

However, despite the urgency and the availability of proven approaches to both measure and respond to child poverty, children have received relatively little attention in the global struggle against poverty. The Sustainable Development Goals offer a tremendous opportunity to change this. Goal 1 on eradicating extreme poverty is crucial for children, and for the first time there is an explicit commitment that all countries measure child poverty and strengthen policies and programmes to meet the child poverty reduction goal by 2030 (see Box 1).

Given the diversity of contexts in which children live, there is no simple universal approach to implement the SDGs on child poverty. Rather this guide aims to lay out approaches that have worked and build on global best practices to provide support and ideas in establishing child poverty as a national priority.

## BOX 1

## The Sustainable Development Goals and child poverty: an obligation and an opportunity

With the global agreement on the SDGs including children in the targets and indicators, there is now a global mandate for reporting on child poverty and ending extreme child poverty and halving poverty of children by national definitions by 2030. This requires member states to report on progress on reducing poverty of children, and creates an opportunity for stakeholders engaged in the fight against child poverty to engage in national processes to achieve this goal.

### Goal 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere

**Target 1.1:** By 2030, eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere, currently measured as people living on less than \$1.25 a day.

**Indicator:** Proportion of population below the international poverty line disaggregated by sex, age group, employment status and geographic location.

**Target 1.2:** By 2030, reduce at least by half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions.

**Indicator 1:** Proportion of population living below the national poverty line, disaggregated by sex and age group.

**Indicator 2:** Proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions.

**Target 1.3:** Implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030, achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable.

**Indicator 1:** Percentage of the population covered by social protection floors/systems, disaggregated by sex, and distinguishing children, the unemployed, the elderly, people with disabilities, pregnant women/newborns, work injury victims, the poor and the vulnerable.

## What is child poverty?

Intuitively people have a strong understanding of what child poverty is, and yet details and definitions can vary in different contexts. Listening to children is crucial in building an understanding and foundation of what child poverty really means. Children's perspectives of course vary (see, for example, Box 3.2 in Milestone 3), but in engaging with children about poverty some common threads emerge:

- **For children, poverty is about more than money.** Children experience poverty as being deprived in the immediate aspects of their lives, areas including nutrition, health, water, education, protection and shelter.
- **While these multiple dimensions of poverty and deprivation are of vital importance to children, income or monetary poverty also matters.** A family's standard of living is one of the crucial determinants of the deprivations children experience.
- **Finally, living in relative poverty can also matter to children – and this may be particularly relevant in richer countries.** Even when not clearly deprived in absolute terms, having a lower standard of living or poorer opportunities in education, health or nutrition compared to their peers limits their future life chances.

Through the SDGs, Member States of the United Nations can reflect upon the importance of these perspectives, focusing on both monetary poverty and children living in poverty “in all its dimensions according to national definitions”. With national definitions of child poverty paramount, this guide aims to share information and approaches to understanding child poverty to support national decision making, but does not suggest a one size fits all approach.



## Why a focus on child poverty matters

If you are reading this guide, the importance of prioritizing children living in poverty may be self-evident. But while across almost all political spectrums the idea of all children having an equal chance in life is broadly supported, with many competing national priorities, not everyone shares a view that child poverty should receive priority focus. The arguments to prioritize child poverty, outlined in detail in Milestone 1, include:

### 1. Children are more likely to live in poverty

The last three decades have seen unprecedented progress in reducing poverty, showing what can be achieved. Despite this, children are vastly overrepresented among the world's poorest people. While children make up around a third of the population of developing countries, they make up half (50%) of those living in income poverty: that's 385 million children.

Further, these measures of extreme poverty understate the problem. Large numbers of children living in households with incomes above \$1.90 a day still experience poverty according to national definitions or are deprived of the minimum basic needs and services they need to survive, develop and thrive.

Global numbers on children living in multidimensional poverty are currently less available than for child monetary poverty, but with around 1.6 billion adults living in multidimensional poverty, the number of children living in multi-dimensional poverty is extremely high. Regional numbers for multidimensional poverty in childhood are emerging, and in sub-Saharan Africa, for example, around two thirds of children (almost 250 million) experience two or more deprivations of multidimensional poverty.

Finally, it cannot be stressed enough that child poverty is a global issue and not just one in lower-income countries. Too many children lack the minimum material standards they need in the world's richest countries. In a review of child well-being across 35 industrialized countries, UNICEF found that approximately 30 million children — one child out of every eight across the OECD — are growing up in poverty.

### 2. Child poverty does long-term damage to children and societies

Poverty is different for children than for adults. Poverty in childhood, both multidimensional and income poverty, can have especially devastating and lifelong effects. The impacts of child poverty can be understood in the following ways (for more details see Milestone 1):

- **Poverty is a violation of a child's rights.** As enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, children have a right to an adequate standard of living, and to be free from deprivations across crucial aspects of their

