

# Expression through Art

**UNICEF**

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## The Adolescent Kit: Healing Through Expression

There is now strong evidence which suggests that adolescence (persons from 10 through 19 years of age) provides a second window of opportunity to influence developmental trajectories. While adolescents are taking the lead in contributing to resilience and serving their societies when disaster strikes, or conflict erupts, they also tend to be among those whose own priorities are often overlooked and whose voices are not heard. Funding for programs that explicitly target adolescents in emergencies remain highly limited and too often adolescent boys and girls are perceived to be a problem rather than as a resource for their communities.

When UNICEF delivers health, education, and protection services to adolescents in emergencies, it is not only creating a sense of safety and normalcy, it is also giving adolescents the tools needed to rebuild their lives and communities and encourage the positive role they can play in their communities. In order to meaningfully engage and strengthen our programmes with adolescent boys and girls in emergencies, **UNICEF has created its first global Adolescent Kit for Expression and Innovation (also known as the “Kit”) as one of the programmatic tools** to help adolescents who have been affected by emergencies heal and build resilience through creative expression.

**The purpose of the Kit is to promote positive outcomes for adolescents' psychosocial wellbeing, learning life skills, and positive active engagement in their communities.** The Kit provides a strong foundation for art therapy and other forms of emotional support and expression (such as dance or sports) to be incorporated as a fundamental element of UNICEF’s emergency response programming. The Kit especially supports activities using **arts, innovation and adolescent-led projects** as methods to achieve those outcomes. It includes a holistic set of tools and supplies, designed to engage adolescents affected by conflict and other crises through engagement in innovation and creative expression.

The kit has been integrated into UNICEF’s education, child protection, adolescent development and peacebuilding work in approximately 15 countries. The versatility of the Kit has allowed UNICEF to operate effectively in a diverse range of environments. UNICEF has been successful in engaging adolescents in urban, rural settings, as well as displaced children living in refugee camps, Internally Displaced People camps and other hard-to-reach areas. **Since 2017, the Kit has reached over 130,000 adolescent boys and girls across 14 countries. The Adolescent Kit costs \$201 per kit.**

## The Kit in Action: Some Country Highlights

### Nigeria

UNICEF Nigeria has utilized the Adolescent Kit in a complex environment: Borno State, in the North-East region affected by intense conflict. The Adolescent Kit is engaging adolescent girls and boys who escaped from Boko Haram and are survivors of violent extremisms but are also subjected to stigma and rejection from their communities and families. A recent visit from photographer, John Baynard, to Maiduguri captured footage of practitioners and young boys and girls engaged in utilizing the kit through coming together in adolescent circles, building trust among each other and expressing their thoughts, fears, concerns and hopes by drawing images.



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### Indonesia

In Indonesia, the kit was used to build the capacity of adolescents to be better prepared before, during and after an emergency. Using the Adolescent Kit for Expression and Innovation, adolescents mapped potential risks, developed stories on the pressing issues that affect them and presented them at community events, village council meetings and school events. They also spearheaded innovative solutions for these issues and engaged in dialogue with policy makers and community members to mobilize the resources needed to apply those solutions. Building on this experience, the Ministry of Education and Culture is strengthening adolescent participation in conducting assessments in safe schools. Additionally, capacity-building support is being provided to the Ministry's Emergency Response Personnel to better equip responders to implement adolescent-specific activities in affected areas.



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### Myanmar-Bangladesh

In Myanmar, UNICEF successfully launched the first adolescent network ‘Teens and Dreams’ across emergency affected-areas in Rakhine, Kachin and Shan States and urban settings in Mandalay, Sittwe and Taunggyi. The Adolescent Kit was used to develop team work and to train adolescents as ‘peer mentors’ to support resilience and provide a support structure to younger children living in conflict affected areas; approximately 11,885 young girls and boys benefited from the Kit in 2018.

One of the core strengths of the Adolescent Kit is that it relies significantly on community mobilization including through the training of youth facilitators coming directly from the affected communities where the Kit is being implemented. In the ongoing Rohingya crisis, 17 Rohingya youth facilitators trained by UNICEF Myanmar in Northern Rakhine State were directly affected and forced to flee to neighboring Bangladesh alongside more than 800,000 other Rohingya. Once in Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh, they got directly involved to assist their community and were recruited by UNICEF Bangladesh and partners to assist on engaging adolescents recently displaced, using pre-existing material approved by the Bangladesh Government.



### South Sudan

UNICEF South Sudan has reached a record number of young people (36,165) in 2018. Through the Adolescent Kit, they have helped adolescents better cope with challenges, build their self-esteem, and protect themselves and others by expressing their views without violence or aggression. By learning to identify their strengths and weaknesses and focusing on what makes them feel valued and confident, adolescents in three States, Jonglei, Upper Nile and Unity, have become positive role models in their schools, youth groups, community centers and child friendly spaces.

The Kit provides a crucial entry point to strengthening UNICEF’s programmes with adolescent boys and girls specially to ensure the continuum of services from humanitarian to development settings. At a time when adolescents may feel frustrated and hopeless, building their capacity and providing them with meaningful engagement opportunities brings a sense of value and worth to their lives. It also allows them to be perceived as agents of change rather than as threats.

