## 2. Six key lessons from the background papers

***Lesson 1. Programmes must embrace the multidimensional nature of well-being: All five domains are fundamentally important to adolescent well-being, and multi-sectoral collaboration and coordinated programming across the sectors will be essential.***
Background papers 4-8 reviewed each of the five domains of adolescent well-being. Each of these papers stressed that their respective domain is of fundamental importance to adolescent well-being. And all the five papers about the individual domains (BP4-8) identified that interventions in their domain could contribute to success in other domains. It will be important that each sector working on

aspects of adolescent well-being also recognizes and internalizes that the converse is true – for example that the health sector recognises that interventions by other sectors have an important contribution to make to outcomes in the health sector´s primary domain of concern.

**Table 2. Background papers**

| 1 | Introduction to adolescent well-being and the background papers |
|---|---|
| 2 | Adolescent well-being framework: Virtual youth consultation report |
| 3 | The economic case for investment in adolescent well-being |
| 4 | Domain 1. Good health and optimum nutrition |
| 5 | Domain 2. Connectedness, positive values and contribution to society: three building blocks of adolescent well-being |
| 6 | Domain 3. A safe and supportive environment for adolescent well-being |
| 7 | Domain 4. Investing in adolescent well-being through education, learning, competence, skills and employability |
| 8 | Domain 5. Agency and resilience - foundational elements of adolescent well-being |
| 9 | Lessons learned from adolescent well-being programmes |
| 10 | Monitoring progress in adolescent well-being |
| 11 | Opportunities and threats for adolescent well-being provided by digital transformations |
| 12 | The forgotten population? A call to invest in adolescent well-being in humanitarian and fragile settings |
| 13 | Adolescent well-being in the time of COVID-19 |
| 14 | Adolescent well-being and the climate crisis |
| 15 | Effective policies and programming to promote adolescent well-being |

A paradigm shift is therefore needed. Sectors can no longer solely be judged based on their contribution to narrow and limited sectoral goals. They also need to be judged on how they contribute to adolescent well-being more generally. Using the education sector as an example, it is traditionally judged on academic outcomes such as students´ grades in national examinations or cross-national comparisons of students´ knowledge and skills in reading, mathematics and science.[4] However, since educational institutions can contribute to students´ health, nutrition, connectedness, positive values, contribution to society, safety, creating a supportive environment, and an adolescent´s agency and resilience, the institution´s contributions to all of these domains of adolescent well-being should be recognised, measured and assessed. This fact has been well-recognised by the recent initiative to develop Global Standards for Health Promoting Schools.[5]

On the other hand, no single sector can achieve adolescent well-being on its own. Multi-sectoral collaboration,[6] and sufficient resources to make this effective, will be essential to the effective promotion of adolescent well-being. To achieve this, adolescent well-being programmes must think beyond narrow sectoral goals to multi-sectoral policies that engage multiple actors at the individual, community/family, and institutional/government levels in order to  affect the whole "system" within which the adolescent is living. This will require:
- Active, constructive oversight of each sector´s contribution to overall adolescent well-being. This oversight should come from a coordinating body that spans the critical sectors, such as health, education, labour, social protection, gender, justice, sports, etc. Also, such oversight mechanisms should be in place at both national and subnational levels, such as the municipality or district.
- These oversight and coordination mechanisms should work towards coordinated programming across domains rather than in silos. This does not mean that every institution or programme or project must cover all or even more than one domain or sector, but that each should contribute synergistically to adolescent well-being. Kuruvilla and colleagues, in their paper on how to make

multi-sectoral collaboration work identified that multi-sectoral action can occur in three ways: through independent sectoral action, through intentional collaboration between sectors, and through contextual or ecological interactions.[6] To be most effective, all three should be coordinated and based on a shared vision, supported by political leadership.

- This will require investment in coordination and that coordinating mechanism must have power and command respect from the individual sectoral departments. In some countries, this role might be played by a Planning Department that vets and collates the sectoral plans and budgets.

- It will also require a long-term investment of time and resources in building a shared vision and trust between the sectors.

- Programmes must get away from sectors competing against each other. Ideally working together to achieve this common goal should both be, and be perceived to be, a win-win. In other words, each sector should agree that the transactional costs of collaborating are more than offset by the gains from doing this. Incentives may be required to encourage or nudge sectors to think and work in this way.

- The ability of adolescents to make and act on their choices and meet their individual and collective aspirations (agency), which is influenced by various intersecting socio-structural factors including deep-rooted social and gender norms and unequal power structures, that adversely affect the potential of adolescents in all their diversity. Background Paper 8 highlights the importance of adopting gender transformative, multi-dimensional, intersectoral and intersectional approaches, focused on increasing adolescents' knowledge of their rights and entitlements, strengthening their autonomous and joint decision-making capacities at home, within peer networks and communities, and building equitable gender relationships.

The case studies of programmes in Background Paper 9 show that holistic adolescent well-being programming, defined here as programmes that explicitly aim to promote adolescent well-being across its multiple domains, is feasible and can be effective. However, programmes need to use systems thinking in order to ensure that some of the effects of the interventions do not have unexpected or unintended negative effects on other outcomes. They also need an interdisciplinary approach and multi-sectoral collaboration to address the multidimensional and interconnected nature of well-being. Sustainability must be considered and invested in from the start, for example by committing time and resources to build the necessary trust and shared vision between sectors and collaborators on the programme. Programmes must also consider the diversity of adolescents to ensure that generic interventions do not leave important groups of adolescents out, including the most marginalized and vulnerable (such as adolescents with disabilities, the poorest of the poor, either boys or girls (depending on the context), sexual and gender minorities, and others). Acknowledging the extent of prevailing inequalities, and that adolescents are not a monolithic group, allows us to explore opportunities to commit to inclusive, gender transformative and adolescent responsive efforts that target adolescent well-being and rights. The programmes also provided concrete examples of the importance of engaging adolescents and young people in all stages of the programme from setting its objectives to its design, implementation, governance, monitoring and evaluation, and of how this could lead to more effective programmes as well as building their agency and resilience. The programmes used four main settings or platforms: the family and household (e.g. parenting interventions), schools, the community and the digital space. However, the programmes reviewed in BP9 demonstrated that many multi-domain programmes have only worked in one of these settings. "Next generation programmes" should also include joined up interventions that span all five domains and all four of the major settings, or multiple, coordinated programmes that, between them, span the five domains and four settings. Experience has also shown that designing interventions and

programmes to focus on developmental transitions rather than single domains of adolescent well-being can add to their effectiveness.[7]

***Lesson 2. Both human rights and economics demand investment in adolescent well-being: Human rights principles, including the right to health, to education, to safety and to participation demand investment in adolescent well-being. There is also a strong economic case for investing public resources in the promotion of adolescent well-being.***

The current generation of adolescents is the largest in history.[8,9] Although the numbers are projected to decrease in high- and upper middle-income countries, they will continue to increase in low- and lower middle-income countries, and in the world as a whole, until at least 2060.[8,9] Related to adolescents, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child "highlights the importance of a human rights-based approach that includes recognition and respect for the dignity and agency of adolescents; their empowerment, citizenship and active participation in their own lives; the promotion of optimum health, well-being and development; and a commitment to the promotion, protection and fulfilment of their human rights, without discrimination."[10]

However, investment in adolescent well-being is not only the right and just thing to do. Background Paper 3 shows that there is also a strong economic case for investment in adolescent well-being. The purely economic returns on the investment, based on cost:benefit ratios, are excellent. "Several studies show benefits between 5- and 10-times costs for many such investments, with much higher ratios in some cases. This is especially so when the synergies between different forms of investment are recognised." (BP3). Furthermore, today´s adolescents will be the adults who will drive the future development of the economy and social fabric of society over the next decades. Their well-being is therefore not only good for them, but will be good for society as a whole, both in the short and longer-term. However, the paper also stresses that far too few adolescent well-being programmes have collected the necessary costing data, linked to measures of effectiveness.

***Lesson 3. Capture impact: There are ways to measure adolescent well-being, though further efforts are urgently needed to prioritize and harmonize measurement, and to further develop and validate new measures. Measures must capture the heterogeneity of adolescents, including by age, gender, disability status, location, marital status and wealth, among others.***

A key driving force behind the major advances in infant and child health and survival over recent decades was the ability to measure the scale of the problem and the progress made to mitigate it.[11] Background Paper 10 reviewed current global adolescent measurement and accountability initiatives for their inclusion of well-being indicators, and multi-topic as well as well-being specific adolescent questionnaires for their inclusion of well-being questions, focusing on measures of positive, rather than negative, aspects of well-being. The review showed that, between them, current adolescent measurement and accountability initiatives include positive indicators for both holistic and domain-specific adolescent well-being, across all five domains. However, it also concluded that "The measurement landscape of adolescent well-being is inconsistent and incomplete in many areas", and that "The identification of core indicators for measurement of each well-being domain and the development of a comprehensive monitoring framework will be important next steps towards improved monitoring of adolescent well-being." (BP10). These measurement frameworks must be adequately resourced to ensure that monitoring systems are embedded into adolescent well-being programmes and are able to capture disaggregated data based on age, gender, and other intersecting characteristics such as race, religion, persons with disability and socio-economic status. Measuring adolescent well-being in relation to adolescents´ access to digital technologies is one of the areas where more work is needed.

An important task for the United Nations multi-agency Global Action for Measurement of Adolescent Health (GAMA) advisory group, which includes representation from youth networks, will be to agree on indicators of adolescent well-being and how to measure them. They should also advise on how monitoring systems can be set up or adapted to accommodate these indicators and on priorities for the further development and validation of adolescent well-being indicators and measurement systems. Using this advice, it will then be essential that countries and their partners develop and validate improved indicators and set up subnational, national and global measurement and monitoring systems. Such efforts should always be informed by adolescents and youth in all their diversity and should ensure that indicators developed in one context are not applied in other contexts without careful thought and appropriate testing.

***Lesson 4. "Nothing about us, without us": The active engagement of empowered adolescents and youth in all their diversity in programme design, implementation, programme governance, monitoring and evaluation contributes to better outcomes.***

"Nothing About Us, Without Us" is the principle that no policy or programme should be decided without the full, meaningful and active participation of members of the group that is affected by that policy.[12] The background papers stress the importance of actively engaging adolescents and youth in all aspects of adolescent well-being programming, including their governance, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and in all interventions that will affect their well-being, even if that is not the specific objective of the intervention (eg. BP11). The ten programmes reviewed in Background Paper 9 provide concrete examples of why this is important and how it can lead both to the empowerment of adolescents and young people but also to more relevant and effective programming. However, the background papers also stress that "meaningfully involving young people at all stages of the programme, including its design, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and governance structures, requires the investment of both human and financial resources into this process.[13]" (Background Paper 9). Gogontlejang Phaladi, a youth activist, said at a WHO consultation in 2016 "if you are not given a seat at the table, sit on the floor, but be there and have your say." But, policy makers and programme managers must ensure that adolescents, youth and youth-led networks and organizations have a seat at the table, ensure their voices are heard and that their issues and proposed solutions are considered. This has been reinforced by the recent *Global consensus statement on meaningful adolescent & youth engagement*.[14]

***Lesson 5. Consider context: Programmes to promote adolescent well-being must acknowledge and address adolescent diversity. In particular, humanitarian and fragile settings, the COVID-19 pandemic and the climate crisis pose critical challenges for adolescent well-being and require tailored responses.***

The background papers emphasize that programmes to promote adolescent well-being must actively take into account the diversity of adolescents within their target population. Adolescents are not a homogeneous group, yet many programmes behave as though they are, failing to ensure that the programme will accommodate the needs of adolescents from all age groups and developmental stages, all sexes and genders, socio-economic, racial, ethnic, religious and language groups, sexual orientation, marital status and whether or not they are themselves parents, level of education, disability status, and those living in rural or urban locations, among others.

Adolescent well-being is particularly constrained in humanitarian and fragile settings. In such contexts, adolescents, whether refugees or internally displaced, may be forced to take on adult roles within their families and communities and frequently suffer from disrupted or no access to an adequate diet,

health services, education, training and employment, and are frequently the victims, and sometimes the perpetrators, of psychological, sexual or physical violence. However, there are steps that can be taken to promote adolescent well-being even in these difficult contexts. For example, Background Paper 12 gives the example of an adolescent economic empowerment programme in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) which reported an impact on adolescents´ economic assets, school attendance and prosocial behavioural outcomes.[15]

The authors of Background Paper 12 stressed that, in humanitarian and fragile settings, programmes must include adolescent-specific strategies and collect data disaggregated by age, gender and disability status at a minimum to reveal the diverse needs of this age group who are often forgotten in such settings. They also emphasize the importance of providing protection for adolescents from child marriage, trafficking and from being enrolled into armies and militant groups.

Adolescent well-being is being severely eroded by the COVID-19 pandemic, especially among the most vulnerable adolescents and their families. Although it is older people who have experienced most of the burden of mortality and morbidity from the pandemic, older children and adolescents have faced severe indirect effects from school closures and other service disruptions.[16,17] UNESCO has estimated that the great majority of the almost 1.6 billion children and adolescents of school-going age have faced school closures and other major disruptions to their learning, and that 24 million will never return to school, with a disproportionate number of these being girls and those from the most marginalized groups.[17] The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the digital divide where students with access to digital devices and reliable internet access, plus digitally-connected and proficient teachers, have been able to continue learning, whereas those without have been significantly disadvantaged. In addition, the partial protection that school provided to adolescents exposed to familial violence and abuse has been lost and the nutrition provided by school meals have left the poorest adolescents hungry. School closures have also impacted the sexual and reproductive health (SRH) of adolescents due to reduced access to SRH information and supplies.

Most adolescents have also sorely missed the social interactions with their peers and teachers that were important to their development and well-being. For many adolescents, and especially those who were already the most vulnerable, these educational disruptions have been combined with financial shocks as their parents or care givers lost their jobs or suffered severe reductions in income and, among other effects, has led to "increases in gender-based violence, child marriage and other rights violations that threaten young people's health and well-being".[18] These COVID-19-related shocks have placed unprecedented pressure on adolescents, taking a toll on their physical and mental health, feelings of connectedness, safety, learning, agency and resilience. The pandemic has greatly exacerbated existing inequalities, with the most vulnerable adolescents (such as refugees, adolescents with disabilities, and girls) worst affected.[17] The authors of Background Paper 13 propose five key actions to mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on adolescent well-being:

1. Invest in pandemic-related, shock-responsive social protection that is gender- and age-responsive, including in conflict-affected settings.
2. Enhance and scale up programming that supports adolescent connectedness, agency and resilience.
3. Strengthen blended learning approaches during school closures and support the return to school.
4. Strengthen mechanisms to ensure the continuity of programming to tackle gender- and age-based violence, despite the pandemic.
5. Ensure that public policy responses for 'building back' post-pandemic include young people's voices.

The futures of the current generation of children and adolescents are existentially threatened by the climate crisis (Background Paper 14). It is already affecting adolescents' physical well-being through increased risk of injury, lung disease, infectious disease and poor nutrition. It also affects adolescents' psychological well-being through exposure to extreme weather events and the existential challenge it poses to adolescents. It disrupts adolescents' safe and supportive environments, for example through its effects on conflicts and migration. Education and employment opportunities for adolescents are also impacted by climate-related extreme weather events and, for example, by the effects of climate change on agriculture. Some adolescents´ sense of self-efficacy and resilience is overwhelmed by the magnitude of the crisis and feelings of impotence in the face of political and corporate responses. However, adolescents and young people have often been at the forefront of efforts to reverse climate change on a range of local and global stages, through advocacy, creating adaptation and mitigation projects, holding governments and older generations to account and engaging in policymaking processes. Examples include the "Fridays for Future" movement founded by Greta Thunberg, a Swedish adolescent, whose speeches and actions have galvanized people of all generations. For example, "*You have stolen my dreams and my childhood with your empty words, and yet I'm one of the lucky ones. People are suffering. People are dying. Entire ecosystems are collapsing. We are in the beginning of a mass extinction and all you can talk about is money and fairytales of eternal economic growth.*"[19] The authors of Background Paper 14 state that "in order to effectively respond to the climate impacts on adolescent well-being, adolescents must be recognized as equal partners and be involved in all climate-related policymaking processes that have an impact on their well-being."

***Lesson 6. Digital technologies provide both opportunities and threats to adolescent well-being: Digital technologies provide important opportunities for adolescent programming, though care must be taken to ensure that the use of technology-based programming does not exacerbate inequalities for disadvantaged adolescents and further research is required to better understand the ways in which digital transformations can positively and negatively affect adolescent well-being.*** The rapid progress in digital technologies and the ways that their adoption have transformed all aspects of our lives has been one of the biggest global changes that have taken place over the past thirty years. Background Paper 11 summarizes the opportunities and threats for adolescent well-being provided by digital transformations of society.

Background Paper 11 and some of the programmes described in Background Paper 9 provide examples of how digital technology can be used to reach unprecedented numbers of adolescents with information, learning opportunities and services that could promote their well-being, capitalizing on the fact that, at least in high- and upper middle-income countries, the current generation of adolescents have grown up in a digital world, tend to be early adopters of digital technologies and are quick to learn how to use them.

However, the paper stresses that digital technology can be a two-edged sword. "Digital transformations offer enormous potential for improving adolescent well-being through increasing adolescents' access to services and information, and creating new opportunities for communication, learning, self-expression, and civic participation. At the same time, poorly designed and governed digital tools can undermine adolescents' rights and expose them to multiple forms of exploitation and harm."

To maximize the potential benefits and minimize the potential harms, "digital environments and tools also need to be (re)designed with adolescents' rights and well-being put ahead of commercial interests". "National, regional and global governance frameworks and safeguards are required to

provide adolescents with adequate personal and data protection in the digital environment whilst maximising opportunities to use technologies and data to improve adolescent well-being."

However, UNICEF and the International Telecommunication Union estimate that, globally, two-thirds of children and young people aged 3-24 years do not have internet access at home.[20] They estimate that only 6% of 3-24 year-olds in low-income countries had internet access at home, though this proportion was 87% in high-income countries. Although the UNICEF/ITU survey was unable to differentiate access to the internet by gender or age because it examined internet access at the household level, other global data have shown that girls and women are often disadvantaged relative to boys and men in terms of access to internet-connected devices, especially in Africa, Arab States and the Asia-Pacific Region.[21] This emphasizes that although digital interventions have great potential for reaching adolescents, they cannot be the only platform for reaching adolescents, particularly in low-income countries and the poorest and most disadvantaged adolescents in all countries, including high-income countries. In fact, digital interventions, by excluding those adolescents without access to them, may increase social inequalities unless supplemented by interventions to reach those without digital access. However, access to digital devices is increasing rapidly everywhere. It will be essential that research is conducted now to learn how best to maximize the potential benefits of digital devices for adolescent well-being and minimize their potential harms.

## 3. Conclusion

Between them, the fourteen background papers highlight six key lessons for adolescent programming:

1. Programmes must embrace the multidimensional nature of well-being: All five domains are fundamentally important to adolescent well-being, and multi-sectoral collaboration and coordinated programming across the sectors will be essential.
2. Both human rights and economics demand investment in adolescent well-being: Human rights principles, including the right to health, to education, to safety and to participation demand investment in adolescent well-being. There is also a strong economic case for investing public resources in the promotion of adolescent well-being.
3. Capture impact: There are ways to measure adolescent well-being, though further efforts are urgently needed to prioritize and harmonize measurement, and to further develop and validate new measures. Measures must capture the heterogeneity of adolescents, including by age, gender, disability status, location, marital status and wealth, among others.
4. "Nothing about us, without us": The active engagement of empowered adolescents and youth in all their diversity in programme design, implementation, programme governance, monitoring and evaluation contributes to better outcomes.
5. Consider context: Programmes to promote adolescent well-being must acknowledge and address adolescent diversity. In particular, humanitarian and fragile settings, the COVID-19 pandemic and the climate crisis pose critical challenges for adolescent well-being and require tailored responses.
6. Digital technologies provide both opportunities and threats to adolescent well-being: Digital technologies provide important opportunities for adolescent programming, though care must be taken to ensure that the use of technology-based programming does not exacerbate inequalities for disadvantaged adolescents and further research is required to better understand the ways in which digital transformations can positively and negatively affect adolescent well-being.

These lessons will be discussed and expanded on during the series of multi-stakeholder consultations on programming to promote adolescent well-being that will be held in May and June 2021. Concrete suggestions for how programmes can apply such principles in practice will be elicited from the participants. The background papers have also identified important gaps in our knowledge related to programming to promote adolescent well-being. Participants will be asked to prioritize these research gaps and to identify which of these should be filled in time for the Global Summit for Adolescents that is planned for 2023. This is so that countries, programmes and funding agencies will have the information they need to decide to invest in adolescent well-being programming and which evidence-based policies and programmes they will implement to promote adolescent well-being.

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