Goal 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels

Target 16.9: By 2030, provide legal identity for all, including birth registration

Indicator 16.9.1: Proportion of children under 5 years of age whose births have been registered with a civil authority, by age

Institutional information

Organization(s):

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

Concepts and definitions

Definition:

Proportion of children under 5 years of age whose births have been registered with a civil authority.

Concepts:

- **Birth registration**: Birth registration is defined as ‘the continuous, permanent and universal recording, within the civil registry, of the occurrence and characteristics of births in accordance with the legal requirements of a country’.
- **Birth certificate**: A birth certificate is a vital record that documents the birth of a child. The term ‘birth certificate’ can refer either to the original document certifying the circumstances of the birth, or to a certified copy or representation of the registration of that birth, depending on the practices of the country issuing the certificate.
- **Civil authority**: Official authorized to register the occurrence of a vital event and to record the required details.

Rationale:

Registering children at birth is the first step in securing their recognition before the law, safeguarding their rights, and ensuring that any violation of these rights does not go unnoticed.

Children without official identification documents may be denied health care or education. Later in life, the lack of such documentation can mean that a child may enter into marriage or the labour market, or be conscripted into the armed forces, before the legal age. In adulthood, birth certificates may be required to obtain social assistance or a job in the formal sector, to buy or prove the right to inherit property, to vote and to obtain a passport.

Children’s right to a name and nationality is enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) under Article 7.

Comments and limitations:

The number of children who have acquired their right to a legal identity is collected mainly through censuses, civil registration systems and household surveys. Civil registration systems that are functioning effectively compile vital statistics that are used to compare the estimated total number of births in a country with the absolute number of registered births during a given period. However, the systematic recording of births in many countries remains a serious challenge. In the absence of reliable administrative data, household surveys have become a key source of data to monitor levels and trends in birth registration. In most low- and middle-income countries, such surveys represent the sole source of this information.

Data from household surveys like MICS or DHS sometimes refer only to children with a birth certificate. UNICEF methodically notes this difference when publishing country-level estimates for global SDG monitoring.

Methodology

Computation method:

Number of children under age of five whose births are reported as being registered with the relevant national civil authorities divided by the total number of children under the age of five in the population multiplied by 100.

Treatment of missing values:

- ***At country level:***

When data for a country are entirely missing, UNICEF does not publish any country-level estimate

- ***At regional and global levels:***

The regional average is applied to those countries within the region with missing values for the purposes of calculating regional aggregates only, but are not published as country-level estimates. Regional aggregates are only published when at least 50 per cent of the regional population for the relevant age group are covered by the available data.

The global aggregate is a weighted average of all the SDG sub-regional aggregates that make up the world.

Regional aggregates:

Regional aggregates are weighted averages of all the countries within the region

Sources of discrepancies:

Nationally produced data are not adjusted or recalculated.

Methods and guidance available to countries for the compilation of the data at the national level:

Substantial differences can exist between CRVS coverage and birth registration levels as captured by household surveys. The differences are primarily because data from CRVS typically refer to the

percentage of all births that have been registered (often within a specific timeframe) whereas household surveys often represent the percentage of children under age five whose births are registered. The latter (the level of registration among children under 5) is specified in the SDG indicator.

Quality assurance:

UNICEF maintains the global database on birth registration that is used for SDG and other official reporting. Before the inclusion of any data point in the database, it is reviewed by technical focal points at UNICEF headquarters to check for consistency and overall data quality. This review is based on a set of objective criteria to ensure that only the most recent and reliable information are included in the databases. These criteria include the following: data sources must include proper documentation; data values must be representative at the national population level; data are collected using an appropriate methodology (e.g., sampling); data values are based on a sufficiently large sample; data conform to the standard indicator definition including age group and concepts, to the extent possible; data are plausible based on trends and consistency with previously published/reported estimates for the indicator.

As of 2018, UNICEF launched a new country consultation process with national authorities on selected SDG indicators, which place strong emphasis on technical rigour, country ownership and use of official data and statistics. The consultation process solicited feedback directly from National Statistical Offices, as well as other government agencies responsible for official statistics, on the compilation of the indicators, including the data sources used, and the application of internationally agreed definitions, classification and methodologies to the data from that source. Once reviewed, feedback is made available to countries on whether or not specific data points are accepted, and if not, the reasons why. More details on the consultation process can be found in the child-related global SDG indicators it is custodian or co-custodian to meet emerging standards and guidelines on data flows for global reporting of guidance note.

Data sources

Description:

Censuses, household surveys such as MICS and DHS and national civil registration systems.

Civil registration systems:

Civil registration systems that are functioning effectively compile vital statistics that are used to compare the estimated total number of births in a country with the absolute number of registered births during a given period. These data normally refer to live births that were registered within a year or the legal time frame for registration applicable in the country.

Household or other population-based surveys:

In the absence of reliable administrative data, household surveys have become a key source of data to monitor levels and trends in birth registration. The standard indicator used in DHS and MICS to report on birth registration refers to the percentage of children under age 5 (0-59 months) with a birth certificate, regardless of whether or not it was seen by the interviewer, or whose birth was reported as registered with civil authorities at the time of survey. Depending on the country, surveys collecting these data may be conducted every 3-5 years, or possibly at more frequent intervals.

Censuses can also provide data on children who have acquired their right to a legal identity. However, censuses are conducted only every ten years (in most countries) and are therefore not well-suited for routine monitoring.

Collection process:

UNICEF undertakes a wide consultative process of compiling and assessing data from national sources for the purposes of updating its global databases on the situation of children.

Up until 2017, the mechanism UNICEF used to collaborate with national authorities on ensuring data quality and international comparability on key indicators of relevance to children was known as Country Data Reporting on the Indicators for the Goals (CRING).

As of 2018, UNICEF undertakes an annual consultation with government authorities on 10 of the child-related SDG indicators in its role of sole or joint custodian, and in line with its global monitoring mandate and normative commitments to advancing the 2030 Agenda for children. This includes indicator 16.9.1. More details on the process for the country consultation are outlined below.

Data availability

Description:

Nationally representative and comparable data are currently available for around 170 countries

Time series:

Not available

Disaggregation:

Sex, age, income, place of residence, geographic location

Calendar

Data collection:

UNICEF will undertake an annual country consultation likely between December and January every year to allow for review and processing of the feedback received in order to meet global SDG reporting deadlines.

Data release:

June 2019.

Data providers

National Statistical Offices (for the most part) and line ministries/other government agencies responsible for maintaining national vital registration systems

Data compilers

Name:

UNICEF

Description:

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

References

URL:

www.data.unicef.org

References:

http://data.unicef.org/child-protection/birth-registration.html

Related indicators as of February 2020