

The Covid Generation

Children and youth in and after the pandemic:
Responding to the World Crisis



Casina Pio IV, Vatican City
February 28 and March 1, 2022



The pandemic “has an enormous impact on education. In many parts of the world, great numbers of children are unable to return to school, and this situation runs the risk of an increase in child labour, exploitation, abuse and malnutrition”

*The Holy Father Pope Francis message to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences
on the occasion of the Plenary Session*

October 7, 2020

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Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences

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Under COVID, millions of children and youth are experiencing damage and dislocations likely to mark their developmental pathways for years to come. Indeed, COVID can be described as a long-lasting catastrophic shock robbing children and youth of learning opportunities, socializing with other children, seeking supports from care-takers, teachers, and extended family members. For millions, the pandemic suddenly disrupted access to school, health care, nutrition, and the various other scaffolds needed for normatively appropriate maturational development. According to UNICEF, “Across virtually every key measure of childhood, progress has gone backward in the 12 months since the pandemic was declared, leaving children confronting a devastating and distorted new normal.” <https://uni.cf/3b2FJVA>

Indeed, preliminary data suggest that, *inter alia*, food insecurity <https://bit.ly/3CIuAW6>, child abuse <https://bit.ly/3cr04ET>, child and youth suicide <https://bit.ly/2RH6VDg>, risk of firearm injury <https://bit.ly/3CIuAW6>, child trafficking <https://bit.ly/3watKya> have all become more insidious during the pandemic. According to The Lancet, from March 1, 2020, to April 30, 2021, over 1.3 million children saw the death of primary caregivers, “including at least one parent or custodial grandparent ... [and] 1,562, 000 children experienced the death of at least one primary or secondary caregiver” with Peru (10.2 per 1000 children), South Africa (5.1), Mexico (3.5), Brazil (2.4), Colombia (2.3) leading the way. <https://bit.ly/2XDmEWO> Children in minoritized populations have been ravaged by COVID-related parental loss. <https://bit.ly/3nWBOzp>

The Workshop will assess the impact of COVID–19 on children and families with a focus on the most vulnerable: children in poverty, racial minority children, refugee children, immigrant children, children in modern slavery, and children in war. In the Workshop, we shall examine the impact of COVID–19 on the physical, socio-emotional, cognitive and meta-cognitive, moral development of children with a focus on education, health and mental health.

The pandemic stunned education systems with geologic force. UNICEF data suggest that for almost half-a-billion children whose schools closed due to COVID-19, there was no such thing as remote learning opportunities. A year into the pandemic, by the first quarter of 2021, more than 160 million children “around the world have missed school for nearly a year due to COVID-19 restrictions.” Fourteen countries “have remained largely closed since March 2020 to February 2021.” Two-thirds of those countries are in Latin America and the Caribbean. In addition, school closures disrupted immunization and other health services that are often provided at school and prevented many children from accessing the only nutritious meal of the day. COVID–19 put millions of children on the streets and at risk of abuse, trafficking and exploitation. David Bloom and Maddalena Ferranna of the Harvard School of Public Health summarize COVID’S impact on children and youth as, “degrading the emotional and mental health of students, and increasing the risk of domestic violence and abuse.”

WHO Global status report on preventing violence against children, warns of the “dramatic impact’ of COVID-19 on violence against children. <https://bit.ly/3cr04ET> Abused children, missing children, children in flight, the children of forcibly displaced migrants, children in modern slavery are enduring in an empire of suffering that COVID – 19 made harder hard-to-survey, prevent, and heal. According to the United Nations office of Drugs and Crime 2020 *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons* “the COVID-19 pandemic is likely to increase trafficking in persons, particularly from countries experiencing the fastest and most persistent drops in employment. ... Children account for about one third of the detected victims of trafficking.” <https://bit.ly/3watKya> Under COVID - 19 modern slavery has become more hidden and difficult to detect

COVID – 19 put millions of children are at risk for desperate reasons. First, extreme poverty compromises socio-emotional and cognitive development, health and wellness in vulnerable populations. The COVID-19 pandemic is likely to push approximately an additional 100 million human beings into extreme poverty (<https://bit.ly/3wpR5g9>). Global hunger and malnutrition — even as progress is made, continue to cripple millions around the world. According to the FAO, “The number of people in the world affected by hunger increased in 2020 under the shadow of the COVID-19 pandemic. After remaining virtually unchanged from 2014 to 2019, the prevalence of undernourishment climbed to around 9.9 percent in 2020, from 8.4 percent a year earlier. In terms of population, taking into consideration the additional statistical uncertainty, it is estimated that between 720 and 811 million people in the world faced hunger in 2020. Considering the middle of the projected range (768 million), 118 million more people were facing hunger in 2020 than in 2019 – or as many as 161 million, considering the upper bound of the range.” <https://bit.ly/3qjeu1B> Transnational pauperism, the implosion of the structures and strictures that codify familial and social norms, rachitic states with feeble institutions – accentuated by war and terror and unchecked climate change, continue to put millions of children and youth at risk.

Second, the pandemic, unchecked climate change, war and terror, are driving unprecedented levels of both legal and unauthorized migration worldwide. Over the last 12 months, the most trafficked border in the world – between Mexico and the United States has seen a skyrocketing surge of unauthorized immigrants with an all-time record 1.7 million from around the world, “many of them fleeing pandemic-ravaged countries ... trying to enter the United States illegally in the last 12 months, capping a year of chaos at the southern border.” <https://nyti.ms/3jxTrEy>

Research suggests that migrants are especially vulnerable to modern human slavery and trafficking (Zhang, 2012) but also are the targets of hate crimes, and social-exclusion. Millions of Asian immigrants became targets of xenophobic violence as the former President of the United States and others framed the COVID disaster with the vulgar term, “the China Flu.” Over 36 million children today are growing up as immigrants; in addition, approximately 18 million children under the age of 18 are internally displaced forced to flee war and terror, extreme poverty & climate change. <https://bit.ly/3aX64UL> Over half of the world’s refugees are children (Suárez-Orozco, 2020). COVID has made the plight of immigrants and refugees more difficult and hazardous.

Third, new information, communication, and social media technologies have an important role to play in in the pandemic such as offering new opportunities to create community, to learn and to find joy for children in underserved communities. But the same technologies offer inappropriate content to children, and are now the routine tools in the exploitation of minors. Scholarly research has outlined the uses of digital technologies, mobile devices, tablets, smart phones, and social networking sites for modern slavery. Increasingly, exploitation is taking place online and includes coercing or extorting children into producing indecent images of themselves or engaging in sexual activity via webcams, which can be captured and distributed by offenders. The mobile phone now is an instrument of torture all made more sinister and prevalent by the COVID pandemic.

The proposed Workshop will represent the first international, interdisciplinary and comparative effort to examine the effects of COVID – 19 on children, youth and emerging adults, draw lessons-learned from best practices and make concrete suggestion to prepare for the next catastrophic disaster moving forward. In the PASS workshop on Children After COVID we shall examine new levers to make the family and the institutions of society tasked with the promoting the development of children more humane and equitable, more engaging and fulfilling, and more relevant to the disparate needs of children and youth around the world. We shall examine, *inter alia*, regional responses to COVID in the Americas, Africa, Asia, and Europe – with a focus on how various nation-states responded to the pandemic, best practices and lessons learned, the role of the Church and communities of faith in mediating the pandemic’s worse after-shocks. We shall address the effects of growing inequality and unchecked climate change on pandemics past and future as well as the tools to reverse the effects of both.

Marcelo Suárez-Orozco

09:00-09:30	Word of Welcome	Stefano Zamagni <i>PASS President</i> H.E. Msgr. Marcelo Sánchez Sorondo <i>PASS Chancellor</i> Marcelo Suárez-Orozco <i>PASS Academician</i>
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SESSION I	Marcelo Suárez-Orozco
The Contours of a Catastrophe	<i>Chairman</i>

TIME	TITLE	SPEAKER
09:30-09:55	The COVID Generation: Children and youth in and after the pandemic	Marcelo Suárez-Orozco <i>Chancellor</i> <i>University of Massachusetts, Boston</i>
09:55-10:20	Early childhood development: Impacts and implications of the COVID-19 pandemic	David Bloom & Aisha Yousafzai via Zoom <i>T.H. Chan School of Public Health</i> <i>Harvard University</i>
10:20-10:45	The pandemic and children's health	Ashish K. Jha <i>MD, MPH, Dean of the</i> <i>Brown University School of Public Health</i>
10:45-11:15	Discussion	
11:15-11:45	Coffee break	
11:45-12:10	Poverty and the pandemic	Jeffrey Sachs <i>Columbia University, PASS Academician</i>
12:10-12:35	Dignity and care in the age of COVID	Hans Zollner, SJ <i>Professor and Director, Institute of Anthropology</i> <i>Interdisciplinary Studies on Human Dignity and Care, Pontifical Gregorian University</i>
12:35-13:00	The pandemic and psychosocial development during late adolescence	Kathleen McCartney & Laurie Fenlason <i>Smith College</i>
13:00-13:20	Discussion	
13:20-14:50	Lunch	

SESSION II
Institutions: Families, Schools,
NGOs and the World Religions
Adapt to the Pandemic

Stefano Zamagni
Chairman

TIME	TITLE	SPEAKER
14:50-15:15	On the ethical dilemmas of the COVID-19 pandemic	Stefano Zamagni <i>PASS President</i>
15:15-15:40	Education and the pandemic	Fernando Reimers via Zoom <i>Harvard University</i>
15:40-16:05	Did the pandemic exacerbate online harms to children?	Gunilla Olsson & Daniel Kardefelt-Winther via Zoom <i>UNICEF Office of Research - Innocenti</i>
16:05-16:30	The mental health of children and adolescents before and during the pandemic	Ernesto Caffo <i>President at S.O.S. - Telefono Azzurro</i>
16:30-17:00	Discussion	
17:00-17:30	Coffee break	
17:30-17:55	Education: a more resilient, inclusive and human-centred recovery	Stefania Giannini <i>UNESCO Assistant Director-General for Education</i>
17:55-18:20	Conflict and pandemic: Linking past, present, and future in refugee education	Sarah Dryden-Peterson via Zoom <i>Director, REACH, an initiative of the Harvard Graduate School of Education</i>
18:20-18:45	Church responses to the pandemic	H.E. Seán Patrick O'Malley via Zoom <i>Metropolitan Archbishop of Boston, USA</i>
18:45-19:10	Church responses to the pandemic	Rev. Dr. William J. Barber II via Zoom <i>President & Senior Lecturer</i> <i>Repairers of the Breach</i> <i>Visiting Professor, Union Theological Seminary;</i> <i>Goldsboro, North Carolina, USA</i>
19:10-19:40	Discussion	
19:40	Dinner	





SESSION III
The Pandemic in
Comparative Perspective

Carola Suárez-Orozco


*Director of the Immigration Initiative, Harvard
Chairwoman*

TIME	TITLE	SPEAKER
09:00-09:25	The Pandemic in Asia: Regional Perspectives	Kiran Bir Sethi via Zoom <i>Founder, Design for Change, India</i>
09:25-09:50	Family decisions on health and economic survival: A struggle for inclusive mercy in Southern Africa	Mpilehle Pearl Sithole via Zoom <i>University of the Free State Phuthaditjaba, South Africa, PASS Academician</i>
09:50-10:15	The Pandemic and the Children of Immigrants	Mary Waters <i>John L. Loeb Professor of Sociology at Harvard University</i>
10:15-10:45	Discussion	
10:45-11:15	Coffee break	
11:15-11:40	The Pandemic and Children's Psycho-Social Development in Latin America	Sebastián Lipina via Zoom <i>Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas (CONICET) Buenos Aires, Argentina</i>
11:40-12:05	The Pandemic in Latin America: Regional Perspective	Gustavo Beliz via Zoom <i>Secretary of Strategic Affairs, Presidency of Argentina, PASS Academician</i>
12:05-12:30	Resilience in the age of pandemics	James M. and Cathleen D. Stone <i>Stone Foundation</i>
12:30-13:00	Discussion	
13:00-14:30	Lunch	

SESSION IV
Donor, Philanthropic,
University and NGO Responses
to COVID

TIME	TITLE	SPEAKER
14:30-14:55	Donor and Philanthropic Responses	Adam Gamoran via Zoom <i>President, William T. Grant Foundation</i>
14:55-15:20	Prostitution, poverty, climate change and human rights in the age of pandemics	Melissa Farley <i>Ph.D. Executive Director Prostitution Research & Education</i>
15:20-15:45	University Research in the Age of COVID	John DeGoia via Zoom <i>President, Georgetown University</i>
15:45-16:15	Coffee break	
16:15-16:45	Discussion, Statement and Next Steps	
16:45	Departure	


LIST OF IN-PERSON PARTICIPANTS




Ernesto Caffo
President at S.O.S. - Telefono Azzurro
Senior Professor of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
Member of the Pontifical Commission for the
Protection of Minors, President of Foundation Child



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James M. Stone
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Mary Waters
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John L. Loeb Professor of Sociology at
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Stefano Zamagni
Professor of Economics and former Dean of
the Economics Faculty at the
University of Bologna, Italy
PASS President



Hans Zollner, SJ
Professor and Director, Institute of Anthropology
Interdisciplinary Studies on Human Dignity
and Care, Pontifical Gregorian University

LIST OF VIRTUAL PARTICIPANTS

	<p>Rev. Dr. William J. Barber II <i>President & Senior Lecturer Repairers of the Breach Visiting Professor, Union Theological Seminary; Goldsboro, North Carolina, USA</i></p>		<p>Fernando Reimers <i>Professor of Practice in International Education, Director of the Global Education Innovation Initiative and of the International Education Policy Masters Program at Harvard University.</i></p>
	<p>Gustavo Beliz <i>Secretary of Strategic Affairs, Presidency of Argentina, PASS Academician</i></p>		<p>Kiran Bir Sethi <i>Founder - The Riverside School, Design For Change, aProCh Ahmedabad, Gujarat, India</i></p>
	<p>David Bloom <i>Clarence James Gamble Professor of Economics and Demography, Global Health and Population, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts</i></p>		<p>Mpilenhle Pearl Sithole <i>Lecturer at the University of the Free State Qwaqwa Campus in Phuthaditjhaba, South Africa</i></p>
	<p>John J. DeGioia <i>48th President of Georgetown University Washington DC</i></p>		<p>Aisha Yousafzai <i>Associate Professor, Global Health and Population Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts</i></p>
	<p>Sarah Dryden-Peterson <i>Director, REACH, an initiative of the Harvard Graduate School of Education, Cambridge, Massachusetts</i></p>		
	<p>Adam Gamoran <i>President, William T. Grant Foundation New York, NY</i></p>		
	<p>Daniel Kardefelt Winther <i>Children and Digital Technology at UNICEF's Office of Research - Innocenti, Florence, Italy</i></p>		
	<p>Sebastián Lipina <i>Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas (CONICET) Buenos Aires, Argentina</i></p>		
	<p>Martin Meehan <i>President, University of Massachusetts, Boston</i></p>		
	<p>H.E. Seán Patrick O'Malley <i>Metropolitan Archbishop of Boston, Massachusetts</i></p>		



Front Cover and page 8 and 9, oil painting by Pieter Bruegel the Elder, Children's Games, 1560

“The children, who range in age from toddlers to adolescents, roll hoops, swim, walk on stilts, spin hoops, ride hobby-horses, stage mock tournaments, play leap-frog and blind man's bluff, perform handstands and play with dolls and other toys. The artist's intention for this work is more serious than simply to compile an illustrated encyclopaedia of children's games, though some eighty particular games have been identified. Bruegel shows the children absorbed in their games with the seriousness displayed by adults in their apparently more important pursuits. His moral is that in the mind of God, children's games possess as much significance as the activities of their parents.”

Photo on page 2 by Gabriella Clare Marino / PASS

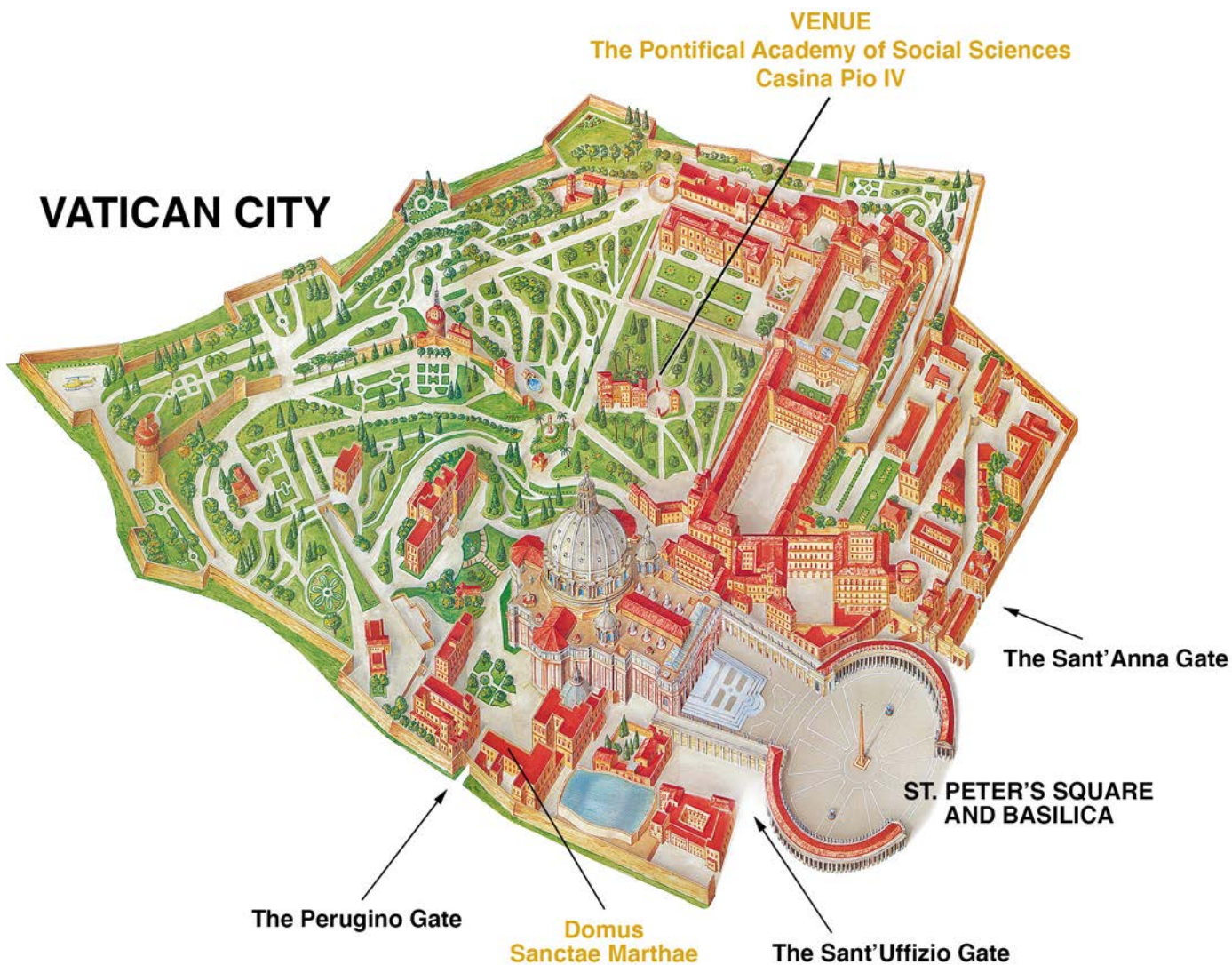
Photo on page 15 by Gabriella Clare Marino / Unsplash

On this page, photo by MOHAMED ABDIWAHAB/AFP via Getty Images.

Displaced Somali girl attending a class to learn alphabets and numbers at a makeshift school at the Badbado IDP camp in Mogadishu, Somalia, on June 25, 2018.

University Students from various universities provide voluntarily free schooling to about 600 girls and boys under 16-years-old at various IDP camps in Mogadishu since May 2017.





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