Global Academy

COVID-19, Peace & Conflict

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ABSTRACT

COVID-19 has initiated a cascade of economic, social, and security problems at the national, regional, and international levels. Most urgently, it has overwhelmed the health systems of many countries. Since developed and developing countries alike have experienced these problems, they are globally visible. While developed countries have been focusing on solving their problems, they have disregarded the situation in developing countries. When considering the desperation of developed countries to combat the virus, it is worth highlighting that the situation in developing countries with weak health systems and fragile economies has been even graver. While the number of reported cases is unreliable in many countries, even in developed ones, it is exceedingly difficult to fully comprehend the pandemic's effects in countries affected by conflict. For example, the conflict in Yemen has already ruined the lives of tens of millions of people, but the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases, which is around two thousand, does not reflect reality.

Although we continue to assess the pandemic's effects on the number of people infected or killed by the virus died, the "officially presented data is only the tip of the iceberg." Taking into account the pessimistic picture we are facing today, this evaluation note examines the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on peace and conflict, especially in developing countries and conflict zones, and on disadvantaged groups such as youth, women and children, and refugees and migrants. The paper ends with a section on the measures that can be taken to mitigate the pandemic's adverse effects.

Introduction

From 11 March 2020, when the World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 a pandemic, to 30 October 2020, more than 46 million people have been infected by the virus and approximately 1.2 million people have lost their lives to it.[1] COVID-19 has initiated a cascade of economic, social, and security problems at the national, regional, and international levels. Most urgently, it has overwhelmed the health systems of many countries. Since developed and developing countries alike have experienced these problems, they are globally visible. Since the early months of the pandemic, countries have prioritized addressing their respective national challenges and shifted their attention away from international issues and cooperative initiatives. Moreover, while developed countries have been focusing on solving their problems, they have disregarded the situation in developing countries.

In this context, the Secretary-General of the United Nations (UN), António Guterres, called for a global ceasefire on March 23, 2020, underscoring the futility of practicing war when the whole world should be focusing the global fight against COVID-19, which he described as the "main struggle of our lives."[2] He also drew attention to disadvantaged groups, including women, children, youth, disabled people, immigrants, and displaced peoples, who have paid the highest price during the pandemic.

When considering the desperation of developed countries to combat the virus, it is worth highlighting that the situation in developing countries with weak health systems and fragile economies has been even graver. In countries with protracted conflicts such as Syria, Yemen, and Libya, the pandemic has prompted new problems and further complicated the situation in these countries. While the number of reported cases is unreliable in many countries, even in developed ones, it is exceedingly difficult to fully comprehend the pandemic's effects in countries affected by conflict. For example, the conflict in Yemen has already ruined the lives of tens of millions of people, but the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases, which is around two thousand, does not reflect reality. As referenced by UN Secretary-General Guterres, experts warned that Yemen's COVID-19 cases are close to one million.[3]

Although we continue to assess the pandemic's effects on the numbers of people infected or killed by the virus died, the "officially presented data is only the tip of the iceberg."[4] Taking into account the pessimistic picture we are facing today, this evaluation note examines the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on peace and conflict, especially in developing countries and conflict zones, and on disadvantaged groups such as youth, women and children, and refugees and migrants. The paper ends with

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[1] WHO COVID-19 statistics, https://covid19.who.int.

[2] "Secretary-General's Appeal for Global Ceasefire", *United Nations Secretary-General*, 23 March 2020, https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2020-03-23/secretary-generals-appeal-for-global-ceasefire.

[3] "'Tens of millions of Yemenis' devastated by unabated war and COVID-19", *UN News*, 17 September 2020, https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/09/1072692.

[4] Alpaslan Özerdem, Global Academy Talks, 22 October 2020, http://www.uikglobalacademy.com/tr/podcasts/.

a section on the measures that can be taken to mitigate the pandemic's adverse effects.

The Effects of COVID-19 Pandemic

The pandemic has created and exacerbated peace and conflict issues around the world and has the potential to trigger additional fault lines in fragile countries. Thus, it created more chaos and undermined attempts at conflict resolution in conflictual regions, since confidence-building measures and dialogue are critical for conflict resolution. International crisis management and conflict resolution mechanisms have also been seriously curtailed in an environment in which international cooperation has come to a halt.[5] This applies in particular to areas where it is physically challenging to conduct UN peacekeeping operations.

Meanwhile, actors are also accelerating the use of statecraft to gain control in emerging power vacuums, which is increasing the risk of further conflicts. Considering that conflicts around the world continue unabated even in normal times, the UN Secretary General's call for a global ceasefire was vital in highlighting the seriousness of the situation. However, despite the fact that this call was supported by 171 countries,[6] over 200 non-governmental organizations,[7] and approximately 2.4 million people,[8] the UN Security

Council did not take a decision on the issue and pass Resolution 2532 (2020)—calling on all parties to armed conflicts to agree to a humanitarian ceasefire, which would be effective for at least 90 consecutive days—until July 1, 2020 due to disputes among member states.[9]

Yet conflicts continue and the situation worsens in different parts of the world despite such calls. According to the EU's Institute for Security Studies (ISS) report, different armed groups in Libya, Iraq, Syria, Colombia, Yemen, Mali, and Niger are pressing for an advantage in their respective conflicts, taking advantage of the pandemic-induced global instability. In countries such as Kenya, India, and Honduras, pandemic-induced socio-economic problems triggered violent civil riots. Furthermore, peace negotiations in countries such as Ukraine, Sudan, and Libya were terminated or interrupted.[10] Although it is impossible to predict the duration and extent of the pandemic's impact, the trend has been negative so far. We can even say that the impact of these adverse conditions was felt with a multiplier effect in countries that are affected by conflict. Similarly, refugees and immigrants living under harsh conditions in camps or urban centers face more difficult conditions. The pandemic has also increased gender-based violence and exclusion and restricted access to rights, arguably most deeply affecting the most

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[5] Ibid.

[6] "Statement of support by 171 UN Member States, Non-Member Observer States, and Observers to the UN Secretary-General's appeal for a global ceasefire amid the COVID-19 pandemic", *ReliefWeb*, 22 June 2020, https://reliefweb.int/report/world/statement-support-171-un-member-states-non-member-observer-states-and-observers-un.

[7] #GlobalCeasefire, https://www.globalceasefire.org/our-movement.

[8] Individual signature campaign for the global ceasefire call by the UN Secretary-General, Avaaz, https://secure.avaaz.org/campaign/en/global_ceasefire_loc/.

[9] United Nations Security Council, S/RES2532(2020), 1 July 2020, http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/doc/2532.

[10] Katariina Mustasilta, "From Bad to Worse? The impact(s) of COVID-19 on conflict Dynamics", *European Union Institute for Security Studies Conflict Series,* Brief 13, June 2020, https://www.iss.europa.eu/sites/default/files/EUISSFiles/Brief%2013%20Covid%20and%20conflict.pdf.

vulnerable sections of the population, especially women, youth, and girls. However, it should be noted that young people and children seem less affected by the pandemic than other age groups.

Increasing Inequalities in the World: Developing Countries and Conflict Areas

Since March, we have observed that the problems caused by the pandemic have been more devastating for developing countries. Although some of these countries have declared a state of emergency and imposed measures such as quarantines, restrictions on circulation, social distancing, and nationwide closures, such measures were more difficult for these countries to implement than for developed countries.[11] Due to their weak economies and fragile financial conditions, the UN, World Bank, and International Monetary Fund (IMF) have allocated funds to assist developing countries in mitigating the pandemic's adverse effects. Considering these effects on the fields of healthcare, social services, and economics, international organizations such as the UN and WHO described the COVID-19 pandemic as "the worst crisis since the Second World War." To mitigate its adverse effects, these organizations established a three-tier plan for developing countries:

- **Solidarity Response Fund**: The World Health Organization, United Nations Foundation, and their partners launched a donation campaign to meet urgent healthcare needs.[12]

- **Humanitarian Response Plan**: The UN launched a $2-billion global humanitarian response plan to support the fight against the COVID-19 in the world's poorest countries.[13]

- **United Nations COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund:** This fund aims for the rapid recovery of low- and middle-income countries.[14]

In addition, the pandemic has exacerbated the complex situation of countries that have been affected by conflict. It has had colossal impacts on countries' economic, social, security, and physical infrastructures, where healthcare services are unavailable or insufficient due to conflict. Restrictions on international movement interrupted humanitarian aid to the conflict areas. During the Ebola epidemic that broke out in the Democratic Republic of Congo in 2019, the WHO and international non-governmental organizations could not reach affected areas due to the interventions of armed militias, despite the support of the UN peacekeeping forces. From time to time, militias even targeted doctors and healthcare officials.[15] Such obstacles to combating the

[11] "Statement of the least developed countries on COVID-19", *UN-OHRLLS*, 28 April 2020, http://unohrlls.org/custom-content/uploads/2020/05/Statement-of-LDCs-on-COVID-19-Broader-FINAL.pdf.

[12] *COVID-19 Solidarity Response Fund*, World Health Organization, https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/donate.

[13] *Global Humanitarian Response Plan COVID-19*, United Nations, April-December 2020, https://www.unocha.org/

sites/unocha/files/Global-Humanitarian-Response-Plan-COVID-19.pdf.

[14] *The Secretary-General's UN COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund*, United Nations, April 2020, https://unsdg.un.org/resources/secretary-generals-un-COVID-19-response-and-recovery-fund.

[15] "COVID-19 and Conflict: Seven Trends to Watch", *International Crisis Group*, 24 March 2020, https://www.crisisgroup.org/global/sb4-COVID-19-and-conflict-seven-trends-watch.

pandemic prevent us from understanding the pandemic's effects in conflict-stricken regions.

As the numbers of people who have lost their lives, been displaced, or sought asylum reveal, parties to conflict have ignored the humanitarian dimension. It was assumed that these numbers would increase during the pandemic. Studies focusing on this issue have highlighted that there has been a relative decrease in the severity of the conflict in Syria due to the pandemic, while the severity of the conflict has increased in Libya and Yemen.[16] Undoubtedly, the humanitarian dimension of the situation has worsened in all conflict areas. In this context, UN Secretary-General Guterres' call for a global ceasefire and the UN Security Council's supporting decision have had limited success in ending conflict.

In addition to the problems experienced from conflict, the pandemic has produced a more favorable environment for conflicts to grow. In the words of Alpaslan Özerdem, the pandemic has consumed the international community, shifting its attention away from other global problems and reallocating funds available for the developing world to fighting the pandemic. This diminished interest in security, conflict, and peace-building issues has caused financial difficulties in conflict-ridden countries. It is expected that this trend will continue in the post-COVID period.[17] According to the UN's Global Humanitarian Response Plan, at the beginning of 2020, global humanitarian needs were at the level of $30 billion, and 168 million people required

humanitarian assistance. The need for humanitarian aid has increased to a record level, totaling 405 million people who require humanitarian assistance. However, the fund only increased to $40 billion, which can only reach 249.6 million people.[18]

When all these general problems are reduced to groups and individuals, it is indisputable that COVID-19 has disproportionately impacted vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, among whom include women, youth, children, asylum seekers and immigrants, disabled people, those with chronic diseases, and pregnant women.

The Effects of COVID-19 on the Lives of Asylum Seekers and Immigrants

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the number of forcibly displaced people by the end of 2019 reached 79.5 million people worldwide, and there were over 30 million refugees or asylum seekers, of whom 38 percent to 43 percent were children under the age of 18.[19] Among displaced peoples, 68 percent were from Syria, Venezuela, Afghanistan, South Sudan, and Myanmar. According to official figures, Turkey hosted 3.6 million refugees, more than any country. In this context, examining Turkey's unique position in managing asylum seekers and migrants will shed light on the problems that refugees have faced during the pandemic.

[16] Bülent Aras and Devin Patrick Brown, "COVID-19 and Civil Conflict: The Cases of Syria, Libya and Yemen", August 2020, p. 9. https://ipc.sabanciuniv.edu/Content/Images/CKeditorImages/20200824-21081688.pdf.

[17] Alpaslan Özerdem, Global Academy Talks, 22 October 2020, http://www.uikglobalacademy.com/tr/podcasts/.

[18] Global Humanitarian Response Plan COVID-19, s. 105.

[19] The UN Refugee Agency, https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/.

Among the Syrians in Turkey, 97 percent to 98 percent are living in urban centers outside of refugee camps.[20] Given their socio-economic status, most are among the most vulnerable groups, and thus one of the groups most affected by the pandemic, especially in big cities, where they often live-in areas with poor hygiene conditions. They also have had difficulties meeting their basic needs and accessing their livelihoods due to COVID-19. [21] According to a survey conducted by the Association for Solidarity with Asylum Seekers and Immigrants (SGDD-ASAM), at the beginning of the pandemic, 63 percent of asylum seekers and migrants said that they have had difficulty in accessing food, and 53 percent have had difficulty in meeting basic hygiene requirements. Respondents also stated that they have had difficulty paying their rent, bills, and other basic expenses.[22]

Due to their temporary protection status, asylum seekers in Turkey have access to essential social services such as healthcare and education, but the pandemic has disrupted their access to such services. Distance education, moreover, causes problems for low-income families, especially for the children of refugees and immigrants. Among them, 48 percent of the school-age children who are enrolled in a school could not benefit from distance education due to technical and technological limitations. [23] Although refugees' and immigrants' situation may improve with the gradual transition to face-to-face education, it is a well-known fact that the tendency to drop out of school, especially for girls, has increased worldwide. The gravity of the situation among asylum seekers and immigrants makes integration into Turkish society all the more onerous. In addition to interruptions in access to healthcare services during the pandemic, asylum seekers and immigrants also lack information about the accessibility of hospitals and clinics and about lockdown and curfew applications. Most of them thought, for instance, that the healthcare centers were not welcoming non-COVID-19 cases.[24]

Since most refugees and immigrants work informally in daily jobs, the pandemic's economic problems have decimated their livelihoods. As stated in the SGDD-ASAM report, "only 18 percent of the respondents did not work before the COVID-19 measures. This rate increased to 88% after March 2020."[25] With the lifting of curfews, access to health services and to formal or informal daily jobs has improved. Nevertheless, the pandemic has deepened inequalities in society, while the closure of many sectors and workplaces has aggravated an already grave situation for asylum seekers.

In addition to the problems faced by asylum seekers and migrants in employment, education, and healthcare, they have also encountered delays with their asylum and status applications. The General Directorate of Migration Management's working hours shortened, especially in the early months of the pandemic, and most of their services such as registration procedures, the examination of

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[20] Deniz Şenol Sert, Global Academy Talks, 22 October 2020, http://www.uikglobalacademy.com/tr/podcasts/.

[21] Kemal Kirişci and Başak Yavcan, "As COVID-19 worsens precarity of refugees, Turkey and EU must work together", *Brookings Institute*, 11 Haziran 2020, https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2020/06/11/as-COVID-19-worsens-precarity-for-refugees-turkey-and-the-eu-must-work-together/

[22] Sığınmacı ve Göçmenlerle Dayanışma Derneği (2020), *COVID-19 Salgınının Mülteciler Üzerindeki Etkileri*, s. 13, https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/76640.

[23] Ibid., s. 16.

[24] Ibid., s. 22.

[25] Ibid., s. 14.

asylum applications, and granting refugee status were suspended.[26]

It is believed that the problems that asylum seekers and immigrants are facing in Turkey can hold a mirror up to other countries. Given the high number of asylum seekers and immigrants that Turkey is hosting, it is a representative case for other host countries regarding the problems experienced by asylum seekers and refugees. Although there are no precise statistics on how the pandemic has affected refugees and migrants, a report published by the UNHCR underlines that as of September 2020, only 21,000 cases of COVID-19 were detected among 30 million refugees across 97 countries.[27] The main reason behind the low number of COVID-19 cases among asylum seekers and refugees is the lack of testing capacity in the camps. Testing in camps only started recently. On the other hand, as the Norwegian Refugee Council reported, 77% of asylum seekers and refugees have lost their jobs or income since March 2020.[28] While governments have focused on their citizens' problems during the pandemic, the problems of immigrants and asylum seekers have remained secondary. Also, the increase in poverty on a global scale has curtailed humanitarian aid to these people.

The Effects of Pandemic on Women and Children

According to global statistics, COVID-19 has infected or killed more men than women, which reinforces the argument that women and children's immune systems are more resistant to and less affected by the virus.[29] However, reports demonstrate that the pandemic has deepened inequalities, and has thus more severely affected women and children in different ways than men. Projections made by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) paint a bleak picture, identifying the following problems: an increase in unwanted pregnancies, a regression in gender inequality, and an increase in child marriages. According to the UNFPA, the risks that women and girls are facing due to the pandemic include:[30]

- It is estimated that over 47 million women in 114 lower and middle-income states will not be able to use modern reproductive methods due to curfews or disruptions in essential healthcare services. It is predicted that at least 2 million or more women will not be able to use birth control methods for at least three months. If curfews and restrictions continue for six

[26] Derya Özkul, "Policy Recommendations towards Immigrants, Asylum-Seekers and Refugees for during and after the COVID-19 pandemic", *İstanbul Political Research Institute and Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Turkey Office Policy Report*, September 2020, p. 9, **Hata! Köprü başvurusu geçerli değil.**.

[27] "UNHCR COVID-19 Preparedness and Response", *UNHCR*, 25 September 2020, https://reporting.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/25092020_UNHCR%20Global%20COVID-19%20Emergency%20Response.pdf.

[28] Daniel Gorevan, "Downward Spiral: The Economic Impact of Covid-19 on Refugees and Displaced People", *Norwegian Refugee Council*, 21 September 2020, p. 3.

[29] Sertaç Aktan, "Why women are more resistant to COVID-19 than men", *Euronews*, 27 April 2020, https://tr.euronews.com/2020/04/27/koronavirus-COVID-19-kadinlar-daha-dayanikli-peki-erkekler-neden-daha-kolay-oluyor.

[30] "Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Family Planning and Ending Gender-based Violence, Female Genital Mutilation and Child Marriage, *UNFPA Interim Technical Report*, 27 April 2020, https://turkey.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/COVID-19un_Dunyaya_Etkileri_Arastirma_Raporu.pdf.

months, unwanted pregnancy cases are expected to increase by 7 million.

▪ Due to COVID-19, it is predicted that progress towards ending gender-based violence by 2030 will decline by one third. It is expected that 15 million new cases of gender-based violence will be added every three months. If curfews and restrictions continue for six months, this number is expected to rise to 31 million.

▪ It is expected that the pandemic will interrupt efforts to end child marriages. Between 2020 and 2030, it is estimated that 13 million child marriages would have been prevented under normal conditions.

In addition to these problems, the pandemic has also negatively affected efforts to combat poverty. According to estimates by the World Bank, even though quarantines have been applied at the national level, the economic collapse was experienced on a global scale, causing at least 49 million people to fall into extreme poverty. All previous gains made in this field have, essentially, been lost.[31] It is expected that women and girls will have experienced the effects of extreme poverty more than others. Considering that 70 percent of women were already working in informal sectors without social security or financial incentives, they remain the most at risk of losing their jobs.[32] From a gender perspective, it should be underlined that women are among the most

affected groups. While the majority has lost employment, their workload at home has increased during the pandemic. In addition, women subjected to domestic violence during curfew periods cannot benefit from shelters and social counseling services. Regardless of a country's development level, the pandemic has unleashed these problems on women in almost every country.

The inequalities mentioned above have also negatively affected the efforts to prevent child marriages, as highlighted in reports from the UNFPA. With limited opportunities for face-to-face education, the participation rate in distance education decreases. Notably, a decrease in the schooling rate among girls is expected, which will increase the likelihood of child marriages, early pregnancies, etc.[33] According to data on the Ebola epidemic that affected Africa in 2013 and 2016, the enrollment rate of 12-17-year-old girls in Sierra Leone decreased from 50 percent to 34 percent. Thus, the probability of pregnancy among girls in the same age range increased by 11 percent in villages that were severely hit by Ebola.[34]

Among the problems caused by the interruption of face-to-face education, children have encountered problems accessing safe and nutritious food and viable mental health services. As emphasized in UNICEF's report, 368.5 million children in 143 countries are expected to lose access to nutritious and safe food with the end of school meals.[35]

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[31] "COVID-19 Is Undoing Years of Progress in Curbing Global Poverty", *The Economist*, May 2020,

[32] *Global Humanitarian Response Plan COVID-19*, p. 5.

[33] Selen Örs Reyhanioğlu, Global Academy Talks, 22 October 2020, http://www.uikglobalacademy.com/tr/podcasts/.

[34] "The Impacts of COVID-19 Pandemic on Children", *UNICEF Policy Report*, 15 April 2020, p. 14.

[35] Ibid., s. 3.

The problems that profoundly affect women and girls as a result of the pandemic may, in other words, increase their vulnerability, especially in conflict and post-conflict contexts. Within the scope of peace and conflict, it is possible to talk about the existence of different problems. UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) entitled "Women, Peace, and Security" has paved the way for women's active participation in peace-building and conflict prevention. Although significant progress has been made within 20 years, the pandemic caused such efforts to flag. While women's groups and organizations undertake essential tasks in preventing conflict and ensuring peace, as witnessed in South Sudan, there has been a decline in women's achievements as "peace-builders" due to the pandemic. Significantly, conducting online peace processes may increase the number of people and groups participating in these processes. However, it has prevented women's participation and observation of them in South Sudan.[36] Necessary steps should be taken to ensure the participation of women in peace and conflict resolution processes.

The Effects of Pandemic on Youth

COVID-19 has also greatly affected young people. Societies often ignored the social, political, and economic roles of young people before the pandemic, but the pandemic has compounded the challenges they face. For a long time, examining "youth" as a category and assessing different perspectives and approaches regarding young people became a popular subject for academic literature. To understand how young people have been affected by the pandemic, it is crucial to touch upon two issues briefly. The most frequently used method to define young people is as a category between childhood and adulthood and refers to people in a particular age group. In this context, despite the existence of different definitions, UN Security Council Resolution 2250 (2015) entitled "Youth, Peace, and Security" defined youth as people who are between the ages of 18 and 29.[37] However, this definition ignores women who are obliged to marry at an early age and individuals who are not regarded as young, even though their age categorically fits this definition.[38] Another problem is that this definition tends to view young people as a homogeneous group, regardless of their race, language, religion, class, ethnic origin, political preferences, etc. Globally, "youth" is an extremely heterogeneous group in terms of their differences. Although it contains various problems, it should be noted that such generalizations are frequently used to make the subject more understandable.

Another critical issue is varying perceptions about young people. The dominant views regarding young people on peace and conflict issues fall into three categories: 1) problematic, aggressive, and offensive; 2) vulnerable and fragile; and 3) actors of change. It seems that some of these perspectives are similar to the comments produced by the media and politicians during COVID-19. That is to say, young people are portrayed as those who

[36] Njoki Kinyanjui ve Louise Olsson, "The COVID-19 Crisis Spotlights Criticality of Women's Participation and UNSCR 1325: A Policy-Research Exchange", *The Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO)*, 23 June 2020, s. 4-5.

[37] United Nations Security Council, S/RES/2250(2015), https://undocs.org/S/RES/2250(2015).

[38] Ali Altıok, Global Academy Talks, 22 October 2020, http://www.uikglobalacademy.com/tr/podcasts/.

are influential in spreading the virus due to their irresponsible behavior and ignoring of social distancing. On the other hand, young people have become valuable in the healthcare sector as a group "resistant" to the virus.[39]

Regarding the effects of the pandemic on young people, the International Labor Organization (ILO) carried out a study on young people's work and education status, mental health, rights, and social activism. Twelve thousand young people from 112 countries participated in ILO's survey, which revealed essential findings.[40] According to the report, since face-to-face education was interrupted by the pandemic, especially in developing countries, one out of eight young people lost access to education.[41] As mentioned in the previous section about children, there were also severe cuts in young people's access to safe and nutritious food in schools. In addition to education, the pandemic has limited young people's employment opportunities and derailed their career plans. According to the ILO report, one out of every six young people (17.4 percent) who were working before the pandemic lost their jobs. Twenty-three percent of the participants who continued to work during the pandemic reported that their working hours were curtailed by an average of two hours a day. Thus, 42 percent of their income was cut.[42] Besides the problems that young people face in education and employment, they have also been experiencing health problems. Seventeen percent of youth reported that they

have depression and anxiety problems. It is also estimated that these rates are higher among young people who are simultaneously affected by both education and employment curtailments.[43]

As in almost every segment of society, national curfew and quarantine practices have hindered youth participation in public affairs, worship, politics, protests, and gatherings. It caused a decline in their access to rights, as well. Thirty-three percent of the young people who participated in the ILO survey stated that their participation in public affairs participation was affected, twenty-seven percent reported that they had problems in accessing their freedom of worship and belief, and twenty-four percent reported that their right to access information was reduced. Even before the pandemic, adults blocked young people from accessing their rights to representation in politics and to protest. There is a risk that the regression experienced due to quarantines, closures, and states of emergency will be permanent.

The issues mentioned above will profoundly affect young people in developing countries, where the youth population is dense, and young people encounter problems in employment and education. Thus, they are likely to be abused by organized crime organizations, terrorist organizations, radical groups, etc. This situation supports the negative view of young people and weakens their achievements in the international arena.[44] Meanwhile, rising inequalities due to the pandemic have created a more favorable environment for conflict in

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[39] Ibid.

[40] *Youth & COVID-19: Impacts on Jobs, Education, Rights and Mental Well-Being Survey Report*, International Labour Organization, 2020, https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/documents/publication/wcms_753026.pdf.

[41] Ibid., s. 22.

[42] Ibid., s. 16.

[43] Ibid., s. 28.

[44] Ghada Waly, "Post COVID-19 World: Contours, Pivot Points and Benefits of Multilateral Collaboration", *UN Office on Drugs and Crime*, 6 July 2020, https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/speeches/2020/ctweek-webinar1-060720.html.

many countries. However, the tendency to explain this increase in conflict by assigning blame on young people triggers a negative view of them. As stated at the beginning of the section, the role of young people in peace or conflict is still controversial. However, generalizations prevent us from seeing the whole picture, due to the wide range of roles that young people have in society.

Despite all the negative views, many young people and youth organizations contribute to peace-building processes in conflict-affected societies. For example, in the northeastern regions of Nigeria, young people have played essential roles in protecting society, increasing their resilience, and reducing the effects of the conflict.[45] Therefore, rather than seeing young people as aggressive and problematic, we should recognize them as potentially vital actors of change for building permanent and sustainable peace. Instead of blaming them as the source of problems, efforts should be made to eliminate the factors that push them to this situation.

Lastly, considering the problems in accessing rights to education, especially in countries where conflict and violence are intense, the protection of schools has disappeared. As Ali Altıok stated, young people's contribution to peacebuilding and social cohesion starts at school. In this context, the closure of schools has also created new obstacles to youth participation in peacebuilding.

Mitigating the Effects of The Pandemic: Steps to Be Taken

When we examine the pandemic's effects on vulnerable and fragile groups in developing countries, a bleak picture emerges at both the national and international levels. As stated in the introduction, it is likely that these adverse effects will be felt worldwide for a more extended period. Considering that the effects we have experienced do not fully reflect the gravity of the situation, especially with the gloomy predictions about winter 2021, we will live with the pandemics longer than expected. Despite the gravity of the situation, it is evident that there are steps that can be taken. More comprehensive cooperation at the international level will minimize the impact of the pandemic at the national and international levels. Thus, there are specific national and international steps that can be taken to alleviate the adverse effects of the pandemic.

Rising global inequalities and levels of poverty due to the pandemic have reinforced authoritarian tendencies. The pandemic has been securitized even in developed countries; while the situation in fragile countries has worsened, pandemic-related problems have increased the risk of conflict in different parts of the world. Eliminating or mitigating the pandemic's negative effects on economies, societies, security, and healthcare will only be possible with international cooperation. In this framework, being aware that the problem is multidimensional and global, the fight against the

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[45] "Entrenching Peace: Assessing Community Resilience and Peace-building Initiatives in Northeast Nigeria", Security, Peace and Development, March 2020, https://nextierspd.com/entrenching-peace-assessing-community-resilience-and-peace-

building-initiatives-in-northeast-nigeria/?fbclid=IwAR3TW7_d0-tuN0nljv2OH9rHMiQo4LfaIhXNROf60perbbgALbHJ7E1aiTk.

pandemic must be carried out at the global level. [46] Developing countries' ability to overcome the effects of the pandemic and to gain access to vaccines will ensure national and international stability and welfare.

The UN can play an active role in solving problems and engage in diplomatic interventions by cooperating with other international organizations and leveraging its increasing importance during the pandemic by asserting leadership. [47] To limit ongoing or emerging conflicts globally, it can implement Security Council Resolution 2532 and coordinate with regional organizations such as the African Union and others.[48] The active role of regional organizations on these issues may improve the situation in the developing world.

Asylum seekers and migrants under temporary protection status in Turkey have been provided financial and social assistance. However, measures taken during the pandemic have resulted in cuts in their access to these benefits. To improve asylum seekers and migrants' conditions, it is necessary to make radical changes and move from humanitarian-based programs to more rights-based programs. [49] The "securitized" discourses towards asylum seekers and immigrants have negatively affected the perception of Turkish people. Asylum seekers and immigrants have begun to be seen as the primary source of structural problems. Considering that most refugees and migrants will live permanently in Turkey, it is crucial to prepare society for this

development. Furthermore, we need concrete policy recommendations to ensure coexistence. [50] Since the pandemic makes asylum seekers and migrants more visible, now is the time to produce more effective policies with the participation of all relevant stakeholders.

To make the adverse effects of the pandemic more visible, it is also necessary to conduct regular studies and prepare intervention plans. Since 1971, the UNFPA has been carrying out activities with Turkish civil society, universities, and public sectors in the field of humanitarian aid to deal with issues such as women's health and the prevention of gender-based violence. The UNFPA is also carrying out concrete activities to analyze and prepare intervention plans to address the pandemic's effects.[51] The achievements that we have made so far regarding vulnerable groups have regressed due to the pandemic. The continuation of activities that targeting disadvantaged people should be supported through the implementation of innovative methods.[52] As stated in the beginning, national and international cooperation is essential for continuing programs that provide essential lines of support.

Combatting negative views towards young people is not something that can happen momentarily. It is necessary to carry out studies to prevent the denigration of the positive image that had been built through international youth-dialogue programs. Eliminating negative discourses and images that are constructed by the media

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[46] Alpaslan Özerdem, Global Academy Talks, 22 October 2020, http://www.uikglobalacademy.com/tr/podcasts/.

[47] Ibid.

[48] Ibid.

[49] Deniz Şenol Sert, Global Academy Talks, 22 October 2020, http://www.uikglobalacademy.com/tr/podcasts/.

[50] Ibid. and Murat Erdoğan, "Prof. Dr. Murat Erdoğan: Suriyeliler Nezdinde Aslında Kendi Aynamıza Bakıyoruz", Evrensel, 23 September 2020.

[51] Selen Örs Reyhanioğlu, Global Academy Talks, 22 October 2020, http://www.uikglobalacademy.com/tr/podcasts/.

[52] Ibid.

and politicians must be at the forefront. Even though young people are the "most resistant group" to being infected with COVID-19, they have been portrayed as enabling the spread of the virus. Drawing attention to the positive roles that young people have played in the fight against COVID-19 at the national and international arena has to be part of this effort. During the pandemic, young people have undertaken vital tasks, such as food distribution, mask production, distribution, disinfectant production, informing the public about the virus in developing countries, raising awareness in society, and preventing disinformation on social media. In many countries, the "peace-builders" working on peacebuilding and preventing conflicts are primarily young people. They are able to reflect on their experiences in different environments during the pandemic process. Peace-builders currently working in international organizations and non-governmental organizations have unique talents and abilities and can thus create sympathy for peace by establishing trust and by being at the forefront of combating COVD-19.[53] In order to change the negative perceptions of young people, such positive examples should be made more visible. Finally, the obstacles that prevent young people from becoming active members of social, economic, and political life should be eliminated. In this regard, the pandemic can then be considered to have triggered radical change.

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[53] Alpaslan Özerdem, Global Academy Talks, 22 October 2020, http://www.uikglobalacademy.com/tr/podcasts/.

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