



 **core**group

**Unlocking Potential:
Prioritizing Child & Adolescent
Health and Well-Being in the New Decade**

Global Health Practitioner Conference

27-28 January, 2021

*January 27-28, 2021
Online*

CONFERENCE REPORT



POST CONFERENCE REPORT

*The CORE Group Global Health Practitioner Conference: **Unlocking Potential: Prioritizing Child and Adolescent Health and Well-Being in the New Decade** took place online over January 27th and 28th, 2021.*

Over 3200 people including implementers, UN agencies, academics, donors, private sector, youth, civil society, and community health advocates operating locally and internationally from more than 100 countries signed up to join this highly interactive, virtual event.

During the two-day conference over 1860 unique users actively engaged in the sessions, halls and networking capabilities all offered virtually on the platform powered by TechChange.

The Conference was funded with generous support from sponsors and partners including:

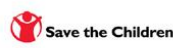
Leaders



Collaborators



Champions





This funding allowed CORE Group to remove cost barriers to attendance and make the conference open and accessible to all. Technical content and all sessions, including French and Spanish language translation and closed captioning, are still available to registered participants on the event portal, enabling CORE Group to achieve a wider and more inclusive global audience and reach with this digital format. Post-event, content will be archived on YouTube and the CORE Group website to increase accessibility beyond registered participants to the broader global health community.



Photo by Helen Keller International

CORE Group developed an outreach and communications plan to engage youth in the conference development and we achieved our target of including 50% youth (defined as aged between 18-30) on the Global Planning Committee and featured several youth-led and designed conference sessions throughout the event.

Youth speakers including Sadia Rahman of FP 2020 Bangladesh, Grace Gatera a mental health advocate from Rwanda, Oyeyemi Pitan of GFF Nigeria, Anne Sophie Lyskjaer Noer Danish Youth Delegate for Equality and SRHR and David Imbago Jacome of CORE Group and PMNCH Board Member were also represented in each plenary session as lead discussants or facilitators. The Global Planning Committee youth members will remain further engaged and develop monthly blogs for CORE Group on babies and toddlers, child and adolescent health and well-being.



Conference Objectives

STRENGTHEN commitment and technical assistance for child and adolescent health and empower young people to advocate for their rights to health and well-being

MOBILIZE and strengthen cross-sectoral partnerships and innovation for child and adolescent health research, advocacy, implementation, and financing in the next decade

SHARE evidence-based research, disaggregated data, and emerging solutions to ensure improved health outcomes for babies, toddlers, children and adolescents.



*Adalia Tara performing her song, 'You Are'.
Composed exclusively for the conference*



DAY 1

Participants were welcomed to the conference with a song composed and performed by Adalia Tara whose beautiful words and music evoked the calls of youth for engagement in their health, the future of our planet and the hope of a world in which all can all be winners.

Lisa Hilmi, Executive Director, CORE Group and Ahmed Arale, Secretariat Director, CORE Group Polio-Global Health Security Project officially opened the conference by handing over the 'key' to unlock potential for child and adolescent health and well-being!



Lisa Hilmi, CORE Group Executive Director and Ahmed Arale, CORE Group Polio-Global Health Security Project Secretariat Director at the Opening Plenary

Conference facilitator, Mercy Juma Nairobi-based BBC Africa Correspondent, was delighted to introduce Dr. Tedros, Director General of the WHO as keynote speaker in the **Opening Plenary** session on Day One. In his remarks, Dr Tedros set out three key areas for governments and civil society where improvement can outweigh the costs to invest in education, reduce emissions and reject mass marketing as areas of priority in respect of strengthening commitment for child and adolescent health.





KEY MESSAGES AND ACTIONS FROM THE SESSION:

- Grace Gatera focused on the SRHR needs of young people. access to health services is critical for youth, especially girls to have autonomy and be empowered with choice.
- Sadia Rahman of FP2020 asked delegates to support empowerment and protection for adolescents and girls is a must. A 10% decrease of child marriage can decrease 70% of maternal mortality.
- Dr Anshu Banerjee, Director, MCA at WHO explained how we need equity and offering services for all children and we must use data to identify and bring services to those who are not benefiting.
- Andrew Morley President and CEO of World Vision International reminded us that faith leaders and community leaders are often the only voices the community still trusts. They can be an instrumental part to community communication and engagement and acceptance.
- To ensure youth have a voice in improving their health and wellbeing, we must be engaging them from the start in designing implementing and evaluating those programs, and bringing stakeholders to the table, to foster meaningful youth adult partnerships and bring funding to the table. Digital harm is an issue being hidden under the carpet and an open dialogue about it needs to be initiated.

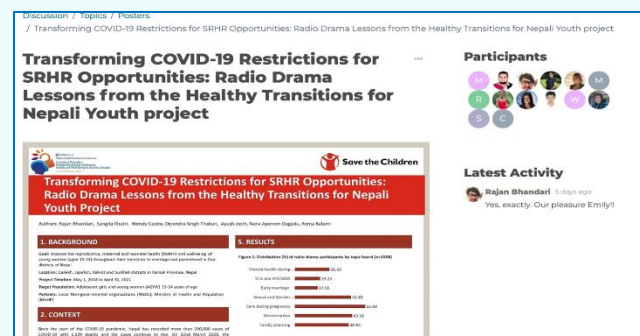


Photo by CORE Group



Opening Plenary Speakers from R-L: Mercy Juma, BBC Africa, Sadia Rahman, FP 2020, Grace Gatera, Rwanda, Andrew Morley, President and CEO World Vision International, Dr. Anshu Banerjee, Director, MCA, WHO

It was clear from the almost **50 conference concurrent, marketplace and poster sessions** that the COVID-19 pandemic is threatening decades of progress made as health systems struggle to rapidly respond to this crisis. Presenters from South Asia, Latin America, and regions of Africa highlighted how children and adolescents are often bearing the brunt of the impact. Increased violence against children, reduced access to routine healthcare, especially sexual and reproductive services, and stunted social development are just a few of the issues exacerbated by this global pandemic. For example, it is estimated that reduced access to SRH advice and information has resulted in over 80,000,000 unplanned pregnancies during the pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic has reversed efforts in polio eradication and routine immunization particularly in remote and hard to reach communities such as nomadic pastoralists in the Horn of Africa.



Interactions in the Poster Hall



The **Closing Plenary** on Day One explored the themes of maintaining resource mobilization and financing mechanisms to help refocus efforts on very young children and youth and put the brakes on the decline in access to services during the pandemic.

Diene Keita, Deputy Executive Director of UNFPA reiterated the agency's commitment to maintain investment throughout the pandemic and confirmed \$250m for SRH education and youth leadership and \$1.8bn allocated to integrated SRH services. During the pandemic she explained how funding had to be repurposed and redirected at speed. Citing the example of a weekly radio show in Botswana geared towards young people she highlighted how access to SRH information could be maintained while sharing COVID messaging in a disability inclusive way.

The importance of mentorship was repeated by Anne Sophie Lyskjaer Noer Danish Youth Delegate for Equality and SRHR. She shared how part of Denmark's international development budget is allocated to support projects initiated by young people and the importance of development partnerships across borders.



Mercy Juma of BBC Africa interviewing speakers Monique Vledder, GFF, Diene Keita, UNFPA, Helga Fogstad, PMNCH, Oyeyemi Pitan, GFF and Anne Sophie Lyskjaer Noer, Danish Youth Delegate in the Closing Plenary Day One



Critically, the issue of engaging new partners and demonstrating accountability for funding was raised by Dr. Monique Vledder, Head of Secretariat for Global Financing Facility. Monique revealed that the GFF approach to linking financing to results was bringing clarity to the process whereby resources would be allocated where high quality services were delivered. Close monitoring enabled GFF to ensure that the funding is used for the intended purpose.



Photo by CORE Group Polio Project/Nigeria

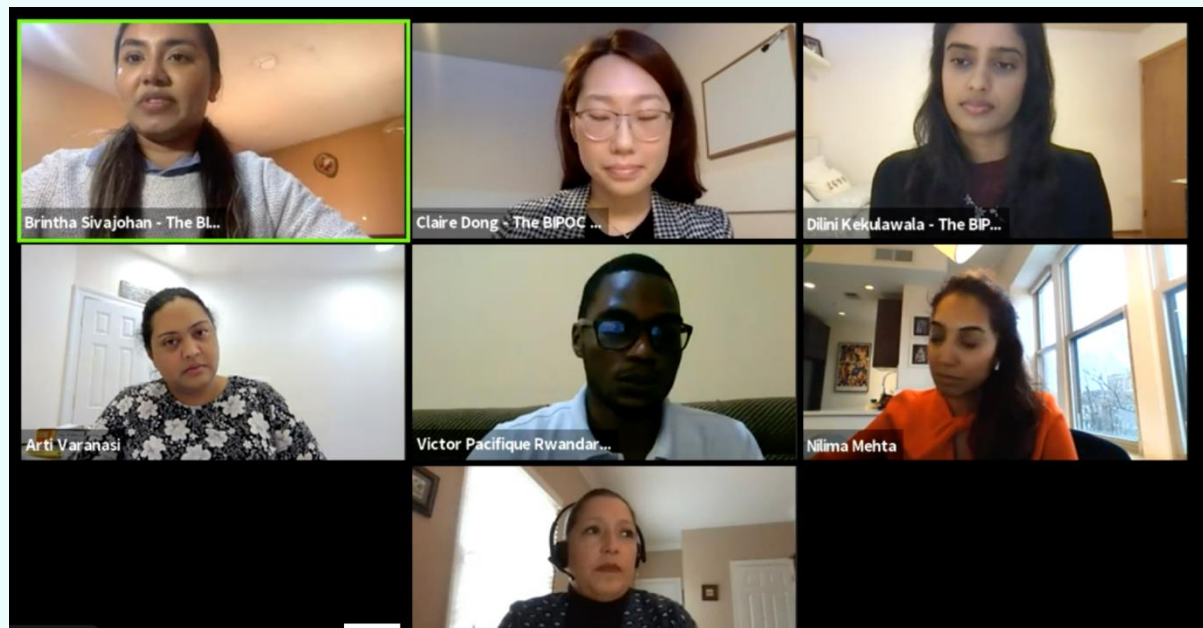
Helga Fogstad, Executive Director of PMNCH responded with a call to action for civil society and communities to call out funding misallocation and that the global community cannot expect individuals to solve this problem alone. She called on participants not only to build back better but to build forward better and develop financing models that put women, children and adolescents at the center of efforts.

Call to Action: While summarizing day one, Lisa Hilmi asked participants to use the collaboration and learning from the sessions to help achieve the overarching aims of the conference and strive for the greater democratization of global health and ensure it is country led. Dyness Kasungami, Project Director Global Child Health Task Force at JSI stated the top three priorities for the Task Force in the coming decade: To support the implementation of programs through country-led engagement strategy; to generate and share evidence around multi-sectoral programming for children life course; to improve Quality of Care and equity and to use the conference as a catalyst as we unite to unlock potential.



DAY 2

Day Two commenced with the **Pitch Challenge** which was designed to allow qualifying groups to present their programs/products/services in front of a panel of judges, as well as participants interested in global health from around the world. The Conference Planning Committee received over 30 very strong applications for this session from diverse teams and projects which made the selection process challenging in itself! Considering funding is an integral component in making their projects a success, it was important for them to share the details of their plan and exactly how they expect to benefit the population they are prioritizing.



Pitch Challenge Session

This session allowed Judges to provide input and filter questions from the audience via the chat function. Five inspiring finalists were selected to pitch their ideas. Judges selected two teams; **BIPOC Women's Health Network** from Canada and **Vinsighte** from Nigeria to win **\$5,000** in seed funding towards their innovative ideas as well as mentorship from the CORE Group International Community Health Network. The BIPOC Women's Health Network aims to provide healthcare resources for serving racialized women in local Canadian communities. They are committed to improving healthcare access, advocating for patients, and empowering women to take control of their health. The other winning team, Vinsighte is a digital health venture that makes use of technology to aid the visually impaired to live a more comfortable life. Their technology



detects eye diseases at an early stage and aids the visually impaired to read books and navigate their environments independently.

The key takeaways and messages during this session included:

- Women, children, and adolescents are the most vulnerable populations and require special programs to prevent a variety of public health issues.
- Creative and inclusive programs to address marginalized populations are a major need around the world.
- Sustainability is needed to justify funding.
- Social determinants of health create need for services/ products in vulnerable communities.
- Foster innovative thinking in order to empower individuals to think outside the box for solutions to problems they feel need to be addressed.

The Day Two breakout sessions in the Concurrent and Marketplace tracks highlighted some key successes despite the current pandemic situation. The session on Maintaining Services During the Covid-19 Pandemic featuring discussants from University of Global Health Equity, Northwestern University, Gates Ventures, ICDDR, incorporated learnings from countries that have succeeded in effectively prioritizing child health services during the pandemic. A panel of speakers from the WHO and the Ethiopian Federal Ministry of Health presented a use case on the success of high-level advocacy on investing in Early Childhood Development to secure policy buy-in from high-level leadership and forge strong multi-sectoral collaboration.

The Conference closed with inspiring and powerful words from the **Closing Plenary Session** speakers on the **interlinkages between climate change and child and adolescent health** led by CORE Group's Technical Programs Officer, David Imbago Jacome. Speakers included Dr Maria Neira of WHO, Peter Winch, Co-Chair of Johns Hopkins Sustainability Leadership Council, Cecilia Vaca Jones, Executive Director of Bernard Van Leer Foundation, Omnia el Omran, Liaison Officer for Public Health Issues, International Federation of Medical Students' Associations and Nikki Fraser, Indigenous Advocate and Founder of Uniting our Voices.

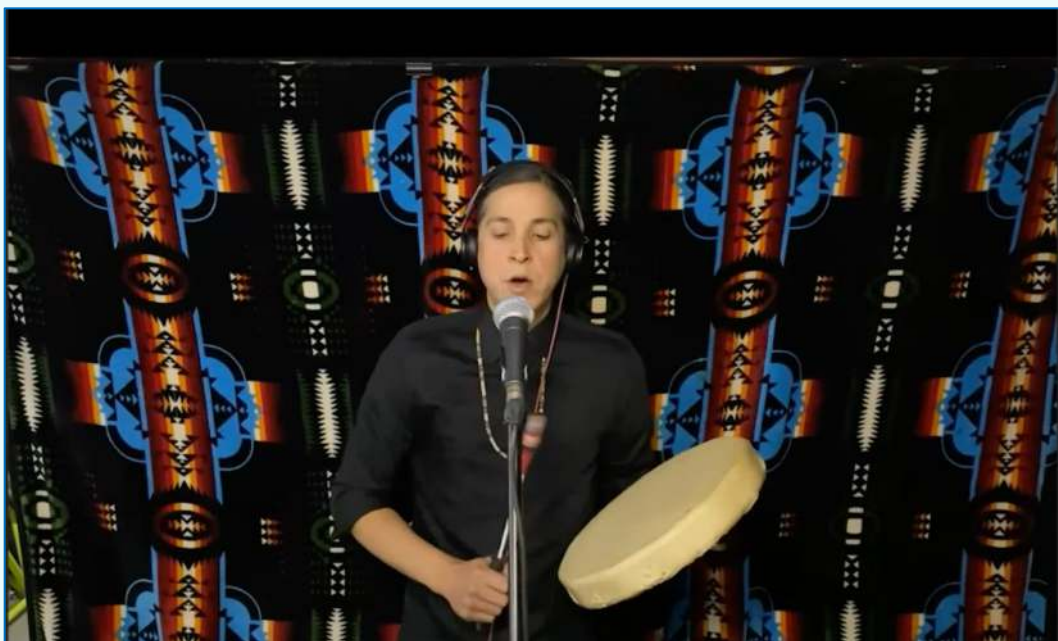


Closing Plenary Session on Interlinkages Between Climate Change and Child and Adolescent Health

Key Messages and Action Points:

- Climate change and health are closely related, so any action to fight it will translate to action in health.
- Convenors such as CORE Group are positioned to promote engagement and collaboration with indigenous communities to understand impact on health and well-being for all.
- Individuals in future generations can't make a change for themselves, so it is our responsibility to leave a healthy planet for them.
- Climate change should be included in many career curriculums.
- There are linkages between climate change and mental health, particularly for indigenous communities.
- We need to respect nature to shape a healthier world.
- We need to adopt more sustainable patterns and move towards achieving "green" countries and economies.
- The role of advocates is crucial to address climate change matter.

The final words went to **Bryden Gwiss Kiwenzie**, the award-winning indigenous artist from Canada who led participants in an indigenous Honor Song to acknowledge the work of the Conference to protect Mother Earth and a collective call for healing.



Bryden Gwiss Kiwenzie

The Virtual Conference Platform, powered by TechChange, allowed us to explore and offer new ways of networking. In a friendly and informal post-conference session the CORE Working Groups invited participants to develop action steps to implement and build on the collaboration and learning from the two days of conference in the context of their own programs and projects.

The conference sessions and content remain available for all the 3200 registered attendees to revisit and review. Materials will be archived on CORE Group's website and YouTube channel as well.

Call to Action: It is important to think about impact and the challenges that must be overcome to ensure child and adolescent health and well-being is prioritized.

We encourage all attendees to use this content to help develop their own action plan and key priorities to unlock potential in the next decade:

- Share the data, research and results from these sessions and the organizations who presented them to improve outcomes for children and young people.
- Mobilize resources – not just financing, but people, programs, systems, cross-sectoral partnerships to involve youth in the decision-making process about their health and well-being.



- Strengthen the commitments and technical assistance we provide not only to each other in this two-day conference but ensure it reaches the communities and people who need it.

NEXT STEPS

CORE Group will prioritize the following next steps post-conference:

- Launching of a Climate Crisis Initiative- “An intersectional approach to climate change and women’s, children’s, and adolescents’ health” that will increase capacity around climate change and undertake advocacy campaigns at the country, regional and global levels.
- Implementing a meaningful youth engagement strategy including advocacy and training grants for Youth Champions on a variety of issues related to babies, toddlers, child, and adolescent health
- Engaging with partners on adolescent and youth consultations to inform programs, policy, and research.
- Launching a blog series on child and adolescent health written by youth Global Planning Committee members and partners on technical areas of relevance
- Developing a racial equity series that addresses program and policy concerns and elevates community voices.
- Addressing equity in immunization and COVID-19 through engaging youth, partnering with GAVI to address zero -dose children, collaborating with the COVAX Facility for CSO engagement, and promoting global polio eradication efforts through the CORE Group Polio Project
- Engaging with the LGBTQ+ community to go beyond the reproductive health area and into the broader SRHR community.
- CORE Group will advocate for mobilizing resources such as by developing case studies on investments related to adolescents' health and well-being
- Providing year-long mentorship to the two Pitch Challenge Winning teams to further develop their innovative solutions to critical issues related to child and adolescent health

Look out for many new and exciting opportunities for engagement in 2021! Join us and become a [CORE Group Member](#) to elevate your voice and demonstrate your leadership in global community health.



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