India entered into a three-month lockdown from March 2020 to May 2020. The duration is highly important for students in India, because of final exams being conducted and results being declared, counselling for admissions are held. The lockdown impacted the mobility of students, schools and colleges being closed, hostels converted into isolation wards forced many to travel to hometown. The University Grants Commission, Human Resource Ministry, State Governments working without co-ordination and each releasing its own guidelines and thus creating a situation of chaos for students across country.

PAC has been aware of the increasing suicide rates across Karnataka during the lockdown. The predominance of adolescents is a global and local phenomenon. PAC has been actively engaged in providing analytics support to the Government of Karnataka on building a resilient exit strategy. The strategy emphasises on lowering risk exposure and reducing stress of due to tectonic shift in education delivery. The strategy can be read here. Adolescent age group is extremely sensitive to psychosocial environment and thus emphasis is required on mental health of adolescents to develop a healthy generation. A recent meta-analysis by Skeen et al. reviews various mental health programmes directed at adolescent mental health and identifies the best buys which can be scaled for implementation during the COVID-19 lockdown.

The chaos has resulted in students showing signs of anxiety, distress and depression. The news of 66 students committing suicide in Kerala, 3 students committing suicide in Madhya Pradesh has led to governments sprung into action and open teleconsultation scheme like Chiri’ (Smile) by Kerala government. Similar initiatives were started by state governments across India.