

Final Action Plan

“Mental Health: Children’s Perspectives on the Challenges and Ways Forward”

The following Action Plan contains the views of children who participated in the *Global Campus International Child-led Conference on Mental Health* in Nepal (2022). The work with the children began in September 2021 with a series of national and international consultations with children in Nepal, India, Lebanon, South Africa, Armenia, Lebanon Italy, Brazil, Chile, and Ecuador. At the national consultations a total of **111 children participated across 13 individual sessions**. The boys and girls who participated ranged from between 10-17 years old and came from diverse backgrounds, including refugee children and minority groups. We also conducted 5 international consultations where representatives from each national consultation attended, taking ownership of the design of the conference. The Global Campus Children’s Leadership Team consisting of **17 children in total** was thus formed. The work with the children culminated with the child-led conference between 31 January and 1 February 2022. This two-day event was attended by **83 children, 19 invited experts and 333 registered participants**. The entire conference was also simultaneously translated into 7 languages. Over the course of the event, the children led discussions, asked questions, and developed their own action plans. The document below represents a combined view of all the views expressed across the various countries represented at the conference.

Subtopic 1: Lack of Educational Mechanisms for Mental Health

What needs to be done?	Who needs to do it? (Government, NGOs, family, community, experts, etc.)	When this needs to be done?	What can children and young people contribute to this Action Point
Mandatory engagement of school psychologists and counsellors. They should be responsible for supporting children holistically. This involves directly working with children, but also with parents and educators to	This needs to happen at the State level and implemented at a regional level by experts.	Immediately and as a matter of urgency	Participate actively in activities set by psychologists and talk to peers and parents to embrace the opportunity.

strengthen support for and awareness of the mental health needs of children at school and at home. <i>National Level</i>			
Online education that promotes mental health awareness, strengthens the resilience of children to cope with challenging situations (at home and at school) and enhances abilities to recognise and support children with mental health needs. <i>International, Regional and National Levels</i>	This should be financed by the state, but created and organised by NGOs, experts, and schools. It is also crucial to involve parents.	Immediately with initial rollouts of content next year.	Contribute to the creation, promotion and distribution of content
Sex education. This should incorporate inclusive education on sexual orientation and gender identity. The awareness of parents should also be strengthened to ensure children are accepted at home and by the community regardless of their orientation and identity. <i>National Level</i>	Required by the state, implemented by schools, and supported by parents	As soon as possible with specific actions taking place in a phased manner (preferably quarterly)	Can encourage and organise meetings with peers and parents.
The involvement of NGOs to set up mental health centres at schools to provide more access to confidential support, access to information and help during crisis moments. <i>International, Regional and National Levels</i>	Non-governmental organisations and local schools - with governmental and community support.	As soon as possible!	Can actively work with NGOs to develop mechanisms that speak to the needs of children. Give peer support at these centres Develop mechanisms that uses modern technologies relevant to children (regional specific)

<p>Instigate national training plans on mental health for educators. Importantly, this training should also include compulsory sensitivity training since teachers often make difficult situations worse due to inappropriate responses.</p> <p>National Level</p>	<p>Experts together with the community and NGOs should create the plan, while the government should be responsible for providing financial support. This should be done at a national level in co-operation with schools.</p>	<p>It is extremely urgent to start a public debate among institutions and citizens on creating these training plans. However, it is recognised that to do this there needs to be a certain buy-in from local authorities and schools. So, awareness needs to be created before the programmes can be instigated. It is urgent however since teachers need to be well trained to support and protect children appropriately.</p>	<p>Contribute with their own views of how important the topic is and of the damage that can be created due to inappropriate training and mental health awareness.</p> <p>Increase informal communications with educators on the way teachers interact with pupils.</p>
<p>More access to information and services should be given to children in rural areas</p> <p>International, Regional and National Levels</p>	<p>This is the responsibility of governments and NGOs working in the communities.</p>	<p>As soon as possible!</p>	<p>Can take a leading role in creating Children's Clubs in rural areas.</p>
<p>Educational resources should be equally distributed – for example: access to the Internet, phones, radio.</p> <p>International, Regional and National Levels</p>	<p>This is the responsibility of governments</p>	<p>As soon as possible!</p>	
<p>Instigate SEL education (social and emotional learning classes) to enhance children's emotional intelligence and understanding of mental health. Developing factual knowledge is not enough. Children need support</p>	<p>Experts and children can combine forces to develop new ideas, but schools must actively support emotional intelligence education.</p>	<p>As soon as possible as evidence suggests that suicide rates among young children are increasing at an alarming rate!</p>	<p>Actively participate and/or lead sessions as peer-to-peer mentors</p>

<p>in understanding their feelings and how to deal with them. Regular classes would allow teachers and psychologists to talk to children in group and smaller sessions.</p> <p style="text-align: right; color: #e91e63;">International, Regional and National Levels</p>	<p>Government should provide educational and financial resources for this</p>		
<p>Training as well as counselling at school for teachers educating them on how to create friendly and constructive environments at school. If teachers do not know anything about mental health, then children will not know anything about mental health.</p> <p style="text-align: right; color: #e91e63;">National Level</p>	<p>Governments, local authorities, communities, schools, and experts</p>	<p>As soon as possible!</p>	
<p>Address the stigma of mental health. Change perspectives of children and adults about people who suffer from mental health issues. They are often branded as 'psychos'. Talking about mental health issues should be normalised. In many traditional communities talking about mental health at home is not possible. There should therefore be dedicated staff members at school that provide an avenue for children to address what</p>	<p>Governments, local authorities, schools, and communities.</p>	<p>As soon as possible!</p>	<p>Children can help by communicating honestly and openly with teachers when they are unable to perform at the desired standard at school.</p>

<p>they are going through – without prejudice.</p> <p style="text-align: right; color: #e91e63;">International, Regional and National Levels</p>			
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Subtopic 2: Violence Against Children and Mental Health

What needs to be done?	Who needs to do it? (Government, NGOs, family, community, experts, etc.)	When this needs to be done?	What can children and young people contribute to this Action Point
<p>Ensure child-friendly environments at home, school and in the community. Treating children with respect and equal to adults is important for this – just because children are smaller, does not mean they are different to adults in terms of their rights, wants and needs.</p> <p style="text-align: right; color: #e91e63;">Regional and National levels</p>	Parents, teachers, and communities.	As soon as possible!	<p>Children can be come peer educators/mentors so that children can support each other through difficulties.</p> <p>Peer to peer support groups</p>
<p>Organise child-centred programmes to make communities aware of the various types of violence and abuse children face at home, school and in society. Some forms of violence children face do not present physically, so children have no 'evidence' of the violence they are exposed to (especially at home</p>	Governments, NGOs, and schools.	As soon as possible!	<p>Children can be come peer educators so that children can support each other through difficulties.</p> <p>Peer to peer support groups</p>

<p>and at school). It is important to understand what types of mental/psychological violence children face and training programmes can help people understand this to eradicate it from our societies.</p> <p>International, Regional and National Levels</p>			
<p>Create child-centred helplines and make people aware of these helplines for them to make use of the helplines.</p> <p>International, Regional and National Levels</p>	<p>Governments, NGOs, experts and peer educators.</p>	<p>As soon as possible!</p>	<p>Children can become peer educators so that children can support each other through difficulties.</p> <p>Peer to peer support groups</p>
<p>Educate children about the difference between good and bad touching by adults at school, home and in society.</p> <p>National Level</p>	<p>Especially female teachers need to help with this, peer educators and experts.</p>	<p>As soon as possible!</p>	<p>Children can become peer educators so that children can support each other through difficulties.</p> <p>Peer to peer support groups</p>
<p>Create committees in local government (including experts) who can act as first responders consulting directly with children</p> <p>Regional and National Level</p>	<p>Governments and experts</p>	<p>As soon as possible!</p>	

<p>Stricter monitoring and banning of online content that instigates cyber-hate that could lead to bullying and other forms of violence against children. This includes creating appropriate laws on cybercrime and make people aware of these laws.</p> <p>International, Regional and National Levels</p>	<p>Governments, NGOs</p>	<p>As soon as possible!</p>	
<p>Deconstruct gender norms and address toxic masculinity via improved school curricula. Such issues are often intensified in rural communities where girls and boys are taught to fulfil certain gender norms – e.g., girls do all the work, boys do very little. Boys are actively taught to assert their masculinity and dominance, which in turn leads to violence against girls.</p> <p>International, Regional and National Levels</p>	<p>Governments, NGOs, local authorities, communities, and parents.</p>	<p>As soon as possible!</p>	<p>Young people can contribute by calling out peers on toxic behaviour and being conscious of the fact that language matters and influences people (language can for example promote and normalise rape culture)</p>
<p>More resources for child offenders to enter rehabilitation and restorative programmes rather than jail. Young people who commit crimes often have underlining mental health issues that are never addressed appropriately. This is especially important</p>	<p>Governments and justice departments, NGOs, parents, and communities.</p>	<p>This may take a few years, but should be started as a matter of priority</p>	<p>Young people should help by contributing to discussions related to reconciliation and rehabilitation of young offenders.</p>

for sex offenders and abusers (of all ages) Regional and National Levels			
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Subtopic 3: Unhealthy Competition

What needs to be done?	Who needs to do it? (Government, NGOs, family, community, experts, etc.)	When this needs to be done?	What can children and young people contribute to this Action Point
<p>Setting realistic targets / expectations for children to achieve. This should involve having regular meetings with children to support them in the process of setting their own targets based on their interests, needs and abilities. This includes involving parents in training initiatives to educate them on how to inspire and motivate their children in a non-harmful way.</p> <p>International, Regional and National Levels</p>	Schools, experts (supported by governments), and parents.	Immediately – doesn't take much to start implementing	.
<p>Creation of individually negotiated learning plans (NLPs) that are specific to each child's interests, needs and abilities. In other words, this entails the development of an individual learning approach that strengthens a child's</p>	Schools and experts	Immediately – doesn't take much to start implementing	Children can be involved in the creation of a process to determine the set-up and implementation of individually negotiated learning plans (NLPs)

<p>natural strengths and skills. People contribute differently to society and the education system should reflect that too.</p> <p>National Levels</p>			
<p>Awareness creation about the impact of unhealthy competition on the mental state of children</p> <p>International, Regional and National Levels</p>	<p>NGOs should specifically work with schools and communities</p>	<p>In a phased manner over time</p>	
<p>Create new assessment methods at school that differ from traditional methods. For instance, test children's knowledge, not their ability to memorise.</p> <p>Regional and National Levels</p>	<p>Governments and Education Departments should take the lead in changing traditional assessment methods – in cooperation of course with teachers and schools</p>	<p>Get started as soon as possible</p>	<p>Children, teenagers and young people are extremely creative in thinking of new ways of evaluating their knowledge at school.</p>
<p>Stop comparing children in terms of how they perform academically, physically, and socially. We are all different and unique. Children do things differently and they are good at different things – just like adults are. So, comparing the performance of children can be harmful. It is like comparing apples with oranges.</p> <p>International, Regional and National Levels</p>	<p>Parents, teachers, and community members</p>	<p>As soon as possible!</p>	<p>Children can help by stopping social media show-off.</p>

<p>Children must be supported to internalise who they are and accept themselves as valuable members of society with something meaningful to contribute.</p> <p>International, Regional and National Levels</p>	<p>Schools, experts, communities, and parents</p>	<p>As soon as possible!</p>	<p>Children can become peer-mentors helping with this process.</p>
<p>Governments should invest in non-traditional opportunities for children to build alternative futures that are not exclusively based on academic achievement. Children excel in different ways. Cultural and sports achievements should also be celebrated and awarded. Non-traditional fields are opportunities that children can tap into. Competing for academic success does not have to be the only avenue to achieving a sustainable and fulfilling life. If a child is not able to become a lawyer, doctor etc. they should not be regarded as disappointments by schools, communities and parents.</p> <p>Regional and National Levels</p>	<p>Governments, schools and communities</p>	<p>As soon as possible!</p>	<p>Children can assist in brainstorming activities in order to help develop non-traditional opportunities.</p>