



8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH



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KEY ASKS FOR 2020 SDG VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REVIEWS

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

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. 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. 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, though poor data on this topic presents a challenge in defining more accurate numbers. 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.



KEY ASKS

- **Support enforcement of legal standards as fundamental to reductions in child labour and child recruitment:** 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).
- **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*² and implement the *Guidelines on Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict*³:** 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.**
 - Support the revisions and implementation of three complementary sets of guidance: the Paris Principles Steering Group's Field Handbook on Prevention of Child Recruitment, Release and Reintegration; the Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Emergencies; and Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Standards.
 - 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.



MONITOR -- THE IMPORTANCE OF DISAGGREGATED DATA COLLECTION, ANALYSIS AND USE

- **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.



INVEST -- SOCIAL SPENDING AND PROGRESS ON RESULTS FOR CHILDREN, ADOLESCENTS & 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.



ACTIVATE -- AWARENESS BUILDING & MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION OF CHILDREN, ADOLESCENTS & 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 indicate⁴ 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.

¹ [Global estimates of child labour: Results and trends, 2012-2016](#) International Labour Office (ILO), Geneva, 2017

² <https://ssd.protectingeducation.org/>

³ http://protectingeducation.org/sites/default/files/documents/guidelines_en.pdf

⁴ <https://unu.edu/children-and-extreme-violence>