

# A POST-2015 WORLD FIT FOR CHILDREN

## ISSUE BRIEF: Monitoring, Follow Up and Review of the SDGs



### Why the monitoring, follow up and review of the SDGs is a critical component of the Post-2015 Agenda

Development is only *truly sustainable* if it is built around tackling climate change; fighting for every person to have a fair chance in life to fulfil their full potential; and supporting the well-being and resilience of people affected by conflict or living in fragile contexts. This is what the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aim to achieve, which can only be done through investments in the planet and in all people at the start of their lives – when they are children.

In order to measure progress on the SDGs, there must be robust monitoring activities established and implemented at local, national, regional and global levels. As part of this work, there will be a set of global indicators that will “be developed by the Inter Agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators, will be agreed by the UN Statistical Commission by March 2016 and adopted thereafter by the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly.”<sup>1</sup> As a contribution to this effort, UNICEF, together with different partners, is suggesting a core set of priority indicators<sup>2</sup> to monitor progress for children with respect to the SDGs. In addition, there are some key principles with respect to monitoring all Goals, Targets and Indicators.

### Why do we need indicators for children?

The well-being of children, girls as well as boys, is the “litmus test” for the health and future well-being of our societies and the planet. How our children are faring – in terms of their health and nutrition, their welfare and education, the environment in which they grow up – is a direct predictor of what the future will look like, and whether that future is bright or bleak. It is therefore critical that the well-being of children is systematically tracked by indicators that not only give an accurate picture of the life of a child today, but also provide a window into the future for all of us.<sup>3</sup>

Investing in all children and young people is central to achieving all aspects of sustainable development – and monitoring progress for children is crucial to know which investments to make. As stated in the SDGs’ Outcome Document, children are both *agents of change*<sup>4</sup> and *torch bearers for sustainable development*.<sup>5</sup> They therefore must be involved in the implementation and monitoring of the SDGs to effectively and sustainably complete the work of building a society in which every child can survive and thrive, learn and grow and have the opportunity to fulfill their full potential.

### Measuring equity gaps

Addressing inequalities and committing to the progressive reduction of equity gaps over time has been a major focus of the SDGs – as can be seen with the inclusion of Goal 10 *Reduce inequality within and among countries* – but also throughout the final outcome document, including the call for “quality, accessible, timely and reliable disaggregated data [that] will be needed to help with the measurement of progress and to ensure that no one is left behind.”<sup>6</sup> Tracking progress for different age, economic and social groups will require targeting and prioritizing the most disadvantaged people, so that all are enjoying progress and that inequalities between different groups are narrowing through levelling up rather than levelling down. Reducing inequalities will only be realized if this issue is adequately and explicitly addressed in the SDGs’ follow up and review activities.

This means that SDGs' monitoring must: 1) disaggregate data as appropriately applicable across all goals and targets; 2) apply universally; 3) be participatory; 4) be transparent.

## Disaggregate data by age, sex, disability status and other dimensions of inequality

As indicated in Target 17.18 of the SDGs' Outcome Document, indicators must be disaggregated – by **income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts.**<sup>7</sup> Disaggregated data are critical to developing and implementing policies that can improve the lives and futures of the most disadvantaged, marginalized and vulnerable children. Disaggregated data help us to see the children and communities that are being rendered invisible or left behind – so that programming and policy decisions can be deployed to improve the situation and help break down the vicious cycles that perpetuate intergenerational inequalities.

The SDGs' Outcome Document also states that, "Data and information from existing reporting mechanisms should be used where possible." For measuring the situation of children, there are many well-tracked indicators that have already been established – for example through the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) monitoring and other internationally agreed Member State commitments. The SDGs indicators' list should however not be confined only to data that is already being routinely collected, as there are many new issues that must be tracked as part of the new framework. It is equally important to measure issues where there is currently scant data and where well-established indicators do not presently exist. This will be critical if the SDGs are to be the transformative agenda they aspire to.

## Universality

Unlike their predecessor, the MDGs, the SDGs are universal and will be globally relevant for all children, no matter where that child is born. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) – the most widely ratified convention in existence – provides the normative framework for all children everywhere to get the best start in life, to survive and thrive, to receive a quality education and to live free from violence and abuse. Human and child rights are not constrained by national borders; therefore all countries are expected to commit to

pursuing the SDGs and their associated targets and indicators through national action.

## People's participation in follow up and review

Inclusivity and participation have been the hallmarks of the Post-2015 process (e.g. *My World Survey*, *World We Want 2015* consultations, etc) – resulting in "an Agenda of the people, by the people, and for the people."<sup>8</sup> Through the participatory nature of developing the SDGs, many Member States have recognized the importance and value of having civil society, together with concerned individuals of all ages and walks of life as active, as collaborating stakeholders. The SDGs' Outcome Document mandates, "A robust, voluntary, effective, participatory, transparent and integrated follow-up and review framework will make a vital contribution to implementation and will help countries to maximize and track progress in implementing this Agenda in order to ensure that no one is left behind."<sup>9</sup>

A participatory approach to the follow-up and review of development offers a sustainable model that empowers local actors to gain the capacity needed to ensure that continuing development efforts are sustainable long after funding and active interventions expire. There are many opportunities now and in the future to use lower cost, "real-time" and participatory approaches to monitor the SDGs, especially at local and national levels. For example, registering births via mobile phone, SMS messages to remind people on health issues (e.g. vaccination days, nutritional advice, etc) or getting constituency feedback on laws, policies or decisions via offline and online platforms. These people-generated data sources must serve as a complement to official data sources, as they can provide the critical *reality check* as to whether the SDGs are truly delivering on the ground.

## Transparency

The reliability and trustworthiness of data depends on transparent systems and reporting mechanisms. Without this, governments and other stakeholders will not be able to truly assess whether or not progress is actually being achieved. In the true spirit of the SDGs, government reporting must be transparent so that every stakeholder can be held accountable and understand the issues. Independent reporting must also be transparent so as to best complement official data collection efforts and inspire efficient policy responses and action towards full achievement.

## For more information

This document is a companion piece to the *A Post-2015 World Fit for Children Annex: Priority Indicators for Children*.

Available here: <http://www.unicef.org/post2015/files/PriorityIndicators.pdf>

Please see UNICEF's webpage on Children and the Post-2015 Development Agenda: <http://www.unicef.org/post2015/>

<sup>1</sup> Paragraph 75; <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/7891TRANSFORMING%20OUR%20WORLD.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Priority Indicators for Children; <http://www.unicef.org/post2015/files/PriorityIndicators.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Statement by the Government of Luxembourg on Behalf of 15 Members States of the Group of Friends on Children and SDGs; <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/13279luxembourg.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Para 51; <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/7891TRANSFORMING%20OUR%20WORLD.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Para 53; <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/7891TRANSFORMING%20OUR%20WORLD.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Para 48; <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/7891TRANSFORMING%20OUR%20WORLD.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Target 17.18; <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/7891TRANSFORMING%20OUR%20WORLD.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> Para 52; <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/7891TRANSFORMING%20OUR%20WORLD.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> Para 72; <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/7891TRANSFORMING%20OUR%20WORLD.pdf>