

# COVID-19: JUSTICE FOR EVERY CHILD



Dear Board,

We, as European Students Union, are coming together with our fellow youth and student leaders across the world, including the All-Africa Students Union (AASU), Organising Bureau of School Student Union (OBESSU), Commonwealth Students Association (CSA) as part of the 100 Million campaign to demand that the rights of children and young people, especially the most marginalised, are protected during COVID-19.

If decision-makers don't prioritise children and young people in their COVID-19 responses, they risk violating the fundamental rights of a whole generation, a generation we as student unions and youth activists fight so hard to protect the futures of, and undo decades of progress towards eradicating extreme poverty, conflict and exploitation.

As the economic impact of the pandemic has hit every country, over \$5 trillion has been committed by wealthy governments to help bailout companies and economies. Never before has so much money been offered in response to a global crisis. But very few commitments have been made to address the specific and urgent challenges being faced by children and young people, that's why we, as representatives of tens of millions of young people across the world, have come together to act and invite you as members of ESU to join us.

**We are standing together to demand that 20% of government funds committed to the coronavirus recovery should be dedicated to supporting the needs of the 20% most marginalised and excluded children and their families.**

If our leaders respond to our demands the futures for millions of children could be transformed. For example, it would meet all of the current COVID-19 UN agency appeals, it would fund the SDGs on health water and sanitation for the next two years, 2 full years of the global education financing gap and more.

The COVID-19 pandemic has upended so many of our lives, and this can make us feel powerless, but we are not. International cooperation and solidarity have never been more important, nor has using our collective voice to demand big, bold changes. The virus doesn't discriminate, but systems do, and together we must do all we can in these unprecedented and challenging times to make sure we emerge from this crisis with a fairer world than we started with.

We have attached a toolkit with everything you could need to join this campaign, but we are also available to support you in taking part. You can reach us by contacting: [sebastian.berger@esu-online.org](mailto:sebastian.berger@esu-online.org) and [georgia@100million.org](mailto:georgia@100million.org)

**We stand united in solidarity, friendship and action,**

Sebastian Berger, Vice President, European Students Union



# COVID-19: JUSTICE FOR EVERY CHILD



The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has turned the world upside down, exposing the many inequalities that the world's most marginalised children and young people are already facing. As youth and student leaders from across the world, we have come together to demand action that protects the rights of these children and young people, from both the short and long term impacts of COVID-19.

The accumulated global memberships of all our youth and student-led organisations totals tens of millions of young people. We're sharing this short pack with you to ask if you'll help us use this collective power to act for justice.

## WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

As COVID-19 spreads across the world, nobody will feel the worst of its impact as painfully as the world's most marginalised young people. Children living in hard-to-reach villages, children in informal 'slum' settlements, children forced to work, children on the move – all of them and more will experience both immediate and longer-term suffering if the world does not act now.

In richer countries, families can stay at home and stock up on food, but millions of poorer children have no means to do the same. Nearly one in every five children in the world lives on \$2 a day or less, many of them in informal settlements too crowded to isolate, or living with underlying health conditions that put them at risk if they contract the virus. If the food supply is affected, or their adult family members cannot work, they will go hungry and soon starve.

An unprecedented amount of money has been offered by governments in response to a global crisis but very few commitments have been made to address the specific and urgent challenges being faced by children and young people. Yet, in previous crises children and young people have paid the highest price when countries try to recover, because governments pay for their debts and bailouts by deprioritising investment in essential rights including children's education, health and nutrition.

A failure to act risks violating the fundamental rights of a whole generation, a generation we as student unions and youth activists fight so hard to protect the futures of. Therefore, as students and young people, **we must stand together and demand that 20% of government funds committed to the coronavirus recovery should be dedicated to supporting the needs of the 20% most marginalised and excluded children and their families.**

## INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY DURING COVID-19

Together we represent young people and students in over 90 countries across the world. This pandemic has demonstrated the importance of global connectivity, none of us are safe unless we all are. So while we may be isolated from each other right now, by acting together on this critical issue that affects all our countries, our collective voice will be heard.



# COVID-19: WHAT WE'RE ASKING FOR



World leaders must ensure 20% of the global response funding goes towards protecting the most vulnerable children and their families.

## WHAT THIS MEANS FOR RICH/DONOR COUNTRIES:

The governments of these countries have an important role to play in delivering global justice. As they control the majority of global trade and overseas aid funding, they have influence over how much money is shared with poorer countries and to whom within those countries these funds are allocated.

These governments, largely in the Global North, must commit to the following:

- Global funding to support the families of the nearly 20% of children around the world who live on less than \$2 a day.
- Making sure companies and businesses are paying their fair share towards supporting these families through paying their taxes and respecting human rights in their business practices.

## WHAT THIS MEANS FOR COUNTRIES WITH THE WORLD'S MOST MARGINALISED CHILDREN:

Governments must ensure that marginalised and vulnerable children and their families receive their fair share of any response to COVID-19. This means giving them a higher allocation to address the imbalance that has already long existed.

What this should look like in practice:

- Ensuring sufficient emergency healthcare services
- Maintaining or providing reliable clean water
- Protecting the supply of food
- Providing financial support to families with no income
- Considering the particular needs of those who don't have the means to self-isolate
- Supporting, not negatively targeting, marginalised communities and making sure that there is no risk to their lives from food and income insecurity.

## WHAT THIS 20% OF GLOBAL RESPONSE FUNDING COULD PAY FOR:

Over \$5 trillion has been committed by wealthy governments to help bailout companies and economies. While some of the amounts being offered to companies are loans, the fact is that never before has so much money been offered in response to a global crisis.

If our leaders respond to our demands for a 20% share for the most vulnerable 20% of children worldwide, the futures for millions of children could be transformed. For example:

1. All of the current COVID-19 UN agency and charity funding appeals could be fully funded, helping ensure that the most vulnerable children are protected. **= \$2 BILLION**
2. If two years of all external debt payments due from the governments of low-income countries in 2020 and 2021 (\$50.4 billion) were cancelled, the funds could protect their vulnerable citizens. **= \$50.4 BILLION**
3. The Sustainable Development Goals on health, water and sanitation could be achieved for the next two years, if part of the 20% was spent on them. **= £760 BILLION**
4. For two years, we could ensure every child gets their full 12 years of education, which would help protect the spread of COVID-19. Marginalised children would be able to go to schools when they reopen, and we could prevent losing a generation to child labour. **= \$78 BILLION**
5. We could create a new global children's social protection fund, to ensure no child is forced to work or go hungry. **= \$50 BILLION**

# COVID-19: HOW YOU CAN TAKE ACTION



We want decision-makers around the world to hear our call for justice. As youth and student leaders in your communities, countries, campuses, schools and unions already you have a critical role to play in raising the profile of these demands.

## HANDS UP FOR THE 1 IN 5

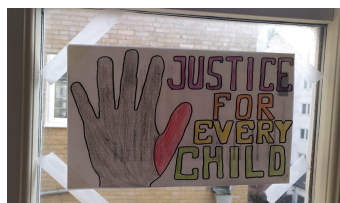
Our joint campaign icon is a hand with a coloured thumb to represent the 1/5 (20%) most marginalised children and young people who must be prioritised by governments and decision-makers.

How you wish to create your version of the thumb image is up to you. You can simply colour in your thumb with whatever you have available—pen, paint, makeup, mud, chalk, or coal dust, for example. Or you can create your own poster by drawing around your hand or covering your hand in paint and pressing it onto the paper. Feel free to get creative!

We're asking you to make this icon as visible as possible, both on and offline. However you make your hand try and capture it on cameras so we can share it online, but also hang it out or on your window for local awareness raising.

For inspiration, you can download a template post or share pre-made graphics and images from other activists across the world in this folder:

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1YhEOKoK8Xlb8u86YeUK5hMSCItRjwIUv>.



You can help by sharing these images and messages with your decision-makers, friends, relatives, classmates and colleagues, and inviting them to join the campaign on social media.

Make sure you tag us @ESUtw and @100MilCampaign so we can share your creations on our platforms too.



## CONTACT YOUR DECISION-MAKER

One of the most powerful things you can do to support this campaign is to contact your decision-maker and call upon them to represent your views and champion this issue.

We have included a template letter, including the key demands agreed by ESU and other representative youth leaders from around the world. Be sure to make your letter personal to you and express why this is such an important issue to you. Once you've written it, you can send it by post or email, along with a copy of your thumb image and reach out to them by social media to request a response.