


Why is a Children's Rights Approach Needed?

The Sustainable Development Goals¹ are a unique opportunity to realize children's rights. All children deserve a future - to get their best start in life, to survive and to thrive. Yet millions are being denied their rights and left behind:




Almost
570
million

Children **living in extreme poverty**, deprived of their dignity and an adequate standard of living.



230
million

Children under age 5 who **do not officially exist** due to failures in registering their births.



Up to
ONE
billion

Children subject to **physical, sexual or psychological violence** in the past year.

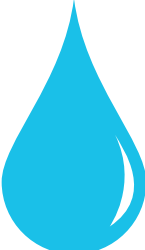
Nearly




1 in **5**

Girls **sexually abused** at least once in their lives.

Every week
119,000



Children under age 5 **die from preventable causes** such as unsafe drinking water.



250
million

Children **failing to learn** basic literacy and numeracy due to poor education quality.

View UNICEF's Mapping of the Global Goals for Sustainable Development and the Convention on the Rights of the Child [HERE](#).

¹ See the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights "Protection of the rights of the child in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" [A/HRC/34/27](#)

What do Children's Rights Mean for the SDGs?

In the 2030 Agenda, governments commit to realizing the SDGs universally for all children, and to doing so on the basis of their rights.² All SDGs are important for children's rights and well-being, and a children's right approach calls for leaving no child behind and reaching those furthest behind first.³ View UNICEF's Mapping of the Global Goals for Sustainable Development and the Convention on the Rights of the Child [HERE](#).

Ending poverty & ensuring access to

services: Child poverty is especially damaging as it denies children a fair start in life, which can in turn hold them back throughout their lives. Equal access for all children to quality services, alongside social protection systems for those in the greatest need, are key tools towards ending child poverty and realizing their right to an adequate standard of living.

Health & nutrition: Children face particular health risks due to their life-stage, including from under-5 mortality, malnutrition, and both communicable and non-communicable diseases. It is crucial to ensure access to quality health-care services, including sexual and reproductive health-care, essential medicines and vaccines for all children, with a focus on overcoming bottlenecks and discrimination in health systems.

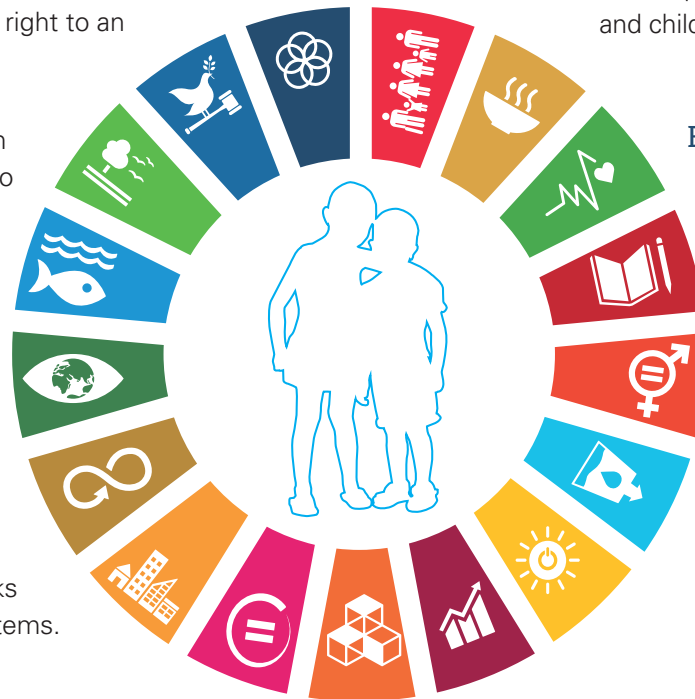
A safe & sustainable

environment: Due to their stage of physical development children experience greater exposure to the effects of environmental degradation and pollution, and are especially vulnerable to natural disasters and emergencies linked to climate change. Action is urgently needed to bring about a safe environment for all children by reversing climate change, protecting ecosystems and developing sustainable cities, energy and infrastructure.

Education & learning: A quality education is the foundation of a child's development and can be the key to breaking cycles of poverty across generations. All children have the right to receive a good education, and an equity approach is essential to address the gaps in access to quality education - especially for girls and children from low-income or otherwise excluded communities.

Ending violence, exploitation &

abuse Violence against children occurs in both the public and private spheres, and remains a challenge for all countries. Some children are especially vulnerable e.g. children living on the streets, or in situations of conflict or displacement. Child protection systems should be strengthened in an integrated way, paying attention to harmful social norms.



Water, sanitation & hygiene are central to children's overall health and nutrition, and to addressing child mortality and stunting. Equitable access to clean water, sanitation and hygiene for all children, with particular attention to the needs of girls and children in situations of vulnerability is crucial to securing a chance for them to survive and to thrive.

² In accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (Transforming Our World, 2016)
³ See UNICEF, "Mapping the global goals for sustainable development and the Convention on the Rights of the Child" (2016).

How can the SDGs be Realized for all Children?

Prioritize reaching those children furthest behind first

This means taking stock of the children at greatest risk of being left behind due to inequality and discrimination, living in poverty and otherwise vulnerable and marginalized situations. Laws and policies should be enhanced to protect these children and realize their rights, and they should be the first focus of SDG action plans. Special programmes are also needed to change the stigma and social norms that contribute to their marginalization.

Enable children to participate in securing their future

The space to meaningfully participate benefits both children as well as policy makers and service providers for improved efficacy. Governments and development partners should create spaces and opportunities for children to actively take part in processes and decisions that affect them. Children should be heard and listened to in SDG planning and monitoring processes in line with their evolving capacities, so that they can help to define their opportunities and claim their rights.

Article 2:
No child should be discriminated against - governments should strive for equal results for all children.

Article 3:
Children's best interests should be the priority - no SDGs should be pursued in a way that could harm children.

Article 6:
All children have the right to life, survival and development - all of the Goals should be realized for all children

Article 12:
Children have the right to be heard - so should be enabled to participate in SDG action plans and results.

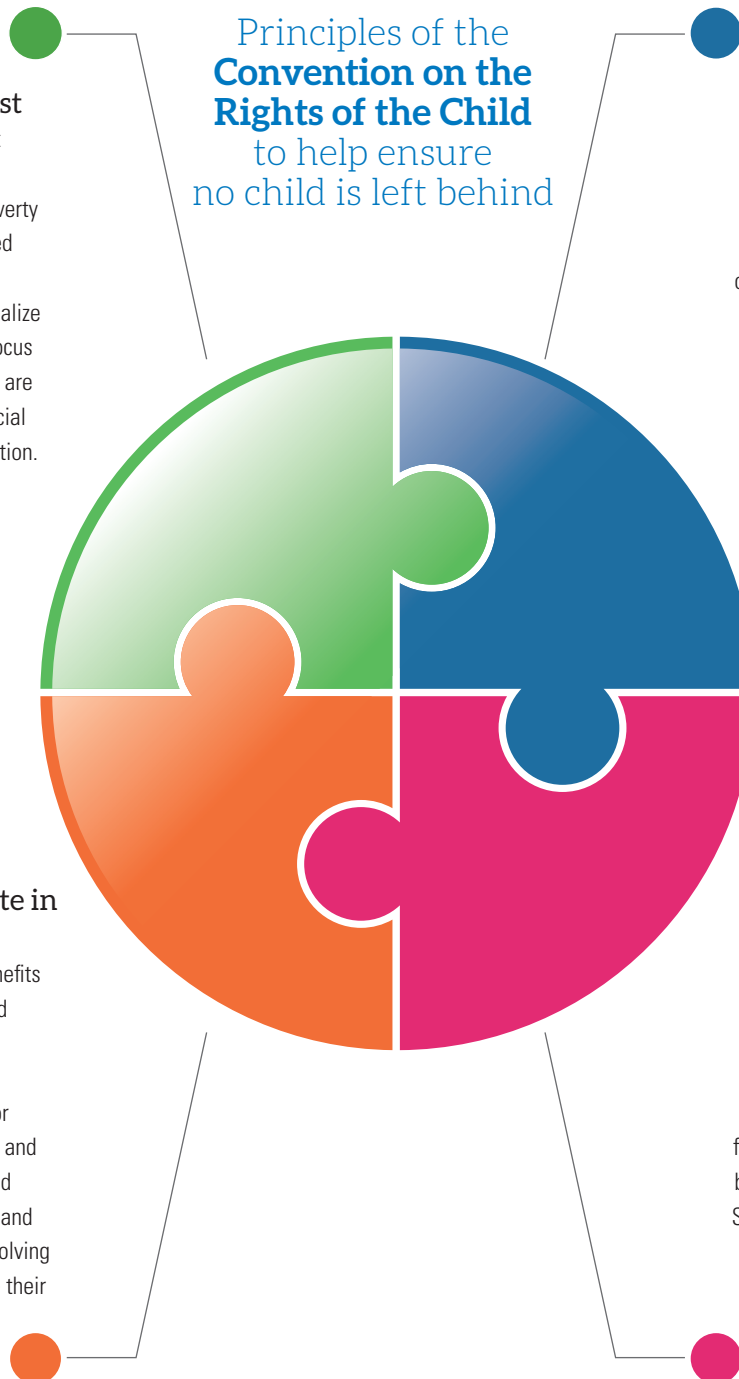
Principles of the **Convention on the Rights of the Child** to help ensure no child is left behind

Make promises real through monitoring and accountability

The SDGs can only be achieved through accountability and a monitoring approach in which every child is counted. The birth of every child must be registered, and their circumstances tracked through reliable, disaggregated data. A data revolution is needed in which children's right to participate in SDG monitoring efforts is realized. Their right to privacy must also be protected, while making data publicly available to cast light on the children being left behind.

Invest the maximum possible resources in children

Realizing a future for all children requires investment of the maximum available resources in policies and programs designed to realize their rights, especially for those in the greatest need. Cooperation between countries is crucial to achieve the SDGs for all children everywhere, including in countries where resources are scarce and children's most basic needs are too often out of reach.



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SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT **GOALS**

