

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There is a genuine prospect that the social and economic effects of the COVID-19 crisis will permanently alter the lives of today's children. Available data and projections present a grim picture with rising household unemployment and poverty negatively impacting children's wellbeing. Against this backdrop, the protection of children and their families and/or caregivers is vital. But how do we determine how to strategically allocate our limited resources to this end when the only constant is uncertainty?

These prudent assumptions are accompanied by a number of unknowns that are impacting our work: the length and severity of the pandemic and of the economic crisis, as well as government capacity to respond and civil society capacity to influence such a response. It is also uncertain what will happen to international cooperation in this context. Most importantly, there are too many unknowns on the long-term impact on children's lives and on the invisible crises they might be facing.

Scenario planning is an approach to thinking about the future by focusing on external driving forces on which we have little or no control. In building scenarios of what the future might look like, we begin with existing data, evidence, and projections to establish prudent assumptions about our current situation:

The scenarios in this analysis are structured along two axes ranking from high to low:

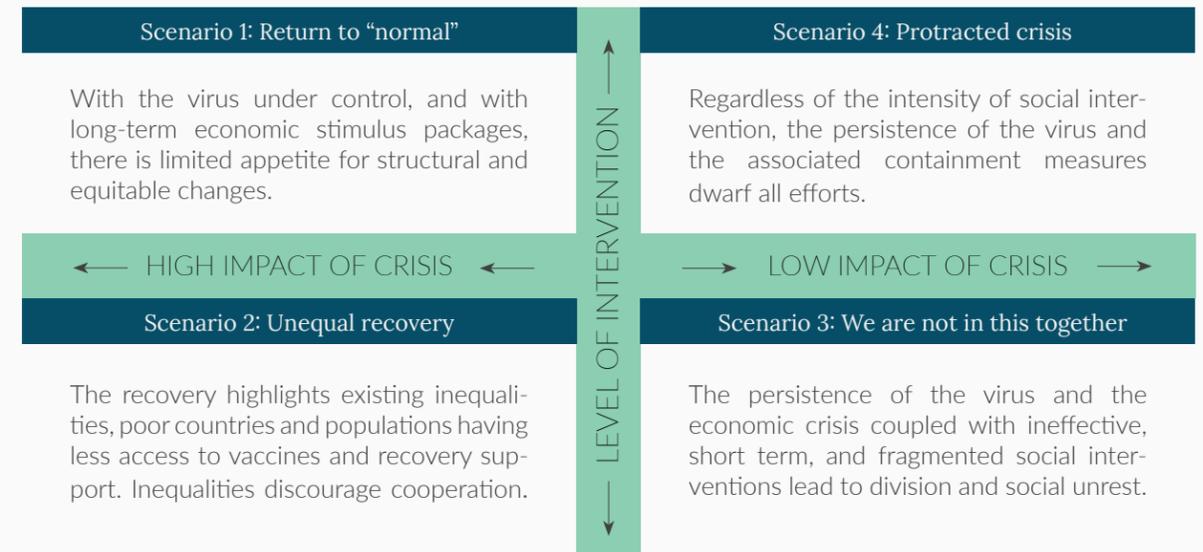
- The crisis is affecting the whole socio-ecological system of the child and is exacerbating existing inequality and vulnerabilities.
- Children are out of school, losing access to a protective measure against many of the existing risks and decreasing their chances of a better future.
- The most vulnerable children are affected the most, with a gender divide making girls face unique risks.
- Social protection measures are offering immediate relief but might not be sustainable in the long run.
- There is a growing mismatch between an increased need for non-profit services and their resources and existing capacities to meet this need.

- 1. The severity of the crisis that is, "the level of harm and dislocation experienced by the population as a result of the depth and duration of the health, economic impacts of the pandemic."¹**
- 2. The level of social intervention, defined as intentionally implemented change strategies to introduce betterment, including alleviating the impact of social and economic stressors.**

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COVID-19 FUTURE TRENDS

ON THESE BASES, FOUR SCENARIOS ARE PROPOSED:



While there is no "happy scenario", all of them can be reshaped to create opportunities and interventions that will have a positive impact on children. Will emerging social movements demanding structural changes and international cooperation build momentum or will they take root in the relief of returning to "normal"? How do we ensure government actors prioritize the most vulnerable children in recovery agendas? How might Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) implement interventions to mitigate this crisis and the upcoming recession and austerity? Can a succession of crises lead to positive change? What is the role of funders in these scenarios, and where and how can a partnership of funders have the biggest impact?

With the support of this paper amongst others, funders will have to build their own answers to these questions and plan accordingly. They will have to consider the whole socioecological system of the child and exercise flexibility in working towards the recovery from the COVID-19 crisis in the context of a recession. It seems plausible that efforts will need to respond both to the immediate needs and to the structural setting, with the delivery of services, the generation of knowledge, and the engagement in advocacy efforts being key in ensuring the prioritization of children's wellbeing and rights today and in the coming years.