Inspiring Change Together: The Lockdown Learners Series

Impact Report (2020-2022)
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Lockdown Learners series, initiated by UNODC Regional Office for South Asia in response to the COVID-19 pandemic in April 2020, would not have been possible without the involvement of children, young people, educators and educational leaders, who actively participated in the dialogues and provided their enthusiastic and spirited support despite the uncertainties.

We thank the Navodaya Vidyalaya Samity, Ministry of Education, Government of India for the strong partnership, allowing UNODC to work with students and educators of Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas. We extend our deep gratitude to Mr. Vinayak Garg (Commissioner, Navodaya Vidyalaya Samity), Mr. Bishwajit Singh (Former Commissioner, Navodaya Vidyalaya Samity), Mr. AN Ramachandra (Former Joint Commissioner, Navodaya Vidyalaya Samity), Mr. T Sobhan Babu (Assistant Commissioner, Navodaya Vidyalaya Samity), Principals and Educators of the Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas for their continued guidance and support.

We are grateful to the inspiring community of educational leaders from partner schools, civil society and educational institutions, who provided valued advise, motivation and support at every stage and helped streamline the cause of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), peace, ethics, crime prevention global citizenship and the rule of law in education.

The Lockdown Learners series was conceptualised and spearheaded by Mr. Samarth Pathak (Communications Officer and Youth Focal Point, UNODC Regional Office for South Asia), under the able guidance and leadership of Mr. Sergey Kapinos (Former Representative, UNODC Regional Office for South Asia), Dr. Suruchi Pant (Deputy Representative, UNODC Regional Office for South Asia), Mr. Gilberto Duarte Santos (Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Officer, UNODC) and Ms. Lulua Asaad (Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Officer, UNODC).
Over the last two years, the COVID-19 pandemic has affected billions of people around the world and impacted all aspects of life and society. The pandemic has also aggravated existing inequalities and fuelled social issues such as discrimination, gender-based violence, social strife, corruption and crime.

The impact on children and young people has been particularly significant. The emotional vacuum caused by lockdowns and school closures have not only affected their education and mental health, but also enhanced their vulnerability to abuse, neglect, exploitation, crime and risky behaviour.

Unfortunately, many young people—especially girls—have undergone unimaginable pain and trauma, leading to anxiety, fear and mental health challenges. Many have witnessed disease and death at close quarters, felt the severe economic impact at their homes, experienced abuse, violence and neglect, and been disturbed by prolonged social restraints and the prevailing uncertainty about the future.

As countries focus on building back better, it is an imperative to use education as a key ally in promoting and strengthening peace and the rule of law, and promoting life skills among young people. It is also important to listen to young people, and provide them with skills and platforms empowering them take charge of the future they want to build.
BUILDING BACK: EDUCATION FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

With the largest adolescent population in the world—253 million—and every fifth person aged between 10-19 years, India stands to benefit socially, politically and economically if children in school are safe, healthy, educated and equipped with life skills.

Educational institutions are an important platform to engage with children and youth and empower them to become responsible citizens and catalysts of change.

This is because children and young people are more likely to adopt positive behaviours when they:

a. Understand the risks and consequences of crime, unethical behaviours and violence
b. Develop a sense of purpose, integrity, tolerance and respect for others
c. Act and create solutions to social problems
d. Participate in decision-making processes
e. Use their skills and technology to foster peace and social change

Hence, it is important to create an education process that bridges digital, socio-economic and gender divides, and produces engaged and committed citizens for building an equitable, inclusive, and plural society.
ENABLING YOUTH ACTION: THE 'LOCKDOWN LEARNERS' SERIES

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, UNODC has spearheaded the ‘Lockdown Learners’ series in India since April 2020, through which a positive framework of action and engagement has been provided to young people and educators on strengthening peace, crime prevention and SDGs. This has been a unique and innovative experiment aimed at promoting awareness and enable youth action on the Global Goals—while complementing key components of India’s New Education Policy 2020.

Designed as a sustained programme with immersive, activity-based engagement with young people, the series includes continuous capacity building of educators and students on critical issues such as corruption, cybercrime, discrimination, misinformation and gender inequality and environment, among others.

At the same time, students are also provided with mentorship and knowledge support to use their skills to promote awareness and co-create initiatives/solutions to address these challenges.

Bridging socio-economic and gender divides, the initiative was featured by the prestigious UN Innovation Network’s Best of 2020 Initiatives, and was one of the key initiatives recognized with the UN Secretary General’s Award for Innovation in 2021. The series has also been showcased at various UNODC/UN regional and global forums, and news media.
ENABLING YOUTH ACTION: THE 'LOCKDOWN LEARNERS' SERIES

So far, this acclaimed and impactful initiative has reached over 14,000 young students and educators from public and private schools in rural and urban settings across 16 states/Union Territories across India—including the Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas, Government of India.

In addition, education resources developed by UNODC have been shared with over 19,000 students and educators across India, besides the Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas.

As part of this program, UNODC has disseminated free-to-use educational material for students and educators, such as:

Content and Videos

The Zorbs cartoon series

Comic books

Board and Online Games

Handbooks for Educators

Special Lockdown Learners sessions have also been held with refugee groups in New Delhi (in partnership with UNHCR India), economically disadvantaged students in New Delhi (in collaboration with Samarpan Foundation), Uttar Pradesh (in collaboration with Saksham Bharti) and Telangana (Mahita).
BRIDGING SOCIO-ECONOMIC DIVIDES: ‘LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND’

Besides top schools and institutions from metropolitan cities, the series has proactively focused on reaching economically disadvantaged students and educators with limited internet access, using innovative and low-cost-high-impact initiatives.

In addition to using a variety of virtual platforms and hybrid modes, Whatsapp and voice notes have been also used to engage students from low income groups and rural areas. The response to this has been tremendous, especially from girls. On Whatsapp, the Lockdown Learners sessions have almost worked like a group interaction, with open discussions. This has proven to be impactful and cost effective, as students with limited data packs have also been able to join the engagements with no additional expenditure.

There has also been a conscious effort to be as inclusive and informal as possible to maximise engagement. This has been done by simplifying and demystifying the language around SDGs and other thematic areas of focus, and providing a local and even hyperlocal context during discussions.

Using UNODC’s special handbooks for educators, modes such as storytelling, activities, thought-provoking open dialogues and Socratic discussions have been adopted to enhance students’ interest and inspire them towards responsible and ethical behaviours.
Safe and open spaces for students have been provided in each session, enabling them to share their thoughts and ideas without hesitancy.

Educators have been involved as focal points for each student group to ensure long-term engagement and provided trainings to effectively teach and lead school-focused interventions on aforementioned thematic areas.

Free-of-cost educational material has been shared and digital information repositories have been created for student groups. Vibrant networks of action have been developed with youth and educators to facilitate exchange of knowledge, ideas and initiatives. School-led, youth-driven solutions have been co-created and effectively showcased on various platforms.

Several partner schools, such as Ahlcon Public School (Delhi), Nahar International School (Mumbai), Kamla Nehru Public School (Phagwara), The Lawrence School (Sanawar), Legacy School (Bengaluru) and others, have been engaging students on peace and the Global Goals through classroom-focused interventions and co-curricular initiatives.
Parents and educators have reported behavior changes, greater engagement and renewed commitment to society among students who are participating. Many students who have participated in the sessions are proactively thinking of social issues, emerging risks, SDGs and post COVID-19 roadmap.

For instance, the series has mentored a growing number of students who are becoming “SDGs and peace mobilisers” themselves. They are engaging in “behavior-change” dialogues with their peers and families, creating advocacy tools and raising awareness on gender equality, COVID-19 precautions and vaccines, misinformation and peace.

Educators have emphasized that students are more curious to know about SDGs and peace-related themes, and use their skills and talents to come up with solutions. They are now actively thinking and talking about the future they want, especially post COVID-19: a peaceful, just and inclusive world, driven by values, compassion and ethics.

This is also evident in the wide range of creative and innovative products that students have created and shared with UNODC: these include songs, interactive videos, games, blogs, websites etc. Some are even designing social initiatives and network-building focused on the SDGs.

During the pandemic, UNODC has also supported student-driven online community collectives—mainly on Whatsapp—to provide knowledge support and assistance to communities. Through these, members verify and share leads on emergency information, and raise awareness on vaccines, masks and other safety precautions among other things.
**Online Youth Collectives (Whatsapp):**
UNODC has supported student-driven online community collectives—mainly on Whatsapp—to provide knowledge support and assistance to communities. Through these online community collectives, members verify and share leads on emergency information, and raise awareness on vaccines, masks and other safety precautions among other things. Whatsapp Groups have been created by students in Rangareddy (Telangana), Jajpur (Odisha), Varanasi (Uttar Pradesh), Deoghar (Jharkhand), Jhajjar (Haryana) and Banswara (Rajasthan).

**Special Video (E-du under Lockdown):**
A short film by Team Role Camera in support of UNODC, highlighting the digital divides in education amid COVID-19 and the Lockdown.

**Notebooks Exchange Programme (Jharkhand):**
A youth group in Deoghar, mentored by UNODC and national award-winning educator Shweta Sharma, carried out a ‘notebooks exchange’ initiative in their community, wherein all virtual discussions were copied on a notebook and shared with students did not have access to the internet. The aim was to bridge digital divides and strengthen access to education.
**MAKING A DIFFERENCE: 'GEN-Z PROBLEM SOLVERS'**

**Music for Social Change:** Using music as a medium to promote peace and a culture of lawfulness, young students conceptualised and composed a set of musical compositions, in support of the Lockdown Learners series.

- **The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Anthem:** A Youth-Focused Rap Song by Abza Dorbala (Phagwara, Punjab)
- **Castles in the Air:** A song on peace and healing by Asavari and Ananya Verma (New Delhi).
- **We are One:** A song on unity by Asavari and Ananya Verma (New Delhi).

**Advocacy with Art:** Art empowers youth to become champions of social change.

Young people from Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas in Jhajjar (Haryana), Rangareddy (Telangana), Jajpur (Odisha), Mawphlang (Meghalaya), Banswara (Rajasthan), Chamoli (Uttarakhand) and other public and private schools used their skills in art to strengthen peace and raise awareness on the SDGs.

In addition, art-based advocacy tools have also been produced to address vaccine hesitancy and promote usage of masks during the pandemic, besides themes such as bullying, social harmony, gender equality, environment and education.
**SDGs Calendar:** Students of the Legacy School Bengaluru created and produced a special calendar, highlighting the Sustainable Development Goals and their role in strengthening peace and development. With the calendar, the students aim at raising awareness on wildlife trafficking and climate change.

**Community Initiatives:** The Lawrence School, Sanawar spearheaded special community initiatives to support COVID-19 awareness and vaccination camps. Students of Sanawar are strengthening efforts on safeguarding and sustaining the environment and spreading awareness on anti-corruption, education, health and peace.

**SDGs Dialogues:** Participating schools held public dialogues to promote awareness on SDGs, peace and the rule of law. These were youth-focused, educators-driven initiatives, and focused on enabling collaborative action on the Global Goals. Special assemblies, focused on themes discussed in the Lockdown Learners series were also convened by select schools.
**MAKING A DIFFERENCE: 'GEN-Z PROBLEM SOLVERS'**

**SDGs-focused Website:** Students of the Nahar International School, Mumbai created and produced a special website in support of the Sustainable Development Goals. The website seeks to serve as a repository of content and information to raise awareness on themes related to peace and development.

**Podcast:** Project Saksham is an initiative of the students of Tagore International School Vasant Vihar (New Delhi), which aims to create an inclusive and just society. In this direction, students have developed a special podcast focused on disability rights and inclusion. The student-led podcast series features interviews with experts, and is showcased on social media platforms.

**Youth Action Peer Groups:** Students from various schools developed interpersonal connections and created peer groups, virtual clubs and action networks to develop joint efforts against discrimination, bullying, gender inequality and disharmony, in support of the SDGs.

**Capacity Building of Educators:** Ms. Paramjit Dhillon, a reputed Indian educator and Principal of the Kamla Nehru Public School Phagwara (Punjab) initiated the 'RiseUp4SDGs,' an independent international educators collective bringing together 1043 educators from 58 countries. The platform has convened dialogues between educators on each of the Global Goals and associated best practices for classrooms.
Interactive Student Reflections

- Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya, Jhajjar
- Kothari International School, Noida
- Ahlcon Public School, New Delhi
- Student from Deoghar, Jharkhand
- Kamla Nehru Public School, Phagwara

Panel Dialogues

- The Army Public School Dhaula Kuan, New Delhi
- Tagore International School Vasant Vihar, New Delhi
- Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya, Jhajjar (Haryana)
- Media Advocacy with Policymakers
- Media Advocacy with Educators
- Media Advocacy with Youth

Blogs

- Sehpathi by the Tagore International School, Vasant Vihar (New Delhi)
- Una Voca by The Legacy School (Bengaluru)
- Perspectives by the Army Public School Dhaula Kuan (New Delhi)
- Nahar International School (Mumbai)
- Kamla Nehru Public School (Phagwara)

Social Media Outreach (Twitter)

- Lockdown Learners Series: Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas
- Lockdown Learners Series: Partners

Online Game against misinformation: The Legacy School (Bengaluru)
“Since April 2020, UNODC’s ‘Lockdown Learners’ series were implemented in select Navodaya schools across eight Regions in India. The emphasis on promoting youth engagement on crime prevention, peace and SDGs in India through activity-based learning remained highly useful and a very welcome initiative in response to the disruptions caused by the pandemic. The series, which included regular interactive dialogues including peace, gender-based violence, misinformation, cybercrime, discrimination and SDGs, among others received tremendous encouragement and has received extensively positive feedback from students and educators. I take this opportunity to extend my heartiest compliments to UNODC, especially Mr. Samarth Pathak, for spearheading this exemplary program.”

Mr. A.N. Ramachandra (Former Joint Commissioner and Academic Consultant, Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti, Government of India)

“The community of learners at the Lawrence School, Sanawar is honored to be a part of the UNODC’s Lockdown Learners series. Our students learned about ideating innovative ways to lend a healing touch and worked collaboratively to make the world a better place. Our students took on the role of champions of education for justice, peace and SDGs and have been enthusiastically raising community awareness on health/safety, countering misinformation, collating leads on essential resources, creating networks and reaching out to the larger community.”

Mr. Himmat Singh Dhillon (Headmaster, The Lawrence School Sanawar, Himachal Pradesh)

“The Lockdown Learners series came as a great motivational drive to our students. It inspired our senior students to go beyond their classroom learning by utilising their knowledge and skills to create an impact on the larger community. It helped them in understanding the power of youth and developed a sense of self belief in them. I would like to thank UNODC for giving this opportunity to our students.”

Ms. Vandana Arora (Principal, Nahar International School, Mumbai)

"We didn’t know how to respond to the crisis COVID-19 wrought on our education system. The Lockdown Learners series came as a blessing amid the isolation and remote learning highlighted by anxiety, depression and mental health issues among the children. That time and space needed relief to fill in them optimism, gratitude, social intelligence and creativity. This program has enriched the social emotional space of the students, building resilience."

Dr. Ashok Pandey (Director, Ahlcon Group of Schools, New Delhi)
“To beat the challenges posed by COVID-19, we need strong and resilient societies, which are only possible with strong schools. UNODC’s Lockdown Learners series created ripples in my students from 65 villages in Punjab. It has been immensely satisfying to see the positive response and engagement from students and teachers on the interactions on peace and the SDGs. Our students have developed, over the last year, great interest in fostering social change. They have created videos, street plays, dances, rap music and research on addressing social issues and make the world more peaceful.

Ms. Paramjit Kaur Dhillon (Principal, Kamla Nehru Public School, Phagwara)

“Our curriculum framework incorporates SDGs to amplify student learning and actions. Our collaboration and synergetic relationship with UNODC through the Lockdown Learners series has further underpinned our commitment to advancing UN goals. Our students have launched various initiatives on anti-corruption, misinformation and climate change through our UNA VOCA web page. The positive stories which have emerged from these interactive engagements have broadened our students' perspectives about international understanding and world peace.”

Ms. Geeta Jayanth (Principal, The Legacy School, Bengaluru)

“I thank UNODC for connecting with my students, for whom SDGs were reflected in their daily struggles. The Lockdown Learners series has empowered them to speak up and address social problems. More importantly, it has built their capacity and inspired them to act for peace, justice and SDGs through quality education.”

Ms. Shweta Sharma (National Award-Winning Educator, Deoghar)

“Through the Lockdown Learners series, UNODC has interacted with students of the Round Table Abhinav Vidyalaya on crime prevention, peace and SDGs. Our students have actively participated in these highly engaging discussions and the process has made them vocal as well as inquisitive to social issues.”

Ms. Jaimala Tewari (Principal, Round Table Abhinav Vidyalaya, Mirzamurad, Varanasi)
"The Lockdown Learners series ensured that learning does not stop for students amid COVID-19 and succeeded in bridging the gap between learners from diverse backgrounds. The program not only bolstered capabilities of our students, but also resulted in exponential growth in opportunities for the educators to learn from the young minds and their peers."

**Ms. Mallika Preman (Principal, Tagore International School, New Delhi)**

"The Lockdown Learners series had a great impact on us indeed. It made students aware and more responsible citizens, despite many obstacles posed by COVID-19."

**Ms. Namita Verma (Educator, Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya, Jhajjar)**
PARTNER SCHOOLS: THE 'LOCKDOWN LEARNERS' SERIES

- The Lawrence School Sanawar (Himachal Pradesh)
- Kamla Nehru Public School Phagwara (Punjab)
- Mount Litera Zee School Amritsar (Punjab)
- The Legacy School Bengaluru (Karnataka)
- Nahar International School Mumbai (Maharashtra)
- The Ahlcon Group of Schools (Delhi)
- Tagore International School Vasant Vihar (Delhi)
- Tagore International School East of Kailash (Delhi)
- Army Public School Dhaula Kuan (Delhi)
- Army Public School Noida (Uttar Pradesh)
- Kothari International School Noida (Uttar Pradesh)
- St John's High School (Chandigarh)
- St Vincent's School Asansol (West Bengal)
- St Patrick's School Asansol (West Bengal)
- Students’ Group in Deoghar (Jharkhand)
- Round Table Abhinav Vidyalaya Mirzamurad (Uttar Pradesh)
- Captain Rakesh Memorial School Mathura (Uttar Pradesh)
- Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya Chamoli (Uttarakhand)
- Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya Jhajjar (Haryana)
- Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya Jajpur (Odisha)
- Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya Rangareddy (Telangana)
- Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya Banswara (Rajasthan)
- Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya East Khasi Hills-1 (Meghalaya)
- Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya Beed (Maharashtra)
- Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya Bengaluru Urban (Karnataka)
- Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya (Uttarakhand)
- Delhi Public School Mathura (Uttar Pradesh)
- Delhi Public School Gurugram (Haryana)
- Delhi Public School Faridabad (Haryana)
- Sarala Birla Gyan Jyoti Guwahati (Assam)
SNAPSHOTS

Ashwani Kumar
Host
UNODC launches ‘Lockdown Learners’ series of e-dialogues for students, educators in India

The Lockdown Learners series also provides a platform for students to receive mentorship and knowledge support through activity-based learning, and use their talent and skills to promote awareness and share their ideas and solutions to address some of these problems.

DC-Dainik Jagran Dialogues on Education

As part of the Lockdown Learner’s programme, UNODC also collaborated with one of India's media groups, the Dainik Jagran. As part of this programme, Jagran New Media, a wing of the media group, co-ordinated a series of focused online dialogues, emphasizing the importance of Education for Justice, Peace and SDGs amid COVID-19. In these dialogues, young people deliberated innovative approaches in education to promote lawfulness, as well as rethinking youth engagement on social themes and peace ID-19.
UNODC has launched the **Global Resource for Anti-Corruption Education and Youth Empowerment (GRACE)** initiative, in follow up to the UNGASS Political Declaration 2021.

Building on the success of the global Education for Justice Initiative and the Lockdown Learners series, UNODC will engage with policymakers, government stakeholders, educational institutions, educators and students with the GRACE initiative in India. The Initiative aims at **promoting the role of education and youth empowerment** in preventing and countering corruption and strengthening peace.

As part of this effort, the focus will be on the following areas:

- Strengthening policy responses through awareness generation, advocacy and based on comprehensive international guidelines
- Engaging youth on peace, anti-corruption, crime prevention and SDGs with education
- Capacity Building of Educators at the Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Levels on GRACE Initiative
- Fostering and showcasing education-driven solutions on anti-corruption and crime prevention