KEY ASKS FOR 2019 SDG VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REVIEWS

Complete set of SDG ‘Issue Briefs’ to support partners in the VNR Process

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About the SDG Issue Briefs

The following are a set of twelve 2-page issues briefs containing key messages to support Governments in their SDG implementation plans and actions, particularly governments who are preparing a Voluntary National Review (VNR) in 2019.

There are four cross sectoral and eight sector specific briefs, which are aligned to the SDGs under review at the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) in 2019.

Governments, NGOs and other stakeholder groups involved in national VNRs are encouraged to use these messages as needed.
The year 2019 is a seminal year for both the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and the Child Rights’ Agenda. In a year of stock-taking and review, the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) will meet twice for the first time since the adoption of the SDGs: 1) during its regular annual meeting under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in July, and 2) for the first time at the General Assembly in September, which occurs every four years. At the July HLPF, the overarching theme will be Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality. The Goals under special review are highly relevant to the lives of children and young people, as they explore quality education, youth employment, migration, inequalities, climate change, and violence against children, among other topics.

The year 2019 also marks the 30th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the most widely ratified human rights treaty in existence. The SDGs and CRC go hand in hand. While the CRC highlights the historic and indispensable international standards for ensuring all activities -- including sustainable development efforts -- align with the rights of every child, the SDGs articulate a modern vision for social, economic and environmental progress that can be achieved when all people, including all children, have their rights recognized and realized. In sum, children’s rights cannot be realized without the successful implementation of the SDGs and vice versa. To that end, the anniversary of the Convention is a time for governments to reflect on and recommit to child rights as major part of their SDG implementation efforts.

**KEY ASKS FOR 2019 SDG VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REVIEWS**

**LINKING CHILD RIGHTS AND THE SDGS**

**COMMITTING TO CHILD RIGHTS ON THE OCCASION OF THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CRC**

UNICEF encourages countries participating in a voluntary national review during the 2019 HLPF to include the following aspects in their respective reports:

1. Reaffirm their commitment to the CRC as a cornerstone of their national SDG implementation efforts.
2. Report on progress and challenges on national action to protect, respect and fulfil children’s rights.
3. Take national action on the 30th anniversary of the CRC. This could include, for example: organizing a multi-stakeholder national summit or event on children’s rights with the participation of children and adolescents; convening a parliamentary dialog/debate on linking child rights and the SDGs; governments announcing new and/or improved laws, policies or programmes that support the fulfillment of child rights and support child well-being; government leaders making public statements on the importance of child rights and how they are committing to the fulfillment of the CRC over the next 30 years.

MONITORING THE SITUATION OF CHILDREN, ADOLESCENTS AND YOUTH

All SDGs are relevant to the fulfillment of the rights of children, not only those which explicitly reference children. UNICEF conducted a detailed mapping of the articles of the CRC to the SDGs goals and targets, illustrating the many linkages and synergies between the two frameworks. That being said, UNICEF has identified 44 indicators out of a total of 232 in the global SDG monitoring framework, that most directly concern children. The quality and availability of data against those indicators remains a significant challenge. A first step in the realization of child rights is to know who these children are, where they live and the challenges they face. UNICEF encourages Governments to:

- Ensure that national SDG monitoring frameworks includes child-focused indicators. Unless the national SDG monitoring framework contains child-focused indicators, the issues around child development and well-being might get lost in policy discussions. Thus, it is essential that the national SDG monitoring and indicator framework is reviewed and updated to include child-focused indicators. As a starting point, the 44 indicators in the global monitoring framework can be used to guide the review and possible updating of both national SDG monitoring framework.
- Strengthen national capacity to improve the collection, dissemination and use of high-quality, comprehensive and up-to-date disaggregated data to adequately monitor and report on progress for all children.
- Leverage existing national monitoring and reporting mechanisms for reporting on the CRC and other relevant human rights obligations to reflect progress on child rights within the context of the SDGs (the mapping can assist).
• Use statistical data from a variety of sources in assessing SDG progress, including censuses, sample surveys and administrative records, as well as perception data collected through participatory monitoring activities.

• Measure child poverty in all its dimensions, and monitoring progress towards ‘ending child poverty in all its forms’, as a universal and cross-cutting issue that can help to reinforce the indivisibility of the SDGs and avoid compartmentalization.

INVESTING IN CHILDREN, ADOLESCENTS AND YOUTH

Delivering on the promises articulated in the CRC and prioritizing the education, protection, health and well-being of children constitutes the best and most robust investment we can make to fulfil the promise of Agenda 2030 – for children and young people themselves and for peace, human security and sustainable development. UNICEF encourages Governments to:

Improve reporting on expenditures and programmes that have direct and indirect impacts on child and adolescent well-being. Relevant approaches include Public Expenditure Reviews (PERs) with a focus on children and child-focused areas such as immunization or nutrition programmes, child-spending markers and taxonomies, as well as established reporting practices on child-focused allocations under the CRC.

Monitor and increase investments on new child- and adolescent-focused SDG priorities that are of a cross-cutting nature but sit less easily within traditional sectoral budgets. Interventions in areas like child protection, gender equality, adolescent development, nutrition and early childhood development cut across sectors and are not always classified under sectoral budgets, which often results in their omission.

Adopt principles of results-based reporting to spending on children and adolescents, with a particular focus on equity and effectiveness, including gender equality. Examples include tracking of spending that explicitly addresses geographic disparities of services for children and adolescents (both quality and access), as well as inequities among different population groups and gender in service provision or other matters.

Carry out systematic equity gap analyses to understand better which children and where progress for children are lagging and determine the underlying causes and bottlenecks.

INCLUDING CHILDREN, ADOLESCENTS AND YOUTH

The CRC asserts that children have the right to have their voices heard in all matters that affect their lives. It is, therefore, their right to learn about and engage in achieving the SDGs, both in claiming their rights now, as children, as well as preparing themselves to take on more complex responsibilities as they grow older. UNICEF encourages Governments to involve children and adolescents in learning about and taking action on the SDGs through participatory means:

• The process for preparing the national review should directly involve children and adolescent girls and boys, especially the most marginalized or excluded. For example, through consultations (on and/or offline), surveys, focus group discussions, etc. UNICEF together with civil society, child-focused organizations and other partners could support the government in that process. The results of these efforts as well as the methods employed should be described in the report, including the number of young people involved in the process.

• Children and adolescents should be made aware of the SDGs through the use of child-friendly and interactive education and learning materials. To inspire action and initiate meaningful consultation, first children must become aware of sustainable development issues and how the goals relate to their daily lives and communities. Materials such as those created as part of the World’s Largest Lesson and Comics Uniting Nations partnerships can help bring the SDGs to young people and inspire their creativity and action on the Goals.

• Awareness-raising and participation should be seen as part of a continuum to regularly, meaningfully and consistently engage children, adolescents and young people as agents of change to influence behaviors and social norms amongst themselves, their households and their communities. This goes beyond engagement just for the purposes of reporting periods, but rather creating standing mechanisms and spaces for young people to engage and have their perspectives heard in decision and policy-making processes as well as across media and communications channels for the purpose of solidifying long-term positive changes in behaviors and social norms.
MONITORING THE SITUATION OF CHILDREN, ADOLESCENTS AND YOUTH

IMPROVING THE COLLECTION, ANALYSIS AND USE OF DISAGGREGATED DATA TO MONITOR SDG IMPLEMENTATION

While all SDG targets and indicators affect the lives and well-being of children, adolescents and youth in some way, UNICEF has identified 44 indicators\(^1\), out of a total of 232 in the global SDG monitoring framework\(^2\), that most directly concern children. The list of indicators for global SDG monitoring, measuring the 169 targets across the 17 goals, was formally approved at the 48th session of the UN Statistical Commission and subsequently adopted by the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in June 2017.

The availability of recent, comparable and high-quality disaggregated data for children remains a significant challenge for many countries, developing and developed alike. It is therefore essential to improve the quality and disaggregation of data and, in turn, use that data to inform decision-making processes for the successful implementation and monitoring of the SDGs.

UNICEF encourages governments and national stakeholders to highlight the following practices and experiences in their 2019 VNRs in the following areas:

ENSURE THAT NATIONAL SDG MONITORING FRAMEWORK INCLUDES CHILD-FOCUSED INDICATORS.

Unless national SDG monitoring frameworks contain child-focused indicators, the issues around child development and well-being might get lost in policy discussions. Thus, it is essential that the national SDG monitoring and indicator framework is reviewed and updated to include child-focused indicators. This may require the review and updating of national development strategies and plans to ensure that the policy goals and targets are specific about children and their issues. After all, indicators are to measure policy goals and targets. It is important the goals and targets are also specific about the population groups and issues for policy interventions in order for governments to fulfill their commitment to “leave no one behind.” As a starting point, the 44 indicators in the global monitoring framework can be used to guide the review and possible updating of both the national SDG monitoring framework and/or national development strategy/plan.

HIGHLIGHT THE USE OF STATISTICAL DATA FROM A VARIETY OF SOURCES IN ASSESSING SDG PROGRESS.

While there are enormous gaps in the availability and quality of official statistics to meet the demands for SDG progress assessments at sub-national, national, regional and global levels, at the same time there are large amounts of existing data yet to be accessed and used for evidence-based policy advocacy and analysis. Only when data from various sources are used can their value be recognized, which in turn strengthens the case for boosting investment in further data improvements.

A positive development over the last several cycles of VNRs is that an increasing number of national reports use existing indicators to highlight patterns of development by citing data coming from a variety of sources, including censuses, sample surveys and administrative records. There are also ongoing explorations to use such emerging big data sources as geospatial information to gain insights in SDG implementation. Governments are encouraged to cite the use of data from a variety of sources to inform SDG implementation.

SHOWCASE CONCRETE ACTIONS BY GOVERNMENT TO STRENGTHEN NATIONAL CAPACITY TO IMPROVE THE AVAILABILITY AND QUALITY OF DISAGGREGATED DATA.

The need for strengthening the capacity of national statistical systems has been a recurring theme during the last rounds of the VNRs, highlighting the gap between demand for and the provision of high quality and disaggregated data for monitoring the SDGs. Some countries have formulated plans to improve the statistics and data underlying their national SDG monitoring and indicator frameworks.

In Myanmar, the development of a child-focused SDG indicator list was undertaken together with a 7-point action implementation plan, including such priority areas as: developing metadata of indicators; harmonizing data sources; increasing data access and data sharing; and improving administrative data. In Colombia\(^3\), the government’s national policy on SDG implementation presents the vision for the country for 2030 and...
establishes a follow-up framework with national indicators, measurable targets, institutional responsibilities and a prioritization and regionalization exercise that includes a set of benchmark targets designed to stimulate progress in the other targets of each SDG. In particular, the policy document also includes a plan to improve statistical data and a territorial strategy designed to maximize ownership and the utility of the SDGs in the transformation of territorial realities while respecting local autonomies and priorities. The formulation of a SDG-focused data improvement plan should ideally be aligned with existing national statistical development strategies and plans, and should have specific budgetary allocations.

UNICEF has provided support to the Multi Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) in many countries, especially low- and middle-income countries. MICS 6 tools have been comprehensively updated to support SDG monitoring during the next round of surveys. MICS 6 (2016-19) provides 45% of all household survey-based SDG indicators across 11 goal areas. The updated questionnaires and indicator lists are available on the MICS website and include new modules on reading/numeracy, early childhood development, water quality and child disability. These child-related modules and indicators should also be included into other demographic and health surveys and income and expenditure surveys in countries where a MICS is not being conducted.

In general, the VNR preparation should be used as an opportunity for the government and other national stakeholders to take stock of their achievements and document lessons and experiences in their collective efforts to strengthen the capacity of national and sub-national authorities to collect, analyse and report official statistics with a particular focus on ensuring that these are disaggregated, where relevant, by income, sex, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability and geographic location, or other characteristics, in accordance with the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics.

MORE RESOURCES ON SDG GLOBAL INDICATORS RELATED TO CHILDREN.

To provide additional support on sector specific SDG Monitoring, UNICEF has also developed a set of briefing notes on SDG global indicators related to children, covering the following topics: child poverty, nutritional status, maternal mortality & skilled attendant at birth, child mortality, universal health coverage, learning, early childhood development, violence against girls and women, harmful practices, drinking water, sanitation & hygiene, child labour, abuse, exploitation and violence and birth registration. Please see here for the full set of briefing notes.

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2 http://unstats.un.org/sdgs/iaeg-sdgs/
4 http://mics.unicef.org/tools
6 https://data.unicef.org/resources/sdg-global-indicators-related-to-children/
INVESTING IN CHILDREN, ADOLESCENTS AND YOUTH

WORKING WITH GOVERNMENTS TO IMPROVE REPORTING ON SOCIAL SPENDING AND PROGRESS ON RESULTS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Prioritizing the education, protection, health and well-being of children constitutes the best and most robust investment we can make to fulfill the promise of Agenda 2030 – for children, adolescents and youth themselves and the fundamental rights that they have – and for peace, human security and sustainable development for all of us and the planet we inhabit.

The Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA) recognizes the link between child- and youth-focused investments and growth by treating children and youth not just as passive recipients of social services and assistance but as active agents of inclusive development. Specifically, the Agenda:

- Recognizes that investing in children and youth is critical to achieving inclusive, equitable and sustainable development for present and future generations (AAAA para 7);
- Recognizes the need to support countries that face particular challenges to make the requisite investments in children and youth (AAAA para 7);
- Reaffirms the vital importance of promoting and protecting the rights of all children, and ensuring that no child is left behind (AAAA para 7);
- Commits to promote national youth strategies as a key instrument for meeting the needs and aspirations of young people (AAAA para 16).

Countries have also made several commitments as part of the SDG Means of Implementation (MOI) indicators (see IAEG report on SDG Indicators to the UN Statistical Commission). These include to regularly monitor: the proportion of resources allocated by the government directly to poverty reduction programmes (MOI indicator 1.a.1); the proportion of total government spending on essential services (education, health and social protection, (MOI indicator 1. a.2); the proportion of government recurrent and capital spending to sectors that disproportionately benefit women, the poor and vulnerable groups (MOI indicator 1.b.1); as well as on programme coverage and results achieved in major SDG priority areas, such as education, health and WASH.

Countries are also encouraged to introduce “nationally appropriate spending targets for quality investments in essential public services for all, including health, education, energy, water and sanitation, consistent with national sustainable development strategies” and to “provide fiscally sustainable and nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, with a focus on those furthest below the poverty line and vulnerable groups, including children (Addis Ababa Action Agenda, para 12).

UNICEF encourages the following actions to improve understanding of social spending on children, adolescents and youth and endeavors to support governments on these actions:

**IMPROVE REPORTING ON EXPENDITURES AND PROGRAMMES THAT HAVE DIRECT AND INDIRECT IMPACTS ON CHILD, ADOLESCENT AND YOUTH WELL-BEING**

A country’s budget in particular reflects how well political commitments under the Agenda 2030 and Financing for Development (FFD) agreements are being translated into direct actions to benefit the most excluded children, adolescents and youth. Yet, under current reporting practices most government budgets are organized by sector and functional area, but do not provide timely and detailed measurement on public spending on health, education and social protection that addresses the human capital potential of young people. Relevant approaches to improve government reporting on child-focused spending include: 1) Public Expenditure Reviews (PERs) with a focus on children and child-focused areas such as immunization or nutrition programmes (these reviews are often implemented in collaboration with the World Bank); 2) child-spending markers and taxonomies developed by countries such as Argentina, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Honduras, India, Mexico, Peru, Uganda, Wales and Yemen; and 3) established reporting practices on child-focused allocations under the Convention of the Rights of the Child. Public dissemination of results of the monitoring exercise should also be considered.
MONITOR AND INCREASE INVESTMENTS ON NEW CHILD, ADOLESCENT AND YOUTH-FOCUSED SDG PRIORITIES THAT ARE OF A CROSS-CUTTING NATURE BUT SIT LESS EASILY WITHIN TRADITIONAL SECTORAL BUDGETS.

For example in the area of child protection, investments in family or foster care; response to and prevention of violence against children; and justice for children are distinct from social protection and not always classified under such budgets. Interventions in areas like gender equality, adolescent development, nutrition and early childhood development similarly cut across sectors, ranging from health to education to agriculture to water and sanitation. Investments that support the school-to-work transition are also commonly captured by education, labour, business development and social protection budgets. Public dissemination of results and spending by age group and gender would facilitate local authorities and other stakeholders to monitor how conditions for young people improve over time.

ADOPT PRINCIPLES OF RESULTS-BASED REPORTING TO SPENDING ON CHILDREN, ADOLESCENTS AND YOUTH, WITH A PARTICULAR FOCUS ON EQUITY AND EFFECTIVENESS, INCLUDING GENDER EQUALITY.

Examples include tracking of spending that explicitly addresses geographic disparities of services for children, adolescents and youth (both quality and access), as well as inequities among different population groups and gender in service provision or other matters. Possible criteria for spending effectiveness include the degree to which budget programs intended for children, adolescents and youth (directly or indirectly) succeed in achieving their objectives.

CARRY OUT PUBLIC ADVOCACY AROUND THE BUDGETING PROCESS.

Public participation in the budgeting process can lead to the improvement of the frameworks capable to demonstrate transparent processes and also track sectoral spending on specific SDGs. Such practices include routine budget briefs, fiscal space analysis and related advocacy with Members of Parliament, civil society, media (for relevant examples and country case studies see here and here).

CARRY OUT SYSTEMATIC EQUITY GAP ANALYSIS TO UNDERSTAND BETTER WHICH CHILDREN, ADOLESCENTS AND YOUTH ARE BEING LEFT BEHIND AND WHERE PROGRESS FOR THESE YOUNG PEOPLE ARE LAGGING AND DETERMINE THE UNDERLYING CAUSES AND BOTTLENECKS.

The policy and programmatic response to this analysis should focus on integration of service delivery platforms, systematically support the participation of community and strategies to reduce vulnerability, and linking budgets and spending to results.

SUPPORT THE INTRODUCTION AND DISSEMINATION OF BLENDED FINANCE SOLUTIONS.

Innovative mechanisms and approaches such as blended finance have a critical role in catalyzing contributions from different sources for financing the SDGs. The mobilization of combined efforts and good practices from the public and the private sectors can enable the provision of partnerships and financing instruments such as venture capital, impact bonds, brain trusts and other public-private financing models to deliver investments in children, adolescents and youth and in support of achieving the SDGs.

SCALE-UP THE ADOPTION, INTEGRATION AND DEPLOYMENT OF NEW TECHNOLOGIES TO SUPPORT PROGRESS ACROSS THE SDGS.

New digital technologies are emerging as opportunities to address long-standing development challenges across the SDGs that directly impact young people—from child protection to nutrition to access to education to healthcare. Technological innovations in programme implementation, service delivery, etc. can assist in reducing inefficiencies and costs in the public sector and in removing some important barriers that constrain the development of sustainable finance practices.
INCLUDING CHILDREN, ADOLESCENTS AND YOUTH

IMPROVING SDG AWARENESS-BUILDING AND PARTICIPATION AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE

To foster inclusion as well as ownership of the principles in the SDGs, UNICEF encourages national partners to involve children in the development of Voluntary National Review (VNRs) but also more broadly in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Just as people’s participation was a hallmark of the SDG negotiations’ process -- infusing increased ambition and legitimacy into that process -- people’s participation must continue and be strengthened for SDG implementation in all countries. Thus, a key aspect of monitoring, follow-up and review will be to foster awareness of the SDGs among the public as well as encouraging their active participation in public participation in these processes -- from the community, national, regional and global level, serving as the “people’s reality check” on if the SDGs are delivering on their promises on the ground (or not).

THE PROCESS FOR PREPARING THE NATIONAL REVIEW SHOULD DIRECTLY INVOLVE CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENT GIRLS AND BOYS.

For example, through consultations (on and/or offline), surveys, focus group discussions, etc. UNICEF together with civil society, child-focused organizations and other partners could support the government in that process. Child, adolescent and youth participation should be meaningful. This means providing them with the space (a safe and inclusive space to express their views), the voice (appropriate information and facilitation for the expression of young people’s views) and the audience (mechanisms to ensure that their views are taken into due consideration). When participation is meaningful, young people’s opinions have an influence, and they feel more empowered to make a change.

The results of this effort as well as the methods employed should be described in the national review report, including the number of children, adolescents and youth involved in the process. A deliberate effort should be done to meaningfully engage young people that are marginalized or excluded (e.g. children with disabilities, street children, children living in poverty, ethnic/minority children, refugee or migrant children etc.). Managers should allocate more time, resources and skilled facilitation to ensure inclusive, safe and meaningful participation for the most marginalized and excluded. Further, the reporting back on how children, adolescents and youth have been involved in the process could be part of a special report or dedicated chapter of the VNR. For example, in 2017 Slovenia had a special report within their VNR entitled: Youth in Slovenia in the context of the 2030 Agenda, which was produced by the National Youth Council of Slovenia based on a survey that the youth group conducted with their peers across the country. This should be considered an example of good practice.

Perception data collected through participatory monitoring activities are an essential “reality check” and useful complement to official data and statistics. Perception data is collected directly from people/constituencies and aims to understand their personal views/perceptions on key topics (e.g. healthcare, education). Moreover, perception data polls/surveys differ from other instruments like traditional household surveys in that the main motivation is to uncover what people think and solicit their views on specific issues. These channels allow people who participate in such activities to share whether or not the SDGs are resulting in positive changes to their lives, schools, communities, etc. and can help to better inform governments and other key decision-makers on the views and ideas of their constituencies. Although not a replacement for official data, collection and analysis of perception data can help governments take more informed, efficient and effective decisions and also to help fill data gaps, where official statistics are not available.

CHILDREN, ADOLESCENTS AND YOUTH SHOULD BE MADE AWARE OF THE SDGS THROUGH THE USE OF CHILD-FRIENDLY EDUCATION AND LEARNING MATERIALS.

The mandate for governments to report on building this awareness can be specifically found in targets 4.7 and 12.8 of Agenda 2030 which suggest:

4.7: By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture’s contribution to sustainable development.

12.8: By 2030, ensure that people everywhere have the relevant information and awareness for sustainable development and lifestyles in harmony with nature.
Government Leaders, -- including the Group of Friends of Children and the SDGs and the former (71st) President of the UN General Assembly (PGA) have called on all Heads of Government for the SDGs to be taught to children in schools.

Achieving the SDGs rely on behavior changes from a systems scale to an individual scale. When taught about the issues in the SDGs, children and youth are often some of the most effective behavior and norm changers in households, communities and societies -- on issues ranging from ending stigma and discrimination to recycling and reducing waste. Children and young people should be educated and engaged on issues in the SDGs with the aim of deepening their understanding of how the goals relate to their daily lives and what actions they can take to help make a difference.

UNICEF can support this effort, particularly due to our existing work in this space and creating child-friendly education and entertainment materials through our foundational partnerships on the World’s Largest Lesson and Comics Uniting Nations.

IMPLEMENTATION IN ACTION: WORLD LARGEST LESSON ACTIVATES A COMMUNITY IN RURAL CAMEROON

In 2015, UNICEF partnered with Project Everyone to launch the World’s Largest Lesson (WLL), a global initiative aimed at bringing the SDGs to the classroom through lesson plans, videos, comics and other creative content – available freely and in a multitude of languages for educators to download, use or adapt for their classrooms.

The inspiration behind the WLL is that the SDGs must be brought down to local realities if they are to succeed in changing the world for the better by 2030. Children, youth, families and communities must internalize how the issues represented by the SDGs affect their own daily lives and environments, whether that be on improving health and nutrition; the importance of early learning and quality education; fostering more peaceful communities where children live free from violence; or establishing more sustainable approaches to use and preservation of natural resources. When that understanding happens, people of all ages can be inspired to take action, resulting in sustained progress on these goals and shifts in social norms and behaviours in the long-term.

A particularly inspiring example of WLL in practice comes from Cameroon, where UNICEF together with the Government implemented a special project on food production. Here, a teacher from the capital city of Yaounde taught rural, Baka (Pygmyee) children how to sustainably increase food production by making compost. This has turned out to be a life-changing lesson for not only the students but their families, inspiring more sustainable farming practices in the rainforest community. As the video produced by UNICEF Cameroon notes, “since the lesson took place, it was reported that more than half of the families in the village started using for the first-time natural compost to fertilize their crops. When school children become agents of change, a simple lesson can change the life of a community.” See the inspiring story here.

AWARENESS OF THE ISSUES AND PARTICIPATION IN MONITORING AND ACCOUNTABILITY PROCESSES SHOULD BE SEEN AS PART OF A CONTINUUM TO REGULARLY, MEANINGFULLY AND CONSISTENTLY ENGAGE CHILDREN, ADOLESCENTS AND YOUTH AS AGENTS OF CHANGE TO INFLUENCE BEHAVIORS AND SOCIAL NORMS AMONGST THEMSELVES, THEIR HOUSEHOLDS AND THEIR COMMUNITIES.

People’s feedback collected through participatory monitoring activities can assist in identifying left behind groups, barriers, and bottlenecks. Acting on these perspectives strengthens policy response and service delivery. Children and young people should be periodically consulted through tools that help gather and act on the perspectives of young citizens.

This participatory monitoring approach goes beyond engagement just for the purposes of reporting periods, but rather systematizing the engagement of young people in a variety of ways and across media and communications channels, including for example: digital platforms (including U-Report), child and youth councils, participatory theatre, intergenerational community dialogues, community & children’s radio, participatory video, school clubs, TV Edu-tainment and child-participatory research.

WORLD CHILDREN’S DAY (20 NOVEMBER) IS A DAY THAT GOVERNMENTS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS CAN CELEBRATE CHILD PARTICIPATION AND MAKE COMMITMENTS TO TAKE FURTHER ACTION.

The 20th of November is the anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the most widely ratified human rights treaty in existence. While children and adolescents are taking action on the SDGs throughout the year in their lives, schools and communities, the occasion of World Children’s Day is a key annual opportunity to amplify their voices; take stock of progress; and for governments, the private sector, civil society, the UN System and others to make new commitments towards fulfilling the rights of every child and meaningfully engaging children as global citizens and positive agents of change.

1 Youth in Slovenia in the context of the 2030 Agenda: https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/16313Slovenia.pdf
2 World’s Largest Lesson: http://worldslargestlesson.globalgoals.org/
3 Comics Uniting Nations: http://www.comicsunitingnations.org/
4 World Children’s Day: https://www.unicef.org/world-childrens-day/
5 World’s Largest Lesson in Cameroon: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=foDt0maT69E
SDG 4: EVERY CHILD LEARNS

At the 2019 High Level Political Forum (HLPF), the overarching theme will be Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality. Additionally, Sustainable Development Goal 4, Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all, is one of the six goals being examined in depth.

As the SDGs are interdependent, achieving the education goal (SDG 4) will have transformative effects on other goals. Educating children gives the next generation the tools to fight poverty and prevent disease and build more resilient and peaceful societies. The adoption of SDG 4 was both a recognition of the importance of education and a commitment to achieve more ambitious outcomes in education access, learning outcomes, and skills development.

UNICEF’s own goal “Every Child Learns,” is fully aligned with SDG 4 and other education-related targets and seeks to ensure that this applies in all country contexts, including humanitarian crises and development settings, regardless of wealth, location, gender, disability, migration status, language or minority status. For every child to learn, all girls and boys should gain access to and participate in education and education should lead to learning and the development of relevant skills for full participation in society.

KEY ASKS

Member states are encouraged to include in their Voluntary National Reviews the following aspects:

1. **A demonstration of how the SDG 4 global ambitions are being nationalized into plans, policies, budgets, data collection efforts, and reports.** SDG 4 articulated higher ambitions for governments that often require a review and update to existing sector plans. Updated plans should however be context-based and realistic in terms of pace of education system development. “Business as usual” at the national level will not result in progress towards greater ambitions at the global level and will require innovations in education.

2. **A continued commitment to improving access to pre-primary, primary and secondary education for all, including for children from minority groups and those with disabilities.** Globally, 262 million children and adolescents do not have the opportunity to enter or complete school. To achieve SDG 4, national and local governments must accelerate action plans to close access gaps and ensure all children are in school, with a focus on marginalized children and children in emergency settings. Too often, a child’s access to education is predetermined by their geographic location, sex, gender, disability status, economic status, or other criteria. Meanwhile, an education is instrumental to improving a marginalized child’s social and economic opportunity: Schools give children in emergency settings stability to help cope with the trauma they have experienced and contributes to restoring peace — yet education accounts for less than 4 per cent of total humanitarian aid. The SDGs and the Habitat III commitments require schools, materials, transport and public places to be made accessible for children with disabilities.

3. **A renewed focus on learning outcomes and their enablers, including learning in safe and adequate environments, supported by well-trained teachers and structured content.** Education success cannot be defined solely by enrollment rates but also by what a child learns. Even for those in school, at least 250 million primary school age children are not learning basic skills. The number of illiterate adults remains stubbornly high at 774 million (UNESCO, 2014). Capacity building to monitor learning outcomes is therefore essential: examples of existing and growing tools include a new Multiple Index Cluster Survey (MICS) module on child foundational learning skills, which assesses reading, comprehension and numeracy competencies of children aged 7-14 years old, both in and out of school. Improved data collection on learning must be met with policy response and coordination that focuses on learning outcomes and their enablers, including a school’s safe and inclusive infrastructure and facilities, quality teaching, structured content, and available resources. A recent global baseline report on Drinking Water, Sanitation and Hygiene also indicates the need to ensure schools have basic drinking water, sanitation and hygiene services.

4. **Attention to skills development should be a core component to education: giving all children and adolescents the skills, competencies, knowledge and values necessary to lead healthy and productive lives from early childhood through to basic and secondary education and beyond.** Adolescents and young people should have access to opportunities to develop skills for empowerment, learning, employability and active citizenship. This includes support for the transition to work, such as through apprenticeships and internships, as well as skills for the future of work and technology, skills for a green economy and sustainability, and skills that promote leadership, resilience and tolerance among young people.

5. **The implementation of SDG-focused learning throughout schools to raise awareness and inspire positive action.** Best practices include local and
national governments and other school systems formally integrating SDG education in national curricula where students can learn about the importance of the issues articulated in the SDGs and how to think critically about barriers to and solutions for achieving the goals. Through schools, students should also be consulted as stakeholders on SDG plans, progress and reports.

**MONITORING THE SITUATION OF CHILDREN, ADOLESCENTS AND YOUTH**

Achieving the globally agreed SDG 4 Targets and Indicators will require expanded data collection and disaggregation. The SDG 4 goal is comprised of seven targets and three means of implementation. These are operationalized through a set of 11 global indicators recommended for global monitoring of progress on key targets. In addition, 32 thematic indicators have been identified by a UNESCO-led, UNICEF-supported body of member states, multilateral agencies and civil society called the Technical Cooperation Group (TCG). Thematic indicators are optional and complementary to the global ones, allowing for a more comprehensive picture of SDG 4 achievement. Countries may customize the targets, as well as choose their own indicators to monitor SDG 4, including country-specific indicators not part of the 11 global or 32 thematic indicators, but it is recommended wherever possible to align national indicators to the internationally agreed SDG 4 indicators.

Not all of the 11 global SDG 4 indicators (as well as many thematic indicators) have established methodology and/or widespread availability -- either at national level or when disaggregated by priority groups such as children with disabilities and ethnic and linguistic minorities. To fill these gaps, Member States are encouraged to:

- Carry out a data mapping exercise to identify SDG 4 data gaps, identify existing data sources, identify indicators based on national priorities, sets national targets, and develop data strategy to monitor progress towards SDG 4 goals.
- Collect and analyse data from different sources to generate baseline estimates for SDG 4 indicators.
- Mainstream SDG 4 monitoring within national education sector plans/strategies.
- Collaborate with partners to implement new MICS household survey modules including early child development, early learning and child functioning (disabilities).
- Improve capacity to collect and disaggregate data for disadvantaged children to ensure no child is left behind. For example, UNICEF is improving the coverage and quality of data and statistics on child functioning and disability through its new MICS module and guidance on inclusive EMIS questionnaires.

**INVESTING IN CHILDREN, ADOLESCENTS AND YOUTH**

Research shows that proper resource allocation and financial investments in education yield some of the strongest economic and social returns. Every year of schooling raises an individual’s earnings by 10 percent. This rate of return is, in fact, higher than alternative investments, including bonds, stocks, deposits, and housing. UNICEF recommends that Member States:

- Meet agreed education budget quotas and minimum spending thresholds. As the GEM Report shows, the international community is not meeting the education financing benchmarks to meet SDG 4 by 2030. One in four countries do not reach the two key targets on public financing of education appear in the Education 2030 Framework for Action, which proposed that governments should be allocating “At least 4 to 6 per cent of GDP to education, and/or at least 15 to 20 per cent of public expenditure to education”.

- Apply the Education Commission’s recommendation of “progressive universalism.” Recognizing the scarcity of public funding compared to the needs, the Education Commission recommends that, when balancing spending across different levels of education, decision-makers should prioritize the poor and early years where social returns are highest, and minimize household spending on basic education by the poor. In many countries, current patterns of public education spending favors the upper levels of education and disfavors the poorest children due to high disparities in terms of access to primary education and of progress to upper levels of education. UNICEF estimates that children/adolescents from the poorest quintile benefit 4 times less from public education resources than those from the richest quintile.

- Spend more on early childhood, care and education. Empirical evidence shows that quality pre-primary interventions increase educational success and adult productivity. Yet low-income countries spend an average of less than 2 percent of their education budgets on pre-primary education and lower middle countries only 5 per cent. External financing for pre-primary education is also extremely limited: less than 1 percent of international aid for education is spent on pre-primary. Tackling the learning crisis requires greater investments from governments, donors and partners to quality early learning programmes, especially for the poorest children.

- Adopt principles of results-based management, with a focus on equity and effectiveness. Challenges in the education sector will not be addressed solely by increased funding. Policies that allow for the equitable targeting of resources and improve the efficiency of overall education spending are needed. With limited resources and a long way to go before every child has access to education and learning, it is essential to identify and support country-specific, cost-effective policies and interventions. Making sound decisions will require strong evidence and better data. Given the magnitude of the learning crisis, we need strengthened learning assessment systems, particularly for the early grades, and strong accountability structures to improve the way in which investments are transformed into actual learning. The SDGs also provide an opportunity to ensure education sector plans and strategies include context-based and evidence-based cross-cutting policies that relate to learning environments and outcomes such as child protection, gender equality, adolescent development, nutrition and early childhood.

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For more information visit: [https://www.unicef.org/education](https://www.unicef.org/education)
SDG TARGET 4.2: EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT, CARE AND PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION

Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) starts with our youngest citizens. Healthy, educated and resilient children grow up into productive adults who can fuel sustainable economic growth for nations.

At the 2019 High-Level Political Forum (HLPF), the overarching theme will be Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality. Additionally, Sustainable Development Goals 4 (Quality Education) and 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), are two of the six goals being examined in depth.

Within these goals, achieving the targets on “access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education” (4.2), “end preventable deaths of newborns and children under 5 years of age” (3.2), “end all forms of malnutrition, including achieving agreed targets on stunting and wasting for children under 5 years of age” (2.2), “end abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence and torture against children” (16.2), and “decent work for all women and men” (8.5) are essential for ensuring that every child gets the best start in life.

UNICEF encourages countries participating in a voluntary national review (VNR) during the 2019 HLPF to consider the following messages and asks in the development of their respective reports:

Investing in the human capital needed to achieve the SDGs starts with our youngest citizens. The science is clear: the most important phase of human development is in the earliest years of life when the brain is developing at its most rapid pace. For optimum brain development, children need nutrition, stimulation and protection. Therefore, early childhood development (ECD) is the foundation for sustainable development because this once in a lifetime investment pays off for life -- and for future generations.

Supporting parents is essential in this endeavor. When parented with love, nourished and cared for in safe and stimulating environments, children start life with a fair chance to grow, thrive and contribute to their communities and the world. Parents want the best for their children. But many work long hours in both formal and informal sectors, compromising their ability to provide the right nourishment, loving environment and stimulating care that strengthens a baby’s developing brain.

Governments and the private sector can redesign the workplace of the future to better support parents in caring for their children. Investing in family-friendly policies can give parents the time and support they need to give their children the best start in life. These policies are good for children, good for women, good for businesses and good for the economy.

KEY ASKS

- Invest urgently and increase investments that support early childhood health and learning and the psychological wellbeing of parents by creating a supportive environment. Increasing the overall share of budgetary allocations for ECD programming is a critical step government can and should take. For example, allocating 10 per cent of all national education budgets to pre-primary education will greatly expand the number of children with access to early learning opportunities, which can improve their educational attainment and increase future earnings. In addition to education, key sectors such as health should commit to investments that advance early stimulation and enhance nurturing care for the young child, especially those 0-3 years of age, through both existing and new platforms. Innovative financing can also help governments reach more children with more effective programming. Approaches can include earmarking taxes to pay for ECD services or instituting ‘payment by results’ frameworks that tie investment to outcomes. Lack of investment in ECD is estimated to cost countries more than what they spend today on health. Therefore, establishing spending targets and/or better tracking of spending on ECD-related programmes/interventions is critical.

- Expand access to effective, comprehensive and essential ECD services in homes, schools, communities and health clinics. This can be done by integrating early childhood interventions into existing services such as routine health screenings at preschools and parenting support as part of home-health visits for new parents. To well-known and effective services such as antenatal care, nutrition support and community-based childcare, these interventions can be added: breastfeeding counselling, guidance on responsive stimulation, early learning, and parenting programmes to protect children from violence.

- Make family-friendly ECD policies and plans a national priority – and a private sector imperative. Policies, programmes and other support that enable parents and caregivers to provide the best start in life for their children pay off in healthier, better educated children, a better equipped
workforce and more sustainable growth. Building on recommendations to enhance breastfeeding support (for example, the ILO calls for a minimum of 14 weeks of breastfeeding support), emerging research and evidence points to the importance of bonding for brain development and father involvement in child development. These policies and programmes need to support (a) breastfeeding; (b) bonding and nurturing care for early stimulation; and (c) involvement of all primary caregivers, including fathers. Key workplace policies should include at least 6 months of paid parental leave that is available to both parents; breastfeeding facilities and paid breastfeeding breaks for the first six months; and onsite childcare and early learning programmes for the children of employees. In addition, all countries should provide two years of tuition-free pre-primary education, which is critical for early cognitive development and also enables working parents to generate more family income. These investments can contribute to progress on multiple SDGs relating to poverty alleviation, gender equality, health and education.

- **Provide dedicated leadership for ECD programmes and coordinate efforts more effectively across sectors.** ECD programmes cut across sectors including health, nutrition, education, protection, and water, sanitation and hygiene. Policies and programmes also need to be integrated. Strong monitoring mechanisms with high-level political commitment and oversight should be in place and should facilitate and track coordination across sectors.

### MONITORING THE SITUATION OF CHILDREN, ADOLESCENTS AND YOUTH

Early childhood development encompasses many dimensions of a child’s well-being, so measuring it is an imprecise science. Collection of disaggregated data in these three vital areas of measurement is essential for closing the knowledge gap:

**The quality of care within a child’s home environment**
- Percentage of children aged 36-59 months who have been engaged in activities to promote learning and school readiness (adult support, by sex and household wealth quintile; and fathers support);
- Percentage of children 0-59 months left alone or in the care of another child younger than 10 years of age for more than one hour at least once in the past week (by sex and household wealth quintile);
- Percentage of children aged 0-59 months who have learning materials at home (children’s books and playthings, by household wealth quintile);
- Ratio of richest to poorest children engaged in early learning activities.

**Access to early childhood care and education**
- Percentage of children aged 36-59 months who are attending an early childhood education programme (by sex and household wealth quintile).

**The overall developmental status of children**
- Percentage of children aged 36–59 months who are developmentally on track in at least three of the following domains: literacy-numeracy, physical development, social-emotional development and learning.

### INCLUDING CHILDREN, ADOLESCENTS AND YOUTH

Through the #EarlyMomentsMatter campaign, UNICEF aims to help parents and partners better understand the importance of the earliest years of life on a child’s developing brain – and what they can do to support that critical process. In addition, the campaign seeks to generate demand from parents for greater time and support in the workplace by calling on governments and the private sector to redesign the workplace of the future by helping families with young children. For more information, please see: [https://www.unicef.org/parenting](https://www.unicef.org/parenting).

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SDG 8.7: ELIMINATION OF THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOUR, INCLUDING RECRUITMENT AND USE OF CHILD SOLDIERS

At the 2019 High-Level Political Forum (HLPF), the overarching theme will be Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality. Additionally, Sustainable Development Goal 8, Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all, is one of the six goals being examined in depth. SDG 8 Targets and Indicators address a number of priority areas for children and youth, including:

8.7 Take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms

Child labour deprives children of their childhood, and their future. Child labour is harmful to the physical, mental, social or moral development of a child, and interferes with their schooling. Economic vulnerability associated with poverty, risks and shocks, plays a key role in driving children to work. Child labour is both a cause and a consequence of poverty, reinforcing social inequality and discrimination. Nearly one in ten children globally are in child labour, which rises to nearly one in every five children in Africa.1 In its worst forms, child labour can result in slavery, sexual as well as economic exploitation, and death. Child labour reduced by just one per cent between 2008-2012.11 Progress amongst girls was 50 per cent less than progress made by boys, and maintaining current rates of progress will leave 121 million children still in child labour in 2025, of whom 52 million will be in hazardous work.10 Without specific investment and interventions, child labour will continue its upward trajectory.

Additionally, several tens of thousands of children are recruited by State and Non-State Actors and used as soldiers in armed conflicts around the world.12 Levels of significant and sustained harm experienced by children are inherent in both the training and the environment of military involvement. A ‘child associated with an armed force or armed group’ refers to ‘any person below 18 years of age who is or who has been recruited or used by an armed force or armed group in any capacity, including but not limited to children, used as fighters, cooks, porters, messengers, spies or for sexual purposes’. It does not only refer to a child who is taking or has taken a direct part in hostilities. Between 2014 and 2017, UNICEF and partners assisted over 42,000 children — 76 per cent of all children released from armed forces and groups — in reintegrating with their families and communities. In 2017 alone, this work to release and reintegrate 12,000 children occurred in 16 countries.

UNICEF urges all governments to:

- Support enforcement of legal standards as fundamental to reductions in child labour and child recruitment.9
- Promote an integrated approach to child labour: This includes strengthening parenting and addressing harmful social norms which perpetuate child labour, increasing access to quality education and supporting poverty reduction strategies, including social protection, which has been demonstrated to reduce child labour rates.
- Strengthen the reach, caliber and funding of the social service workforce: Preventing violence and abuse through strengthening parents and communities with support from front line social service workers is crucial to prevent child labour and to support families to make different choices wherever possible. This includes provision of education and promotion of the importance of civil registration in establishing when children are too young to work.
- Treat children primarily as survivors of grievous violations of their rights, including by adopting legislation that clearly refers to them first as children in need of protection. This includes refusing to succumb to national security narratives that may undermine the fact that children are primarily victims of recruitment into conflicts they did not create.
- Eliminate child detention for children associated with armed conflict: Thousands of children are deprived of their liberty every year for their alleged participation in hostilities. Detention can have a profound and negative impact on children’s long-term physical, emotional and cognitive development. There are many alternatives to detention including tracing and reunification with families, fostering and other alternative care mechanisms.
- Prioritize reunification: Humanitarian law provides that parties to a conflict must facilitate the reunion of families dispersed due to armed conflict. The Paris Principles and Commitments promote reintegration programmes regardless of whether a formal process for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration exists.
• Endorse the Safe Schools Declaration and implement the Guidelines on Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict: Schools must be safe spaces. Catch-up education should be available to all.

• Prevent violations against children affected by conflict beginning with the prevention of recruitment, conflict, and other grave violations against children.
  o Engage with the United Nations in-country to promote engagement by non-state actors to sign Action Plans for the release and reintegration of children.

MONITORING THE SITUATION OF CHILDREN, ADOLESCENTS AND YOUTH

Child labour data is available for most of the less industrialized countries, yet a number of middle-income countries have stopped collecting and publishing data, and high-income countries do not collect data on child labour. Countries, therefore, should continue to routinely collect quality data on the incidence of child labour. Additionally, further research needs to be undertaken on the implications for child labour in the context of broader global challenges, including climate change, migration, inequality, urbanization, and changes in the world of work. Disaggregated data is also needed to account for the children whose rights are violated by armed forces and armed groups that recruit children. Additionally, disaggregated data can identify governments and non-state armed groups that recruit children, via engagement with the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM), and use naming and shaming to provide a basis for peace negotiations.

• Member States should support and grant access to UNICEF for monitoring grave violations against children, including the recruitment and use of children.

INVESTING IN CHILDREN, ADOLESCENTS AND YOUTH

The social service workforce is fundamental to address the lack of awareness within communities about the negative consequences of child labour and promote social norms that make child labour unacceptable in local communities.

• Invest in the strengthening and expansion of the social service workforce to support access to prevention and response services.

• Establish social protection systems, including social floors to structurally prevent and respond to child labour, particularly in the absence of widely available decent work and/or in humanitarian contexts.

• Support for the reintegration of children associated with armed conflict usually takes years, and short term funding will not provide the necessary support for children whose rights have been violated or who know only armed conflict. Funding gaps and short-term funding pose challenges for the prevention of child recruitment into armed conflict, their reintegration, and conflict resolution.

• Establish and finance multi-year programmes to support those who are released or leave armed groups and armed forces and provide long-term alternatives for children at risk for recruitment or re-recruitment.

• Support and develop holistic reintegration programmes anchored to the national child protection system, enabling the social service workforce to link with the education, health, justice, and law enforcement systems, such that children can reintegrate into and contribute to their communities.

INCLUDING CHILDREN, ADOLESCENTS AND YOUTH

Evidence indicates that increased access to education has significantly reduced child labour, especially for girls. The importance of educated parents, particularly educated mothers who have benefitted from educational expansion and access to better opportunities, demonstrates that children are much more likely to be kept in school, when returns on investment are apparent.

• Invest in inclusive and quality education for all to raise awareness of the harm which child labour generates and to offer better life chances, particularly to girls.

Research and evidence indicate that armed groups use powerful narrative that offers children and adolescents a strong sense of identity as well as family income. Addressing the economic needs of the family and offering children and adolescents an alternative narrative, just as strong and powerful can make a difference and prevent recruitment of children.

• Invest in prevention interventions engaging children and adolescents that are inclusive and address the socio-economic needs of the entire family.

4 Data sources and methodologies are largely inadequate or absent so that the true number cannot be known.
5 A recent 48 country study demonstrated strong correlation between ratification of international legal standards and reductions in child labour incidence (UCW Understanding Trends in child labour 2017)
SDG 10: LEAVE NO CHILD BEHIND

At the 2019 High Level Political Forum (HLPF), the overarching theme will be Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality. Additionally, **Sustainable Development Goal 10**, Reduce inequality within and among countries, is one of the six goals being examined in depth. The issue of equality will therefore be central to 2019 HLPF discussions and outcomes. As governments align national plans, budgets, and monitoring efforts to the SDGs, UNICEF encourages countries to specifically strengthen efforts to leave no one, including no child, behind.

Inequality starts with the lottery of birth – who your parents are and where you are born – accounting for the vast majority of variation in the resources and opportunities available to human beings. The social and economic inequalities and disadvantages in early life increase the risk of having lower earnings, lower standards of health and lower skills in adulthood. Studies suggest that nationality and economic class can predict about 80% of an individual’s likely income throughout their lifetime, thus one’s chances in life are essentially determined at birth.

Discrimination based on age, gender, ethnic or racial group, age, disability category, sexual orientation or other factors serve to disadvantage some individuals in many different and often invisible ways, throughout their lives. These patterns of inequality get passed on to generation after generation. Therefore early interventions and investing in all children, especially the poorest and most marginalized, is central to breaking intergenerational poverty and inequality.

KEY ASKS

Achieving SDG 10 and the SDGs more broadly requires a deliberate strategy to reach the furthest behind, first. UNICEF encourages governments to monitor, report on and respond to the following issues:

**End child poverty.** Children make up nearly half of the people living in extreme poverty and child poverty in all its dimensions, monetary and multidimensional, which is a universal problem with lifelong consequences that perpetuate cycles of poverty and inequality (Goal 1: No Poverty indicator 1.2.2 and Goal 10: Reduced Inequalities indicator 10.2.1). A [UNICEF and Global Coalition to End Child Poverty Guide](https://www.unicef.org/childpoverty/en/) harnesses the expertise and knowledge to support national processes to achieve the SDG poverty targets.

**Implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all,** including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poorest and most vulnerable children and families (Goal 1: No Poverty indicator 1.3.1 and Goal 10: Reduced Inequalities target 10.4).

**Eliminate laws, policies and practices that discriminate against children,** including because of their gender, ethnic or racial group, age, migration status, disability, sexual orientation or other factors (Goal 10: Reduced Inequalities target 10.3).

**Ensure children with disabilities have access to services.** One in ten children globally are children with disabilities. Accessibility is a precondition for children with disabilities to live independently and participate fully and equally in society. The SDGs and the Habitat III commitments require schools, materials, transport and public places to be made accessible for children with disabilities (Goal 10: Reduced Inequalities target 10.2 and Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities).

**Build the resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations,** with special attention to families, women, children and those with disabilities, and reduce their exposure and vulnerability to climate-related extreme events and other economic, social and environmental shocks and disasters (Goal 13: Climate Action).

**Strengthen civil registration systems** that register every child immediately after birth. Birth registration often unlocks access to essential services throughout a child’s lifetime (Goal 16: Peace and Justice indicator 16.9.1).

**Include children in decision-making** and promote the meaningful participation of children in society by providing an environment that enables children to exercise their rights including to be heard without discrimination (Goal 16: Peace and Justice indicator 16.7.2).

**Achieve universal access to education** including for children in vulnerable situations and emergency settings. A child’s access to education unlocks critical knowledge and opportunity often necessary to fully participate in society (Goal 4: Quality Education).
MONITORING THE SITUATION OF CHILDREN, ADOLESCENTS AND YOUTH

An essential component towards combatting inequality begins with knowing where and why it exists. Disaggregated data that identifies most excluded and vulnerable groups of children and shows the different dimensions of inequality is vital for decision-makers to use in policy and program implementation and legislation. Member States are encouraged to:

** Carry out a data mapping exercise** to identify data gaps, identify existing data sources, identify indicators based on national priorities, set national targets, and develop a data strategy to monitor progress towards the SDGs.

** Collect and analyse data from different sources** to generate baseline estimates for SDG indicators. Improve capacity to collect and disaggregate data for disadvantaged children - to ensure no child is left behind (e.g. by age, sex, education, wealth quintile, migration or displacement status, ethnicity, disability status etc.)

**Implement new MICS household survey modules** including on child functioning (disabilities).

INVESTING IN CHILDREN, ADOLESCENTS AND YOUTH

Investing in children yields positive benefits to economies and societies. Since the foundation of an individual’s health and well-being is laid in early childhood, the most opportune time to break the cycle of poverty, or prevent it from beginning, is during that time. Child-related interventions yield relatively low financial costs and high returns – in terms of human lives as well as economic productivity – this makes a strong case for paying particular attention to children in economic policy and fiscal budgets in times of economic hardship, as well as in times of growth. Both the SDGs and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA) recognize the link between child and youth focused investments and growth. UNICEF works to support data and evidence generation for better and greater public investment in children, and encourages Governments to:

**Improve reporting on expenditures and programmes that have direct and indirect impacts on child and adolescent well-being.** Indicator 1.a.2. specifically calls to measure spending on essential services (education, health and social protection) as a percentage of total government spending. Relevant approaches include analysis of public expenditure that focuses on children and child-focused areas, child-spending markers and taxonomies, as well as established reporting practices on child-focused allocations under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

**Increase visibility and coherence of investments on new child and adolescent focused SDG priorities** that are of a cross-cutting nature but sit less easily within traditional sectoral budgets. Interventions in areas like child protection, gender equality, adolescent development, nutrition and early childhood development cut across sectors and are not always classified under sectoral budgets, which can result in gaps, duplication, poor coordination or omission.

**Adopt principles of results-based reporting to spending on children and adolescents, with a particular focus on equity and effectiveness, including gender equality.** Examples include tracking of spending that explicitly address geographic disparities of services for children and adolescents (quality and access) and inequities among different population groups in service provision or other matters.

This type of budget data, along with other targeted analysis of the costs and returns of investing in children, can be used to support decision making by Government Ministries, Ministries of Finance and parliamentary committees to influence allocation decisions and improve spending performance. Additional information on how UNICEF works with governments to achieve the best results for children from national budgets is set out in the Public Finance for Children Framework, including the use of sector and cross-cutting expenditure analysis, costing and planning tools for evidence generation and engagement in the national budget process.

INCLUDING CHILDREN, ADOLESCENTS AND YOUTH

To foster inclusion as well as ownership of the principles in the SDGs, UNICEF encourages national partners to involve children in the development of Voluntary National Review (VNRs) but also more broadly in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Effective and meaningful participation with children, adolescents and youth is a continuum of raising awareness, inspiring action, facilitating consultation and strengthening accountability:

**Build awareness to inspire action:** The SDGs rely on perception and behavior changes. Children and youth are often some of the most effective behavior and norm changers when they are engaged on issues such as ending stigma and discrimination. Children and young people should be educated and engaged on issues in the SDGs with the aim of deepening their understanding of how the goals relate to their communities and what actions they can take to help make a difference. Tools such as the World’s Largest Lesson provide free and translated materials for bringing the messages of the SDGs to the classroom through lesson plans and to the public through animations and posters. Comics Uniting Nations also provides free and translated comic books. Two comics that specifically teach inclusion are: Ali Finds a Way and Goats of Anarchy.

**Enable Accountability:** People’s feedback and perception data collected through participatory monitoring activities can assist in identifying left behind groups, barriers, and bottlenecks. Acting on these perspectives strengthens policy response and service delivery. Children and young people should be periodically consulted through on and offline means on the SDGs. Governments can utilize consultative tools such as mobile polling (see U-Report) and child and youth councils that help gather and act on the perspectives of young citizens.

Voluntary National Review Reports should feature the perspectives of children and youth on the status of the SDGs in their country, for instance by including child and youth written sections throughout the report and/or through a dedicated chapter. Some previous VNR presentations by Member States have also invited a child or youth representative to present a section at the High Level Political Forum.
### SDG 10.7: CHILDREN AFFECTED BY MIGRATION

At the 2019 High Level Political Forum (HLPF), the overarching theme will be *Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality*. Additionally, **Sustainable Development Goal 10, Reduce inequality within and among countries**, is under specific review and thus reporting states will also report on target 10.7 and indicator 10.7.2 relating directly to migration:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>Facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.7.2</td>
<td>Number of countries that have implemented well-managed migration policies</td>
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</table>

30 million children live outside their country of birth. Half of the world’s refugees are children. Tens of millions of children are also left behind by migrating parents. Making migration safe and empowering for children and young people is not only a challenge, but a tremendous opportunity. Well-managed migration that both addresses the drivers and mitigates against the risks of migration is at the heart of an equity-focused development agenda. The close link between sustainable development and international migration is also reflected in the Global Compacts for Migration and Refugees. Migrants make a significant contribution to inclusive growth and sustainable development – for instance, remittances are three times greater than official development assistance.

A dedicated focus on children affected by migration is therefore critical to meet the SDGs commitment to leave no one behind. Too often, migrant children are statistically invisible, excluded from national systems and discriminated against. The 2019 review is a not-to-be-missed opportunity to educate, advocate and support states in accelerating progress for all children, including children affected by migration, across the SDG agenda and ensure that migration policies are child-sensitive.

**INVESTING IN THE SDGS TO UPHOLD THE BEST INTERESTS OF CHILDREN AFFECTED BY MIGRATION**

The in-depth review of SDG 4, 8, 10, 13 and 16 in 2019, as well as of SDG 17 discussed every year, presents a unique opportunity to consider targeted investments across various goal areas that also benefit children affected by migration:

- **SDG 4 – Education**: Children affected by migration face additional barriers to accessing early childhood development, primary and secondary education and skills training. Challenges include lack of capacity in schools, language barriers and lack of recognition of certifications across borders. In crisis-affected communities, education is often the first service suspended and the last service restored. UNICEF encourages Member States to remove barriers to education for migrant and refugee children, ensure *safe places of learning*, and increase funding to education, including trained staff, to close the access gap and enable schools to foster inclusive learning.

- **SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth**: Three-quarters of the children who arrived in Italy across the Central Mediterranean route during the second half of 2016 report being held against their will or forced to work without pay. UNICEF encourages Member States to strengthen child protection systems, to build the capacity of frontline workers to identify child victims of trafficking and facilitate cross-border cooperation for eradicating forced and child labour, and enact labour migration policies that enable migrant workers to bring their families.

- **SDG 13 – Climate Action**: With the risk and frequency of natural disasters increasing, millions have been uprooted. Today, over 500 million children live in extremely high flood-risk zones and nearly 160 million children live in high or extremely high drought-risk zones. Developing child-sensitive adaption and resilience strategies and integrating displacement considerations into disaster preparedness can protect the most vulnerable, including internally displaced children.

- **SDG 16 – Peaceful Societies**: Tens of millions of children are uprooted from their homes by protracted conflict and can face different risks, including gender-based violence and trafficking. Enabling safe migration channels, allowing families to migrate together, strengthening child protection systems, ending the detention of children and providing identity documents can keep migrant or forcibly displaced children safe and contribute towards achieving target 16.2 and target 16.9. These actions also support SDG 5 – Gender Equality targets to end trafficking and sexual violence.

- **SDG 17 – Partnerships**: The very nature of migration means that no one state can manage it alone. Effective collaboration between governments, private sector and civil society can develop and scale-up solutions to the issues mentioned above. Data is another key component of this SDG, including partnerships and capacity-building to strengthen data collection and dissemination to support target 17.18.
INVESTING IN CHILDREN, ADOLESCENTS AND YOUTH

In addition to the SDGs mentioned above, achieving target 10.7 for and with children affected by migration or displacement, requires policy and financial investments that consider their specific needs across the SDG Agenda, including when investing in SDG 2 (Zero Hunger); SDG 3 (Health) and in particular access to psychosocial and mental health services; SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation); or SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities).

When countries dedicate social spending to strengthening child protection systems, school systems, early childhood programmes and other services to protect and empower migrant children, they establish a foundation of support and care. When countries invest in migrant-inclusive and robust health systems, all children – and society at large -- benefit. Investments are particularly needed to build the capacity of frontline workers, like social workers, teachers, and nurses, to assess the needs and implement standards of care and protection. These investments help realise not only migrant children’s rights and wellbeing, but also the tremendous potential of migration to sustainable development.

KEY ASKS

UNICEF urges governments and partners take the following actions as part of their SDG implementation: Adopt action plans and invest in the implementation of the child-specific commitments in the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and the Global Compact on Refugees.

Implement a six-point Agenda for Action for Children Uprooted:

- Protect migrant children from exploitation and violence by investing in strong local, national and regional child protection systems, including (i) training of social workers; (ii) appointment of qualified guardians; (iii) legal assistance; (iv) case management; and (v) partnerships with civil society and faith based organisations.
- End the detention of children because of their immigration status by introducing practical alternatives, such as foster care, supervised independent living, or other family- or community-based living arrangements.
- Keep families together and reduce statelessness through stronger policies to prevent the separation of children from their families in transit; faster procedures for reunification, including in destination countries; and through providing all children with a legal identity and registering them at birth.
- Provide comprehensive care and access to services for migrant children through strengthening the capacity of education and healthcare systems (supporting SDG 3 - Health and target 3.8 for universal health coverage), enacting referral mechanisms and implementing firewalls between social services and immigration authorities.
- Protect migrant children from discrimination and xenophobia by speaking out against discrimination, regulating hate speech, enacting hate crimes legislation and strengthening the role of human rights institutions.
- Address the causes that uproot children from their homes through policy and financial investments across all SDG areas, e.g., social protection, youth employment, climate action, peace and justice.

MONITORING THE SITUATION OF CHILDREN, ADOLESCENTS AND YOUTH

UNICEF urges governments to collect age-- and sex-disaggregated data and report on all children in national reviews, including non-national children. Reports on SDGs should cover key issues relating to children affected by migration, and the data collection and analysis efforts should be coordinated both within countries and across borders, per a recent call to action for better data by UNICEF and partners.

INCLUDING CHILDREN, ADOLESCENTS AND YOUTH

UNICEF urges governments to enable participation by young migrants in designing and implementing migration policies and programmes, and involve them in the monitoring and review process. Participation is key as children’s first-hand experiences can inform and strengthen national priorities to implement the SDGs, including target 10.7 on well-managed migration.

In addition to the importance of the participation of migrants, governments should work with the public and other partners to foster a public inclusive of migrants, starting with educating children, adolescents and youth on inclusivity. UNICEF encourages national partners to implement SDG-focused learning through the school curricula. The World Largest Lesson is an excellent resource to bring the SDGs to the classroom through multilingual educational content, including teaching materials on SDG 10 and target 10.8 (see specific lessons: Children on the move and Migration is Part of our Shared History).

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SDG 13: CLIMATE ACTION FOR CHILDREN AFFECTED BY CLIMATE CHANGE

At the 2019 High Level Political Forum (HLPF), the overarching theme will be Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality. Additionally, Sustainable Development Goal 13, Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts, is one of the six goals being examined in depth. The HLPF in combination with the Secretary General’s Climate Summit in September 2019 provides a particular opportunity to recognize and include children and young people as key stakeholders in climate change.

Climate change and environmental degradation are equity issues that undermine the rights of every child, especially the most disadvantaged. As the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) recently reported, urgent action is needed to combat climate change and its impacts on current and future generations.

It is more and more evident that realizing children’s rights as embedded throughout the SDGs – access to economic opportunity, nutrition, heath, education, equity, water, energy, and peace – are contingent on taking action to address and adapt to climate change.

UNICEF encourages governments conducting a Voluntary National Review (VNR) to ensure their reports on SDG 13 are:

- Linked to national plans, budgets and accountability frameworks;
- Informed by relevant, disaggregated data, including on children;
- Inclusive of children’s voices on climate, energy and environmental issues, for instance through conducting consultations with children and youth;
- Action-oriented on the following priority areas for child rights and climate:

Reduce greenhouse gases and promote sustainable energy investments so that global temperature increases are limited ideally to 1.5 degrees Celsius. Greenhouse gas emissions are rapidly increasing and the world is not on track to meet its commitments to avoid global warming. It is certain that the current and future generations of children and young people will bear the brunt of the pernicious effects of climate change. Ambitious targets and actions to curb emissions will benefit hundreds of millions of children. Prioritising sustainable energy and low carbon solutions, such as decentralized solar energy, cleaner cooking fuels and energy conservation practices in public facilities, will not only assist in curbing greenhouse gas emissions but simultaneously ensure access to clean, reliable and modern energy services.

Address environmental degradation and reduce the effect of harmful pollutants on children: Emerging and alarming evidence is beginning to show the direct impact of air pollution on children. Exposure to toxic indoor and outdoor air pollution kills over 600,000 children under the age of 15 every year. Every day approx. 93 per cent of children under 15 – a full 1.8 billion young people - breathe dangerously polluted air. Increasing evidence suggests it also affects children’s cognitive development. This is further perpetuating poverty and inequity, with the most disadvantaged children and communities often at the greatest risk. Air pollution is exacerbated by the use of fossil fuels – a key driver of climate change.

Accelerate and scale up investment to strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity of children to climate impacts. The SDGs and Sendai framework specifically reference the urgent need to strengthen resilience to natural and climate related disasters and shocks (drought, floods, epidemics and storms). Climate adaptation, climate related disaster risk reduction measures must be implemented for and with children: climate resilient school structures in vulnerable zones, youth dialogue to enhance social cohesion, and participatory climate risk mappings are examples of working for and with children to achieve climate resilient development in risk-prone settings. Ensure climate-disaster response includes investments in child protection, education, health, nutrition and WASH.

Reduce inequity to promote resilience to climate change. The poorest children and their families will be most affected by climate change. Programmes to develop policy, raise awareness, build institutional capacity and support communities to adapt to climate change and strengthen their resilience must prioritize the poorest and most marginalized children, families and communities who are disproportionately affected. Reducing inequities now – providing access to safe water and adequate sanitation; good nutrition and food security; strong and accessible health systems; and well-functioning child and social protection systems – will give disadvantaged children a better adaptive capacity to cope with climate impacts.
MONITORING THE SITUATION OF CHILDREN, ADOLESCENTS AND YOUTH

To accelerate strategies and actions on the above priority areas for children and climate action, data is necessary. Climate change related data/evidence on areas most relevant to children is scarce, specifically on interlinkages between climate and child health, nutrition, education, displacement, migration, etc. Collecting and disaggregating SDG 13 Targets and Indicators is vital in understanding how and where children are being left behind in the context of addressing climate change.

INVESTING IN CHILDREN, ADOLESCENTS AND YOUTH

Recent estimates suggest that the cost of climate inaction is trillions of dollars more costly — and deadly — than the financial costs of cutting carbon pollution.¹ Increasing the money available to deal with climate change is both urgent and necessary. It will provide the resources to protect children from the worst impacts of climate change through adaptation, and will also ensure a safer future for all generations through low carbon development. Long-term climate finance must be distributed and targeted in such a way that those most vulnerable, such as children, benefit from adequate investment to cope with the growing impacts of climate change. UNICEF encourages governments to:

- Allocate climate funding (domestic/international) to promote and scale up investments/actions for children.
- Work in partnership with the private sector to develop and incentivize innovative approaches and technologies to benefit children most at risk from climate impacts and environmental degradation.

INCLUDING CHILDREN, ADOLESCENTS AND YOUTH

We encourage governments to improve climate education, awareness and participation especially among children and adolescents. Personal behavior changes are central to popularizing more sustainable choices around the globe -- including through household energy use, transportation and food choices, recycling and waste-reduction behaviors, and other climate-friendly decisions.

Oftentimes, educating and engaging children, adolescents, and youth leads to wider household and community changes and therefore is a critical intervention to result in wide-scale shifts. Empowering young people with knowledge can also lead to innovations -- including through technology or creative approaches to reduce greenhouse gases or otherwise promote climate action.

Their education and engagement on the issue as current change agents and future decision makers, entrepreneurs, consumers, teachers and parents will help ensure the sustainability of our efforts.

Children, adolescents and young people can already be some of the fiercest advocates for climate action and environmental sustainability. Time and again, young people have voiced their concern about climate change. A UNICEF poll conducted among more than 5000 children and adolescents across over 60 countries found that almost 80% considered climate change to be one of the most pressing issues facing them today. This signals an unprecedented level of interest and willingness among children, adolescents and youth to take and help shape climate action.

UNICEF encourages national partners to involve and empower children, especially the poorest and most vulnerable, in processes regarding the implementation and review of SDG 13 through participatory means including to:

- Integrate children’s interests, perspectives and needs into national climate change policies (e.g., National Climate Change Adaptation Plans, Nationally Determined Contributions). Identify the children most at risk, solicit their feedback and strengthen their resilience.
- Establish formal mechanisms to support children’s and young people’s full and meaningful participation in discussions and decision-making on climate change, with a particular focus on elevating the voices of the most vulnerable such as adolescent girls, displaced and migrant children/youth and those with disabilities.
- Enhance efforts on education (formal/in-formal) and life-skills for living in a climate-resilient and low carbon world among children and youth and prepare current and future generations for shifting societies towards sustainable practices and in advocating for the environment. The World’s Largest Lesson is an existing tool for bringing the SDGs into the classroom through freely available, multilingual creative and educational content. Comics Uniting Nations also develops supplementary educational materials on the SDGs through comic books.

¹ WHO, 2018
SDG 16: PROTECT AND INCLUDE CHILDREN FOR PEACEFUL, JUST AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES

At the 2019 High Level Political Forum (HLPF), the overarching theme will be *Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality*. Additionally, Sustainable Development Goal 16: *Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels*, is one of the six goals being examined in depth.

Peace, stability, human rights and effective governance, based on the rule of law are central to the realization of child rights; and a prerequisite for sustainable development. SDG 16 includes several explicit targets for children (16.2 on violence against children; and 16.9 on legal identity for all, including birth registration); as well as many others where child rights are implicit, such as 16.3 on the rule of law and equal access to justice, 16.6 on strong institutions; and 16.7 on inclusive societies.

**PEACEFUL SOCIETIES**

High levels of violence, conflict, insecurity, crime and exploitation have a profound impact on sustainable development. Millions of children around the globe experience emotional, physical and sexual violence in homes, communities, schools, workplaces, detention centres, and institutions online. In 2016, around 12 million children had migrated across borders or been forcibly displaced due to conflict, violence and natural disasters. An estimated 23 million children were living in internal displacement – 16 million as a result of conflict. As children are particularly vulnerable to long-term effects of violence, exploitation and abuse, they require special protection and attention. UNICEF urges all governments to:

- Establish high-level oversight of a coordinated national agenda to end all forms of violence against children and invest in child protection.
- Reform laws to prohibit all forms of violence against children in all settings.
- Strengthen child protection systems and the social services workforce across all sectors – social welfare, justice, health, education and security.
- Strengthen capacity amongst children, parents/caregivers, communities and leaders/decision makers to challenge harmful attitudes and behaviors, and adopt positive social norms and practices.

**JUST SOCIETIES**

Strengthening the rule of law and promoting human rights is key to establishing peaceful and inclusive societies. While the right to access justice applies equally to children and adults, it is often overlooked in relation to children in contact with the law - whether as alleged offenders, victims or witnesses. For children to exercise their rights in a meaningful way, effective representation and remedies must be available to enforce their rights and seek reparation.

To be able to claim their rights, a person’s very existence needs to be recognized by the state. The right to be recognized as a person before the law through a legal identity is a prerequisite for being able to exercise all other rights. A birth certificate - as proof of legal identity - is critical to ensuring that children can enjoy their rights from birth. An effective civil registration system, including universal birth registration, is essential to ensuring that all citizens and especially children are recognized before the law, have a nationality; and can access basic social services and be protected from violence, abuse and exploitation including child labour, sexual violence and exploitation, recruitment into armed groups, trafficking, child marriage and prosecution as an adult in criminal proceedings. Birth registration, as an essential component of a country’s civil registry, also strengthens the quality of statistics, aiding planning and government efficiency and investment. UNICEF urges all governments to:

- Strengthen civil registration systems that register every child immediately after birth.
- Identify and address disparities in birth registration between different groups.
- Ensure universal access for children to independent justice systems.
- Reduce the use of deprivation of liberty for children through diversion and the use of alternatives to detention.
- Establish specialized, child-friendly procedures at all points where children are in contact with the law.
INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES

Inclusive societies ought to engage people as equal participants in decision-making, policy-making and law-making processes, implementation and scrutiny. Like adults, children have the right to express their views freely in all matters affecting them. This requires that those views be heard and given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity. Their effective participation can enrich decision-making processes. Children should not be excluded from processes and decisions that affect them and society more broadly based on their age, gender, disability, or other status. UNICEF urges all governments to:

- Promote the meaningful participation of children in society and provide an environment that enables the child to exercise their right to be heard.
- Guarantee the rights of all children in their territory, without discrimination.
- Take urgent action to combat xenophobia and discrimination against disadvantaged groups of children.

MONITORING THE SITUATION OF CHILDREN, ADOLESCENTS AND YOUTH

Addressing all forms of violence, abuse and exploitation of children requires increased investment in data collection and analysis to improve the evidence base for policy making, planning and programming and in working towards filling information gaps. Disaggregated data (e.g. by age, sex, education, wealth quintile, migration or displacement status, ethnicity, disability status) are critical to identify and track the most excluded and vulnerable groups of children.

Of the 20 indicators agreed for measurement of progress towards SDG 16, eight target children, or explicitly require age disaggregation. UNICEF urges all governments to collect and analyze disaggregated data, especially on groups of children particularly vulnerable to violence, abuse and exploitation.

Additionally, UNICEF encourages countries to build or improve national data collection and monitoring systems on violence against children to generate reliable evidence to guide policy and budgeting and for designing, monitoring and evaluating prevention and response programmes and services.

INVESTING IN CHILDREN, ADOLESCENTS AND YOUTH

Opening up budgets and promoting participatory budget process is a key component in achieving effective, accountable and transparent institutions. When citizens have a say in policy formulation and resource allocation, it contributes to the allocative efficiency of national public financial management and enables better tracking of expenditure that is responsive to children’s concerns and good value for money. This is especially important for child protection related services, most of which are provided locally, making it harder to track use of public funds without feedback from concerned families and communities. UNICEF urges all governments to ensure an open and transparent budgeting process, prioritize resource allocation for programmes that further the realization of children’s rights; and establish measures to track and monitor public expenditures for children.

Countries are encouraged to follow the guidance from the General Comment No. 19 on the best possible use of public budgets for realizing child rights. UNICEF stands ready to provide assistance through its Public Finance for Children work.

INCLUDING CHILDREN, ADOLESCENTS AND YOUTH

UNICEF urges all governments to promote the meaningful participation of children in society and to provide an environment that enables the child to exercise their rights (including to be heard) without discrimination. The process in developing Voluntary National Reviews provides an opportunity to consult and act on the voices of children on issues relating to SDG 16.

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1^A Call to Action, Protecting Children on the Move starts with better Data, UNICEF, IOM, UNHCR, Eurostat, OECD, February 2018.
SDG TARGET 16.2: END ALL FORMS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

Goal area 16 includes Target 16.2 – End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence and torture of children – which is of critical importance to both the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and UNICEF’s mandate. As Governments are reporting SDG progress and plans, including for SDG 16.2, there is an opportunity to strengthen the connections between global reporting and national implementation.

Millions of children around the globe experience emotional, physical and sexual violence in homes, communities, schools, workplaces, detention centers, and institutions and online. Close to 300 million (3 in 4) children aged 2 to 4 experience violent discipline by their caregivers on a regular basis. Worldwide, around 15 million adolescent girls aged 15 to 19 have experienced forced sex in their lifetime. Every 7 minutes, somewhere in the world, an adolescent is killed by an act of violence. Around half of students aged 13 to 15 worldwide – around 150 million – report having experienced peer-to-peer violence in and around school. The ambition in SDG target 16.2 to end violence against children is clearly relevant and necessary.

Targets to end violence against children are hollow however unless they are matched by a strong commitment to action. There is a legal and moral obligation to act, and a growing body of evidence from around the world that shows how societies can be made safer for children. With implementation of the right laws, systems, policies and investments, as well as adequate monitoring and evaluation and robust public education and campaigning, significant and sustained reductions in violence can be achieved.

KEY ASKS

To achieve Target 16.2, progress must be driven from the national level. Governments must lead and be supported to implement multi-pronged evidence-based strategies to prevent and end violence.

UNICEF urges all governments to:

- Establish high-level oversight of a coordinated national policy agenda to end violence against children.
- Implement and reform laws to ensure the prohibition of all forms of violence against children in all settings.
- Strengthen national coordination efforts to implement multisectoral programmes to prevent and respond to violence against children, underpinned by a robust social services workforce.
- Promote norms that do not accept violence against women and children, by building capacity and promoting participation among communities, parents/caregivers and children to challenge harmful behaviors, and adopt positive norms.
- Mobilize and invest resources in scaling up proven, effective interventions, and those with promise of innovation.
- Monitor implementation of Target 16.2 through investment in the collection of quality, timely and disaggregated evidence on violence against children, and integration of data into national statistics systems and strategies.

MONITORING THE SITUATION OF CHILDREN, ADOLESCENTS AND YOUTH

UNICEF urges all Governments to prioritize the collection, analysis, dissemination and use of disaggregated data for key SDG indicators. This includes strengthening systems to collect administrative data on incidents of violence reported to authorities or service providers and collecting data on the prevalence and circumstances of violence through dedicated violence against children surveys or through the inclusion of modules to capture violence against children in other national household surveys.

16.2.1: Proportion of children aged 1-17 years who experienced any physical punishment and/or psychological aggression by caregivers in the past month.

UNICEF’s global databases include data for children aged 1-14 years. National statistical offices are required to expand this indicator to include children up to 17 years of age; methodological work is ongoing to assess whether modifications are needed to capture information relevant also for older adolescents between the ages of 15 and 17. Disaggregation by age and sex is required and disaggregation by household wealth, place of residence, and geographic location are also recommended.
There is currently no established best practice for measuring and producing statistics on the sensitive issue of sexual violence that has been agreed upon internationally. As a result, different approaches have been developed to gather data that has made comparisons between countries problematic. Underreporting on experiences of sexual violence generally and particularly among boys, is a challenge. Specialized approaches to ensure safe, ethical and confidential disclosure, especially among children, need to be built into surveys, which must also include a referral process. For more information on how UNICEF supports data collection for child protection please see here.

### INVESTING IN CHILDREN, ADOLESCENTS AND YOUTH

Failing to prevent and effectively respond to violence against children can have lifelong impacts on health, well-being and attitudes towards family and relationships, which can perpetuate the cycle of violence. The consequences of violence against children may place an important economic burden on society – estimated at up to USD$ 7 trillion each year.\(^{v}\) However, in 2015, less than 0.6 per cent of Official Development Assistance (ODA) was allocated to ending violence against children.\(^{vi}\) In terms of national budgets, the financial resources made available to support State’s obligations to protect children from violence are rarely perceptible.

UNICEF urges all Governments to establish or strengthen tracking of resource allocation for child protection as a necessary first step to assess the degree to which children’s right to protection from violence is realized. Depending on the country context, such mechanisms could include: a) a method of tracking the budget allocated to support implementation of national plans or strategies on children protection, b) a record/report of activities funded as part of the national plan in the past financial year; or c) a public expenditure tracking mechanism for investment in prevention and response to violence against children. Countries and donors are encouraged to use available tools to advance VAC (replace with Violence Against Children) results through the best use of ODA and public budgets.

### INCLUDING CHILDREN, ADOLESCENTS AND YOUTH

For national efforts to reach Target 16.2, they must tackle social acceptance of violence against children, including harmful attitudes and behaviors that exist among policy and law makers, government officials, front-line workers and communities; legislation which condones or fails to uphold violence; and lack of child-friendly reporting mechanisms.

Greater public awareness and stronger participation of children and adolescents, in particular in and around schools, and online, are key to the development of prevention strategies, better reporting and promoting positive social norms. As such, ending violence against children is an organizational priority for UNICEF, with sharpened focus and campaigning on child and adolescent participation to end violence in and around schools in 2018-2019.

To support child and youth awareness, action and meaningful participation on the topic of ending violence in and around schools, UNICEF’s partners -- the World’s Largest Lesson and Comics Uniting Nations -- have developed two tools to bring the principles of SDG 16 to children:

- A ‘Safe to Learn’ lesson plan for classes to learn about school based violence and discuss solutions.
- The ‘School Superhero Comic Contest’ asks children and youth to develop a superhero that can end violence in schools. The winner will develop a full comic book featuring their winning superhero to then raise awareness about the issue of violence in and around schools.

UNICEF urges all Governments to co-create powerful social change to end violence against children; and promote positive, protective social norms and practices. These efforts should be linked with legislative reform, for example, in the case of corporal punishment against children, to ensure a comprehensive prohibition in all settings – currently achieved in just 53 countries worldwide. Efforts should systematically include the participation and empowerment of children and adolescents, especially for identifying and addressing unequal power dynamics, wherever they may occur in the home, school or community — and within all contexts where violence can happen. All efforts must be underpinned by coordinated multi-partner action, including with the Office of the Special Representative to the Secretary-General on Violence Against Children and the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children and other partners, and draw on the common package of evidence-based strategies – INSPIRE: Seven strategies for ending violence against children, which provides the first globally agreed set of actions to meet SDG targets for effective prevention of and response to violence against children.

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\(^{1}\) UNICEF, A Familiar Face: Violence in the lives of children and adolescents, 2017.


\(^{5}\) Overseas Development Institute and ChildFund Alliance, The costs and economic impact of violence against children, 2014.
