



COVID-19

PAYO PARA SA MGA MAGULANG, GURO AT TAGAPANGALAGA NG BATA



Philippines

Statement

# UNICEF statement on keeping minors in lockdown

19 March 2021

**MANILA, 19 March 2020--** UNICEF acknowledges the efforts put in place by the Government of the Philippines to control the recent surge in COVID-19 infections.

However, the recent decision of the Metro Manila Council, through the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority, to explicitly prohibit minors from going outside for a period of two weeks, in a bid to contain the transmission of the virus in the metropolis, can be considered an infringement of children's rights.

While efforts to contain the spread of infections require public health and social measures, UNICEF emphasizes that these measures should consider the highest level of acceptability and feasibility, proven effectiveness and should minimize the negative consequences on health and well-being of all members of society. They should respond to the best interest of the child; should not cause further harm; and should always consider the preservation of the child's wellbeing and dignity.

As the pandemic enters its second year, the impact on children and young people's psycho-social wellbeing and mental health risks is taking a toll. Due to the restrictive containment measures adopted since the onset of the pandemic, children have been kept away from members of their extended families, teachers and friends. They have been learning from home, often confronting incredibly challenging circumstances. For those



experiencing violence, neglect or abuse at home, lockdowns left them stranded with abusers and without the required support.

According to WHO, the COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted or halted critical mental health services in 93 per cent of countries worldwide, while the demand for mental health support is increasing. A study from 194 cities in China<sup>1</sup> found that 16 per cent of respondents among the general population reported moderate to severe depressive symptoms during the pandemic, and 28 per cent moderate to severe anxiety symptoms.

Globally, data also show that even before the pandemic, children and young people carried the burden of mental health risks, with half of all mental disorders developing before age 15, and 75 per cent by early adulthood. The majority of the 800,000 people who die by suicide every year are young people, and self-harm is the third leading cause of death among 15–19-year-olds, with higher rates among adolescent girls. It is estimated that globally 1 in 4 children live with a parent who has a mental disorder.

As the pandemic continues to affect communities, we must find better ways to manage it together. Children and their communities should be consulted and an evidence-based rationale for measures that affect them, should be developed and communicated transparently. We need to take into full account the needs and rights of children, while we continue to protect them and all members of the public, from the increased risk of COVID-19 infections.

The “Omnibus Guidelines on the Implementation of Community Quarantine in the Philippines” issued by the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases, clearly spell out that children of all age groups may exercise and perform non-contact sport activities, provided that the minimum public health standards such as the wearing of masks and the maintenance of social distancing protocols, and no sharing of equipment where applicable, are duly observed.

In line with the above IATF guidelines, UNICEF urges the Metro Manila Council to issue a resolution to all 17 Local Government Units comprising the National Capital Region specifying that in order to take the best interest of the child into account, children of all age groups can be allowed to play and conduct sport and physical exercise in outdoor areas, as long as the required public health measures (social distancing and wearing of masks) are strictly complied with.



UNICEF reiterates its full support to the Philippine Government in fighting COVID-19 by complementing the government's response through technical assistance, provision of essential supplies, support for logistics and transportation of vaccines, effective communication of safe practices to families, as well as ensuring that the rights of children and their families are protected. ###

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<sup>1</sup> Wang C, Pan R, Wan X, et al. Immediate Psychological Responses and Associated Factors during the Initial Stage of the 2019 Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Epidemic among the General Population in China. Int J Environ Res Public Health. 2020;17(5):1729. Published 2020 Mar 6. doi:10.3390/ijerph17051729

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