Save the Children

STILL LEFT BEHIND?

Tracking children's progress against the pledge to Leave No One Behind

Save the Children fights for children every single day. Because every child should be able to make their mark on the world and build a better future for us all.

We stand side by side with children in the toughest places to be a child. We do whatever it takes to make sure they survive, get protection when they're in danger, and have the chance to learn.

Cover photo: Girls at a primary school in Turkana, Kenya
(Photo: Allan Gichigi/Save the Children)

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Foreword

By Save the Children Girl Champions,
Xhorda from Albania, Saleha from India, and Maryam from Nigeria

In 2015, world leaders promised to Leave No One Behind. This means that everyone, everywhere should benefit from the Sustainable Development Goals, especially those who are missing out at the moment. In our countries, there are many children who suffer from poverty, violence, discrimination and a lack of basic services. The Leave No One Behind principle understands that because these groups are prone to being excluded, extra effort must be made to ensure that they are carried along.

Most importantly, leaders and authorities must focus on girls. The world over, girls continue to suffer and face barriers to reaching their full potential simply because they are girls. Unless girls are educated and empowered, the world cannot progress. We want a world where girls have an equal opportunity, where they dream and also make their dreams a reality.

This report is about accountability for the pledge to Leave No One Behind. It is important to hold authorities accountable for their promises. We as children try hard to get those who take decisions to hear our voice on issues that concern us. Children can understand our issues better than anyone else and can provide ideas on how to improve them in our best interests. We want to be called upon for our suggestions when it comes to issues that affect our well-being. We want to be able to speak and use our voices to hold political and traditional leaders accountable for their words and their actions.

The pledge to Leave No One Behind also means that everyone should play a role in reaching the unreached. The SDGs are a motivation for us and our peers. They will significantly shape the world we inherit as adults and provide us with an opportunity to work together to make the world a better place. We are currently working on issues in our communities ranging from health, water and sanitation to girls' education and empowerment.

The work we do isn't easy. But we know that we won't go far if we don't take our friends, family and community members along. The first step is to do our bit: we cannot expect others to join unless we do. And once we come together, we can bring about bigger change. Like Mahatma Gandhi said, "be the change you want to see".

We can help lead the change. But we also need our leaders to keep the promise they have made to people. Together, we need to make the poverty and discrimination that children face visible, understand it, and address it.

We children are part of the fight to ensure that no child is left behind. Join us. Invest in our future.

Executive summary

Governments around the world are failing to honour a pledge to reduce extreme inequalities in child survival, malnutrition, education, protection and other development indicators. In 2015, world leaders signed up to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – a set of 2030 targets for eradicating extreme poverty in all its forms. As part of this agreement, governments committed to ensure that the pace of change would be fastest for those left furthest behind. Evidence set out in this report shows that progress to date has been limited, and that SDG monitoring and review is still focusing on average change rather than those who are furthest behind. This neglect of unfair inequalities threatens to derail the entire SDG project.

THE LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND PLEDGE: A COMMITMENT TO PROGRESS WITH EQUITY

The Leave No One Behind pledge lies at the heart of the SDG framework – a commitment 'to reach the furthest behind first' and ensure that targets are met for all segments of society. Monitoring and delivering on this promise is not just a matter of equity and fulfilment of fundamental children's rights. It is also a condition for achieving the 2030 goals. Failure to narrow the gaps between the most marginalised children and the rest of society is acting as a brake on progress.

To illustrate this globally, this report presents inequality trends for five key child poverty indicators – child mortality, malnutrition, child marriage, birth registration and primary education. For each of these, we calculated progress trends for the world's poorest 20% of households and compared them to global average trends. The world's poorest households are located in a mix of middle- and low-income countries. The majority – almost a third – are in India, comprising 486 million people. This is followed by Nigeria (127 million), Democratic Republic of Congo (71 million), Indonesia (68 million) and China (63 million).

Across all of the indicators we analysed, we found that inequality is a major barrier to progress, with the world's poorest households lagging considerably behind global average rates of change. On current trends, we can only expect a marginal or no reduction in these gaps by 2030.

Child survival provides a stark illustration of the challenge. On current trends there will still be more than 4 million deaths of children under the age of five in the year 2030, compared with 5.6 million in 2016. Children in the world's poorest 20% of households are nearly 40% more likely to die before their fifth birthday than the global average. Eliminating this wealth gap would save 4.1 million lives between now and 2030. However, social disparities in child survival are narrowing far too slowly. On current trends, the global gap is set to fall by only three percentage points.

In addition to global trends, we looked at what is happening in individual countries, analysing trends for marginalised segments of society including the poorest households, rural areas and girls. Our analysis shows that in 19 of the 45 countries that are off-track for achieving the minimum SDG targets on child mortality for all segments of society, the gap between the poorest children and the national average is not set to close by the end of the century, if at all. 228 million children live in these countries, and they include India and Nigeria, the two countries with the highest numbers of child deaths in the world.

As this report argues, there is an urgent need for governments and aid donors to ensure that progress is not only fast, but also that it is equitable. To achieve this, governments need to understand the extent of the problem. Yet, to

date, SDG monitoring is failing to systematically track progress for the furthest-behind groups. Governments, supported by the international community, must shift their attention from averages to focus on the progress that the children who are furthest behind are making, and the extent to which they are catching up, or converging, with their more advantaged peers.

Inequalities in child survival reflect deeper disparities in access to healthcare and the neglect of major killers. Parents of the poorest children are often unable to meet the costs of health provision. Pneumonia, for example, is the leading cause of child deaths from infectious disease, killing 879,000 children in 2016, overwhelmingly concentrated in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.[1] If diagnosed early, the disease can be treated with antibiotics that cost a mere $0.40.[2] Pursuing equitable pathways towards universal health coverage is essential, ensuring that everyone, and critically the poorest and most marginalised, can access the good-quality health services they need without financial hardship.[3]

Malnutrition is one of the most important indicators for national progress, providing insight into how much support children receive in their early years. Here, too, social disparities loom large: being born into the world's poorest 20% of households increases the chance of being stunted by 60% among children under five. Worryingly, the gap between the poorest and the global average is static. Of countries that have sufficient disaggregated data to compare trends, none are on track for achieving the SDG target of ending malnutrition by 2030 for all segments of society. In over two-thirds of these countries, social disparities are either widening or static.

For malnutrition, as for child survival, governments need to address underlying social disparities as a matter of urgency. For the poorest 20% of households the rate of decline needed to achieve the SDG target has to increase ten-fold.

The picture is similarly bleak for the other indicators of child development examined in this report.

Child marriage: Progress for girls in the poorest households needs to accelerate by a factor of 13 to reach the target of ending child marriage by 2030.

Girls in this group are 76% more likely to marry before 18 than the global average, and this gap is set to close by a mere three percentage points by 2030. Eliminating this wealth gap would prevent 20 million child marriages over the next 12 years. Of 68 countries with data, none are set to achieve the SDG target for all segments of society by 2030.

Birth registration: If current trends continue, there will still be 101 million children by 2030 across the world under age five who do not officially exist as they were not registered at birth. This undermines their access to essential services and rights, and increases their vulnerability to child marriage and labour. Progress for the poorest households needs to more than double to reach the SDG target of universal registration by 2030. Eliminating the wealth gap between the poorest and the global average would see 28 million more children registered by 2030.

Education: Progress for children in the poorest households needs to more than triple to ensure all children complete primary school by 2030. Eliminating the wealth gap between the poorest and the global average would allow 31 million more children to complete primary school over the next 12 years. However, this gap is set to fall by only 5 percentage points by 2030 if current trends continue. Of the 62 countries that are off track for achieving universal primary school completion for all segments of society, 55 will not see the gap between the poorest and the national average close this century.

RAPID AND EQUITABLE PROGRESS IS POSSIBLE

While the global picture is one of stark failure to combat indefensible and avoidable inequalities, success stories point to what is possible. For example, for child survival, 30% of the countries in our sample are on track to achieve the SDG target for all segments of society, including Bangladesh, Indonesia, Vietnam and Nepal. For education, 23% of countries are on track. While no country is on track for child marriage, Swaziland and Rwanda are likely to only just miss the overall target, and are seeing progress that is both fast and equitable.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The evidence presented in this report underscores the need for countries and international agencies to take urgent steps to implement the SDG pledge to Leave No One Behind, pursuing equitable progress through reaching the furthest behind groups first. Improving monitoring and review processes so that they track inequalities in a clear and systematic way is an important piece of the puzzle. It is only when inequality trends are made visible and are understood that we can expect meaningful action and accountability.

Save the Children is therefore calling for governments and international agencies to track not just national and global average progress, but also the pace at which disparities between socioeconomic groups are narrowing. This must be done at international and national levels, and in ways that are systematic across indicators and accessible for members of the public. The graphs and calculations presented in this report provide an illustration of how this could be done in practice at the international level. Save the Children's new Group-based Inequality Database (GRID) tools (https://campaigns.savethechildren.net/grid) illustrate how progress could be monitored nationally, allowing users to create their own graphs of inequality and convergence trends for different countries and child development indicators.

There is an urgent need for:
* **National governments** to use available survey and other data to report on inequality and convergence trends regularly and transparently, as well as to invest in filling data gaps.
* **The UN system and international organisations** to report on global and national inequality and convergence trends, including through the annual UN SDG Report and High Level Political Forum.

* **Civil society organisations** to collect and publish disaggregated data from their programming, and demand and support participatory monitoring of progress for the furthest behind groups.

Improving SDG monitoring and review is important and should incentivise and support action on inequalities. But changes in policy and practice do not have to wait for improvements in monitoring.

As well as monitoring inequalities and convergence, **governments and international aid agencies must implement and prioritise policies that allow for accelerated progress with enhanced equity**.

This should include:
* A review of financing and investment in children at local, national and international levels, with more resources focused on a per capita basis on children in greatest need.
* A renewed focus on inequality across all government and donor policies. For example:
  – For child survival – pursuing universal health coverage, improving nutrition, and reversing neglect of diseases like pneumonia that are exacerbated by poverty and inequality.
  * For education – preventing inequalities in learning outcomes from emerging in the early years, and subsequently persisting throughout childhood.
  – Across the board – tackling gender inequalities and harmful social norms that often put the poorest girls at the very back of the queue, and that make them vulnerable to fundamental rights violations such as child marriage and other forms of gender-based violence.

Cindy, age 17, participates in the Schools Building Peace project in Mexico. The poster she is holding reads, "as children and adolescents, our voices must be heard and our recommendations should be put into practice".

Leave No One Behind: the challenge and remarkable opportunity

"As we embark on this great collective journey, we pledge that no one will be left behind. Recognising that the dignity of the human person is fundamental, we wish to see the Goals and targets met for all nations and peoples and for all segments of society. And we will endeavour to reach the furthest behind first."

Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (paragraph 4)

NEW DAWN OR EMPTY PROMISE?

In 2015, world leaders came together to agree a roadmap for achieving global prosperity, peace and sustainability. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), is a rallying call for action to eradicate poverty in all its forms and ensure that everyone has fair chances in life by 2030. It's a call for the world's 385 million children who still live in extreme poverty, and the millions deprived of their right to education, health and protection, to be given the chance in life that they deserve – a chance to live healthy and fulfilled lives and shape their own futures.[4] To achieve that, the 2030 Agenda calls for efforts to be focused on the most deprived and marginalised people, putting their needs first.

It is this focus on the people who are furthest behind and on reducing inequality that sets the SDG agenda apart from predecessor agreements, and that holds promise for real, much-needed change. The Leave No One Behind pledge – a short but all-important statement set out in the preamble of the Agenda – states that SDG targets should be met for all segments of society, and that the furthest behind should be reached first.

This pledge has the potential to revolutionise how the world defines and strives for progress, in line with international human and child rights principles of equity and non-discrimination.[5] Its predecessor, the Millennium Development Goals framework, celebrated only global and national average change, with a focus on developing countries. In comparison, the 2030 Agenda is truly universal, forcing rich and poor countries to shine a spotlight on the most deprived and marginalised groups, whose lack of progress has historically been hidden from public and political scrutiny.

The importance of this cannot be overstated, particularly for children – a group that is systematically marginalised and disempowered across the world, but in whom investment must be prioritised if we are to realise the SDG vision of a more prosperous and peaceful future for all. While the world has made good progress in recent decades across key dimensions of child poverty, devastating inequities – based on factors such as family income and resources, geography, gender, identity and whether they have a disability – are holding particular groups of children back. And those groups of children growing up in conflict situations and fragile states are among the most vulnerable and furthest behind of any in the world.[6] The Leave No One behind pledge is first and foremost a commitment to address these grossly unfair inequalities in development progress. Children's life chances should not be determined by who they are or where they live.

The extent of inequalities in the world today is illustrated by new research presented in this report.

- Children in the world's poorest income quintile are at 60% higher risk – almost twice as likely – of being stunted than the global average.
- They are nearly 40% more likely to die before their fifth birthday.
- Girls in this group are 80% more likely to be married as children.
- Children in this group are 15% less likely to complete primary school.[7]

If governments are committed to the SDGs, they need to get serious about addressing these rights violations and closing these profoundly unjust inequalities in children's basic life chances.

Worryingly, we are seeing insufficient reduction in unfair inequalities across the world. If recent trends continue, no low- or middle-income country in our sample is set to achieve the SDG targets of eliminating stunting or child marriage for all segments of society by 2030.[8] This report highlights that, if recent trends continue, 119 million children under the age of five will still be stunted in 2030, and 10 million girls will be married under the age of 18. Only 30% of countries are on track to meet the global SDG child mortality target for all segments of society, and only 23% for universal primary school completion. Put simply, if progress does not accelerate for the world's poorest children, the SDG targets will not be achieved.

At the root of these trends is a failure by governments and their donor partners to allocate sufficient resources to addressing harmful discrimination and to improving access to basic services for the most deprived and marginalised girls and boys. This includes the widespread failure to tackle two issues that Save the Children has identified as critical: pneumonia, the world's leading infectious killer of children, and the education and learning crisis that is entrenched in the early years, before children even start school.

Three years on from the adoption of the Leave No One Behind pledge there is very little sign of change in policy, strategy and monitoring. Every year, government delegations head to the UN General Assembly in New York and to other summits to reaffirm their pledge to leave no one behind. Yet few have translated the pledge into public spending commitments or into wider strategies for combating the inequalities that are holding back the most marginalised children.[9] The pledge is at risk of becoming empty rhetoric, paid lip service in global meetings, but not accompanied by concrete changes in policy or practice.

Putting those children who are furthest behind first is no easy task. It means collecting and reporting disaggregated data to identify the furthest behind groups, facing often uncomfortable truths about why they have been left behind, and allocating resources in new ways to reach and help them.[10] But we must face these challenges head on; the future of the world's children depends on it.

UNCOUNTED AND INVISIBLE

Governments' commitment to the SDGs should start with a pledge to track and report to citizens on the pace at which the life chances of all groups of children are progressing towards the 2030 goals, and at which the most marginalised children are converging or catching up with their more advantaged peers. This would allow governments and their partners to assess where effort needs to be focused, and civil society organisations and the public to hold them to account for change. If conducted in ways that are open, participatory and inclusive, monitoring and review processes have the potential to help to raise public awareness about issues of inequality and exclusion. The aim should not be to build purely technocratic SDG monitoring processes, but rather to promote deliberation about barriers and solutions, and thereby generate public and political will to drive change.

Yet not enough is being done to get even the basic building blocks of transparent and accessible monitoring of inequalities and convergence rates in place. A number of UN agencies are making efforts to monitor and report on trends in disaggregated data, including for example the recent UNICEF report *Progress for Every Child in the SDG era*[11] and the World Health Organization's Health Equity Monitor database and tools.[12] But more needs to be done to consolidate this work across sectors and agencies to present a systematic, accessible and holistic picture of inequalities and rates of convergence for the furthest-behind groups, and place this at the heart of SDG monitoring.

The UN annual SDG Progress Report focuses on global, regional and national averages, with only ad hoc reference to disaggregated data, often for single data points rather than to highlight trends over time. The international SDG database mostly contains data for global, regional and national averages, with limited disaggregation for selected indicators. The Inter-Agency and Expert Group on SDG indicators – the group mandated to define and support the SDG indicator framework – established a work stream on data disaggregation in 2016. Their work, however, has lacked transparency and is moving at a slow pace. A background document on guidelines for data disaggregation is not set to be submitted to the UN Statistical Commission until March 2019 – nearly four years on from the establishment of the Leave No One Behind pledge.[13]

Reporting on progress for those who are furthest behind is similarly weak at the national level, in high-, middle- and low-income countries alike. Country reports (known as Voluntary National Reviews) presented at the UN High Level Political Forum – the body mandated to follow up and review SDG progress at the global level – have so far tended to limit themselves to identifying which groups are furthest behind, rather than tracking their progress over time.

This lack of progress in incorporating the Leave No One Behind pledge into SDG monitoring and reporting has to change. To address the devastating inequalities that are keeping untold millions of the world's most deprived and marginalised children in poverty, we have to make them visible and monitor progress over time.

PROPOSING A WAY FORWARD

This report illustrates what SDG data monitoring focused on the Leave No One Behind pledge could look like in practice. It proposes steps that could be taken by technical stakeholders involved in SDG monitoring and review processes.

The 2030 Agenda sets out guiding principles for SDG monitoring and review processes (see Box 1). These make clear that it is no longer acceptable to focus on national or global averages in SDG reporting, particularly as current approaches and technology allow for more and better disaggregated data, and this is becoming available for an increasing number of countries and indicators. New approaches for calculating and monitoring progress for the most deprived and marginalised people must be explored, with trends presented transparently, accessibly, regularly and systematically to gauge progress.

As we argue in our 2016 report *Towards a New Accountability Paradigm*, robust global monitoring and accountability must operate across multiple levels, maximising information and accountability flows from local and national through to regional and international levels.[14] In line with this, in this report we present approaches for monitoring progress for the groups that are furthest behind both globally and nationally. We illustrate these approaches using five SDG indicators:

• under-five child mortality
• under-five stunting
• child marriage
• birth registration
• primary school completion.

These indicators were selected as they provide critical insights into the rights and welfare of children across the crucial domains of health, protection and education, and on the basis of availability of internationally comparable disaggregated data. It is not a comprehensive or exhaustive list of the indicators that we deem to be important but, taken together, they provide an important picture of the chances that children have in life to survive, thrive and claim their rights.

BOX 1: A SELECTION OF THE 2030 AGENDA GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR SDG MONITORING AND REVIEW

Follow-up and review processes at all levels will be guided by the following principles:
• They will be **open, inclusive, participatory and transparent** for all people and will support the reporting by all relevant stakeholders.
• They will be people-centred, gender-sensitive, respect human rights and **have a particular focus on the poorest, most vulnerable and those furthest behind**.

• They will be rigorous and based on evidence, informed by country-led evaluations and **data which is high-quality, accessible, timely, reliable and disaggregated** by income, sex, age, race, ethnicity, migration status, disability and geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts.

Source: *Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (paragraph 74).

GLOBAL TRENDS ANALYSIS

To analyse global inequality trends for each of the five indicators, we present graphs displaying progress trends and projections for children in the world's poorest 20% of households, in comparison with the global average. These illustrate the rate of convergence that is needed to close the gap between the poorest and the average (see Boxes 2 and 3).[15] We also look at additional group-based inequalities that can be aggregated and monitored internationally (sex and urban/rural location).

As we look at these separately, our analysis does not capture the multiple, overlapping forms of inequality that many children face (eg, being a poor girl in a rural area), or the drivers behind them. But our approach does provide a simple, systematic and powerful representation of our global collective failure to tackle inequality and ensure that all children have a fair start in life. It underscores that urgent action is needed to achieve the magnitude of change required to fulfil the Leave No One Behind pledge.

BOX 2: WHO ARE THE WORLD'S POOREST 20%?

To help strengthen accountability from local to global levels, it is important to monitor progress for the socioeconomic groups that are furthest behind at both national and international levels, and the rate at which they are converging with more advantaged groups.

To measure progress for the poorest 20% globally, we follow the Development Initiatives 'P20' approach, which allows for the identification and comparison of poor households across countries.[16] The focus on the global P20 complements our focus on the poorest 20% for our national level analysis. See Methodology Paper for further details about this approach.

Almost a third of the poorest 20% live in India, followed by 8% in Nigeria and 5% in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Due to demographic and poverty trends, the proportion of people in the P20 is falling in India (projected to decline to 28% by 2030) and rising in Nigeria (to 10% by 2030).

Some countries have a particularly high proportion of their population in the world's poorest 20%. DRC has the largest share of its population in this group at 85%, followed by 65% in Nigeria and Tanzania.

According to our calculations, in 2018, the world's poorest 20% of households are living on less than $3 a day (purchasing power parity). Around half live below the international extreme poverty line of $1.90 a day.

THE TOP TEN COUNTRIES CONTRIBUTING THE MOST PEOPLE TO THE WORLD'S POOREST 20% (2018 ESTIMATES)

Country	Contribution to poorest 20% (%)	Absolute population in poorest 20% (millions)	Proportion of population in the world's poorest 20% (%)
India	32	486.0	36
Nigeria	8	127.3	65
DRC	5	71.4	85
Indonesia	5	68.4	26
China	4	62.7	5
Bangladesh	3	49.9	30
Pakistan	3	46.2	23
Ethiopia	3	45.2	42
Tanzania	3	38.4	65
Philippines	2	30.9	29

BOX 3: WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO MONITOR GROUP CONVERGENCE?

In too many countries across the world, children's chances in life depend on factors beyond their control, such as where they were born, their family's income and resources, their gender, or whether they have a disability. This is unfair, and a violation of children's rights.

An ethical approach to SDG monitoring and implementation would therefore focus on convergence – the rate at which disadvantaged groups are catching up with or falling behind national averages and their more advantaged peers.[17] This is the right and just thing to do; it is also sensible. In most countries, the SDG targets simply won't be met unless progress accelerates for the groups that are furthest behind. Moreover, research suggests that pursuing equitable pathways to progress can both help to accelerate overall rates of change, and be more cost-effective.*

A comparison of child mortality trends in Bangladesh and Cambodia illustrates why convergence is so important (see Figure 1). Both countries currently have similar overall levels of child mortality and are projected to meet the SDG child mortality target of 25 deaths per 1,000 live births by 2030 as a national average. Positively, in Bangladesh, the poorest 20% of children have made faster progress than the national average, and are on track to achieve the target. In comparison, the poorest 20% of children in Cambodia are diverging from the national average. If current trends continue, the child mortality rate among the poorest 20% of children could be 35 per 1,000 live births in 2030 – almost double the rate of the poorest 20% in Bangladesh.

Figure 1 In Bangladesh children in the poorest households have made faster-than-average progress on child mortality, but in Cambodia they are diverging from the national average
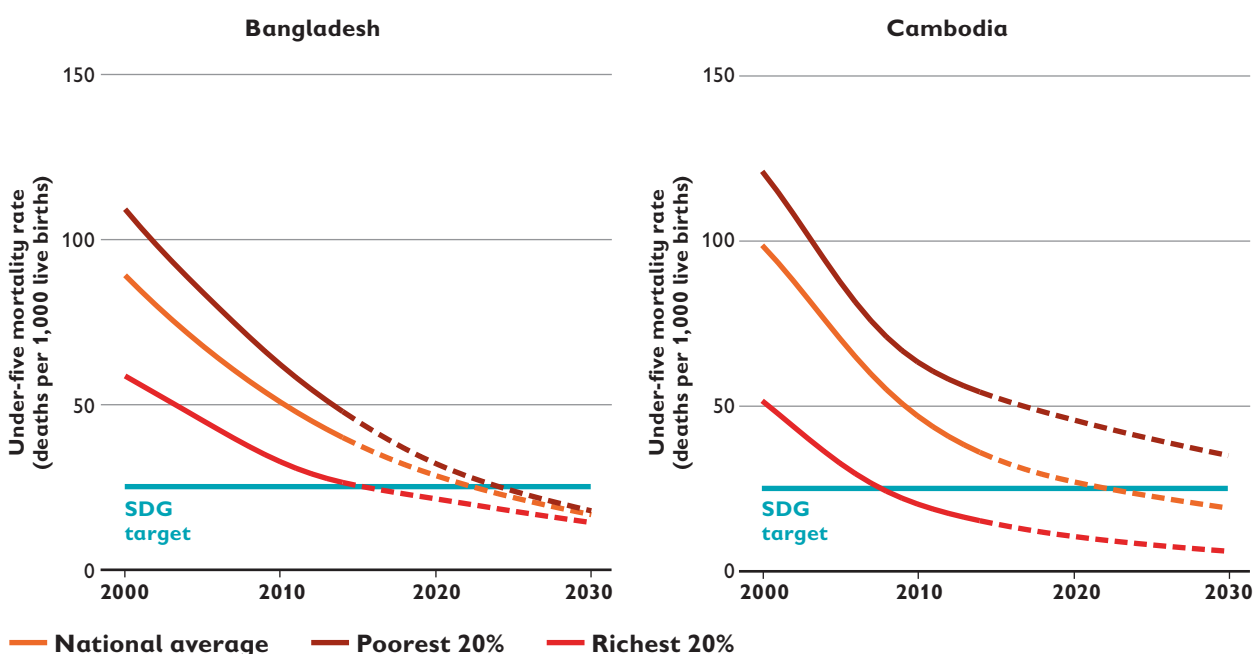
* UNICEF (2010) *Narrowing the Gaps to Meet the Goals*. UNICEF: New York; Save the Children (2015) *The Lottery of Birth*. Save the Children: London.

Dotted lines indicate projections.

Data: Save the Children calculations based on DHS/MICS.

While our global trends and projections analysis focuses on the world's poorest quintile, in our attempt to present a systematic approach for monitoring progress for the world's furthest behind children, this report uses disaggregated data that is publicly available from internationally comparable household surveys – the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) and Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS). Depending on the indicator, this data is available for 89 to 109 mainly low- and middle-income countries, which are home to 92% to 97% of the children in the world's poorest quintile. This means it provides a good picture of progress for the people who are the furthest behind in the world. However, it must be remembered that the SDG agenda is universal, and that considerable inequalities persist in high-income countries.

NATIONAL TRENDS ANALYSIS

To assess national progress, we analysed country-level trends and projections to 2030. For this report, we present a summary for each indicator, placing countries into four categories, according to whether they are on track to reach the SDG target, their average rate of progress, and the rate at which the groups that are furthest behind are catching up (see Box 4).

The four categories are:

- **On track**: Countries that are on track to reach the SDG target as a national average, and for all furthest-behind groups.

- **Off track, but with convergence**: Countries that are not on track to reach the SDG target for all furthest-behind groups, but are making overall progress. All of the furthest-behind groups will have converged with the national average by 2030, representing decreasing inequalities.

- **Off track, with limited convergence**: Countries that are not on track to reach the SDG target for all furthest-behind groups, but are making overall progress, and at least one furthest-behind group will have caught up with the national average by 2030.

- **Off track with no convergence**: Countries that are either not making national average progress, and/or where no furthest-behind group will have converged with the national average by 2030. In this case inequalities are not reducing, and the furthest-behind groups are being left behind.

The appendix provides further details of our projections for each country to 2030. Readers can also explore our accompanying online

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BOX 4: WHAT DO WE MEAN BY THE 'FURTHEST-BEHIND GROUPS'?

We have borrowed the language of 'the furthest-behind groups' from the wording of the SDG Leave No One Behind pledge in the 2030 Agenda. We define this as the group of children with the highest rates of deprivation according to data disaggregated by socioeconomic categories such as wealth, sex, location and identity.

The furthest-behind groups we include in our analysis are: the poorest 20%, rural areas and, where possible, girls. These are groups that research shows are often left behind, and for which data are easily comparable across countries and across time. While data are also available for sub-national regions and ethnic groups for some countries, we were not able to include these in our analysis because a lack

of standardisation between surveys makes it difficult to track and aggregate trends over time for many countries. Data are not available to track trends for children with disabilities.

We were not able to disaggregate child marriage data by sex as data for boys are extremely limited. We also did not include girls in the analysis for child mortality and stunting as girls are systematically less likely to be affected than boys for biological reasons; sex differences in these indicators do not necessarily reflect discrimination. However, there are a number of countries where gender discrimination is resulting in higher than expected mortality among girls (see page 14). See endnotes 27 and 28 for further discussion.

interactive data dashboard (https://campaigns.savethechildren.net/grid), which allows for the creation of disaggregated trend graphs for individual countries, and includes additional child development indicators. Other inequality data tools are also available on the site, allowing users to explore the extent of inequalities between different socioeconomic groups (see Box 5). Further detail on our methodology can be found in the accompanying Methodology Paper.

BOX 5: COUNTING EVERY LAST CHILD: THE GROUP-BASED INEQUALITIES DATABASE (GRID)

Save the Children's GRID database contains data processed from more than 400 household surveys (DHS and MICS) to estimate group-based inequalities for selected child well-being indicators. Interactive data visualisation tools can be found at https://campaigns.savethechildren.net/grid.

Trends and projections

This tool presents trends in inequalities for different countries. It displays data for selected child well-being indicators and socioeconomic groups, and shows changes over time. The tool can also be used to project trends to 2030.
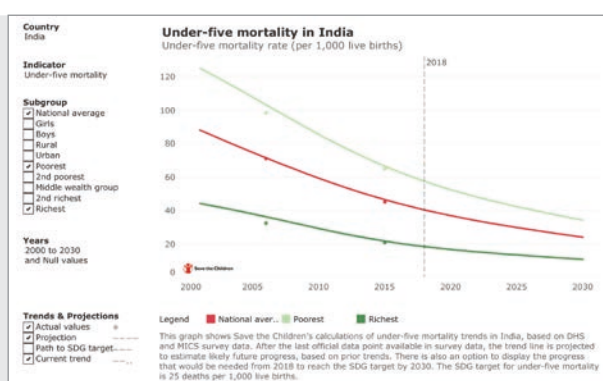
Cross-country comparison

This tool allows for the comparison of levels of inequality in and between different countries. It displays data for single indicators of children's well-being.

Intersecting inequalities

This tool allows for the comparison of levels of child well-being between different groups of children within the same country. It allows for the identification of children who are furthest behind as a result of being a member of more than one disadvantaged group.
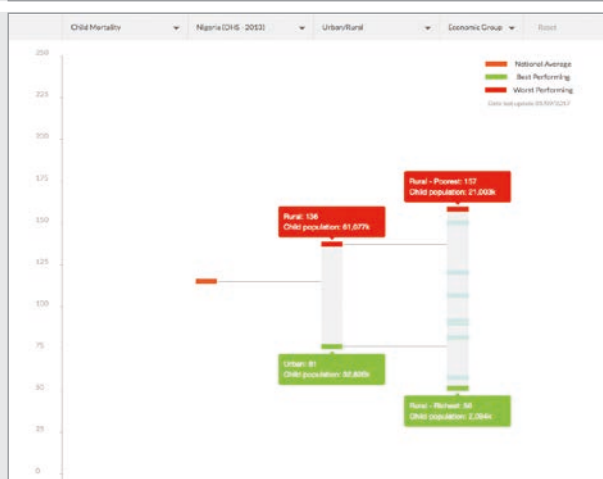
The approach we propose in this report is partial, and focuses on getting the basics of disaggregated data reporting right. There are of course other approaches that could be pursued to the one we present here and, with effort invested to interpret and standardise surveys, trends in other forms of group-based inequality could also be monitored (such as between sub-national regions and ethnic groups). This report focuses on internationally comparable data for illustrative purposes, but much more could be done at the country level, drawing on national surveys and administrative data. Including this data was beyond the scope of this report, but in many countries it offers rich insights for national and local reporting. In addition, much more needs to be done to translate this data into formats that are accessible and easy to understand by children and other citizens in order to promote public engagement, deliberation, and change.

Whichever approach is taken, and whichever data sources are used, what is important is a systematic focus on the most deprived and marginalised groups, across all SDG indicators for which sufficient disaggregated data are available. While significant data gaps remain (see below), we believe that it is far better to make systematic use of existing data than to continue to allow inequalities to be masked by a reliance on national and international averages.

THE WORLD'S MISSING MILLIONS

In our attempt to present a systematic approach to monitoring progress for the world's furthest-behind children at the international level, this report uses disaggregated data that is publicly available from internationally comparable household surveys – DHS and MICS. However, while important, these data show only part of the picture.

First, coverage is limited, and available for mainly low- and middle-income countries (see above). Second, DHSs and MICSs currently lack disaggregation by key dimensions of inequality and marginalisation, such as disability, migration status and, for many countries, ethnicity. Very little data is disaggregated by age, and surveys rarely capture the challenges faced by different age groups, with 10–14-year-olds often completely invisible. Positively, UNICEF and partners have recently released a module on child functioning for censuses and surveys, which promises to yield internationally comparable data on the challenges faced by children with disabilities.[18]

Third, an estimated 250 million people across the world are missed by the sampling techniques used by household surveys, most notably homeless people, people living in institutions, and people on the move, including those displaced by crisis.[19] There is an urgent need for more and better data on children living in and affected by humanitarian contexts. The world's poorest and most vulnerable people are disproportionately represented in the groups that are missed by household surveys, a significant proportion of whom are children. These 'invisible' groups of children include children living on the street or in orphanages, and detained or imprisoned children. So little is known about these groups that even estimates of their size are uncertain.

Much greater investment is required to fill these critical data gaps, including through dedicated surveys, new technology and better birth and death registration systems.[20] While this report is limited to using existing household survey data, formal SDG monitoring and review processes should do everything in their power to fill critical data gaps, ensure comparable data for high-, middle- and low-income countries, and report systematically on progress for groups of children that currently fall through the gaps of household surveys.

CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION

The 2030 Agenda guiding principles of inclusivity and participation (Box 1) are central to building an SDG monitoring system that has the Leave No One Behind pledge at the centre. However, efforts to support people's participation in SDG monitoring, review and accountability processes have been weak to date, from local to global levels. This is particularly true when it comes to children, whose voices and perspectives are too often ignored.

As beneficiaries and custodians of the 2030 Agenda, children have the right to engage in implementation, monitoring and review – a right enshrined in Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and supported by the commitment in SDG 16.7 to ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels. This not only helps to empower children as active citizens, but also

enables governments to understand children's perspectives, priorities and challenges, and to design interventions accordingly.

Participatory research and review activities with children, including children in the poorest and excluded groups, can also help to fill critical data gaps on the missing millions referred to above, as well as complement the limited insights that quantitative data provide (Box 6). Vital information on hidden issues can be assembled by combining available quantitative data and new qualitative data. This can help bring to light groups otherwise absent from survey data, such as adolescents and street children, as well as information on sensitive topics that have proven difficult to study through traditional surveys – for example, violence and social norms that support harmful practices, such as child marriage.[21]

CHASING DREAMS

"I would like to become an engineer, fighting against the odds, especially poverty and disability. Children with disabilities need an example before them to draw courage from and chase their dreams. I want to set an example for them."

Shamima, 17, is an activist for children's rights, pushing for teachers to follow a code of conduct at school, and for the Community-based Child Protection Committee (CBCPC) – on which she is one of two child representatives – to lobby for special bus fares and reserved seats for children with disabilities. Shamima was diagnosed with cerebral palsy when she was three years old and has limited movement. She has gained confidence through participating in her local children's club and CBCPC.

Adapted from: Save the Children (2017) *Hope Against Despair*, Save the Children: Dhaka

Recent research stresses the importance of ensuring that data collection techniques are selected and tailored to be appropriate and meaningful for different groups, ensuring that they feel comfortable speaking about sensitive issues.[22] This is particularly important when working with children. If conducted in appropriate ways, participatory research and accountability processes can help marginalised groups of children feel empowered to engage in dialogue with government representatives, helping to strengthen accountability and shape policies and interventions that are responsive to these children's needs.[23] Box 6 outlines principles for children's meaningful, inclusive and safe participation in SDG monitoring, review and accountability processes.

This report attempts to provide a platform for the voices of some children and families that Save the Children works with, through case studies and quotes that exemplify our focus on child

development indicators. However, this is only illustrative of the potential for including children's perspectives in SDG monitoring. We recommend that formal national and international SDG review reports provide ample room for the systematic analysis of qualitative data and inputs from children, are translated into child-friendly versions, and are accompanied by child-led shadow reports which allow children to report and review directly, unmediated by government. Save the Children is working in these areas and commits to doing more in the future.

The remainder of this report presents our illustration of how progress for the world's furthest-behind children could be monitored more systematically through SDG processes, before concluding with recommendations for governments and international agencies.

BOX 6: CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION IN SDG MONITORING AND REVIEW

Global, national and local SDG monitoring and review processes must include opportunities for children's meaningful, inclusive and safe participation. These should include:

- access to spaces and organisations – online and offline – where children can meet, learn about their rights and the 2030 Agenda, share experiences, and take joint action
- access to age-appropriate and timely information in a language they can understand, such as the child-friendly

version of the SDGs, which is available in different languages (https://uni.cf/2JSkgn2)
- access to child-friendly, age-appropriate and safe spaces where children can engage with decision-makers and provide input, supported by ICT, such as webcasts and online meeting spaces
- feedback from decision-makers to children about how their inputs have been considered and acted upon.

Adapted from Save the Children (2016) *Towards a New Accountability Paradigm*. Save the Children: London.

EMPOWERING YOUNG PEOPLE TO ADDRESS BARRIERS TO LEARNING IN JORDAN

Through a youth participatory action research project in Jordan, 20 young Syrian refugees and Jordanians conducted assessments with nearly 150 Syrian and Jordanian children to assess marginalised groups' aspirations for a good-quality education and the challenges they face in trying to acquire it.

The project identified the unmet need for psychosocial support and school counselling as a key barrier to learning for refugee children. The young researchers used their findings to advocate for change, engaging with coalitions and partners at local, national and international levels. The project helped to foster social cohesion between Syrian and Jordanian youth and demonstrated how youth-driven data collection can help to fill data gaps and drive accountability in fragile and conflict-affected countries.

Case study adapted from Save the Children (2017) *Recommendations at the President of the General Assembly High-Level Action Event on Education.*

CHILD MORTALITY

SDG Target 3.2: End preventable deaths of newborns and children under 5

Indicator 3.2.1: Under-five mortality rate (no more than 25 deaths per 1,000 live births)

THE GLOBAL PICTURE

On current trends, 4 million children under 5 will die in 2030, with children in the poorest households at 34% higher risk

Figure 2 Under-five mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)

Poorest 20% globally

Global average

SDG target
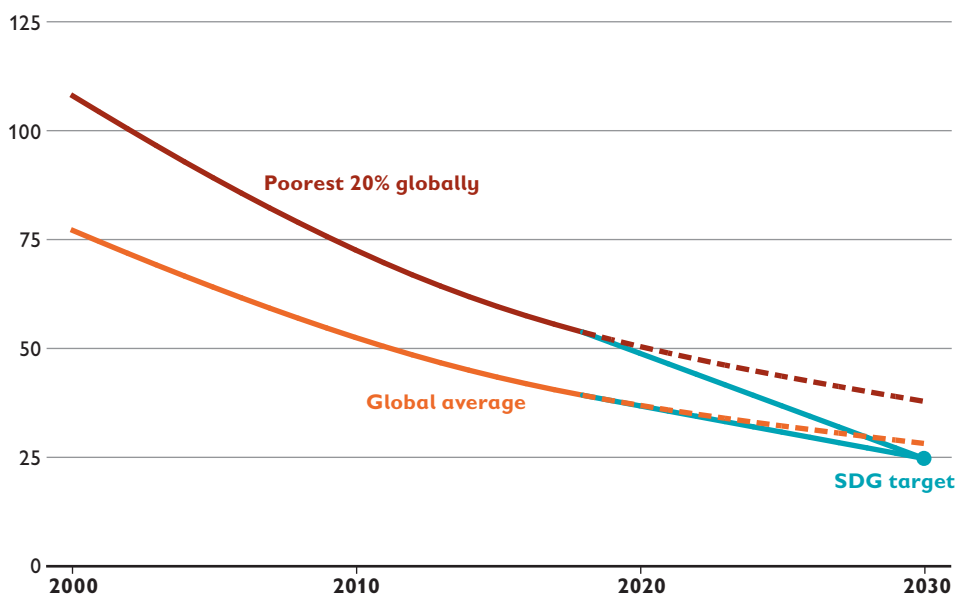
Data: Save the Children calculations based on UN Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation, DHS/MICS, and other sources (see Methodology Paper). Dotted lines indicate projections.

- 27% of under-five deaths take place in the world's poorest 20% of households.

- Inequality is almost static: the world's poorest children are 37% more likely to die than the global average. This is set to fall by only 3 percentage points by 2030.

- Eliminating this wealth gap would save 4.1 million lives between now and 2030.

- Progress for the poorest 20% of children needs to more than double to reach the SDG target by 2030.

THE NATIONAL PICTURE

Will the furthest-behind groups meet the SDG target and converge with the national average by 2030?

- ■ On track
- ■ Off track but with convergence
- ■ Off track with limited convergence
- ■ Off track with no convergence

| 30% | 16% | 25% | 30% |
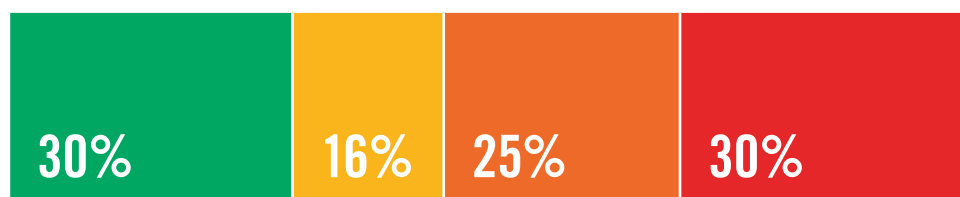
Analysis of convergence rates is based on 64 countries where sufficient data are available, representing 72% of children aged 0–4. Groups include poorest 20% and rural areas. Data: DHS/MICS

One of the starkest measures of inequality in life chances in the world today is the chance a child has of surviving beyond their fifth birthday. This chance is not random; it is inextricably linked to where they are born, the wealth and cultural identity of their parents, and, in many countries, their gender (see Box 7).

The last 26 years have seen significant reductions in global child mortality rates, falling 56% between 1990 and 2016. The number of under-five deaths has fallen from 12.6 million per year to 5.6 million, with nearly half of these deaths taking place in the newborn period.[24] However, the most deprived and marginalised children are lagging behind.

Our analysis shows that children who die young are disproportionately represented in the world's poorest 20%, with 28% of all deaths occurring in this group. Children in this group are nearly 40% more likely to die before age five than the global average. Child mortality rates for the world's poorest children are only very slowly catching up with the global average, and this rate of convergence is not fast enough to put them on track to achieve the SDG target of 25 deaths per 1,000 live births by 2030. While the world is set to meet the SDG target as a global average if recent trends continue, the rate of progress for the poorest 20% needs to more than double.

Looking at national trends, 30% of countries for which data are available are seeing either no progress as a national average or no convergence between the furthest-behind groups and the national average. These include, for example, India and Cambodia. Both are expected to reach the SDG target by 2030 as a national average. However, the poorest 20% are diverging from the average in Cambodia, and in India this group of children is not expected to converge until after 2100 and is far from achieving the SDG target. Nigeria, with 733,000 under-five deaths per year – more than 10% of the global burden – has a very slow rate of national progress, and is expected to see convergence between groups only after 2100.

More than 2.1 million under-five deaths (71% of all deaths in our sample) are occurring in countries in categories 3 or 4 – countries that are seeing either no or limited convergence for the furthest-behind groups. Almost all of these are in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.

While the sample used for our analysis contains mainly low- and middle-income countries, inequalities play a crucial role in high-income countries as well. For example, recent research shows that infant mortality rates in the UK are much higher for children born into more deprived groups, with mortality among children born to mothers working in manual and routine occupations more than double that of children born to mothers working in managerial and professional occupations.[25]

While the overall picture is bleak, there are examples of rapid and inclusive progress in some low- and middle-income countries, which should inspire change in other countries. 30% of countries in our sample are on track to reach the SDG target for all furthest-behind groups if recent trends continue. These include Bangladesh, Indonesia, Vietnam and Nepal (although these countries need to make faster progress on convergence). There are also a number of countries – such as Kenya, Republic of Congo, Tanzania and Ethiopia – that had high levels of child mortality in 2018 and are likely to miss the target in 2030, but where progress is nonetheless rapid and inclusive.

ACCELERATING PROGRESS FOR THE MOST DEPRIVED AND MARGINALISED CHILDREN

Accelerated progress and convergence in child survival requires integrated strategies that focus on the most marginalised children. Pursuing equitable pathways towards universal health coverage is critical, ensuring that everyone, and urgently the poorest and most marginalised, can access the good-quality health services they need without financial hardship.[26] Too many children are effectively priced out of healthcare because their parents are too poor to pay fees. Many more are living in areas that are poorly served by health systems, with shortages of trained health workers.

In addition, background risks associated with poverty and malnutrition must be addressed (see below), coupled with a strengthened focus on neo-natal and neglected killers. Good quality maternal and child health services are particularly important at the beginning of a baby's life, with

BOX 7: GENDER BIAS IN CHILD MORTALITY

Under normal conditions, under-five mortality rates are generally lower for girls than for boys. However, research papers published in *The Lancet* show evidence for higher-than-expected female mortality rates in selected countries.[27] This suggests significant levels of gender-based discrimination, ranging from deliberate neglect in healthcare provision to invisible biases in allocation of food. This is displayed in the adjacent graph as 'excess female mortality'. Estimates suggest that 239,000 girls under 5 in India alone are dying per year due to gender bias.[28]

Figure 3 10 countries where mortality rates for girls are higher than expected

Country	Excess female mortality rate in 2012 (per 1000 live births)
India	13.5
Afghanistan	5.2
Pakistan	4.7
Nepal	2.9
Egypt	2.4
Bangladesh	2.1
Jordan	1.9
Iran	1.8
Bahrain	1.1
China	1

Excess female mortality rate in 2012 (per 1000 live births)
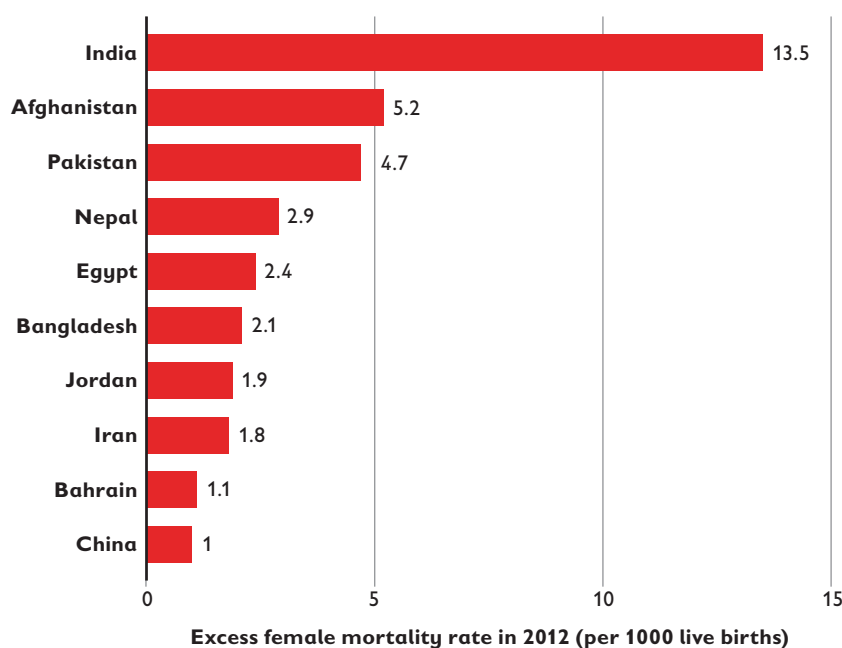
Data: Alkema et al. (2014)

deaths in the first month of life accounting for close to half – 44% – of all under-five mortality. Pneumonia is the leading cause of child deaths from infectious disease, killing 879,000 children in 2016, overwhelmingly concentrated in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.[29] If diagnosed early, the disease can be treated with antibiotics that cost a mere $0.40.[30] That the poorest and more marginalised children are still dying in such vast numbers from this preventable and treatable disease paints a grim picture of the extent and impact of inequalities that persist in the world today (see Save the Children's *Fighting for Breath* report for further discussion).[31]

In most countries, progress for those left behind will rely on increasing public investment in health (and nutrition – see page 19), to fill the estimated $33.3 billion per year gap in health services for women, adolescents and children.[32] There is considerable scope for governments to both increase their health budgets and increase the proportion of these spent on primary healthcare, starting with a focus on the most deprived regions and population groups. Only 14% of low-income and lower middle-income countries have reached the African Union's Abuja Declaration target of

spending 15% of general government expenditure on health, and only one third of government health expenditure is currently dedicated to primary health care.[33]

International donors also have a critical role to play, both in supporting domestic resource mobilisation through progressive taxation in low- and middle-income countries so that governments have more to invest in health systems, and in helping to fill funding gaps through high-quality aid for those countries where increased public spending will still be inadequate. New, innovative financing mechanisms are promising – like the Global Financing Facility (GFF), which provides catalytic grants to countries to generate domestic resources, and to leverage other sources of financing. However, to realise their full potential, the GFF and other innovative mechanisms must focus on assisting governments to develop holistic, equitable and sustainable approaches to health system financing – protecting countries from bad or unsustainable debt, ensuring transparency and accountability, and keeping the focus on promoting universal access to good-quality primary healthcare services.[34]

PHOTO: JENNIFER HUXTA/SAVE THE CHILDREN

PNEUMONIA: A DISEASE OF POVERTY AND INEQUALITY

Jackson was admitted to hospital where he was diagnosed with severe pneumonia. His mother, Maximilia, is poor and was struggling to support her children – Jackson hadn't eaten for two days before he arrived at the hospital.

"Jackson was crying, refusing to eat, had a fever and was shivering. He had heavy breathing and was vomiting when he drank water. I could see his chest moving up and down. That is when I realised he was seriously sick," said Maximilia.

At the hospital Jackson was treated by Jedidah, the Emergency Health Officer. He made a full recovery. "If it hadn't been for Jedidah, my son would have died," says Maximilia.

CHILD MALNUTRITION

SDG Target 2.2: End all forms of malnutrition

Indicator 2.2.1: Prevalence of stunting among children under 5

On current trends, 119 million children will still be stunted in 2030, with children in the poorest households at 58% higher risk

Figure 4 Prevalence of stunting, or low height for age (% of children under 5)
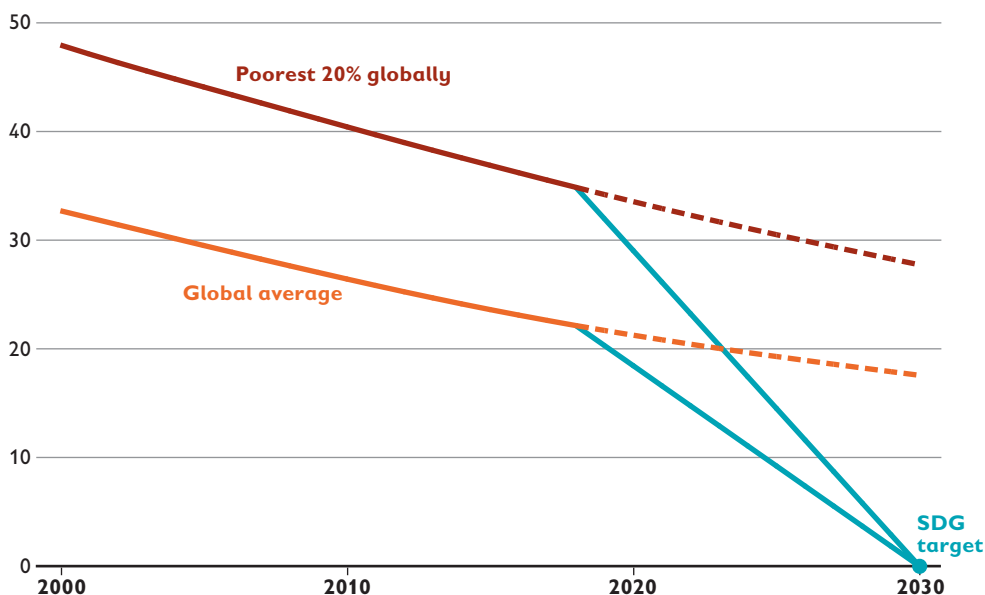
Data: Save the Children calculations based on UNICEF/WHO/World Bank Joint child malnutrition estimates 2018, DHS/MICS, and other sources (see Methodology Paper). Dotted lines indicate projections.

- No country is on track to eliminate child stunting in all segments of society by 2030.

- 32% of children who are stunted are in the world's poorest 20%.

- Inequality is growing: the poorest children are 58% more likely to be stunted than the global average and this is unlikely to change by 2030.

- Eliminating this wealth gap could prevent 40 million cases of stunting by 2030.

- A ten-fold increase in progress is needed for the poorest 20% to reach the SDG target by 2030.

THE NATIONAL PICTURE

Will the furthest-behind groups meet the SDG target and converge with the national average by 2030?

- ■ On track
- ■ Off track but with convergence
- ■ Off track with limited convergence
- ■ Off track with no convergence

9%   23%   68%

Analysis of convergence rates is based on 57 countries where sufficient data are available, representing 52% of children aged 0–4. Groups include poorest 20% and rural areas. Data: DHS/MICS

Malnutrition among children is a critical indicator of poverty and inequality, offering insights into whether children's basic needs have been met in their early years.[35] Tackling malnutrition is important for spurring progress across a range of SDG targets, with an impact on children's chances of survival, of achieving good learning outcomes at school and of future economic prosperity.

In the world today, nearly a quarter of all children under five – 151 million[36] – are stunted. 51 million children under five are wasted, of whom 16 million are severely wasted, the most serious form, which can kill in just a few days. Meanwhile, 38 million children under five are overweight.[37] Many countries now face the twin challenges of undernutrition and obesity, known as the double burden of malnutrition.

Nearly half of all deaths in children under five are linked to undernutrition, contributing to the death of 2.5 million children every year.[38] These mostly occur in low- and middle-income countries. At the same time, rates of childhood overweight and obesity in these same countries are rising.[39]

The 2017 Global Nutrition Report shows that for each of the 2025 World Health Assembly targets, often used as a measuring stick for overall progress on SDG 2, there has been very limited improvement, or in some cases, regression.[40] Most notably, we are

significantly behind schedule on stunting, wasting, anaemia and child overweight.

This is concerning enough. But when we dig beneath the surface, we see that malnutrition disproportionately affects particular groups of deprived and marginalised children, including those who are discriminated against on the basis of wealth, geographical location, disability and ethnicity. A third of children affected by stunting are in the poorest 20% of the world's population. These children are 58% more likely to be stunted than the global average. Perhaps more worryingly, there is very little sign of convergence, with progress for the poorest children continuing to lag behind. Reductions in stunting among the world's poorest 20% need to accelerate ten-fold to reach the SDG target by 2030.

Looking at national-level trends, in 68% of countries in our sample there is either no overall progress or no convergence between the national average and

BOX 8: THE RURAL CHALLENGE

Children living in rural areas of South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa – the two regions of the world with the highest stunting rates for children under five – are more likely to be stunted than those growing up in urban environments.

Figure 5 Children in rural areas are more likely to be stunted
Prevalence of stunting, or low height for age
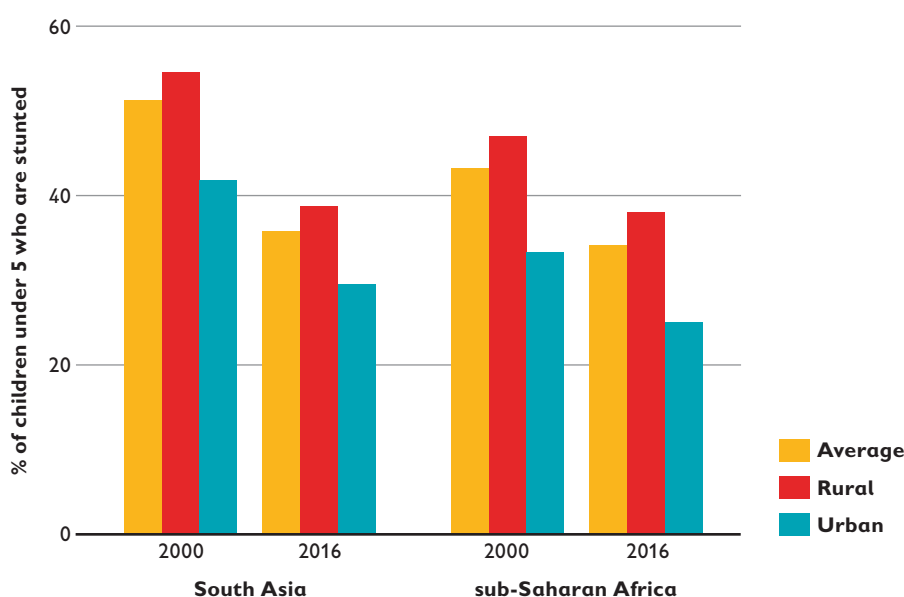
Data: UNICEF/WHO/ World Bank, DHS/MICS

the furthest-behind groups (poorest 20% and rural areas).[41] In Burundi, the country in our sample with the highest stunting rates, one out of two children are stunted. The country is not reducing stunting as a national average, and rates among the poorest are increasing. If current trends continue, stunting could be as high as 72% for the poorest 20% by 2030.

In total, almost all of the stunted children in our sample live in countries in categories 3 or 4 – countries seeing either no or limited convergence for the furthest-behind groups. Nine out of ten of these children are in either sub-Saharan Africa or South Asia. No country in our sample is currently on track to eliminate stunting for all segments of society by 2030.

OUR NUTRITION, OUR FUTURE

Good nutrition is essential for adolescents, particularly for girls – for their own well-being, but also for that of future generations. Yet in most countries, children's personal experience of malnutrition and their ideas for tackling it are not taken on board by policy-makers. A series of participatory workshops with children aged 11–18 in Bangladesh and Nigeria in 2017 revealed that they were personally familiar with the drivers and impact of malnutrition, and keen to share their insights and experiences.

"WE BELIEVE THE PROMISE OF WORLD LEADERS TO END MALNUTRITION WILL BE ACHIEVED"

Sylhet, Bangladesh

They identified four policy areas that require urgent attention:

1. End poverty:

   "Before they reverse malnutrition, they have to cure poverty first."
   Abdul Malik, 14

2. Stop malnutrition passing from generation to generation:

   "We need to stop child marriage and ensure nutritious food for pregnant women."
   Ramij, 16

3. Enact and enforce legislation to better protect adolescents:

   "The budget allocated funds for the improvement of nutrition in our country. Is that budget distributed fairly for everyone?"
   Marzina, 17

4. Ensure unified action:

   "If there is unity among leaders then there will be more of an understanding and leaders can take each other's advice and use it."
   Anonymous

For further details see Save the Children (2017) *Our Nutrition, Our Future*. Save the Children: London, and accompanying video at: https://youtu.be/aoCWPgQkU2c

ACCELERATING PROGRESS FOR THE MOST DEPRIVED AND MARGINALISED CHILDREN

Reducing malnutrition in an inclusive way requires coordinated policies across sectors, recognising the importance of child-sensitive social protection; universal health coverage; clean water, sanitation and hygiene; education; resilience; and food security and livelihoods. Policies must be designed, implemented and monitored with multi-stakeholder participation in line with the Scaling Up Nutrition Movement[42] model, with governments leading and uniting people – from civil society, the United Nations, donors, businesses and research – in a collective effort to improve nutrition for children. The same is true for all policy areas discussed in this report.

Policies should be coordinated through costed national nutrition plans that embed the Leave No One Behind principle and bridge the humanitarian/development divide. Policies and plans must be underpinned by strong government systems and institutions that can deliver for all children in their jurisdictions. Investment in flexible and shock-responsive nutrition development needs to be aligned with sustained post-humanitarian response funding to lock in developmental gains and mitigate against recurrence of crisis. National costed nutrition plans are more likely to succeed if they are underpinned by recognition of the moral and legal imperative for the right to food and nutrition for all.[43]

National nutrition plans must also be accompanied by and coordinated with the implementation of policies to advance gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment. Research shows close links between women's status and education and their children's health, nutrition and education.

Adolescence is a critical window to invest not only in girls' own health and futures, but also those of the next generation. Important policy areas to drive synergistic change in gender equality and nutrition include reducing and responding to child marriage and early pregnancy; increasing women's access to and control over income and resources; investing in women's and girls' education; and supporting their participation in decision-making in both the private and public spheres.[44]

The success of national nutrition plans will ultimately depend on accurate costing and adequate financing. Nutrition has been consistently under-financed. The World Bank Investment Framework on nutrition indicates that an additional $7 billion is required each year to deliver on the World Health Assembly targets on stunting, wasting, anaemia, and exclusive breastfeeding. However, this excludes all the funding required for nutrition-sensitive interventions, such as education, agriculture and social protection. The current nutrition financing paradigm cannot provide that sort of financing – we need a step change in how we fund the fight against malnutrition.

A new funding model is needed, based on the sustainable generation of resources. This will require increased domestic and innovative resources, which should be supported by, but not reliant upon, aid. Increased domestic resource mobilisation will require progressive tax reform and investment of revenue in meeting the basic needs of the most deprived and marginalised citizens. These efforts should be supported by increased innovative financing through the Global Financing Facility, Power of Nutrition and new mechanisms. An increase in the volume and effectiveness of aid that is focused on the most excluded groups and catalyses domestic resources is also vital.[45]

SDG Target 5.3: Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation

Indicator 5.3.1: Proportion of women aged 20–24 years who were married or in a union before age 18

THE GLOBAL PICTURE

On current trends, 10 million girls will get married in the year 2030, with those in the poorest households at 74% higher risk

Figure 6 Women (20–24 years) first married or in union by age 18 (%)

Poorest 20% globally

Global average

SDG target
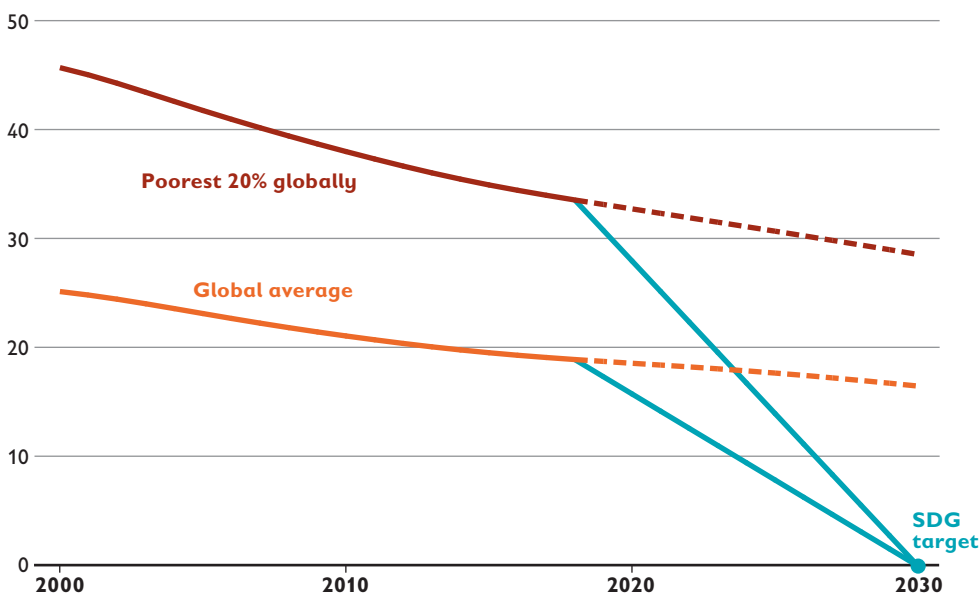
Data: Save the Children calculations based on Save the Children/World Bank estimates, and DHS/MICS (see Methodology Paper). Dotted lines indicate projections.

- 35% of child marriages involve girls from the world's poorest 20% of households.

- Inequality is almost static: child marriage is 76% more likely for the poorest 20% than the global average. This is set to fall by only 2 percentage points by 2030.

- Eliminating this wealth gap would prevent 20 million child marriages by 2030.

- Progress for the poorest girls needs to accelerate by a factor of 13 to reach the SDG target by 2030.

THE NATIONAL PICTURE

Will the furthest-behind groups meet the SDG target and converge with the national average by 2030?

- ■ On track
- ■ Off track but with convergence
- ■ Off track with limited convergence
- ■ Off track with no convergence

12% **16%** **72%**

Analysis of convergence rates is based on 68 countries where sufficient data are available, representing 54% of young women aged 20–24. Groups include poorest 20% and rural areas. Data: DHS/MICS

Child marriage is an extreme violation of children's rights, disproportionately affecting the world's poorest and most marginalised girls. Child marriage forces girls into physical and emotional relationships that they are not ready for, that they usually do not choose, and over which they have little control. Deprived of education and vulnerable to social isolation, sexual and reproductive health complications and domestic violence, girls married too young are trapped in poverty, with lifelong consequences for them and their children (see Save the Children's *Every Last Girl* report for further discussion).[46]

The world is significantly off track to achieve the SDG target of eliminating child marriage among all segments of society by 2030. This is problematic, both for girls' rights, and because ending child marriage would help to catalyse progress across multiple SDG targets including on health, nutrition, education, inequality and economic development – particularly if pursued through approaches that expand opportunities for girls and women, amplify their voice and power, and address harmful gender norms.

Girls from the poorest 20% of households are 76% more likely to be married than the global average, and very low rates of convergence mean that they are unlikely to catch up soon. Our calculations suggest that child marriage rates for the world's poorest quintile will still be 28% in 2030 if recent trends continue. Their rate of progress needs to accelerate almost thirteen-fold to reach the SDG target by 2030.

BOX 9: CHILD MARRIAGE IN INDIA

India is home to the world's highest number of child brides, yet has seen an impressive reduction in child marriage over the last ten years. The national rate fell from 47% in 2005 to 27% in 2015. However, progress is not even across the country. Uttar Pradesh decreased rates of child marriage by two thirds, from almost 60% in 2005 to 21% in 2015, a rate of reduction much higher than the average of 4% per year. In contrast, West Bengal – a state with similarly high rates in 2005 – decreased the rate of child marriage by only 2.5% per year, down to 41% in 2015.

Figure 7 Regional differences in child marriage in India

Women (20–24 years) first married by age 18
- 40–50%
- 30–40%
- 20–30%
- 10–20%
- 0–10%

Data: NFHS 2015/2016

Across the country, girls in rural areas and poor households are particularly vulnerable to child marriage and are seeing only very slow convergence with national average progress.
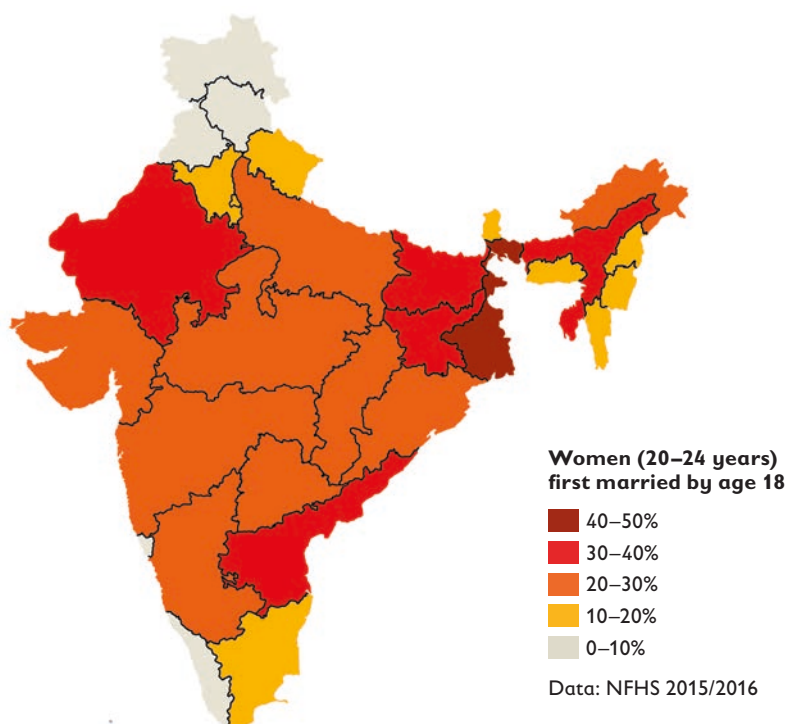
If progress does not accelerate for girls from the poorest 20% of households, the country will not see an end to child marriage until well into the next century.

Source: National Family Health Survey, India (2018) *Key Findings from NFHS-4*, http://rchiips.org/NFHS/factsheet_NFHS-4.shtml

Of the 68 countries with available data, there is no single country where the SDG target is set to be reached for both the poorest 20% and girls in rural areas by 2030. The vast majority of countries – 72% – are seeing no convergence between the furthest-behind groups with the national average, and/or no national average progress. In Niger current trends suggest that seven out of ten girls will be getting married before age 18 in 2030. The gap is widening here between girls in rural areas and the national average, and the poorest 20% are not expected to catch up with the national average before 2100. In total, almost all child marriages in our sample are happening in countries where no or limited convergence is observed, and 85% are in sub-Saharan Africa or South Asia.

PURSUING EQUALITY FOR THE NEXT GENERATION

"I'm going to school because I want my life to be brighter and so that I know what I'm doing and I know about the world… What I want for my girl, with God's help, is for her to grow up. I hope to send her to school when she reaches the right age. I hope she stays in school until she's 20. If she doesn't do well at school or if she does well, then she can continue her studies and have a job until God brings the day that she will marry. Then she can."

Abida,* Niger

Abida* lives in a village in Niger's Maradi region, and is thought to be 17 years old. She has two children; a girl, aged three, and boy, one. She has been married to her husband, Ambouka,* 43, since she was either 12 or 13. She married in a collective marriage along with a number of other girls from her age group.

Due to her early marriage, she left school in the first grade. She is now attending an educational programme for girls and women forced to drop out of school as children, which she participates in with her children strapped to her back.

Niger has the highest rate of child marriage in the world at 76% (DHS data, 2012). Progress is slow, with rates of change in rural areas lagging behind the national average, and the poorest 20% not set to see an end to child marriage this century.

* Names changed to protect identities.

PHOTO: DIANA ZEYNEB ALHINDAWI/SAVE THE CHILDREN

Nevertheless, a number of positive examples in our sample show that inclusive progress is possible. Both Rwanda and Jordan are making good progress, with national rates expected to be only slightly higher than the SDG target in 2030. Furthermore, both countries have already seen convergence between the furthest-behind groups included in the analysis and the national average, or are expected to do so before 2030.

Data are insufficient to include child marriage for boys in our analysis, although it has been estimated that the global child marriage rate for boys is around one fifth of that for girls, highlighting gender inequality and discriminatory social norms as major drivers of child marriage.[47] Data on child marriage in humanitarian contexts and among displaced populations are woefully lacking (and if available, might present a different picture in otherwise well performing countries like Jordan), as are data for children with disabilities.

Although child marriage is most prevalent in low- and middle-income countries, it is also a problem for high-income countries. For example, estimates show that almost 250,000 children were married in the United States between 2000 and 2010, 85% of whom were girls, some as young as 12.[48]

ACCELERATING PROGRESS FOR THE MOST DEPRIVED AND MARGINALISED GIRLS

Accelerating progress on ending child marriage for the furthest-behind groups of girls must be a priority for governments from local to international levels. A first step is a legal framework that sets 18 as the minimum age of marriage in law without exceptions. But this alone is not enough. Traditions that legitimise and promote child marriage reflect deeply held beliefs about the role that girls and women should play in society, and the age they are ready to marry and bear children. These beliefs can be very hard to shift, particularly when they are perpetuated by customary and religious law and practices, which can contradict statutory law. They must, however, be addressed if we are to see sustainable progress towards the target to end child marriage for the world's most deprived and marginalised girls.

The impact of discriminatory social norms on girls' lives is often exacerbated by poverty and insecurity, which force difficult decisions about resource allocation and income. For example, families can perceive child marriage as a way of reducing the costs of bringing girls up, and as a route out of poverty and vulnerability for their daughters. Measures to combat poverty and insecurity are therefore essential components of strategies to address child marriage, together with efforts to keep girls in school and ensure comprehensive sexuality education and access to contraception. Given the links between conflict and child marriage, particular focus is required on strengthening prevention and response efforts in humanitarian contexts.[49]

As the drivers and solutions to child marriage cut across the economic, health, education and protection sectors, governments should develop and implement resourced, cross-sector national action plans that prioritise the issue across ministries and facilitate a whole-of-government response. These should be designed to address context-specific drivers of child marriage and empower girls, with a focus on the most deprived and marginalised girls, and include support for girls who are already married. They must incorporate measures to tackle harmful social norms, including through supporting local women's and girls' rights organisations, and through engagement with influential stakeholders such as traditional leaders, as well as with women, men, girls and boys. Plans must be accompanied by participatory monitoring and accountability, and implemented in a coordinated way across ministries and stakeholders.

National monitoring and accountability should be supported through regional and international processes, with donors aligning behind and helping to resource national action plans. In Africa, the African Union Campaign on Ending Child Marriage has achieved notable success in raising the political profile of the issue across the region, and would be strengthened considerably if accompanied by a high-level monitoring and follow-up mechanism, working in synergy with international and African Union human and child rights accountability mechanisms.

BIRTH REGISTRATION

SDG Target 16.9: Provide legal identity for all, including birth registration

Indicator 16.9.1: Proportion of children under five whose births have been registered with a civil authority

THE GLOBAL PICTURE

On current trends, 101 million children under 5 will not have been registered at birth in 2030, with children in the poorest households 8% less likely to be registered

Figure 8 Children under 5 whose births have been registered (%)
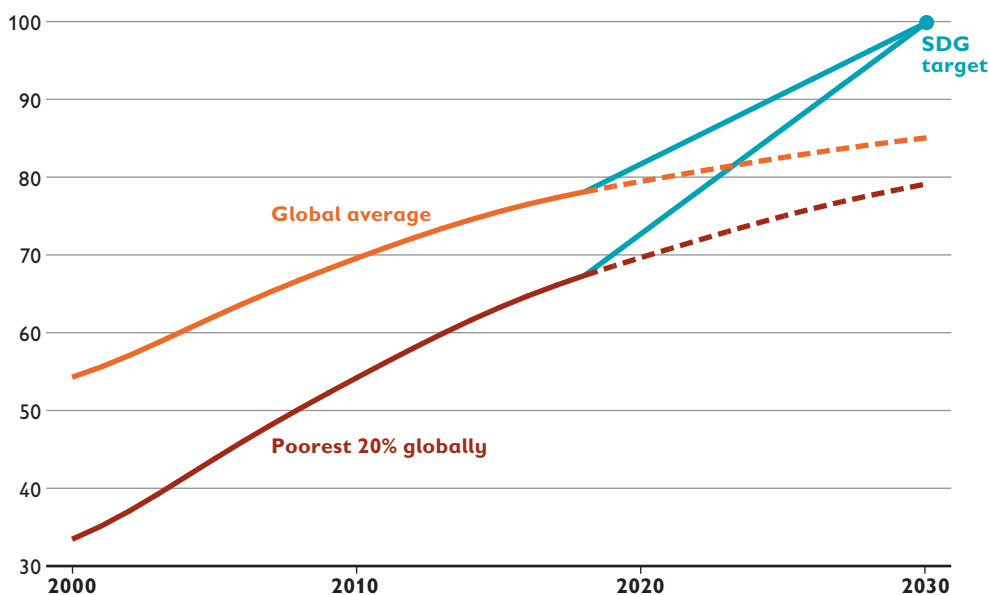
Data: Save the Children calculations based on DHS/MICS, World Bank, and UNICEF (see Methodology Paper). Dotted lines indicate projections.

- 30% of children not registered at birth are in the poorest 20% globally.

- Inequality is decreasing slowly: the poorest children are 15% less likely to be registered than the global average, falling to 8% by 2030.

- Eliminating this wealth gap would allow 28 million more birth registrations by 2030.

- Progress for the poorest 20% needs to more than double to reach the SDG target by 2030.

THE NATIONAL PICTURE

Will the furthest-behind groups meet the SDG target and converge with the national average by 2030?

- On track
- Off track but with convergence
- Off track with limited convergence
- Off track with no convergence

| 24% | 8% | 51% | 18% |

Analysis of convergence rates is based on 51 countries where sufficient data are available, representing 54% of children aged 0–4. Groups include girls, poorest 20% and rural areas. Data: DHS/MICS and other sources for a small number of data points (see Methodology Paper)

If every person counts, then every person must be counted. Our analysis shows that there are nearly 146 million children across the world under the age of five who do not officially exist because they have not had their births registered. Of those children who have been registered, only an estimated one in seven has a birth certificate.[50] This is in violation of children's right to a name and nationality (UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 7). It also leaves them vulnerable and poses multiple challenges throughout their lives.

Having proof of birth registration is often necessary for legal recognition, claiming rights and receiving access to justice.[51] Without registration, children cannot prove their citizenship or age, which can increase the risk of them being forced into marriage or labour before they are adults. Access to education and health services is in many countries dependent on proving identity, age or citizenship. Children born to refugee parents are particularly vulnerable.

Low birth registration also has serious implications for a government's ability to make the best decisions for its citizens. Designing impactful policies and interventions to address poverty and reach the furthest-behind children depends on first knowing who makes up the population, and the nature of the issues they face. This is an essential precondition for the fulfilment of the pledge to Leave No One Behind.

More and better data are needed to track trends: 22% of countries, home to 16% of children under five, lack data on levels of birth registration.[52] From countries that do have data, we know that overall trends are improving. But unless progress accelerates, the world will not meet the SDG target by 2030, when 21 million births will still go unregistered.

The picture is even more stark for the world's most deprived and marginalised children. Our analysis shows that children in the world's poorest 20% are 15% less likely to be registered than the global average. While this group is seeing convergence with the global average, their rate of progress

RAISING AWARENESS ABOUT BIRTH REGISTRATION IN TAJIKISTAN

"I realised that everything requires birth registration. To get a proper job, enrol in school, get married, register children, etc. I would be very worried if they could not register their children and the vicious cycle would continue for my grandchildren and great grandchildren. So I decided that I needed to take action and resolve this problem. I tell all the young women in the village to go and get their children registered or they will have to spend a lot of money later on like I did to get my daughters the paperwork that they need."

Boboeva, Tajikistan

Boboeva, 62, is an active advocate within her community for birth registration. When Boboeva gave birth to her two youngest daughters, the civil war in Tajikistan had just come to an end. During that time, it was very challenging to register birth as government institutions were not working well. Through her engagement with women's groups, Boboeva later learned about the importance of birth registration and the process to obtain it. She went through an arduous process to get her 15- and 16-year-old daughters the paperwork they need to get married later in life, and to have their own children registered so they can enrol in school.

PHOTO: SAVE THE CHILDREN

BOX 10: BIRTH REGISTRATION AND ETHNICITY IN WEST AFRICA

Children from particular ethnic groups can be less likely to be registered at birth. Data from West Africa show large gaps between the rates of birth registration between ethnic groups.

■ **National average**

● **Ethnic group with lowest level of registered births**

● **Ethnic group with highest level of registered births**

Data: DHS/MICS

Note: All differences between ethnic groups and the national average are statistically significant.

Figure 9 Wide variations in birth registration among different ethnic groups in West Africa

Children whose births are registered (%), by ethnicity
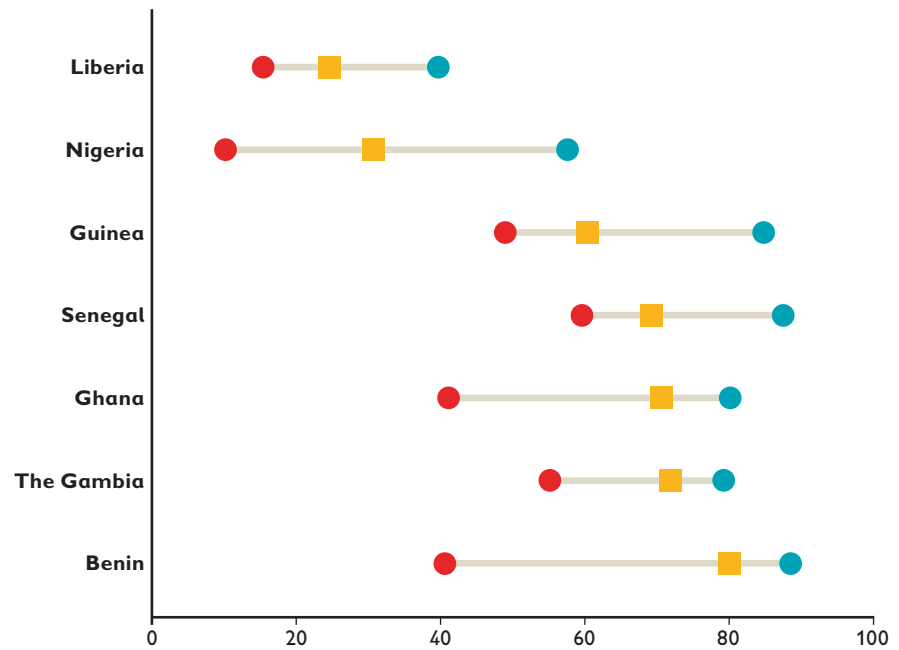
needs to more than double to reach the SDG target by 2030. Children from certain ethnic and religious groups, living in rural or remote areas, and born to uneducated or unmarried mothers can be at particular risk of remaining unregistered (see Box 10).[53] Children of unmarried mothers or absent fathers are denied registration in countries such as Bhutan, Bangladesh, Sierra Leone and Sudan.[54]

A number of low- and middle-income countries have already achieved, or are extremely close to achieving, the SDG target of universal birth registration, acting as a beacon for other countries to follow. 24% of the countries in our sample have reached, or are on track to reach, the SDG target for all segments of society by 2030. For instance, if recent rapid and inclusive national progress continues, Benin is expected to achieve the SDG target even for the poorest quintile, whereas only 67% of children under five were registered at birth in 2014. Others, however, have a long way to go. Ethiopia, for example, has extremely low levels of registration, expected to reach only 5.8% as a national average and only 1% for children from the poorest 20% by 2030 if current trends continue. 18% of countries in our sample are seeing either no progress at the national level, or no convergence

between the furthest-behind groups and the national average. A further 51% are seeing at least one group left behind, failing to converge with the national average before 2030.

ACCELERATING PROGRESS FOR THE MOST DEPRIVED AND MARGINALISED CHILDREN

Inadequate birth registration is often caused by weak registration systems and infrastructure, and low levels of awareness of the importance of birth registration. Strong statistical systems are crucial for monitoring progress towards the SDGs but too many countries still have inadequate systems for registering new births.[55]

Interventions need to be tailored to the national context to ensure they are as effective as possible, but actions that have been shown to have a positive impact include removing physical, financial, institutional and legal barriers to birth registration. These actions include using technology; integrating registration units into existing health services, such as maternity wards and immunisation centres; and running awareness-raising campaigns.[56]

EDUCATION

SDG Target 4.1: Ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes

Indicator 4.1.1: Proportion of children and young people achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in (i) reading and (ii) mathematics.

Proxy indicator: Proportion of people aged 15–24 who have completed primary school.

THE GLOBAL PICTURE

On current trends, 12 million children will not complete primary school in the year 2030, with those in the world's poorest households 10% less likely to complete

Figure 10 Primary school completion rate (% of people aged 15–24 who have completed primary education)
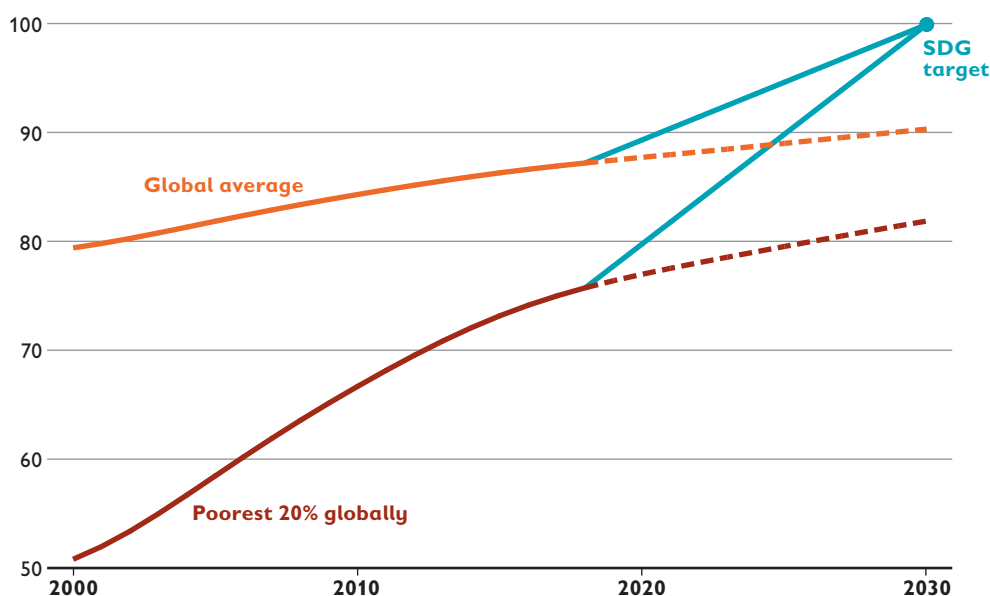
Data: Save the Children calculations based on UNESCO World Inequality Database on Education (see Methodology Paper). Dotted lines indicate projections.

- 37% of young people who have not completed primary school are in the poorest 20% globally.

- Inequality is almost static. The poorest children are 15% less likely to complete primary school than the global average, falling to 10% by 2030.

- Eliminating this wealth gap would allow 31 million more children to complete primary school by 2030.

- Progress for the poorest 20% needs to more than triple to reach the SDG target by 2030.

THE NATIONAL PICTURE

Will the furthest-behind groups meet the SDG target and converge with the national average by 2030?

- ■ On track
- ■ Off track but with convergence
- ■ Off track with limited convergence
- ■ Off track with no convergence

| 23% | 46% | 31% |

Analysis of convergence rates is based on 80 countries where sufficient data are available, representing 76% of children and young adults aged 15–24. Groups include girls, poorest 20% and rural areas. Data: UNESCO World Inequality Database on Education

Ensuring that all children receive quality education, from the early years through to secondary school and beyond, will be critical for spurring progress across the entire SDG framework. Education and learning enable children to forge pathways out of poverty, allowing them to contribute more effectively to the economies and societies in which they live as they grow up. It is also important for child protection, helping to reduce child labour and child marriage.

This section presents data for primary school completion as a proxy indicator for other important SDG targets that lack data. These include early learning. All children must be supported to learn from day one: evidence shows that children who start school behind are likely to continue behind, making investment in early learning a critical strategy for promoting equity. Positively, unlike the MDGs, the SDG framework recognises the importance of pre-primary or early years education, essential for ensuring that children start school ready to learn. In the world's least developed countries, an estimated 45% of children participated in pre-primary education in 2015, compared with a global average of over 69%.[57] However, internationally comparable disaggregated data on early years education are only available for 66 countries, rendering it impossible to estimate global convergence trends.

SDG indicators for education rightly focus on learning outcomes. However, data are currently insufficient for estimating global trends, either as an average or for the world's poorest children. We therefore focus here on the proxy indicator of primary school completion rates.

TRENDS IN PRIMARY SCHOOL EDUCATION

Despite the global primary completion rate increasing from 80% in 2000 to 87% today, more than 15 million young people per year do not complete primary school. The world's poorest 20% are 15% less likely to have completed primary school than the global average, and rates of convergence are extremely slow. If this group is to reach the SDG target by 2030, their rate of progress would need to more than triple.

At the national level, 23% of countries in our sample are set to achieve primary school completion for all furthest-behind groups by 2030 if recent trends continue. Yet worryingly, that leaves 77% – home to almost 80% of children in our sample – seeing

inadequate or no convergence between the furthest-behind groups and the national average, or in some cases, not even average national progress. In Burkina Faso and Niger, less than half of children are expected to have completed primary school by 2030, if current trends continue. Both countries have significantly lower completion rates for girls, children from rural areas and poor households, and our analysis shows that none of those groups will converge with the national average before the end of the century.

Gender parity in primary schooling has markedly improved in recent decades and was close to parity at the global level in 2015.[58] But differences between boys and girls remain high in some countries, particularly where overall rates of primary completion are low. In Niger, South Sudan and Afghanistan, around twice as many boys complete primary school as girls.[59]

Refugee children are among the most disadvantaged in the world when it comes to education. More than half of all refugee children – 3.5 million children – are missing out on education.[60]

It must be remembered that even where trends in primary school enrolment and completion are positive, they often mask a learning crisis (see Figure 11). An estimated 58% of children of primary- and secondary-school age across the world are not attaining minimum proficiency in literacy and maths, two thirds of whom are in school but not learning.[61]

Inequalities in learning outcomes for children from different socioeconomic backgrounds are often marked, in higher and lower income countries alike. For example, in Cameroon, only 5% of girls from the poorest households had learned enough at the end of primary school to continue school, compared with 76% of girls from the richest households.[62] In England, 23% of children are behind on language skills by age five, and one in three children in poverty are falling behind with their education,[63] with similar trends in other high-income countries.[64]

Figure 11 Children missing out on learning

Proportion of children in grades 2/3 not achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in reading and mathematics, 2013/2014.

- Reading
- Mathematics

Data: UN Stats,
SDG Indicator 4.1.1
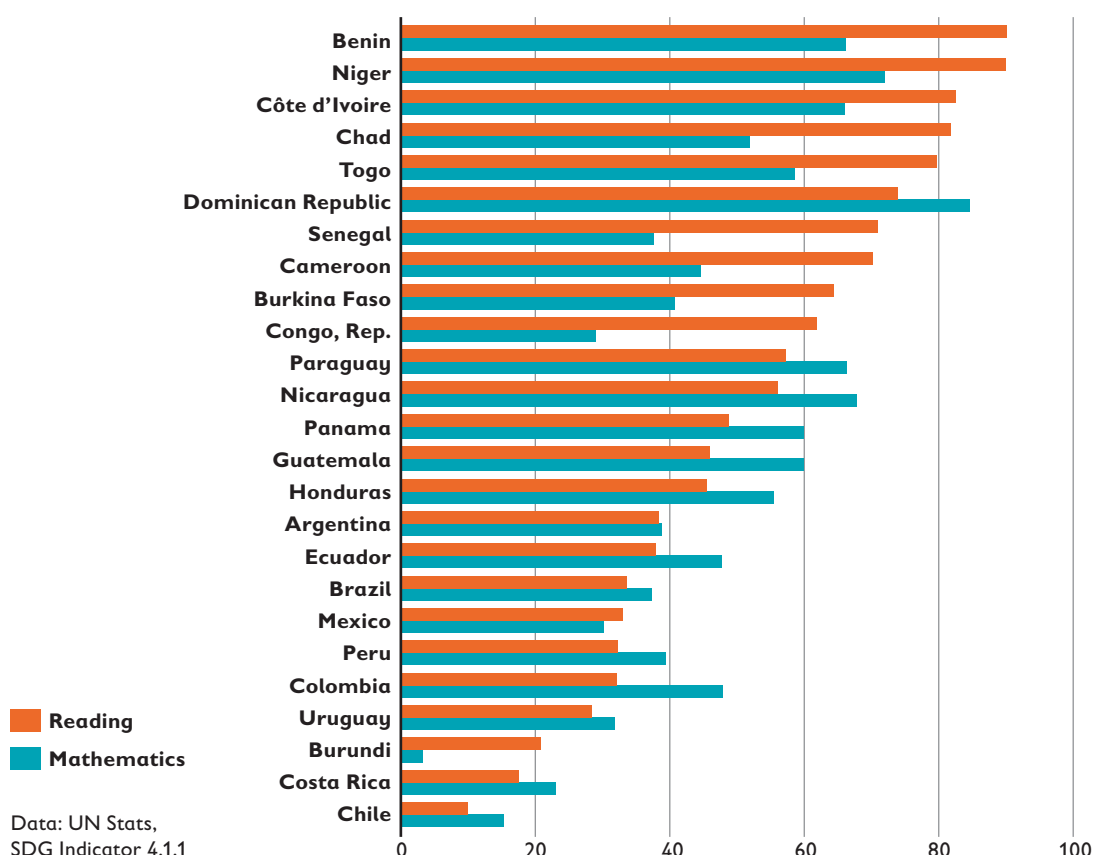
ACCELERATING PROGRESS FOR THE MOST DEPRIVED AND MARGINALISED CHILDREN

Achieving quality primary education and learning for all will require more and better funding. In 2015, more than 70 countries allocated less than the recommended 15% of public expenditure to education.[65] There is significant scope to increase revenue from progressive taxation, and more focus should be placed on basic education, with per-capita spending on higher education in low-income countries nearly 900% more than that spent on primary education.[66]

The international and donor community must take urgent steps to reverse the decline in the proportion of aid that is spent on education and improve allocation to focus on those most in need. Low-income countries currently only receive 19% of total aid for education, and 23% of aid for basic education.[67] Increasing assistance for refugee education must be an urgent priority.

Innovative financing mechanisms, such as the International Financing Facility for Education, could help fill the significant funding gaps that remain. However, it is critical that these uphold principles of aid effectiveness, debt sustainability, governance and equity. They must be guided by the principle of progressive universalism, prioritising basic education and making equity targets a core requirement for funding.[68]

For national and international stakeholders, particular focus must be placed on investing in early learning and ensuring a supportive environment from parents and the community. This is essential for children's cognitive development before they enter primary school, and will help to close equity gaps in learning that worsen throughout children's school careers.

To improve learning, critical policy measures include investment in more and better books and learning materials, and opportunities at school and at home, as well as teacher training and retention. Ensuring that children are able to learn

in languages that they understand is particularly important for ensuring equal opportunity for all groups. Comparable assessments for reading and mathematics should be conducted regularly, helping to tailor individual policies and programmes and to identify disadvantaged groups. Gender gaps must be closed through investment in safe, violence-free,

sanitary and equitable school environments, with training and teacher assessment to ensure that discrimination is not promoted or reinforced in the classroom. Economic empowerment and social protection schemes should be employed to help break links between dropping out of school with child marriage and labour.

"EDUCATION BRINGS CHANGE"

"Education is the only way to bring changes in one's life. I have brought changes in my life by educating myself. I want to see that each child in the world is educated. If that happens, the world will be changed for better."

Saleha, 17, lives next to the biggest dumping ground of Mumbai in India, near Shivaji Nagar slums, where life expectancy is almost half the national average. Saleha's family has long faced financial difficulties, with her elder sister marrying young and her family opting to prioritise her brother's education over Saleha's during hard times. Saleha has worked hard to change her family's mindset, and is now studying in the 12th grade of college. She is a community campaigner, working through a child rights group to push for girls' education and health, as well as conducting training sessions for her peers.

Conclusion and recommendations

This report, and the accompanying online data dashboard (https://campaigns. savethechildren.net/grid), illustrate what an SDG monitoring system that focuses on the pledge to Leave No One Behind could look like in practice.

The current business-as-usual approach to focusing on national and global averages undermines the revolutionary potential of the SDGs, generating few incentives to tackle the inequity and discrimination that are denying millions of the world's most deprived and marginalised children a future. If we do not act soon, the 2030 Agenda will not be achieved. As this report has shown, the SDG targets simply will not be met if progress does not accelerate for the furthest-behind groups of children.

The international community must be bold and take urgent action to address the significant data gaps, methodological challenges and political barriers that remain to effective and inclusive SDG monitoring.

Good-quality, internationally comparable disaggregated data are currently available for a number of SDG indicators. National and international monitoring must always make full use of this data in all reporting, and improve measurements where data is poor, to track progress for the world's furthest-behind groups.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SDG MONITORING AND REVIEW

The UN system and international organisations must lead by example.

- The annual **UN Sustainable Development Goals Report** should devise and present an approach for systematically monitoring global and national trends for the furthest-behind groups of children across the SDG framework, for as many targets as possible under current data constraints, prioritising child-focused targets. In addition to doing this for every goal

area, the report should include a dedicated chapter to assess overall progress towards the Leave No One Behind pledge, and include systematic analysis of qualitative data capturing the voices of children and adults affected by deprivation and marginalisation.

- A day-long session should be dedicated to monitoring the Leave No One Behind pledge in all meetings of the **High Level Political Forum**. This should include analysis and discussion of trends for the furthest-behind groups and facilitate the sharing of successes and challenges, providing meaningful opportunities for civil society and child participation, and identification of lessons learned. Representatives of marginalised groups should be supported to engage in this discussion.

- The negotiated political declaration of the HLPF should highlight the situation of those furthest behind, progress made in putting the furthest-behind first, and the status of meeting all SDGs and targets for all nations, peoples and segments of society.

- The **Inter-Agency and Expert Group** on SDG indicators must prioritise and accelerate its workstream on data disaggregation. The final guidelines should help to strengthen statistical systems and transfer technology and knowledge, with a particular focus on child development indicators.

- The **custodian international agencies** responsible for collecting and reporting data for each SDG indicator should collect and report on disaggregated data for as many groups as possible. This should be captured in the United Nations Statistics Division Global SDG Indicators database.

- The **Secretary-General's voluntary common reporting guidelines for Voluntary National Reviews** should be updated to include specific guidance on how countries should report on progress for the furthest-behind groups, with a focus on children, in addition to the current request for identification of groups and information about policies being implemented.

National governments should prioritise the Leave No One Behind pledge in their efforts to implement and monitor the SDGs, with donor governments and international agencies supporting low- and middle-income countries to make progress. They should:

- make full use of existing available data to systematically track progress for the furthest-behind groups across SDG targets, with a focus on child-focused indicators

- report trends in disaggregated data to the public regularly and transparently, with citizen participation by children and adults, and encourage open dialogue and deliberation

- invest in filling data gaps, prioritising SDG indicators that relate to the health and well-being of children where necessary

- conduct a 'leave no one behind assessment' to identify the barriers faced by the most deprived and marginalised groups of children, and ensure that clear strategies for reaching them are incorporated in all sector plans and budgets.

Civil society organisations should:

- demand access to disaggregated data and transparent monitoring of progress for the furthest-behind groups in formats that are easy for different groups of the public to understand and that can boost accountability and empower excluded groups, including a focus on children

- use data that are available to produce shadow reports on SDG progress to hold leaders to account

- support children and deprived and marginalised groups to participate in SDG monitoring and accountability, and help amplify their voices

- collect and report disaggregated data linked to their own programming work and impact.

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICIES TO PURSUE EQUITABLE PROGRESS

Improving SDG monitoring and review is important, and should incentivise and support action on inequalities. But changes in policy and practice do not have to wait for improvements in monitoring.

As well as monitoring inequalities and convergence, **governments and international aid agencies must implement and prioritise policies that allow for accelerated progress with enhanced equity**.

This report has outlined core recommendations for each of the five focus indicators. Priority actions include:

- A review of financing and investment in children at local, national and international levels, with more resources focused on a per capita basis on children in greatest need.

- A renewed focus on inequality across all government and donor policies. For example:
  - For child survival – pursuing universal health coverage, improving nutrition, and reversing neglect of diseases like pneumonia that are exacerbated by poverty and inequality.
  - For education – preventing inequalities in learning outcomes from emerging in the early years, and subsequently persisting throughout childhood.
  - Across the board – tackling gender inequalities and harmful social norms that often put the poorest girls at the very back of the queue, and that make them vulnerable to fundamental rights violations such as child marriage and other forms of gender-based violence.

Appendix: National progress towards the fulfilment of the Leave No One Behind pledge

The tables below present the breakdown of country data that were used to build our categorisation of whether countries are on or off track for realising the Leave No One Behind pledge by 2030. The analysis is based on DHS and MICS data, for countries with at least two data points and with data available from at least 2010.

For each of the five indicators, the tables show:
- the national level estimate for each indicator in 2030, assuming recent trends continue
- whether national average trends are moving in the right direction towards SDG targets
- the 2030 estimate for each furthest-behind group (poorest 20%, rural areas and girls where relevant – see endnote 8).
- an assessment of whether each furthest-behind group is converging with the national average, categorised according to whether:
  – they have already converged or are on course to converge by 2030
  – they are converging, but not reaching the national average by 2030 (expected date of convergence shown in brackets)
  – they are diverging from the national average .

The final column in the table categorises each country into one of four LNOB (leave no one behind) categories:

On track: The country is on track to reach the SDG target as a national average, and for all furthest-behind groups.

Off track with good convergence: The country is not on track to reach the SDG target for all furthest-behind groups, but is making overall progress, and all of the furthest-behind groups will have converged with the national average by 2030.

Off track with limited convergence: The country is not on track to reach the SDG target for all furthest-behind groups, but is making overall progress, and at least one furthest-behind group will have converged with the national average by 2030.

Off track with no convergence: The country is either not making national average progress, or no furthest-behind group will have converged with the national average by 2030.

We have assumed that all national targets are equivalent to the global SDG targets, most of which are zero or 100%, with the exception of child mortality at 25 deaths per 1,000 live births (note that this can lead to countries being on track [LNOB category 1] without seeing convergence for the furthest-behind groups). For the zero and 100% targets, we consider countries and groups to have reached the target if they are within 3 percentage points of it. While countries have been encouraged to set their own targets according to national context, we believe that this should refer to the selection of relevant targets and interim milestones. We do not believe that this means that levels of ambition for 2030 should be lowered below that of the international SDG agreement and targets.

CHILD MORTALITY

CHILD MORTALITY PROJECTIONS FOR 2030 (UNDER-FIVE DEATHS PER 1,000 LIVE BIRTHS; SDG TARGET IS 25 DEATHS PER 1,000 LIVE BIRTHS)

Country	Projected national rate	Is there national average progress?	Projected rate in rural areas	When will rural areas converge with the average?	Projected rate for poorest 20%	When will the poorest 20% converge with the average?	LNOB Category
China	6	Yes	7	2100+	6	Already converged	1
Kazakhstan	6	Yes	6	Already converged	7	2027	1
Armenia	7	Yes	9	2100+	8	2044	1
Peru	8	Yes	10	2068	9	2062	1
Colombia	9	Yes	13	2100+	11	2100+	1
Moldova	9	Yes	9	Already converged	12	2069	1
Honduras	10	Yes	10	Already converged	10	2024	1
Jordan	11	Yes	11	Already converged	11	2023	1
West Bank and Gaza	11	Yes	11	Already converged	11	Already converged	1
Egypt, Arab Rep.	12	Yes	13	2029	14	2063	1
Kyrgyz Republic	12	Yes	15	Divergence	15	2100+	1
Paraguay	12	Yes	14	Divergence	19	Divergence	1
Vietnam	13	Yes	14	2028	25	Divergence	1
Indonesia	14	Yes	17	2097	20	2100+	1
Bangladesh	16	Yes	17	Already converged	17	2034	1
Guatemala	16	Yes	18	2100+	23	2100+	1
Nepal	16	Yes	18	2057	19	2100+	1
Dominican Republic	19	Yes	19	Already converged	19	Already converged	1
Guyana	23	Yes	23	Already converged	23	Already converged	1
Kenya	34	Yes	34	Already converged	34	Already converged	2
Congo, Rep.	37	Yes	38	2027	38	2030	2
Tanzania	38	Yes	38	Already converged	38	Already converged	2
Ethiopia	39	Yes	40	Already converged	40	2024	2
Liberia	46	Yes	48	2026	46	2026	2
Mozambique	48	Yes	48	Already converged	45	Already converged	2
Mauritania	57	Yes	57	Already converged	55	Already converged	2
Congo, Dem. Rep.	65	Yes	66	2028	66	2027	2
Lesotho	67	Yes	66	Already converged	63	Already converged	2
Chad	92	Yes	93	Already converged	95	2022	2
São Tomé and Príncipe	23	Yes	23	Already converged	30	2100+	3
Rwanda	26	Yes	27	2027	31	2084	3
Timor-Leste	26	Yes	27	2030	37	Divergence	3
Gabon	33	Yes	51	Divergence	34	2028	3
Uganda	36	Yes	37	2028	40	2069	3
Malawi	37	Yes	38	2028	39	2032	3
Ghana	39	Yes	41	2027	42	2037	3
Zimbabwe	39	Yes	41	2030	44	2047	3
Haiti	42	Yes	42	Already converged	44	2035	3
Zambia	43	Yes	44	2026	46	2032	3
Sudan	45	Yes	46	Already converged	47	2031	3
Burundi	49	Yes	50	2026	77	Divergence	3
Comoros	51	Yes	64	Divergence	52	Already converged	3
Burkina Faso	58	Yes	61	2030	73	Divergence	3
Niger	62	Yes	67	Divergence	61	Already converged	3
Sierra Leone	79	Yes	88	Divergence	79	2021	3
Philippines	17	Yes	20	Divergence	26	2100+	4
Cambodia	19	Yes	21	Divergence	35	Divergence	4
India	24	Yes	27	2100+	34	2100+	4
Turkmenistan	30	Yes	33	2100+	79	Divergence	4
Namibia	31	Yes	34	2100+	34	2078	4
Yemen, Rep.	31	Yes	34	Divergence	36	2100+	4
Senegal	32	Yes	37	2100+	42	2100+	4
Afghanistan	42	Yes	51	Divergence	56	Divergence	4
Swaziland	48	No	48	Already converged	50	2027	4
Togo	53	Yes	59	2091	68	Divergence	4
Cameroon	55	Yes	76	Divergence	96	Divergence	4
Angola	56	Yes	68	2100+	92	Divergence	4
Guinea	58	Yes	68	Divergence	80	Divergence	4
Pakistan	58	Yes	63	2100+	74	Divergence	4
Côte d'Ivoire	65	Yes	69	2050	73	2084	4
Benin	69	Yes	76	2100+	83	2100+	4
Nigeria	72	Yes	82	2100+	93	2100+	4
Mali	75	Yes	85	Divergence	78	Divergence	4
Central African Republic	89	Yes	100	2100+	96	2081	4

MALNUTRITION (STUNTING)

STUNTING PROJECTIONS FOR 2030 (% OF CHILDREN UNDER 5 WHO ARE STUNTED)

Country	Projected national rate	Is there national average progress?	Projected rate in rural areas	When will rural areas converge with the average?	Projected rate for poorest 20%	When will the poorest 20% converge with the average?	LNOB Category
Serbia	3	Yes	3	Already converged	4	2028	2
Kazakhstan	5	Yes	5	Already converged	5	2021	2
Kyrgyz Republic	6	Yes	6	Already converged	7	2030	2
Egypt, Arab Rep.	17	Yes	16	Already converged	17	2023	2
Sierra Leone	32	Yes	32	2028	32	2028	2
Dominican Republic	4	Yes	4	Already converged	5	2070	3
Jordan	5	Yes	5	Already converged	7	2072	3
Armenia	6	Yes	7	2063	6	2021	3
Cambodia	19	Yes	20	2027	26	Divergence	3
Bangladesh	20	Yes	21	2023	30	Divergence	3
Zimbabwe	22	Yes	22	2021	25	2070	3
Uganda	23	Yes	24	2021	26	2100+	3
Liberia	25	Yes	25	Already converged	28	2100+	3
Lesotho	27	Yes	28	2026	47	Divergence	3
Central African Republic	32	Yes	33	2022	35	2082	3
Zambia	32	Yes	33	2030	37	2080	3
Chad	33	Yes	34	2043	34	2020	3
Timor-Leste	38	Yes	39	2024	40	2034	3
Moldova	3	Yes	5	Divergence	9	Divergence	4
Paraguay	3	Yes	5	2100+	7	Divergence	4
Colombia	7	Yes	8	2100+	9	2100+	4
Guyana	7	No	7	Already converged	13	Divergence	4
Peru	8	Yes	15	Divergence	17	2100+	4
Honduras	12	Yes	14	2066	19	2100+	4
Haiti	13	Yes	14	2100+	18	2100+	4
Gabon	13	Yes	24	Divergence	25	Divergence	4
São Tomé and Príncipe	13	Yes	15	Divergence	22	Divergence	4
Senegal	13	Yes	16	2100+	19	2100+	4
Ghana	14	Yes	16	2095	18	2100+	4
Congo, Rep.	17	Yes	28	Divergence	47	Divergence	4
Namibia	17	Yes	21	Divergence	25	Divergence	4
Côte d'Ivoire	17	No	20	2100+	23	2100+	4
Swaziland	20	Yes	22	Divergence	24	Divergence	4
Nepal	20	Yes	21	2033	29	2100+	4
Kenya	20	Yes	23	2086	31	Divergence	4
Togo	21	Yes	27	Divergence	27	Divergence	4
Burkina Faso	22	Yes	24	2097	30	Divergence	4
Mauritania	22	Yes	25	Divergence	33	Divergence	4
Ethiopia	25	Yes	26	Divergence	30	Divergence	4
Mali	25	Yes	28	Divergence	35	Divergence	4
Comoros	25	Yes	28	Divergence	31	2100+	4
India	25	Yes	27	2100+	35	2100+	4
Cameroon	26	Yes	31	2100+	33	2100+	4
Pakistan	27	Yes	29	2100+	46	Divergence	4
Guinea	27	Yes	33	Divergence	32	Divergence	4
Benin	27	Yes	30	2055	36	2100+	4
Tanzania	28	Yes	30	2092	32	2100+	4
Malawi	30	Yes	32	2046	38	2100+	4
Rwanda	31	Yes	34	Divergence	44	Divergence	4
Sudan	31	Yes	37	Divergence	33	2035	4
Mozambique	34	Yes	36	2048	41	2100+	4
Guatemala	34	Yes	40	2100+	50	2100+	4
Congo, Dem. Rep.	35	Yes	39	Divergence	42	Divergence	4
Niger	36	Yes	37	2056	38	2069	4
Yemen, Rep.	37	Yes	42	Divergence	51	Divergence	4
Nigeria	37	Yes	43	Divergence	59	Divergence	4
Burundi	50	Yes	53	Divergence	72	Divergence	4

CHILD MARRIAGE

CHILD MARRIAGE PROJECTIONS FOR 2030 (% OF WOMEN AGED 20–24 MARRIED OR IN UNION BY 18)

Country	Projected national rate	Is there national average progress?	Projected rate in rural areas	When will rural areas converge with the average?	Projected rate for poorest 20%	When will the poorest 20% converge with the average?	LNOB Category
Swaziland	4	Yes	4	Already converged	4	Already converged	2
Rwanda	4	Yes	4	Already converged	5	2027	2
Jordan	4	Yes	4	Already converged	4	Already converged	2
Kazakhstan	4	Yes	5	2022	5	Already converged	2
Turkmenistan	5	Yes	4	Already converged	5	Already converged	2
Tajikistan	11	Yes	11	Already converged	11	Already converged	2
Afghanistan	15	Yes	15	Already converged	15	2023	2
Yemen, Rep.	18	Yes	18	2023	18	2023	2
Belarus	3	Yes	5	Divergence	3	2023	3
Macedonia, FYR	3	Yes	3	Already converged	7	Divergence	3
Serbia	3	Yes	3	Already converged	14	Divergence	3
Montenegro	3	Yes	3	Already converged	6	2100+	3
Ukraine	7	Yes	9	2077	7	2025	3
Kyrgyz Republic	12	Yes	14	Divergence	13	2023	3
Burundi	14	Yes	14	Already converged	16	2054	3
Haiti	18	Yes	18	2020	20	2100+	3
Comoros	23	Yes	24	2037	24	2030	3
São Tomé and Príncipe	28	Yes	29	2030	36	2075	3
Bangladesh	41	Yes	41	Already converged	44	2036	3
Bosnia and Herzegovina	3	Yes	4	Divergence	9	Divergence	4
Armenia	4	Yes	5	2060	6	2079	4
Mongolia	6	Yes	14	Divergence	8	2081	4
Namibia	6	Yes	9	2100+	9	2080	4
Vietnam	9	Yes	11	2100+	30	Divergence	4
Moldova	10	No	17	Divergence	42	Divergence	4
Egypt, Arab Rep.	10	Yes	13	2100+	13	2100+	4
Indonesia	11	Yes	18	Divergence	26	Divergence	4
Philippines	13	Yes	15	2083	26	2100+	4
Pakistan	13	Yes	16	Divergence	29	Divergence	4
Togo	14	Yes	21	2100+	17	2100+	4
Ghana	15	Yes	16	2038	18	2052	4
Lesotho	15	Yes	18	2100+	29	Divergence	4
Gabon	15	Yes	28	Divergence	18	Divergence	4
Cambodia	16	Yes	19	Divergence	23	2100+	4
Guinea-Bissau	17	Yes	36	Divergence	28	Divergence	4
Kenya	17	Yes	20	2074	30	2100+	4
India	18	Yes	20	2064	26	2100+	4
Paraguay	18	Yes	25	2100+	28	2100+	4
Peru	18	Yes	30	2100+	28	2100+	4
Benin	19	Yes	25	2100+	32	2100+	4
Côte d'Ivoire	21	Yes	36	Divergence	38	2100+	4
Colombia	21	Yes	39	Divergence	35	Divergence	4
Cameroon	23	Yes	33	Divergence	45	Divergence	4
Congo, Rep.	23	Yes	28	2085	36	Divergence	4
Sudan	25	Yes	31	Divergence	28	2044	4
Zambia	25	Yes	34	2100+	38	2100+	4
Senegal	26	Yes	35	2100+	42	2100+	4
Tanzania	26	Yes	33	2100+	45	Divergence	4
Sierra Leone	26	Yes	32	2100+	41	2100+	4
Liberia	27	Yes	34	2100+	32	2082	4
Guatemala	27	Yes	34	2100+	39	2100+	4
Congo, Dem. Rep.	27	Yes	35	Divergence	32	2069	4
Zimbabwe	27	Yes	37	Divergence	46	2100+	4
Uganda	28	Yes	33	2100+	47	Divergence	4
Honduras	30	Yes	37	Divergence	40	2100+	4
Nepal	31	Yes	34	2039	34	2048	4
Ethiopia	32	Yes	40	Divergence	53	Divergence	4
Guyana	33	No	34	Already converged	39	2056	4
Dominican Republic	34	Yes	39	2069	39	2056	4
Malawi	35	Yes	38	2088	48	Divergence	4
Nigeria	39	Yes	40	2031	64	2100+	4
Burkina Faso	42	Yes	51	2100+	52	2100+	4
Mali	44	Yes	50	Divergence	50	2100+	4
Guinea	46	Yes	67	Divergence	78	Divergence	4
Mozambique	48	Yes	55	2100+	71	Divergence	4
Chad	57	Yes	69	Divergence	63	Divergence	4
Central African Republic	60	No	61	2045	61	2023	4
Niger	69	Yes	79	Divergence	77	2100+	4

BIRTH REGISTRATION

BIRTH REGISTRATION PROJECTIONS FOR 2030 (% OF CHILDREN UNDER 5 WHOSE BIRTHS HAVE BEEN REGISTERED)

Country	Projected national rate	Is there national average progress?	Projected rate for girls	When will girls converge with the average?	Projected rate in rural areas	When will rural areas converge with the average?	Projected rate for poorest 20%	When will the poorest 20% converge with the average?	LNOB Category
Armenia	100	Yes	100	Already converged	100	Already converged	100	Already converged	1
Kazakhstan	100	Yes	100	Already converged	100	Already converged	100	Already converged	1
Serbia	100	Yes	100	Already converged	100	Already converged	99	2024	1
West Bank and Gaza	100	Yes	100	Already converged	100	Already converged	100	Already converged	1
Kyrgyz Republic	100	Yes	100	Already converged	100	Already converged	100	Already converged	1
Congo, Rep.	100	Yes	100	Already converged	99	2023	99	2029	1
Thailand	100	No*	100	Already converged	100	Already converged	100	Already converged	1
Peru	99	Yes	99	Already converged	98	Divergence*	99	2029	1
São Tomé and Príncipe	99	Yes	99	Already converged	98	Divergence*	98	Divergence*	1
Benin	99	Yes	99	Already converged	99	2020	97	Divergence*	1
Vietnam	99	Yes	99	Already converged	99	Already converged	98	2100+*	1
Honduras	99	Yes	99	Already converged	99	Already converged	99	Already converged	1
Sierra Leone	93	Yes	93	Already converged	93	Already converged	93	Already converged	2
Nepal	86	Yes	86	Already converged	86	Already converged	86	Already converged	2
Malawi	84	Yes	84	Already converged	84	Already converged	84	Already converged	2
Uganda	52	Yes	52	Already converged	52	Already converged	52	2023	2
India	98	Yes	98	Already converged	98	2025	96	2100+	3
Belize	98	Yes	99	Already converged	98	Already converged	92	Divergence	3
Dominican Republic	97	Yes	97	Already converged	94	Divergence	93	Divergence	3
Namibia	96	Yes	96	Already converged	94	Divergence	85	Divergence	3
Mali	95	Yes	95	Already converged	95	2029	86	Divergence	3
Burundi	95	Yes	95	Already converged	95	Already converged	85	Divergence	3
Madagascar	93	Yes	93	Already converged	92	Divergence	90	2093	3
Afghanistan	92	Yes	91	Already converged	90	Divergence	84	Divergence	3
Togo	91	Yes	91	Already converged	85	Divergence	88	Divergence	3
Pakistan	88	Yes	88	Already converged	84	Divergence	73	Divergence	3
Sudan	88	Yes	87	2020	84	2100+	80	2096	3
Ghana	87	Yes	87	Already converged	84	2086	80	Divergence	3
Cambodia	86	Yes	86	Already converged	85	Divergence	69	Divergence	3
Kenya	86	Yes	86	Already converged	83	2091	71	Divergence	3
Côte d'Ivoire	85	Yes	85	Already converged	79	Divergence	77	2100+	3
Indonesia	85	Yes	86	Already converged	83	2059	73	2100+	3
Senegal	85	Yes	84	2020	79	Divergence	67	Divergence	3
Mozambique	79	Yes	97	Already converged	72	Divergence	77	2041	3
Swaziland	78	Yes	78	Already converged	76	Divergence	70	Divergence	3
Bangladesh	77	Yes	77	Already converged	77	Already converged	73	2090	3
Timor-Leste	69	Yes	70	Already converged	69	2019	64	2100+	3
Nigeria	68	Yes	68	Already converged	61	2100+	42	Divergence	3
Lesotho	68	Yes	68	Already converged	68	Already converged	33	Divergence	3
Liberia	52	Yes	52	Already converged	50	2049	50	2037	3
Chad	26	Yes	26	Already converged	21	2086	23	2046	3
Zambia	21	Yes	20	Already converged	15	2100+	11	2100+	3
Haiti	94	No	94	Already converged	94	2025	92	2100+	4
Guyana	91	No	91	Already converged	91	Already converged	91	2023	4
Niger	86	Yes	78	Divergence	84	2100+	80	2100+	4
Cameroon	79	No	79	Already converged	69	Divergence	57	2100+	4
Rwanda	63	No	63	Already converged	63	Already converged	33	Divergence	4
Zimbabwe	57	No	57	Already converged	44	Divergence	26	Divergence	4
Tanzania	48	Yes	46	Divergence	40	2100+	25	Divergence	4
Congo, Dem. Rep.	11	No	11	Already converged	11	Already converged	10	2044	4
Ethiopia	6	No	6	Already converged	3	Divergence	1	Divergence	4

* Not converged by 2030, but already within 3 percentage points of the SDG target.

PRIMARY SCHOOL COMPLETION

PRIMARY SCHOOL COMPLETION PROJECTIONS FOR 2030 (% OF PEOPLE 15–24 WHO HAVE COMPLETED PRIMARY SCHOOL)

Country	Projected national rate	Is there national average progress?	Projected rate for girls	When will girls converge with the average?	Projected rate in rural areas	When will rural areas converge with the average?	Projected rate for poorest 20%	When will the poorest 20% converge with the average?	LNOB Category
Armenia	100	No*	100	Already converged	100	Already converged	100	Already converged	1
Belarus	100	Yes	100	Already converged	100	Already converged	100	Already converged	1
Jamaica	100	Yes	100	Already converged	100	Already converged	100	Already converged	1
Chile	100	Yes	100	Already converged	100	Already converged	100	Already converged	1
Kazakhstan	100	Yes	100	Already converged	100	Already converged	100	Already converged	1
Georgia	100	Yes	100	Already converged	100	Already converged	99	Already converged	1
Ukraine	100	Yes	100	Already converged	100	Already converged	100	Already converged	1
Montenegro	100	Yes	100	Already converged	99	Already converged	99	2020	1
West Bank and Gaza	100	Yes	100	Already converged	100	Already converged	100	Already converged	1
Macedonia, FYR	100	Yes	100	Already converged	99	2022	98	Divergence*	1
Bosnia and Herzegovina	99	Yes	99	Already converged	99	Already converged	99	Already converged	1
Mongolia	99	Yes	99	Already converged	99	Already converged	99	2022	1
Thailand	99	Yes	99	Already converged	99	Already converged	98	Divergence*	1
China	99	Yes	99	Already converged	98	2029	99	Already converged	1
Jordan	99	Yes	99	Already converged	99	Already converged	97	Divergence*	1
Ecuador	99	Yes	99	Already converged	99	2019	98	2020	1
Guyana	99	Yes	99	Already converged	99	Already converged	99	2023	1
Kyrgyz Republic	98	No*	99	Already converged	98	Already converged	98	Already converged	1
Serbia	99	Yes	99	Already converged	99	Already converged	94	Divergence	3
Mexico	99	Yes	99	Already converged	97	2100+	95	Divergence	3
Colombia	98	Yes	99	Already converged	96	2100+	96	Divergence	3
Peru	98	Yes	98	Already converged	97	2100+	97	2100+	3
Brazil	98	Yes	99	Already converged	97	2030	97	2100+	3
Indonesia	98	Yes	98	Already converged	97	2100+	95	Divergence	3
Vietnam	98	Yes	98	Already converged	98	Already converged	94	Divergence	3
Dominican Republic	97	Yes	98	Already converged	96	2100+	93	Divergence	3
Tajikistan	96	Yes	94	Divergence	96	Already converged	94	2100+	3
Suriname	96	Yes	96	Already converged	95	2100+	90	Divergence	3
India	95	Yes	94	2029	94	2027	93	2100+	3
Egypt, Arab Rep.	94	Yes	94	Already converged	94	2026	92	2100+	3
Nepal	94	Yes	92	2100+	93	2028	92	Divergence	3
Honduras	94	Yes	96	Already converged	92	2089	88	2100+	3
Zimbabwe	93	Yes	93	Already converged	90	2100+	80	Divergence	3
Philippines	93	Yes	98	Already converged	91	2100+	75	Divergence	3
Gabon	92	Yes	96	Already converged	80	2100+	87	2100+	3
Namibia	91	Yes	95	Already converged	87	2100+	81	Divergence	3
Congo, Rep.	91	Yes	91	Already converged	72	Divergence	79	Divergence	3
Cambodia	90	Yes	90	Already converged	89	2100+	80	2100+	3
Lesotho	90	Yes	97	Already converged	88	2100+	79	Divergence	3
Bangladesh	90	Yes	91	Already converged	89	Already converged	82	2100+	3
Ghana	87	Yes	87	Already converged	83	2100+	78	2100+	3
São Tomé and Príncipe	86	Yes	88	Already converged	85	2030	80	2081	3
Swaziland	83	Yes	89	Already converged	79	Divergence	70	Divergence	3
Tanzania	83	Yes	83	Already converged	77	Divergence	65	Divergence	3
Zambia	83	Yes	82	Already converged	75	2100+	61	Divergence	3
Haiti	82	Yes	82	Already converged	75	2100+	66	2100+	3
Sudan	82	Yes	82	2022	76	Divergence	75	2082	3
Nigeria	81	Yes	77	2100+	81	2022	33	Divergence	3
Malawi	79	Yes	79	Already converged	76	2100+	65	2100+	3
Gambia, The	76	Yes	75	2030	60	Divergence	69	2100+	3
Sierra Leone	75	Yes	75	2029	75	2029	67	2069	3
Uganda	67	Yes	68	Already converged	61	Divergence	38	Divergence	3
Rwanda	66	Yes	67	Already converged	63	2093	44	2100+	3
Senegal	62	Yes	61	2030	55	2096	55	2078	3
Burundi	60	Yes	44	Divergence	59	2024	40	2100+	3
Moldova	96	No	96	Already converged	96	Already converged	66	Divergence	4
Belize	95	No	98	Already converged	92	Divergence	79	Divergence	4
Guatemala	91	Yes	90	2096	88	2095	79	Divergence	4
Lao PDR	89	Yes	88	2067	87	2047	76	2100+	4
Congo, Dem. Rep.	83	Yes	80	2086	76	2100+	73	2100+	4
Kenya	83	No	83	Already converged	75	Divergence	54	Divergence	4
Yemen, Rep.	82	Yes	77	2077	78	2100+	58	Divergence	4
Cameroon	81	Yes	78	2100+	67	Divergence	37	Divergence	4
Togo	80	Yes	77	2073	73	2100+	72	2100+	4
Pakistan	80	Yes	77	2088	76	2100+	51	Divergence	4
Iraq	79	No	75	2100+	61	Divergence	44	Divergence	4
Benin	74	Yes	70	2090	70	2070	62	2100+	4
Afghanistan	74	Yes	65	2100+	72	2036	73	2034	4
Liberia	74	Yes	70	2085	61	2100+	58	Divergence	4
Mozambique	74	Yes	71	2055	66	2100+	50	2100+	4
Ethiopia	69	Yes	68	2043	64	2092	52	2100+	4
Mauritania	67	Yes	60	Divergence	60	2077	47	2100+	4
Guinea	65	Yes	58	2100+	52	2100+	38	2100+	4
Côte d'Ivoire	65	Yes	64	2031	42	Divergence	39	2100+	4
Central African Republic	63	Yes	52	Divergence	50	2100+	46	2100+	4
Chad	61	Yes	56	2059	54	2100+	57	2044	4
Guinea-Bissau	60	Yes	58	2049	43	2100+	49	2100+	4
Mali	55	Yes	50	2100+	50	2072	41	2097	4
Burkina Faso	44	Yes	38	2100+	36	2093	24	2100+	4
Niger	35	Yes	28	2100+	28	2100+	20	2100+	4

* Not converged by 2030, but already within 3 percentage points of the SDG target.

Endnotes

1 UNICEF Cause of death data, available at https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-survival/under-five-mortality/

2 Save the Children (2017) *Fighting For Breath: A call to action on childhood pneumonia*

3 World Health Organization (2014) *What is Universal Health Coverage?*

4 World Bank/UNICEF (2016) *Ending Extreme Poverty: A focus on children* https://data.unicef.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Ending_Extreme_Poverty_A_Focus_on_Children_Oct_2016.pdf

5 See, for example, Article 2 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

6 Norris, J, Dunning, C, & Malknecht, A (2015) *Fragile Progress: The record of the Millennium Development Goals in states affected by conflict, fragility, and crisis*. Center for American Progress & Save the Children

7 Unless otherwise referenced, all figures in this report are drawn from Save the Children's own research. See accompanying Methodology Paper for a full discussion of the research approach.

8 Includes groups for which progress can be tracked over time – income and rural populations. We also include sex for birth registration and the education indicators. This was not possible for child marriage due to a lack of data for boys. We do not present an analysis of gender inequalities for child mortality or stunting. This is because girls tend to have systematically lower under-five mortality rates than boys if they have the same access to resources such as food and medical care. Newborn girls have a biological advantage in survival over boys, with lesser vulnerability to perinatal conditions, congenital anomalies, and infectious diseases (intestinal infections and lower respiratory infections). Thus, comparison of disadvantages and discrimination in mortality rates between sexes requires going beyond comparing different rates to a complex analysis of excess female mortality rates, which was beyond the scope of this report (see also Box 7). The issue is similar for stunting. [Alkema et al. (2014), *Lancet Global Health* https://www.thelancet.com/pdfs/journals/langlo/PIIS2214-109X(14)70280-3.pdf; UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2011), Sex Differentials in Childhood Mortality http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/SexDifChildMort/SexDifferentialsChildhoodMortality.pdf; Wamani et al. (2007). *BMC Pediatrics* https://bmcpediatr.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/1471-2431-7-17]

9 Save the Children (2016) *Realising the Pledge to Leave No One Behind*

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STILL LEFT BEHIND?

Tracking children's progress against the pledge to Leave No One Behind

The pledge to Leave No One Behind within the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) agenda has the potential to revolutionise how the world defines and strives for progress, putting the world's most deprived and marginalised children first. One of its key challenges is the need to collect and report disaggregated data in order to track inequality trends, strengthen accountability and support policies that accelerate progress for those furthest behind.

Still Left Behind? illustrates what that data monitoring could look like in practice. It presents approaches to monitor the progress of groups that are furthest behind both globally and nationally against five SDG indicators:

- under-five child mortality
- under-five stunting
- child marriage
- birth registration
- primary school completion.

For each indicator, graphs display progress, trends and projections for children in the world's poorest 20% of households in comparison with the global average, revealing the rate of convergence needed to close the gap. The analysis of national progress places countries into categories according to whether they are on or off track to achieve the SDG aspiration of meeting targets for all segments of society.

This report provides a simple, systematic and powerful representation of our global collective failure to tackle inequality and ensure that all children have a fair start in life. Acknowledging the need for urgent action, it puts forward a series of recommendations for governments and international agencies to bring the pledge to Leave No One Behind to life through SDG monitoring and reporting.

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