

# Building a Protective Environment for Children

The UNICEF IKEA  
Partnership in India

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## What is Child Protection?

UNICEF uses the term 'child protection' to refer to preventing and responding to violence, exploitation and abuse against children – including commercial sexual exploitation, trafficking, child labour, child abuse and harmful traditional practices such as child marriage.

## Why is Child Protection Important?

Every child has a right to protection. This not only includes children who are in difficult circumstances and those who have suffered violence, abuse and exploitation but all children. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child reinforces this right. As a responsible society we must ensure, as far as possible, that children are not exposed to harm.

# What are the Millennium Development Goals?

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are the world's time-bound and quantified targets for addressing extreme poverty while promoting gender equality, education, and environmental sustainability. These are the basic human rights of each person to health, education, shelter and security as pledged in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the UN Millennium Declaration. Through adoption of the Millennium Declaration, countries have resolved to strive for the full protection and promotion of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights for all.



## Why Achieve the Millennium Development Goals?

According to the Millennium Project, if the world meets the Goals by 2015 more than 500 million people will be lifted out of extreme poverty. More than 300 million will no longer suffer from hunger. There will be dramatic progress in child health: rather than die before reaching their fifth birthdays, 30 million children will be saved. So will the lives of more than two million mothers. There's more. Achieving the Goals will mean that 350 million fewer people will be without safe drinking water and 650 million fewer people live without the benefits of basic sanitation, allowing them to lead healthier and more dignified lives. Hundreds of millions more women and girls will go to school, access economic and political opportunity, and have greater security and safety.





# How does Child Protection Affect the Millennium Development Goals?

The Millennium Declaration addresses child protection explicitly. The achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is intrinsically linked with improving the everyday lives of children: protecting children from labour, trafficking, harmful traditional practices like child marriage and other forms of exploitation and abuse. Reaching the most vulnerable and excluded children will ensure the health and well-being of all children in realising the MDGs.

Goal 1  
Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

Goal 2  
Achieve universal primary education

Goal 3  
Promote gender equality and empower women

Goal 4  
Reduce child mortality

Goal 5  
Improve maternal health

Goal 6  
Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases

Goal 7  
Ensure environmental sustainability

Goal 8  
Develop a global partnership for development



## Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

Children who live in extreme poverty are often exposed to violence, exploitation, abuse and discrimination. They may be marginalised and frequently lack access to health care and education. Child labour – both a cause and consequence of poverty – damages a child's health, threatens education and leads to further exploitation and abuse. Poverty and exclusion often separate children from their families as they are sent to work or their parents migrate for labour and leave their children behind.

## Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education

Education enhances lives. It is important to ensure that all boys and girls complete primary schooling. This cannot be achieved without eliminating the barriers that keep children out of school such as child marriage, child labour, violence in schools and discrimination. The school environment has to be safe, child-friendly and free of violence to encourage children to attend and remain in school. Harmful traditional practices like child marriage can lead to dropping out. Uneducated girls are more at risk than boys to become marginalised. After marriage, young girls' access to formal and even non-formal education is severely limited because of domestic burdens, childbearing and social norms that view marriage and schooling as incompatible. This impairs girls' employment or income generation options. It affects their autonomy in making key decisions relating to their reproductive health and the well-being of their children. Accessing hard-to-reach children is critical to achieving education for all.

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### Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women

Child marriage, sexual violence, child labour and trafficking, lack of education and skills, are child rights violations that prevent girls from enjoying gender equality. Discrimination denies girls health care, education, the power to make decisions and freedom from violence, abuse and exploitation. Sexual violence and harassment of girls at school are major impediments to achieving gender equality in education. When they occur in other settings, such as the community and workplace, they undermine efforts to empower girls and women.

### Goal 4: Reduce child mortality

Extreme exploitation, violence or abuse increases child mortality. Child marriage affects children's health as babies who are born to very young mothers are more vulnerable to disease during critical early years of life. Children without parental care or separated from their mother at an early age are at much greater risk of early death. Improper care for children with disabilities can increase the mortality risk. Children without protection are more vulnerable to substance abuse and its effects, including death.



## Goal 5: Improve maternal health

Abuses against adolescent girls endanger their physical and psychological health and, should they become mothers, their reproductive health as well. Protecting girls from child marriage is an important factor in improving maternal health as pregnancy at a young age jeopardises the health of young mothers. Child marriage compromises the development and education of girls and often results in social isolation.



## Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases

Many of the worst forms of child labour fuel the spread of HIV/AIDS as children are sexually exploited and trafficked. At the same time, children from families and communities affected by HIV/AIDS are particularly vulnerable to exploitation and at risk of growing up without parental care. For children orphaned or otherwise affected by HIV/AIDS, protection is a priority.



## Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability

Environmental disasters increase household vulnerability, which can in turn, increase the pressure for child labour and child marriage, as well as the risk of sexual exploitation.



## What is UNICEF Doing to Build a Protective Environment for Children to Achieve the Millenium Development Goals?

UNICEF is committed to protecting children worldwide and advocates and supports the creation of a protective environment that shields children from violence, exploitation and abuse. It collaborates with governments, national and international partners, including the private sector and civil society to help build a world in which all children are able to survive and thrive. Partnerships are critical to achieving results for children. Since 2000, UNICEF is partnering with IKEA Social Initiative to deliver tangible benefits in child rights, such as health, education, and protection, for millions of children and women in India.

# UNICEF IKEA Partnership on Child Rights

IKEA, a global retailer of home furnishings, is committed to each girl's and boy's right to a healthy and secure childhood. In 2005, IKEA formed IKEA Social Initiative with the overall mission to improve the rights and life opportunities of many children – creating substantial and lasting change like access to a quality education.

In 2000, IKEA Social Initiative began supporting UNICEF to prevent and eliminate child labour in the 'carpet belt' in Uttar Pradesh, India. By creating awareness and mobilising rural communities to prevent child labour and strengthen child rights, more than 80,000 children received an education they would otherwise have been denied. Women were empowered through self-help groups, alternative learning centres were set up to mainstream children into regular schools and enrolment campaigns were conducted for children who had never attended school.

Since 2006, IKEA Social Initiative has partnered with UNICEF in the southern state of Andhra Pradesh, India on projects aimed at preventing girls from working on cotton-seed farms. Children have gained access to quality education while girls' collectives have been formed to influence their communities against child labour and ensuring that children are kept in school. Awareness about child labour has also been created among key stakeholders comprising local government, NGOs and employers.

In 2009, IKEA Social Initiative further expanded its support for children with a \$48 million donation to UNICEF in India. This most recent donation will support UNICEF programmes aimed at improving the health and survival of tens of millions of women and children in some of India's most deprived areas. The funding for child protection programmes, as part of this renewed commitment, will aim to prevent and reduce child labour and ensure the rights of children to quality education. About 4.9 million children (6-14 years) in the Indian states of Gujarat, Maharashtra and Rajasthan will get quality education.



- Every child has a right to protection.
- The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are the world's time-bound and quantified targets for addressing extreme poverty while promoting gender equality, education, and environmental sustainability.
- The achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is intrinsically linked with improving the everyday lives of children.
- UNICEF is committed to protecting children worldwide and advocates and supports the creation of a protective environment for children with its partners.
- UNICEF and IKEA Social Initiative are working together to deliver tangible benefits in child rights, such as health, education, and protection, for millions of children and women in India.
- In 2000, IKEA began supporting UNICEF to prevent and eliminate child labour in the 'carpet belt' in Uttar Pradesh, India.
- In Andhra Pradesh, India IKEA is supporting projects aimed at preventing girls from working on cotton-seed farms through education and community mobilisation.
- IKEA has expanded its support for children with a \$48 million donation to UNICEF programmes in India in 2009.
- The programmes for strengthening child rights will aim to prevent and eliminate child labour and ensure the basic rights for children to quality education.

For more information, please visit  
[www.unicef.in](http://www.unicef.in)  
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