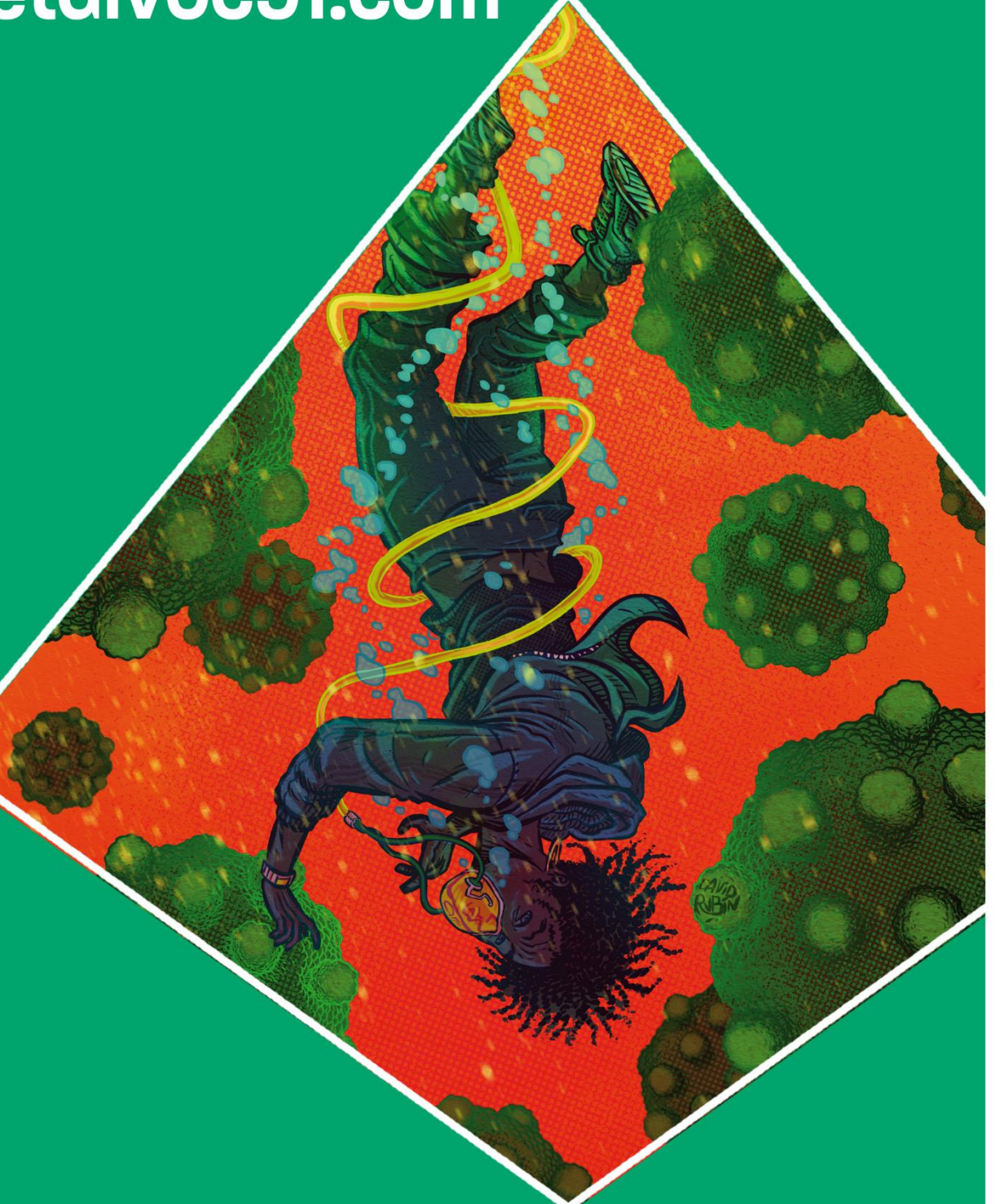


planetdivoc91.com



# Evaluation Report

## Planet DIVOC-91

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## Executive Summary

### About Planet DIVOC-91

Planet DIVOC-91 is a participatory arts and science engagement project co-created with young adults from India, South Africa and the UK, multidisciplinary researchers and experts, renowned comic writers and artists. The project began in March 2020 as a response to the lack of young adult voices in the public discussions about the pandemic and grew out of conversations between Sara Kenney of Wowbagger Productions and Bella Starling of Vocal (Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust). One of the key aims of the project was to bring together diverse perspectives and experiences of the pandemic and to enable young adults to be heard by those involved in research and policy.

Initially UK-based, the project was produced by Wowbagger Productions and Vocal in association with the UK Academic of Medical Sciences (AMS). The project was able to extend in the summer of 2020 as a result of Wellcome funding to include project teams working directly in India, South Africa and the UK. In India the project was led by Sarah Iqbal (DBT/Wellcome Trust India Alliance) and in South Africa by Nabeel Petersen (Interfer). Anita Shervington (BLAST Fest) led on the *Power, Influence and Change* workstream.

The project team supported a core group of 45 young adults between March 2020 and May 2021. The young adults participated in a range of activities. This included interviewing over thirty scientists from countries around the world, representing diverse disciplines. There were also workshops and meetings with artists and media creatives. By the end of the project period, a nine chapter [webcomic](#) had been produced and had involved twenty three writers and comic artists along with Music Mixes from 9 musicians. Young adults informed the development of the storylines throughout the course of the project via workshops with writers and artists. One of the comic chapters was written by one of the young adults and the young adults also created their own articles, films and artwork in order to share their experiences of the pandemic.

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The project was a creative response to the experiences of a pandemic and infodemic<sup>1</sup>. The creative approach allowed the young adults to both explore and make sense of what was happening around them and to create original content for wider audiences.

At the start of the project, most of the young adults had limited experience of being included in conversations about science or activism. Over a period of 14 months, the project supported the young adults to have their voices heard by scientists, researchers and policy makers and to develop their own skills and confidence in telling their own stories. This was made possible through a proactive and supportive approach throughout which responded to the needs of young people and also provided opportunities that they would not have thought possible at the start of the project

*“As someone who is new to speaking up and bringing opinions to a big platform, being a part of this group has made it a lot more easier and given me experience to go on to do things I didn’t think I’d be able to do!”* UK young adult

The activities the young adults undertook included:

- interviewing high profile scientists, researchers and policy makers.
- participating in comic story development workshops with creative practitioners, comic writers and artists.
- learning new skills through masterclasses on areas such as science journalism, filmmaking and producing podcasts.
- exploring new ways to tell their own stories about themselves and what was important to them. <sup>2</sup>
- participating in a mentorship programme, which is ongoing.
- chairing project Steering Group meetings.

Funding for the project came from a range of organisations:

- The Academy of Medical Sciences.
- NIHR Manchester Biomedical Research Centre, and NIHR Manchester Clinical Research Facility.
- The Science and Technology Facilities Council.

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<sup>1</sup> World Health Organisation (2021) Infodemic Available: [https://www.who.int/health-topics/infodemic#tab=tab\\_1](https://www.who.int/health-topics/infodemic#tab=tab_1).

<sup>2</sup> Anita Shervington and Sara Kenney worked with the young adults using Marshall Ganz’s ‘Public Narrative’ methodology.

- Royal Society of Chemistry.
- The University of Manchester through the Wellcome Institutional Strategic Support Fund award.
- Wowbagger Productions through in-kind support for 7 out of 15 months of production.
- The global reach of the project has been possible by funding from Wellcome.

## Evaluation Methodology

Throughout the course of the project a mixture of qualitative and quantitative data has been collected via a range of methods in a Mixed Methods approach. The combination of these two types of data can provide an understanding of impact but can also provide insight into why the impact has occurred.<sup>3</sup> Qualitative methods were particularly important in order to explore the experiences of a variety of stakeholders and participants. The methods and how they were used are summarised below.

The project team worked in collaboration with the evaluator throughout the project to provide access participants and stakeholders. This approach was facilitated by regular discussions with the project team (evaluation was a regular feature of the weekly project team meetings) and as a result they undertook reflection on any observations or interim results from the evaluation and used the information to iterate and improve over the course of the project.

Overall, the evaluation methodology aimed to address the project outcomes:

1. Effectively engage young adults in the development and delivery of Planet DIVOC-91.
2. Successful production of high-quality output that engages the target audience.
3. Ensuring Planet DIVOC-91 reflects a broad diversity of experience.
4. Successful research partnerships and influence.
5. Learning from Planet DIVOC-91.

## Findings

This “*innovative*”, “*creative*” and “*exciting*” project has exceeded expectations of the project team and by listening and responding to the young adults, the project team has

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<sup>3</sup> Cohen, L., Manion, L. & Morrison, K. (2018) Research Methods in Education. 8th Edition. Abingdon: Routledge.

met their needs. They have felt “*informed*”, “*heard*” and “*supported*”. The young adults have been provided with opportunities to share their experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic with researchers and policy-makers. They have developed their knowledge, skills and professional networks, with a particular focus on leadership skills.

In terms of the key success measures relating to each of the project outcomes, the project has met those for project outcomes 1 to 4, with the work in relation to outcome 5 carrying on beyond the period covered by the evaluation report but there is every expectation this will also be successfully achieved.

### **Project outcome 1: Effectively engage young adults in the development and delivery of Planet DIVOC-91**

Effective engagement with the young adults was sustained by the project team throughout the course of the project and they were constantly reflecting and responding to the young adults: “*We were responding to, not just the pandemic, but the experiences of the young people and as we went along, thinking how we can work more effectively.*”

Key themes:

- Relationship-building and trust: The project team effectively engaged the young adults and successfully built a level of trust enabling them to share personal experiences.
- Successful international collaboration: The project team have established a successful international collaboration and have laid a foundation for continued work together.
- Giving young adults a purpose: The project provided young adults with a chance to “do something” during the COVID-19 pandemic when there was disruption to their work, learning and home life. The young adults have been provided with mental health support and have felt less isolated being part of the project. Via the connections they have made with each other and the interactions in the international sessions, the young adults have an awareness of the impact of the pandemic on people around the world.

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- Personal and professional development: There have been a range of professional development opportunities for the young adults. Through meeting and talking to a range of researchers, the young adults have become better informed about COVID-19. They have had the opportunity to develop skills they will be able to use in their professional careers such as interviewing, writing, presenting and film-making along with organisational skills, teamwork and collaboration. They have also developed their professional networks and connections, not just in their home countries but internationally, and have had the opportunity to take part in a mentoring scheme.

***Project outcomes 2 and 3: Successful production of high-quality output that engages the target audience and Ensuring Planet DIVOC-91 reflects a broad diversity of experience***

Key themes:

- Enabling young adults to be heard: The webcomic, articles, films and artworks produced by the young adults have given them an opportunity to share their experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Engaging the target audience and comic book reach: The Planet DIVOC-91 project ran from March 2020 to May 2021 with 45 young adults engaged in this period. The young adults have produced over 50 articles, films and artworks which have been published on Webtoons and a dedicated Planet DIVOC-91 website. As of the end of May 2021, there have been over 20,900 views of the webcomic on Webtoons. This exceeds the minimum target the project set of 10,000. Young adults who did not participate in the project shared their impressions of the webcomic via a focus group. The participants were engaged by the content due to the “*insightful*” storylines and “*amazing artwork*”. The themes (misinformation, equity & stigma, mental health) were relatable to young adults, regardless of where they were from. The webcomic and the project were promoted using a range of social media channels with hundreds of thousands of people being reached with the planet DIVOC-91 content. Around 100 news articles from the comics and entertainment industry have been written on the project, reaching a broad audience and diverse readership.

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The project was internationally-minded and diverse in all aspects: the project team, the young adults, the researchers and policy-makers engaged with. The topics of the articles and the storylines of the comic reflected the different experiences of the young adults. For example, one chapter of the webcomic was authored by one of the South African young adults who was able to bring “*different viewpoints and artistic ideas*”.

#### **Project outcome 4: Successful research partnerships and influence**

Being listened to by different organisations and people has been an extremely positive experience for the young adults: “*It was amazing hearing about the research that is going on and having our voice heard*”.

Key themes:

- Influence: The young adults have been able to share their own experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic with a range of people and organisations. The voices of the young adults and their experiences of the pandemic have been heard by researchers and policy-makers.
- Setting the agenda: In addition to identifying opportunities for the young adults to engage in existing meetings and activities, the young adults were able to participate in and ultimately determine the agenda of the project’s steering group. During the course of the project the steering group met monthly and the latter meetings were chaired by the young adults, with each country team taking a turn. By taking on this role, the young adults demonstrated how their confidence has built over the course of the project. This opportunity was an example of the project providing the young adults with access to organisations they wouldn’t necessarily get to interact with.

#### **Project outcome 5: Learning from Planet DIVOC-91**

When reflecting on their experiences, the general feeling across the project team was that they would like to see a longer-term investment in community and grassroots organisations who facilitate these kinds of collaborative projects, rather than

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necessarily funding on a project-by-project basis. The project team are looking at ways to embed the successes from PD-91 in the way they work more generally but there is a desire to continue working with these same young adults in an ongoing way, as “*a long-term relationship is more authentic and rewarding for everyone involved*”.

Key themes:

- Challenges: Whilst the project has been successful, that's not to say the work undertaken by the project team was not without its challenges. This included adapting to a virtual or online mode of delivery, issues with the administration of payments to project partners and more time needing to be spent on aspects such relationship development with the young adults.
- Reflecting on the project model: As part of the reflection undertaken by the project team towards the end of the project period they considered what could have been done differently. Overall, there were no major changes to the project model, which was felt to many participants and stakeholders to be “*innovative*”. Proposed changes focus on increasing the effectiveness of the approach. Possible changes included spending more time working directly with the young adults, supporting the development of relationships between the young adults in different countries at an earlier stage, more involvement of policy professionals and researchers on the theme of how to effectively engaging young people in their fields and shifting the power to the young adults earlier in the project lifecycle. One of the project team members sums up their experience: “*I am really proud of what we achieved. [...] we have created something that has made a real difference in the lives [of] some of the young people we have worked with. To me that matters the most.*”

## Conclusion

The project team have successfully delivered a multi-layered and multi-dimensional project for young adults during a global pandemic. The experience has had a profound impact on the young adults and they will take this experience forward into their future lives and careers.

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The webcomic, articles, artwork, films and podcasts produced by the young adults provide an insight into their experiences. These are summed up in the three areas of concern from their manifesto: (i) mental health, (ii) equity and stigma and (iii) misinformation.

The relationships between the project team, the young adults and the project partners and stakeholders are well established. Stakeholders have been able to reach new audiences. Researchers and policy makers have been affected by the personal stories of the young adults. The impact on the project team, young adults, stakeholders, researchers and policy makers will continue beyond the end of the funded period of the project.



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## Introduction

Planet DIVOC-91 is a participatory arts and science engagement project co-created with young adults from across the globe, multidisciplinary researchers and experts, renowned comic writers and artists. The project began in March 2020 as a response to the lack of young adult voices in the public discussions of the pandemic and grew out of discussions between Sara Kenney of Wowbagger Productions and Bella Starling of Vocal (Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust). The aim was to utilise a participatory arts methodology in order to offer audiences diverse perspectives on how to make sense of a pandemic and to enable young adults to be heard in research and policy conversations and decisions.

The project was initially UK-based and produced by Wowbagger Productions and Vocal in association with the UK Academic of Medical Sciences (AMS). As a result of Wellcome funding, the project was extended in the summer of 2020 to include project teams working directly in India, South Africa and the UK. In India the project was led by Sarah Iqbal (DBT/Wellcome Trust India Alliance) and in South Africa by Nabeel Petersen (Interfer). Anita Shervington (BLAST Fest) led on the *Power, Influence and Change* workstream.

Between March 2020 and May 2021, the project team supported a core group of 45 young adults, who interviewed over thirty scientists from a wide range of disciplines (ranging from psychology and public health to astrophysics and computational biology) and worked directly with eleven artists and media creatives. A nine chapter webcomic was produced involving twenty three writers and comic artists along with sound mixes from 9 musicians. Young adults informed the development of the storylines throughout the course of the project through workshops with writers and artists. One of the comic chapters was written by one of the young adults and they also created their own articles, films and artwork.

The project was, of course, delivered in the midst of a pandemic and infodemic,<sup>4</sup> the project teams and the young adults were working creatively to both explore and make sense of what was happening around them and to create original content for wider

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<sup>4</sup> World Health Organisation (2021) Infodemic Available: [https://www.who.int/health-topics/infodemic#tab=tab\\_1](https://www.who.int/health-topics/infodemic#tab=tab_1).

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audiences. From the outset the project had a highly proactive multi-disciplinary approach, both in the way that it was delivered and in the outputs that were created. The project process and outputs drew attention to the diversity of science and research perspectives including social sciences and medical humanities, as well as the lived experience of those taking part. Young adults created a range of articles, films and artworks which were published as part of the webcomic, as well as their own manifesto for change.

At the start of the project, most of the young adults had limited experience of being included in conversations about science or activism. Over a period of 14 months, the project supported the young adults to have their voices heard by scientists, researchers and policy makers and to develop their own skills and confidence in telling their own stories. This was made possible through a proactive and supportive approach throughout which responded to the needs of young people and also provided opportunities that they would not have thought possible at the start of the project

*“As someone who is new to speaking up and bringing opinions to a big platform, being a part of this group has made it a lot more easier and given me experience to go on to do things I didn’t think I’d be able to do!”* UK young adult

The activities the young adults undertook included:

- interviewing high profile scientists, researchers and policy makers.
- participating in comic story development workshops with creative practitioners, comic writers and artists.
- learning new skills through masterclasses on areas such as science journalism, filmmaking and producing podcasts.
- exploring new ways to tell their own stories about themselves and what was important to them. <sup>5</sup>
- participating in a mentorship programme, which is ongoing.
- chairing project Steering Group meetings.

Funding for the project came from a range of organisations:

- The Academy of Medical Sciences.

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<sup>5</sup> Anita Shervington and Sara Kenney worked with the young adults using Marshall Ganz’s ‘Public Narrative’ methodology.

- NIHR Manchester Biomedical Research Centre, and NIHR Manchester Clinical Research Facility.
- The Science and Technology Facilities Council.
- Royal Society of Chemistry.
- The University of Manchester through the Wellcome Institutional Strategic Support Fund award.
- Wowbagger Productions through in-kind support for 7 out of 15 months of production.
- The global reach of the project has been possible by funding from Wellcome.

The project was jointly managed by Wowbagger Productions and Vocal. The group of young adults in each country were supported by a local team. In addition to those based in the organisations mentioned, freelance consultants formed an important part of the inter-disciplinary team. A full list of contributors can be found in appendix C.

The project identified the following outcomes:

1. Effectively engage young adults in the development and delivery of Planet DIVOC-91.
2. Successful production of high-quality output that engages the target audience.
3. Ensuring Planet DIVOC-91 reflects a broad diversity of experience.
4. Successful research partnerships and influence.
5. Learning from Planet DIVOC-91.

This evaluation report examines whether these project outcomes have been achieved and considers the impact of participation on the young adults. A range of evidence was collected throughout the project lifetime. The evaluation methodology is discussed in the following section and the project outcomes are addressed in the results and discussion session on page 18.

## Methodology

Throughout the course of the project a mixture of qualitative and quantitative data has been collected via a range of methods in a Mixed Methods approach. The combination of these two types of data can provide an understanding of impact but can also provide insight into why the impact has occurred.<sup>6</sup> Qualitative methods were particularly important in order to explore the experiences of a variety of stakeholders and participants. The methods and how they were used are summarised below.

The project team worked in collaboration with the evaluator throughout the project to provide access participants and stakeholders. This approach was facilitated by regular discussions with the project team (evaluation was a regular feature of the weekly project team meetings) and as a result they undertook reflection on any observations or interim results from the evaluation and used the information to iterate and improve over the course of the project.

Overall, the evaluation methodology aimed to address the project outcomes. A full description of these and the associated success measures can be found in Appendix G.

### Young adults

The following methods were used to better understand the experiences of the young adults involved in the project.

Method	Purpose and description
Survey	This survey gathered information on the motivations, expectations and experiences of the young adults. It was shared with all participants.
Interviews	Semi-structured interviews were carried out with a small number of young adults. The purpose of these was to explore the motivation for getting involved in the project and the impact it has had on them.
Photo-elicitation	Young adults from each of the three countries were asked to take photographs or create artworks to describe their

<sup>6</sup> Cohen, L., Manion, L. & Morrison, K. (2018) Research Methods in Education. 8th Edition. Abingdon: Routledge.



	experience of the project. This was followed up by an interview or focus group in order for the participants to reflect on their meaning. This method can shift power towards the participant, giving them a “safe environment” to express their feelings. <sup>3</sup>
Observations	Sessions and steering group meetings were recorded and reviewed by the evaluator. A set of prompts and questions were used as a basis to structure the observations. These were undertaken in order to get a sense of the level of involvement of the young adults and the interactions between them, the project team and stakeholders.

### Project team

A range of approaches were taken with those involved in the management of the project, the production of the webcomic and direct engagement with the young adults.

Method	Purpose and description
Interviews	Interviews were undertaken of the project team members from each country, in some cases this was a group interview. Creatives involved in the production of the comic were interviewed about their experience working on the project and with the young adults.
Survey	Creatives (e.g. artists, writers) involved in the production of the webcomic and those who attended and took part in sessions with the young adults were surveyed on their experiences.
Observations	Production meetings were attended when possible and sessions with the young adults led by the project team were recorded and reviewed by the evaluator.
Self-reflection	Towards the end of the project team members carried out a self-reflection exercise considering their experiences of the project, what their expectations had been and whether or not they had been met.

## Stakeholders

The stakeholders encompass a wide range of organisations and individuals who have an interest in health-related policy making, researchers from a range of disciplines and youth organisations.

Method	Purpose and description
Interviews	Interviews were carried out with a range of stakeholders, including researchers and those with a policy role. This was to gain insight into the impact of working with the young adults.
Survey	Researchers who were involved in sessions with the young adults as part of a panel or those who were interviewed were surveyed on their experiences.
Observations	Recordings of Steering Group meetings were reviewed in order to gain a sense of how stakeholders interacted with the young adults and to gauge impact and action prompted as part of these sessions.

### Project-related

A variety of data sources were used to track whether the project was meeting its outcomes.

Method	Purpose and description
Demographic data from participants and project team	This information was gathered in order to monitor whether the participants and project team represented a range of demographics.
Social media and Webtoons metrics, press coverage	These measures allowed the tracking of the reach and readership of the webcomic.
Documentary analysis	The comic and associated articles along with other reports or tracking documents were reviewed in order to gain a broader view of the project activities.
Focus group	This was undertaken in order to gather feedback about the webcomic from young adults who were not participating in the project but who formed the target audience for the webcomic.

### Data collection and ethics

Data collection of interviews was undertaken remotely (using platforms such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams) and observations of recorded sessions was frequently undertaken.

Consent was sought from all participants of the evaluation activities with opportunities to withdraw their data being made clear. All data has been stored securely and will be deleted according to Ondata Research's GDPR policy.

### Data analysis

Thematic analysis has been used to review all qualitative data, including the open-ended survey responses, interviews, focus group, photo-elicitation discussions and

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observations.<sup>7</sup> The resulting themes arising from the analysis of data are discussed in detail in the following sections.

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<sup>7</sup> Braun, V., Clarke, V. (2019) Reflecting on reflexive thematic analysis, *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*. 11:4, 589-597.

## Results and Discussion

The themes arising from the analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data collected across the duration of the project reflect the richness of the activities undertaken by the project.

The themes arising from the analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data have been grouped according to the project outcomes. The themes are summarised below, with a fuller discussion of each in the following sections. Following each theme is an excerpt from a piece submitted by some of the young adults as part of a photo-elicitation exercise (see page 15 for details) in order to provide further illustration of impact. The full set of responses can be found in Appendix A.

Project outcome	Themes
1. Effectively engage young adults in the development and delivery of Planet DIVOC-91.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relationship-building and trust.</li> <li>• Successful international collaboration.</li> <li>• Giving young adults a purpose.</li> <li>• Personal and professional development.</li> </ul>
2. Successful production of high-quality output that engages the target audience 3. Ensuring Planet DIVOC-91 reflects a broad diversity of experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enabling young adults to be heard.</li> <li>• Engaging the target audience.</li> <li>• Comic book reach.</li> <li>• Comic books and science engagement.</li> </ul>
4. Successful research partnerships and influence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Influence.</li> <li>• Setting the agenda.</li> </ul>
5. Learning from Planet DIVOC-91	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Challenges.</li> <li>• Reflecting on the project model.</li> </ul>

## Project outcome 1

Effectively engage young adults in the development and delivery of Planet DIVOC-91

### Relationship-building and trust

*The project team effectively engaged the young adults in the project and successfully built a level of trust enabling them to share personal experiences.*

The young adults had a range of motivations for getting involved in the Planet DIVOC-91 (PD-91) project and this was captured via a survey mid-way through the project (n=21: India n=7, SA n=6, UK n=8). The most common reason given was “*interest in COVID-19 and the impact of it*”, additional motivations included the opportunity to collaborate with other young adults and an interest in health research and art & storytelling. They all reported a positive experience of the project so far (43% excellent, 52% good, 5% fair) and felt the experience had met their expectations, with participants very satisfied. This finding was supported by the experiences of several young adults, captured through interviews or focus groups, where they described the open communication they had with the project team, enabling them to give honest feedback about the activities. Sometimes this would result in an adaptation or change by the project team, in other cases it would result in the young adult having a better understanding of the decision-making process.

The young adults taking part in the project were students at school, college or university, some worked, some experienced furlough for significant periods of time and others were unemployed. A summary is available in table 1. Based on the information from the mid-project survey the average age of the young adults was 22 (the youngest was aged 16 and oldest aged 27).

	Responses %
University student	32
Employed (including freelance or part time)	24
Not currently working	24
School student	10
College student	10

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*Table 1. Responses to the statement: “Please select the option that describes your current situation”*

Demographic information on young adults is available in the table below based on returns made by the young people in December 2020. Information included only if available for all three countries.

	<b>Number of participants</b>	<b>Gender</b>
India	15	73% female, 20% male, 7% non-binary
South Africa	8	37% female, 63% male
UK	13	85% female, 15% male

*Table 2. Demographic information for young adults as of December 2020.*

The total participants were made up of 15 in India, 10 in South Africa and 20 in the UK.

The project teams in the three countries built a level of trust and friendship within the different groups to enable the young adults to feel safe and able to share personal stories. There were 45 young adults working with the project with most engaging consistently throughout. The structure of the project meant that depending on personal pressures and commitments, the young adults could take a step back if necessary. However, the project team maintained as many avenues to engage as possible: *“each person will engage in the ways they want and the more ways we could provide for involvement, the more people stayed in touch as there was usually at least one thing that was of interest.”*

Trust was built within the different countries through diligent work by the project teams, all dealing with different circumstances. The Indian team did not know each other before this project, the South African team had previously worked together as part of the ‘Young & Curious’ and in the UK, a handful of the participants knew each other from already being part of Voice Up (the young people’s research advisory group led by Vocal) but in the main they were meeting for the first time to work together.

The project team took the time to get to know the young adults individually and then ground rules and guidance were used to manage group discussions. In interviews with the project teams in the different countries, seeking consent for decisions played an important role in this process. Effective engagement with the young adults was

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sustained by the project team throughout the course of the project and they were constantly reflecting and responding to the young adults: *“We were responding to, not just the pandemic, but the experiences of the young people and as we went along, thinking how we can work more effectively.”* This approach was appreciated by the young adults; being consulted and involved in the project *“felt good”*. There is the recognition amongst the project team of this model of relationship development and support being something they can build future practice on.

It is important to remember the project team’s efforts were also being undertaken when they themselves were experiencing the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on their personal and professional lives: some were home schooling children in addition to working; all team members were transitioning to working online and becoming familiar with using digital platforms such as Zoom to engage young adults and to ensure the sessions were inclusive for everyone.

### Successful international collaboration

*The project team have established a successful international collaboration and have laid a foundation for continued work together.*

Many of the members of the project team and project partners commented on the people involved in the project as being its *“biggest strength”* and the project team had a positive experience: *“we complemented, challenged and inspired each other in a way that was incredibly rewarding”*. The project team recognised the benefits of working collaboratively: *“There is shared power, trust and collective purpose which strengthens the project and its objectives far more than what it could be as a single entity working on it.”*

Throughout, the project team members have been there as facilitators and guides, supporting the young adults to take control of the direction of the project. Moving the power more fully into the hands of the young adults was something that developed over the course of the project through a collaborative effort. This effort used the range of experiences and skills within the project team, with one project team member describing the shift as *“refreshing and exciting”*.

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This collaborative effort to move power into the hands of the young adults also resulted in an increased level of trust between the young adults in the three countries. The international group did not come together as regularly as they did with their own country team. The public narrative approach had a powerful effect on the young adults. Introduced by Anita Shervington of BlastFest, the approach is an “exercise of leadership by motivating others to join”<sup>8</sup> formed of a story of self, us and now, summarised in figure 1.



Figure 1. Summarising public narrative: the story of self, us and now. Ganz, M.L. (2009) *What is Public Narrative: Self, Us & Now*

The young adults were given excellent structure and support in order to implement this approach. Around half of the young adults took part in individual meetings with Anita Shervington and Sara Kenney. They were given a ‘Story of Self’ primer document to help them reflect and prepare for the meeting. This was later followed up by a workshop of all interested young adults across the three countries. Chaired by Anita and Sara, the young adults shared their ‘Story of Self’ via pre-recorded films. These were very personal accounts of the effects of the pandemic on them. The openness of these accounts prompted others in the session to share, even though they had not planned to. As observed by one project team member, “*the shared experience of the pandemic brought them [the young adults] closer*”. The culmination of this process was for the young adults to discuss key points they wanted to share in a manifesto, ultimately describing the ‘Story of Us’ for PD-91, and this was collaboratively

<sup>8</sup> Ganz, M.L., 2009. *What Is Public Narrative: Self, Us & Now*.

developed over time to reflect their feelings and experiences. This was an extensive process across multiple workshops helping the young adults to identify their key concerns, prioritise them and then describe them in statements. This resulted in a [10-point manifesto](#) on the themes of mental health, equity & stigma and misinformation has been produced. This is a key legacy for the project and will be a lasting statement of the experiences of the young adults. The project team are continuing to promote and share this beyond the end of the funded period.

The project team met weekly to plan, review activities and share information. Some of the project team had worked together previously or were known to each other. For example, four of the project team members – Sara Kenney, Nabeel Petersen, Anita Shervington and Bella Starling – were Wellcome Trust Engagement Fellows but this was the first time everyone in the group had come together on one project but they knew they were all *“aligned in terms of values, in terms of ambition, in terms of ways of working”* and *“having this shared vision/ history made a difference to the success of the project”*.

## Giving young adults a purpose

*The project provided young adults with a chance to “do something” during the COVID-19 pandemic when there was disruption to their work, learning and home life. The young adults have been provided with mental health support and have felt less isolated being part of the project. Via the connections they have made with each other and the interactions in the international sessions, the young adults have an awareness of the impact of the pandemic on people around the world.*

A comment which arose frequently from the young adults was that the project offered the opportunity to “do something” during the pandemic and they looked forward to the meetings in order to “escape the uncertainty” of their situation. A common refrain was that they felt supported and reassured that “it wasn’t just me” who was struggling with their mental health. Being part of the project made the young adults feel less isolated.

As part of the team meetings in the individual countries and within the international sessions there was support for the young adults’ mental health. For example, the project provided access to counsellors and organised a mental health workshop for all to attend. Some young adults were already using a range of approaches to support their mental health and they shared these techniques with others. The project was seen as a safe space the support on offer was therefore particularly effective. The young adults were able “to help each other get through the pandemic and also make sense of what each of us are feeling through the pandemic”. This interaction and “feeling of solidarity” resonated with many of the young adults, allowing them to feel “better equipped to deal with the uncertainty and stress”. Seeing the positive impact of this on the young adults many of the project team intend to incorporate mental health support in future work with young adults.

One of the Indian young adults commented that they struggled to connect with some of the issues experienced in the UK during the pandemic because of some of the more fundamental differences between the countries. However, they felt there were still common experiences between the young adults that resonated, for example the negative impact on mental health. By meeting with the other young adults they gained a “global perspective of the pandemic”. There was a desire to talk to young adults from different countries, with one project team member commenting that they were regularly

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asked when the next international meet-up was and if they could talk to the others without “*supervision*” which they felt was in order to have the “*freedom of talking to one another without any boundaries and establish relationships that can continue beyond the project as they all have some sort of similar interests*”.

One observation made as part of the reflection by the project team was around the success of providing an international perspective: “*Being able to expose our young adults to the countless possibilities of what hard work and collaboration can be and look like, especially on an international level. This allows them to think differently than they did before and open up a myriad of possibilities for their futures, not only to impact themselves but also their families and communities.*”

The young adults in the project team also reported a positive impact on their own mental health through participation. The sessions encouraged one team member to remember to “*look after myself as well*” and realise that the themes in the webcomic, articles and artwork will “*stick through adulthood*” and in particular “*worrying about misinformation [...] and being separated from friends and family never goes away.*”

## Personal and professional development

*There have been a range of professional development opportunities for the young adults. Through meeting and talking to a range of researchers, the young adults have become better informed about COVID-19. They have had the opportunity to develop skills they will be able to use in their professional careers such as interviewing, writing, presenting and film-making along with organisational skills, teamwork and collaboration. They have also developed their professional networks and connections, not just in their home countries but internationally, and have had the opportunity to take part in a mentoring scheme.*

Over 50 researchers and stakeholders were involved in the project as part of workshops, mentoring and/or steering group (project activities are summarised in table 3). They came from a range of disciplines and organisations. A full list of those who have contributed can be found in appendices D and E.

To help the young adults prepare for each session with researchers and policy makers, the project teams ran an advance meeting to support the young adults to identify the key questions and topics they wanted to cover in the session. The workshops started with one expert, but expanded to two to four experts, which allowed for more interdisciplinary conversations.

Preparatory sessions for interviews and workshops	17
Interviews with researchers, scientists and policy-makers	11
International workshops with researcher panels (Misinformation, Vaccines x 2, Mental health).	5
International art & science workshop with researcher and artist (Planetary Art)	1
Story development sessions with webcomic creatives	8
Skills masterclasses (science journalism, podcasts, TV film production)	4
Personal and public narrative sessions (Story of Self, Story of Now, Creating the PD-91 Manifesto)	4
Story of Self individual reflection sessions	20
Mentoring relationships	22

Table 3. Summary of project activities

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Being able to interview leading scientists and those involved in policy-making had a profound impact on the young adults. In the UK and India the young adults were able to interview the Chief Scientific Advisors. On interviewing Professor Sir Patrick Vallance, the UK Government Chief Scientific Advisor, one of the young adults found it *“daunting”* but also reassuring as they had the opportunity to *“ask a really high authority about things that were worrying me”*. One of the researchers interviewed by the Indian project team was impressed by the project model and that they *“were building this community for themselves and getting external inputs into it”*.

The way in which the young adults were able to interact with the live project sessions was via Zoom and tools such as padlet, with communication between the project team and the young adults typically coming via e-mail with the young adults themselves using different platforms like WhatsApp or Slack. Through the project the young adults developed their technical skills and felt more comfortable using online spaces: *“I got to know different types of technology that I didn’t know before”* and this also extended to getting used to elements of online sessions such as break-out rooms.

As part of the preparation for interviews the young adults would develop a set of questions (supported by project team members) and in the session there would tend to be lead interviewers. Others then might pitch an article or artwork idea based on the discussion. Those contributing articles to the project had to pitch their ideas and if commissioned were able to work with an editor to develop their writing: *“[the experience] strengthened my writing and analytical skills greatly”*. All contributors received a fee and the process was seen by the young adults as *“professional”* with it being experience they could proudly include on their CV.

There were many ways in which the young adults felt as though their confidence developed. They felt more confident presenting virtually on platforms such as Zoom. As the project activities were conducted in English, for many of the participants in the project this meant they were presenting in their second language to a global audience. In online learning environments for school or university, the young adults felt more able to speak up and ask questions because they had such a positive experience in the PD-91 sessions. This confidence was recognised by those they presented to during the course of the project, with one of the health sciences researchers commenting how *“articulate”* they were in a *“stressful environment”* and that the young

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adults had shared how the project had provided a support to them directly and helped them to build their confidence. The interviews seemed to be a positive experience from all perspectives. One of the researchers interviewed observed that the project had given the young adults “agency” and “power” to act on their own behalf, something they perhaps weren’t previously able to exert due existing social structures. The experience was enjoyable for those who were interviewed, with one researcher observing that at the end they felt they “*did something good today*”.

There were also ways in which the young adults developed professional and personal contacts. One of the UK young adults was able to get advice on university choice from some of the others in their team. This was a result of having a range of ages and experiences within the ‘young adult’ designation (aged 16-25) taking part in the project.

Through the interview sessions and others focussed on topics such as vaccinations, the young adults developed their own knowledge of COVID-19 and related areas of health sciences. One of the young adults who is considering a medical degree felt they had a better sense of what their studies would involve after hearing from so many inter-disciplinary researchers.

Some of the young adults have used the project team members for references for jobs or volunteer roles, with one team member observing: “*I could write about the skills they've been showing, like leadership and public speaking.*” One of the young adults spoke about how “*having connections to this project is going to help me in future*”, particularly in being able to get advice on a science communication career from across the project team with another planning to reference the project in their university application.

One of the motivations for the public narrative approach using the ‘Story of Self, Us and Now’<sup>9</sup> was to support the young adults in developing their leadership skills and ensuring they were able to take that away from the experience of the project, with one of the team members commenting that they were conscious of how the young adults can “*leverage the whole thing towards improving their futures*”. One of the consequences of this was the establishment of a mentoring scheme in response to the needs of the young adults. One team member described the motivation around assisting “*them in their own individual desires for their professional trajectory*”. Around

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<sup>9</sup> Ganz, M.L., 2009. What Is Public Narrative: Self, Us & Now.

half of the young adults took up the opportunity to connect with a mentor. The commitment from mentors was two thirty-minute zoom calls and two or three follow up e-mails. This process was ongoing as of mid-May 2021. The mentors were drawn from a range of disciplines from NGOs and charities to TV production. A full list of those involved can be found in Appendix E. What is clear, is that the young adults have developed skills and connections which will be of use to them in many future circumstances, with one of the project team commenting: *“the young people feel empowered and more equipped to lead change in personal and collective ways”*.

When asked to choose words to the impact of the project on them, the young adults said they felt *“informed”*, *“hopeful”*, *“heard”*, *“supported”* and *“strengthened”*. Participating in the project has had both short and long-term effects on the young adults. They were provided with direct support during the peak of the pandemic and were able to communicate their experiences with others and the project also developed their personal capabilities, considering how best to help them achieve their goals.



**Fatema, UK young adult***Hope*

*The planet DIVOC-91 project was one of my only entertainments at some point. I had to self-isolate right before the virus was considered as a global pandemic and it was very lonely. I had to stay at home on my own while my friends were saying their last goodbyes to high school days together. However, I still had that hope for something fun to take place. This project allowed me to feel like I was accomplishing something and I really had fun helping with the first interviews.*

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## Project outcomes 2 and 3

Successful production of high-quality output that engages the target audience

Ensuring Planet DIVOC-91 reflects a broad diversity of experience

### Enabling young adults to be heard

*The webcomic, articles, films and artworks produced by the young adults have given them an opportunity to share their experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic.*

The experiences of the young adults have been used as a basis for the story themes in the nine chapters of the webcomic. The webcomic was co-created with the young adults and as one of the project team said, *“it’s their story”*. The way in which these experiences were incorporated into the storyline was through meetings and workshops with the production team, writers and artists. The creative teams for the comics had multiple meetings with groups of the young adults and the resulting discussion would then feed into the chapters. One particularly impactful workshop for the young adults was focussed on ‘The End’. This took place after three chapters had been published, with six remaining. The ideas and discussion between the young adults was recorded in detail by the project team and they were used to shape the remaining story and the ending.

There were benefits not only for the young adults in this process but also those they collaborated with. One of the creatives involved in the comic book production reflected on their experience: *“I don’t often work so collaboratively and I enjoyed it, particularly on a theme that was affecting so many people. It took you out of your bubble at a time I needed to connect.”*

In addition to the experiences feeding into the webcomic, the young adults produced their own articles, films and artwork. These were included as additional content alongside the webcomic chapters and are now all available on a dedicated [Planet DIVOC-91 website](https://www.planetdivoc91.com). There were a range of themes explored in this content with many based on the interviews with researchers and policy-makers. The young adults wrote about the issues in the context of their own experiences and perspectives and the following excerpts from the articles illustrate this:

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*“How much can you really learn about yourself if you’re only talking to others online?”<sup>10</sup>*

*“These past few months have certainly been difficult for everybody, and whether we acknowledge this or not, it has affected our mental health.”<sup>11</sup>*

*“We could do well to look across these apparent partitions in time and space and think about how the people before us would have responded to similar problems, or how those in other cultures do.”<sup>12</sup>*

A broad range of content has been produced, summarised in table 4.

	India	South Africa	UK	Total
<b>Art</b>	5	9	7	21
<b>Articles</b>	7	7	8	22
<b>Films</b>	8			8
<b>Podcast</b>	3			1
<b>Webcomic chapter author</b>		1		1
<b>Total</b>	23	17	15	55

*Table 4. Summary of contributions from young adults*

The project began in March 2020 as a small UK-only public engagement programme to produce a webcomic using the young adults’ experiences as a basis. This then expanded to include the international perspective with the Indian and South African teams joining in August 2020. As a result the initial comic chapters were produced with the UK young adults only but the content very quickly reflected the input from the other countries from chapter 3 onwards.

The key figure driving production of the webcomic was Sara Kenney of Wowbagger Productions. One of the creatives involved in the webcomic observed that *“She’s creative but can also bring together a massive team and do it all with massive calm.”* Providing some perspective on the scale of the achievement to produce the comic, they added *“in the comic world it’s very unusual you would do such a big project. In fact, I don’t think I’ve I know of another big project.”*

<sup>10</sup> Mannion, L. (2021) *A metaphor for social development exists through your screen* – but is a metaphor enough? Available: <https://planetdivoc91.com/article-by-lucas-mannion-art-by-hanna-gwynn/>.

<sup>11</sup> Jbeili, A. (2021) *What about mental health?* Available: <https://planetdivoc91.com/alma-jbeili/>.

<sup>12</sup> Porte, L. (2021) *A Conversation Through Space and Time* Available: <https://planetdivoc91.com/article-2-by-lucy-porte-art-by-hanna-gwynn/>.

Each of the nine chapters of the webcomic was delivered by a different creative team and in the words of the one of the project team members, *“we’ve got all these great artists and writers and contributors”*. Contributions came from the project team (Chapters 1 and 9 were written by Sara Kenney, Chapter 6 by Nabeel Petersen) and one of the South African young adults (Chapter 8 by Phelisa Sikwata) alongside other well-known writers and artists from the comics industry. One of the team members reflected on Phelisa’s contribution as a writer and that *“she’s been able to bring different viewpoints and artistic ideas”*, an example of how the project was able to ensure a diversity of experiences were included. It was down to Editor to Kirsten Murray to co-ordinate and bring everything together in terms of artwork and writing.

The story follows the experiences of Sanda (female, 23) and Champo (non-binary, 19), who are siblings from Birmingham, UK and are mixed race Burmese/Caribbean. They find themselves transported to an alien planet – Planet DIVOC-91 – along with other young people when Earth is threatened. On the planet the siblings have to work to discover the cause of a virus affecting alien children, along with challenging misinformation being spread about humans and confronting longstanding issues between them.

[Webtoons](#) was chosen as the platform via which the comic would be released. By publishing digitally this meant that the project team weren’t limited to a set number of pages for the comic, which would have been an issue if releasing via print. This also allowed for the inclusion of additional articles and artworks created by the young adults. One of the team members involved in the production felt that the platform is seen as being *“great for accessibility”* and *“it’s got lots and lots”* of readers. As of mid-May 2021 the webcomic had over 20,700 views, well exceeding the project’s minimum readership target of 10,000. The project team were very satisfied with this level of readership, given that in their experience independent comics *“might sell between one thousand and three thousand copies – to get twenty thousand views is a good number”*. The project are pursuing various options in relation to print versions of the comic, particularly as it may then reach *“a wider traditional comics audience”*. Proposals are currently with publishers and if it is not picked up there is a self-publishing route to ensure print versions are circulated. This is a particular target for the project team as two translations are in production, one in Xhosa (spoken by millions of people in South Africa) and the other in Hindi (spoken by hundreds of

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millions of people in India and is the third most spoken language). Towards the end of the project one of the young adults reflected on how they felt about seeing the published comic, articles and artwork on Webtoons: *"I'm so proud of it"*.

### Engaging the target audience

In order to establish whether the storylines in the webcomic were relatable for other young adults around the world a focus group was arranged. Young adults who did not take part in the project were spoken to in April 2021 when the final chapter had been completed.

Five young adults from India, South Africa and the UK took part in the focus group. Three were regular comic book readers with two new to the genre. They read all nine chapters of the webcomic. In terms of the anthology approach (each chapter was produced by a different creative team) this was well received: *"As far as the graphics and the pictures go, that was awesome. I loved the different styles of the different artists. It was amazing."*

They found the story itself enjoyable and engaging. They were all very *"curious"* about how the story would progress and the different chapters kept bringing up questions they wanted answered. They felt there was consistency in the characters and storyline between the different chapters and creative teams. The key story arcs they identified were the character development of Sanda (and the influence of Dr Mulukele and their subsequent death) and the increased closeness and improved relationship between Sanda and Champo. There were several aspects of the storyline of the webcomic that were relatable.

- One key theme was misinformation: *"Exactly what happened and has been happening throughout the pandemic, even now. And conditions are worsening here in India. So that was very good. I would say a very relatable point in the comic."*
- The sibling dynamic between Sanda and Champo: *"For me, it was relatable for the fact that at the end of any challenge, you become closer with your siblings."*
- The loss of time when treating the alien children: *"I really liked how we have to sacrifice time. I thought that really echoes lockdown and how you have to stay at home."*

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- Sanda's panic early on: *"I just want my bed and my WIFI again', that was very relatable. You immediately feel like you're her"*.
- The sacrifices people have made: *"it was relatable in terms of [...] the sacrifices made by the doctors and healthcare professionals, they have been portrayed very well in the comics."*

Two of the participants read the webcomic on Webtoons whilst the others read it as a PDF. For those who read it online they saw the additional articles, artwork and background content on how the webcomics were made. They felt it was good to *"understand what was going through their mind as they were creating this comic"*. Four of the five participants preferred having a physical version to read as opposed to the online version, *"there's something different about holding a book or comic to read"*. They could relate to the content and it was a high quality webcomic they enjoyed reading: *"overall I would say it was very insightful, with amazing artwork."* They were all keen to read more: *"Is there another book coming out?"*.

## Comic book reach

In order to promote the webcomic the project maintained a social media presence and used press releases at key points during the project, with the most recent relating to the release of the final chapter and the associated manifesto and website. Around one hundred news-type articles have been shared on PD-91. These are made up of a mixture of comic and entertainment industry articles<sup>13</sup> and those shared by project partners and stakeholders<sup>14</sup>. Specialist comics PR expert David Hyde of Superfan Promotions (based in Los Angeles) supported the team in achieving this reach. Members of the South African team appeared on a [morning breakfast show](#) with a viewership in the hundreds of thousands.

A summary of the engagement via social media is in table 5 below. Key partners and stakeholders (the Academy of Medical Sciences, DBT India Alliance and Interfer) also used their social media accounts to promote the project outputs and activities.

	Followers	Engagement	Impressions <sup>15</sup>	Reach <sup>16</sup>	Other
PD-91 <a href="#">Instagram</a>	301	1,882	104,541	82,737	3,049 video views
PD-91 <a href="#">Twitter</a>	395	6,713	528,815		339 mentions
PD-91 <a href="#">Facebook</a>	10,140	54,521	-	378,572	
AMS <a href="#">Twitter</a> (PD-91 related content only)	29,400	1,098	114,773	-	
DBT India Alliance <a href="#">Twitter</a> (PD-	12,300	2,634	102,389		

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/movies/movie-news/planet-divoc-91-turns-coronavirus-response-a-sci-fi-allegory-1303181/>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.manchester.ac.uk/discover/news/covid-19-inspired-webcomic-praised-by-top-scientists-and-policy-makers/>

<sup>15</sup> How many times a post has been seen.

<sup>16</sup> The number of unique people who have seen the content.

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<b>91 related content only)</b>					
<b>Interfer</b> <a href="#">Instagram</a> <b>(PD-91 related content only)</b>	867	-	7,313	6,375	2,047 video views

*Table 5. Summary of social media metrics for PD-91 accounts and content*

One of the key success measures in relation to the project promotion was for over 100,000 people to be reached via social media, media and associated coverage and this has been comfortably achieved.

- There have been over 65,000 engagements (e.g. liking, sharing or commenting on content) with a PD-91-related social media post.
- In terms of reach, via the different accounts, almost 470,000 people saw PD-91 content (sum of reach column in table 5, not captured by all social media platforms).
- The posts appeared over 850,000 times in peoples' feeds (sum of impressions column in table 5).

Social media content was linked to the release of comic chapters, articles, artwork and films by the young adults. Accounts also shared excerpts from meetings where the PD-91 young adults contributed or references to sessions they attended. Further to the social media content, there were two sets of films produced: two for Thought Bubble 2020, a comic art festival, and a series of films made by young adults in India and South Africa. All are available to view via [Wowbagger's YouTube channel](#) and have received over 3,000 views in total.

### Comic books and science engagement

As part of the evaluation, using a comic book as a basis for the project has been considered. They are well established as an effective science engagement approach and can be used to convey scientific information<sup>17</sup> or to influence behaviour in order

<sup>17</sup> Hosler, J., & Boomer, K. B. (2011). Are comic books an effective way to engage nonmajors in learning and appreciating science?. CBE life sciences education, 10(3), 309–317. <https://doi.org/10.1187/cbe.10-07-0090>



to have a positive impact on public health<sup>18</sup>. PD-91 instead aims to convey the experiences of young adults during the COVID-19 pandemic. The key themes underlying the storyline relate to mental health, misinformation and equity & stigma and it is recognised that comics can be a more effective means of conveying such sensitive topics. In particular, “character-driven narratives” can be more “accessible and engaging” than more traditional means of communication<sup>13</sup>. The feedback from the focus group was that using a comic book as a medium for communicating this story was felt to be appropriate. For example, there were places where the artwork was able to convey powerful sentiments: *“when the doctor dies I think that’s so well done. [...] without any words, it really captures the sort of feeling.”* One of the members of the creative teams observed that comics are an “*accessible art form*” and one of the project partners and funders was confident in the approach due to previous successful projects delivered by the project team<sup>19</sup> and that they felt it was an “*exciting and creative way*” to work with young adults.

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<sup>18</sup> Farinella, M., 2018. The potential of comics in science communication. *Journal of science communication*, 17(01), pp.Y01-01.

<sup>19</sup> Sara Kenney had previously led on the production of Surgeon X: <https://surgeonx.co.uk/>.

**Aishwarya, Indian young adult**

*Informed, supported, hopeful* - three words that encompass what I have been feeling through and through the project since its inception.

Informed because I have been attending so many informative sessions on various public health issues and socially relevant topics that has added to my knowledge and enlightened me. Its these discourses that have helped me in building an individual perspective and developed a sense of critical thinking and deep insight rather than believing the superficial. The interactions with renowned experts from all over the world, talking to other young people made me realise that conversations and constructive discussions cross-cut borders and leave you with a storehouse of newer learnings.

Supported because I was encouraged to share what I had in mind, all my ideas and learnings with a bunch of people who were great listeners. I found my voice amidst the chaos on most occasions and borrowing from other people's experiences I felt I was a part of an enabling workplace that respected everyone. It was a non-judgemental space to grow personally and professionally outside of the mundane routine that life throws at us most times.

Hopeful because in the end it's only hope that we carry forward and it's the emotion that still lingers even after our transient presence. I felt hope radiating through all that we as a team envisaged for building back better from the current pandemic times. Ideas of choice, challenge and change and developing a story of self, us and now ring in positivity and good fortune for all of us. The processes and possible solutions that come out of our collective projects could be prospective learnings which when implemented could inspire young adults and fuel in them an undampening spirit that they too can play their parts in being thoughtful architects of a world we aspire to build.

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## Project outcome 4

Successful research partnerships and influence

### Influence

*The young adults have been able to share their own experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic with a range of people and organisations. The voices of the young adults and their experiences of the pandemic have been heard by researchers and policy-makers.*

The project team have been keen to ensure the young adults can “*feed in their voices to people in policy and people making decisions on things that affect them*” and these are situations and people they would not normally have access to. Being listened to by different organisations and people has been an extremely positive experience for the young adults: “*It was amazing hearing about the research that is going on and having our voice heard*”.

This project has also aimed to fill a clear gap on what is reported in the media. One of the public health researchers who participated in meetings with the young adults noted “*I don't think we hear the public's voice nearly enough in [the] media or anywhere else.*” Another stakeholder commented on the implication of the lack of young adults being heard in that they “*aren't necessarily always included in decision making*”.

The project team have had an “*amazing*” response from those involved in research and policy. One team member was “*inspired*” by their willingness to engage and they observed that the researchers or policy-makers recognised the “*potential in this engagement*” with the young adults once they had had their first meeting with them. The types of organisations who have engaged with the young adults include the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health, global health organisations, research institutions and professional bodies. Through these types of partnerships the project team are able to ensure that “*marginalised voices have genuinely had the opportunity to share their views*”.

One partnership where momentum has built over the course of the project in terms of impacting research and policy is with the Academy of Medical Sciences (AMS). They began as funders but this involvement grew into a larger project partner role. The AMS

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has provided multiple opportunities for the young adults to contribute to sessions with their Fellows and they were very responsive across the project lifetime and worked to identify other opportunities and partnerships for the project. The young adults have been able to address their Fellows directly and this has been a new audience group for the AMS to work with and include in their discussions. In one particular meeting of a COVID-19 advisory group, one of the public health researchers found the presentations of three of the UK young adults “*compelling*” and noted that having people address the meetings in this way was “*unusual*” but it clearly reflected the ambition of the AMS to include young adults in the conversations about COVID-19. The young adults “*were very articulate about not only their experience, but their concern for their age group more broadly*”.

As a result of the AMS meeting the UK young adults were invited to address a public meeting of Independent SAGE (a group of scientists working independently of the UK government who provide advice and guidance relating to the COVID-19 pandemic) which was broadcast live on YouTube. This stream was watched by over 14,000 people and a clip of one of the young adults was shared widely on Twitter with over 36,000 views.



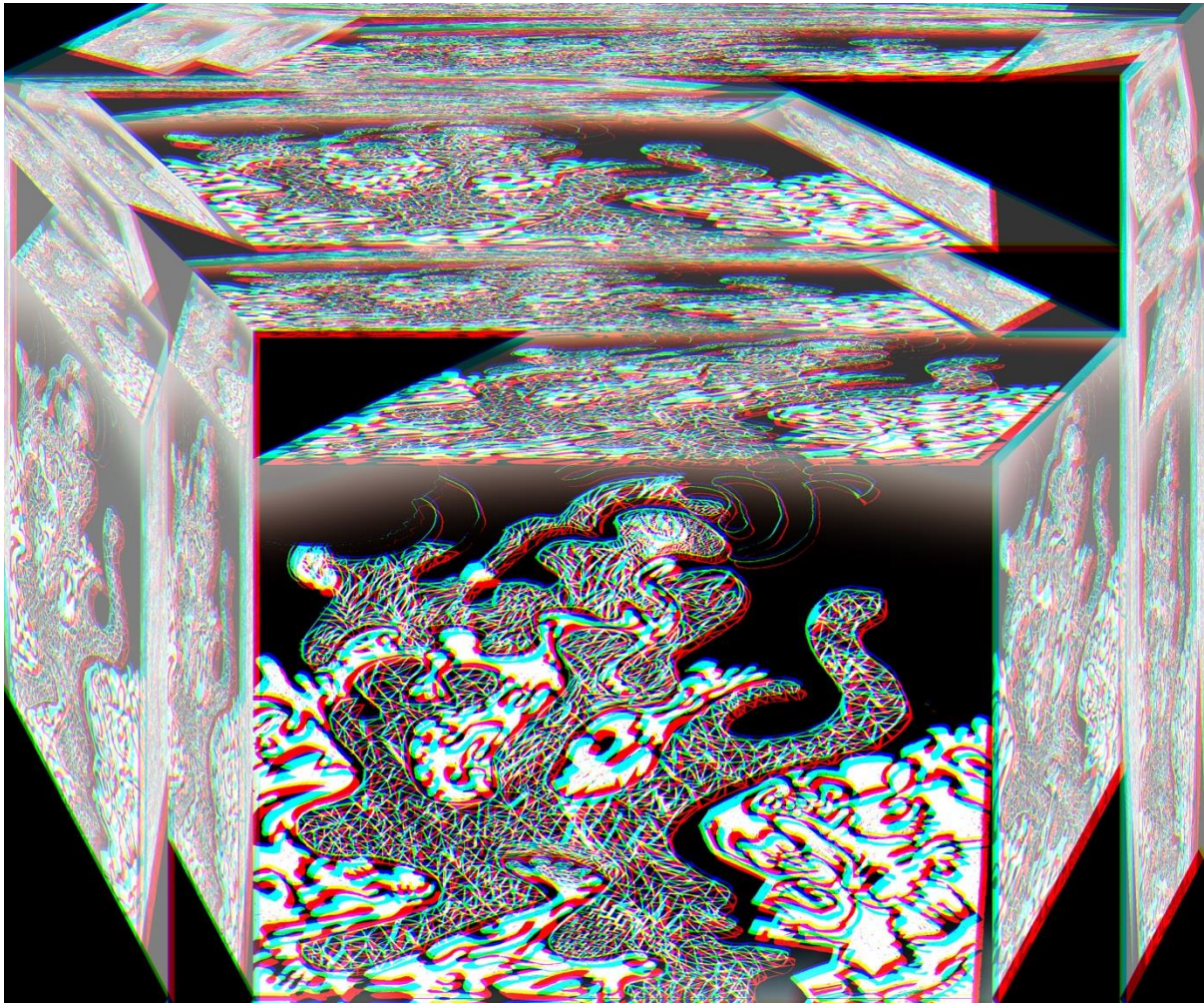
Figure 2. One of the UK young adults speaking at Independent SAGE

The response to the young adults' contributions to the Independent SAGE meeting was very positive. One of the project stakeholders observed that the researchers and policy-makers who met the young adults commented on *"how much they've learned from listening to what young people have to say"*. This was echoed in other interviews with researchers from India, South Africa and the UK. A key impact of talking to the young adults was summed up by one of them in that *"it's not just about what young people learn from you, it's mostly about what you can learn from them"*. At the time of writing, young adults are contributing to workshops for the AMS Winter Report.

This aspect of the project aims was seen as a daunting one by project team members but they have been successful in finding opportunities for the young adults and this influence will continue beyond the end of the funded period of the project as the experiences of the researchers and policy makers will stay with them.

### Setting the agenda

In addition to identifying opportunities for the young adults to engage in existing meetings and activities, the young adults were able to participate in and ultimately determine the agenda of the project's steering group. During the course of the project the steering group met monthly and the latter meetings were chaired by the young adults, with each country team taking a turn. By taking on this role, the young adults demonstrated how their confidence has built over the course of the project. This opportunity was an example of the project providing the young adults with access to organisations they wouldn't necessarily get to interact with. The young adults were able to share their experiences but also used this as an opportunity to challenge organisations around their decision-making. In one meeting chaired by the South African team, the young adults prompted the organisations present to reflect on how to involve young people directly in decision-making around research and policy instead of just *"extracting"* information and feedback from them. The organisations represented at the steering group included the AMS, NIHR, Wellcome and WHO (a full list of those invited is available in Appendix E).

**Elethu, South African young adult**

Untitled (Mixed media: pen on paper and graphic manipulation)

*Informed, heard*

My time with planet DIVOC-91 has been a great opportunity to connect with people who occupy systems that mostly influence systematic changes that affect the lives of many people in great ways. I come from a community where many offspring of deliberate historical and existing systematic deprivations exist. I mean poverty, crime lack of direction and purpose alongside many social ills. I say this in the light that research can influence policy that in turn trickles down to me as a citizen and many other people.

The space has exposed me to the platforms where my voice can carry weight in helping to influence my life and that of society in a manner that I can relate to and celebrate.

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I know I am being heard in this space and I am growing better to understand the strides of researchers and its institutions of affiliation. I know that these are people who wish to have the best practice in their fields hence the existence of the Planet DIVOC-91 Initiative.

(This is an excerpt – please see Appendix A for full piece).

## Project outcome 5

### Learning from Planet DIVOC-91

#### Challenges

Whilst the project has been successful, that's not to say the work undertaken by the project team was not without its challenges. A variety of issues are discussed here.

- In terms of working online, this was a new forum for the project team and the young adults to get used to engaging in. There were fundamental issues relating to access to suitable devices and internet connections, particularly in South Africa in areas of deprivation. In order to overcome this and ensure more equitable access to sessions and wider content relating to PD-91, the project was able to invest in phones for some young adults. Some of the project team had concerns about how effective the workshops and discussions would be in an online environment. For example, there were concerns that conversations would be restricted due to the online space and size of the group. However, one team member reflected that well-established approaches to engagement were still successful, for example *“creating a safe space for the group of young adults right at the start, listening and being sensitive to their challenges and needs and providing them support as and when required”*. Another team member felt that they had definitely come to see the benefits of this approach: *“the virtual mode is a very valuable approach, particularly to attract geographical and cultural diversity to one’s project”*.
- Another challenge was bringing the young adults together in their own online space to communicate without the facilitators. It was difficult for the project team to identify a platform that would work, for example a Facebook group was started but not used much by the young adults directly. Within the country teams they were active users of platforms like WhatsApp and Slack. One team member observed that perhaps the uptake of the international online space wasn't successful because they saw it as a *“top-down”* response rather than being owned by them.
- There have been successes in terms of supporting the young adults in sharing their experiences with stakeholders and the public more widely but the project

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team have also experienced frustrations. They feel that some organisations are not engaging in a forum that is suitable for young adults who have additional support needs or they do not perhaps consider the sensitive nature of the discussions and the level of stress experienced by the young adults taking part. The project team are conscious of ensuring that all young adults have the opportunity to share their experiences but there remain barriers so that access is not equitable. There were also frustrations around the inflexibility of some organisations when it came to involving the young adults as they were insistent on operating within existing structures or were reluctant to engage because they didn't have formal structures in place. Whilst there has been engagement with international researchers, there has been a less-balanced spread across the countries in terms of policy influence. However, one of the Indian project team members commented on the difficulty of influencing policy in India and they viewed the capacity building and the development of leadership skills in the young adults as something that would have a future impact on this aspect.

- One significant aspect that impacted on the project teams was finance and the associated administration. To begin with there was a small budget with project partners working pro-bono until further funding could be established. There were various sources of funding for the project and the finances and payments were managed by Vocal through the University of Manchester. Unfortunately, due to university processes and the effects of COVID-19 on the university administration there were delays to payment which were outside of Vocal's control. The delayed payments had various effects on the project team, including increased levels of stress for the partner organisations who were paying costs out of their own funds (such as stipends and fees to the young adults) whilst waiting for payments to come through. This is a situation many of the collaborators have experienced previously when working with universities. However, due to the multi-partner nature of the project it would be beneficial for all involved if funders could be more flexible when it comes to the payment terms of large grants, e.g. allowing multiple organisations to receive payment from a large grant rather than relying on one which then becomes a bottleneck.
- Engagement projects can achieve significant outcomes for the people they work with but it does require significant investment of time to enable this. This

is particularly true for a project like PD-91 as the relationship development with the young adults was at the core of its success and requires a long-term investment of time. Project team members spent more time than expected on relationship development with the young adults. Whilst the young adults were able to steer the direction of the project, they needed advice and guidance and the project team were working to balance their interests and their expectations around what was achievable. However, as one project partner observed, the project team had a “*can do*” attitude and collaborated to ensure the interests of the young adults were well-served. When the project team undertook a reflection exercise towards the end of the project, many of the comments were around resourcing. One team member summarised the position: “*The project itself needs a greater budget with greater resources between and across all regions*” with several others commenting on managing expectations, for example “*balancing the potential for the project and what is realistic to achieve with the resource allocated*”. Whilst the project has been able to achieve a lot on what it has received, a significant proportion of time has been given in-kind. An estimate made by the project team is that if all pro-bono and in-kind contributions were taken into account the project budget would need to increase by around 40%.

### Reflecting on the project model

As part of the reflection undertaken by the project team towards the end of the project period they considered what could have been done differently. Overall, there were no major changes to the project model, which was felt to many participants and stakeholders to be “*innovative*”. Proposed changes focus on increasing the effectiveness of the approach. Possible changes included spending more time working directly with the young adults, supporting the development of relationships between the young adults in different countries at an earlier stage, more involvement of policy professionals and researchers on the theme of how to effectively engaging young people in their fields and shifting the power to the young adults earlier in the project lifecycle.

One of the project team members sums up their experience: “*I am really proud of what we achieved. [...] we have created something that has made a real difference in the*

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*lives [of] some of the young people we have worked with. To me that matters the most.”*

Relationships have been established with the young adults and between the project team members and there is motivation to “*keep that dynamic going*”. The project teams have learned from each other’s approaches as each country team has operated slightly differently. One option is to continue the collaboration with the young adults in paid roles as co-facilitators and some project team members are exploring the possibility of setting up a new charitable organisation to support their work with young adults based on their experiences of PD-91.

Across the project team they would like to see a longer-term investment in community and grassroots organisations who facilitate these kinds of collaborative projects, rather than necessarily funding on a project-by-project basis. The project team are looking at ways to embed the successes from PD-91 in the way they work more generally but there is a desire to continue working with these same young adults in an ongoing way, “*a long-term relationship is more authentic and rewarding for everyone involved*”. At the moment that only seems to be possible through project-based grants.

The longer-term benefits of the project have been emerging. A focus for the project team and the young adults is to share what has been achieved as part of Planet DIVOC-91. A key legacy will be the outputs created by the project (webcomic, articles, artwork, films and manifesto) and being able to showcase them on a dedicated [website](#). Translations of the comics and printed versions will be released, enabling the comic to reach an even wider audience than it has already achieved.

This has begun with the young adults creating and sharing their 10-point manifesto dealing with themes of mental health, equity & stigma and misinformation. The project team are hoping to continue to engage researchers and policy-makers with this output and it was published in mid-May at a similar time to this evaluation report, therefore there will be longer term sharing of experiences that it is not possible to capture here.

In addition to researchers and policy-makers, the project team are keen to share the project model with other practitioners and funders. It is anticipated that this will be through a peer-reviewed paper. The project team are keen to share their experience that “*Participatory arts models are very powerful and using storytelling to create change in terms of science and health is a strong way forward.*”

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### Hester, South African young adult

*Heard, inspired, informed.*

Being a young adult raised in a community where culture and society's words are more valuable than yours as an individual can be challenging.

Then coming into this space where you are informed as a young adult your voice can be heard it is inspiring. The inspiring story of each young adult has been very encouraging.

I have learned a lot from being a part of the project and have gained a lot of confidence and how to voice out my opinion and knowing that it matters but to also consider others while voicing out my opinions.

## Conclusion

This “*innovative*”, “*creative*” and “*exciting*” project has exceeded expectations of the project team and by listening and responding to the young adults, the project team has met their needs. They have felt “*informed*”, “*heard*” and “*supported*”. The young adults have been provided with opportunities to share their experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic with researchers and policy-makers. They have developed their knowledge, skills and professional networks, with a particular focus on leadership skills.

In terms of the key success measures relating to each of the project outcomes, the project has met those for project outcomes 1 to 4, with the work in relation to outcome 5 carrying on beyond the period covered by the evaluation report but there is every expectation this will also be successfully achieved.

The Planet DIVOC-91 project ran from March 2020 to May 2021 with 45 young adults engaged in this period. The young adults have produced over 50 articles, films and artworks which have been published on Webtoons and a dedicated PD-91 website. As of the end of May 2021, there have been over 20,900 views of the webcomic on Webtoons. This exceeds the minimum target the project set of 10,000. Young adults who did not participate in the project shared their impressions of the webcomic via a focus group. The participants were engaged by the content due to the “*insightful*” storylines and “*amazing artwork*”. The themes (misinformation, equity & stigma, mental health) were relatable to young adults, regardless of where they were from.

The webcomic and the project were promoted using a range of social media channels with hundreds of thousands of people being reached with the PD-91 content. Around 100 news articles from the comics and entertainment industry have been written on the project, reaching a broad audience and diverse readership.

The project was internationally-minded and diverse in all aspects: the project team, the young adults, the researchers and policy-makers involved. The topics of the articles and the storylines of the comic reflected the different experiences of the young adults. For example, one chapter of the webcomic was authored by one of the South African young adults who was able to bring “*different viewpoints and artistic ideas*”.

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This inter-disciplinary project worked with around 50 researchers who participated in interviews and workshops and provided ongoing advice and guidance to the young adults. Through partnerships with organisations such as the Academy of Medical Sciences, the young adults were able to reach a large policy and research audience and with contributions to groups like Independent SAGE they also reached a public audience.

The relationships are ongoing between the project team, the young adults and the project partners and stakeholders. Through their work with Planet DIVOC-91, stakeholders have been able to reach a new audience. Researchers and policy makers have been affected by their personal stories and will take this knowledge of young adults' experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic forward into their own work with influence continuing beyond the end of the funded period.

The project team have successfully delivered a multi-layered and multi-dimensional project for young adults during a global pandemic. The experience has had a profound impact on the young adults and they will take this experience forward into their future lives and careers.

## Appendix A: Photo-elicitation responses

### Aishwarya, Indian young adult

*Informed, supported, hopeful.*

Three words that encompass what I have been feeling through and through the project since its inception.

Informed because I have been attending so many informative sessions on various public health issues and socially relevant topics that has added to my knowledge and enlightened me. Its these discourses that have helped me in building an individual perspective and developed a sense of critical thinking and deep insight rather than believing the superficial. The interactions with renowned experts from all over the world, talking to other young people made me realise that conversations and constructive discussions cross-cut borders and leave you with a storehouse of newer learnings.

Supported because I was encouraged to share what I had in mind, all my ideas and learnings with a bunch of people who were great listeners. I found my voice amidst the chaos on most occasions and borrowing from other people's experiences I felt I was a part of an enabling workplace that respected everyone. It was a non-judgemental space to grow personally and professionally outside of the mundane routine that life throws at us most times.

Hopeful because in the end its only hope that we carry forward and it's the emotion that still lingers even after our transient presence. I felt hope radiating through all that we as a team envisaged for building back better from the current pandemic times. Ideas of choice, challenge and change and developing a story of self, us and now ring in positivity and good fortune for all of us. The processes and possible solutions that come out of our collective projects could be prospective learnings which when implemented could inspire young adults and fuel in them an undampening spirit that they too can play their parts in being thoughtful architects of a world we aspire to build.

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## Arushi, Indian young adult

If I had to point out everything, words will certainly fall short of everything this project has done for me. This would not stop me, though, from reminding us of how special each of us has now become, to all of us.

I'm so GRATEFUL that the mentors and everyone in the team has always taken the time to help each other. It's really made our team come together. I have formed some wonderful friendships in the process, too.

So the words I chose to portray my experience, I would like to explain or broaden them with a small collage of a few of the art works I did, especially during the pandemic.



1. Strong and strengthened: “I feel like a tiger right now. There’s nothing impossible if you get up and work for it.” – Michael Flatley

So as they say, start thinking you are a tiger and you’ll feel pumped. You’ll start thinking there’s nothing impossible if you get up and work for it. This is definitely something I have felt after most of our meet-ups and discussions

2. Beautiful and Powerful: “Even when it’s not pretty or perfect. Even when it’s more real that you want it to be. Your story is what you have, what you will always have. It is something to own.” - Michelle Obama

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A thought I closely relate to as a woman and this journey of PD-91 has been special also a bit extra, because I was really happy to be led by three very beautiful and powerful women mentors in turn making all of us feel the same too.

3. Positive and calm: Lastly but not the least, amid all the uncertainty and chaos around us, I definitely could brew some Positivi-TEA and be calm for my own mental peace through this project.

Eman, Indian young adult

Hopeful, heard, informed



**Aviwe, South African young adult**

*Supported, motivated, comfortable*



## Hester, South African young adult

*Heard, inspired, informed.*

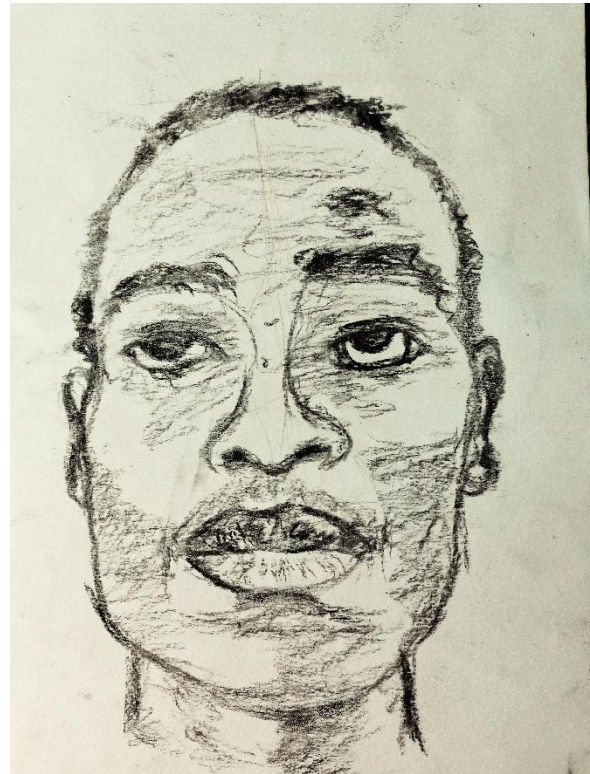
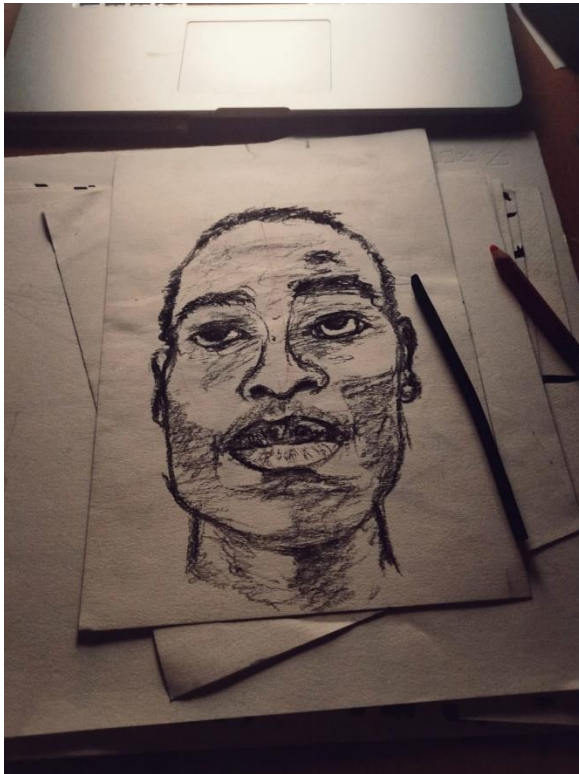
Being a young adult raised in a community where culture and society's words are more valuable than yours as an individual can be challenging.

Then coming into this space where you are informed as a young adult your voice can be heard it is inspiring. The inspiring story of each young adult has been very encouraging.

I have learned a lot from being a part of the project and have gained a lot of confidence and how to voice out my opinion and knowing that it matters but to also consider others while voicing out my opinions.

**Khangelani, South African young adult**

*Calm, reassured and curious*



**Mfuneko, South African young adult**

*Strengthened, encouraged, supported.*

My name is Mfuneko known as Miyagi. I am an artist (performing art), I love spending time with children, I am passionate about cooking. Singing has been always my dream since I was born, but it is not easy to get where you want to be especially if you do not have the right people around you, people who doesn't really believe in what you can do.

When I met up with young and curious group, I told myself that I will never sing in front of many people, not because I was afraid but because I did not have the courage.

Young and curious strengthened me in everything. When I came there, I was totally different with what I am today. As I have stated already, with the way I was I have learned to trust myself in everything that I do, as I am performing artist, I do feel like I can perform in stage full of eyes, and I'm actually confident enough.

I remember when I started, I had no hope, I was not sure if I will ever perform, but young and curious gave me all of that, I am now a proud person who learned and experienced.

I am grateful that I am a different person and I'm always willing to perform whenever I have to perform, and I believe and know the purpose of art in me.

I am not just a singer, and I just do not write music, I'm telling a story, my story.

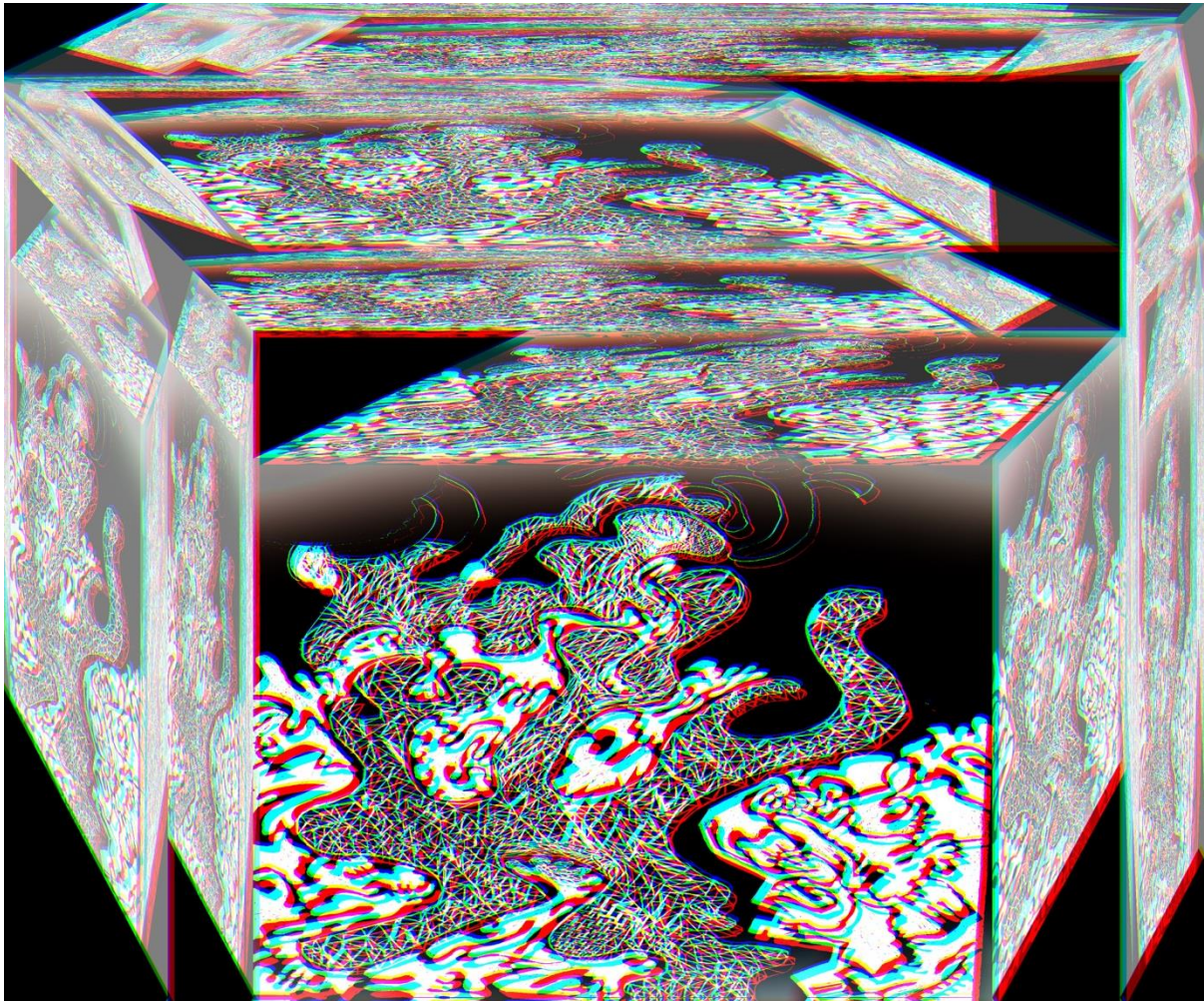
I felt supported from the very same day, I mean having people listening and respecting your story means a lot and it means you can still make it in life, and you are never too late.

Young and curious showed me love, whenever I went there, they were always willing to help me and willing to find solutions for all my problems.

As an artist, they introduced me to painting, I hated painting, but wow they made it the love of my life. We even had a chance to take part in Planet DIVOC and that made me someone who learned lots of things.

I am grateful and looking forward to being with them always.

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**Elethu, South African young adult***Informed, heard*

Untitled (Mixed media: pen on paper and graphic manipulation)

The coming about of this picture was a phase in my life where I was a new born in deliberate artistic exploration. Many months later while experimenting with other mediums, I went to my Old files and found the original piece. With new experience in graphic design, the doodle found a new form. Its essence is that of pen on paper just graphically manipulated. I won't speak now on what the picture might mean, because I don't really know but I will emphasize its relevance to this exercise which is transformation and change.

By transformation and change I reference to my early days as an active citizen for personal and community development. The nature of spaces and conversations I

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engaged to better understand and navigate personal and community life has changed significantly. PD-91 is one of those platforms for approach on pleasantness inside, pleasantness outside. For me and community.

My life as it is has been influenced by many factors, many outside my control. At this stage in my life, I feel a great need to feel stability and enjoy pleasantness from inside and in the spaces that I occupy. With DIVOC I believe I am in that space I can call home and help shape as well.

My time with planet DIVOC-91 has been a great opportunity to connect with people who occupy systems that mostly influence systematic changes that affect the lives of many people in great ways. I come from a community where many offspring of deliberate historical and existing systematic deprivations exist. I mean poverty, crime lack of direction and purpose alongside many social ills. I say this in the light that research can influence policy that in turn trickles down to me as a citizen and many other people.

The space has exposed me to the platforms where my voice can carry weight in helping to influence my life and that of society in a manner that I can relate to and celebrate.

I know I am being heard in this space and I am growing better to understand the strides of researchers and its institutions of affiliation. I know that these are people who wish to have the best practice in their fields hence the existence of the Planet DIVOC-91 Initiative.



## Phelisa, South African young adult

### *Reassured*

This picture is taken in a yard that holds many of my firsts, a house I've seen fatten itself for three families, made most of my childhood days feel like answered prayers. This yard had trees that could hold the stories I had to tell, had loud radios that woven song lyrics with my every memory. With time the trees fell, silence grew and the grey walls now bleed longing.

The child in the photograph is my reason to most things. Having being part of Young and Curious since late 2019, I've learnt different ways to gather information, utilize it in my creative writing and in little ways share it where I come from. As much as I understand that my change agency is spiritually meant for my family. Being part of Planet DIVOC-91, has motivated me to create positive change in the smallest ways on larger platforms.

It is with such innovative platforms that I am reassured that in investing on how we language and understand things that have been cradled with stigmas, that generations won't be stagnant trying to unlearn what was done by generations before. Planet DIVOC-91 is, in most ways an anchor of sustainable change and if not for us, the now generation- I believe this documenting is creating a brighter future in the world of research and removes class basis of availability of critically acclaimed information.



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**Fatema, UK young adult***Hope*

The planet DIVOC-91 project was one of my only entertainments at some point. I had to self-isolate right before the virus was considered as a global pandemic and it was very lonely. I had to stay at home on my own while my friends were saying their last goodbyes to high school days together. However, I still had that hope for something fun to take place. This project allowed me to feel like I was accomplishing something and I really had fun helping with the first interviews.

## Appendix B: List of young adults involved in Planet DIVOC-91

Sophie Ainsworth (UK)  
Nikita America (South Africa)  
Arushi Batra (India)  
Erin Burnett (UK)  
Noah Carey (UK)  
Annabel Carr (UK)  
Beth Dillon (UK)  
Rowan Frewin (UK)  
Conor Giblin (UK)  
Hanna Gwynn (UK)  
Shanjida Hossain (UK)  
Katie Heyes (UK)  
Alma Jbeili (UK)  
Sonal Katyal (India)  
Fatema Kharbotli (UK)  
Eman Khan (India)  
Hood Kazibwe (UK)  
Divij Kinger (India)  
Lyle Lawrence (South Africa)  
Nathaniel Lawford (UK)  
Whitney Love (UK)  
Vishwadeep Mane (India)  
Lucas Mannion (UK)  
Ishita Mehra (India)  
Khangelani Mgoqi (South Africa)  
Mfuneko "Miyagi" Mtshofeni (South Africa)  
Sreshtha Mondal (India)  
Amber Naeem (UK)  
Awiwe Gift Ndalana (South Africa)  
Elethu Nkala (South Africa)  
Hester Nontobeko (South Africa)  
Raghav Pandey (India)  
Lucy Porte (UK)  
Aishwarya Rohatgi (India)  
Bo Rutter (UK)  
Rashmi Sheroan (India)  
Matteyah Shervington (UK)  
Phelisa Sikwata (South Africa)  
Mohd Sobaan (India)  
Jenny Speakman (UK)  
Isha Tanwar (India)  
Sevitha V (India)  
MeghaSyam Veluvali (India)  
Angel Wang (UK)  
Keenan Sauls (South Africa)  
Awiwe Macothoza (South Africa)

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## Appendix C: Production team

Yukti Arora, Communications Officer, India Alliance

Paolo Arru, Social Media Lead, Vocal (Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust)

Charlotte Bailey, Sensitivity Consultant, Freelance

Antonio Benitez, Social Media Lead, Vocal (Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust)

Claire Bithell, Head of Communications, AMS

Naomi Clarke, Senior Communications Officer, AMS

Kat Cresswell, Project Manager, Vocal (Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust)

Kauthar Dramat, Film Editor, Freelance

James Devlin, Design/ Production, Freelance

VV Glass, Sensitivity Consultant, Freelance

Meghna Gupta, Exec Producer for India Films, Freelance

Georgia Harrison, Graphic Designer, Freelance

Nick Hillier, Director of Communications, AMS

David Hyde, PR, Superfan Promotions

Sarah Iqbal, India Project Lead, India Alliance/ Freelance

Banya Kar, PR and Communications Lead, India Alliance

Annie Keane, Public Programmes Manager, Vocal (Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust)

Sara Kenney, Project Co-Lead, Wowbagger Productions

Rudy Loewe, Sensitivity Consultant, Freelance

Joe Muggs, Article mentor/ Music Consultant, Freelance

Kirsten Murray, Editor/ Project Manager, Freelance

Hina Lateef Nizami, Communications Consultant, India Alliance

Adilah Petersen, South Africa Project Coordinator, Interfer

Nabeel Petersen, South Africa Producer, Interfer

Thy Quach, Trailer Editor, Freelance

Gaby Richter, Communications Officer, AMS

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Holly Rogers, Acting Head of Communications, AMS

Kiki Shervington-White, Film Editor, Freelance

Anita Shervington, Lead - Power, Influence & Change, BlastFest Ltd

Bella Starling, Project Co-Lead, Vocal (Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust)

Laura Thomas, Evaluation, Ondata Research

## Appendix D: Expert Interviewees/ Consultants

Dr Giridhar R Babu, Epidemiologist, Public Health Foundation of India

Dr Anant Bhan, Medical Doctor and Global Health Researcher

Dr Sylvie Briand, Director of Global Infectious Hazards Preparedness Department, WHO Health Emergencies Programme

Rameez Cassiem, Radio Presenter and Motivational Speaker, Radio 786 (Cape Town)

Professor Dawn Edge, Medical Sociologist, University of Manchester

Professor Alan Fitzsimmons, Astrophysicist, Queens University, Belfast

Professor Ian Goodyer FMedSci, Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist

Liesl Hermanus, Psychologist, Hanover Park Maternity Ward

Alok Jha, Journalist and Science Correspondent, *The Economist*

Professor Gagandeep Kang, Public Health Expert & Vaccinologist, Christian Medical College, Vellore, India

Dr Tasha Koch, Biomedical Research and a Founding Managing Director of Eh!woza, University of Cape Town

Professor Sir Robert Lechler FMedSci, Former President of the Academy of Medical Sciences

Professor Nathan Mayne, Astrophysics and Planetary Climates, University of Exeter

Dr Winston Morgan, Toxicologist, University of East London

Cheleka Mpande, Biomedical Scientist and Immunologist, SATVI - University of Cape Town

Dr Harriet Palfreyman, Medical Historian, University of Manchester

Dr Soumitra Pathare, Mental Health Expert, CMHLP - Centre for Mental Health Law & Policy, Pune, India

Dr Lisa Pierre, Senior Clinical Pharmacologist and Development Team Leader, Johnson & Johnson's Lung Cancer Initiative

Ms Subhra Priyadarsini, Science Journalist & Chief Editor, Nature India, Nature Springer Group, New Delhi, India

Professor Vijay Raghavan, Principal Scientific Adviser to the Government of India, Government of India

Dr Lindsey Reynolds, Anthropologist and Public Health Specialist, Stellenbosch University

Sharad Sharma, Founder, World Comics Network

Dr Zania Stamataki, Viral Immunologist, University of Birmingham

Dr Emma Sutton, Historian of Emotions, Queen Mary University

Dr Michele Tameris, Senior Clinician, Researcher and Vaccinologist, SATVI - University of Cape Town

Ms Amrita Tripathi, Freelance journalist, author & mental health advocate, The Health Collective

Professor Sir Patrick Vallance FMedSci , Chief Scientific Advisor, UK Government

Professor Arpana Verma, Head of Division of Population Health; Health Services Research and Primary Care; WHO Expert; Director of Manchester Urban Collaboration on Health

Dr Martyn Winn, Computational Biology Group, Rutherford Appleton

Professor Maria Zambon FMedSci , Director of Virology, Public Health England

Dr John Parker, Psychiatrist at Western Cape Government and Lecturer at University of Cape Town

## Appendix E: Meeting, workshop and mentoring contributors

The following people contributed to session discussions and/or as mentors working one to one with the young people:

- Dr Saleyha Ahsan, Emergency Medicine Doctor & Broadcaster
- Olly Colegrave, Strategist, VCCP
- Duncan Copp, TV Exec/ Series Producer
- James Cox, Head of Education, Policy and Advocacy, Save the Children
- Jeremy Deller, Artist
- Kieron Gillen, Comic book writer
- Stefan Lacandler, Photographer
- Michelle Martin, Executive Producer, Audible
- Fiona Scott, Executive Producer, Off the Fence
- Dana Stevens, Head of Planning, VCCP
- Kate Vines, TV Development Producer

The steering group was an opportunity for young adults to talk directly to the science research and policy community. The young adults were joined by the project teams from all three countries, representatives of stakeholders such as the Academy of Medical Sciences along with the following invitees:

- Daneille Barnetche, Product Manager, Wellcome Trust
- Jennifer Cook, Research Manager, NIHR
- Nan Davies, Education and Learning Lead, Wellcome Trust
- Mark Ellis, Policy Advisor, Education and Skills, Wellcome Trust
- Sarah Hess, Covid-19 Engagement & Partnerships, WHO
- Divya Shah, Science Portfolio Manager, Wellcome Trust
- Katherine Sheridan, Technical Officer, WHO
- Doreen Tembo, Senior Research Manager, NIHR

To find out more about the project, visit [www.planetdivoc91.com](http://www.planetdivoc91.com)



## Appendix F: Artists, writers and musicians

Comic Creative Teams:

<p>Chapter 1: Transparency is for Windows          Art: Charlie Adlard          Words: Sara Kenney          Colours: James Devlin          Lettering: Hassan Otsmane-Elhaou          Cover: Elsa Charretier</p>	<p>Chapter 6: Same but Different          Art: Anand RK          Words: Nabeel Petersen          Colours: James Devlin          Lettering: Hassan Otsmane-Elhaou          Cover: FØK</p>
<p>Chapter 2: The Real Question          Art: Nick Brokenshire          Words: Charlotte Bailey          Colours: James Devlin          Lettering: Hassan Otsmane-Elhaou          Cover: Matt Kindt</p>	<p>Chapter 7: Crisis of Existential Selves          Art: Zara Slattery          Words: Bobby Joseph          Colours: James Devlin          Lettering: Hassan Otsmane-Elhaou          Cover: David Rubin</p>
<p>Chapter 3: Eedyats in Every Galaxy          Art &amp; Words: Hannah Berry          Colours: James Devlin          Lettering: Hassan Otsmane-Elhaou          Cover: VV Glass</p>	<p>Chapter 8: Remembering to Return          Art: Rudy Loewe          Words: Phelisa Sikwata          Lettering: Hassan Otsmane-Elhaou          Cover: Warwick Johnson-Cadwell</p>
<p>Chapter 4: It's Just a Phase          Art &amp; Words: Rachael Smith          Colours: James Devlin          Lettering: Hassan Otsmane-Elhaou          Cover: Leslie Hung</p>	<p>Chapter 9: The Place Where We Stop          the Story...          Art: James Devlin          Words: Sara Kenney          Lettering: Hassan Otsmane-Elhaou          Cover: Alitha Martinez</p>
<p>Chapter 5: Maturing          Art &amp; Words: Karrie Fransman          Lettering: Hassan Otsmane-Elhaou          Cover: Marco Finnegan</p>	

Musicians:

- Angel-Ho
- Grandmixxer
- Juice Aleem
- Joe Muggs
- LCY
- NV Funk
- Toya Delazy
- Yewande
- Arjun Vagale

Mixes found here: <https://www.mixcloud.com/PlanetDivoc91/>

## Appendix G: Project outcomes and success measures

Outcomes	Success indicators, KPIs & evidence
Effectively engaging YA in the development and delivery of <i>PlanetDivoc91</i> .	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 40+ YA co-create &amp; remain engaged for 6 months+</li> <li>2. 300+ YA involved in informing activities</li> <li>3. &gt; 30 content pieces produced by YA</li> <li>4. Evidence from process evaluation related to YA experiences of <i>PlanetDivoc91</i></li> </ol>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Over 45 young adults have engaged across the lifetime of the project from India, South Africa and the UK.</li> <li>• The opinions of a range of young adults from the different countries were involved as part of social listening exercises.</li> <li>• Over 50 content pieces have been produced by the young adults, ranging from articles and artworks to films and podcasts.</li> <li>• Evidence for this outcome more generally is summarised in the project outcome section on page 18 where the themes arising from the analysis were: 'relationship-building and trust'. 'successful international collaboration', 'giving young adults a purpose' and 'personal and professional development'.</li> </ul>
Successful production of high quality engagement output that engages target audience	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. 10,000-100,000+ views via Webtoons</li> <li>6. 100,000+ people reached via social media, media &amp; associated coverage</li> <li>7. Feedback and comment on the comic (Audience engagement evaluation)</li> </ol>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By the end of May 2021, the English version of the webcomic had received almost 21,000 views on webtoons.</li> <li>• As described on page 34 the social media activity has reached well in excess of 100,000 people:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ There have been over 65,000 engagements (e.g. liking, sharing or commenting on content) with a PD-91-related social media post.</li> <li>○ In terms of reach, via the different accounts, almost 470,000 people saw PD-91 content (sum of reach column in table 5, not captured by all social media platforms).</li> <li>○ The posts appeared over 850,000 times in peoples’ feeds (sum of impressions column in table 5).</li> </ul> </li> <li>• The target audience were consulted once all 9 chapters of the webcomic were available. They thought it was an engaging story and “<i>overall I would say it was very insightful, with amazing artwork.</i>” Further information on this can be found on page 32.</li> </ul>	
<p>Ensuring PlanetDivoc91 reflects a broad diversity of experience</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8. Inclusion of diverse YA according to protected characteristics (demographic data capture)</li> <li>9. Diversity of content produced by YA</li> <li>10. Diversity (ethnicity, specialism, background) of researchers, artists and writers involved</li> <li>11. Balance of project team: gender, ethnic and socioeconomic background</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The project teams from India, South Africa and the UK were extremely conscious of ensuring the young adults participating came from diverse backgrounds. In reflecting on the success of this, one team member commented that they felt “<i>marginalised voices have genuinely had the opportunity to share their views</i>”. The virtual and online aspect of the project was particularly helpful in this regard, with one team member</li> </ul>	

<p>commenting that it allowed for a “<i>geographical and cultural diversity to one’s project</i>”.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A summary of the content produced by the young adults can be found in table 4 on page 31 but it included articles, artwork, films and podcasts.</li> <li>• When it came to the creation of the webcomic and the contribution of one of the young adults as a chapter writer, it was clear that “<i>she’s been able to bring different viewpoints and artistic ideas</i>”. This is a clear example of how the project has been able to ensure a diversity of experiences were included.</li> <li>• The researchers, artists and writers involved came from many different specialisms and were drawn from a range of countries. This therefore meant that different ethnicities and backgrounds were included.</li> <li>• The project team was diverse in terms of their gender, sexuality, religion and beliefs. All were educated to a higher/university level.</li> <li>• The gender split of the project participants and the project team were similar (males made up 33% of the project team and 32% of the participants, whilst females made up 66% of the project team and 65% of the participants).</li> </ul>	
<p>Successful research partnerships and influence</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>12. 50+ researchers involved in the project from 15+ different disciplinary backgrounds &amp; institutions</li> <li>13. 100+ research &amp; policy audiences reached through communication and engagement</li> <li>14. Evidence of increased confidence and capacity of researchers involved to engage with YA</li> <li>15. Evidence of demonstrable research/policy influence</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Over 50 researchers across a range of disciplines have participated in a range of activities with the young adults. Full details of contributors can be found in appendices D and E.</li> <li>Over 100 people from research and policy groups have been reached through a range of methods. This activity has been delivered in partnership with stakeholders such as the Academy of Medical Sciences. A fuller description of the types of activities the young adults participated can be found in table 3 on page 26 along with a description of research/policy influence.</li> </ul>	
<p>Learning from <i>PlanetDivoc91</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>16. 500+ people from science communication/public engagement and other relevant sectors reached</li> <li>17. 1 peer-reviewed publication on method, output, impact and learning from the project</li> <li>18. Comic infographic summarising YA perspectives from PlanetDivoc91</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The legacy of the project will continue beyond the funded period and this will include sharing of the project model with colleagues in science communication and public engagement.</li> <li>A peer-reviewed paper is under discussion.</li> <li>A <a href="#">manifesto</a> has been produced by the young people describing their experiences.</li> </ul>	

**This report was written by Laura Thomas of Ondata Research.**

Established in 2019, Ondata Research provides research-informed advice and guidance on evaluation and delivers various evaluation-related services to multiple sectors. This includes evaluation planning, implementation and report writing and consultancy on project delivery in areas including education, outreach and public engagement.

Laura has extensive experience evaluating a range of public engagement and education-related projects across both formal and informal education. She is an experienced social sciences researcher, having recently completed an MRes in Educational Research with the University of Stirling and is continuing her research through a part-time PhD.

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