PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS

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.

KEY ASKS

Advances in ending violence, promoting the rule of law, strengthening institutions and increasing access to justice are uneven and continue to deprive millions of their security, rights and opportunities as well as undermine the delivery of public services and broader economic development. Attacks on civil society are also holding back development progress. Renewed efforts are essential to move towards the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 16.

- **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 and online. Globally, the forcibly displaced population increased in 2017 by 2.9 million. By the end of the year, 68.5 million individuals were forcibly displaced worldwide as a result of persecution, conflict, or generalized violence. *The world’s forcibly displaced population remained yet again at a record high*. Children below 18 years of age constituted about half of the refugee population in 2017. 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. Even though 143 countries have reached universal or near universal birth registration, globally the average is just 73 per cent. *Fewer than half (46 per cent) of all children under the age of 5 in sub-Saharan Africa have had their births registered*. UNICEF urges all governments to:

  - Establish 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.

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

INVEST -- SOCIAL SPENDING AND PROGRESS ON RESULTS FOR CHILDREN, ADOLESCENTS & YOUTH
Opening up budgets and promoting participatory budget processes 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.

ACTIVATE -- AWARENESS BUILDING & MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION OF CHILDREN, ADOLESCENTS & 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 for preparing the 2020 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 or polls, 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 VNR report, including the number of young people involved in the process.
• Actively involve children, adolescents and youth, especially the poorest and most vulnerable, in local and national planning processes in development and humanitarian contexts through consultation and other participatory means, and as part of ongoing efforts to make children, adolescents and youth aware of these issues, inspire their positive action and expand the space for their participation in accountability mechanisms and activities. This should be 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. It 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), participatory theatre, intergenerational community dialogues, community & children’s radio, participatory video, school clubs, TV Education and child-participatory research.
• Provide spaces for children, adolescents and youth to learn about, discuss and take action on the SDGs, including Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions. UNICEF can support this effort 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. UNICEF’s Youth Activate Talk Methodology is also a platform from children to express their ideas on the SDGs through a variety of mediums.