



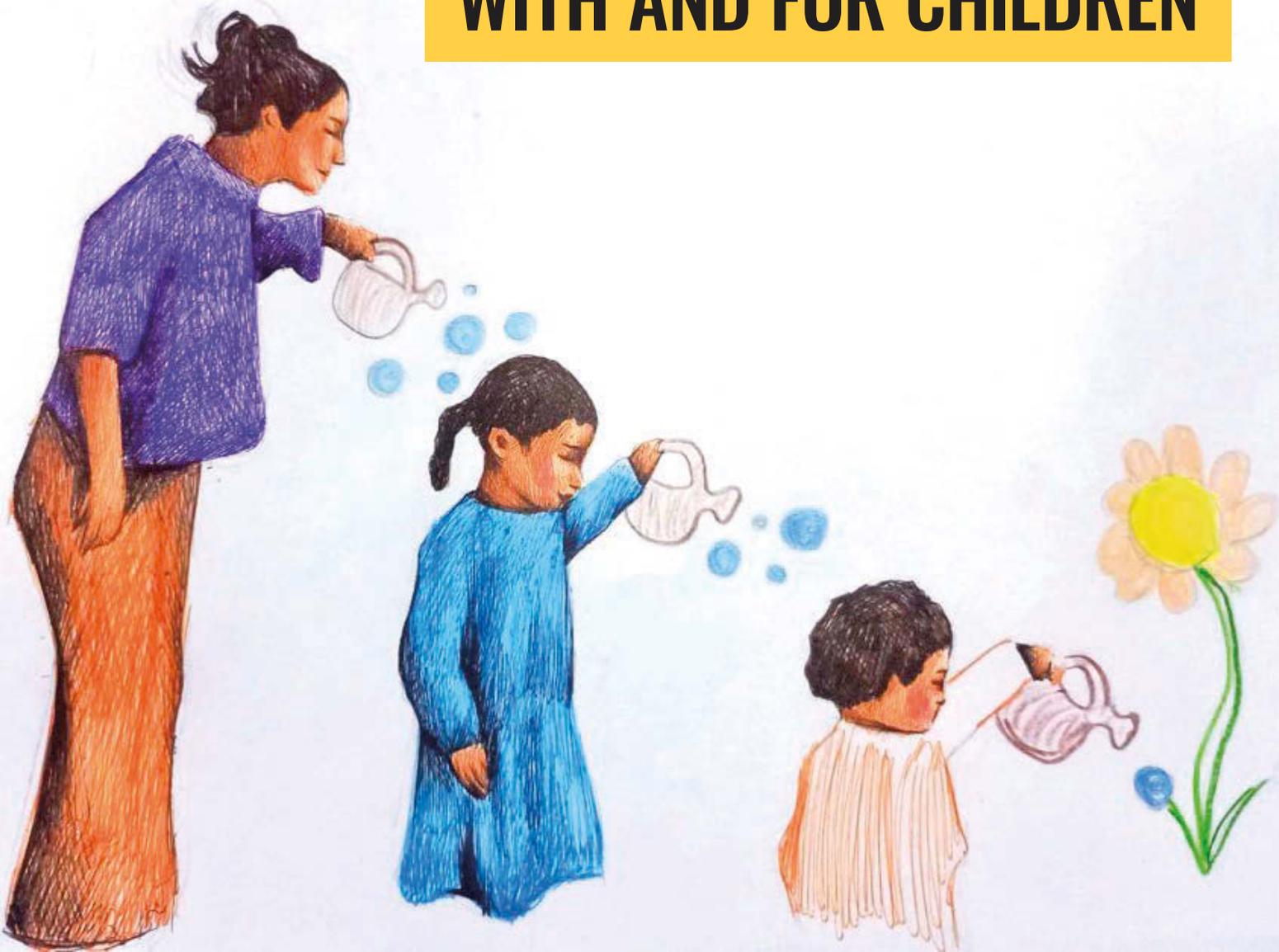
Save the
Children

RACING AGAINST TIME

ACHIEVING THE

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

WITH AND FOR CHILDREN



Note: Children’s names have been changed throughout this report to protect identities.

Cover image: “From Generation to Generation. Our past, present, and future with the SDGs”
by Lila, 17, Nariño, Colombia

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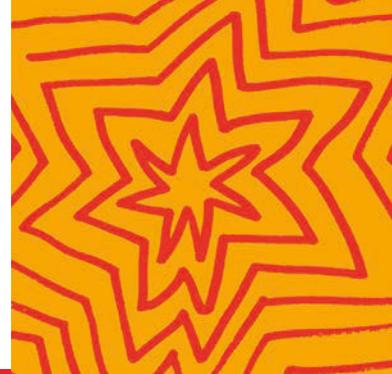
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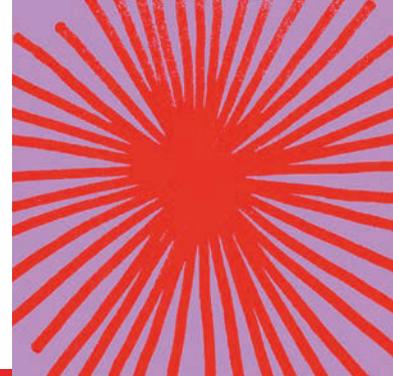
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Executive summary



In 2015, leaders from every country in the world agreed 17 goals to end poverty, fight inequality and urgently address climate change, creating a better future for all people, everywhere by 2030. These were named the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Now, with less than six years left to deliver on these 17 promises to children, world leaders are in a race against time.

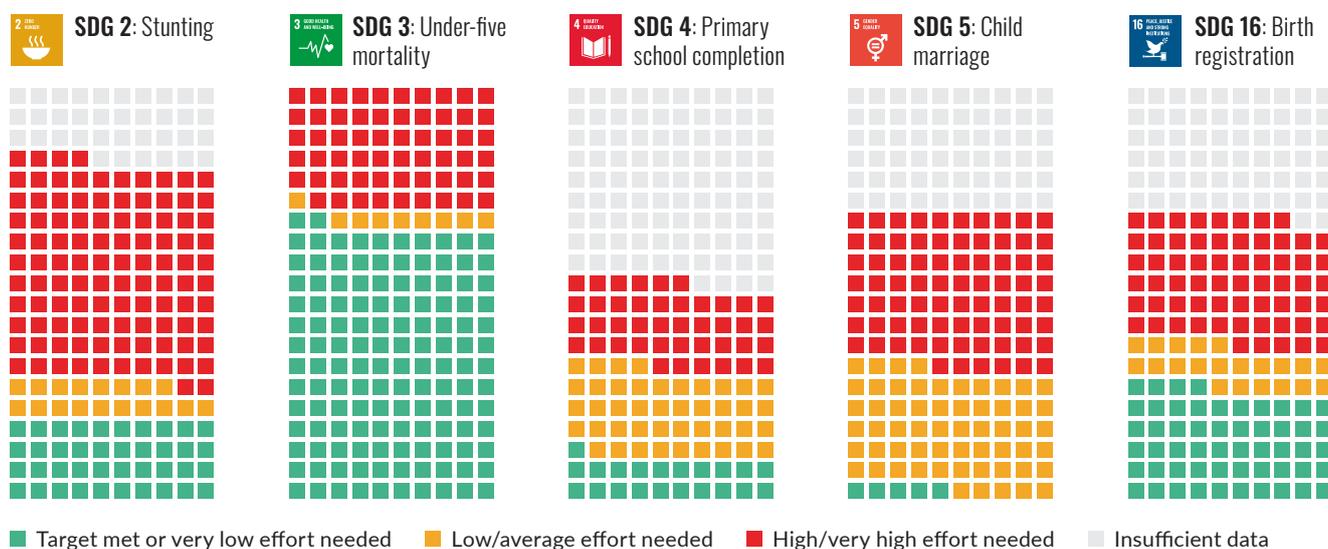
Despite progress on some of the goals since 2015, we have gone backwards on others. The 2024 Summit of the Future in September is the first high-level intergovernmental meeting to discuss the agenda of future generations since 2015 when the SDGs were agreed. The Summit is a time to take stock of where the world stands in meeting these crucial targets for children everywhere and our shared planet. It must mark the beginning of renewed commitments to deliver the work still to be done and identify the reforms needed to adapt to new and changing challenges like the climate crisis, conflict, shrinking civic space and digital technology.

This report provides new global analysis of progress toward achieving key SDGs for children, as well as reports from children in five countries piloting our new [Children's Scorecard for Child Rights and Sustainable Development Toolkit](#).

Global stocktake: SDG Progress for Children

Most countries are off-track to achieve key SDG promises for children. Our analysis examines progress against five critical indicators for children, applying a 'traffic light' rating to the level of progress needed to meet the 2030 deadline (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Inadequate progress toward five key SDG indicators for child rights



Source: UNICEF, Progress on Children's Well-being: Centring child rights in the 2030 Agenda (2023)

Projections based on current trends show that:



Despite significant progress, 3.8 million children will still die before their fifth birthday in 2030, many of those from preventable causes.¹



Levels of hunger globally are now higher than in 2015 and without accelerated progress, by 2030 malnutrition will leave more than one in five babies stunted.²



Most countries require some or very high levels of effort to reach the ‘quality education’ target, even for primary school completion. Since COVID-19 it is estimated that 70% of 10-year-olds in low- and middle-income countries are unable to understand simple written text as a consequence of inequalities exacerbated by impacts of the pandemic.³



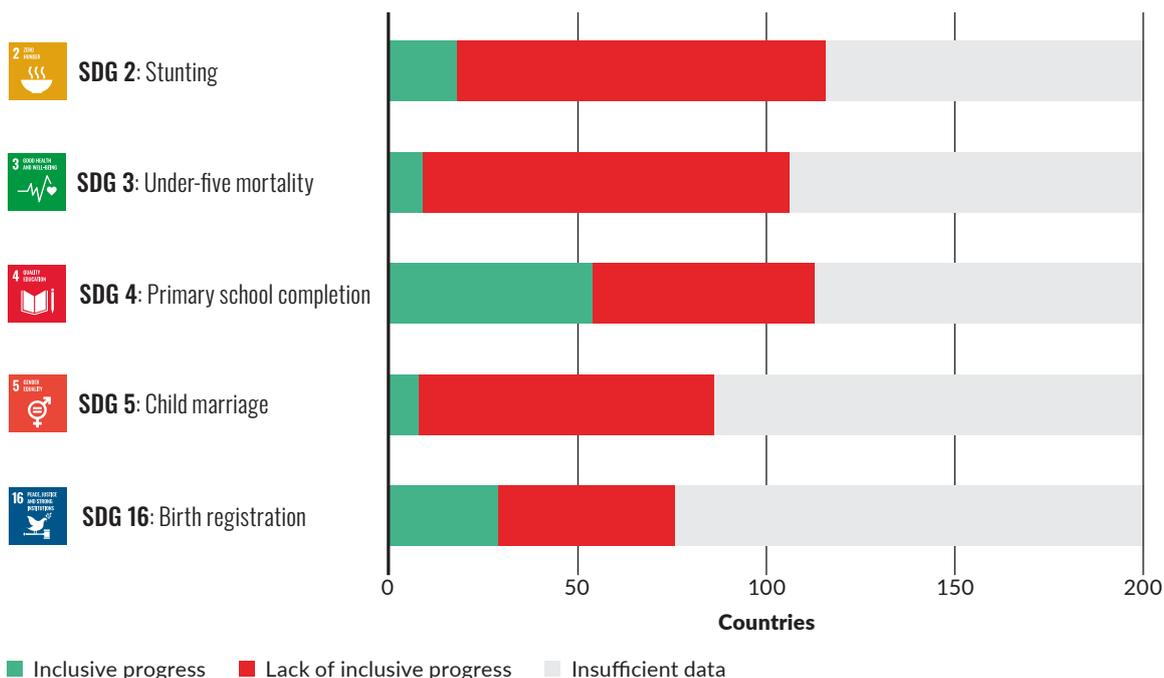
Only five countries in the world have met or are on track to end child marriage by 2030 – UN Women estimates that it will take 300 years to achieve full gender equality – well beyond the lifetime of any child born today.⁴



Progress to increase birth registration has been mixed with signs of progress in some countries and significant efforts still needed in others. Currently, almost one in four children under the age of 5 globally do not have their birth registered denying them a crucial access point to essential services like school and healthcare.⁵

Progress to-date has also often fallen short of the pledge world leaders made that “no one will be left behind [...] and we will endeavour to reach the furthest behind first”. This pledge requires that progress for population groups furthest from the target increase faster than groups already closer to the targets to close inequality ‘gaps’. Instead, groups that were already further ahead have often progressed fastest or at similar rates to groups further behind, entrenching existing inequalities (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Too many children still left behind based on sex, location and wealth



Source: Save the Children analysis based on publicly available data from UNICEF, UNESCO and household surveys such as DHS and MICS

Children's Scorecard for Child Rights and Sustainable Development

Save the Children developed the [Children's Scorecard Toolkit](#) to bring attention to progress for child rights, including children's own views, to accountability processes for the SDGs.

The Toolkit has now been piloted with around 500 children across Colombia, Georgia, Nepal, South Africa and Zimbabwe. Their Scorecards reveal some significant commonalities that highlight the added value of engaging children in decision-making and monitoring of progress for child rights and sustainable development for policy-makers to learn from. Children's right to be heard in matters affecting them is also a central tenet of the United Nations Convention on Rights of the Child.⁶

- Children did not separate one SDG from another but saw them as linked and wanted solutions that reflected that reality.
- Children cared deeply about the inequalities they saw in their communities and wanted more to be done for groups they felt were discriminated against including children with disabilities, girls, LGBTQI+ children, children of a certain caste, ethnic minorities, indigenous communities and migrant or undocumented children.
- Children emphasized the need for their meaningful and inclusive participation in SDG implementation, monitoring and accountability processes – they want to play an active role in solutions to the challenges we face today.
- Children called for increased investment in the services that most impacted their lives like financial support to families, healthcare, education and safety and security.
- Children highlighted the impact of a few issues in particular: climate change; lack of mental health support for children and young people; and bullying in schools – a safety issue and barrier to accessing essential services and realising individual rights rarely referenced in adult discussions of human rights or sustainable development.

Save the Children's recommendations to drive SDG progress for child rights

1. Close the SDG financing gap by:
 - a. Scaling up investment in achieving the SDGs, including through reforming the global financial architecture
 - b. Prioritising investment in social sectors that benefit children and their families
2. Recommit to delivering all 17 of the SDGs in line with the principles set out under the 2030 Agenda by:
 - a. Working with children and their communities to develop approaches that recognise the interconnected and interdependent nature of the SDGs.
 - b. Urgently shifting to policies that put the furthest behind first, to ensure no one is left behind.
 - c. Scaling up national statistical capacity to collect, monitor and publish timely, disaggregated data.
3. Establish, invest in and institutionalise children's safe and meaningful participation in decision-making from the local to the global levels.
4. Ensure the Summit of the Future is the turning point the world needs to achieve the SDGs.
5. Commit to establishing an accountability process at the United Nations to achieve intergenerational justice for sustainable development.

Part 1

Sustainable development for children: where are we now?



Where did we start? 17 Promises for a safer, healthier, more equal world

In 2015, leaders from every country in the world agreed 17 goals to end poverty, fight inequality and urgently address climate change, creating a better future for all people, everywhere by 2030. These were named the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).



Where are we now?

Despite progress on some of the goals since 2015, we have gone backwards on others. Levels of hunger are actually higher than when the 2030 Agenda and SDGs were agreed in 2015.

Meanwhile, many of the challenges to achieving sustainable development have changed or increased. These include:⁷

- the worsening climate crisis, growing fragility, inequality, debt distress and food insecurity, especially in the world's poorest countries.
- new and escalating conflicts and violence, made worse by a growing sense of impunity for grave violations of child rights.
- shrinking civic space and increasingly well-funded and coordinated attacks on child rights, particularly in relation to gender equality.
- unforeseen threats and opportunities associated with rapid advances in digital technology.

Where are we going? A new Pact for the Future

We have passed the halfway point to the 2030 deadline for meeting the SDGs yet on our current trajectory, we are not on track to meet them. The world is now taking stock of progress and the work still to be done to deliver on these 17 promises.

The UN General Assembly will hold a Summit of the Future in September 2024 to agree a Pact for the Future, including a Declaration on Future Generations. The Pact and Declaration will outline commitments from countries on ways to address the challenges that got bigger since 2015, to cooperate in response to new and emerging challenges and to future-proof and accelerate progress to meet the SDG targets by 2030.

Summit of the Future and the Sustainable Development Goals

Who are the future generations? The UN defines “future generations” as “all those generations that do not yet exist, are yet to come and who will eventually inherit this planet”.⁸

Children today are important to future generations: their lives will stretch further into the future than those of adults alive now.⁹ Today’s children will share more time and interests with future generations and will experience the long-term impacts of policies made today with them. The [Maastricht Principles](#) on the human rights of future generations state that:

“Children and youth are closest in time to generations still to come and thus occupy a unique position, and have an important role to play, within this transition to long-term, multigenerational thinking ... [so] their perspectives and participation in decision-making with respect to long-term and intergenerational risks must be accorded special weight.”

The 2030 Agenda (including the Sustainable Development Goals) is a universal framework that commits all governments around the world to act today. But the SDGs are also vital for the well-being of future generations. They include targets on environmental sustainability, equality, economic prosperity, health and education, peace and security. Achieving the SDGs is essential to build the foundation to ensure a sustainable, equitable, and prosperous future for generations to come and the planet they will inherit. They are key to realising intergenerational justice and equity.

66 SDGs unite all the countries day and night. Guiding us towards a brighter light.
No poverty, hunger, or corruption. Just equality, sustainability, and peace in life. 99

Justin, child activist, South Africa

This report presents

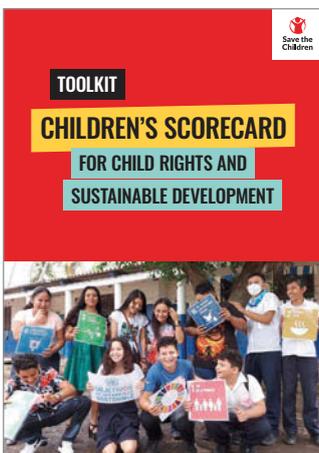
- (i) global analysis on the state of progress toward the SDGs in 2024, and
- (ii) five country Scorecards developed by children to rate their countries’ SDG progress.

The data from both the global analysis and the children’s assessments present a compelling case that the world needs to urgently accelerate progress to achieve the SDGs as a foundation for building just, resilient and sustainable societies and economies for present and future generations. The data also demonstrates the importance of children’s views informing more impactful policy across generations.



“We must be the change”

In the lead up to the Summit of the Future, Save the Children has been supporting children from around the world to campaign and advocate on their priorities for action to world leaders. In May and June 2024, Save the Children, supporting activities held in over 23 countries around the world, collated messages from 1,230 children. Some of their messages and demands were captured to produce a [Children's Pact for the Future](#).



Children's Scorecard for Child Rights and Sustainable Development Toolkit

Save the Children developed a [Children's Scorecard for Child Rights and Sustainable Development Toolkit](#) to enable children to work together to bring their experiences and expertise to understandings of progress, and to engage directly with policy-makers.

Part 2

A global analysis of SDG progress for children



With just six years remaining, the world is in a race against time to achieve the SDGs. The latest UN Sustainable Development Report shows that globally, only 17% of targets, are making the progress needed to reach the 2030 deadline.¹⁰ Only moderate or marginal progress is being made against nearly half of the SDG targets – far from enough to reach the targets in time. Progress on 18% of targets is stagnating and 17% are regressing with rates of progress slower than they were at the 2015 starting point.

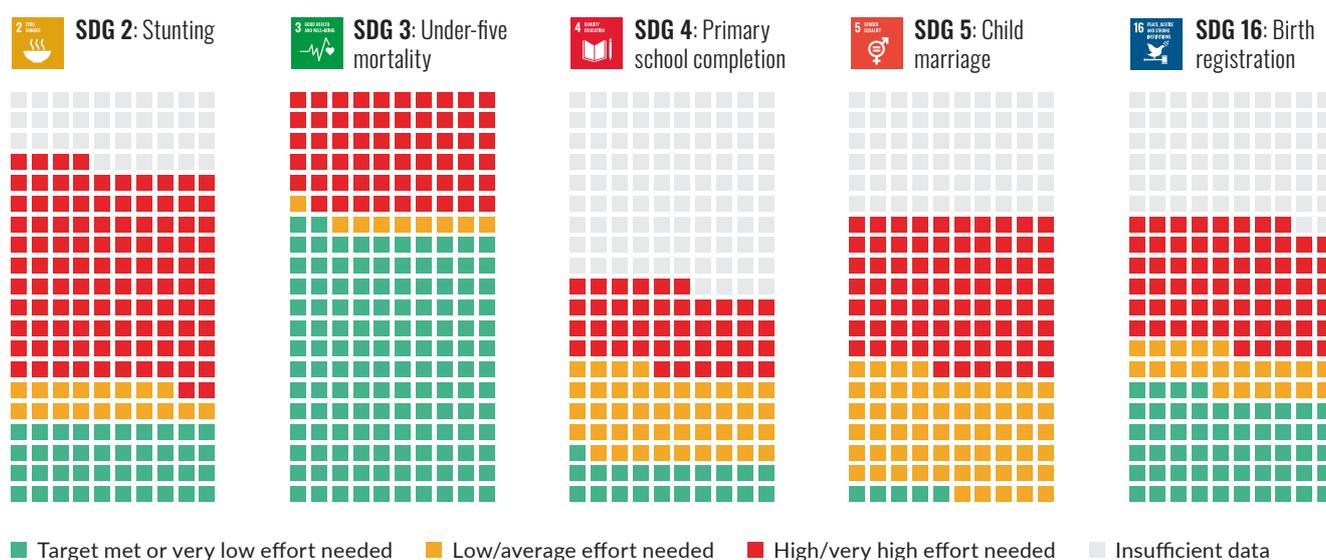
Most countries are off track to deliver on key SDG promises for children

A handful of SDG indicators that are particularly important for children illustrate this lack of progress in more detail – painting a bleak picture for children’s rights to the end of this decade and beyond.



This analysis looks at five key SDG indicators for children using UNICEF’s assessment of progress towards the SDGs to see how likely it is that the targets will be reached by 2030.¹¹ Figure 1 (below) applies a traffic light system to this analysis to indicate the level of effort required to get progress back on track for 2030 – each small box represents an individual country.

Figure 1: Inadequate progress toward five key SDG indicators for child rights



Source: UNICEF, Progress on Children’s Well-being: Centring child rights in the 2030 Agenda (2023)



Progress to reduce under-five mortality stands out among our four key indicators for children – it is the only indicator for which most countries have either met the target or could get there with a low level of effort.¹²

This progress reflects impressive improvements made in recent decades, with child mortality decreasing globally from 76.4 deaths (per 1,000 live births) in 2000 to 37.1 in 2022.¹³ However, 58 countries still need high or very high efforts to reach the SDG target, making it very unlikely for those countries to reach the goal. On current trends, this would mean that 3.8 million children will die before their fifth birthday in 2030, many of those from preventable causes.¹⁴



With levels of hunger globally now higher than in 2015 when the SDGs were agreed, the world is significantly off track to reach SDG 2. Children

are considered stunted when they are too short for their age because they do not get sufficient or nutritious food. Stunting can have significant long-term effects on physical growth and development. Despite progress in reducing levels of stunting globally from 33% in 2020 to 22.3% in 2022,¹⁵ only a minority of 40 countries will reach the SDG target to eliminate stunting and other forms of malnutrition. Without accelerated progress, by 2030 malnutrition will leave more than one in five babies stunted.¹⁶

66 When I'm hungry, it's hard to focus in class. I don't have the energy to learn. **99**

Gia, 17, Georgia



Despite global progress in expanding access to education, most countries require some or very high levels of effort to reach the SDG target, even for primary school completion. This falls short of the SDG 4's much

wider ambition that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary *and* secondary education, leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes. Despite significant improvements in collecting information on learning outcomes, data is still often missing to understand learning outcomes and therefore the quality of education. Children's education was hit hard by COVID-19 pandemic and as a consequence, it is now estimated that 70% of 10-year-olds in low- and middle-income countries are unable to understand a simple written text.¹⁷



Just five countries have ended or are on track to end child marriage. Child

marriage is a strong indicator of progress toward gender equality, including ending gender-based violence (SDG5), and contributes to poor outcomes against other SDGs like child and maternal mortality, adolescent pregnancy and early school drop-out.¹⁸ The vast majority of countries with data, will need high or very high levels of effort to reach the goal by the end of this decade. In 2022, UN Women estimated that it would take 300 years to achieve full gender equality – well beyond the lifetime of any child born today.¹⁹

66 These days, child marriages are often initiated by the children themselves. Some of my friends are getting married because they think it's the only option for them. **99**

Girl, Karnali, Nepal



Birth registration is crucial for safeguarding children’s rights, preventing statelessness, and enabling access to essential services yet almost one in four (23%) of children globally do not have their birth registered.²⁰ Birth

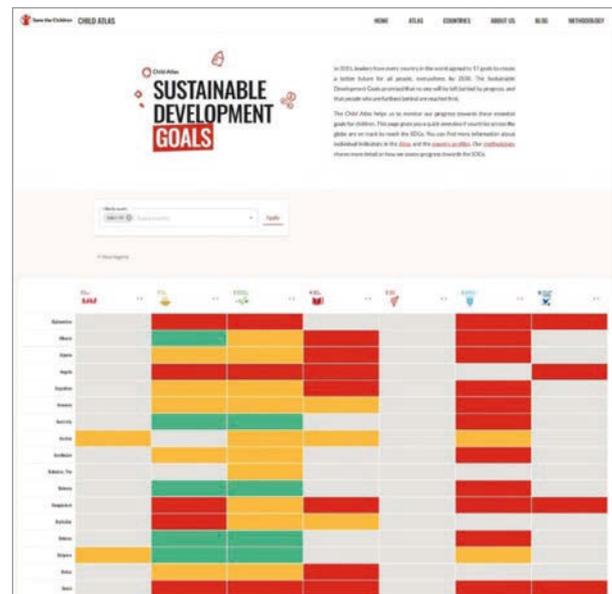
registration measures the proportion of children under the age of five whose births are registered by public authorities and is one of the targets under SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions). Progress toward this target has been mixed: while 54 countries are on track to reach universal birth registration, 61 still require high or very high levels of effort to guarantee children this important first step in life.

Lack of comparable and high-quality data even halfway through the SDGs means we have an incomplete picture of where the world is delivering on – and at risk of breaking – these promises for children. Impressive progress has been made in many statistical organisations, to develop methodologies and collect data for around 230 indicators across the 17 goals. Yet the continuing lack of data – represented by the grey squares in our traffic light analysis – means governments and international organisations are still making decisions affecting children’s rights without the information they need. According to UNICEF, national-level data are only available for half of the 48 most child-relevant SDG indicators.²¹ Disaggregated data – data broken down by different groups of children for example based on wealth, location or ethnicity – in particular is often missing.

Understand progress on the SDGs with new features in Save the Children’s Child Atlas

The Child Atlas is Save the Children’s data platform to visualise, compare, analyse and understand children’s outcomes around the world. It allows you to explore the different ways inequality affects children’s lives, understand the relationship between different topics, like poverty, education and the climate crisis, and hear how children describe the problems they are facing.

We have now added a new function to the Child Atlas that provides information about countries’ progress towards the SDGs. You can explore global and regional data in the Atlas or dig deeper through one of our country profiles to see whether countries are on track to reach the SDGs for specific indicators and whether their progress has been inclusive. Explore our new tools at www.childatlas.org/sdg



Progress has been slower for those children left ‘furthest behind’

National averages hide significant and consistent inequalities – children are regularly denied their rights because of where they grow up, their gender or ethnicity, whether they have a disability, or the socioeconomic backgrounds of their parents. For instance, girls growing up in the poorest 20% of households are twice as likely to marry before the age of 18 than girls from the richest 20%.²²

World leaders committed combat these inequalities when they endorsed the SDGs, pledging that “no one will be left behind [...] and we will endeavour to reach the furthest behind first”. This pledge has clear implications for the actions required to meet the SDGs for all. Ensuring that ‘all segments of society’ achieve the 2030 goals requires that progress for population groups furthest from the target increase faster than groups already closer to the targets to close inequality ‘gaps’ in a process called ‘convergence’.

Our analysis reveals that much of the progress made toward key SDGs for children has not been inclusive. This means groups closer to reaching the targets have often progressed faster than groups further behind, further entrenching existing inequalities.

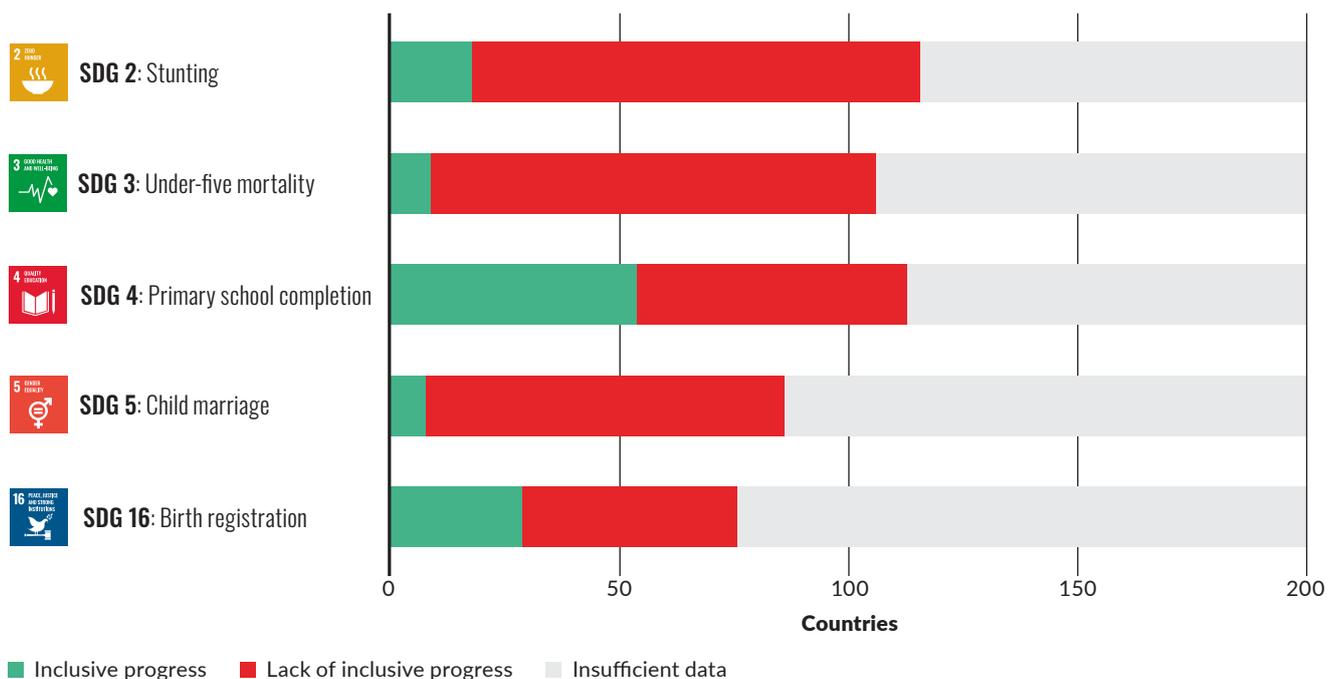
66 Bring more notebooks. Provide flexible education, so that children who can't go to school can be educated at home. Don't take away the right to education from poor children. **99**

Child participant, Colombia



This analysis measures convergence by looking at whether gaps in progress between different groups are narrowing. Using publicly available data on the indicators selected above, we calculate the annual rate of reduction in equality gaps since 2000 for groups of children that we have comparable data on (currently: sex, residence and wealth).²³ Countries are then classified in Figure 2 below as experiencing inclusive progress, if over the last two decades they 1) progressed towards the SDG target, and 2) that progress closed gaps between boys and girls, rural and urban areas, and richer and poorer families.²⁴

Figure 2: Too many children still left behind based on sex, location and wealth



Source: Save the Children analysis based on publicly available data from UNICEF, UNESCO and household surveys such as DHS and MICS

There is a clear lack of inclusive progress across most of the key indicators of progress toward the SDGs for children.



The difference between average progress and inclusive progress is particularly striking for under-five mortality and stunting.

These indicators have seen significant reductions globally, and in most countries, since 2000 but on closer examination, that progress has not been inclusive. While these improvements have extended to children impacted by inequality and discrimination in most cases, the rate of progress for those children has been slower than for children in better-off communities. Inclusive progress to reduce under-five mortality has only been made in 9 of the 106 countries for which data is available. Just 18 of 116 countries have made inclusive progress to reduce stunting.



Lack of progress toward ending child marriage at the national level is mirrored by a lack of inclusive progress marking it one of the indicators for children that has seen the least progress by either measure.



Disaggregated data reveals a more positive picture for primary school completion and birth registration. A much larger proportion of countries experienced inclusive progress towards these goals than the others in our analysis.



But even for these indicators, a majority of countries included in the analysis, had higher rates of change for groups of children already closest to meeting the SDG target.



Almost half of all countries lack publicly available and easily accessible information on different population groups, making it particularly difficult to track progress against the pledge to Leave No One Behind.

Despite some progress – especially around collecting consistent information on disability – data is consistently missing for many other communities impacted by discrimination and inequality.

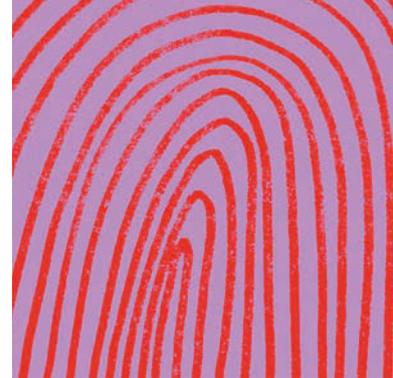
These findings should be a wake-up call, not only for better disaggregated and more granular data, but crucially to design policies and programmes that actively reduce inequalities.



Image from Nepal Children's Scorecard pilot report (see page 30)

Part 3

Children's Scorecard for Child Rights and Sustainable Development



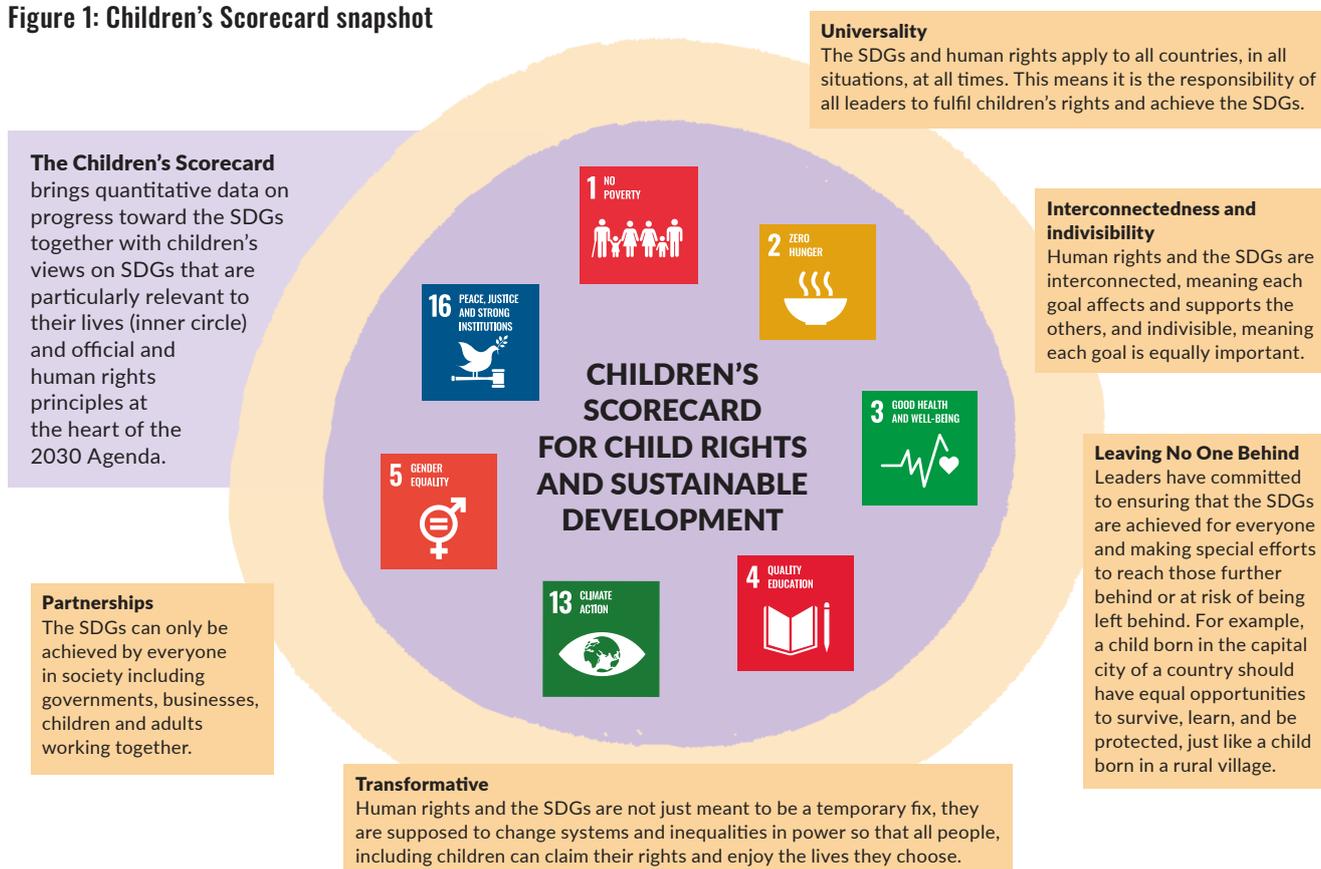
Children's Scorecards: what are they and how can they help?

Save the Children developed the [Children's Scorecard Toolkit](#) to bring a child focus, including children's own views, to accountability processes for the SDGs. It is a publicly accessible toolkit to facilitate child-led or child-centred data collection and contains child-friendly information on the SDGs and guidance on facilitating child participation.²⁵

The Scorecard uses a child-friendly rating scale to evaluate progress and identify gaps, using the [guiding principles](#) of the 2030 Agenda as the criterion for evaluation. It also incorporates guidance on how to access quantitative data from Save the Children's [Child Atlas](#). The Children's Scorecard is designed to align with the [People's Scorecards](#) developed by the Action for Sustainable Development (A4SD) network to measure civil society's perception of countries' progress on the SDGs.

Find the full Toolkit [here](#).

Figure 1: Children's Scorecard snapshot



Who can use Children's Scorecards and how?

Children's Scorecards can be used for a variety of purposes:

- The UN, civil society and governments can use them to feed into SDG progress reporting, including Voluntary National Reviews (VNR) (official government reports submitted to the UN) or [People's Scorecards](#).
- Local and national leaders can use them to inform policy and decision-making, including to help implement recommendations made by human rights bodies like the Committee on the Rights of the Child, by positioning them within national development plans and budgets.
- Civil society organisations and governments can use them to inform their reporting to human rights bodies.
- Children can use them to advocate to governments for policy changes, and to hold governments accountable for delivering on child rights and the SDGs.



Youth in South Africa demand action from government and international leaders during SDG VNR talks. Photo: Banele Senatla/Save the Children South Africa

Piloting the Children's Scorecard – highlights from five countries

From December 2023 to July 2024, the Children's Scorecard Toolkit was piloted in **Colombia, Georgia, Nepal, South Africa** and **Zimbabwe**, with the active participation of approximately 500 children across these countries.²⁶ The ages of the children that participated in the Scorecards ranged from 11–18, and efforts were made in all countries to reach children in different regions, and those most affected by inequality and discrimination, including children with disabilities, indigenous communities, castes or ethnic minorities, and migrant communities (read the full reports for details of selection in each country).



Children and Save the Children staff and partner organisations in each country adapted the Toolkit for their contexts to work with partners, focus on particular areas, issues or goals and include children with different experiences. The Toolkit is intended to be adaptable to maximise the range of children and communities that can use it, the views captured are unlikely to be statistically representative but provide an important record of individual experiences and perspectives for decision-makers to consider.

The summaries in this report provide highlights from the complete Scorecards – you can access those here to see examples the different ways that the toolkit can be adapted and find out more about the children who participated.



How Colombia applied the Toolkit

- Number of participants: 147 (71 boys, 76 girls)
- Locations: Bogotá, Antioquia, Valle del Cauca, Nariño, Norte de Santander, La Guajira, Arauca
- Group breakdown: Participants included Indigenous children, children discriminated against based on where they live (for example urban slums), ethnic and religious minorities, and migrant and undocumented persons.

Read the [full report](#) for more detail, quantitative data and to find out how child participants were identified for the Colombia pilot.



SDG 1: No poverty

66 The government could create more jobs and ensure that wages are fair, so families have enough money to cover their needs. They could also offer training and education programmes so people can get better jobs. **99**

Child participant

66 They have to listen to children because poverty also worries children. **99**

Child participant

Children's views

Key: progress: ; inequality: ; interconnections: ; insights:

- A majority of participants felt that despite some interventions, there had been no progress in reducing poverty in Colombia.
- The children felt that there remains a divide between urban and rural communities and between boys and girls in terms of how poverty affects them.
- Children emphasised that it was important to provide education and participation opportunities for children as this is essential in breaking the cycle of poverty.
- Children suggested that the government should provide more opportunities for poor people through accessible markets and targeted programmes to help alleviate poverty, including direct aid, job creation and fair wages.



SDG 2: Zero hunger

66 To ensure that families have enough food and that children do not go hungry, the government could implement several measures. First, schools can play a crucial role by providing better nutrition to children through full-day programmes that include balanced meals. Additionally, creating stable jobs for parents and caregivers is essential for families to have sufficient income to cover their basic needs. **99**

Child participant

Children's views

Key: progress:  / ; inequality: ; interconnections: ; insights: 

-  The majority of children felt that there had been no progress in reducing hunger in the last three years, although they felt there had been some improvement in the way policies and programmes to address SDG 2 linked to others.
-  Despite the overall view that there had been no progress, children felt that significant strides have been made in recognizing the connection between human rights and hunger in recent years.
-  Children felt that certain groups of children, such as homeless or street children, are the most affected by hunger.
-  Children emphasised the link between access to adequate and nutritious food and their ability to learn and develop.
-  Children suggested that expanding the school meals programme could help reduce hunger and ensure children receive nutritious meals throughout the school day.
-  Children said that protecting the environment and redirecting funding from other parts of the budget to environmental protection could help improve long-term food security.
-  Children emphasised the importance of protecting farmers, improving access to food products in underserved areas, and targeted interventions to reach the most vulnerable.



SDG 3: Good health and well-being

66 Build more hospitals. Campaigns to deliver medicines. Health centres for homeless people. More opportunities to become doctors. **99**

Child participant

Children's views

Key: progress: ; inequality: ; interconnections: ; insights:

- The majority of children felt that there had been no progress in the last three years, they saw some improvement in the way health policies and programmes linked to other essential services.
- Children felt that certain groups of children, such as those without registration documents, were still not able to access basic healthcare services.
- Children emphasised the link between access to healthcare services and the social welfare system.
- The children suggested more investment in training healthcare professionals to improve quality, and to expand access to underserved areas.
- The children said that improving information sharing and awareness campaigns about access to healthcare, especially in rural communities, could be beneficial as clear and accessible information can help people understand their healthcare options and rights. They said children's councils should be able to help.
- Children underscored the importance of improving hospital conditions by upgrading infrastructure, increasing the number of hospitals, ensuring that health centres are well-equipped, and providing more health programmes at the local level to address communities' specific health needs.



SDG 4: Quality education

66 Bring more notebooks. Provide flexible education, so that children who can't go to school can be educated at home. Don't take away the right to education from poor children. **99**

Child participant

Children's views

Key: progress: ; inequality: ; interconnections: ; insights:

- Children described slight improvements over the past three years but generally concluded that “everything remains the same”.
- Delays in access to education for Venezuelan children who have migrated to Colombia were highlighted as an example of inequality that needs to be addressed.
- Children linked safety and school meals to school attendance and the ability to learn.
- Children suggested that the government should build more public schools and increase the number of places available in existing schools to ensure that all children, including those from marginalised groups like Venezuelan children, can access education.
- Children said that there is a need for more space and opportunities to take part in a wide range of recreational activities. Sports, art and advocacy are important to their wellbeing and development.
- The children said that schools and community organisations should work together to organise activities such as sports events, cultural programmes and educational workshops. Parents should be encouraged to participate, supporting their children and reinforcing positive behaviour.



“Education will always be an SDG.” Photo: Cesar Zapata/Save the Children



SDG 5: Gender equality

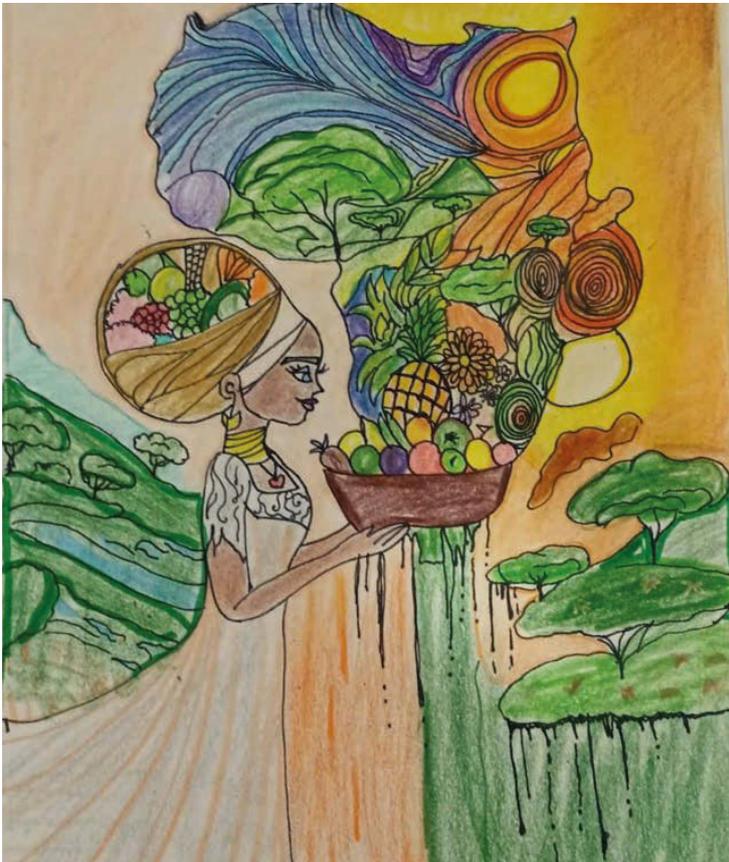
66 Change the traditional perspective of gender. 99

Child participant

Children's views

Key: progress: / ; inequality: ; interconnections: ; insights:

- Participants stated that no progress had been made toward gender equality over the past three years and that efforts to 'leave no one behind' had gone backwards.
- Children linked gender-based violence, wider family violence, traditional norms and lack of punishment by the justice system for perpetrators.
- Many child participants highlighted safety in public spaces, with a combination of views about girls doing more to protect themselves, local government doing more to ensure safety, and the need for direct messages targeted at men and boys as perpetrators.
- Children emphasised the need to generate equal opportunities for men and women, including by promoting the role that women play in society and equal salary allocation.



"Roots, Culture, and Commitment. In the pursuit of the SDGs."
Artwork by Shorely from Nariño, Colombia



SDG 16: Peace, justice and strong institutions

66 More security in homes and communities. Run campaigns to avoid police who steal and ask for money. Remove child exploitation, eliminate guerrillas. **99**

Child participant

Children's views

Key: progress: / ; inequality: ; interconnections: ; insights:

- Some progress had been made in linking SDG 16 to other goals and in efforts to introduce transformative responses.
- Children identified criminal gangs, police corruption, violence and trafficking of children as continuing problems.
- Children highlighted the importance of role-modelling good behaviour and having opportunities to take part in community and cultural events, for children to have something good to do in their free time to prevent crime. They saw a role for themselves in organising community events, with help from schools and law enforcement authorities.
- Children shared that it was important to establish talks with military and armed groups in conflict-prone areas and support negotiations and peace talks to resolve conflicts without violence and bring justice to affected communities.
- The children underscored the importance of anti-corruption measures in improving governance.



"SDGs reach every corner of the country" Arauca, Colombia. Photo: Marcos Mora /Save the Children



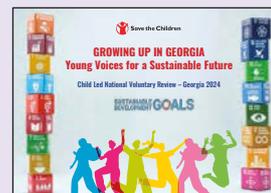
66 We should have a say in decisions that affect our lives – I know that we're just kids, but age does not mean that I cannot say what concerns me and how I see a solution. **99**

Dato, 14

How Georgia applied the Toolkit

- Number of participants: 78 children
- Ages: 13–17 years
- Group breakdown: 54% from rural areas; 5% from ethnic minorities; 12% children with disabilities; 57% girls; 43% boys

Read the [full report](#) for more detail, quantitative data and to find out how child participants were identified for the Georgia pilot.



SDG 1: No poverty

66 With everything getting more expensive, it's harder for families to afford healthy food. It must be affecting children's health, development, happiness. **99**

Giorgi, 14

Children's views

Key: progress: ; inequality: ; interconnections: ; insights:

- Children identified that rising prices and poverty disproportionately affect rural areas, hindering access to essentials like food, education, and healthcare.
- Children rated progress as having declined slightly, emphasising the need for more comprehensive solutions, particularly in rural areas where children feel neglected. For some, this neglect had led to issues such as forced labour or early marriage.
- Children called for transformative change through programmes that empower families and equip them with skills to break intergenerational cycles of poverty, and through the creation of more job opportunities.
- Children underscored the importance of identifying those who are being left behind. They identified the need to expand social protection and for essential services such as healthcare and quality education to reach all parts of the country, including through mobile service delivery and working with local community groups and communities.
- Children wanted ways that they could share their views on poverty reduction with decision-makers, like child councils or advisory boards and by strengthening connections between children and organisations working on child rights.



SDG 2: Zero hunger

66 Due to the prices, families can't always afford healthy food, seasonal fruit and vegetables. I've heard of the prices in other countries – it's much cheaper, even though people are wealthier there. **99**

Veriko, 15

Children's views

Key: progress: ; inequality: ; interconnections: ; insights:

- Children highlighted an overall backslide on progress toward SDG 2 (to end hunger and all forms of malnutrition by 2030) and identified challenges that suggest gaps in current food security and agricultural strategies.
- Children in urban areas in particular described limited access to fresh produce, though they felt that this was a challenge nationwide. Nearly half of the children reported that inequality had increased, noting that lower-income families often rely on cheaper, less healthy food.
- Many children expressed concerns about the negative effects of hunger on education and health.
- Children called for approaches that prioritise access to affordable, nutritious food for all children, investment in sustainable agricultural practices, and stronger partnerships between government agencies, local communities, civil society organisations and farmers to build sustainable food systems. Suggestions include a voucher system for school meals and to improve the quality of meals provided.
- Children also suggested educational and financial support programmes to enable farmers to adopt sustainable practices and provide them with tools to reduce reliance on chemicals and improve food quality.



SDG 3: Good health and wellbeing

66 Universal healthcare doesn't solve everything. People still self-medicate and avoid regular check-ups. It can be caused by the fact that they don't trust the quality of local hospitals and doctors and can't afford to visit doctor after doctor. **99**

Mariam, 15

Children's views

Key: progress:  / ; inequality: ; interconnections: ; insights: 

-  Introduction of universal health coverage and regulated medical prices, rating progress as positive with some concerns.
-  High medication costs, particularly for rural families, and a lack of focus on preventive care.
-  Children emphasised the interconnectedness of health with other SDGs, such as those on poverty and hunger, noting that malnutrition and financial hardship, compounded by environmental concerns, could limit access to preventive and long-term healthcare.
-  The children called on the government to develop solutions to tackle the root causes of high medication costs and provide education about preventive care in school. They recommended public health campaigns should promote healthy choices.
-  Children called for stronger, inclusive partnerships that incorporate their voices – as well as those of civil society and communities – to create a more equitable health system. This includes child and youth councils at municipal and national levels to ensure that children's voices are included in healthcare decision-making.



SDG 4: Quality education

66 It's about the accessibility and about the quality. In the big cities we get to obtain slightly better education than in rural areas, but private schools are at another level. Why do my parents have to pay extra to get the medium quality of education I should be getting anyway? It's not like we're asking for the Oxford-level education, we just want decent schoolbooks, teachers and materials. **99**

Eka, 15

Children's views

Key: progress:  / ; inequality: ; interconnections: ; insights: 

-  Construction and renovation of schools and preschool facilities.
-  The majority felt there has been no significant improvement. They highlighted inequalities and bullying in schools, indicating that teachers and school administration often turn a blind eye, with impacts on children's sense of security and learning.
-  Concerns about the needs of children with disabilities and ethnic minorities, suggesting a more comprehensive approach is needed to ensure access for all.
-  Children highlighted a lack of focus on the interconnectedness of education with other SDGs, explaining how malnutrition and health problems can hinder a child's ability to learn effectively.
-  Children called for investment in training teachers and updates to curricula to include critical thinking, creativity, and social-emotional learning.
-  Children suggested that interventions that address underlying power imbalances and foster a culture of respect for people of all genders, and efforts to strengthen partnerships between schools, government and civil society, including ways to ensure children's input into decision-making about education, could be beneficial to improve access and quality of education for all children in Georgia.
-  Children suggested revisions to the school funding system to encourage competition, for example by issuing vouchers to enable families to choose the best school – including private options – to incentivise schools to attract students by employing qualified teachers and high-quality materials.



SDG 5: Gender equality

66 While attitudes are gradually changing, with families not prioritising boys to pursue higher education, it's still harder for women and girls to prove that they can perform as well as men. Female-led households tend to be poorer, because women have to take care of children and house alongside working. **99**

Nino, 16

Children's views

Key: progress: ; inequality: ; interconnections: ; insights: 

-  Children perceived that there has been an increase in acceptance of gender equality among older generations in recent years.
-  Children highlighted persistent challenges to the achievement of gender equality, including continued prevalence of traditional gender roles in schools and families.
-  No significant progress has been made on initiatives that reach the entire population, suggesting a need for outreach strategies that account for regional differences and ensure that everyone in Georgia understands and embraces gender equality principles. The difference between the percentage of children who reported progress on the Leave No One Behind principle (15%) and the percentage that reported no progress (85%) suggests differences in experiences among the children participating.
-  The children stressed the importance of interventions that address underlying power imbalances and foster a culture of respect for people of all genders.
-  Children highlighted the need for governments to develop closer partnerships with survivors of violence against women and children to create more effective prevention and support programmes for girls and women. Women and girls can play a vital role in this work. They also asserted the importance of strengthening education and awareness programmes for the general population and targeting boys and men, especially those who have shown violent behaviour. Government support for awareness-raising activities by civil society organisations can contribute to the overall effort to prevent violence and support affected individuals.



SDG 13: Climate action

66 The air is getting harder to breathe in the city, and I see fewer trees every year. We need to find ways to protect our environment for everyone. With the news about the desertification, increased frequency of heatwaves, we have to act. **99**

Nika, 14

Children's views

Key: progress: ; inequality: ; interconnections: ; insights:

- Children described a decline in progress including worsening air quality and uncontrolled construction leading to deforestation.
- Climate change disproportionately affects vulnerable populations, such as those with disabilities and those living in mountainous regions. Children emphasised the urgency of addressing these specific needs.
- Children linked the negative impacts of the climate crisis to poverty, hunger, and health challenges and called for a response that takes into account these linkages.
- Children highlighted the importance of outreach strategies that address the diverse environmental challenges faced by different regions of Georgia and climate action plans and policies that prioritise the needs of vulnerable populations.
- Children underscored the importance of public awareness campaigns to improve understanding of climate change and its impacts, and of incorporating climate change education in the national curriculum for all age groups.
- Children called for strong partnerships with children's and youth organisations to ensure they can actively participate in decision-making processes related to climate action.



SDG 16: Peace, justice and strong institutions

66 Lately, I've been too scared to walk home alone after dark. With all the news about violence against women, my family and I just don't feel safe any more. Even coming back from tutoring the other night, cars kept pulling up next to me asking if I needed a ride. It was really creepy, especially when one car wouldn't leave me alone until I got to a busy street. I shouldn't have to be this scared just walking home. **99**

Natia, 14

Children's views

Key: progress:  / ; inequality: ; interconnections: ; insights: 

-  While some children acknowledged increased awareness of safety measures, they remain concerned about a perceived rise in unaddressed crimes and bullying.
-  Vulnerable groups need protection to fulfil the SDG pledge to Leave No One Behind.
-  Children suggested that without addressing issues of poverty, inequality and discrimination, achieving peace and justice for all in Georgia will be difficult.
-  The children underscored the need for stronger child protection mechanisms, with more opportunities for children to participate in decision-making. Partnerships were scored zero out of five, with children emphasising their desire to collaborate with adults to build a safer and more just future.
-  Children called for legal reforms to protect victims from retaliation. Other suggestions included creating a culture of intolerance toward bullying, improving street lighting, increasing police patrols, and enforcing public safety laws more strictly.



How Nepal applied the Toolkit

- Number of participants: 56 (including direct participants and those who participated in verification processes)
- Locations: Representatives of province-level child clubs from all seven provinces of Nepal participated.
- Group breakdown: Of the 40 children directly involved at the focus group discussion phase, 25 were girls, 14 were boys and one identified as LGBTQI+.
- Adaptions: In Nepal, adult civil society organisations and experts in child rights took part in the validation workshops to triangulate the findings from the Child Scorecard process.

Read the [full report](#) for more detail, quantitative data and to find out how child participants were identified for the Nepal pilot.



66 People who have access to people in power have justice, whereas under-represented groups do not have that privilege. Children on the basis of their caste, gender, sexual orientation, disability, age, language, skin colour, religion, or how they look are teased, bullied, and harassed in most communities and schools. **99**

Child participant



A child club member presents insights from the Child Scorecard Process in Madhesh Province in Nepal. Photo: Save the Children in Nepal



SDG 3: Good health and wellbeing

Children's views

Key: progress: ; inequality: ; interconnections: ; insights:



- Cities and villages still lack access to safe drinking water, forcing people to wash their clothes, take baths, and drink water from streams and ponds.
- Quality health facilities are centred in major city areas, where government hospitals are overcrowded and access to treatment and services is expensive.



Lack of access to high quality healthcare in rural areas. Children identified a lack of qualified healthcare workers in Karnali in particular, explaining that remoteness, poverty and difficulty reaching the area meant healthcare workers preferred not to work there.



The children identified mental health as a particular concern. A majority of children consulted in Madhesh and Karnali shared that children their age have experienced anxiety and sadness, sometimes leading to suicidal tendencies. They explained that seeking support for mental health is considered taboo in Nepal and there is a lack of child-friendly and child-focused mental health services. Therefore they felt that the government should prioritise expanding mental health services tailored to children's needs and support awareness-raising activities to fight stigma and misconceptions about mental health so that children feel empowered to seek help.



SDG 4: Quality education

Children's views

Key: progress: ; inequality: ; interconnections: ; insights:

Children highlighted that many of their classmates dropped out of school to seek employment abroad. Additionally, it was noted that many families lie about the age of their children to send them to the labour market early, particularly in low- and middle-income families. This practice further exposes these children to dangerous labour conditions.

- Beliefs that girls or children with disabilities don't need education, and stigma attached to children from the LGBTQI+ community, reduce access to quality education.
- Children from Dalit and underrepresented communities, such as, Teli, Koiri, Kushwaha, Chamar, Musahar, Kurmi, Dusadh, Mallaah, Raute, and those from low-income households, children with disabilities, and LGBTQI+ children, often lack access to quality education.

Children linked experiences of inequality to poor access to education, noting that communities that face discrimination and inequality are less likely to prioritise children's education, leading to children being forced to drop out of school.

Children in the focus groups believed that well-off families tend to enrol their children in private schools and that these offer higher quality education, more support and mentorship from teachers, and better accountability to students. Attending a public or private school was also considered a marker of wealth that highlights inequality. Children felt that strategies to improve access to quality education must address barriers like poverty and inequality, physical punishment of children, and lack of access to sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Effective school management committees and parent-teacher associations, alongside empowering school-based children's clubs, should be supported to enable children and parents to input to decisions about children's education. Gaps that were identified included skills-based (vocational) training and career counselling in schools to support students to make decisions about their career options.

Children emphasised that schools must prioritise creating violence-free environments and foster open dialogue on sensitive topics. They said teachers should be given the training and resources to support children's diverse needs, especially those of children belonging to the LGBTQI+ community and children with disabilities.

SDG 5: Gender equality

Children's views

Key: progress: ; inequality: ; interconnections: ; insights:

- A majority of participants stated that despite campaigns and advocacy around child marriage, many families still believe that daughters should be married early.
- Education is considered less important for girls than boys.
- Continuing support for child marriage or early marriage of girls was linked to social norms and poverty. Children explained that families might support early or child marriage as a way for their daughter to escape poverty.
- Strategic actions need to be undertaken to address harmful social norms surrounding marriage, menstrual hygiene, and biases related to sex, sexuality, and gender, as they are contradictory to child rights.
- Children emphasised that gender inequality needs to be considered alongside other experiences of inequality, such as disability, and that 'one-size-fits-all' solutions would not work.



Child participants in the Child Scorecard process fill out the 'emoji' template to determine progress on the SDGs.
Photo: Save the Children in Nepal



SDG 13: Climate action

66 Every year, disasters like flooding, and landslides affect our communities. This causes water scarcity in our community and also affects our farm. **99**

Girl, Karnali

Children's views

Key: progress: ; inequality: ; interconnections: ; insights:

- Many families live in homes that are vulnerable to extreme weather and are located near rivers or in areas prone to landslides. Grazing land, wetlands and water sources are disappearing, and people are without government support to adapt to climate change.
- There is a growing consensus among children, young people and organisations that children and young people should be included in climate discussions, focusing on their lived experiences, and context-based policy dialogues.
- Children from impoverished families are the most vulnerable to extreme heatwaves, extreme cold, flooding, and similar disasters.
- Children said that climate change affects people's livelihoods, leading to forced migration and an increase in child marriage, as poverty forces families to make risky decisions, affecting children's well-being and future.
- Child participants expressed concerns that climate change discussions are often conducted in isolation, with a technical expert-led approach that overlooks their lived experiences and the impacts on their communities. They emphasised that climate change shouldn't be discussed in isolation, as it affects multiple aspects of children's rights, including education, health and well-being, the livelihood choices of their parents, and increased their vulnerability and risks due to climate-induced migration. It was important to children that discussions around climate change must be made more child-friendly, including by using less technical language and raising decision-makers' awareness of the impacts of climate change on children.
- The children called for the government to prioritise awareness-raising activities that include children from the beginning, that allow them to lead climate justice campaigns and discussions, advocating for change in their communities. This involves recognising children's role as influencers and experts and will show that they can be leaders in climate justice efforts.
- Child participants also highlighted the positive role that children could play, for example through children's and youth networks, and other CSOs working on child rights and climate action, working in coalitions to influence local and provincial governments.



SDG 16: Peace, justice and strong institutions

Children's views

Key: progress: ; inequality: ; interconnections: ; insights:

- Children shared that violence against children by their parents and other caregivers remains common. They reported experiencing harassment on local transport and in public places which made them worried for their safety and security.
- Despite efforts to improve children's access to influence decision-makers, opportunities are often limited by biases, power dynamics, and structural challenges. Biases, power dynamics, and harmful societal norms often marginalise children, limiting their participation to being tokenistic.
- Children linked experiences of violence from parents and caregivers to children's and young people's mental health concerns, including psychological distress, fear of socialisation, and isolation.
- Children called for increased investment in institutions and essential services in a way that recognises the linkages between SDGs relating to health, nutrition and violence against children. Services need to be child-friendly, provide financial support to families in a way that recognises and addresses gender inequality, and report on progress so that they are accountable to communities, including children.
- Children underscored the importance of child participation to strengthen institutions. They felt child participation should be mandatory at all levels of decision-making and supported by measures to address barriers and ensure inclusivity. They also called for support for children to influence decision-making to be expanded beyond formal groups, to include more diverse groups of children.



How South Africa applied the Toolkit

- Number of participants: 123 children participated in a survey and 78 participated directly in consultations
- Locations: Gauteng, Limpopo and Mpumalanga provinces
- Group breakdown: The group included migrant children, girls, boys and children with disabilities.
- Adaptation: Nine child volunteer child researchers (three in each province) were supported to conduct the survey and ten children participated in a verification hearing and signed off the findings – read the full report for more information about this.

Read the [full report](#) for more detail, quantitative data and to find out how child participants were identified for the South Africa pilot.



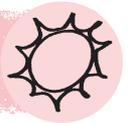
Children's participation in government decision-making

66 When I collected data around my community, I felt so emotional then I figured out that many children are actually facing a lot of challenges. I was so emotional. All I can say is: **BE THE CHANGE YOU WANT TO SEE IN FUTURE. 99**

Child participant

Children in South Africa shared a particularly strong interest in the need for meaningful child participation to accelerate progress across all six SDGs evaluated. They recognised that bodies had been established to promote children's participation in decision-making, including the Nelson Mandela Children's Parliament, but that children had to be aware of these opportunities to participate in them and that this platform and others are too informal.

Children's recommendation: The Government of South Africa should move toward valuing the voices of children by formalising the Children's Parliament and recognising its sittings as official sittings of parliament, comparable to adult parliaments.



SDG 1: End poverty

Children's views

Key: progress: / ; inequality: ; interconnections: ; insights:

- Children rated progress toward ending poverty, including financial support programmes, food and water aid, as moderate.
- Children noted that there were still high rates of unemployment and child labour.
- Children said that access to support services is more limited in rural areas.
- Children viewed food insecurity and unsafe living conditions, including lack of access to clean water, sanitation and electricity, as ongoing challenges, including as a result of inflation and the high cost of living.
- Children felt that tackling corruption in government could help accelerate progress toward ending poverty.
- Children highlighted the need for government support and social protection programmes to be fairly distributed to all communities, including undocumented children, and for child grants to be increased to cover all children's needs.
- Increased investment in the development of rural areas to improve access to services and economic growth opportunities, and building partnerships with the private sector to increase employment opportunities, were seen as ways to tackle poverty.



SDG 2: Zero hunger

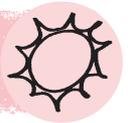
66 It was interesting and painful at the same time. I never thought I would find more than 20 to 30 people that go to sleep with empty stomach. It was pretty sad because there was nothing I could do at that time. I'm so happy that I got the chance to do the survey, now I can get the chance to help other children who are in need. **99**

Child researcher

Children's views

Key: progress: ; inequality: ; interconnections: ; insights:

- Children saw government programmes, including implementation of the National Nutrition Programme in schools and grants to support agriculture, as important progress.
- Children highlighted that some children in their community still experienced hunger and malnutrition and that they did not know whether nutritional needs were being met in their communities.
- Children who are not in school, or who are on school holidays, miss out on meals delivered through school feeding programmes.
- Participants linked poverty, the rising cost of living and climate disasters affecting agriculture to lack of progress to reduce hunger.
- Children across different provinces noted that communities and children were not able to feed into policy to ensure it met their needs.
- Children felt that there is a need to educate the public, including children, on agriculture and the importance of subsistence farming. This will empower communities to provide for themselves and address issues affecting agriculture, such as climate change.
- Participants suggested that initiatives to protect agricultural activities, provide families with land, and invest in sustainable agricultural practices and innovations could help improve food security.



SDG 3: Good health and wellbeing

Children's views

Key: progress: ; inequality: ; interconnections: ; insights:

- Children assessed progress as being moderate. Examples of progress provided included access to primary healthcare, improved access to sexual and reproductive health services, and nurse- and civil society-led health education campaigns.
- Underfunding of public healthcare facilities and corruption, including health workers selling medications that are supposed to be free, undermined progress.
- Children and young people generally, and particularly migrant children, experienced discrimination by health workers.
- Interruptions to electricity and water supplies were recognised as preventing hospitals and clinics from being able to run safely and provide health services effectively.
- Children highlighted a lack of understanding of mental health in schools and wider communities and limited access to support services, as well as linkages between drug use and mental health, as important concerns.
- Children said that health education and awareness should be strengthened in schools to help young people make healthy choices. Greater collaboration between government, communities and civil society organizations could help to create real change and improve children's health and well-being.
- Children emphasised that more must be done to increase access to healthcare for marginalised communities, and to improve disease control and health monitoring, by placing more doctors in rural areas, and building clinics and hospital facilities, including mobile clinics, in underserved areas.



SDG 4: Quality education

66 The SDG data collection was a beautiful experience where I encountered diverse-minded children, leading to beautiful interactions. Although it was tiring and sometimes frustrating, it paved the way for fulfilling moments of learning and communication. **99**

Child participant

Children's views

Key: progress: / ; inequality: ; interconnections: ; insights:

- Children identified increased access to teachers and technology in urban schools and a court judgement allowing undocumented children to attend school as important steps.
- Children rated progress on SDG 4 lower than any of the others assessed. They highlighted unsafe and overcrowded conditions in classrooms and a lack of equipment and teachers, particularly in rural areas.
- Undocumented children still struggle to access schools in South Africa and children in rural areas often have to travel long distances to reach the nearest school.
- Children linked high rates of adolescent pregnancy to girls having to drop out of school early.
- Children also identified corruption in schools, stating that some 'free' schools still forced parents to pay fees.
- Children underscored the need for the government to prioritise the needs of children with disabilities by implementing government guidance, including the South African Government's White Paper no. 6.
- Children called for more funding to schools so that they have space and facilities for exercise and sports, especially in the most under-funded schools, and for increased investment in training teachers.



SDG 5: Gender equality

Children's views

Key: progress: ; inequality: ; interconnections: ; insights:

- Increased representation of women in leadership roles, improved attitudes and understandings of LGBTQ+ rights, and programming to address gender equality were identified as indicators of progress.
- Children highlighted high rates of teenage pregnancies, lack of support for victims of violence and uncertainty over whether women had decision-making power over family planning.
- Participants identified poverty as putting some women and girls more at risk of gender-based violence.
- Children identified high rates of adolescent pregnancy as a health challenge and a reason for girls having to drop out of school early.
- Children highlighted the need to address the persistence of traditional gender roles they felt were forced onto boys and girls and used to hold women back.
- Children felt that public education campaigns should include information about sexuality, gender-based violence and violence against children, and promote equal and respectful treatment of people of all genders.
- Children wanted to see programmes that were inclusive and designed to recognise different needs and experiences based on gender inequality.



SDG 16: Peace, justice and strong institutions

Children's views

Key: progress: ; inequality: ; interconnections: ; insights:

- Progress was described as low to moderate but children highlighted examples of progress including reduced racial tensions in schools and South Africa's leadership on human rights on the world stage.
- Government instability and weak criminal justice systems were identified as driving violence and mob justice in communities.
- Violence against LGBTQ+ people and migrants was highlighted and comments were made about how the rights of LGBTQ+ people and children not being taken seriously, including (in the case of children's rights) by South Africa's Human Rights Commission.
- Bullying and harassment were seen as linked to poor mental health, including suicide.
- Children identified a lack of knowledge about laws, rights and court processes as a barrier to justice and participation in public decision-making.
- Children highlighted the need to ensure there are enough police and security forces to protect children in communities and engage children and young people in efforts to identify what support is needed.
- Children wanted to see action taken to end corruption and mismanagement of funds by government, including by vetting government officials and workers.



How Zimbabwe applied the Toolkit

- Number of participants: 353 (177 girls, 176 boys)
- Locations: Manicaland, Matabeleland South, Midlands, Mashonaland West and Harare provinces.
- Group breakdown: Participants included junior parliamentarians and junior councillors from children's parliaments; children in residential care; refugee children; children at risk of undocumented migration, children with disabilities and children living with HIV.

Read the [full report](#) for more detail, quantitative data and to find out how child participants were identified for the Zimbabwe pilot.



The Government of Zimbabwe has included information from the Children's Scorecard in the official report on progress toward achieving the SDGs that they submitted to the UN this year ([Voluntary National Review](#)).

66 We, the children of Zimbabwe, demand action, NOW! We want a Zimbabwe where ALL children have equal opportunities: free education, access to affordable healthcare, a registered identity for every child, because we all matter, protection from abuse and a justice system free from corruption and, create for us sustainable solutions to end poverty and hunger. **99**

Child participants, as quoted in the [Zimbabwe 2024 Voluntary National Review](#)



Children engaging in a focus group discussion. Photo: Cynthia Chimbunde/Save the Children



SDG 1: End poverty

66 In my community, some children cannot afford to pay school fees and BEAM (Basic Education Assistance) is not paid, and they end up being sent away from school. **99**

Child participant

Children's views

Key: progress: ; inequality: ; interconnections: ; insights:

- Children recognised the importance of support provided by government to provide financial and other assistance like food, employment opportunities and farming resources for vulnerable families.
- Support services are affected by gaps in availability and access as well as underfunding, so that the help they provide does not meet the need.
- The majority of children and families with disabilities are poor and often miss out on financial support and projects like grants to help generate income.
- The economic crisis, related to the rising cost of living and impacts of climate change, was identified as a key contributor to poverty in Zimbabwe.
- Children considered corruption a challenge to efforts to reduce poverty and provide support to vulnerable children and communities.
- Children highlighted the need to stabilise the economy to prevent inflation.
- Children suggested that more employment opportunities could be created, particularly for young people and people with disabilities and their caregivers. They said children with disabilities should be included in consultations about action to reduce poverty.



SDG 2: Zero hunger

66 Hurumende inongopa chibag chete pasina muriwo, even muzvikoro” / The government gives only grain with no vegetables, and to be registered for food aid is difficult, you need to be linked to someone. 99

Child participant

Children's views

Key: progress: ; inequality: ; interconnections: ; insights:

- Most children said that progress toward SDG 2 was improving, including with the help of government programmes providing resources to support farming.
- Food prices are too high, agriculture is not providing enough food to feed the population and food aid does not provide a balanced diet (it is focused on grain) and isn't enough to meet everyone's needs.
- Children and families with disabilities were identified as the most likely to be affected by hunger, due to poverty.
- Climate disasters (especially drought) making farming more difficult were recognised as affecting progress to end hunger and ensure access to healthy food.
 - Children also made links between children going to school hungry and difficulty learning.
- Some children reported parents selling food aid to buy other things and identified spending on alcohol as particularly problematic because it could increase family violence.
- Children highlighted various ways to improve agriculture in the country, for example children in Mangwe specifically recommended cattle-rearing projects and improving access to water for example by digging dams, drilling boreholes, repairing damaged pipes and introducing solar-powered pump systems.
- Children emphasised the need for food aid to reach everyone in need, in both rural and urban areas, and that nutrition support programmes should be targeted to vulnerable families, including children with disabilities.



SDG 3: Good health and wellbeing

Children's views

Key: progress: / ; inequality: ; interconnections: ; insights:



Government efforts, including public information campaigns, building new health facilities and mass immunisation and drug administration (for example access to HIV medication) represent important progress.



Health services are too expensive and hospitals and clinics lack reliable funding.



- Communities in rural areas have to travel long distances to access healthcare.
- Support for children with disabilities to access healthcare is limited, for example there are no sign-language interpreters.



Children saw lack of access to healthy food and clean water, as well as harmful drug use, as increasing health challenges.



Drug use by adolescents and young people was highlighted as a critical concern for children. Children emphasised the importance of strengthening law enforcement to end drug use, dealing and corruption.



Children called for increased resources for primary healthcare and to ensure hospitals have basic equipment, enough medication and staff who are motivated to help children. They said there should be clinics specifically for adolescents, providing information and healthcare, especially for those born with HIV who may have questions and want discussions outside parental influence. Children shared that lessons could be learned from other countries, such as those that provide universal healthcare coverage for children.



Children highlighted the need to move essential services including health; transport; water, sanitation and hygiene food, and awareness-raising on hygiene closer to the community level, so that no communities are left out.



SDG 4: Quality education

66 Isu tinorarama nehurema, mari yacho yekutibatsira haiuye and zvikoro zvacho hazvina maresources ekushandisa / For us children living with disabilities, there is no assistance that comes from the government and the schools are not disability friendly. **99**

Child participant

Children's views

Key: progress: ; inequality: ; interconnections: ; insights:

- Programmes providing support to pay school fees and buy school equipment for vulnerable children were seen as important examples of progress.
- Basic education is not free and schools are underfunded with very large class sizes and a lack of facilities. This is particularly the case in rural areas, where children often have to travel long distances to school, increasing the risk of drop-out.
- There is too little support for children with disabilities to participate fully in school. Children noted that a lot of education programmes focused on girls but few addressed the needs of children with disabilities.
- Children made clear linkages between discrimination against children with disabilities, poverty, substance abuse, child marriage and adolescent pregnancy and poor access to school and attendance.
- The children emphasised the need for the government to uphold its commitment to free basic education, improving infrastructure in both urban and rural areas. They also highlighted the need to build more secondary schools,
- Children felt that parents should be held accountable for sending children to school, including through government programmes that support school attendance, promoting attendance with school meals programmes and enforcing laws against child labour, substance abuse and child marriage.



SDG 5: Gender equality

66 Uhulumende lenhlanganiso asebenzisana lazo kumele bencedise abantwana ngokupheleleyo ukubhadalela abantwana imali yesikolo kuphela kakusizi uma ekhaya kungela kudla njalo umntwana engela mabhuku okubhala esikolo / Partners and government should help a child holistically. Paying fees only does not help if there is no food at home or not enough stationery at school. That's why you see many girls getting pregnant. **99**

Child participant

Children's views

Key: progress: / ; inequality: ; interconnections: ; insights:

- Children highlighted examples of progress, including the outlawing of child marriage, and programmes to support girls' education and representation of girls in senior positions in child parliaments, including the first girl president.
- Children reported that girls were at risk of sexual exploitation in exchange for good grades and other educational and career opportunities.
- Girls with disabilities were seen as excluded from programmes aimed at supporting girls' education.
- Child marriage and pregnancy were identified as leading to early school drop-out and linked to taboos around sexual and reproductive health and lack of access to confidential healthcare.
- Some children saw programmes aimed at improving girls' access to education as excluding boys and creating rather than reducing inequalities.
- Children suggested that community-based vocational centres for both girls and boys could be beneficial in enabling them to learn practical skills.
- Children called for more opportunities for women and children with disabilities, as well as training and support services to help women and girls manage finances and earn money.



SDG 16: Peace, justice and strong institutions

66 Munhu anorepa asi pasina mazuva tomuona akutofamba mucommunity justice yacho iri papi? / A person sexually abuses a child but within a few days they would be released, where is the justice? **99**

Child participant

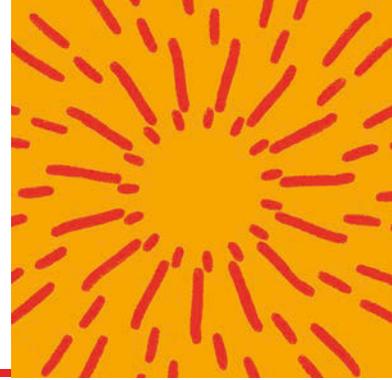
Children's views

Key: progress: ; inequality: ; interconnections: ; insights:

- Children applauded the government and people of Zimbabwe for ensuring a peaceful country which has no notable conflicts.
- Child abuse, including sexual violence, is common although reporting is low, perpetrators are rarely punished and services for survivors are underfunded.
- The lack of support for children with disabilities (for example lack of sign language interpreters) prevents them from reporting violence and giving evidence in court.
 - Police patrols are less common in remote areas.
- Children recognised that support services, particularly mental health services, were important to support survivors of violence.
- Children underscored the importance of raising awareness of child rights, especially child protection, and ensuring that children could report violence and other crimes confidentially including through community reporting structures that report all cases are necessary regardless of whether they have powerful relatives or other social connections.
- Children expressed concerns that law enforcement was inadequate, including as a result of corruption which meant that people did not believe that the justice system would help them, and deterred them from reporting.
- Children wanted to see reforms to existing laws to allow children born outside Zimbabwe to register for birth certificates.

Part 4

Conclusions and recommendations



The Children's Scorecard pilots conducted in Colombia, Georgia, Nepal, South Africa and Zimbabwe followed quite different approaches, adapted for different national and sub-national contexts. While these reflect just a tiny portion of the insights and experiences of children in each of these countries and around the world, they reveal some significant commonalities that highlight the added value of engaging children in decision-making and monitoring of progress for child rights and sustainable development for policy-makers to learn from.

- Children considered SDG progress based on their day-to-day experiences, this meant that they didn't separate one SDG from another but saw them as linked ('interconnected and indivisible') and wanted solutions that reflected that reality. For example, children in Nepal saw the connection between poverty and how that impacted the ability of children to continue schooling and health services. For them solutions that focused on one SDG without considering the impact of others would not work.
- Children in all five countries cared deeply about the inequalities they saw in their communities and wanted more to be done for groups they felt were discriminated against. The groups they identified as being left behind included children with disabilities, girls, LGBTQI+ children, children of a certain caste, ethnic minorities, indigenous communities and migrant or undocumented children.
- Children emphasized the need for their meaningful and inclusive participation in SDG implementation, monitoring and accountability processes, including ensuring children most affected by inequality and discrimination were able to engage safely. Children want to play an active role in solutions to the challenges we face today.
- Children saw that the social services with the most impact on their lives including financial support to families, healthcare, education and safety and security services were often under-resourced and called for increased investment to improve quality and make them affordable and accessible to all.
- Children highlighted the impact of a few issues in particular:
 - climate change was recognised as impacting their daily lives and they underscored the urgency of climate action with particular attention to children and including them in policy discussions.
 - poor mental health among children and young people and the need for more support.
 - bullying, particularly in schools – a safety issue and barrier to accessing essential services and realising individual rights rarely referenced in adult discussions of human rights or sustainable development.

Save the Children's recommendations to drive SDG progress for child rights

With levels of hunger higher than when the 2030 Agenda and SDGs were agreed in 2015, and progress on critical goals for children off track and leaving so many behind, world leaders are running out of time to deliver on their 17 promises to children. The Summit of the Future taking place in September 2024 is a critical moment to lock in commitments that will lay the ground for global policy discussions on accelerating implementation of the SDGs at the Financing for Development conference and World Social Summit in 2025. The futures of children and future generations hang in balance. As we race toward 2030, Save the Children calls on governments to:

1. Close the SDG financing gap by:

- a. **Scaling up investment in achieving the SDGs, including through reforming the global financial architecture** to place the rights of children and families most affected by poverty and inequality at the centre, making it more inclusive, transparent and equitable in order to mobilise and unlock financing.
- b. **Prioritising investment in social sectors that benefit children and their families** as essential building blocks for healthy economies and societies, including health, education, social protection and preventing violence against children through effective child protection systems, while adapting services to be climate-resilient, shock responsive, and integrated.

2. Recommit to delivering all 17 of the SDGs in line with the principles set out under the 2030 Agenda by:

- a. **Working with children and their communities to develop approaches that recognise the interconnected and interdependent nature of the SDGs.** As the Children's Scorecards conducted to date show, children speaking from lived experience articulate interconnected rights and sustainable development needs that can feed directly into multisectoral interventions that support the whole child.
- b. **Urgently shifting to policies that put the furthest behind first, to ensure no one is left behind.** This requires a clear and targeted focus on children and communities most affected by inequality and discrimination, and commitment to policies that eliminate discrimination and close inequality gaps.
- c. **Scaling up national statistical capacity to collect, monitor and publish timely, disaggregated data,** at a minimum by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts, on the gaps and progress in SDG implementation, and commit to regular multistakeholder Voluntary National Reviews to the High-Level Political Forum. The availability, including in the public domain, of timely, comprehensive and disaggregated data on the situation of all children in a country is crucial to inform resource planning, budget allocation and spending, not least to ensure that budgets are responsive to the needs and rights of the most excluded groups of children.

3. Establish, invest in and institutionalise children's safe and meaningful participation in decision-making from the local to the global levels, including by:

- a. Investment in child-led groups and grassroots youth- and adult-led social justice, feminist and human rights organisations that support them.
- b. Consulting with children in all processes for tracking progress toward the SDGs and child rights, including Voluntary National Reviews, using tools like the Children's Scorecard.

4. Ensure the Summit of the Future is the turning point the world needs to achieve the SDGs by investing in and supporting partnerships with civil society, business, children and their communities to implement the commitments made under the Pact of the Future and Declaration on Future Generations. These are critical to respond to barriers to SDG progress that have grown in significance since the 2030 agenda was agreed.

5. Commit to establishing an accountability process at the United Nations to achieve intergenerational justice for sustainable development:

World leaders must commit to setting up the institutional mechanisms necessary for multilateral and multistakeholder dialogue and collaboration to define, measure and hold present generations accountable for the rights and well-being of future generations.

66 If children are the future, then we must be left with the reason of surviving to become that future; when children are groomed in a peaceful society it breeds love and better shapes the future, all the governments of the world should come together to promote peaceful co-existence and security of human rights. **99**

Rita, 16, Nigeria

Endnotes

- 1 Sharrow, D. et al. (2022). Global, regional, and national trends in under-5 mortality between 1990 and 2019 with scenario-based projections until 2030: a systematic analysis by the UN Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation. The Lancet. <https://data.unicef.org/resources/global-regional-and-national-trends-in-under-5-mortality-between-1990-and-2019/>
- 2 Save the Children (2023) [The SDG Summit must unlock new financing and raise ambition with and for children](#). See methodological note [here](#).
- 3 World Bank, UNICEF, FCDO, USAID, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (2022). The State of Global Learning Poverty: 2022 Update. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/education/publication/state-of-global-learning-poverty>
- 4 UN Women (2022) [Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The gender snapshot 2022](#).
- 5 UNICEF (2024). Birth registration. <https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-protection/birth-registration/>
- 6 Save the Children (2011). Every child's right to be heard. <https://www.savethechildren.org.uk/content/dam/global/reports/education-and-child-protection/every-childs-right-to-be-heard.pdf>
- 7 Save the Children (2022). [Generation Hope: 2.4 billion reasons to end the global climate and inequality crisis](#); United Nations Sustainable Development Group (2024). [2024 SDG Report: Global Progress Alarmingly Insufficient](#); The Elevate Children Funders Group and Global Philanthropy Project (2021). [Manufacturing Moral Panic: Weaponizing Children to Undermine Gender Justice and Human Rights](#).
- 8 For more information, see [United Nations System Common Principles on Future Generations | United Nations - CEB \(unsceb.org\)](#)
- 9 United Nations System (2023). United Nation System Common Principle on Future Generations. https://unsceb.org/sites/default/files/2023-05/Advance%20Unedited%20-%20United%20Nations%20System%20Common%20Principles%20on%20Future%20Generations_0.pdf
- 10 Note: Statistics apply to those countries where sufficient data on progress is available: UN (2024). [The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2024](#).
- 11 UNICEF (2023). [Progress on Children's Well-being: Centring child rights in the 2030 Agenda](#). UNICEF analysis is based on officially reported data.
- 12 Under-five mortality measures the probability of a child to dying before their fifth birthday. It is widely used as a key indicator to understand progress for child health. children's progress in health. It is also the only of our five indicators where the majority of countries have either met the target already or require only very low efforts to get there.
- 13 UNICEF (2024). Under-five mortality. <https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-survival/under-five-mortality/>
- 14 Sharrow, D. et al. (2022). Global, regional, and national trends in under-5 mortality between 1990 and 2019 with scenario-based projections until 2030: a systematic analysis by the UN Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation. The Lancet. <https://data.unicef.org/resources/global-regional-and-national-trends-in-under-5-mortality-between-1990-and-2019/>
- 15 UNICEF (2024). Child malnutrition. <https://data.unicef.org/topic/nutrition/malnutrition/>
- 16 Save the Children (2023) [The SDG Summit must unlock new financing and raise ambition with and for children](#). See methodological note [here](#).
- 17 World Bank, UNICEF, FCDO, USAID, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (2022). The State of Global Learning Poverty: 2022 Update. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/education/publication/state-of-global-learning-poverty>
- 18 Save the Children (2021) [Preventing and Addressing Child, Early, Forced Marriages and Unions: Technical Guidance](#).
- 19 UN Women (2022) [Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The gender snapshot 2022](#).
- 20 UNICEF (2024). Birth registration. <https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-protection/birth-registration/>
- 21 UNICEF (2023). Progress on Children's Well-being: Centring child rights in the 2030 Agenda. <https://data.unicef.org/resources/sdg-report-2023/>
- 22 Save the Children analysis based on DHS/MICS household surveys.
- 23 All the data can be explored using the Child Atlas, Save the Children's data platform to understand and visualise data on key outcomes for children. The data included in the analysis is drawn from publicly available databases from UNICEF, WHO and UNESCO, as well as our own analysis of DHS and MICS household surveys.
- 24 Countries for which we don't have data for at least two groups are excluded from the analysis.
- 25 The Children's Scorecards is not intended to guide research or produce statistically representative data, users should adapt it based on their resources and focus to serve the needs of their community.
- 26 All discussions with children were conducted in line with the office's national child safeguarding and consent protocols.