

Media Update

13 September 2023

UNICEF

PRESS RELEASE

Children bearing brunt of stalled progress on extreme poverty reduction worldwide – UNICEF, World Bank

333 million children globally survive on less than US\$2.15 a day as new analysis reveals three lost years due to COVID-19

Multimedia content available to download [here](#).

NEW YORK/WASHINGTON D.C., 13 September 2023 – An estimated 333 million children globally – or 1 in 6 – live in extreme poverty, according to new UNICEF-World Bank analysis released today.

[Global Trends in Child Monetary Poverty According to International Poverty Lines](#) – which for the first time looks at trends in extreme child poverty – finds that while the number of children living on less than US\$2.15 a day decreased from 383 million to 333 million (or 13 per cent) between 2013 and 2022, the economic impact of COVID-19 led to three lost years of progress, or 30 million fewer children than projected in the absence of COVID-19-related disruptions.

The analysis – released ahead of High-level Week of the United Nations General Assembly (18 – 22 September), when global leaders will, among other things, meet to discuss the mid-point of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – warns that, at current rates of reduction, the SDG goal of ending extreme child poverty by 2030 will not be met.

“Seven years ago, the world made a promise to end extreme child poverty by 2030. We have made progress, showing that with the right investments and will, there is a way to lift millions of children out of what is often a vicious cycle of poverty,” said UNICEF Executive Director Catherine Russell. “But

compounding crises, from the impacts of COVID-19, conflict, climate change and economic shocks, have stalled progress, and left millions of children in extreme poverty. We cannot fail these children now. Ending child poverty is a policy choice. Efforts must be redoubled to ensure that all children have access to essential services, including education, nutrition, health care and social protection, while addressing the root causes of extreme poverty.”

According to the report, Sub-Saharan Africa carries the highest burden of children – 40 per cent – living in extreme poverty, and accounts for the largest share increase in the last decade, jumping from 54.8 per cent in 2013 to 71.1 per cent in 2022. Rapid population growth, limited social protection measures, and challenging global trends including COVID-19, conflict, and climate-related disasters, have resulted in the steep increase. Meanwhile, all other regions in the world have seen a steady decline in extreme poverty rates, with the exception of the Middle East and North Africa.

Globally, children comprise more than 50 per cent of the extreme poor, despite making up only a third of the global population. Children are more than twice as likely as adults – 15.8 per cent versus 6.6 per cent – to live in extremely poor households, lacking the food, sanitation, shelter, health care, and education they need to survive and thrive.

“A world where 333 million children live in extreme poverty -- deprived not only of basic needs but also dignity, opportunity or hope -- is simply intolerable,” said World Bank Global Director for Poverty and Equity Luis-Felipe Lopez-Calva. “It is more critical than ever that all children have a clear pathway out of poverty – through equitable access to quality education, nutrition, health, and social protection, as well as safety and security. This report should be a stark reminder that we have no time to lose in the fight against poverty and inequality, and that children must be foremost in our efforts.”

The most vulnerable children – such as those living in rural settings and children living in households where the head has little or no education – are significantly more affected by extreme poverty. According to the report, an estimated 1 in 3 children in countries affected by conflict and fragility live in extremely poor households, compared to 1 in 10 in non-fragile states.

To end extreme poverty and offset the pandemic backslide, UNICEF and the World Bank are calling on governments and partners to:

- Ensure a continued focus on children living in extreme poverty in lower middle- and low-income countries and fragile contexts.
- Prioritize agendas aimed at tackling child poverty, including expanding social protection coverage for children to reach those living in extremely poor households.
- Design public policy portfolios to reach large households, and those with young children and in rural areas. Investing in early childhood has proven one of the most effective ways to break intergenerational persistence of poverty, bringing positive returns to individuals, families and societies.
- Increase access to universal child benefits as a proven effective measure in reducing child poverty.
- Design inclusive social protection programmes, taking into account disability and gender-specific needs.

###

Notes to Editors

The *Global Trends in Child Monetary Poverty According to International Poverty Lines* analysis builds on a similar exercise conducted in 2020 to examine child poverty. The analysis contains records from 10.4 million individuals from 147 countries, taken from the 2022 spring version of the Global Monitoring Database (GMD) with 2019 as a base year. The GMD is a collection of globally harmonized household survey data compiled by the Data for Goals group of the World Bank's Poverty and Equity Global Practice.

Poverty estimates for 2020, 2021 and 2022 have been “nowcasted”—that is, gross domestic product (GDP) growth rates have been used to forecast household incomes, assuming all households experience equal consumption growth in percentage terms.

The international poverty lines were updated in 2022. The three poverty lines are:
\$2.15 (extreme poverty), \$3.65 (lower middle income) and \$6.85 (upper middle income).

Approximately 333 million children globally survive on less than US\$2.15 a day, 829 million children subsist below a poverty line of US\$3.65, and 1.43 billion children are living on less than US\$6.85 a day.

For further information, please contact:

Nadia Samie-Jacobs, UNICEF, New York, +1 845 760 2615,
nsamie@unicef.org

Paul Clare, World Bank, Washington, +1 703 870 1674,
pclare@worldbank.org

About UNICEF

UNICEF works in some of the world's toughest places, to reach the world's most disadvantaged children. Across more than 190 countries and territories, we work for every child, everywhere, to build a better world for everyone.

For more information about UNICEF and its work for children visit

www.unicef.org

Follow UNICEF on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [YouTube](#)

About World Bank

The World Bank provides financing, global knowledge, and long-term commitment to help low- and middle-income countries end poverty, achieve sustainable growth, and invest in opportunity for all. We comprise the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), the world's largest development bank, and the International Development Association (IDA), one of the largest sources of funding for the world's poorest countries. With the other World Bank institutions, as well as partners across the public and private sectors, we are helping build solutions to the global challenges of the 21st century in all major sectors of development. A world where no one lives in poverty and everyone has the opportunity for a better life is within our reach.