

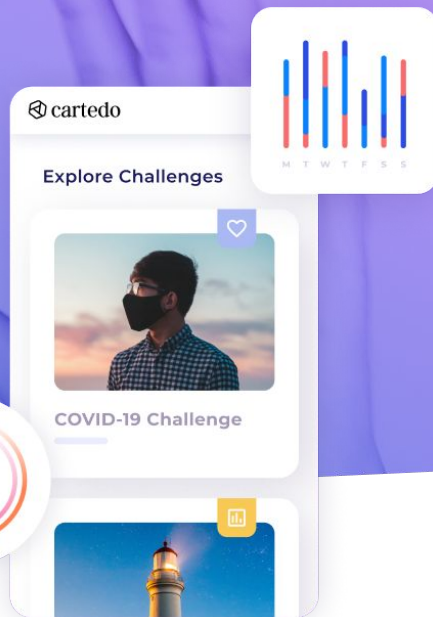
August 2020



Case Study 3.

COVID-19 Youth Innovation Challenge

Empowering youth to become knowledge producers during a pandemic



The Challenge.

Young people have been found to be immensely vulnerable to disruptions caused by the pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in severe social and economic impacts around the world. Young people have been found to be immensely vulnerable to disruptions caused by the pandemic, and many are now at risk of being left behind in education, economic opportunities, and health and well-being during a crucial stage of their life development.

According to UNESCO (2020), 191 countries have implemented nationwide or localized school closures, resulting in over 91 percent of enrolled students, or 1.5 billion people, not being able to go to school.



How might we empower youth to create ideas for the COVID-19/ post COVID-19 world?

Furthermore, vulnerable and marginalized youth are at particular risk of COVID-19 and its impacts. This especially includes youth coming from several intersections: young migrants and refugees, adolescent girls and young women, young persons with disabilities, young people of different gender identities and sexual orientations, etc. It becomes essential to understand that youth may be at the receiving end of precarious job contracts and lack of adequate social protection, during and even beyond the Pandemic.

With the pandemic, leading to a decline in hope amongst youth, it is important for institutions and organizations to re-assess and re-evaluate how empowering contexts can be created for young people amidst a global crisis. Through the UNICEF and Botnar Foundation COVID-19 Youth Innovation challenge, Cartedo's experiential learning platform has supported young people around the world in exploring pandemic related challenges in their context. This collaboration has been able to both empower young people to create ideas and prototypes for challenges faced in the COVID-19 world, as well as support youth with transferable future-readiness skills.

Cartedo's Framework.

A platform for defining, measuring, developing and discovering future ready skills

Cartedo is an unbiased innovation platform which utilises data analytics and learning theory in the measuring and development of people's future-ready skills. Its human analytics assessment engine captures and collates individuals' performance, based on their application of soft skills to a real world challenge. Through this experiential learning platform, the learner is empowered with a deep understanding of their inherent skills while receiving a personalized action plan for development. The application of complex 21st century skills in the real-world is measured through projects, challenges and simulations on the Cartedo platform.

For sustainable youth empowerment, Cartedo partners with employers and organisations to help youth develop future-readiness employability and entrepreneurship skills through innovation challenges such as this.



The Solution.

Equipping youth with
Design Thinking skills,
and an innovation
ecosystem



Through the COVID-19 Innovation Challenge, Cartedo, with support from UNICEF country offices, was able to **empower youth across Africa**, equipping them with skills to face challenges posed by the Pandemic. With participants from over 160 countries, Cartedo ignited 200,000 young minds.

The core goals targeted by Cartedo included:

- giving youth a voice, access to reliable information,
- driving awareness about the Pandemic and its consequences,
- developing future-readiness skills, and
- enhancing employability and entrepreneurship.

“Hours doing this project it’s not a waste, as I have acquired new skills. I haven't done a hand drawing storyboard before, but I did. Reviewing people's ideas, gave me more knowledge about this Pandemic and beyond it.”

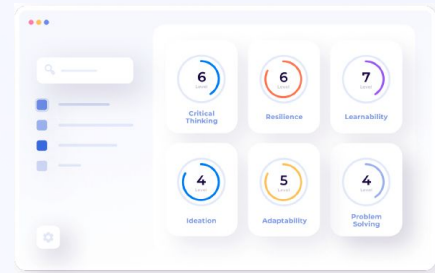
Challenge Participant

Through the simulation-based, experiential learning platform, participants were empowered to create solutions for challenges such as:

- job loss,
- homebound income generation,
- access to reliable information,
- education on COVID-19,
- sanitation and hygiene,
- loneliness and depression,
- mask availability and disposal,
- and stalled learning.

Each of these challenges was explored and contextualised through participant’s own lived experience, giving an incredible diversity to the solutions produced.

Participants engaged in the Challenge utilising a design thinking framework and process. Beginning this human centred exploration of pandemic-related challenges, participants began by trying to better understand it through empathy work such as online interviews and in-person discussions where the proper safety protocols could be followed.



Inspired by their exploration of people's needs, participants generated ideas and prototypes which were improved through inputs from blind peer-to-peer sharing.

Some of the soft skills developed during the COVID-19 Innovation Challenge included empathy, critical thinking, ideation, design thinking, and research. Participants also reported learning some technical aspects they had never tried before: creating storyboards, video production, 3D animation and app development.

The challenge introduction set out specific aspects including motivation, learning goals, and pre-challenge reflection, along with a psychometric evaluation to assess baseline characteristics. The Empathy stage helped participants define the problem and explore the challenges posed by COVID-19 through another person's perspective. The Ideation stages empowered participants to generate and present multiple ideas. These ideas were further reviewed with the help of blind peer-to-peer rating. The Prototype stage encouraged participants to refine their ideas and bring them to life. Prototypes were also reviewed through blind peer-to-peer feedback. Post-challenge, participants reflected on their learnings and how they might carry these forward in their day to day lives.

“First of all I'd like to acknowledge one big mistake I used to do each and every single time before this project, which is stigmatization on a low key. But this project has opened up my eyes to see that it wasn't the fault of anyone who has the virus, for getting infected.”

Challenge Participant

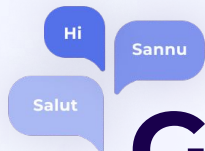
With the support of partners and regional UNICEF offices, over 60,000 ideas and 10,000 solutions were shared to challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The COVID-19 Innovation Challenge empowered youth to have a voice and agency during a global pandemic. It helped them gain self-confidence and enhanced their self-efficacy.

Transcending the boundaries and barriers of the global impact of the Pandemic, the impact of this initiative has been multifold and resounding. It has not only helped youth develop future-ready skills but it has also given young people a platform to share their ideas and innovations with peers, leaders, and organisations.

“The new skill i have developed during this project is self confidence. Being a learned woman in my society has not always been easy, there is already a place where you should be and there are things you should do. Whereas here, I am not judged by my gender, all that matters is what I think, my contribution, what I can bring as a thinking human being.

This platform has really transformed me, and this will help me in the future. I have also developed during this project altruism. The COVID-19 pandemic is everyone's concern, we should and must reflect together how to maintain health on earth for each and everyone of us despite who we are and where we are coming from. I hope this project brings light to all of us and gives us tools to chase away this COVID-19 pandemic.” *Challenge Participant*



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info@cartedo.com

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