

Committee: United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

Issue: Ending child poverty

Student Officer: Maria Pontikakou

Position: Deputy President

PERSONAL INTRODUCTION

Dear Delegates,

My name is Maria Pontikakou, I am 16 years old, and I am an 11th grade student at Arsakeio Psychikou. I am very excited to welcome you to the 9th ATSMUN Conference and it is a great honor and pleasure to serve as the Deputy President of the United Nations Children's Fund Committee (UNICEF). Having been a huge part of my life for the past 2 years, MUN has made me realize that it gives you the chance to step outside your comfort zone and improve as an individual in a broad sense. MUN has been, is, and will be a huge passion of mine and I'm sure that this conference will convince you that it is 100% worth it.

The theme of this year's conference is "C.P.R. Cooperation Prevention Resilience" which is linked with the purpose of UNICEF which is to defend the rights of all children while working before, during, and after humanitarian emergencies, ensuring the prevention and resilience of crises, which both come as an immediate result of cooperation.

The topic that will be covered in this study guide is "Ending child poverty", which is very pivotal issue to combat. Throughout this guide, you will find information on all aspects of the topic, including key terms, previous attempts to solve the issue, etc., and everything that you will need to prepare and use for the conference. Besides that, though, I strongly urge all of you to conduct your own research to comprehend the topic more thoroughly.

On a more personal note, as this committee is designed specifically for young beginner delegates, I understand that many of you are stressed, as it will be one of your first conferences. But, you don't have to worry about anything, as the Chairs,

including myself, will make sure that every single one of you feels comfortable and has the best time of your lives.

Of course, if you have any questions or need any further explanations, please don't hesitate to contact me at the email address listed below:

mariaelpidapontikakou@gmail.com

Best regards,

Maria Pontikakou

TOPIC INTRODUCTION

According to UNICEF, an estimated 356 million children live in extreme poverty. Even in the world's most developed countries, one in seven children still live in poverty. Today, one in four children in the European Union are at risk of falling into impoverishment, while across the world, about 1 billion children are multidimensionally deprived, meaning they lack necessities as basic as food or drinking water. Unfortunately, an additional 100 million children have fallen into poverty as a result of the recent COVID-19 pandemic.

For those growing up in humanitarian crises, the risks of deprivation and exclusion rise. No matter where they live, underprivileged children have low living standards, lack of professional development, and poorer wages as adults. Poverty in childhood can have several long-lasting results, with the most indigent children less likely to have access to health care or complete their education and more likely to suffer from malnutrition. Children who fail to achieve their potential are unable to contribute to the advancement of society, politics, and the economy. Moreover, people who grow up in poverty are more likely to have financial difficulties, which perpetuates a cycle of disadvantage¹.

Every government should make investments in youth and child-sensitive social protection. This approach helps prevent, handle, and overcome the negative

¹ "Ending child poverty", UNICEF <https://www.unicef.org/eca/what-we-do/ending-child-poverty>

effects of poverty that can harm their overall welfare. Social protection includes various measures and policies which can protect children against the severe consequences of poverty². However, only a few governments have made the eradication of child poverty a central goal at a national level, despite the urgent need to protect the integrity of the children globally. It is imperative we understand that children hold the key to the future of our society and represent our sole hope for the proper continuation of humanity.



Figure 1 UNICEF/UNI109428/Pirozzi It is imperative we understand that children hold the key to the future of our society and represent our sole hope for the proper continuation of humanity.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Poverty

Poverty is the state of one who lacks a usual or socially acceptable amount of money or material possessions². It is said to exist when people lack the means to satisfy their basic needs and it is both an individual concern as well as a broader social problem. On the individual or household level, not being able to make ends

² Definition of Poverty, Britannica <https://www.britannica.com/topic/poverty>

meet can lead to a range of physical and mental issues. At the societal level, high poverty rates can be a damper on economic growth and be associated with problems like crime, unemployment, urban decay, education, and poor health³.

Child poverty⁵

Child poverty describes the situation where a child is raised with limited access to or, in some cases, no access to, the essential resources they need to survive and live well. Children who've grown up in poverty often suffer compared to others because of the lack of food, sanitation, healthcare, and education they need to thrive.⁴

Child labor

The definition of "child labor" is frequently given as employment that is harmful to a kid's physical and mental development, deprives them of their childhood, their potential, and their dignity. It refers to work that: puts children in danger or harms them physically, mentally, socially, or morally; interferes with their education by denying them the chance to go to school; requiring them to leave early; or requiring them to try to balance school attendance with excessively heavy work.

The worst forms of child labour involves children being enslaved, separated from their families, exposed to serious dangers and diseases and/or left to fend for themselves on the streets of large cities – often at a very young age.

Children's Rights

A collection of rights guaranteed by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child to every child and young person under the age of 18. Children from all backgrounds are entitled to these rights, which cover all they require for survival as

³ "What is Poverty", by James Chen in Investopedia
<https://www.investopedia.com/terms/p/poverty.asp>

⁴ "Supporting vulnerable children", World Vision UK
<https://www.worldvision.org.uk/about/blogs/what-is-child-poverty/>

well as the chance to enjoy secure, fulfilling lives. They may be divided into four groups: the right to survive, be safe, belong and develop.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)⁵

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015 to end poverty, reduce inequality and build more peaceful, prosperous societies by 2030. Also known as the Global Goals, the SDGs are a call to action to create a world where no one is left behind. They cannot be achieved without the realization of child rights. UNICEF works with governments, partners, and other UN agencies to help countries ensure the goals deliver results for and with every child – now and for generations to come.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Historical background

Child poverty has been a persistent issue throughout history and continues to affect millions of children worldwide. It has likely existed as long as poverty itself. In ancient societies, children from disadvantaged backgrounds often faced harsh living conditions, lack of access to education, and limited opportunities for social development. Poverty and child labor were closely interconnected, with children being expected to contribute to their family's income from an early age.

The Industrial Revolution⁶, which began in the late 18th century, brought important changes to societies worldwide. While it led to economic growth and technological advancements, it also intensified child poverty. In factories and mines, children were employed in harsh conditions, working long hours for modest wages. Their well-being and education were often neglected, perpetuating a cycle of poverty.

⁵ "UNICEF and the Sustainable Development Goals", UNICEF <https://www.unicef.org/unicef-and-sustainable-development-goals>

⁶ "Childhood and child labor in the British Industrial Revolution", by Jane Humphries

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, various social reform movements gained momentum, leading to the establishment of legislation aimed at improving the lives of impoverished children. These reforms included restrictions on child labor, compulsory education, and the creation of welfare programs. Organizations like Save the Children⁷, founded in 1919, played a crucial role in advocating for children's rights and addressing child poverty on a global scale.

The period following World War II was characterized by increased efforts to combat child poverty, particularly in developed countries. Social welfare programs and economic policies focused on reducing inequality were implemented. The United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child⁸, adopted in 1959, recognized children's entitlement to special care and assistance, further emphasizing the need to eradicate child poverty.

Causes of Child Poverty

Children are born filled with potential. And childhood years offer invaluable chances for growth and development. Yet because of this, children are also far more susceptible to the effects of poverty. They're more likely to suffer today and in the long-term⁹.

To begin with, water and food are the most essential needs of every person. However, while poverty is often named as a cause of hunger, hunger is also a cause of poverty. It's a never-ending loop that impedes many people from ameliorating their lives. As a result, it is impossible to work many hours a day without having enough to eat or being constantly ill from waterborne illnesses.

⁷ Save the Children <https://www.savethechildren.net/>

⁸ UN DECLARATION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD (1959) <https://archive.crin.org/en/library/legal-database/un-declaration-rights-child-1959.html>

⁹ "Why are children more impacted by poverty?", World Vision

<https://www.worldvision.ca/stories/child-sponsorship/child-poverty-causes-and-consequences>



Figure 2 Brierfield in Lancashire, where nearly 35% of children live in poverty and just over 50% are classed as poor, according to the End Child Poverty Campaign. Photograph: Christopher Thomond/The Guardian

Furthermore, the lack of access to basic healthcare and education is another significant cause of impoverishment. Half the world's population has zero access to basic health care services and frequent illnesses can prevent a person from attending school or holding down a job. Similarly, while the lack of education does not necessarily make one poor, it can contribute to perpetuating the cycle of poverty. Limited access to education means limited job opportunities, so limited chances of social mobility.

Finally, inequality leads to poverty when people's rights are ignored or violated. It inhibits them the power of making their own decisions and improve their living conditions. A more than blatant example is the one of gender discrimination, with many negative effects on women's and girls' lives, causing malnutrition, disrespect, and not equal chances to education, jobs etc.¹⁰

Consequences of Child Poverty¹¹

¹⁰ "10 major causes of poverty and how can we help solve them", by Charizze Abulencia in World Vision <https://www.worldvision.ca/stories/child-sponsorship/major-causes-of-poverty>

¹¹ "Impact of child poverty", Public Health Scotland <https://www.healthscotland.scot/population-groups/children/child-poverty/child-poverty-overview/impact-of-child-poverty#:~:text=Poorer%20health%20and%20wellbeing%20%20Limited%20money%20for,Unhealthy%20lifestyles.%204%20Poorer%20education%20and%20employment%20opportunities>

There are several ways in which living in poverty can result in poorer health outcomes in children, as well as into adulthood. Being exposed to some or all of the key factors below, as well as the accumulation of exposure over time, can have a detrimental impact on child development and health.

- Limited money for everyday resources - including good quality housing.
- Stress of living in poverty.
- Unhealthy lifestyles.
- Poorer education and employment opportunities.

Children's experience of poverty can also lead to bullying, or feelings of exclusion, as they may have fewer friends and less access to the social activities of their peers.

When considering health inequalities, children growing up impoverished or in the most deprived areas are in greater danger of poorer health than children from better off families or from more affluent areas. This can be seen in:

- higher infant mortality rate
- low birthweight
- risk of being overweight or obese
- tooth decay
- unintentional injury
- poorer general health and mental wellbeing
- teenage pregnancy.

Children from low-income households and disadvantaged areas tend to have worse outcomes than their better-off peers in terms of intellectual development and academic success. This can impact educational outcomes. Despite the fact that many children from disadvantaged backgrounds perform well in school, there remains a continuous gap between the most and least poor districts and a persistent disparity in educational attainment by deprivation. Children from underprivileged communities typically perform worse in reading, writing, and numeracy from as early as primary school through high school graduation. However, there is a variety of

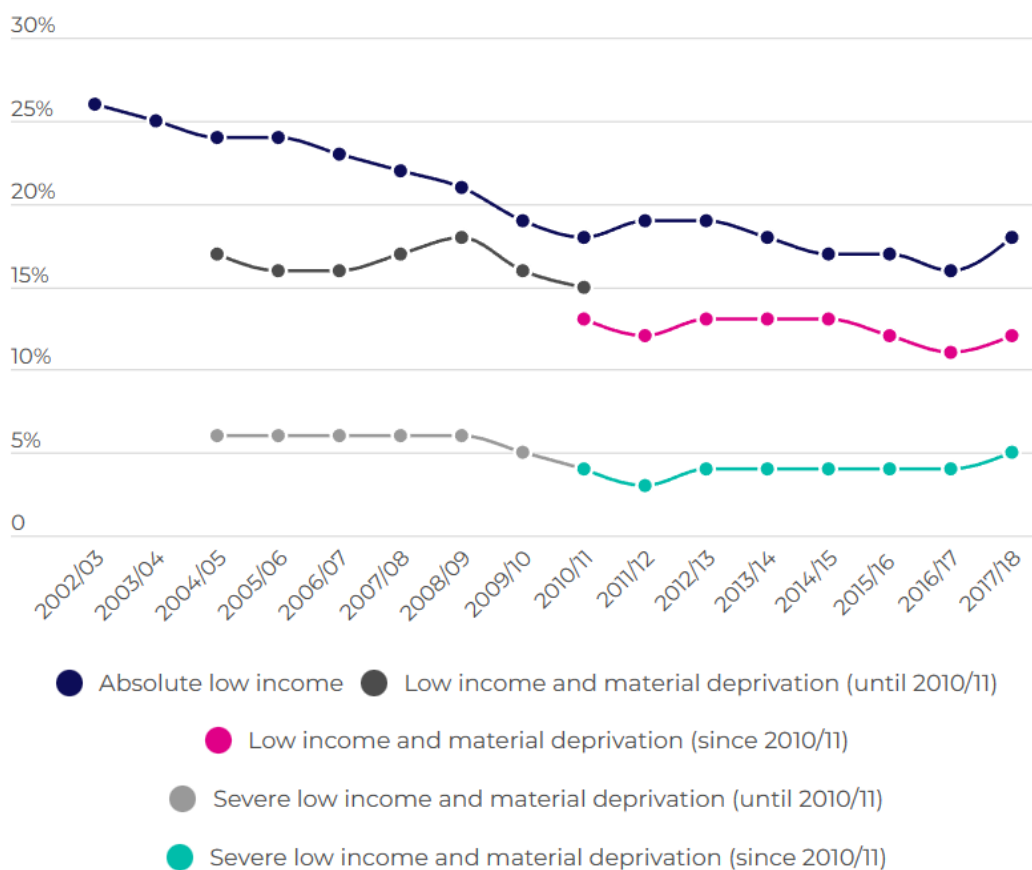
factors that can positively impact educational attainment for children experiencing poverty. These include:

- parental engagement with their child's education
- good quality preschool education
- extra-curricular support during school time.

MAJOR COUNTRIES, CONTINENTS AND ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED

The UK

Proportion of children categorised as living in poverty by differing definitions, UK, 2002/03-2017/18



Source: Households below average income: 1994/95 to 2017/18, UK Government (accessed February 2020)

Child poverty rates have fluctuated across the UK over the past two decades. A national government pledge to end child poverty by 2020 sparked anti-poverty

efforts at the turn of the millennium. Families with children were particularly impacted by changes to the tax and welfare benefit systems and the introduction of a national minimum wage. The percentage of children living in households earning less than 60% of the median national income, or relative poverty, decreased from 27% in 1998 to 21% in 2005, with a smaller drop from 22% in 2008 to 18% in 2014. The latter drop was largely caused by a decline in median incomes as a result of the recession in 2008, not an increase in incomes for the least fortunate. From that point forward, child poverty targets were deserted. From 2014, child poverty rates started to increase and in 2020 came to 23%; Rates rise to 31% after housing costs.

United States of America (USA)

According to a new study, the number of children in America living in poverty jumped dramatically after just one month without the expanded child tax credit payments. Advocates worry that the delay in payments could undo what they see as significant progress in reducing poverty.

Columbia University's Center on Poverty and Social Policy estimates 3.7 million more children were living in poverty by January – a 41% increase from December, when families received their last check.

The Columbia study, which combines annual U.S. Census data with information from the Census Bureau's monthly Current Population Survey bulletins, found that the monthly child poverty rate increased from 12.1% in December to 17% in January. That's the highest level since December 2020, when the U.S. was grappling with high unemployment and a resurgence of COVID-19. Black and Latino children experienced the highest percentage point increases in poverty – 5.9% and 7.1% respectively.

India

Millions of Indian children live in extreme poverty, putting their lives, as well as the development of their bodies and minds, at risk. Global efforts have made significant progress toward combating child poverty in India and further financing will allow this success to continue.

India is one of the most populated countries in the world, with a population of 1.366 billion. Second only to China, with a population of 1.398 billion (a mere 2.3% greater), India alone accounts for more than 17% of the world's population. With a population of such magnitude, there are not enough resources to go around.

India has historically struggled with poverty, with 63.1% of its population living on less than \$1.90 a day in 1977. Since then, this number has diminished drastically to 22.5% in 2011 – but this still equates to an astounding 296 million people living in extreme poverty.

Children in India feel the burden of extreme poverty the most. They are the most likely to endure impoverishment and lose their lives due to poverty. Global efforts have made a substantial amount of progress in fighting child poverty, but child poverty is still not close to eradication. Here are six crucial facts about child poverty in India.

China

The SDGs, which aim to eradicate poverty in all its dimensions, are in good alignment with the recent announcement by the Chinese government that it wants to free 70 million people from poverty by 2020. Strategies for reducing poverty were previously connected to economic growth and development; however, with increased efforts on strengthening capacity, there is mounting accentuation on coordinated intercessions tending to various hardships and inconsistencies. China's pathway to address child poverty spans the whole policy spectrum from distinguishing, perceiving, and measuring child poverty to utilizing the proof to create, carry out, monitor, and resource relevant county child poverty plans.

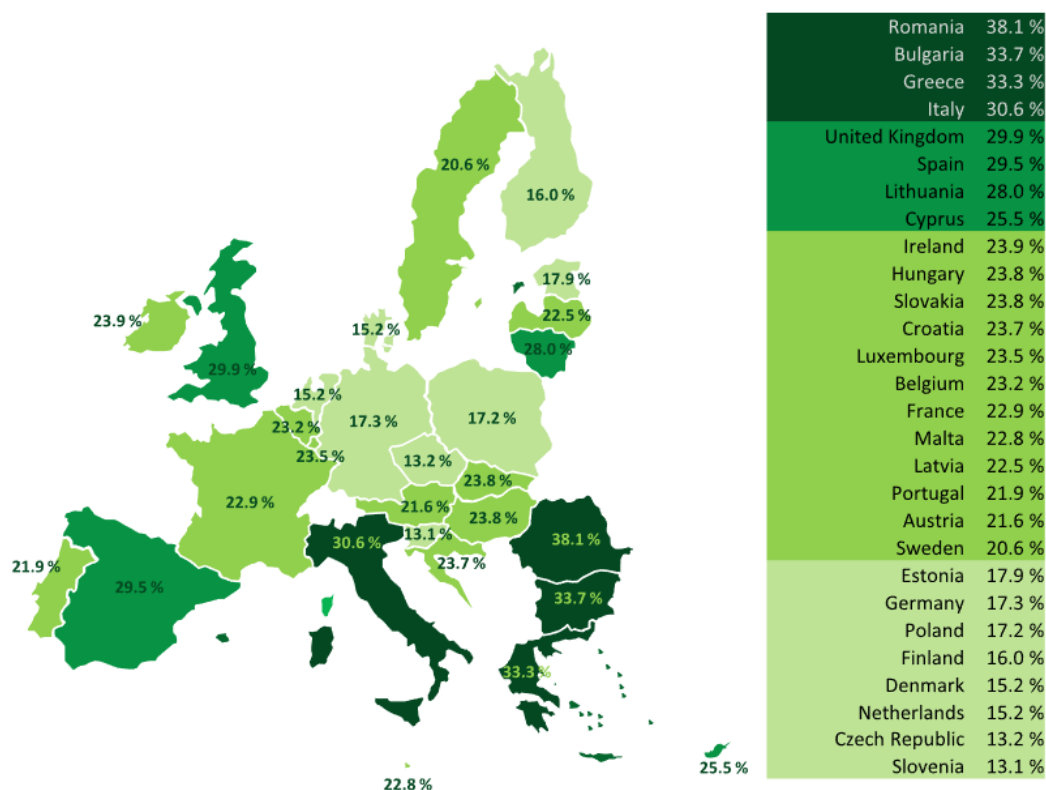
Africa

Extreme poverty leads to hunger in Africa: More than a quarter of the hungry in the world live on the African continent. One fifth of people living in Africa are considered malnourished. This gives the continent the highest rate of malnourished people worldwide. More than 30 percent of African children suffer from growth

disorders such as stunting due to their chronic malnutrition. This disease causes physical and mental underdevelopment in children. Sub-Saharan Africa is the region with the highest infant mortality. On average, one in 11 children dies before his fifth birthday. Three of the four countries with the highest infant mortality worldwide are on the African continent: Ethiopia, Nigeria, and Kenya. In addition to complications at birth and malnutrition, there are diseases such as pneumonia, diarrheal diseases, and malaria, which lead to the early death of many children. In sub-Saharan Africa, 59 million children between the ages of 5 and 17 work instead of playing and going to school. They fight poverty for their families. In Africa, every fifth child is cheated out of childhood and forced into child labor.

Europe

Percentage of Children at risk of poverty or social exclusion (AROPE) in the EU, in 2018



Source: ECA based on Eurostat data, extracted on 20.12.2019

The Europe 2020 strategy is centered on fighting poverty and social exclusion. The key to success in this setting is determining the factors that contribute to a group's vulnerability to poverty or social exclusion and identifying those groups.

Children in the EU are more likely than the rest of the population to experience poverty or social exclusion, according to ten-year statistics. For a competitive knowledge economy that is long-lasting and effective as well as for a society that is fair across generations, it is essential to focus on children and address the high rate of child poverty that currently exists. The economic benefits of investing in children significantly outweigh the financing costs of the investment.

World Vision

Started in 1950 when Bob Pierce helped one little girl, this organization now helps more than 3.5 million children in nearly 100 countries. They fight against child poverty through sponsorship programs, health and economic empowerment, child protection, disaster relief, education, and food security. World Vision uses a child sponsorship program where a sponsor's commitment helps the sponsored child and community overcome poverty. According to World Vision's reports, "Over a five-year period, 89% of the children who were severely malnourished in severe relief areas were treated and made a full recovery." Typically, sponsorship lasts 10-15 years.

Compassion International, Inc

This organization advocates for children and is the world's leading authority in holistic child development through sponsorship. They were founded in 1952 when Reverend Everett Swanson flew to South Korea. He was there to minister to American troops but felt compelled to help the orphans there reach their full potential. Together, Compassion and local churches provide whole life care – holistic, comprehensive care to help children "fully develop and become responsible, fulfilled adults."

Children enrolled in Compassion programs are 27-40% more likely to complete a secondary education, and 20% more likely to have a higher income as an adult. Compassion aims to fight child poverty through a direct partnership between a child and the sponsor. This is done by cultivating a meaningful relationship between the sponsored child and the sponsor through letter writing and emails. In 2019, more than 2.1 million children were sponsored. Today, in addition to child sponsorships, Compassion provides mother and baby care and health resources. They also work to

meet critical needs such as providing clean/sanitized water, treatment for HIV infection, access to medical treatment, and disaster relief in their efforts to fight child poverty.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Date	Description of Event
1989	World leaders made a historic commitment to the world's children by adopting the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child – an international agreement on childhood.
September 25 th 2015	The 193 countries of the UN General Assembly adopted the 2030 Development Agenda titled "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development". This agenda has 92 paragraphs. Paragraph 59 outlines the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and the associated 169 targets and 232 indicators.
1998, 2010, 2020	The Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action – the CCCs – are the core UNICEF policy and framework for humanitarian action. They are at the heart of their work on upholding the rights of children affected by humanitarian crises. The CCCs promote equality, transparency, responsibility, and a results-oriented approach to enable predictable and timely collective humanitarian action. The CCCs are grounded in global humanitarian norms and standards and set commitments and benchmarks against which UNICEF holds itself accountable for the coverage, quality, and equity of its humanitarian action and advocacy.

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

Global Coalition to End Child Poverty

In 2015 a diverse group of organizations came together to form the Global Coalition to End Child Poverty to work collectively for change. Its goal is to raise awareness about children living in poverty across the world, support global and

national action to alleviate it, and achieve a world where all children grow up free from poverty, deprivation, and exclusion.

UNICEF, the World Bank, and the European Union (EU)

In 2018, UNICEF and its partners (including the World Bank and European Union) contributed to the Region's poverty reduction efforts by:

- Supporting reinforced policies to tackle child poverty.
- Providing quality and accessible services for the most deprived children.
- Providing a minimum income for families with children.
- Ensuring that financial barriers do not stop children from reaching their full potential.

UNICEF's Social Monitor Report

UNICEF's Social Monitor report provides distinctive viewpoints on children's living conditions and vulnerability and has significantly contributed to the creation of economic and social policies and debates across the region. Moreover, it gathers data on trends and patterns of change in child poverty and the effects of social protection on children in 30 countries and territories. It highlights key challenges in the region in meeting the social protection needs of children.

UNICEF's Humanitarian Action for Children (HAC)

UNICEF's Humanitarian Action for Children (HAC) appeal provides conflict- and disaster-affected children with access to water, sanitation, nutrition, education, health, and protection services. In 2023, UNICEF's HAC appeal total requirement is US\$10.3 billion to assist more than one hundred and seventy three million vulnerable children and their families and caregivers around the world.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

A strong organizing team

Across all work on addressing child poverty, there is perhaps no question more important than who is involved and who leads in different aspects of child poverty work. One way of thinking through stakeholders who may be involved is to identify the

organizing team, build allies, and raise awareness about the issue. In many countries, a small core team of partners can play a crucial role in giving directions and focus to the work, and in organizing stakeholders, events, and analysis to help move the child poverty agenda forward. Leadership is of course important, and depending on context this group may be led by the government and include international organizations, local and/or international civil society organizations. The involvement of local researchers can be important both for immediate knowledge and impact and sustainability over time. Finally, it is of great importance that young people and their families, particularly those living in poverty, through Civil society organizations (CSOs) or other relevant mechanisms, fully understand the situation of child poverty and its solutions.

Major players in poverty measurement

Identifying the key actors in poverty measurement can help develop partnerships that can make an impact. While these actors will vary significantly by context, below is a shortlist of institutions that play a major role in many countries.

- National Statistics Office (NSO) is usually a government agency responsible for collecting, analyzing, publishing, and disseminating statistics relevant to the economy, population, and society. They will likely play the lead role in collecting poverty data and lead on SDG reporting. For existing poverty measures they should be able to disaggregate child poverty relatively easily from existing poverty measures. They also often conduct the census, family expenditure/income survey, and lead (or support) other household surveys, including Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS), Living Standards Measurement Surveys (LSMS), or Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS).
- Ministries of Finance and Planning: While actors across governments and outside use poverty analysis, Ministries of Finance and Planning often play leading roles in the analysis and reporting of poverty. Their support in building and using child poverty measures is often a crucial foundation for child poverty analysis to be owned and used.
- Independent and autonomous agencies: In some contexts, independent bodies are chosen to lead poverty measurement and help ensure the credibility

of results. In Mexico, for example, Congress endowed The National Council of Evaluation of Social Development Policy (CONEVAL) with a highly independent structure to minimize the potential for the government to misuse its power and report false information.

- The World Bank has been leading the work on monetary poverty analysis particularly in lower- and middle-income countries and provide rich resources on global monetary poverty measurement as well as country level reports on poverty analysis.
- UNDP developed a multidimensional poverty index (MPI) together with the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI). In many countries, both organizations publish a country brief on poverty, based on MPI. The global outlook is published in the Human Development Report annually.
- Civil society and research institutes play an important role in advocating to keep the poorest children and families central to the agenda. Interviews, stories, or qualitative studies of children living in poverty can shed light on the issue of child poverty and influence the government to establish a child poverty measure. For example, in countries without official measurement of child poverty, estimates by civil society organizations or local research institutions can help raise public awareness, which in turn puts pressure to support child poverty measurement.

Tackling social stigma and discrimination

Social stigma and discrimination are one of the most fundamental and often deeply rooted causes of child poverty. While forms of discrimination vary by country, examples of widely prevalent forms of discrimination that children experience are based on caste, ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation, HIV status, disability, refugee, and migrant status, among many other context-specific factors. Tackling society's stigma and behaviors can be a long, complex, and politically challenging process. But without tackling stigma and discrimination, marginalized children will continue to face deprivation and injustice and they will continue to grow up in poverty.

FURTHER READING

- “How to address and end child poverty”, UNICEF on YouTube <https://youtu.be/ygCQEAZRJg0?t=14>
- “7 facts about child poverty everyone should know”, UNICEF's site <https://www.unicef.ie/stories/7-facts-about-child-poverty-everyone-should-know/>
- “Child Poverty and Education: Why We Should Care” <https://www.yudabands.org/child-poverty/>

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"A world free from child poverty", UNICEF <https://www.unicef.org/reports/world-free-child-poverty>

"In Focus: Ending Child Poverty", UNICEF <https://www.unicef.org/eca/reports/focus-ending-child-poverty>

"Humanitarian Action for Children Appeal", UNICEF <https://www.unicef.org/appeals>