

10
REDUCED
INEQUALITIES

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 accounts for the vast majority of variation in the resources and opportunities available. Being on the lower spectrum of social and economic inequalities and facing severe 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, disabilities, sexual orientation and various other factors serve to disadvantage some individuals in many different and often invisible ways throughout their lives. These patterns of inequality persist from generation to generation. Therefore, early interventions and investing in all children, especially the poorest and most marginalized, is central to breaking [intergenerational poverty](#) and inequality.

The onset and ongoing global polycrises including the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, the war in Ukraine and economic downturns have only exacerbated existing inequalities, 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 epidemics show that inequalities - including those based on economic status, ability, age, and gender - are created or exacerbated. It is estimated that [100 million additional children](#) fell into poverty due to the COVID-19 crisis, a 10 per cent increase since 2019. Initially, governments significantly scaled up social protection responses. However, broader scale up and long-term commitment to social protection is needed to enable an inclusive recovery. Achieving SDG 10 and all of the SDGs more broadly requires a deliberate strategy to ensure "reaching the furthest behind" is the starting point not the finishing line. UNICEF encourages governments to monitor, report on and respond to the following issues:



KEY ASKS

- 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. 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 accelerate towards ending poverty for the good – starting with children and families who are the most vulnerable.
- 2. Implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all,** and achieve substantial coverage of the poorest and most vulnerable children and families by 2030 (Goal 1: No Poverty indicator 1.3.1 and Goal 10: Reduced Inequalities target 10.4).
- 3. Safeguard Social Spending.** The polycrises have greatly impacted children and it is crucial to safeguard social spending on health, education, social protection, and other social sectors. Economic and fiscal policies need to be enacted to protect the decades of investments in social sectors and to mitigate the consequences of the pandemic. Investments in children should always be protected, during and after crisis.
- 4. Eliminate laws, policies and practices that discriminate against children,** based on 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 economic, social, and environmental shocks and disasters including climate-related extreme events (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 are 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, existing data sources, indicators based on national priorities, to 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 AND YOUTH

The onset and ongoing global polycrises including the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, the war in Ukraine and economic downturns threaten to roll back years of progress on the SDGs including the risk that investments in child rights and well-being as articulated in the 2030 Agenda Outcome Document and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda will be deprioritized. To that end, UNICEF and our partners encourage governments to call for **urgent action to protect our children and to make specific commitments, including financial commitments, to realize this pledge**. Recognising the need to continue to invest in children to safeguard progress, in 2021, UNICEF issued [Financing an Inclusive Recovery for Children: A Call to Action](#). This calls on governments and the international community and the private sector to:

- **Safeguard** critical social spending and minimize the negative impacts of the economic crisis on people, children, ensuring children are last in line for budget cuts.
- **Ensure** the effective and efficient use of financial resources across social sectors for human capital development, maximizing coverage and impact for all children.
- **Identify** and **deploy** additional international and domestic financing options, using innovative approaches as necessary to direct adequate finance towards an inclusive recovery that protects children (especially the poorest and most marginalized), tackles inequalities (including those of gender that have been revealed and deepened by the pandemic), and sets a course for more resilient economies capable of responding to and withstanding future shocks.

Governments around the world have mobilized billions of dollars to save their economies. But there is another impending and devastating loss if we do not act: a lost generation of children. Progress towards the SDGs is slipping backwards, and children are the hardest hit. Not only does this have grave consequences for children now, but it is also a threat to their future and our shared humanity.

For more information on UNICEF's key asks on social spending on children, adolescents and young people in all settings including within the context of fragile and humanitarian contexts, please refer to the cross-cutting [SDG 2-pager entitled: "Invest – Social Spending and Progress on Results for children, Adolescents & Youth"](#) included in the SDG Support Package.