



# Children's Mental Health: Rights and Perspectives

MOOC Report  
E-learning Department

# Foreword

As a global actor, the Global Campus of Human Rights is committed to bolster the promotion of human rights and democracy and to contribute to strengthening democratic resilience by offering education and raising awareness on cutting-edge issues of contemporary concern and relevance. These include current challenges and debates in children's rights, especially for what concerns **meaningful child participation**.

This MOOC was made following the request of children who led and participated in the Global Campus International Conference *Mental Health - Children's Perspective on the Challenges and Ways Forward* organised in 2022. The course was also an opportunity to continue cooperating with them through the **Global Campus Child Leadership Team**, with the hope to move our dialogue and collaboration forward towards the development of new ways for children and young people to directly participate in decision-making in this area of their lives.

Course objectives included providing:

- key information about definitions, methods and practices in the area of children's mental health
- robust knowledge on **children's rights principles, standards and practices**
- increased awareness about the connections between children's mental health and children's rights
- clearer understanding - through reference to implementation practices – of the need to adopt a **holistic, rights-based approach to children's mental health**

We also aimed at envisaging a **roadmap for change**, including: how to develop child/adolescent mental health policy and plans; inter-sectoral collaboration; advocacy on children's mental health and empowering families, social workers, health professionals, educators, children's rights defenders, policy-makers and other members of civil society and **amplify dialogue on the importance of acting** on children's mental health as a matter of rights.

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# Introduction

In recent reports by UNICEF and WHO, escalating **challenges in children's mental health** have emerged as a pressing global concern, exacerbated by the profound impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. This crisis has exposed children to an array of threats, ranging from anxiety and depression to heightened vulnerability to domestic and sexual violence, as well as more subtle forms of abuse like unhealthy competition. These adversities, taking an immense toll on children, pose the risk of social exclusion and hinder their ability to realise their full potential.

While **the right to health** for children and young people is well-established in international and regional legal and policy frameworks, its translation into national plans and actions remains uncertain. The MOOC addressed the main challenges faced by children and young people in this context, offering insights into existing and potential **protective and participatory mechanisms**. By doing so, it sought to empower a broad audience to realise that viable solutions exist.

The MOOC, with its freely accessible resources and user-friendly format, facilitated understanding and knowledge-sharing, contributing to **bridging operational gaps and dismantling social stigma** surrounding children and young people's mental health. It not only provided information on mental health as a human right but also offered practical guidance and examples for implementation. A key focus area was exploring approaches that champion the **direct participation of children and young people in decision-making**, echoing the strong call from children themselves for meaningful consultation to support their development.

This report presents **data and analysis** on demographics, courseware, impact, highlights and recommendations based on participant evaluation (entry survey taken by 25% of registered users; exit survey taken by 10% of registered users) and course dynamics.

# The MOOC in a nutshell

## Key information



16 Oct-19 Nov  
2023



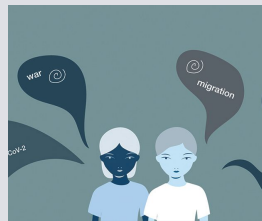
Open EdX



5+ h/week



Webpage



Teaser and social  
media campaign



5 discussions,  
5 quizzes,  
2 surveys,  
1 word cloud,  
2 ranking exercise

# A snapshot

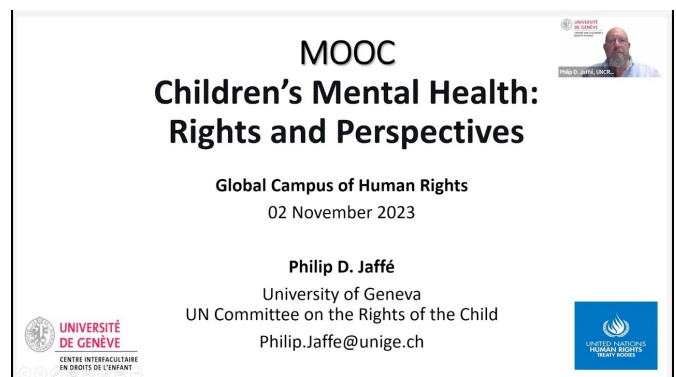
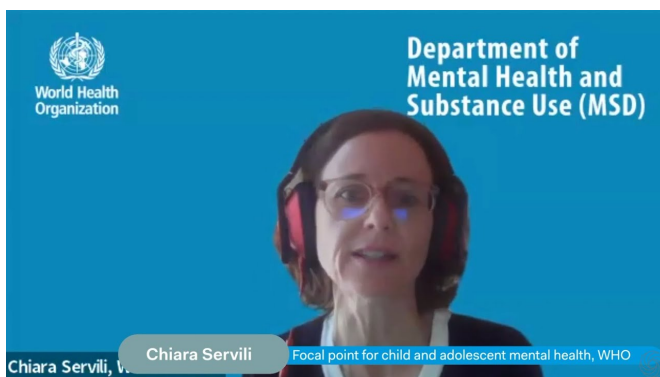
## Our lecturers



- **Najat Maalla M'jid**, UN Special Representative on Violence against Children
- **Anne Filorizzo Pla**, MHPSS Global Lead, Save the Children
- **Thobekile Sithole**, Children's Rights Project Manager, Global Campus of Human Rights
- **Kristen Hope**, Terre des Hommes
- **Amrit Rijal**, young child rights advocate from Nepal

- **Elvis Fokala**, Children's Rights Regional Officer, Global Campus Africa
- **Philip Jaffé**, Member of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child
- **Eshani Ruwanpura and Adriana Rietsema**, UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia
- **Marthe Wandou**, 2021 Right Livelihood Laureate
- **Chiara Servili**, focal point for child and adolescent mental health at WHO Headquarters
- **Grace Gatera**, lived experience mental health advocate from Rwanda
- **Mariam Muradyan**, Children's Rights Regional Officer, Global Campus Caucasus

## Lectures and webinars



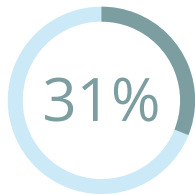


# Highlights

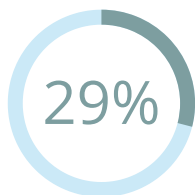
- Comprehensive exploration of **a holistic approach** in addressing mental health challenges, putting **children's rights at the centre of solutions**
- Extensive input of **high level experts** including UN Special Representative; UN CRC Member; UNICEF, WHO, Save the Children and Terre des Hommes specialists; GC Children's Rights Project Manager and Right Livelihood Laureate
- Particularly enriching contributions of **young child rights activists** and testimonies of a **lived-experience advocate**
- **Global perspective** illustrating diverse mental health challenges and cross-cultural insights with **concrete fieldwork examples** and participation of GC Children's Rights Regional Officers
- **Hands-on guidance** for participants to take actionable steps in their respective fields offering tangible **recommendations and tools**, particularly appreciated by NGOs in Africa
- **Application-driven exercises** to reinforce theoretical concepts and enhance participant learning and skill development in different curricula



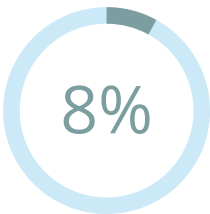
# Professional profiles



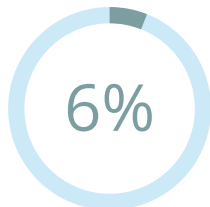
NGO professionals



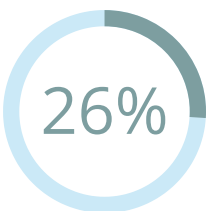
Students and education professionals



Psychologists



Researchers

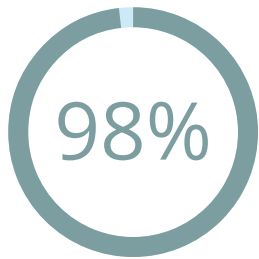


## Others

Governmental officers/representative; staff of inter governmental organisations, media professionals, lawyers, medical sector professionals and others

# Audience

## Inspiring for refreshing and re-training skills



An overwhelming majority of survey respondents (98%) revealed they were well-versed in the topic before enrolling. Many aimed to complement their skills (48%) or/and add cross-disciplinary dimensions to their current jobs.

The motivations of participants varied, showcasing a broad spectrum of professional, but also personal interests. This highlighted a crucial point: as challenges related to mental health encompass several aspects of our lives, they require a holistic approach and multi-sectoral collaboration of different actors.

## Expectations

I am leading the Development in Education and Literacy Organization (DIL), particularly the child protection strategy. This course will help me to understand child mental health and learn the rights-based approach for child protection in Afghanistan.

I hope this course will give more knowledge children mental health issues, since I work as children rights advocate with ombudsman. I feel that i don't have enough knowledge on this topic, so i am looking forward to this course.

I am a teacher and I need a different approach to children's mental well-being from that I have been given in my CPD courses so far. I hope I will find it here.

## A toolkit for practitioners

In this regard, professionals, NGOs and social workers were motivated to gain practical tools and recommendations that can be directly applied in their daily work. This aligns with the expectations of participants in the medical sector, who sought insights that can contribute to their practice and patient care.

Other participants looked to improve their overall well-being and acquire coping tools and strategies to assist others. Expectations also extended to daily activism and advocacy, with a desire for a different and innovative approach.

I am a human rights lawyer and deal with cases involving minors, hence this course is perfect to nourish my skills and further open new approaches and possibilities for me in dealing with minors.

I am a social worker, I have been working with children, street children, children with disabilities, children in difficult circumstances, children victims of human trafficking, children living with HIV. I always want to refresh myself as well as seek more skills for my work as well as my dreams. I hope that the course helps me gain more knowledge and statistics on what I have for the unity system and update new content about working to support children based on human rights.



I am a paediatric intensive care nurse and I am often in contact with traumatised children/family. I do believe that attending this online course would help me in my role of nurse in charge supporting them and identifying potential situation that require action. Moreover I will know more about mental health and human rights which is very useful for my personal knowledge given the world we live in.

## Enhancing diferent curricula

The shared goal of practical applicability underscored the course's relevance across diverse professional backgrounds and the stated need for promoting cross-sectoral collaboration and application of human rights-based approach.

As a Child Protection Officer working with UNHCR, I would like to gain specific knowledge on MHPSS support and approach targeting children. I am a lawyer and I believe I need to further develop other aspects (such as MHPSS) to address the different needs of children at risk.

As a translator for an NGO dedicated to combat sexual exploitation and abuse of children I am looking to gain more skills in the field of children's rights and children's well being to set foot in a new career path.

I am UNV.org Personnel Supervisor assigned to a cause in Zimbabwe involving at risk youth and child marriage survivors. I believe the course may prove useful to recruits under my management who are new to both international humanitarian work and the subject matter. I am taking the course myself first before I make it a recommendation per quarter.

After the course, the general knowledge on the topic **increased** from the initial 16% (very good) and 4% (excellent) to 60% very good and 19% (excellent).



# Impact

## Elevating skills and deepening understanding



Given that a majority of participants assessed their knowledge and expertise as high, the course played a crucial role in helping them elaborate on, review, and consolidate concepts and skills. This resulted in a more profound understanding of the problem and its associated terminology.

## Empowering professionals



On the other hand, many participants evaluated the course as an eye-opener, enabling them to understand diverse realities and gain a better grasp of a children's rights-based approach - a perspective they had not previously applied in their professions. This understanding motivated them to apply the newly acquired skills in their respective fields.



The course also proved to be a transformative experience, introducing the concept of a holistic approach that extends beyond the theoretical realm and may be adaptable in different curricula.

I am now equipped with an array of resources that I can refer to in my course of my work. I am also now more familiar with terminology and work being done globally to raise awareness of and promote childrens' and adolescents mental health.

I refreshed some information I had about mental health and children's mental health, but I definitely improved my information about protection, climate consequences on health and risk factors.

## Practical application

In this context, the course left a notable impression and met the expectations - particularly of practitioners - by not only introducing theoretical concepts but also providing **practical recommendations and tools for immediate application**.

The materials and activities were highly appreciated especially by African NGOs. The impact was reinforced by presenting case studies and implementation practices from the field, acting as a good example and **inspiration to adopt a holistic, rights-based approach**.

Really was interesting to be more close to children problems and perspectives and that really helps me on my fight against human rights violations. Also gives me constantly interesting information and facts to think and make me emotionally engage with this human rights perspective.

I am creating a service of tailored PFA teaching to people in contact with refugees in Scotland. This has given me the tools on how to incorporate participation of refugees themselves and also as a psychiatrist, it has given me tools to assess parental mental health.

## Cross- sectoral exchange

The diverse composition of participants, representing teachers, psychologists, NGO and social workers, parents, policy-makers, and individuals from different sectors, also directly contributed to enrich the learning environment. This diversity has also promoted cross-disciplinary perspectives, fostering **dynamic discussions** and facilitating **the exchange of practices and cultural insights** among the participants.

All these elements aligned seamlessly with the established learning goals.

## Facilitating people-powered change

Participant feedback proves that the course successfully achieved its objectives, as many participants claimed to:

- have understood better the importance of **active listening** and considering the opinions of children in their work
- feel eager to foster **dialogue on children's mental health as a rights issue**
- feel motivated to **contribute for positive change**

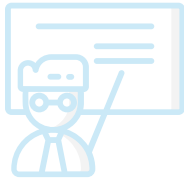
A considerable number of participants felt inspired to consider a career change or were motivated to incorporate children's rights into policy-making and actively raise awareness on the issue.

I have learned that mental health issues are multifaceted and we need to kill stigma and pass the mic onto children. I will now know how to give help and open up the more to my young learners and people in my community.

I work as a behavior analyst, specializing in assisting children affected by multisensory impairments and neurodevelopmental disorders. Addressing their emotional and physical needs can become challenging due to societal perspectives influenced by historical ideologies. Through my professional journey, I've come to realize the significance of acknowledging their voices. This realization has empowered me to spearhead change within my field, urging fellow professionals to prioritize the child's perspective. It's crucial not only to provide and protect them but also to actively listen and consider their thoughts and opinions.

Last but not least, many participants emphasized the adaptability of this approach, not only in their professional settings but also in their personal life.

# Recommendations from participants



The course has been widely praised for its **practicality, regional relevance, inspirational impact** on career choices and advocacy and the variety of provided materials.



In this regard, many appreciated the possibility to consult and review the content beyond the course duration. Some suggested to extend its duration and to **make it accessible on different platforms to a wider public.**



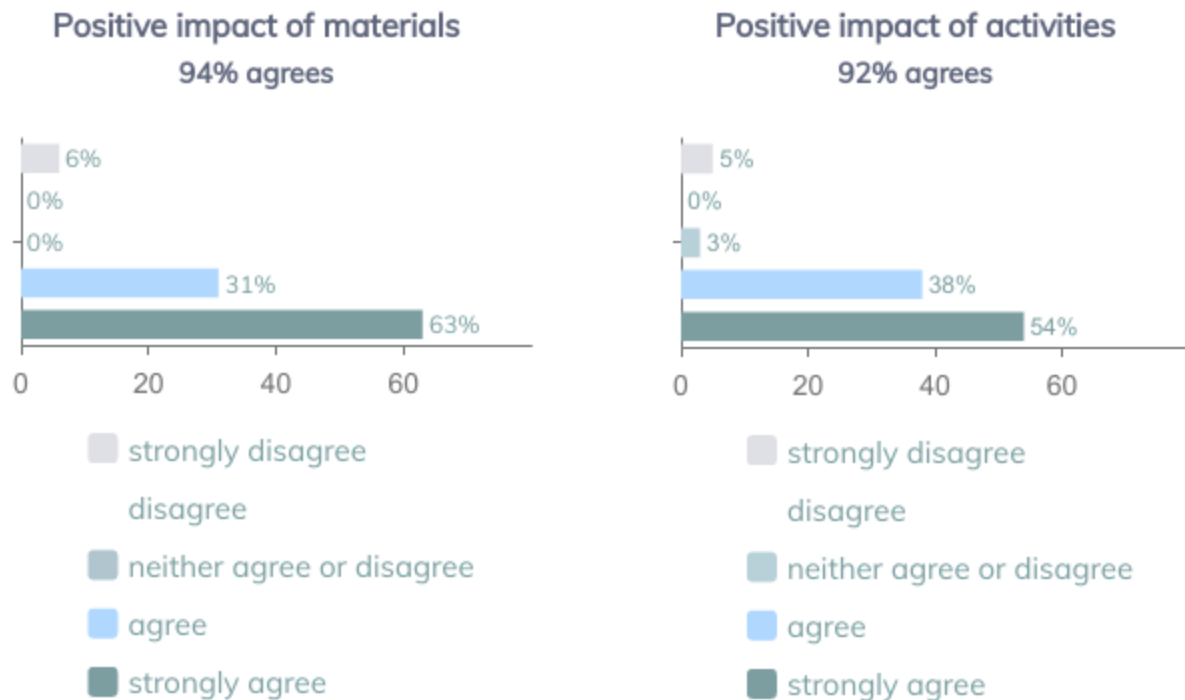
Many participants appreciated the inclusion of practical **examples and comments from different parts of the world** that enhanced the overall learning experience. Some proposed to create **a collaborative channel to foster communication** among participants.



Few participants claimed for **restricting obligatory reading materials** to ensure accessibility and manage participants' time effectively.

# Evaluation

Impactful materials and activities made participants give a **very high rating** and **top recommendation**.



## 95% gave 4-5\*

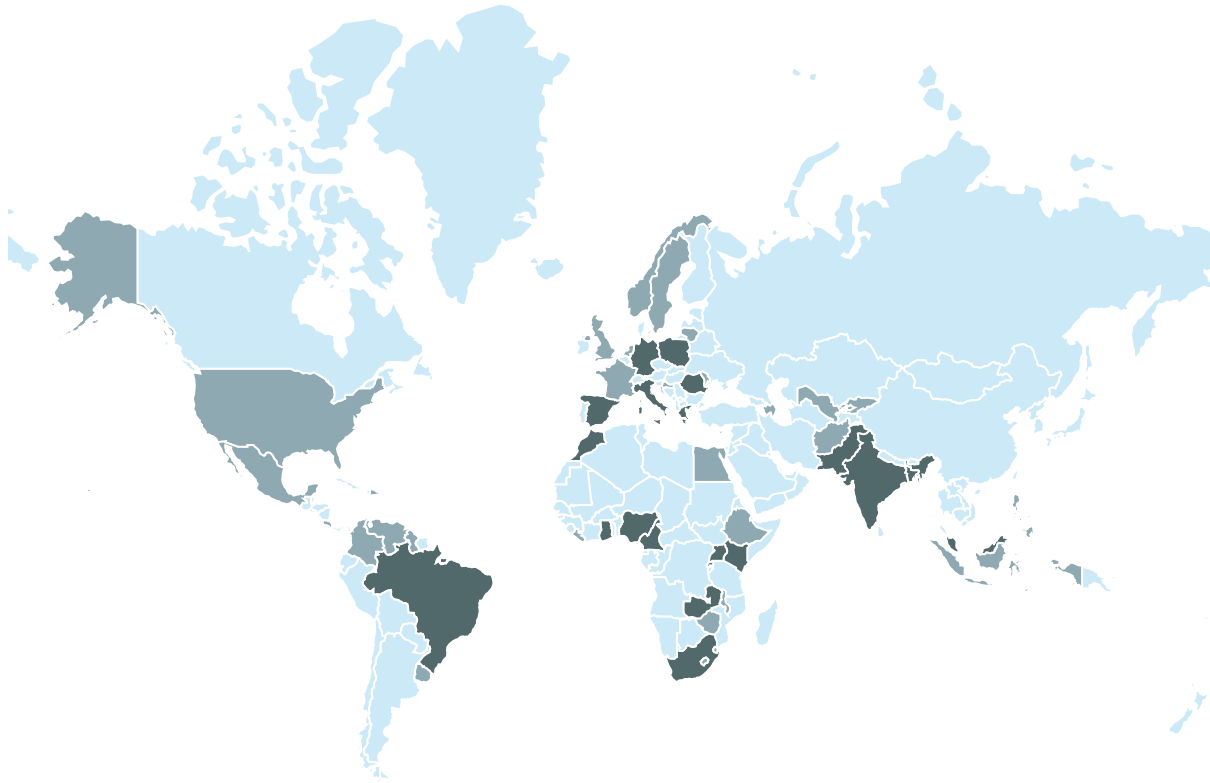
When asked to give an overall rating on a scale of 1 to 5, only 1% of survey respondents gave 1\*, 4% gave us 3\*. The rest is shared between 37% who assigned 4\* and 58% who gave 5\*.

## 100% would recommend

While a minor percentage (6%) of survey respondents found the course materials and activities less enriching for their personal development, every participant **expressed a willingness (100%) to recommend it to others**. This indicates that despite the audience's existing experience with the topic, they have recognised its overall importance and the necessity to disseminate it to a broader public.

# Certificates

Our certificates, awarded to those who completed all course requirements, reached **154 participants** in **54 countries** around the world.



**1551 Participants**

**10% Certificates**

The course had a particularly high participation rate from Sub-Saharan Africa (35%). Other regions that fared well were Europe (24%) and Asia/Pacific (14%). Participation from MENA (9,5%), Latin America (6%), North America (3%), Central Asia (2%) and Southeast Europe (0,5%) was largely in line with previous courses.

The countries with the highest number of certificates were Nigeria (19), Kenya (12), Lebanon (12) and India (9), an interesting change from the prevalence of European countries observed in the past.

# Selected comments

## Hands-on approach

I've been exploring different aspects of mental health for a few years now to try and understand the different ways we can apply psychological training to global/societal problems. What I appreciated about this course was that it took not just an academic lens, but an applied a hands on approach. It wasn't focused on developmental psychology (as many other courses do) but on societal and personal situations that affect children's mental health that non clinical professionals can take actionable steps towards improving. Looking forward to more courses like that.

## Professionally and personally helpful

This course has brought me plenty of benefits not only professionally but also as a mother of an 8-year-old girl. I am still in the process of digesting information and building conclusions considering the MOOC material relevance. In general terms, this course has helped me deepen my knowledge about mental health from an holistic and comprehensive perspective. Besides, I could delve into a variety of issues, risks and challenges children and young people are facing in the field of mental health plus I could obtain practical tools to address them as a policymaker in the fields of poverty alleviation, peace-building and human rights defender.

Additionally, this course provided me with theoretical and practical tools to support my daughter's mental health throughout the course of her life. (...) I am very really grateful for the opportunity to access to quality data, information, knowledge and practical experiences in children and adolescents' mental health under your extraordinary guide and expertise.

## Valuable insights

As a translator of research-related texts for an NGO busy with child's rights and thinking of following post-grad education in human rights research, this course has been an excellent opportunity to approach and get acquainted with the fascinating and multi-layered universe of human rights advocacy and its always direct connection to matters that concern us as human beings. I feel I have gained a very valuable insight. Thanks very much indeed for the coordination of this course .

As a social worker in a crisis area, it has helped me understand better what children go through, how to help and most importantly the fact that children should be at the center of discussion and policy making when it concerns their mental health.

There is a saying that " There is no health without mental health ".

A course on children mental health of this caliber cuts through all aspects of the child's well-being. I will do this course again and again if given the opportunity so that I can raise proper awareness especially in my work space.

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