Analytic report

Youth Leadership in times of COVID-19
About CEDAPS

Since 1993 CEDAPS (Health Promotion Center) promotes the strengthening of organizations, groups and popular communities and contributes to the improvement of sustainable, inclusive and healthy public policies.

**HEALTH PROMOTION**

Process of community capacitation to act in the improvement of their quality of life, including increased participation in the control of decisive individual and collective processes.

**FIELDS OF WORK**

**Health Services** – Primary Care and Intersectoriality

**Prevention and Care** – Communicable and Non-Communicable diseases – Health and Environment

**Youth** – Rights, Opportunities, New Educational approaches
Mobilizando jovens e comunidades para mudança.
The Jovens Construtores Program is a social technology aimed at the training and qualification of young people conceived by the YouthBuild International and implemented in Brazil by CEDAPS (Health Promotion Center).

It consists of an intensive program aimed at the development of young people in vulnerability and their communities, covering different dimensions of their lives, such as family, community, and professional life.

In ten years, the program has already achieved significant results, such as: constituting a network composed of over 500 young persons; a 93% retention rate; 60% placement rate; 212 family assets and 91 community assets.
The COVID-19 pandemic which spreads across Brazil since January 2020 has had a series of effects not only in the health sector, but in the economy as well.

Young people feel its effects in a particular way, be it because of the need for social isolation, the possibility of being infected with the virus or of losing family members, economic impacts, and others.

Bearing this in mind, the youth front of the Health Promotion Center (CEDAPS), in partnership with the YouthBuild partners network¹, applied a survey specifically directed at youth, focusing on young people that are part of the Youth Builders network, and contemplating their different perceptions on the pandemic, as well as the different strategies adopted by them during this period.
The answers obtained were analyzed and compared to the report by the National Council on Youth (CONJUVE), published in June 2020, relating to the results of a survey conducted by the organization with over 30 thousand young people. The survey was constructed with young people from all of Brazil's regions and addresses the pandemic's impacts on their income, work, health, feelings, and other aspects.
In total, 122 young people responded to the survey, between 14 and 28 years old. Only one claimed to have some form of disability.

Respondents are mostly between 19 and 23 years old.

Concerning gender, **women** predominated, comprising 62.3% of the responses.
The great majority of participants (85.3%) identifies as black or 'parda', which in Brazil constitutes the **black population** - priority group for the Jovens Construtores program.

In the CONJUVE survey, 46% of respondents were white, while black and brown young participants comprised 52% of the total.

Most responses came from residents of Rio de Janeiro, with 83 respondents composing 66.4% of the total. There were also 24 responses from residents of Minas Gerais and 17 from residents of Espírito Santo, comprising 19.7% and 13.9% of the total, respectively.

It is worth noting that Jovens Construtores has 100 young partners in Minas Gerais and 18 in Espírito Santo. As such, 24% of partners answered the survey in Minas Gerais and 89.4% in Espírito Santo, a significant response rate.
78 of the participants - or 63.9% - are **not currently working**. In the CONJUVE report, 50% of respondents are not working, while according to the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), 49% of people between 15 and 29 years old were not working in 2019. According to the International Labor Organization (ILO)², one in every six young people stopped working since the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis.

It is worth mentioning that the Jovens Construtores program is aimed at youth **placement**, which can happen through the labor market, entrepreneurship, professional qualification or return to school. In 16 editions, the total placement rate of the program is 62.8%, 59.6% relating to the labor market.

Of those that work (of all ages, **47.7% are in regular employment**), and the rest is self-employed or are working without a formal contract.

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We also see that a little over half (52.5%) of respondents have not yet completed Secondary Education, while 47.5% completed Secondary Education, and 5.7% are in or have completed higher education.

Finally, we see that the great majority of the participants (89) do not have children, 21 have one child, 8 have two children and 4 have three children.
According to the respondents, the level of information received about COVID-19 has been not only sufficient, but excessive. Very few respondents claimed to receive little or no information.

The CONJUVE survey observed that, although they feel very informed about the prevention of COVID-19, young people feel less informed about the evolution of the pandemic in Brazil and the world and about locations and procedures for treatment.

PERCEPTIONS AND ACTIONS IN THE PANDEMIC

a) Access to information

With the rapid spread of a potentially fatal virus with a high transmissibility rate, a high quantity of information in the form of alerts or instructions to the population is also being propagated.
The sources of that information vary, the main ones being **national news and social media**.

It is worth emphasizing that in the CONJUVE survey social media and messaging apps were indicated as the information channels in which young people trust the least.

On a smaller scale, the government, Health Ministry and WHO appear as sources of information. International news, Basic Health Units, friends and family or churches appear to have a smaller role. Although there are no significant differences between regions, only respondents from Rio de Janeiro claimed to receive information through social projects from the community.
Concerning social networks, **WhatsApp** predominates as the most utilized platform, with about 84.4% of respondents claiming to use the resource a lot.

Facebook and Instagram are also highly utilized by the participants. The least used social networks are Tiktok, Snapchat and Linkedin, all of them not used by over half the respondents.
b) Concerns

The pandemic brings a series of changes in the lives of youth, many of them sudden and imposed.

As such, it is visible in the participant's answers the many impacts that both the virus and the need for isolation have had.

The responses were also analyzed through two angles: **gender** and **locality**.

Due to the majority of respondents being from Rio de Janeiro (corresponding to 66.4% of the total, while Minas Gerais and Espírito Santo correspond to 19.7% and 13.9%, respectively) analysis based on locality is hindered.

Therefore, the comparison of the answers does not have the goal of inferring closed conceptions about youth from each locality, but to assess what emerges in their answers that might assist in the understanding of their specific worries and demands.
Concerning health issues, it is visible there is a strong concern among respondents about infection by the coronavirus, be it in relation to them or their families. 61.5% of the respondents claimed to be extremely concerned about being infected.
On a scale of 1 to 10, what is your degree of concern about someone in your family falling ill with COVID-19?

The concern is particularly high in relation to their families: 73.8% have stated that they are extremely concerned their relatives might be infected.
The degree of concern of participants from all three localities is similarly high.

However, the higher level of concern with family shown by respondents from Minas Gerais and Espírito Santo can be highlighted.

Both men and women show extreme concern about being infected by COVID-19, their families being infected or having other illnesses. Alhtough there are no significant differences between the genders in this aspect, men showed slightly less concern.
The degree of concern about other health issues was smaller, but still with a significant portion of over half respondents (53.3%) stating extreme concern.

All of these results are compatible with the CONJUVE report, in which the three biggest concerns listed by the young people during the pandemic were losing a family member, being infected with COVID-19, and infecting other people.
Not only physical health can be affected by the pandemic, but emotional and psychological health as well.

76.3% of the respondents stated to have a degree of concern of 6 or more (moderate to extreme) about having emotional pains and disruptions, 44.3% stating to be extremely concerned.
The mental health of young people is strongly impacted by the pandemic, possibly affecting other aspects of their lives. In the CONJUVE research, 20% of respondents listed emotional crises and difficulties as one of their greatest concerns during the pandemic.

Respondents from Espirito Santo and Minas Gerais show a higher degree of concern, despite that in all three localities the degree of concern shown is high.

Both men and women showed great concern about emotional pains and disruptions, however with a higher level of concern among women than among men.

The CONJUVE research registered a significant difference between men and women: women expressed being more emotionally affected by the pandemic.
The pandemic, however, does not only bring the risk of physical and mental distress, but a large-scale economic crisis (which, in the case of Brazil, is met with a reality of already very high inequalities), frequently leading to loss of income by individuals and families.

In this sense, the respondents elicited concerns relating to their sustenance.
It is noteworthy that 76.2% of respondents stated having moderate to extreme concern about income, and even more so that 71.3% stated the same about food - a smaller, but perhaps more significant percentage, since it relates to one of the most basic aspects of survival.
Financial difficulties were also listed by 26% of respondents in the CONJUVE survey as one of their biggest concerns.

Respondents from all three regions showed great concern about both aspects. In particular, participants from Espírito Santo demonstrated higher concern about the lack of food and income, and those from Minas Gerais showed slightly lower concern.

The degree of concern of both genders is also high, however, women appear to present a higher level of concern about the lack of income and food than men.
Another impact brought by the pandemic which also relates to Brazilian inequalities concerns the possibility of access and permanence in formal education. Over 80% of respondents claimed to have moderate to extreme concern in not being able to continue their studies, and over half - 53.3% - stated to be extremely concerned.

In the CONJUVE survey, the fear of having their studies interrupted was listed as one of their main concerns by 13%, and 28% stated that they have thought of not continuing their studies. This concern evidently has many causes, and demonstrates how Brazilian inequalities are interconnected, and how they were impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.
However, it is worth highlighting that respondents from Minas Gerais and Espírito Santo state to have a higher degree of concern than those from Rio de Janeiro, and those from Espírito Santo showed the highest degree of concern.

Furthermore, a slightly higher level of concern can be observed in men than in women about the continuity of their studies.

In the CONJUVE survey, participants pointed out a series of difficulties in studying during the pandemic: anxiety and/or stress; difficulty organizing; lack of face-to-face contact with teachers; lack of a peaceful environment to study; among others.

Again participants from all three localities state to be extremely concerned about the continuity of their studies.
The fear of victimization by the many types of violence was also brought by the survey.

The answers referring to the fear of domestic violence were split between no concern or extreme concern, higher concern still being predominant among participants. While 35.2% stated not to be concerned about domestic violence, 36.1% stated to be extremely concerned.
On a scale of 1 to 10, what is your degree of concern about suffering from urban violence?

The fear of urban violence was more prevalent: 62.3% of the participants stated having a degree of concern of 8 or higher with urban violence.
On a scale of 1 to 10, what is your degree of concern about leaving the house and you or a member of your family being arrested?

Furthermore, 54.9% claim to have a degree of concern of 8 or more about being arrested or of a family member being arrested.
Although high, the degree of concern of participants from Minas Gerais with domestic violence was lower than that of other localities.

Respondents from Rio de Janeiro and Espirito Santo demonstrated a higher level of concern with urban violence, and those from Rio de Janeiro the highest concern with arrest.

Respondents from Espirito Santo demonstrated higher concern with domestic violence and lower concern with their arrest or of family members.

Finally, despite the high levels of concern in both genders, women demonstrate a higher degree of concern about all types of violence.
OTHER CONCERNS

In addition to those brought by the survey, participants stated some of their other worries.

Many concern the loss of family members - parents, brothers and sisters, children - because of the disease, while others expressed concerns about being infected. Other than the fear of infection with the coronavirus, they expressed concerns about other health issues: contracting other diseases, or existing health problems. These issues relate to and are aggravated by financial and work-related difficulties:

"My concern is about what I have at home because at the moment I am not working and my father is an independent worker, and I am afraid that he is being exposed in order to bring us food and might end up getting sick because he has health issues, and also it worries me that one day we may not have what to eat because we will not have a source of income, and things are expensive, it would make me very sad, not having a decent meal for my father, mother, nephew and brothers."
OTHER CONCERNS

The lack of job opportunities appears frequently - some stating that due to lack of income they are afraid they will not be able to pay their bills, buy food, or pay for a preparatory course to enter a university. In particular, some participants with children claim to be afraid of losing their source of income and not being able to sustain them.

The fear of violence and war also came up with a certain frequency: participants claim to be concerned about conflicts between armed factions, police operations, or with a civil war. Furthermore, one participant emphasized racism as a factor that makes her fear for herself, her friends and her family. The issue of violence appears mainly in accounts of the respondents' concern with their communities:

“Fear of a war or the police or factions, and because a good part of the community is at home but is circulating in the community to buy food or for some other need, hardly anyone is locked inside their homes, some because they don’t have a good relationship with their families, others because of need, unfortunately it is agonizing for us in the community but on one side it is necessary, on the other because there are a lot of people circulating I am more afraid of a war breaking out and an innocent person being shot.”
Other responses include concerns about mothers having their children during the quarantine, fear of not being able to be with friends or family, and concern about mental health, especially depression and anxiety.

For some, everything that is happening during the pandemic makes them afraid of the kind of society we will have after it is over:

“I worry about the people that are going through difficulties during the quarantine. These people cannot count on anyone. I worry that after corona we will become a society without hope and without concern for others.”
c) Actions

To address a pandemic without precedence, it is necessary to engage in several actions, many of which are created and led by youth. The CONJUVE report states that young people’s high degree of concern about others is met with high availability to help, mainly through actions that can be carried out without leaving their homes. As such, participants have claimed to be involved in a series of activities:

- Promote messages about compliance with social distancing on social media (30.3%)
- Promote other positive messages on social media (30.3%)
- Help to manage the stress and concern (18%)
- Make videos with positive or educational messages (15.5%)
- Share training opportunities online (13.1%)
- Support the creation of family/community gardens (4%)
- None (32.6%)
- Other (34.4%)

For men:
- Promote messages about compliance with social distancing on social media: 30.4%
- Promote other positive messages on social media: 23.9%
- Help to manage the stress and concern: 15.2%
- Make videos with positive or educational messages: 19.5%
- Share training opportunities online: 21.7%
- Support the creation of family/community gardens: 4%
- None: 32.6%
- Other: 10.8%

For women:
- Promote messages about compliance with social distancing on social media: 30.2%
- Promote other positive messages on social media: 34.2%
- Help to manage the stress and concern: 19.7%
- Make videos with positive or educational messages: 11.8%
- Share training opportunities online: 7.8%
- Support the creation of family/community gardens: 6.5%
- None: 35.5%
- Other: 7.8%
Approximately a third (32.8%) of participants claimed not to take part in any initiative combating the COVID-19 crisis. The rest, however, carried out a series of initiatives - most of them virtually. Activities carried out in social networks are predominant, such as encouraging compliance with social distancing measures or sharing other positive messages.

In the CONJUVE survey, virtual activities were also more frequent: 79% of participants claimed to have called an acquaintance to check on them and 70% shared messages on social media. Concerning gender, they found that women declared to get more in contact with acquaintances and to be more active in their social media, and men indicated more frequently not to have taken part in any activities.

In this survey, however, men and women were equally active. Men engaged more in making videos, while women shared diverse messages on social media more frequently, and were more involved in family or community gardens.
Some respondents declared also to have taken part in other activities not listed on the survey. A large portion are activities alerting and spreading information on COVID-19 and forms of protection, as well as other messages made as a way of combating the afflictions caused by the pandemic: videos; meditation courses; yoga; dancing. Many claimed to share positive and hopeful messages. These strategies are shared with others but also used by the participants. Some shared their concerns with their families and the impacts they suffered during the pandemic that motivate them to share these messages:

I lost a godfather and his sister to this disease, COVID-19, and at home I have my parents, who have their health issues, my wife and my son who is now two months old, so I try not to go out, avoid agglomerations, and every time I receive news stories I try to see if they are not fake and share them, because it is very bad to lose loved ones like this, out of nowhere, even more to a disease that has no cure, and unfortunately many still think it’s a joke so I try to help the way I can without exposing myself to not affect me or my family, friends etc...
In addition to virtual activities, participants engage in on-the-ground actions, such as the distribution of 'basic monthly baskets'³, hygiene supplies and/or other items to more vulnerable families, action undertaken by twelve participants. Aside from spreading the importance of quarantine, some young people have claimed to help others in activities that require leaving the home, such as grocery or pharmacy shopping. There is a diversity of other activities undertaken by the participants, such as volunteering, movements of young leaders fighting COVID-19 in their territories, sharing messages on healthy nutrition, or helping renovate their houses. One participant recounted an activity he takes part in due to Jovens Construtores:

> Young people and community-based organizations, connected to the Jovens Construtores program, submitted propositions of emergency actions to a notice on Racial Equality of the Baobá Fund and were approved. With a small resource, they structured effective actions, and I advised them in the organization and structuring of each action, conducting weekly meetings and articulating with other partners.

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³ set of basic products utilized by one family during a month.
OTHER ACTIONS

In the space reserved for suggestions, many respondents stated the need for the population to have greater access to hygiene kits, food, alcohol gel and/or masks. Therefore, the distribution of basic monthly baskets (or food in general), masks and other hygiene materials was one of the most recurrent suggestions - a total of 32 suggestions include at least one of these elements.

Also, some participants highlighted the groups that they believe should be the target audience of this type of action: the homeless population appears most frequently, but they also listed families in vulnerability, young people or the elderly. Some also suggested the distribution of other materials, such as children’s books to occupy their time at home, or the expansion of access to Wi-fi and the internet, both for adults and for young people to continue their studies. In short:

“Bring hope to people. With music, food, tips, it doesn’t matter. People need to know that this will pass and that they have someone they can count on during this whole crisis.”
Another frequent suggestion was the creation and dissemination of campaigns and/or messages, most of them virtually. A total of **24 suggestions** include some form of message sharing, such as: creating videos and/or hashtags; awareness campaigns; lives; courses and online capacitation. It was stated that these messages could be made with humor, to approach a serious issue while capturing young people’s attention.

Aside from donations for groups that need them, I think it is a good idea, getting in that ‘wave’, to have interactive lives, or videos with health professionals, educational, but with a young approach. Educational classes are a good idea! In Porto do Saber we had a Human Rights module, and it was extremely important for my development. Why not do this in a video?
Another suggestion was to organize videoconferences or conversation groups with young people in order to understand what they are going through, some suggesting that these be composed by participants of different editions of Jovens Construtores. The formation of these groups was suggested by some as a form of mutual support amongst them, and also as a way to spread information to their communities.

Psychological support was another aspect considered important by some respondents, especially for people adapting to confinement, young people with difficulties at school, and families of people that passed away due to COVID-19.

Also, others suggested sharing notices aimed at combating COVID-19, or holding capacitation courses in Health Promotion or other areas that would catch the attention of young people by offering professional experience.
AVAILABILITY

Apart from the activities they already carry out, almost all respondents claim to have availability to assist in the creation and/or sharing of messages that might help people in this moment of crisis. Most claimed to be available to share the created message, but a significant portion is also available to participate in its creation.

In the final comments, some participants also praised the initiative of making the survey and emphasized their desire to contribute to the work of CEDAPS in their territories.
Conclusions

- Many young people receive information about the pandemic through social networks, a large portion through WhatsApp. As such, part of the respondents say that they try to seek the sources of the information they receive and combat fake news.

- The fact that a large portion of young people receive an excessive amount of information largely through social media (some even claiming not to trust them) may point out to the issue of fake news as an element that adds to the challenges faced by youth during the pandemic.

- Despite being one of the public entities responsible for guaranteeing the population’s right to health, Basic Health Units appear to have a minor role in spreading information to young people during the pandemic in all three regions.
Beyond making explicit the existing Brazilian inequalities, the pandemic aggravates them, creating a fear of lack of access to fundamental resources. The participant's responses demonstrate this concern that affects their very survival - such as the high fear of lack of food and income expressed in the survey, which puts young people and their families in a situation of food insecurity.

The pandemic also hinders many young people's access to education and leaves them at risk of not being able to complete their studies, which also aggravates Brazilian inequalities. Although this strongly affects all groups, men seem to be more affected by this issue than women, and young people from Minas Gerais and Espírito Santo have expressed being more affected than those from Rio de Janeiro.

Young people perceive the lack of access to basic supplies, such as food or hygiene and personal protection products, as one of the largest issues that must be addressed in the pandemic.

**Conclusions**
The issue of violence remains during the pandemic: fears of urban violence or prison are still strongly present, and a significant portion of young people expressed high concern with domestic violence, which is an especially troubling scenario during a period that requires social isolation. Women in special show higher concern than men with suffering all listed types of violence.

The fear of violence is also connected to young people's concern with their communities, which they see as at risk due to their limited capacity to address the COVID-19 pandemic - because of both the disease and the socioeconomic issues communities already faced.

The differences in concern between localities and genders are subtle, partly since all questions registered a high level of concern in every aspect. However, it may be said that young people from Rio de Janeiro are especially affected by violence, while those from Minas Gerais and Espírito Santo show higher concern with their studies.
Even with their fears and risks, young people are at the forefront of the struggle against the pandemic, using the means they have at their disposal - especially social media and the internet. Many also take part in on-the-ground activities in their communities and/or families.

Social networks are utilized as a source of information, and also perceived as spaces where young people can make interventions with positive or educational messages. Therefore, they are considered an important resource by participants.

The collective is an important element for the participants, who see it as a safe space for mutual support. They perceive its importance and emphasize it as a way of combating the issues caused by the pandemic. Many of the actions taken by participants concern their communities neighboring communities - territories they know and are able to monitor, identifying groups in most need of intervention.

Conclusions
Annex
List of partners

Institutional partners:
Inter-American Bank
Brazil Foundation
CIEE-Rio
Fundação Vale
Federação das Indústrias do Rio de Janeiro - FIRJAN
United Nations Children’s Fund – UNICEF
Instituto Invepar
Instituto Oi
MetroRio
SECONCI
Secretaria Municipal de Educação do Rio de Janeiro – CEJA Maré
United Way do Brasil
Vale

Implementation partners:
Associação de Mulheres da Mangueira - AMU Mangueira
Associação Semente da Vida - ASVI
EDUCAP - Espaço Democrático de União, Convivência, Aprendizagem e Prevenção
Grupo PROA
Instituto de Cidadania Unidos da Tijuca
Instituto Vida Real
ONG Rongo

CEDAPS is a member of the Global YouthBuild International Network