



University of
Strathclyde
Glasgow

Inspiring Children's Futures

Supporting Children's Wellbeing
During COVID-19: Staff Supervision,
Coping and Wellbeing, and the
Impact on Service Delivery

Summary of Findings



The International **COVID 4P** Log Project

LEARNING
SERIES | **2**



About the COVID 4P Log Project

COVID-19 has abruptly thrust the rights and wellbeing of children and families into greater risk around the world. The impact of COVID-19 on children continues to be vast. Risks posed to children’s survival and development, to their special protections, education, health and access to food, for example, are being greatly compounded not only by COVID-19, but also by government responses.

With roughly a third of the global population estimated to be under age 18, children¹ account for a huge proportion of our population. Successful delivery of the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals (henceforth ‘SDGs’), which relate to all ages, heavily relies on our ability to effectively and robustly respond to the distinct needs and rights of children. Even prior to COVID-19, our global task to achieve these global goals by 2030 seemed daunting. In the light of COVID-19, achieving the SDGs is even more challenging.

To effectively mitigate the impact of COVID-19 in the light of protecting children’s wellbeing, and ultimately for our collective societal future, policy and practice responses must be distinctively designed to address children’s wellbeing needs.

Policymakers, and those working with children, are at the heart of pandemic responses as they continue to support children’s wellbeing, rise to many new challenges, and respond in new, innovative and, in some cases, unprecedented ways. To address the impact of COVID-19 on children in the long term, the COVID 4P Log Project sought to better understand the changing demands on these policies and practices across different cultures and contexts, in 22 countries and five continents.



The **Institute for Inspiring Children’s Futures** is a joint initiative at the University of Strathclyde, Scotland, with a collective vision of ensuring that children and young people have what they need to reach their full potential, particularly those who face adversity.

We work in partnership with a wide range of partners nationally and internationally. Children’s human rights and the UN Sustainable Development Goals are the heart of our work.

1. The term ‘children’ is used throughout to describe all those under the age of 18 years, in line with the CRC’s definition of a child. Where ‘young person’ is used in the Report, this is reflecting that specific age group only.

THE SMARTPHONE APP



The COVID 4P Log is an Android and iOS smartphone app, free-of-cost to app users, that collected the real-time, anonymous views and experiences of practitioners and policymakers who were working across the globe to support children's wellbeing in the light of COVID-19. In answering a series of questions, these volunteer respondents helped us to better understand the ways practitioners and policymakers were responding in new, innovative and, in some cases, unprecedented ways.

During the last quarter of 2020, practitioners and policymakers were invited to download the app to log a 2-minute response to one main question every day, for eight weeks. The questions were both practice and policy-focused, and based on the '4P' children's human rights framework of Protection, Provision, Prevention, and Participation, in order to better understand the ways practitioners and policymakers around the world were protecting children, providing for their unique needs, enabling their participation in decisions that affect them, and preventing harm, during the COVID-19 pandemic.

RESEARCH THEMES

The smartphone app explored respondents' views of several core areas:

1. Learning from the pandemic so far
2. Protection: Ending violence against children
3. Provision: Access to food, health, education
4. Collaborations, flexibility, transparency and trust: Applying evidence from past emergencies to COVID-19
5. Prevention: Children's social and emotional wellbeing
6. Special considerations: Justice, alternative care and disabilities
7. Participation: Responding to #COVIDUnder19 - children and young people's findings
8. Preparing to rebuild post-COVID

OUR KEY PARTNERS

Our 17 international Key Partners range from capacity-building organisations, to international advocacy NGOs and service delivery partnerships, to the UN and other inter-governmental agencies. Their support and close engagement enabled the **Institute for Inspiring Children's Futures** to gather these important insights through the COVID 4P Log smartphone app. Their mention here does not imply endorsement of these findings.





Report Summary: Staff Supervision, Coping and Wellbeing, and the Impact on Service Delivery During the COVID-19 Pandemic

This report presents the findings from the analysis of the COVID 4P Log responses about respondents' experiences of receiving supervision during the pandemic, as well as about their coping and wellbeing during this time. The report is organised in two main parts. '**Receiving Supervision During the Pandemic and its Impact on Service Delivery**' discusses topics such as the characteristics of useful supervision, as well as the impact of having (or not having) such supervision on respondents' coping and work performance. '**Respondents' Own Coping and Wellbeing**' explores how respondents managed the stresses and anxieties experienced during the pandemic, and what type of support (formal and informal) they deemed most helpful in meeting those challenges.

The data presented here were collected in the last quarter of 2020.

This is a summary report. The full report on the in-depth findings can be found at <https://inspiringchildrensfutures.org/publications>.

This report aims to generate new insights, and spark new questions and ideas to inform, equip and strengthen policy, service and practices for and with children and their families.

This report is part of a series of Learning Reports documenting the COVID 4P Log App findings from responses across the eight weeks of questions. This COVID 4P Log Learning Report series aims to inform and equip those who seek to 'respond to children's distinct needs, and realise their full range of rights and opportunities, to achieve peaceful, just and inclusive societies for all'.²

2. Davidson, J.; Elsley, S.; Giraldi, M.; Goudie, A.; Hope, K.; Lyth, A.; Van Keirsbilck, B. (June 2019): Justice for Children, Justice for All: The Challenge to Achieve SDG16+ Call to Action. Glasgow: CELCIS - Inspiring Children's Futures, University of Strathclyde. <https://www.justice.sdg16.plus/justiceforchildren>

Key Messages

Receiving Supervision During COVID-19

The **vast majority** of respondents had received some form of supervision during the COVID-19 pandemic. Supervision took different forms - via **telephone and virtually; planned and unplanned; formal and informal; and individual and group supervision.**

Importance of Good Supervision for Service Delivery

Most respondents described the supervision received as useful - both personally and professionally - and highlighted its **importance for safe, responsive, thoughtful and quality service delivery.**

Respondents' Wellbeing During the Pandemic

The numerous challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic were often **overwhelming**, and had a **far-reaching negative impact** on respondents' **wellbeing, attitudes** towards themselves and their work, and on their **work performance.** Feeling unsafe, uncertain, 'helpless', 'low', 'doubtful' and a sense of failure were reported as resulting from pandemic-related stress and anxiety.

Managing Stress and Anxiety During the Pandemic

Respondents discussed their experience of **stress and anxiety** during the pandemic, with **almost half** of them reporting these had had an impact on their work. Talking and sharing; engaging in leisure activities; relaxing; praying and meditating; and 'taking it one day at a time' - were all shared as **useful practices for managing the stress and anxiety** during the pandemic. Some respondents reported having **difficulties coping with that stress and anxiety.** The **increased workload and work demands** were sometimes cited as the main sources of stress.

Concerns about the Supervision Received

Respondents shared different **concerns about supervision** during the pandemic, and discussed the impact of having reduced support on their work. Some of those concerns related to the **increased stress** faced by their supervisors, the **limited face-to-face contact** and the **insufficient organisational focus** on long-term planning and solutions.

Self-Care and Social Support

The majority of respondents had **benefitted from some form of self-care, and social and professional support** during the pandemic. Such help offered **affirmation, encouragement and emotional support.** **Peer support,** via online platforms or otherwise, was highlighted as helpful.

What Made Supervision Effective and Useful?

Effective supervision was immensely valuable in helping respondents **physically, mentally and emotionally cope with the challenges** faced during the pandemic. Supervision that offered **frequent, immediate, personalised and confidential support** was preferred as it fostered **collaboration, problem-solving and reflection** - resulting in more effective responses to the COVID-19 emergency. 'Useful' supervision helped respondents **feel cared for, connected, guided and reassured.**

Preferred Supervision and Support

Respondents often preferred having **more regular, structured, focused and face-to-face support;** having **more opportunities to engage in reflective practice;** and having **better access to reporting equipment** such as laptops.

Negative Effects of the Lack of Adequate Support

Feeling unmotivated, unproductive, overwhelmed and isolated - were often reported as consequences of **not receiving adequate support during the pandemic.** **Burnout, fatigue** and thoughts about leaving one's job were also reported.

Advice for Colleagues from Around the Globe

Respondents' advice to their colleagues facing similar challenges carried messages about **self-care and self-compassion, resilience and finding support in others.**

Some of our Respondents' Advice to Colleagues on Managing the Challenges and Stresses of Working During COVID-19

Seek out supportive and reflective supervision or colleague groups.

[...] be kind to yourself.

Be strong.

Cherish small moments of happiness and the small victories because they will help sustain you in the bad times.

Take each day as it comes.

You have to be able to know when you are stressed, acknowledge it and help yourself with de-stressing techniques.

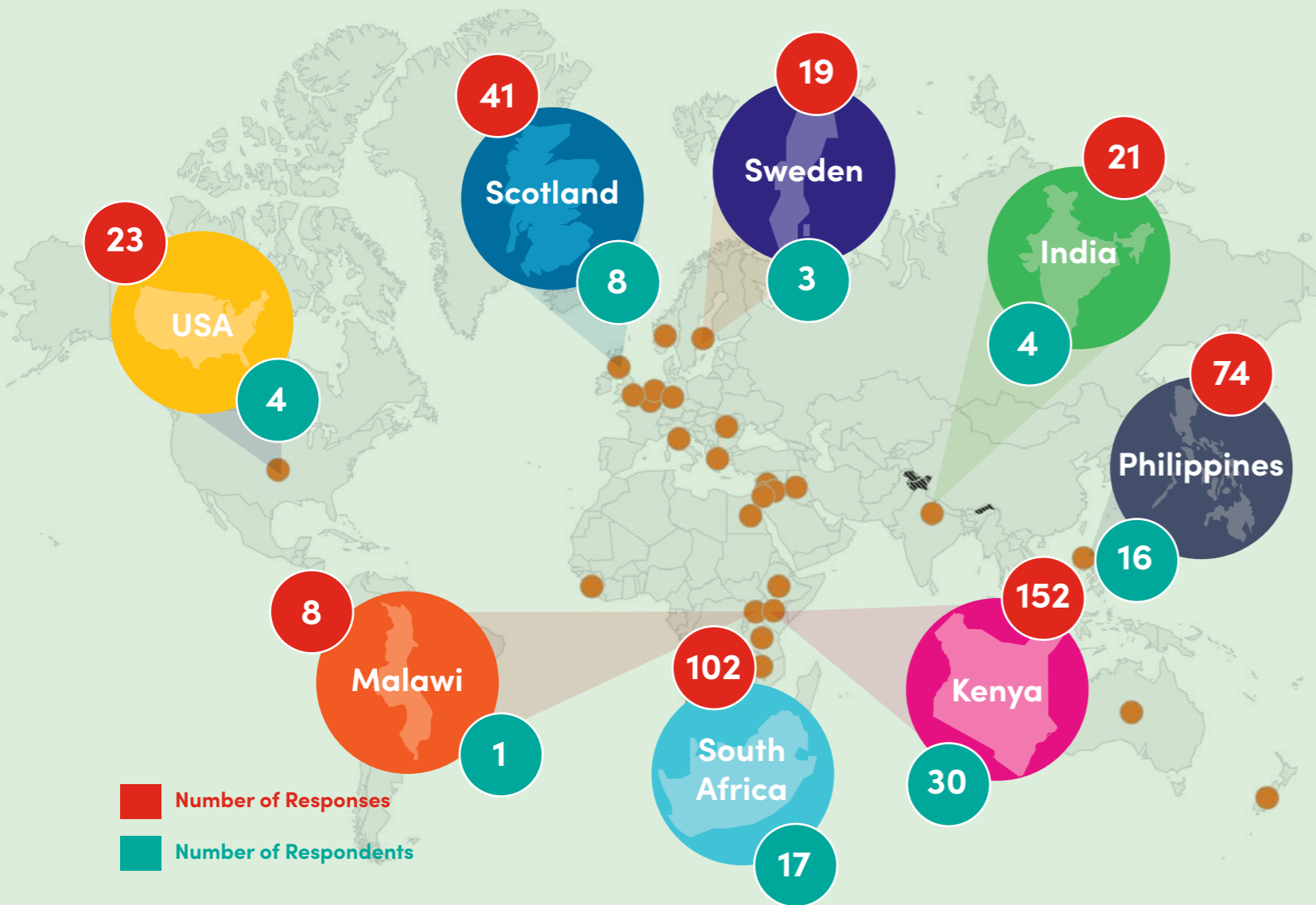
Keep team spirit and work close with your team.

Self care is vital! You **MUST** put your wellbeing first. You cannot pour from an empty cup!

Take care of themselves in order to protect the next person.

Respondents and Countries Represented in this Report

459 responses from 88 respondents

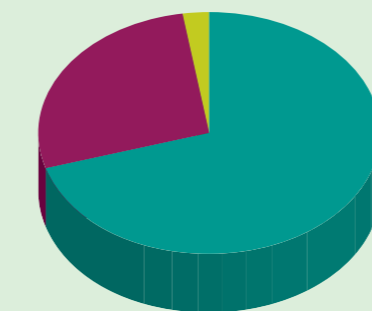
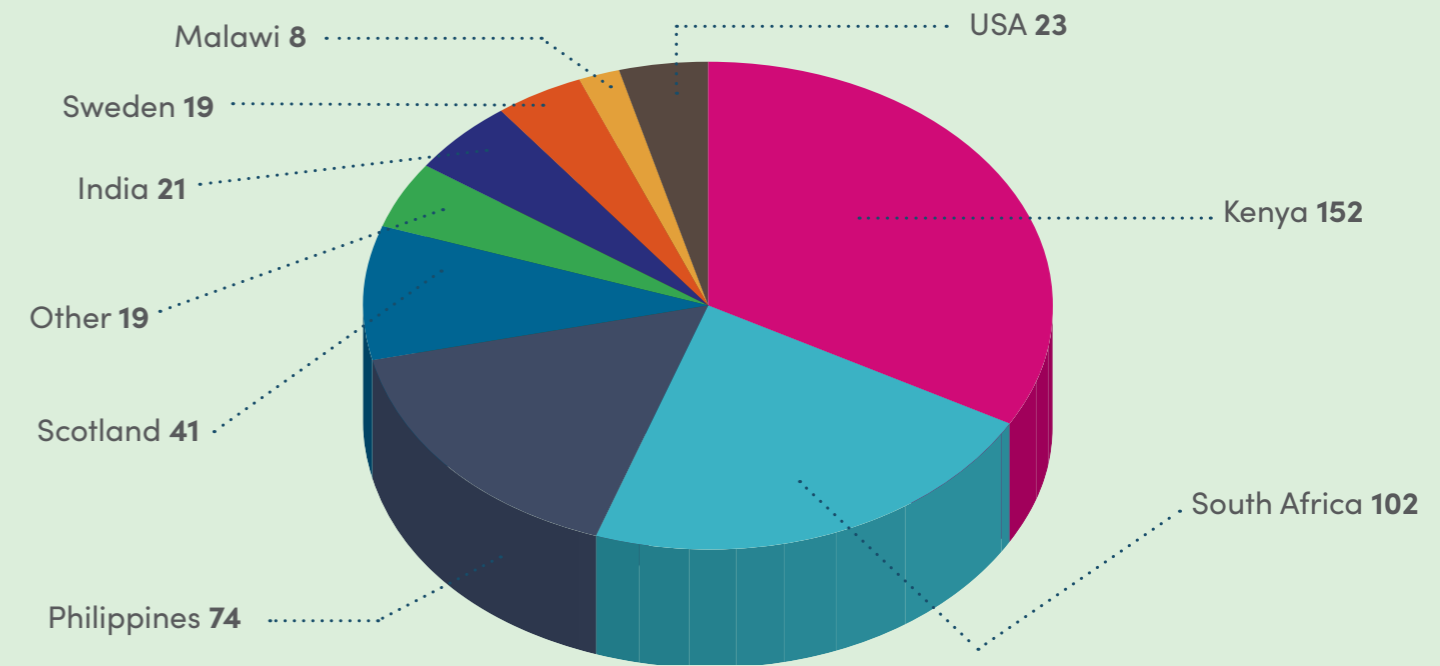


The findings in this Learning Report are based on 459 responses from 88 respondents - including 47 direct service providers, 26 service managers and 15 policymakers (62 - women; 24 - men; 2 - prefer not to say). 53 (60%) respondents stated that they supervised staff. 64 (73%) respondents represented NGOs; 11 (13%) - civil society organisations; 9 (10%) - the government; 1 (1%) - private sector; 1 (1%) - other; 2 (2%) - did not specify.

The respondents represented 13 countries:

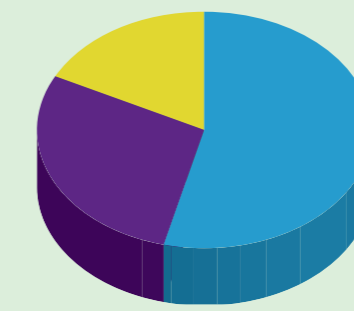
Belgium, Canada, India, Israel, Kenya, Malawi, the Netherlands, the Philippines, the Republic of Montenegro, South Africa, Sweden, the UK (Scotland) and the USA.

Number of Responses



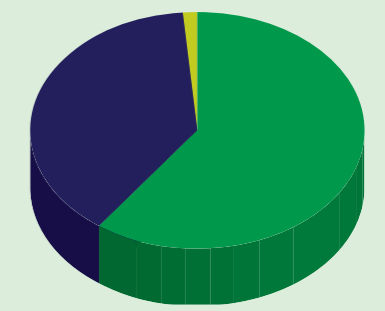
Respondents by Gender

Women	62
Men	24
Prefer not to say	2



Respondents by Role

Direct Service Providers	47
Service Managers	26
Policymakers	15




Do you Supervise Staff?

Yes	53
No	34
Did not specify	1

The top eight countries with the highest numbers of respondents and responses, respectively, were:

Kenya (30 and 152); South Africa (17 and 102); the Philippines (16 and 74); Scotland (8 and 41); India (4 and 21); the USA (4 and 23); Sweden (3 and 19); and Malawi (1 and 8).

Together, the responses from those top eight countries amount to 440 or 96% of all responses reported here. All other countries contributed to a total of 19 (or 4%) of all responses.



"I have a supervisor but she was not able to do her job as she used to. She said that her stress level was negatively affected by the pandemic, so I have to take that into consideration and can work around it. Especially with the pandemic issues being relatively new, it was harder for me to do my job because I was, in a way, left to my own devices."

Policymaker, NGO, Philippines

"The supervision that I have received [received] is individual and group supervision. This has helped immensely in my work ensuring quality services to clients and in working and supervising a team. The supervisions I have received have helped in having different perspectives and options in how to handle the challenges we face."

Direct Service Provider,
NGO, South Africa

"My supervisor's openness to innovative ideas and worker's wellbeing was instrumental to our ability to think creatively about the situation and how we can do our work better."

Direct Service Provider, Civil Society
Organisation, the Philippines



What could have made this supervision even better?

“The odd face to face contact, I am a touchy feely person.”

Direct Service Provider, Private Sector,
Scotland

What could have made this supervision even better?

“Stringent in-depth insightful discussions missing. Too much day to day management and short term solutions. Missing leadership skills”

Policymaker, Government, Sweden

If you have not had supervision, how has this affected your work?

“Dealing with the fear and stress of contracting Covid 19 has stalled our work. The government’s restrictions on movement and gatherings that is to contain the spread of the virus has made it difficult to deliver services to the children.”

Service Manager, NGO, Kenya

Impact of Stresses and Anxieties on Respondents' Work During COVID-19

"I wanted to quit because the pressure was too much and I felt I was failing at my job"

Direct Service Provider,
NGO, South Africa

"Sometimes it stresses one, witnessing the condition children and care givers go through"

Direct Service Provider,
NGO, Kenya

"In some cases just feeling overwhelmed and isolated. Overworked and more so during covid because we had to act fast and with [with] pressure to support children more like getting them food parcels etc"

Service Manager, NGO,
South Africa

"Most of children went unserved [unserved] which brought about negative impact, at the back of their thoughts they think that the organisation has refused to support them. This contributes to a lot of stigma"

Service Manager, NGO, Kenya



About this Report

This Learning Report has been produced by the Institute for Inspiring Children's Futures at the University of Strathclyde, Scotland, UK. **Inspiring Children's Futures**, with its many partners, has a strong track record of multi-level, multi-sector global engagement, policy development and practice improvement.

This Learning Report is part of a series of reports on the findings of the COVID 4P Log Smartphone app. Together, the reports from this series form the second of a three-part 'Inspiring Children's Futures in light of COVID-19' programme.

This programme is gathering evidence on protecting children's wellbeing in past epidemics; informing better policies and practices throughout the COVID-19 pandemic; and influencing change in the long shadow that COVID-19 will cast over the recovery phases ahead.

With our partners, we are strengthening global, national and local approaches to ensure that we are collectively delivering on the Justice for Children, Justice for All SDG 16+ Call to Action to "respond to children's distinct needs, and realise their full range of rights and opportunities, to achieve peaceful, just and inclusive societies for all".

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