



KEY ASKS

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SDG 10: ADDRESSING INEQUALITIES TO LEAVE 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. 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.

“In an era characterized by extreme inequality, the COVID-19 pandemic is a fundamentally disequalizing event. Its effects are expected to be most damaging for children in the poorest countries, on the poorest households within countries, and on girls within poorest households. This poses a monumental challenge to the principle underpinning the Sustainable Development Goals to leave no-one behind.”

[--Policy Brief by the UN Secretary-General : The Impact of COVID-19 on Children](#)

The onset and ongoing crisis of the global COVID-19 pandemic has only exacerbated the situation, especially for the most vulnerable children causing an immediate impact on children’s well-being, and medium to long-term challenges to recovery. Experience from previous outbreaks shows that epidemics exacerbate existing inequalities, including those based on economic status, ability, age and gender. An estimated 117 million additional children could fall into poverty as a result of the crisis. The number of children living in multidimensional poverty – without access to education, health, housing, nutrition, sanitation, or water – has soared to approximately 1.2 billion, due to the pandemic. Governments have significantly scaled up social protection response. However, further scale up and continuation of social protection support over the longer term is needed to address the projected deeper recession in 2020 and slower economic recovery in 2021. 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:



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- 1. End child poverty.** Child poverty, monetary and multidimensional, is a universal problem with lifelong consequences that perpetuate cycles of poverty and inequality. In almost every country in the world – rich and poor – children are more likely than adults to live in poverty, and their young age makes them more vulnerable to its effects. With children constituting half of the global poor, an explicit child focus is essential to ending poverty for good. (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](#) harnesses the expertise and knowledge to support national processes to achieve the SDG poverty targets.
- 2. 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).
- 3. Safeguard Social Spending:** The current COVID-19 crisis has greatly impacted children and it is crucial to safeguard social spending on health, education, social protection and other social sectors. Economic and fiscal policies should be embarked to protect the decades of investments in social sectors and to mitigate the consequences of the pandemic. Investment on

children should always be protected, during and after the COVID-19 crisis.

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).
5. **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).
6. **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).
7. **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).
8. **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).
9. **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).



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

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) and social transfer (social protection).



INVEST -- SOCIAL SPENDING AND PROGRESS ON RESULTS FOR CHILDREN, ADOLESCENTS & 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 opportune time to break the cycle of poverty, or prevent it from beginning, is during childhood. 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, including the COVID-19 crisis, 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. The SDG indicator 1.a.2 gives specific emphasis on investing and tracking social spending. UNICEF works to support data and evidence generation for better and greater public investment in children, and encourages Governments to:

- **Improve measurement and reporting on actual expenditure on social services and sectors that have an impact on alleviating and reducing child monetary and multidimensional poverty**, such as for example, social protection, education, health, early childhood care and education, nutrition, WASH and others. Given the COVID-19 crisis, it is important to monitor and track the consequences of economic and fiscal policies on children and vulnerable groups to better safeguard social spending.
- **Increase visibility and coherence of investments on child and adolescent-focused SDG priorities that are sector specific in**

nature as well as those that are cross-cutting nature. It is also key to protect and further support social spending as part of the COVID-19 stimulus measures, while adopting effective solutions to protect investments for children in any choices to be made during the next phase of the crisis.

- **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 (quality and access) and inequities among different population groups in access to public social services, or other matters.
- **Collaborate with National and International Development Partners and the Private Sector, to better expand resources to support national fiscal responses.** 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.



ACTIVATE -- AWARENESS BUILDING & MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION OF CHILDREN, ADOLESCENTS & 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 of children, adolescents and youth should be part of a continuum of raising awareness, inspiring action, facilitating consultation and strengthening accountability:

- **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 Edu-tainment and child-participatory research.
- **Provide spaces for children, adolescents and youth to learn about, discuss and take action on the SDGs, including Addressing Inequalities.** 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](#). Two comics that specifically teach inclusion and addressing inequalities are: [Ali Finds a Way](#) and [Goats of Anarchy](#). UNICEF's [Youth Activate Talk Methodology](#) is also a platform from children to express their ideas on the SDGs through a variety of mediums.



For more information, visit: <https://www.unicef.org/sdgs>