

# GLOBAL CALL FOR ACTION

## ENSURING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S VOICES ARE HEARD DURING COVID-19

The Covid-19 pandemic continues to impact the lives of millions of children and young people around the globe. Despite lockdown and restrictions in many countries, child helplines remained operational and many were able to adjust quickly to the new realities of remote working, providing essential services in challenging times. For many children and young people, child helplines have been – and continue to be – the only point of support.

In 2020, child helplines responded to over 1,900,000 calls<sup>1</sup>. Most child helplines were faced with a heightened demand for their services, which has not yet declined<sup>2</sup>. As in the previous year, violence and mental health remain the main reasons for children and young people to make contact with a child helpline. Requests for information about Covid-19, and contacts relating to family relationships, access to essential services and concerns about their own physical health have also emerged as main reasons for contact during the year.

### CALL FOR ACTION

Child Helpline International is a network of **166 child helplines operating in 139 countries and territories** around the world. We uphold the child's right to protection from violence at all times, including during emergencies such as the Covid-19 pandemic.

*Reiterating* our April 2020 Call for Action and its recommendations<sup>3</sup>, in particular the need for governments and partners to continue supporting and strengthening child helplines, and other child-friendly reporting mechanisms to respond to additional needs of children and young people during times of emergencies,

*Emphasizing* the central role of child helplines in national child protection systems, **we hereby call upon:**

#### Governments:

- To urgently ensure that child helplines are equipped with the necessary financial and human resources to operate fully, including during emergencies, but also ensure that referral mechanisms are available, operational and well connected to those helplines.

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<sup>1</sup> *The impact of Covid-19 on child helplines, children and young people Factsheet*, March 2021 containing data from 50 helplines. <https://www.childhelplineinternational.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Covid-19-Impact-Factsheets.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> *Voices during the Covid-19 Pandemic: The impact on children, young people and child helplines around the world*, May 2021. <https://www.childhelplineinternational.org/data-overview/publications/voices-during-the-covid-19-pandemic/>

<sup>3</sup> *Child Helpline Services and the Covid-19 Outbreak: Call for Action*, 16 May 2020. <https://www.childhelplineinternational.org/child-helplines/tools/coronavirus/the-covid-19-outbreak-and-child-helpline-services/>



- To ensure that child helplines are fully integrated into emergency response plans and national action plans and child protection systems, in coordination with other service providers and humanitarian actors where relevant<sup>4</sup>.
- To continue raising awareness of child helpline services in Covid-19 communications across different channels.
- To ensure that all children and young people have free and unlimited access to child helpline services, including particularly vulnerable children and young people, including children on the move, children with special needs, children from minorities, LGBTQI+, refugee and displaced children and young people.
- To support and facilitate the establishment of national child helplines where they do not yet exist.
- To support child helplines to strengthen their data management systems, so that their data can effectively and efficiently contribute towards informing relevant policies and services to uphold children's rights.

### Regional institutions and organisations:

- To recognise the central role of child helplines in addressing violence against children and young people, mental health and other key child protection issues.
- To advocate with governments and donors for additional resources for child helplines to remain operational during emergencies and strengthen their services in a sustainable way.
- To continue advocating for regionally harmonised child helpline numbers in order to make them more accessible to children and young people, such as 116 in Africa, 1098 in Asia, 116 111 in Europe and 150 in the Commonwealth of Independent States.

### Mobile operators, ICTs and social media platforms:

- To use their channels to disseminate to their users the contact details for child helplines and information about the services they provide.
- To support child helplines adapting to remote services as needed and helping them to expand their operations through the use of innovative technologies.
- To waive costs for child helpline numbers whenever incurred and wherever possible.
- To continue strengthening measures to protect children from all forms of violence, including bullying and online sexual exploitation, including via monitoring mechanisms and reporting avenues.

More information can be found at <https://www.childhelplineinternational.org/about/>

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<sup>4</sup> In line with the 2020 Technical Note on Protection of Children during the COVID-19 Pandemic available at: <https://alliancecpha.org/en/child-protection-news/alliance-coordinators-new-technical-note-protecting-children-during-covid-19>