



BRIEFING NOTE #1

National and global monitoring of child-related SDG indicators

The 2030 Agenda

*Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*¹ was unanimously agreed by the 193 member states of the UN General Assembly in October 2015. The 2030 Agenda is a plan of action for people, planet and prosperity. Member states resolved to ‘end poverty in all its forms’, to take bold and transformative steps to ‘shift the world onto a sustainable and resilient path’, and to ensure that ‘no one will be left behind’. The 2030 Agenda establishes 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 global targets, relating to both development outcomes and means of implementation (Mol), designed to be integrated and indivisible and to balance the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. It further seeks to realise the human rights of all, and to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. This ambitious new universal agenda is intended to be implemented by all countries and all stakeholders, acting in collaborative partnership.

The UNICEF Strategic Plan for 2018-2021 is aligned with the 2030 Agenda and envisages a world in which all children are healthy and protected, live in a clean environment, learn and have a fair chance to succeed². It commits UNICEF to supporting member states to localise the SDGs by setting ambitious national targets relating to children, establishing systems to track progress in reducing inequality, and ensuring that ‘no child is left behind’. Among the 232 global SDG indicators, UNICEF has identified 35 that most directly concern children and will be the major focus of UNICEF’s efforts to monitor and report on ‘progress for every child’ during the SDG era³. These include 17 global SDG indicators for which UNICEF has been identified as the official custodian or co-custodian for the purposes of global reporting which are discussed in more detail in subsequent briefing notes.

SDG follow up and review

The 2030 Agenda emphasises that governments have primary responsibility for ‘follow up and review’ of progress towards the SDG goals and targets at national, regional and global levels. It encourages Member States to set their own national targets and to establish regular and inclusive review processes and highlights the need for ‘high quality, accessible, timely and reliable disaggregated data’ to measure progress. The UN Development Group has published guidelines for UN country teams on mainstreaming the 2030 agenda, tailoring SDG targets to national context, and country reporting on the SDGs⁴. A number of different modalities are envisaged for SDG follow up and review, including:

1. **Voluntary National Reporting**⁵ - regular country-led and country-driven reviews of progress at the national and sub-national levels.
2. **Thematic reporting** – periodic reviews by international agencies, UN commissions and expert panels focused on specific cross-cutting issues related to the 2030 Agenda.
3. **Regional reporting** – periodic reviews by regional intergovernmental bodies to promote cooperation, peer review and exchange of lessons on SDG implementation⁶.
4. **Global reporting** – reviews by the UN system including the following mandated reports: annual Secretary General’s SDG Progress Report, annual Inter-Agency Task Force Report on Financing for Development, and quadrennial Global Sustainable Development Report on the science-policy interface.

The **High Level Political Forum**⁷ is the main global platform on Sustainable Development and has a central role in the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda. It meets annually under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council and every four years under the auspices of the UN General Assembly and adopts political declarations. The theme of each HLPF, and subset of goals to be reviewed, is agreed in advance. Member states are selected to present national reports which are reviewed together with reports and contributions from other major stakeholders.

1 United Nations (2015) *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/70/1, 21 October 2015: http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1&Lang=E

2 UNICEF (2018) Strategic Plan 2018-2021: https://www.unicef.org/publications/index_102552.html

3 UNICEF (2018) Progress for every child in the SDG era: <https://data.unicef.org/resources/progress-for-every-child-2018/>

4 <https://undg.org/2030-agenda/mainstreaming-2030-agenda/>

5 <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/vnrs/>

6 <http://www.regionalcommissions.org/regional-forums-on-sustainable-development/>

7 <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf>



The global SDG indicator framework

The 2030 agenda mandated the UN Statistical Commission (UNSC) to define global indicators for tracking the SDG goals and targets. The Statistical Commission has established an Inter-Agency & Expert Group on SDG Indicators⁸ (IAEG-SDG) 'to develop and implement the global indicator framework for the goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda'. The IAEG comprises a rotating membership of 28 member states⁹ representing all regions of the world, with regional and international agencies as observers. UN Statistical Division acts as the secretariat and coordinates inputs from the UN system. The official list of global SDG indicators¹⁰ was approved by the Statistical Commission in March 2017, and subsequently adopted by the General Assembly in July 2017¹¹. The UNGA resolution states that the indicator framework will be refined annually and reviewed comprehensively by the Statistical Commission in 2020 and 2025, and that it will be complemented by regional and national indicators which will be developed by Member States.

The IAEG meets twice each year to review progress and challenges associated with implementing the global indicator framework. It has classified the 232 global indicators based on methodological development and data availability¹². Tier I indicators have established methods and standards and data available for at least 50% of the global population and 50% of countries. Tier II indicators have established methods and standards but data are not regularly produced by countries. Tier III indicators are those for which methods and standards are being developed. At each meeting the IAEG reviews progress made in collecting and reporting on the global SDG indicators and considers proposals for further technical refinements.

The IAEG has also established three working groups to address Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange (SDMX)¹³, Geo-spatial Information¹⁴, and Interlinkages¹⁵. The global indicator framework states that 'indicators should be disaggregated, where relevant, by income, sex, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability and geographic location, or other characteristics, in accordance with the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics'. The IAEG has established a dedicated work stream on disaggregation and requested UN agencies to provide support in operationalising this commitment to 'leave no one behind'.

The UNICEF Data & Analytics Section has been actively involved in providing technical support and advice to the IAEG-SDG on the development, collection, analysis and reporting of child-related SDG indicators at national and global levels and calling for a stronger focus on disaggregation.

Global data custodians

The IAEG-SDG has identified 'custodian agencies' for each of the 232 global SDG indicators which are expected to:

1. Lead the development of methods and standards for data collection,
2. Contribute to statistical capacity building and data collection,
3. Establish mechanisms for compilation and verification of national data,
4. Maintain global databases and provide internationally comparable estimates to UN Statistical Division for inclusion in the SDG global database.

UNICEF is well established in the role of global custodian of data for children. The IAEG has identified UNICEF as custodian or co-custodian for 17 global SDG indicators (Table 1) and it has also been listed as a supporting agency for a number of other indicators in the global framework. Each of these indicators is discussed in detail in subsequent briefing notes #2-15 (see Table 1).

The IAEG is developing guidelines for global data flows and reporting which seek to formalise engagement between national authorities and international agencies, and to establish principles for instances where data from national statistical systems do not meet international comparability and quality standards or are not available. In cases where international agencies make estimates based on national data, or adjust national data to make them comparable, they are expected to provide national statistical authorities with an opportunity to review country-specific estimates of SDG indicators prior to their publication.

UNICEF is committed to supporting member states to develop, collect, analyse and report on SDG indicators related to children and consulting with national authorities on data and estimates used for the purposes of global reporting. In addition to the 17 global SDG indicators for which UNICEF is custodian or co-custodian, UNICEF supports the collection and reporting of a wide range of other child-related indicators relevant for monitoring progress at national, regional and global levels (see below).

8 <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/iaeg-sdgs/>

9 <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/iaeg-sdgs/members/>

10 <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/indicators-list/>

11 <https://undocs.org/A/RES/71/313>

12 <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/iaeg-sdgs/tier-classification/>

13 <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/files/Working-Group-ToR--SDMX.pdf>

14 <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/files/Working-Group-ToR--GeoSpatial.pdf>

15 <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/files/Working-Group-ToR--Interlinkages.pdf>



Table 1: UNICEF is custodian or co-custodian for 17 SDG global indicators (highlighted in bold)

SDG GLOBAL INDICATOR ¹⁶	UNICEF SDG INDICATOR BRIEFING NOTE
1.2.1 National poverty line	Briefing note #2 Child poverty
1.2.2 Multi-dimensional poverty	Briefing note #2 Child poverty
2.2.1 Stunting	Briefing note #3 Nutritional status
2.2.2 Wasting/overweight	Briefing note #3 Nutritional status
3.1.1 Maternal mortality	Briefing note #4 Maternal mortality and skilled attendant at birth
3.1.2 Skilled attendant at birth	Briefing note #4 Maternal mortality and skilled attendant at birth
3.2.1 Under-five mortality	Briefing note #5 Child mortality
3.2.2 Neonatal mortality	Briefing note #5 Child mortality
3.8.1 Universal health coverage	Briefing note #6 Universal health coverage
3.b.1 Full vaccination coverage	Briefing note #6 Universal health coverage
4.1.1 Early learning	Briefing note #7 Learning
4.2.1 Early childhood development	Briefing note #8 Early childhood development
5.2.1 Sexual violence by intimate partner	Briefing note #9 Violence against girls and women
5.2.2 Sexual violence by non-intimate partner	Briefing note #9 Violence against girls and women
5.3.1 Early marriage	Briefing note #10 Harmful practices
5.3.2 FGM/C	Briefing note #10 Harmful practices
6.1.1 Safely managed drinking water	Briefing note #11 Drinking water
6.2.1 Safely managed sanitation and hygiene	Briefing note #12 Sanitation and hygiene
8.7.1 Child labour	Briefing note #13 Child labour
16.2.1 Child discipline	Briefing note #14 Abuse, exploitation and violence
16.2.3 Sexual violence against children	Briefing note #14 Abuse, exploitation and violence
16.9.1 Birth registration	Briefing note #15 Birth registration

Supporting national target setting and monitoring

The 2030 Agenda states that the SDG targets are ‘global in nature and universally applicable, taking into account different national realities, capacities and levels of development and respecting national policies and priorities’¹⁷. Global targets are therefore considered aspirational, with each Government setting its own national targets ‘guided by the global level of ambition but taking account of national circumstances’. It encourages Member States to develop as soon as possible ambitious national responses to the overall implementation of this Agenda. Specifically it calls on each government to: a) decide how the SDGs should be incorporated into national planning processes, policies and strategies; b) set their own national targets guided by the global level of ambition, but taking into account national circumstances; and c) in the implementation of the Agenda build on existing commitments and in accordance with international human rights standards for the benefit of all¹⁸.

UNICEF is committed to supporting Member States to localise the global SDG targets and to set appropriately ambitious national targets that take account of specific needs and priorities for children and available capacities and resources in each country context. This forms part of a coordinated effort by UN agencies to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda at country level through Mainstreaming, Acceleration and Policy Support (MAPS)¹⁹. Support needs to be tailored according to context but typical steps include:

1. Reviewing the baseline situation and recent trends (based on existing national data sources and other relevant evidence).
2. Reviewing national targets and indicator frameworks (taking into account the SDGs and other international agreed targets and indicators relating to children)
3. Identification and prioritization of major issues facing children in a given country context (reviewing the specific nature, magnitude and linkages between different challenges faced)
4. Developing nationally appropriate targets and specific measures to be taken (linked to periodic reviews of policies, plans or strategies at national or sub-national level)
5. Defining national indicators and mechanisms for national data collection (promoting global SDG indicators and other priority indicators for children and supporting data collection)
6. Supporting regular and inclusive review processes to assess progress and course correct (compiling and analyzing data and supporting rigorous and participatory review processes to inform decision making at national and sub-national level)

¹⁷ United Nations (2015) Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/70/1, 21 October 2015 (Paragraph 59).

¹⁸ <https://undg.org/2030-agenda/mainstreaming-2030-agenda/tailoring-sdg-to-national-context/>

¹⁹ <https://undg.org/document/maps-mainstreaming-acceleration-and-policy-support-for-the-2030-agenda/>

¹⁶ UNICEF uses short hand for ease of communication. See official list: <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/indicators-list/>



In all cases the localisation of global SDG targets and indicators within national policies, plans and strategies requires an in-depth analysis of existing national data to determine the baseline and identify data gaps. National targets should be time bound, with clearly defined indicators and national sources of data to be used to quantify progress. Operational definitions should be developed for key concepts such as 'universal', and the most relevant types of data disaggregation should be clearly identified. Where national standards, for example for service coverage or health outcomes, differ from international standards these should also be clearly specified to inform comparison across countries. Specific concerns relating to measurement and monitoring of individual child-related indicators are discussed in briefing notes #2-15.

UNICEF support to monitoring progress for children in 2030 agenda

UNICEF's support to monitoring SDGs related to children is based on its mandate in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) to work with Member States in monitoring the progressive realization of child rights. Legitimacy also comes from UNICEF's activities in more than 190 countries including support to governments and development partners in every region to collect, analyse and use data to inform policies and programmes designed to save lives and help children realize their full potential. UNICEF has established extensive global databases and is committed to supporting Member States to monitor progress for children in the 2030 Agenda by developing and testing new indicators and methods and supporting their collection and analysis to inform national and global monitoring of progress for every child.

UNICEF has played a leading role in the development of new standards and data collection methods for monitoring child well-being. Many of the measurement techniques developed by UNICEF and its partners during the MDG period have now been integrated within the SDG global indicator framework. These are discussed in more detail in subsequent briefing notes relating to specific SDG targets and indicators and include: enhanced methods for estimating child mortality based on limited data, techniques for integrating data household survey and administrative data to estimate immunisation coverage, new household survey modules on child discipline, ECD, child and adult functioning, child learning assessments, water quality testing and migratory status, and new methods for measuring multi-dimensional child poverty.

UNICEF also supports the collection and analysis of a wide range of data relating to children beyond SDG indicators, including through government surveys and censuses, administrative and regulatory data, and participatory reporting by service users and citizens including parents, adolescents and children. Over the past 20 years, the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey programme has systematically built the capacity of national statistical authorities around the world to collect child-related data. UNICEF also actively supports the development of censuses and administrative data sources, including civil registration and vital statistics systems and sectoral management information systems.

UNICEF has a strong track record of working in partnership with other agencies to support both government and non-government partners to collect robust data and conduct rigorous analysis of critical indicators of child health and welfare. Continued support will be critical to consolidate the gains made to date and to enable national authorities and development partners to respond to new and increasing demands for data.

Monitoring progress for every child in the SDG era

As stated above, related to the 232 global SDG indicators, UNICEF has identified 35 that most directly concern children and will be the major focus of UNICEF's efforts to monitor and report on 'progress for every child' during the SDG era²⁰. These include the 17 global SDG indicators for which UNICEF has been identified as the official custodian or co-custodian for the purposes of global reporting which are discussed in more detail in subsequent briefing notes.

The relation of child-related indicators to official SDG indicators is complicated. There are SDG indicators which have a broad scope, but UNICEF wants to measure the child-related elements (e.g. UNICEF monitors child poverty, but the SDG indicator is for poverty disaggregated by age. Other indicators are composite, which UNICEF breaks into separate indicators (such e.g. HIV infections for children under five, and for teens – the formal SDG indicator lumps these together). So the 35 child-related global SDG indicators can be further, separated and disaggregated to highlight the children's issues.

Of those 35, how many are UNICEF Strategic Plan indicators? For how many is UNICEF custodian (or co-custodian)? How many are collected in MICS? The answers are in the following diagram.



Resources

- SDG website: <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/>
- IAEG website: <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/iaeg-sdgs/>
- UNDG website: <https://undg.org/2030-agenda/>
- UNICEF data: <https://data.unicef.org/>
- Countdown 2030: <http://countdown2030.org/>

²⁰ UNICEF (2018) Progress for every child in the SDG era: <https://data.unicef.org/resources/progress-for-every-child-2018/>