

# SUPPORT EVERY CHILD!

*A child-friendly version of:*

## **2023 REPORT TO THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL ON CHILD RIGHTS & INCLUSIVE SOCIAL PROTECTION**

**By the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights**



# Road Map



1

## ABOUT THIS REPORT



Meet the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights



Child Participants

2

## ABOUT SOCIAL PROTECTION



Extra support is a child's right. Children are more likely to claim their other rights when they receive social protection.

3

## CHILDREN LEFT BEHIND



Most children around the world do not receive enough support and many children need extra support.

4

## SUPPORT EVERY CHILD



Governments need to put children at the centre of their laws, policies and programmes to make sure that every child is supported and can claim their rights.

# Meet the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

**I'm Volker Türk! I'm the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.** I am responsible for human rights at the United Nations (UN). I work with my team at the UN Human Rights Office to help governments to improve the human rights of everyone living in their country.

**Every year, my team and I write a report about children's rights** to give countries extra information about how they can improve children's lives. The report is discussed with governments at a **meeting of the UN Human Rights Council**.\*

**This report is a child-friendly version** of my 2023 report to the Human Rights Council about child rights and inclusive social protection. The official United Nations reference for that report is A/HRC/54/36.

**My team and I wrote it with help from children**, civil society organisations, countries (in the UN, they are called UN Member States}, UN agencies, and National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs).\*\*

\*The United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC) is responsible for making sure that countries keep their promises about human rights. The HRC is made up of **47 governments**. They meet to discuss human rights three times a year and they take decisions which they record in documents called resolutions.

\*\*NHRIs, or National Human Rights Institutions, are independent organisations that protect and promote human rights in a country.

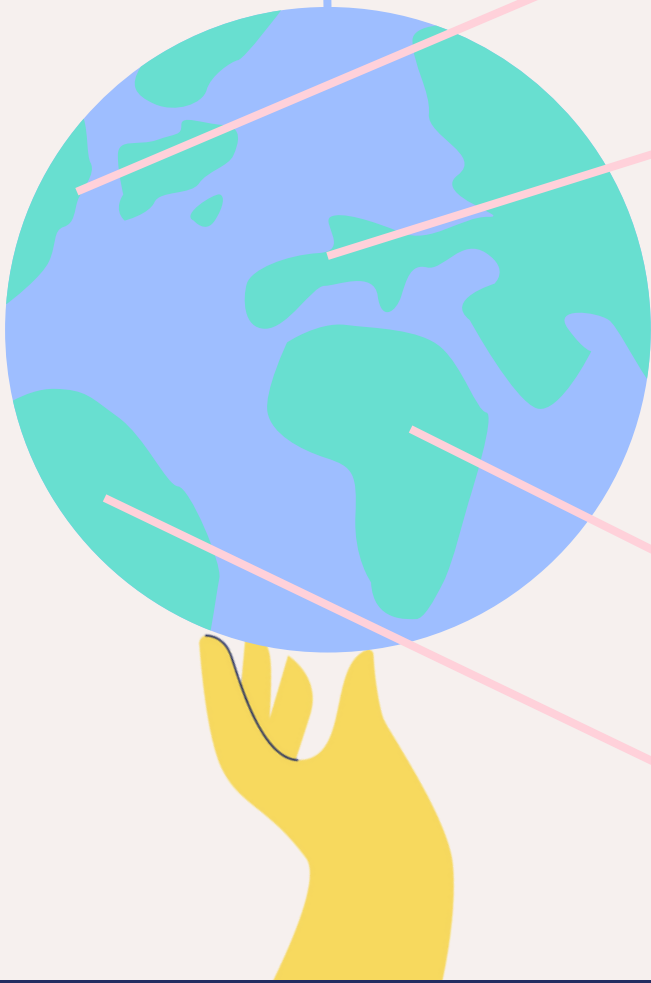


## CHILD PARTICIPANTS:

**24  
COUNTRIES**

**600+  
CHILDREN**

**5-17  
YEARS OLD**



### **NORTH AMERICA:**

United States of America

### **EUROPE:**

Albania, Croatia, France, Denmark (Greenland), Northern Ireland, Romania, the Netherlands, United Kingdom of Great Britain

### **ASIA:**

Bangladesh, India, the Philippines, South Korea, Türkiye

### **AFRICA:**

Democratic Republic of Congo, Ghana, Mozambique, South Africa

### **LATIN AMERICA & THE CARIBBEAN:**

Argentina, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay



*Thank you to the children from all over the world who shared their experiences for this report, and to those who helped design it.*

# CHILDREN WITH VERY DIFFERENT EXPERIENCES CONTRIBUTED TO THIS REPORT, INCLUDING CHILDREN...

-  With disabilities
-  Of different genders: girls, boys, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and children who chose not to identify
-  From religious or ethnic minorities
-  Living in poverty
-  With no proof of identity
-  Refugee children, asylum seekers and children with immigrant parents
-  Without a home, living in street situations, or living in poor urban areas
-  In or out of school
-  With experience of violence at home, in school or in the community
-  Affected by armed conflict, natural disasters and the climate emergency

2

## ABOUT SOCIAL PROTECTION

What is social protection?

What does social protection mean to children?

What makes social protection inclusive?

Who is responsible for inclusive social protection?

Other international laws and agreements



# What is Social Protection?

Governments have agreed to take special measures to support children and their parents or caregivers with enough money, and everything else that they need for children to grow up in a healthy, happy, safe, and fair environment.

**This extra support is called social protection.  
It is also called social security, or social and economic help.**

Social  
Protection

HEALTHCARE



EDUCATION



SAFE HOUSING



HEALTHY FOOD

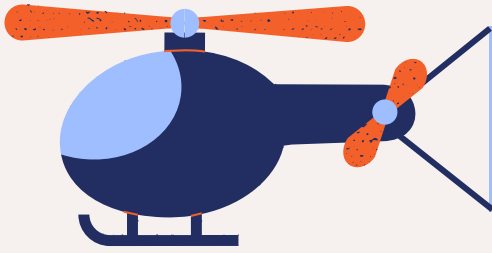


CLEAN WATER



MORE MONEY





GETTING EXTRA SUPPORT  
IS EVERY CHILD'S RIGHT!

## ARTICLE 26, UN CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD (CRC):

### *Your right to social security (also called social protection)*

Every child has the right to social security. Governments must provide this extra support, including financial help and other benefits, to children and their families if they need it.



*Children's rights are commitments that nearly every government has made to children.*



**LEARN MORE ABOUT THE CONVENTION  
ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD HERE**



*"I am sorry that people don't know about children's rights, and children can't participate more."*

**Girl, aged 13, Croatia**



# What does social protection mean to children?



"I know that I have the right to protection and safety, but I've not heard of social protection."

**Girl, aged 13, India**



"I know about social protection. Even though it is a well-known right there are many people who cannot exercise it."

**Child, aged 16, Mexico**



"I know about social protection, although many children are not given priority."

**Child, aged 17, Dominican Republic**



"I did not know that children should get extra support. That would help me."

**Boy, aged 12, Albania**

## Social Protection



"I have the right to live in a caring family environment, and be in school. For my security, I receive special protection from any danger. Protection and education have to be provided for me until I turn 18."

**Girl, aged 16, Türkiye**



*Do you know about social protection in your country?*

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# What makes social protection inclusive?

*Inclusive social protection means that support from governments should be there to help every child, without leaving any child behind.*

***Social protection should always be inclusive.***

The Convention on the Rights of the Child recognizes that **some children might need different support from others**, especially if they need special care and assistance because of their experience or situation. For example:

	<b>ASYLUM-SEEKING AND REFUGEE CHILDREN</b> (CRC, ARTICLE 22)
	<b>CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES</b> (CRC, ARTICLE 23)
	<b>CHILDREN IN ALTERNATIVE CARE</b> (CRC, ARTICLE 25)
	<b>CHILDREN ENGAGED IN CHILD LABOUR</b> (CRC, ARTICLE 32)
	<b>CHILDREN AFFECTED BY ARMED CONFLICT</b> (CRC, ARTICLE 38)

***Inclusive social protection can:***

- Reduce poverty
- Make societies more equal, and
- Make societies more economically stable

# What happens with and without inclusive social protection?



**With inclusive social protection,** children are more likely to enjoy their rights and access the support they need.



**Without inclusive social protection,** children are at higher risk of other child rights violations and are more likely to be left behind.

All these violations can have long-term impacts on children's health, education and development. For example: opportunities to get work when they are older, increased poverty, malnutrition, or deeper inequalities.

# Who is responsible for inclusive social protection?



**Governments are responsible for providing children and their parents or caregivers with social protection**

## They should do this with:



Laws that provide children and their parents/caregivers with social protection.



Policies and programmes that explain how and when they will provide this support.



This information should be available in languages that all children and adults understand, and communicated to them so that people can easily find this information.



*"The Administration passes laws but fails to explain to children and their families what they mean. Many people are illiterate so they do not manage to put these laws into practice."*

**Boy, aged 15,  
Democratic Republic of Congo**

# Other international laws and agreements

Providing children and their families with special assistance is so important you can also find it in other international laws, agreements, standards and political commitments.



*“In my community there are children who can't afford to enrol in school or buy school supplies, giving priority to other rights such as food, and delaying their school year.”*

**Boy, aged 12, Mozambique**



UN SECRETARY-GENERAL'S CALL TO ACTION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

DECLARATION ON THE RIGHT TO DEVELOPMENT

OUR COMMON AGENDA

INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION CONVENTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION ON THE PROTECTION OF THE RIGHTS OF ALL MIGRANT WORKERS AND MEMBERS OF THEIR FAMILIES

CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN

INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS



# Sustainable Development Agenda

Countries from all around the world agreed that by 2030, they will have met a number of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that everyone in the world enjoys peace and lives well.



**[READ MORE ABOUT ALL THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS HERE!](#)**

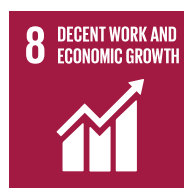
## SOCIAL PROTECTION HELPS ACHIEVE MANY OF THESE GOALS. THESE INCLUDE:



**Sustainable Development Goal 1 to end poverty**, especially target 1.3 to implement social protection systems and universal measures by 2030 to achieve substantial coverage of the poor and vulnerable.



**Sustainable Development Goal 10 to reduce inequality**, particularly target 10.4, which urges States to adopt social protection policies.



3

## CHILDREN LEFT BEHIND

Children from around the world say...

Social Protection is not ENOUGH

Social Protection is not EQUAL or EQUITABLE

Who is at most at risk of being left behind?

Why aren't children getting social protection?



*“There are many children from needy families with a lot of problems. Perhaps they have sick parents, who cannot work or dropped out of school and have to work wherever they can.*

*Many children are facing not only lack of money but also lack of food, and clothing. This can lead them to drop out of school, not able to cope and not having many possibilities for the future. They will try to find a job where they can to help their parents, siblings and support their family.”*

**Girl, aged 17, Romania**



# CHILDREN FROM AROUND THE WORLD SAY:



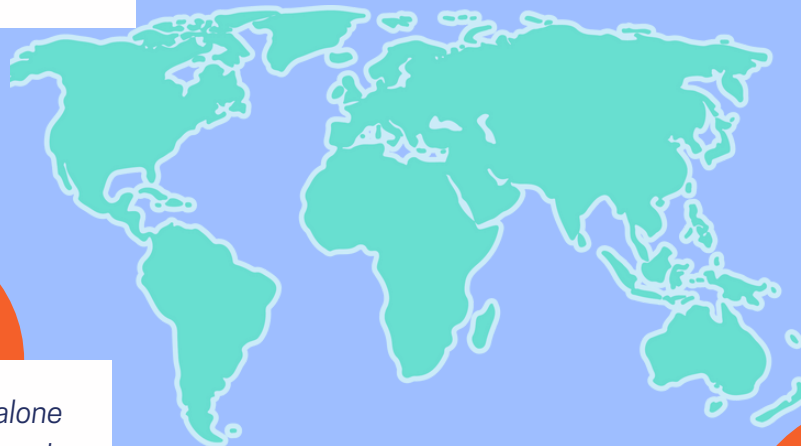
"There are children in our community who experience more difficulties than others. Some families have to worry about education, food, shelter, and childcare - while others don't."  
**Boy, aged 17, United States of America**



"There is a big problem with malnutrition because of the price of food."  
**Girl, aged 15, France**



"Children on the move don't have the right legal documents to access healthcare, education, food and nutrition anywhere they go."  
**Girl, aged 16, India**



"Some children are left alone at home with nothing to eat while their parents go to work. If their parents die, they turn to drugs because they lack support."  
**Girl, aged 16, South Africa**



"Because of the conflict, children's living conditions keep getting worse and they have no support."  
**Boy, aged 13, Democratic Republic of Congo**



"There are financial problems that affect parents, which then pass on to their children. The financial support provided by the State is not enough."  
**Girl, 16 years, Türkiye**



**What issues have you seen in your country?**

.....

.....

All over the world, social protection is not:

# ...Equal or Equitable.

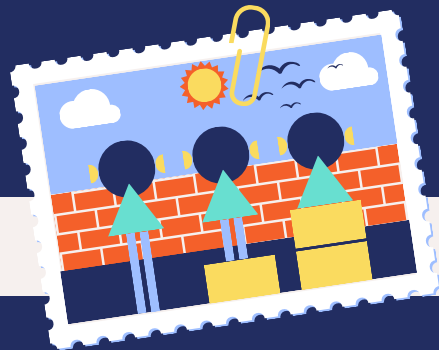
## Equal:

Existing discrimination causes many children to miss out on support because they are treated unfairly because of who they are or their life experience.



## Equitable:

Many children need even more support and care than others to fully enjoy their childhood, yet they often don't get the extra help they need.



### For example:

- Children with disabilities
- Girls
- Internally displaced, refugee and migrant children
- Child labourers
- Children in street situations

**and many more...**



*"Children face barriers to access social protection if they do not have identity documentation, such as street connected children, children on the move, or the children of casual workers."*

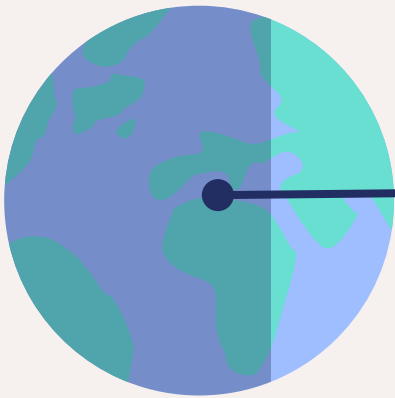
**Girl, aged 15, India**



Children are missing out on their rights because their government is not always providing them with the support they need to develop and grow up in the healthiest, happiest and fairest ways.

**Globally, social protection is not:**

# ...Enough.



**More than 1 billion children**

around the world do not get ANY social protection.

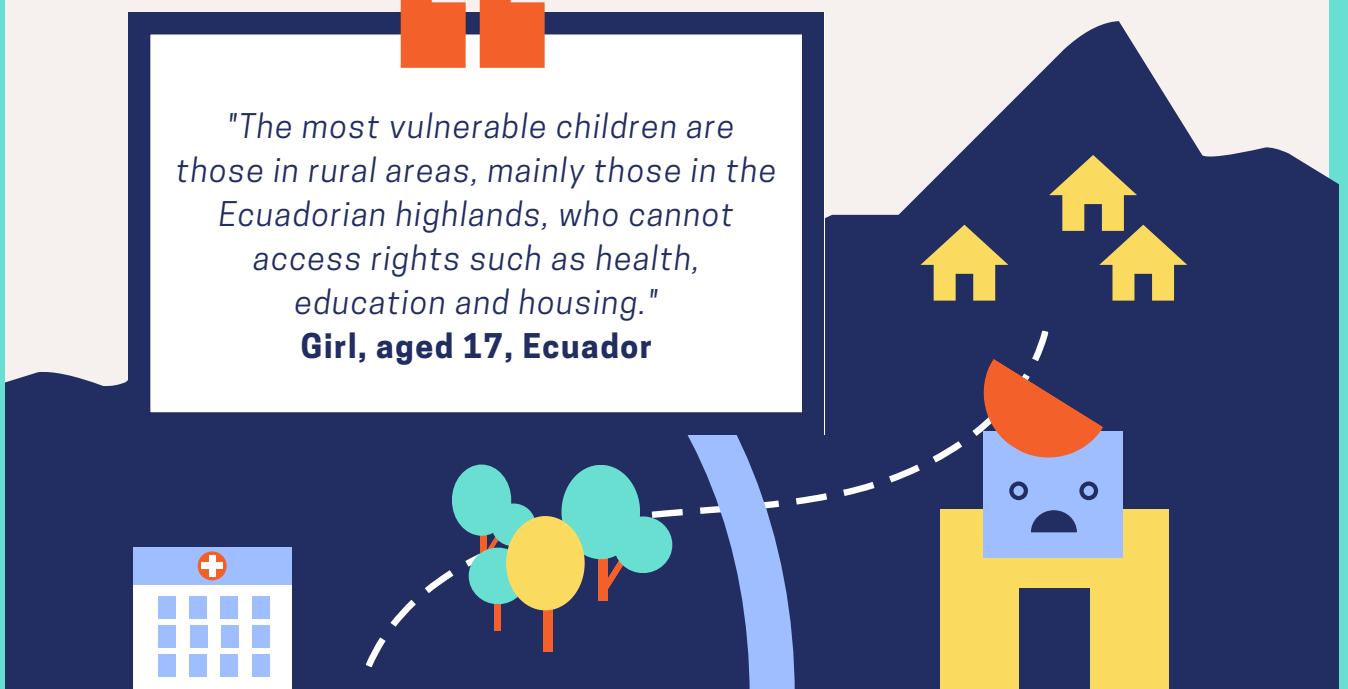
**For example:**

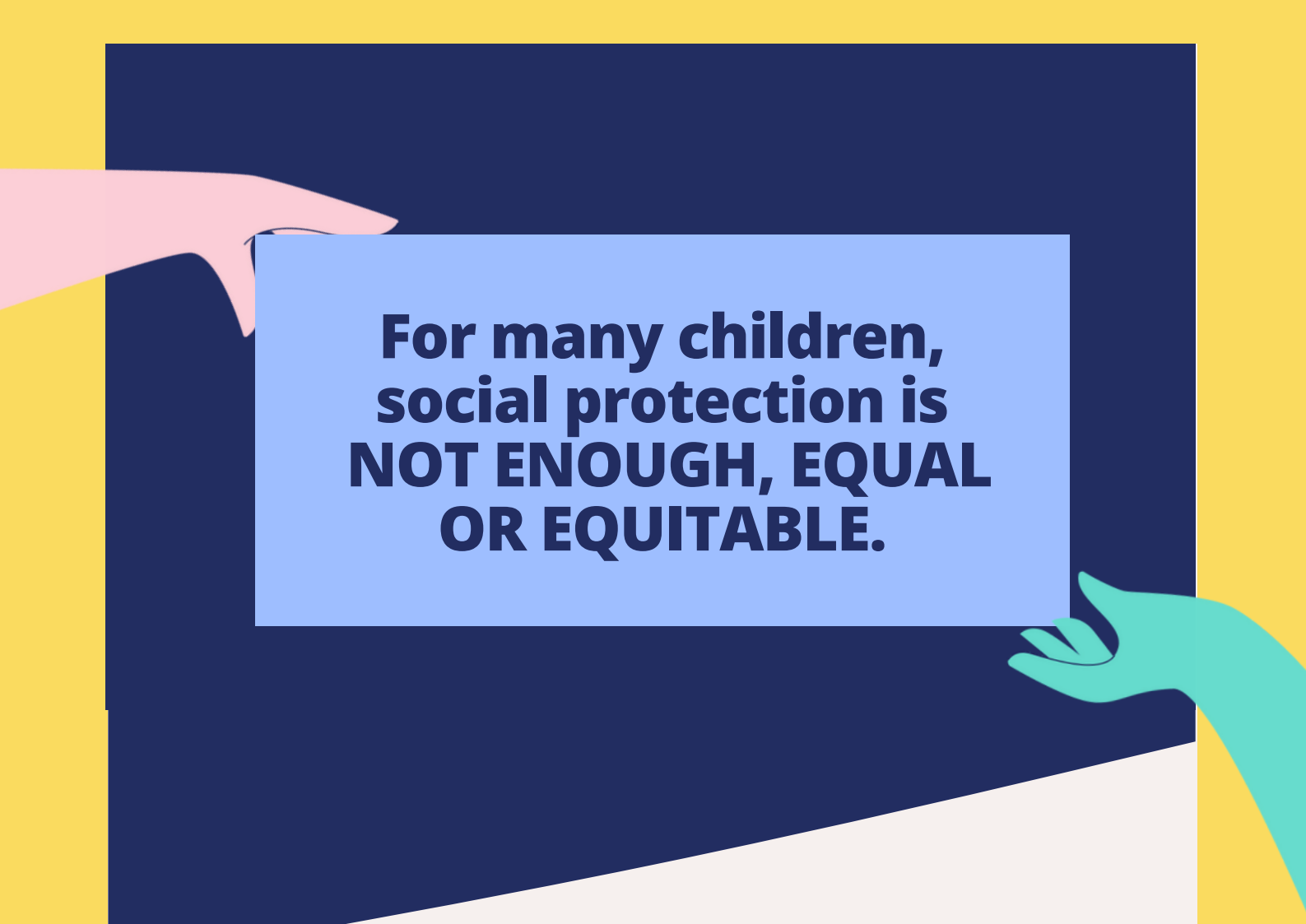
- Children living in poverty
- Children in rural areas
- Children affected by conflict
- Children affected by natural disasters



*"The most vulnerable children are those in rural areas, mainly those in the Ecuadorian highlands, who cannot access rights such as health, education and housing."*

**Girl, aged 17, Ecuador**



An illustration of two hands, one pink and one teal, holding a light blue rectangular sign against a dark blue background. The sign contains the text: "For many children, social protection is NOT ENOUGH, EQUAL OR EQUITABLE."

**For many children,  
social protection is  
NOT ENOUGH, EQUAL  
OR EQUITABLE.**



*"Access to education is not equal for children with disabilities because they do not receive the extra assistance that they require."*

**Girl, aged 11, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland**



# Who is most at risk of being left behind?

Children are less likely to receive enough support when:



- They live in poverty
- Living costs are too high



- Parents/caregivers are not able to get work
- Parents/caregivers are sick or have a disability
- Parents/caregivers don't have good parenting skills



- They live in fragile or conflict affected areas
- They experience displacement or migration
- They are affected by natural disasters or the climate emergency



*"When there is lack of money some children are forced to work early, others start to steal, and others end up interrupting their studies. Some girls get involved in prostitution. The way children live influences their growth."*

**Boy, aged 13, Mozambique**



# WHY AREN'T CHILDREN GETTING SOCIAL PROTECTION?



## ...BECAUSE CHILDREN'S RIGHTS AREN'T ALWAYS THE PRIORITY!



Governments don't always put children first in budgets and plans for their country.



Different government departments don't always work together well to prioritise children.



Governments don't always know which children need extra support.



Governments don't always share enough information about the support available to children and parents or caregivers, or make sure that this information is understood.



**ALL THESE BARRIERS, AND MANY OTHERS, STAND IN THE WAY OF CHILDREN ACCESSING INCLUSIVE SOCIAL PROTECTION.**

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## SUPPORT EVERY CHILD

Children from around the world ask for...

What is a child rights-based approach to social protection?

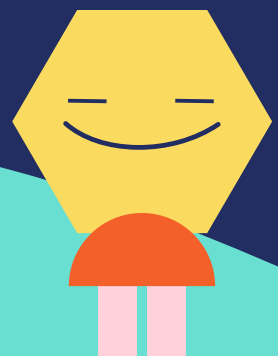
Children should always be at the centre of social protection

Recommendations from the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights



*"Parliament and all other decision-making platforms should include children's representatives so that children can actively participate in budgeting and resource planning."*

**Girl, aged 15, India**



# CHILDREN FROM AROUND THE WORLD ASK FOR:



"Positive parenting training for parents."

**Boy, aged 14,  
Mexico**



"Funded programs for children that find out about their exact needs."

**Girl, aged 17,  
United States of America**



"More homeless shelters and better, cheaper housing for families."

**Girl, aged 14,  
United States of America**



"Subsidies to lower the prices of food."

**Boy, aged 11,  
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland**



"Increase budgets to guarantee access to education, health and food for vulnerable families."

**Girl, aged 12  
Ecuador**



"Public transport needs to be cheaper."

**Boy, aged 14,  
Romania**



"Lower the prices of school fees and uniforms, and give free education to all children."

**Boy, aged 14  
South Africa**



"Support children living in extreme poverty and indigenous groups."

**Boy, aged 12,  
Paraguay**



"Kits for families in need and sanitation campaigns in rural communities."

**Girl, aged 16,  
Mozambique**



**What would you like your government to do better to support every child?**

# Children should always be at the centre of social protection

## GOVERNMENTS MUST PRIORITISE A CHILD RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH TO INCLUSIVE SOCIAL PROTECTION

This means making sure that support is always based on children’s rights, and prioritises their development, protection and empowerment at all times.



# WHAT IS A CHILD RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH TO SOCIAL PROTECTION?

## GOVERNMENTS SHOULD:

Ensure **laws and policies promise universal social protection** for all children, and that all laws and policies prioritise children's rights.

Provide **Universal Child Benefits (UCBs) for every child\*** in their country, no matter who they are, to give all children a fair start.

Provide **basic services to everyone**, such as universal healthcare, and free education.

Make sure that **different government departments work together**, for example, child protection, education, finance, health, labour and social welfare.

**Remove administrative barriers** to make inclusive social protection available and accessible on and offline.

**Provide training** so professionals can support children and their families to access social protection.

**Collect information on children** to find out which children are being left behind and not being supported.

**Make sure children have everything they need to grow** and develop and provide extra support when they need it.

Tell children and their parents/caregivers about the **support that is available** to them.

**Support parents to be the best parents.** For example, being able to take time off work after their child is born, ensuring they have affordable childcare, and providing them with support if they are unable to work because of unemployment, illness or disability.

\*UCBs are cash benefits to families with children from birth, regardless of how much money a family has. They help reduce inequalities, reduce poverty and fulfill a child's right to social security.





## I, THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, ASK THAT...

**1** States make laws and policies that give enough support to children, parents and other caregivers for every child in their country to grow up in a healthy, happy, safe, and fair way. This support should be provided to people in different ways throughout their lives.



**2** States spend as much money as they can afford, even in times of crisis, to guarantee that all children get the support they need to claim all their rights. When States decide how to spend money, children's rights should always be a priority.



**3** States provide more support to children who have extra needs or who miss out on a healthy, happy, safe, and fair childhood because of who they are, where they live or other reasons.



**4** States involve children in decisions about social protection and make sure children can access information about social protection in ways that they understand. Children should always have ways of voicing their concerns and getting a solution if their rights are denied.



**5** The UN keeps focusing on children's rights in their work, including inclusive social protection for every child.



CHILDREN CANNOT BE LEFT  
BEHIND ANY LONGER.

NOW IS THE TIME TO MAKE UNIVERSAL  
SOCIAL PROTECTION AVAILABLE TO EVERY  
CHILD IN THE WORLD.

