

100 Million and Global Student Forum Youth-led consultation on the High-Level Political Forum, May 2021 Analysis of responses

As part of the youth-led joint advocacy work on the 2021 High-level Political Forum conducted by 100 Million and the Global Student Forum, an online consultation was held between 12-27 May, targeted at student- and youth-led organisations as well as grassroots youth activists. The survey questions were written with reference to the May 3 Draft Ministerial Declaration and focused specifically on the child-related SDGs. For each question, respondents were asked to identify up to 3 priority areas, and give their rationale for their selection.

The objective of the consultation was to gauge the priorities young people believe should be discussed during the forthcoming HLPF, included in the Ministerial Declaration, and urgently acted upon by governments.

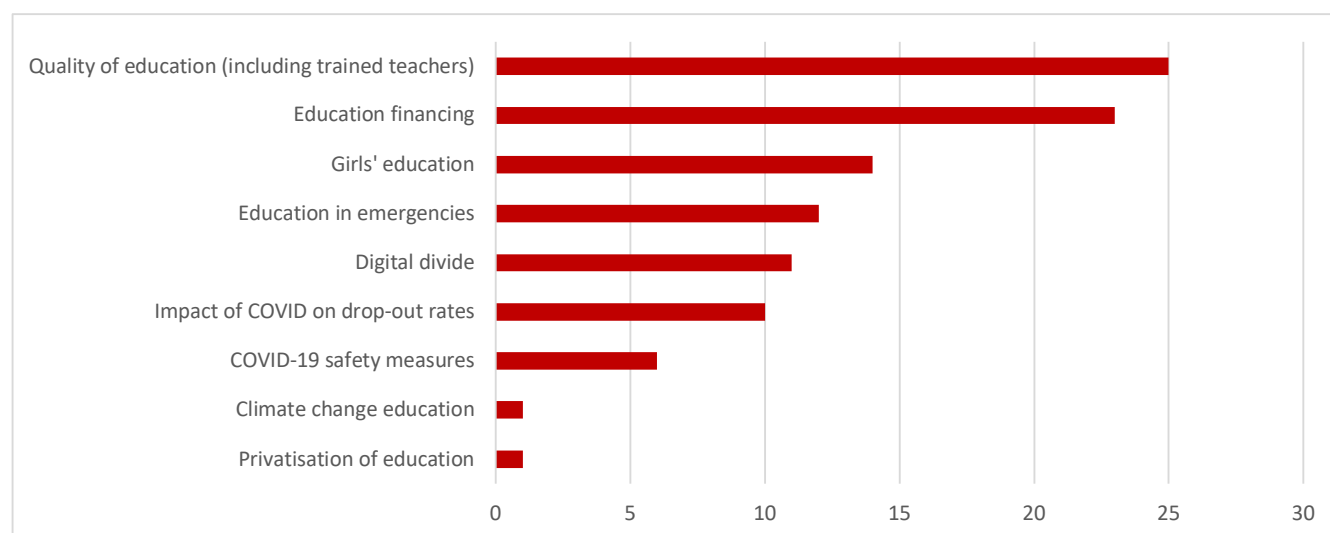
This analysis informed the Global Youth Caucus hosted by 100 Million and the Global Student Forum, which agreed formal inputs into the Ministerial Declaration to be submitted to the UN Major Group for Children and Youth, and will continue to inform the national-level advocacy work of youth-led organisations on the SDGs.

36 eligible responses were submitted, with 29 respondents completing the consultation. Of the 36, 25 were submissions from youth-led organisations, and 24 of the 25 organisations completed the consultation. 24 countries are represented by the 36 eligible responses; in addition, several organisational respondents represent regional or international entities.

COVID-19 RECOVERY: EDUCATION

Question: What education issues would you like to see prioritised by world leaders?

Although SDG 4 on Quality Education is not one of the focus SDGs being discussed by the HLPF in 2021, it has a significant role in COVID-19 recovery and in the corresponding section within the draft Ministerial Declaration.

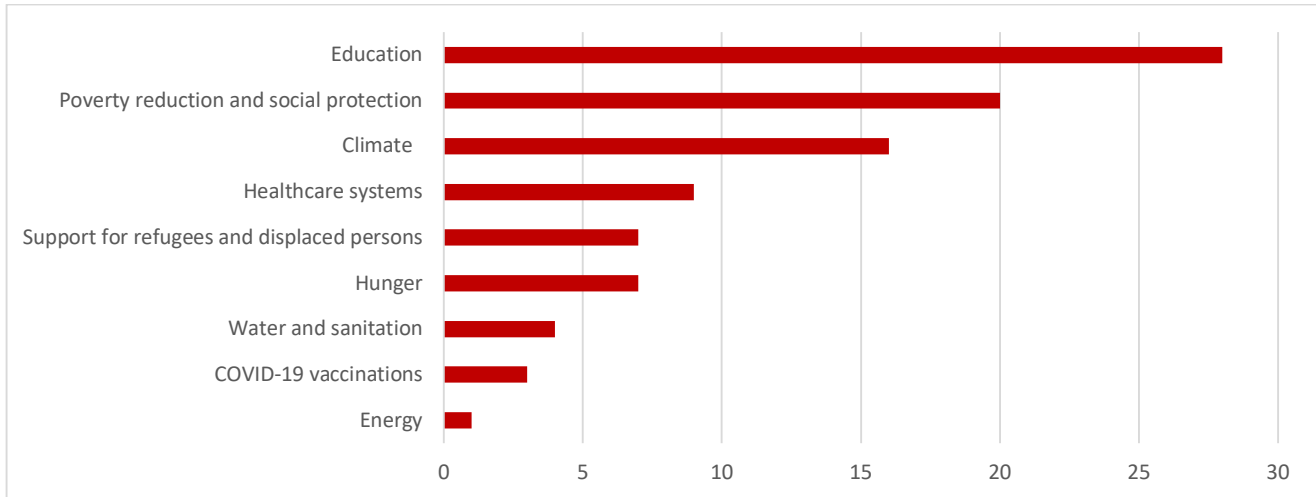


For the majority of respondents, the core issues remained quality of education and education financing. Additional rationale provided a thread between these issues and COVID-19 recovery, as several respondents particularly from low-income countries noted that quality teaching and sufficient education budget were critical to ensure marginalised children could continue or enter education. Examples given of marginalised children included children who had dropped out of school, children forced into child labour to pay for family or school costs, or children forced to enter early marriage, all of which had been witnessed by respondents as a result of the pandemic. Already-vulnerable populations, such as families with insufficient income to pay for schooling and refugee and internally displaced children, were also highlighted as suffering particularly during the pandemic.

Five responses – from across high-income, lower-middle-income, and low-income countries – pointed out a link between quality and the digital divide, raising concerns about the quality of education received and the need for ongoing teacher training, especially online teaching.

COVID-19 RECOVERY: FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE

Question: What global issues would you like to see prioritised for increased financing by world leaders?

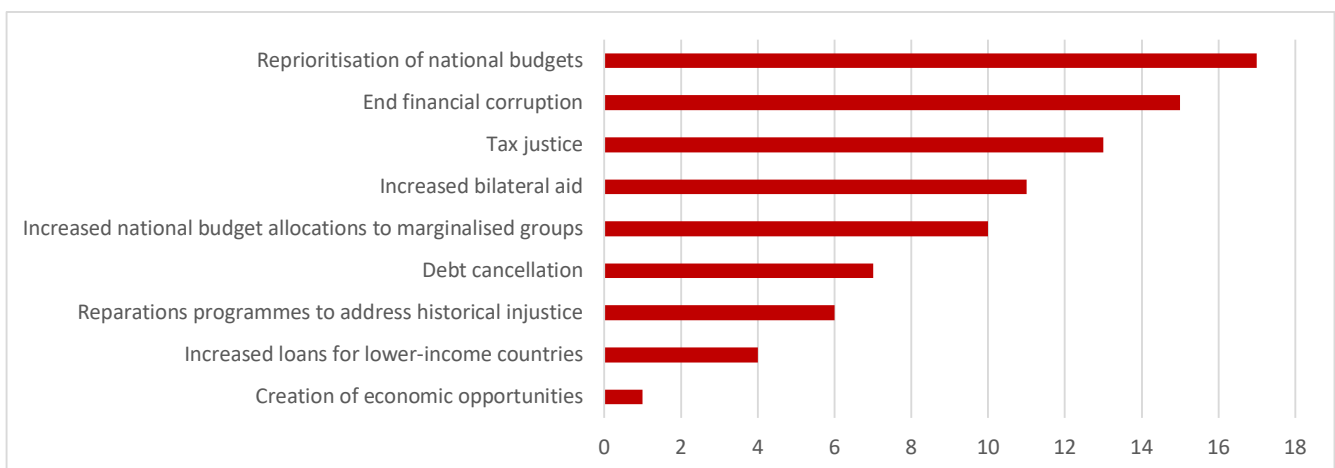


Respondents across HICs, MICs, and LICs made a clear connection between education and poverty, seeing education as the route out of poverty, and existing poverty (and resulting child labour) as a barrier to achieving education. Several respondents felt strongly that marginalised communities should be prioritised for this support, with one respondent raising the concern that refugee and migrant populations were likely to be deprioritised in government recovery plans.

Climate was the third most popular issue, and some respondents provided the rationale that the impact of climate disaster was particularly impacting poorer communities. One respondent noted that increased temperatures had already brought with them increased carriers of disease, such as Zika and dengue. For the respondents who prioritised health, almost all provided the rationale that COVID had highlighted severe weaknesses in current healthcare provision.

COVID-19 RECOVERY: FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE

Question: How do you believe financing for development should be achieved?



Respondents identified efforts which would increase national budgets for public services, with several also calling for marginalised groups to benefit first, and income generation focused on tax justice and eliminating corruption. Respondents felt particularly strongly about corruption, which several had witnessed within their own communities, and the overly high amount allocated to military spending. Official development assistance (specifically in the form of grants, not loans) still has a role to play, but respondents felt that their own governments had the major responsibility to deliver financing for development.

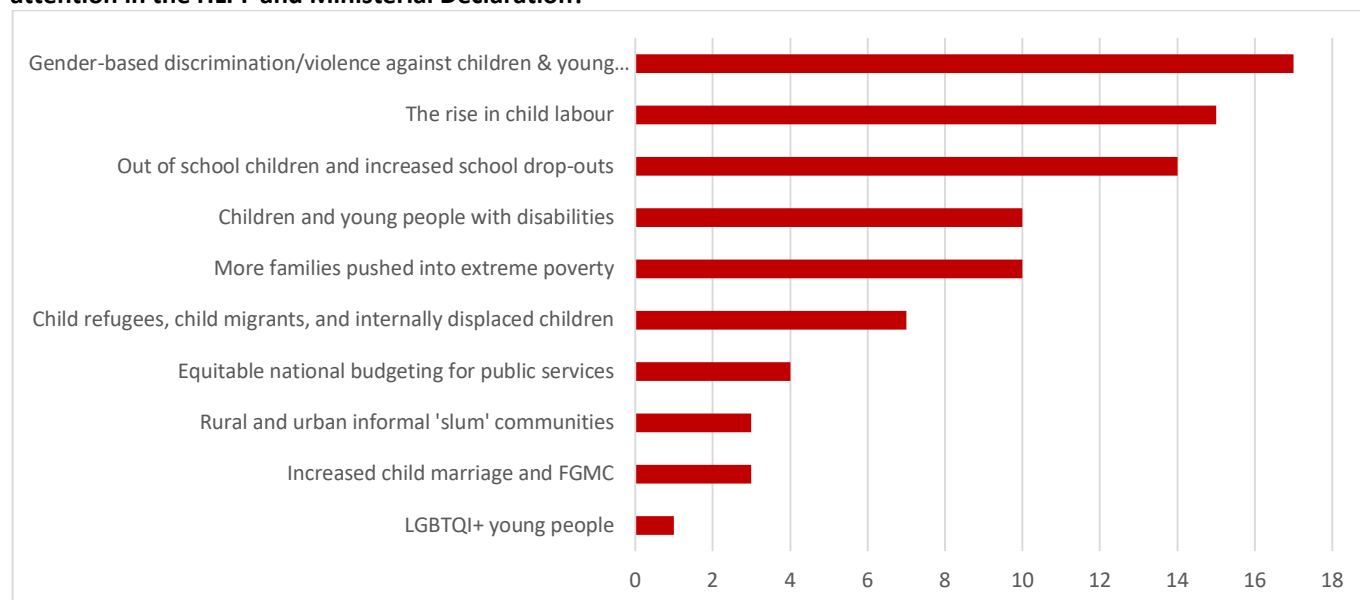
Of the six respondents who identified reparations as a source of financing for development, two felt strongly that these should not be seen as ‘aid’, but as acknowledgement for past crimes against poorer countries. The same was felt by another respondent of the seven who prioritised debt cancellation, which should be seen as justice for past crimes of colonial regimes.

Question: How do you think young people, especially marginalised young people, could be more genuinely engaged in political decision-making, and particularly on issues related to COVID-19?

Many respondents identified organising and formal representation as the main routes to participation, calling on governments to provide clear and official roles for young representative youth organisations to input into decision-making, with one respondent calling for lower voting ages, and another calling for mandatory consultation with marginalised groups. Several respondents gave examples of how they had engaged marginalised young people – from those who were themselves marginalised and from those who were not but felt a responsibility to work in partnership with marginalised young people. There was a balance between respondents who specifically mentioned the need for input at national and local levels. Several responses identified that young people had so far had very little input into decisions on COVID-19 measures which directly impacted upon them.

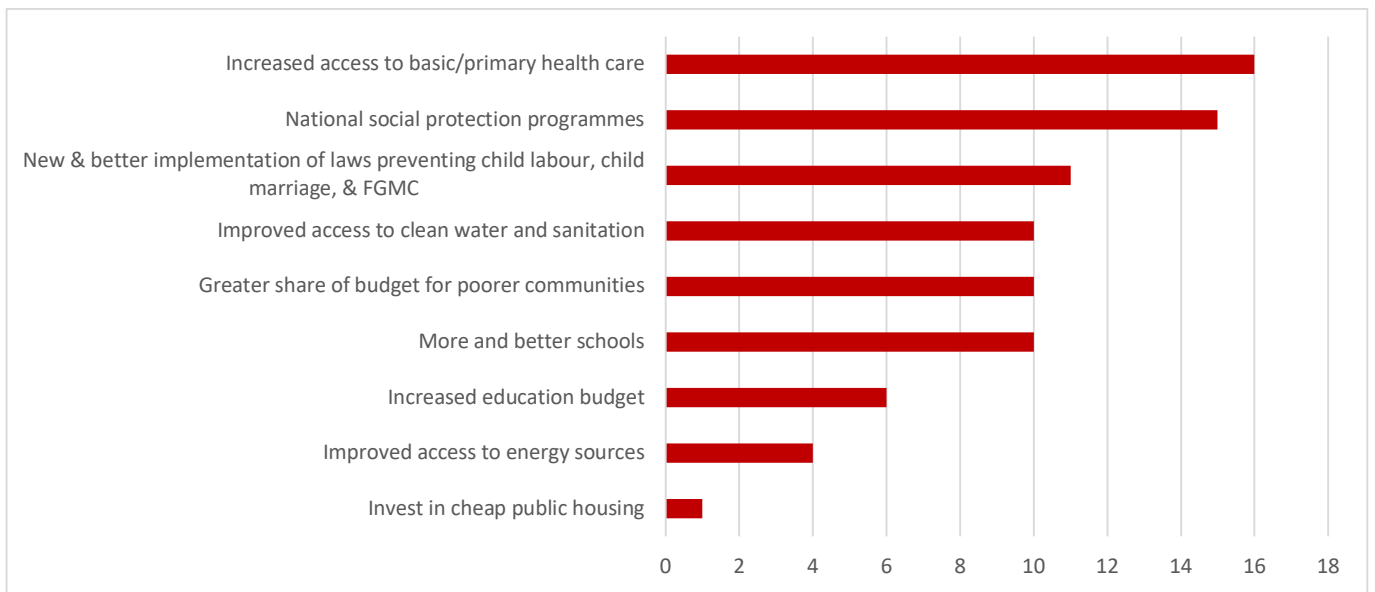
SDG1 (NO POVERTY) AND SDG 10 (REDUCED INEQUALITIES)

Question: Which aspects of child poverty and inequality for children and young people do you think need more attention in the HLPF and Ministerial Declaration?



Gender-based discrimination and violence against children and young people had the majority of votes, which tallies with the strong inputs from respondents in previous questions on the impact of the pandemic and lockdown measures on girls’ education – particularly when grouped with the issue of increased school drop-outs and out-of-school children. The rise in child labour was also perceived to be significant as several respondents had witnessed this for themselves within their own communities, and some feared that children with disabilities would be even further overlooked in COVID recovery plans.

Question: How do you think poverty and inequality should be tackled by governments?



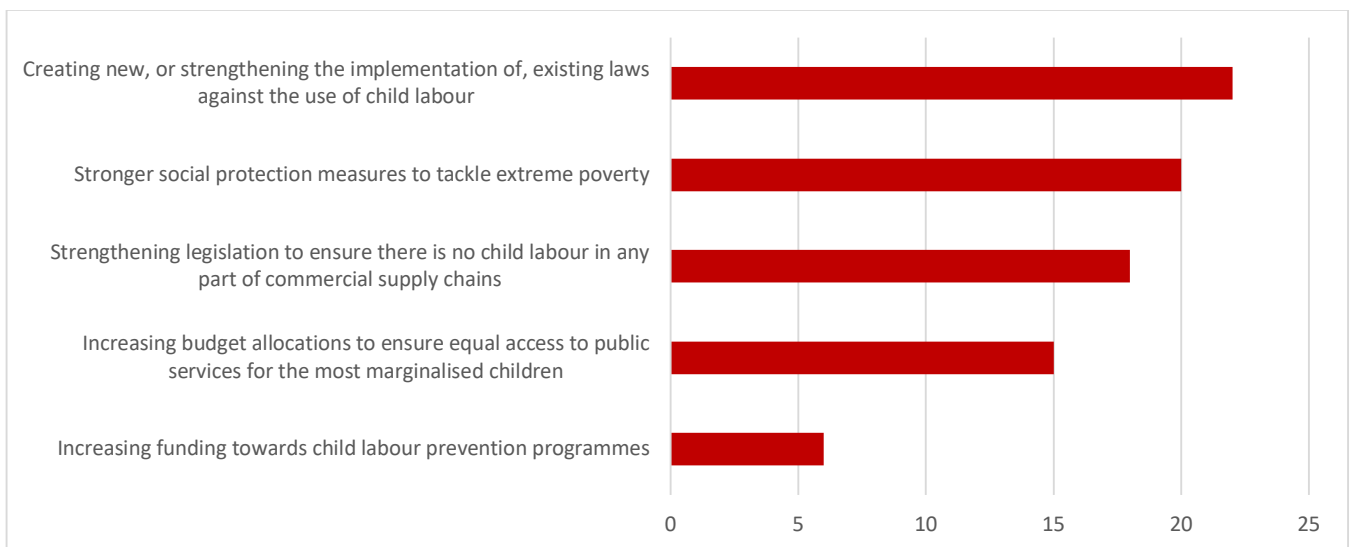
Fewer respondents provided rationale for this question, but the quantitative responses demonstrate the strength of feeling that public services including social protection, alongside laws to protect marginalised children, should be the priority. Two respondents identified weak implementation of laws having an impact on marginalised children, particularly on child labour and FGM/C. One respondent identified school feeding programmes as a central pillar of social protection for children.

Question: If you identify as a young person who has experienced injustice or any form of marginalisation, work with or represent those who have experienced this, what recommendations would you like to present to world leaders?

While a wide variety of recommendations were made under this question, the thread that ran through the majority of responses was to listen to young people, and particularly those from marginalised groups.

SDG8 (DECENT WORK INCLUDING ENDING CHILD LABOUR)

Question: Which of the following interventions to end child labour do you think governments should prioritise?



Unsurprisingly, respondents felt very strongly that the root causes of child labour should be tackled – by providing financial protection for families in need and increased public services – supported by safety nets in the form of better legislation and better implementation. There was limited appetite for a focus purely on child labour eradication programmes, with respondents elaborating in their qualitative responses that tackling poverty would be the only way to end child labour.

OVERALL PRIORITIES

Question: What commitments would you like to see from this declaration and from world leaders to address the COVID-19 pandemic and its impacts with the urgency it requires?

The recommendations made were predominantly very specific:

- High-income countries to pay their dues to poorer countries through vaccine justice, aid, and reparations.
- Increased education financing which improves quality and targets children particularly impacted by the pandemic including girls and children who have dropped out.
- Realise the rights of young people and prioritise marginalised populations to deliver social justice.
- Pay decent wages, particularly to essential workers.
- Deliver social protection programmes for the families most in need, including establishing universal basic income.
- Genuine focus on climate change.
- More and better routes for youth participation in decision-making.
- Increased transparency and accountability of governments in decision-making and implementation of budgets and policies.
- Increased multilateralism.

Finally, one respondent succinctly summed up the tone of the overall consultation response: “I don’t want to see commitments, I want to see action.”