

UNICEF's renewed ambition to ending child poverty

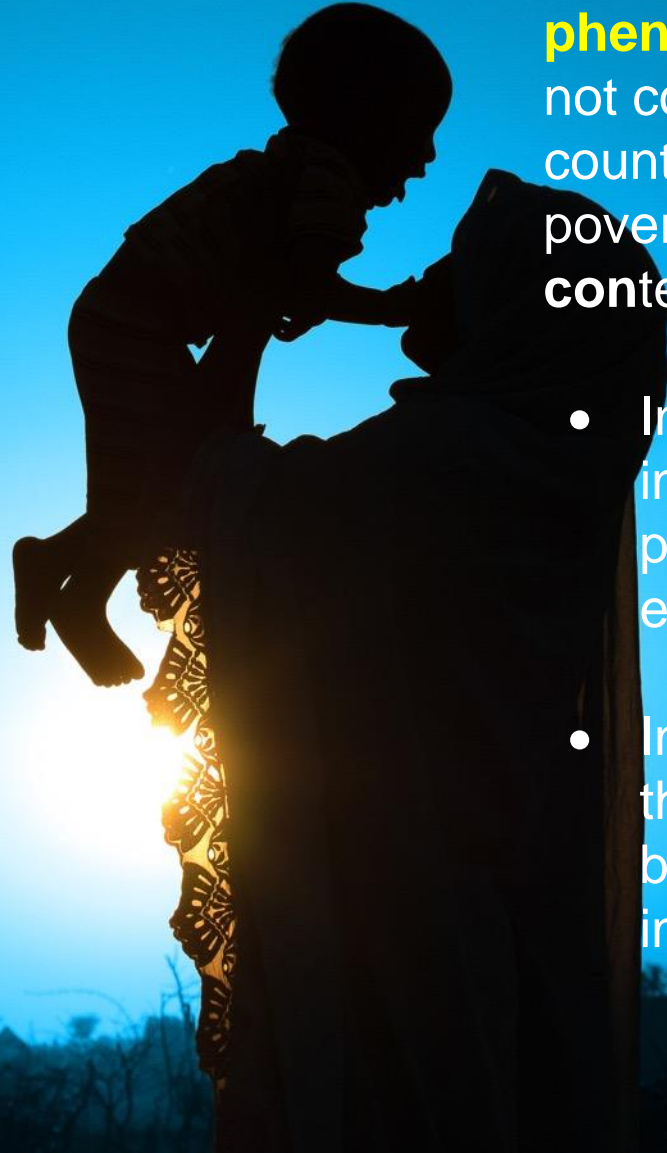
unicef 
for every child

Natalia Winder Rossi, Director
Social Policy and Social Protection

Inter-agency Expert Group Meeting on the Implementation of the
Third United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty
May 2023

Child Poverty: Global Challenge

- **1 billion** children worldwide are living in multidimensional poverty
- 1 in 6 children live in extreme monetary poverty
- Extreme child poverty is increasingly concentrated in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia



- Child poverty is a **global phenomenon**. Child poverty is not confined to low-income countries; most children living in poverty are in **middle income contexts**
 - In the European Union, one in four children live at risk of poverty and social exclusion
 - In many OECD countries, the depth as well as breadth of poverty has increased in recent years.

Exclusion and long-term impacts

Severe and long-lasting consequences of growing up in poverty:

- Less access to health care; twice as likely to die in childhood
- More likely to experience malnutrition and stunting and wasting; impact on cognitive and physical development and their life-long earnings.
- Less likely to complete primary or secondary school

Groups of children who are particularly vulnerable to poverty:

- Households raising children with **disabilities**; **displaced** and migrant families
- **Girls and women**; disproportionately represented in informal jobs
- Children in **fragile and humanitarian crises**
 - It is estimated that by 2030 up to two-thirds of the world's extreme poor could live in contexts of fragility, conflict, and violence



COVID-19, Climate and Conflict: main drivers of poverty

- At onset of the pandemic: 2 out of 3, or 76% of households with many children reported experiencing total income loss, versus 55% of households with no children (WB/UNICEF)
- An **100** million additional children were living in multidimensional poverty at the end of 2021, as a result of the pandemic.
- Impacts of **war in Ukraine** globally + Eastern Europe and Central Asia
 - An additional 10 million people – including about **4 million children** – will be pushed into poverty
- **NEW PROFILES** of children in poverty:
 - Increase in **urban areas**
 - Among those with **more basic assets**,
 - Non-agriculture sectors and care economy





Limited but some Progress before COVID...

- The SDGs provided the first global commitments on eliminating child poverty
- Important progress on child poverty reduction, prior to the pandemic – albeit a slow one:
 - 30 million fewer children were living in extreme poverty in 2017 compared to 2013
 - In the 20-year period between 2000 and early 2020, multidimensional child poverty fell in developing countries from around 70% to 45%.
- In many countries child poverty has reduced drastically: eg: Nepal, Mongolia, Sierra Leone, Lesotho
- **BUT,** poverty reduction has been slower for children
 - Extreme poverty is becoming increasingly concentrated among large households with young children.
 - **Overall message: an ever-increasing share of the global poor are children.**

Case is clear; investments are still not enough



- Slow commitment to **monitoring** child poverty
- **Too little, too late**
 - Per capita expenditure on children is lowest in earlier years
 - Expenditure in LICs concentrated in education; children under 6 do not benefit from public support
- Absorption capacity and national and subnational levels
- Limited **alignment** of climate, humanitarian and development financing
- Limited investments in **preparedness** across social sectors
- **Trade-offs** between climate adaption and poverty reduction not always explicitly
- **Debt repayments** outweigh education, social protection and health combined*

Challenges: Social Protection*

Social protection is a key policy lever for reducing child poverty
Critical pillar of COVID-19 response, and multiple crises. BUT **critical gaps** remain:

Coverage

- **Children:** including those in specific groups such as children on the move, ethnic groups, urban areas, disability and fragile contexts
 - 1.5 billion children below the age of 15 year currently have no access to social protection
 - Progress has stalled since 2016.

Sustainable Financing Gap

- Current fiscal space allowed for an unprecedented but **short-term response**
- Expenditure remains far too low to fill the financing gap for social protection for children, with upper-middle-income countries spending just 0.5 per cent and lower-income countries 0.1 per cent of GDP on social protection for children.

Adequacy

- Disaster risk/ Risk informed and shock responsive systems
- Programming in Urban areas
- Going beyond UCTs/CCTs: *Care economy, health insurance, other?



**More than a billion reasons:
The urgent need to build
universal social protection
for children**

Second ILO–UNICEF joint report on social protection for children



Opportunities

Ending child poverty is a **policy choice**

We know what works to address and end child poverty:

- Having clear national support for ending child poverty, including routine measurement and including child poverty as appropriate in national budgets, policies and laws.
- Improving universal access to quality **social services**, such as health care , nutrition, WASH, and education, particularly for children living in poverty
- Expanding inclusive and shock-responsive **social protection systems** and programmes, including child benefits, paid maternity and parental leave, childcare services, and policies that enable women to work in the formal and informal economy.
- Promoting a decent work and inclusive growth agenda.

Momentum: Global Accelerator on Social Protection and Jobs for Just Transitions



Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions

High-Level Summary¹

¹ The following agencies contributed to the development of this document: ILO, IOM, ITC, ITU, The Executive Office of the UN Secretary-General, UN Women, UNDCO, UNDP, UNEP, UNICEF, WFP, and WHO.

The accelerator:

- *An SG initiative that aims to support the creation of 400 million decent jobs, the extension of social protection to the 4 billion people*
- *Strong focus on green transitions*
- *Strengthen effective and coordinated multilateral cooperation.*
- *agreed implementation plan, a strong interagency coordinating body in place*

Next steps:

- *development of detailed roadmaps at the national level in possible pathfinder countries,*
- *the identification of new pathfinder countries committed to accelerating progress*
- *the development of interagency structures for the technical support facility.*

The success of the accelerator depends on strong country-level leadership and vision.



unicef 
for every child

Muchas gracias