

Request for UNICEF inputs: Report of the Secretary-General on Implementation of the Third United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2018-2027)

UNICEF supported 154 countries in 2019 to help provide children an equitable chance in life. This includes humanitarian action in 60 countries.

Expanding social protection

UNICEF supports countries 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.

UNICEF emphasizes the expansion of child and family benefits for children, including the progressive realization of universal child grants as a practical means to increase coverage. It is important that 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.

UNICEF-supported cash transfer programmes reached more than 51 million children in 78 countries in 2019, including almost 8.5 million in humanitarian settings in 30 countries. These numbers include 11 million girls and 10.9 million boys, based on data from 36 countries, and almost 700,000 children with disabilities, based on data from 21 countries. As of 2019, 47 countries had strong or moderately strong social protection systems, up from 38 in 2018, and 9 had national cash transfer programmes ready to respond to a crisis, up from 6 in 2018.

UNICEF took significant steps in 2019, in partnership with others, to expand inclusive social protection systems, with a particular focus on child-sensitive, gender-responsive and disability-inclusive work. In 2019, UNICEF scaled up disability-inclusive programmes to support 1.7 million children with disabilities across 142 countries, up from 1.4 million across 123 countries in 2018. A total of 35 per cent of UNICEF humanitarian responses (21 out of 59 countries) systematically provided disability-inclusive programmes and services, such as accessible classrooms constructed in refugee camps in Kenya.

Although social protection coverage has progressively expanded, social protection programmes for children struggle with limited coverage, inadequate benefit levels, fragmentation and weak institutionalization. UNICEF's new [Global Social Protection Programme Framework](#), launched in 2019, outlines the role that child-sensitive social protection systems play in addressing these challenges.

[Inter-agency collaboration](#): The establishment of the Joint SDG Fund was a critical step in accelerating progress towards the SDGs by integrating economic, social and environmental policies, and applying a multidimensional and cross-sectoral approach to complex social challenges. UNICEF is now part of 33 of the 36 accepted proposals and is leading the joint programmes in more than 50 per cent of the countries.

In March 2019, UNICEF joined the Social Protection Inter-Agency Cooperation Board Joint-Statement on social protection's role in promoting gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment, and [called for greater action to promote gender equality in all social protection work](#) alongside other UN agencies, IFIs, bilateral partners and civil society. In September 2019, UNICEF also introduced additional inclusion-specific monitoring tools to assess the portfolio of over 140 country office programmes working on social protection and developed a new work plan on gender-responsive social protection to intentionally step up further on this agenda. Moreover, UNICEF, and partners, including FAO and the University of North

Carolina/Chapel Hill, continue to build on evidence on the social and economic impacts of national cash transfers programmes in Africa, supporting the investment case for scale-up.

UNICEF has also taken a proactive role in developing technical guidance and knowledge exchange and learning opportunities in 2020, in response to COVID19, which presents an unprecedented challenge around the world. UNICEF produced [Technical Guidance on Gender-Responsive Social Protection during COVID19](#) in five languages, and co-created a series of webinars with the Social Protection Inter-Agency Cooperation Board Gender Working Group, to shine a spotlight on the linkages between social protection, COVID19 and gendered issues such as unpaid care work, adolescent girls' needs and GBV.

In 2019, UNICEF strengthened its partnership with United Nations Partnership on the Rights of People with Disabilities (UNPRPD) and the ILO to expand work on disability and social protection. UNICEF, ILO and International Disability Alliance are currently implementing a UNPRPD-funded three-year programme to develop global tools and guidance on disability and social protection. Through this project, UNICEF Jordan, Mexico and Montenegro received initial funding to strengthen national capacity on disability and social protection. Through the project we also [produced joint guidance on disability-inclusive social protection during COVID19](#).

Social Protection in humanitarian and fragile contexts.

Fragility, conflict and violence threaten efforts to end poverty and achieve SDG 1 in low- and middle-income countries. Children living in countries that experience conflict and fragility are particularly vulnerable to poverty and nearly 58 per cent of them live in extremely poor households, versus 17 per cent of children in non-fragile countries.ⁱ The World Bank estimates that by 2030 up to two thirds of the world's extreme poor – an estimated 342 million people – will live in fragile and conflict-affected countries.ⁱⁱ

By the end of 2019, more than 1 in every 45 people in the world – nearly 167 million people – needed urgent humanitarian assistance.ⁱⁱⁱ OCHA estimates that the number of people in need of humanitarian assistance has more than doubled in the past five years.^{iv} Many of these are children and at the risk of being left behind unless concerted efforts are made to strengthen the humanitarian, development and peace building nexus.

Many countries are accelerating their work on social protection system strengthening to include a focus on shock responsive/adaptive social protection, however more is needed. In 2019, UNICEF continued to support governments in the endeavour and the number of countries reporting work on this reached 52 in 2019, compared with 36 in 2018. Strengthening the shock responsiveness of social protection systems is, however, an incremental process requiring systematic work on all the components to prepare them for future crisis. Humanitarian situations can be leveraged to contribute to system strengthening. In 2019, UNICEF supported governments in 8 countries to scale up their social transfers by providing technical and financial support, thereby benefiting 8.5 million children in 2.8 million households.

[Interagency convergence and collaboration](#): Building on the EU guidance package on [Social Protection across the humanitarian and development nexus](#), UNICEF developed a [programme guidance on strengthening shock responsive social protection systems](#) in 2019. Consultations with agencies working on the issue were held to develop this guidance. It is now being used as one of the key documents to

design trainings on shock responsive social protection by interagency platforms such as [TRANSFORM](#) and [ITC/ILO training centre](#).

UNICEF co-leads the subgroup on linking social protection and humanitarian cash in the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC)-led Grand Bargain cash workstream. In 2019, a global workshop was organised for stakeholders to discuss and undertake key actions to strengthen these linkages. As a follow up of the workshop recommendations, on behalf of the subgroup UNICEF launched a webinar series and other efforts to share knowledge and support learning on making stronger links between social protection and humanitarian cash in different crisis contexts.

Human capability development – addressing the non-income forms of poverty

Children are over-represented among the poorest people, they are twice as likely as adults to live in poverty. UNICEF continues to highlight that a child focus is critical to address overall poverty. In 2019, UNICEF continued work on measuring and monitoring child poverty, in all its dimensions, monetary and multidimensional. As of 2019, there were 65 countries which routinely measured and monitored multidimensional child poverty.

[Interagency collaboration](#): This work is often done in partnerships with other UN actors, for example in Guinea-Bissau UNICEF and UNDP jointly disseminated the results of the first measurement of the multidimensional child poverty along with the Sustainable Development Goals agenda. In Burundi, UNICEF supported the establishment of a Child Poverty working group, chaired by the ministry in charge of finance and bringing together representatives from relevant line ministries, the Burundi Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies, academics, civil society and United Nations agencies - providing an opportunity to strengthen national dialogue and attention on monetary and multidimensional child poverty. In Myanmar, UNICEF, UNDP and the World Bank collaborated on child poverty analysis. Through collaboration with staff in UNDP, IMF and ILO in Lebanon, UNICEF analyzed the impact on economic growth of national capital investments anticipated from donors for use in high-level advocacy to promote pro-poor growth in Lebanon. UNICEF Belize is working together with World Bank, ILO and WFP on a series of consultations, including one on multidimensional child poverty, to strengthen the country's social protection system.

In addition, UNICEF chairs the Global Coalition to End Child Poverty, a 20 member global initiative to raise awareness about children living in poverty across the world and support global and national action to alleviate it. In 2019 the Coalition raised awareness on many pertinent issues around child poverty, including the [importance on counting all children](#), including refugee children, children in institutions etc. in poverty statistics as well as place [pressure on countries to measure, monitor and address child poverty](#).

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 is increasingly engaged in 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. 2019 saw further 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.

UNICEF works to ensure adequate expenditure on sectors and services that contribute to the realization of child rights in 84 countries. Data and evidence generation around social spending are central to PF4C work and was carried out extensively in 2019 to assist in improved budget decisions to support children's rights, with special attention to the most marginalized. Social sector budget analyses were conducted in 59 countries, providing data on the level, efficiency and distribution of social spending relevant to children. By making children's rights more visible in budget processes, governments are better able to link budget allocations to outcomes for children and to identify gaps and additional resource needs. In 38 countries, UNICEF built capacity of national and subnational government partners and civil society organizations, including citizen groups in budget planning, formulation, execution, monitoring and reporting.

Accelerating climate action

Climate change is one of the drivers of fragility, conflict and violence. Based on current trends, 100 million more people will be pushed into extreme poverty by 2030 as a result of climate change if current trends continue.^v Globally, nearly 160 million children live in areas of high or extremely high drought severity and over half a billion children live in extremely high flood occurrence zones.^{vi}

Children are the least responsible for climate change, yet will bear the greatest burden of its impact. They are the most vulnerable to vector-borne diseases that will increase as a result of climate change, and to air pollution, which is associated with climate change. Close to 90 per cent of the burden of disease attributable to climate change is borne by children under 5 years of age. Climate change also affects a child's right to learn: extreme weather events destroy schools and extreme heat can affect a child's ability to learn. For children who are already disadvantaged, the risks of climate change are even higher.

UNICEF programming on climate change expanded in 2019, with 56 country offices engaged in child-inclusive programmes fostering climate resilience in 2019, compared with 27 in 2018. Key activities included policy and implementation support to make social service delivery more climate-resilient, actions to combat air pollution, and the provision of sustainable energy. At the United Nations General Assembly, the Secretary-General's Climate Summit and other global forums, UNICEF advocacy stressed that the climate crisis is a children's rights crisis, culminating in the launch of an Intergovernmental Declaration on Children, Youth and Climate Action at the 25th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP25).

ⁱ *Multidimensional Poverty Index 2019*.

ⁱⁱ Corral, Paul, Alexander Irwin, Nandini Krishnan, Daniel Gerszon Mahler, and Tara Vishwanath, *Fragility and Conflict: On the front lines of the fight against poverty*, World Bank, Washington, D.C., 2020, <<https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/33324>>, accessed 28 April 2020.

ⁱⁱⁱ Global Humanitarian Overview 2020, p. 24.

^{iv} In 2014, nearly 78 million people were in need of humanitarian assistance. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Global Humanitarian Overview 2015, OCHA, Geneva, 2014.

^v The World Bank, 'Managing the impacts of climate change on poverty', World Bank, Washington, D.C., 2015, <www.worldbank.org/en/news/infographic/2015/11/08/managing-the-impacts-of-climate-change-on-poverty>, accessed 28 April 2020.

^{vi} United Nations Children's Fund, *Unless We Act Now: The impact of climate change on children*, UNICEF, New York, 2015, <https://www.unicef.org/publications/files/Unless_we_act_now_The_impact_of_climate_change_on_children.pdf>, accessed 28 April 2020.