

## **Progress in accelerating global actions for a world without poverty and implementation of the System-wide Plan of Action for the Third United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2018-2027): UNICEF, June 2019**

Towards the aim of achieving the SDG Goal of eradicating extreme poverty and implementing national social protection measures for all, UNICEF supports countries to address child poverty through expanding social protection programmes and improving the equity of public expenditure, so that disadvantaged children are better covered by government investments in health, education and social protection – as outlined in the key actions steps of the UN Plan of Action for the Third United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty.

### **Action step b: Expanding social protection**

Key focus: In line with the *Third United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty* Action step on *Expanding social protection systems to underpin inclusive poverty reducing development*, UNICEF has placed increased emphasis in 2018 and 2019 on the rapid expansion of child and family benefits for children, including the progressive realization of universal child grants as a practical means to rapidly increase coverage.

In 2018, 38.4 million children benefitted from social protection interventions supported by UNICEF. In general, a positive trend of expanding cash transfers for children can be witnessed in recent years – yet in many countries, social protection programmes for children struggle with limited coverage, inadequate benefit levels, fragmentation and weak institutionalization. It also emphasizes the need to extend fiscal resources for social protection for children and that universal approaches to child and family benefits are part of a social protection system that connects to other crucial services beyond cash (for example health care, child care and education services) and addresses life-cycle risks.

Inter-agency convergence and collaboration: UNICEF and ILO increasingly collaborate for the joint objective of expanding social protection coverage. Together with ODI, UNICEF and ILO organized a high-level conference in 2019 on universal child grants – bringing together national governments and policy practitioners, researchers and the international community around this importance issue. In addition, UNICEF and the ILO published a joint report in 2019 titled “*Towards universal social protection for children: Achieving SDG 1.3*”, and by working together to produce this report both organizations shed light on how the move towards universal social protection should, and can, better encompass the rights, concerns and specific issues of children and their families.

UNICEF is an active member of the Social Protection Interagency Coordination Board (SPIAC-B) chaired by ILO and World Bank. Under the auspices of SPIAC-B, UNICEF is contributing to the development of social protection assessment tools as part of Interagency Social Protection Assessment Working Group. UNICEF has actively supported the development of the Core Diagnostic Instrument for Social Protection (CODI) and its roll out in many countries. UNICEF is also part of the steering committee on Universal Social Protection initiative (USP2030) to promote and advocate for the realization of universal social protection, focusing on universal child benefits.

### **Action step c: Human capability development - addressing the non-income forms of poverty**

Key focus: Children are over-represented among the poorest people, and UNICEF continually highlights that **a child focus is an important means to address overall poverty** and promotes the importance of specifically measuring child poverty, in all its dimensions (as outlined in SDG 1.2.2). In 2018 UNICEF continued increasing our knowledge of the multidimensional nature of child poverty, including its depth and severity, and the actions needed to tackle all forms of deprivations.

The push of the SDGs is evident in this regard, more countries than ever are now measuring and monitoring child poverty, both monetary and multidimensional. UNICEF mapping shows that in 2018, 55 countries had established multidimensional poverty measurement and reporting processes, and 74 countries had established routine monetary child poverty measurement and reporting processes, a significant increase from preceding years.

Inter-agency convergence and collaboration: In relation to monitoring and reporting on the indicators for the poverty eradication-related SDG Goals, UNICEF and the ILO, as well as the World Bank collaborate on developing estimates on access to social protection, focusing on children and adolescents. This collaboration includes analysis of survey

data, improving survey data collection and the use of administrative data. This work contributes to the monitoring and equity focused disaggregation of SDG 1.3. Additionally, UNICEF, UNDP and the World Bank form an Inter-agency working group supporting countries with the reporting of SDG 1.2.2.

In many countries multidimensional poverty analysis is a joint UN exercise, for example in Trinidad and Tobago regional consultations in 2018 were conducted under the Joint UNICEF-UNDP Programme on Multidimensional Poverty, to capture community input on poverty — including the voices of children — to inform the development of the National Poverty Reduction Strategy.

Lastly, UNICEF collaborates with numerous UN agencies to address the non-income dimensions of poverty, such as health, nutrition, water, sanitation and education. In health, for example, UNICEF led the process to establish an inter-agency Hub for Vaccination Acceptance and Demand that includes WHO, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Gates Foundation, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, John Snow Inc., and the Gavi Secretariat and civil society constituency. The hub aims to advance the understanding of ‘vaccination demand’ in a more rigorous, evidence-informed and holistic manner among partners, donors and key programme stakeholders.

#### Action step e: Reducing inequalities

There are key elements that the UN system needs to consider for the acceleration of poverty reduction, including increasing the fiscal space for poverty reduction (including progressive taxation as well as other measures) to divert resources to invest in children and their families living in poverty and addressing inequities not only between, but within countries. Likewise, the role and obligation of ODA to the acceleration of poverty reduction is crucial.

Government budgets are the most powerful tool available to reduce poverty and inequalities. UNICEF has placed increased emphasis on this area of work, including through inter-agency convergence and collaboration. UNICEF’s Public Finance for Children (PF4C) programme seeks to influence and support the mobilization, allocation and use of domestic financial resources to achieve greater, more equitable and sustainable results for children. If government budgets are insufficient, concentrated on better-off groups, or used poorly, the poorest children and their families are left behind. 2018 saw an acceleration of these efforts, including an increase in the countries which are analyzing and advocating that sufficient resources are allocated for child related policies and services, that spending is efficient, timely and effective, that resources are equitably distributed (with greater attention to disadvantaged group) and that children, adolescents and their families are empowered to participate in the budget process, for more transparent and accountable spending.

#### Action step g: Tackling poverty in fragile and humanitarian contexts

Key focus: Children living in countries that have experienced conflict and fragility are particularly vulnerable to poverty – nearly 58 per cent of children in such countries live in extremely poor households, versus 17 per cent of children in non-fragile countries.<sup>1</sup> This is particularly worrisome as growing numbers of countries worldwide are affected by both recurring disasters caused by natural hazards and protracted crises associated with fragility, conflict and violence. UNICEF and partners are increasingly involved in poverty reduction efforts in these fragile and humanitarian situations, including, but not limited to – through the provision of cash transfers. UNICEF places emphasis on countries readiness to respond to crisis, including strengthening national cash transfer programmes so they are ready to respond to crises.

Inter-agency convergence and collaboration: UN collaboration is critical to tackle poverty in fragile and humanitarian context, and a key cooperation body is the Inter-Agency Standing Committee. In this regard, UNICEF has been active in managing joint analysis and planning, and providing support to United Nations Country Teams.

In 2018 UNICEF partnered with other UN agencies in a number of countries to highlight the situation of children living in multidimensional child poverty in fragile situations. In Iraq, for example, there are multiple on-going initiatives which call for inter-agency collaboration. UNICEF partnered with the United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR) to conduct analyses of multidimensional child poverty in Mosul city. This was a ground-

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<sup>1</sup> World Bank Group & UNICEF (2016). Ending Extreme Poverty: A Focus on Children.

breaking attempt to capture multidimensional child poverty in humanitarian settings, and the findings were used to redefine targeting methods for social assistance — to look beyond basic needs by incorporating multidimensional aspects of poverty. UNICEF in collaboration with the Ministry of Planning, World Food Programme (WFP) and ZAIN Telecommunication in Iraq are also exploring and developing an innovative model for measuring child poverty using mobile data, satellite imagery and crop productivity mapping, to produce regular monitoring mechanisms, such as poverty maps. In addition to this work, UNICEF and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UNESCWA) supported the Ministry of Planning to develop a national and child-specific multidimensional poverty index, involving analysis from a recent UNICEF-supported Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey.