

## UNICEF Inputs to the 2024 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF)

Theme: “Reinforcing the 2030 Agenda and eradicating poverty in times of multiple crises: the effective delivery of sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions”

**Chapeau:** *It is clear that we cannot achieve any of the SDGs without making progress for children.* Decision-makers must act swiftly and decisively to uphold their obligations to fulfil children’s rights to get the world back on track towards meeting the 2030 goals.

- **The children of today will determine the planet of tomorrow.** Putting child rights at the centre of the 2030 Agenda will accelerate and sustain equitable results **for all societies.**
- SDG acceleration requires ambitious yet realistic implementation at the national level based on country context and must be driven by political commitment to **change the arc of implementation** via investments and partnerships.
- Knowledge and evidence production and their use **for the most vulnerable** is essential for rapid progress as quality data to guide action and track progress at the country level is required **to leave no one behind.**

*Much more needs to be done to mobilize sufficient domestic and external, public and private resources (including innovative and alternative financing) and ensure governments are directing these investments to help children as the key priority*

### 1) Impacts of multiple crises on the implementation of SDGs 1 (No Poverty), 2 (Zero Hunger), 13 (Climate Action), 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions) and 17 (Partnerships for the Goals) from the vantage point of your intergovernmental body.

- Children are among the most affected by poly-crises, facing heightened risks of violence, displacement, malnutrition, disrupted education, and limited access to healthcare and social services. The long-lasting consequences of these adversities and deprivations can perpetuate cycles of poverty, inequality, and marginalization. [At the height of the COVID-19 pandemic the number of children in multidimensional poverty increased by 15 per cent to 1.2 billion.](#) Today, 333 million children live in extreme poverty, struggling to survive on less than \$2.15 a day, as [three years of poverty reduction were lost due to the pandemic.](#)
- The world is in the throes of [the highest number of violent conflicts since the Second World War.](#) This grim reality has left more than [460 million children living in or fleeing from conflict](#) and susceptible to unthinkable adversities such as enslavement, trafficking, abuse, and exploitation. Moreover, many of these children find themselves in a state of limbo, without official immigration status, education, or healthcare. [No country or region is ‘immune’ to violence against children. Every five minutes, somewhere on our planet, violence takes the life of another child. Every year, at least 1 billion children – half of the world’s children – suffer violence.](#)
- Women and children are those most adversely impacted by food insecurity situations and the climate crisis and the war in Ukraine has introduced additional complexities: disrupting food supply chains leading to soaring food prices and food shortages for the poorest and most vulnerable as well as driving up the price of responsive and therapeutic foods. Almost 200 million children under five are still affected by undernutrition of which approximately 45 million children are suffering from wasting, a life-threatening form of malnutrition. Malnutrition and hunger undercut progress across many SDGs especially 3 on universal health for all, and 4 on quality education. Malnourished children are far more likely to die before their fifth birthday and malnourished, hungry children cannot learn.
- The climate crisis is a child rights emergency. It is having profound impacts on children across the globe, threatening decades of progress in areas such as health, education, equality, and poverty reduction. Nearly half of all children worldwide, amounting to a staggering 1 billion, inhabit countries extremely vulnerable to climate impacts. This crisis is also altering disease and agricultural patterns: over 600 million children are at a heightened risk of vector-borne diseases like malaria, dengue and yellow fever, chikungunya, and zika. The increasingly unpredictable patterns of drought, famine, flooding and forced migration are altering access to food and water sources increasing malnutrition, wasting, cholera and insecurity – affecting vulnerable populations such as children and pregnant women. In 2022, it was estimated that natural disasters cost countries \$270 billion in damages, and more than half of those losses were not insured. Furthermore, it is projected that the annual climate adaptation gap may reach as high as US\$140-300 billion by 2030. Broader reforms are needed to shield government debts from the effects of

climate shocks, mitigate losses and damage, and to enable countries to invest in climate adaptation and resilience which are squarely aligned with children's interests.

- Underinvestment in children today is partially due to constraints on government expenditure resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, debt, and climate crises. Many governments borrowed money during the pandemic to support their populations and IFIs even assisted highly indebted countries to avoid imposing a choice between a debt crisis and a public health crisis. However, even pre-pandemic, 1 in 8 Member States – particularly lower income countries – were spending more on debt servicing than on education, health and social protection combined. Sadly, debt service is the only area of government spending that has risen as a proportion of overall spending in the last five years. However, even when presented with evidence (e.g. [adaptive social protection](#)) the global response is woefully inadequate (e.g. only 2.4 per cent of climate finance from key multilateral climate funds support projects incorporating child-responsive activities).

**2) Three key areas where sustainable, resilient, and innovative solutions for achieving the SDGs are being effectively delivered, especially related to the cluster of SDGs under review in 2024, bearing in mind the three dimensions of sustainable development and the interlinkages across the Goals and targets.**

**Prioritizing the wellbeing of children is not just an ethical imperative but a foundation for sustainable national growth.** High-level political commitment at the country level plays a pivotal role in ensuring children's issues remain a top priority. When influential stakeholders at the national level, especially politicians, champion child-centric causes the visibility and urgency of these issues is amplified, and national and international investments are driven accordingly.

- **Creation, strengthening, and enforcement of robust policies designed to promote and protect children's rights requires political will in addition to funding.** [There are numerous country-level examples across a range of income and humanitarian-development contexts that have been able to make progress on child-related SDGs.](#)
  - To date, the gains that could be achieved by adoption of whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches<sup>i</sup> have not been achieved due to siloing and projectization of financing and implementation. **Policies and programmes must act in synergy across the life stages from birth to adolescence so that positive actions in one sector are amplified by positive action in other sectors<sup>ii</sup>.** For example, early learning and responsive caregiving in early childhood are more likely to improve learning outcomes in later life if children are well-nourished and have access to quality education.
  - **Localizing the SDGs or bringing SDG implementation to the subnational and local level will address key child right violations such as multi-dimensional poverty and inequality.** The full realization of children's rights, the reduction of child poverty, and the achievement of the SDGs requires coordinated action between national, subnational, and local structures, including governments and multiple other actors. At least 105 of the 169 targets underlying the 17 SDGs will not be reached without proper engagement and co-ordination with subnational and local governments. Mobilizing, empowering, and supporting local stakeholders in advancing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development will result in strong local systems and institutions, delivering equitable social services and scale innovations to accelerate result for children, including the furthest left behind.
  - While there is no standard template for success, shock responsive and inclusive social protection systems are proven effective policy tools for drastically reducing child poverty and improving children's access to education, health, and adequate nutrition.
- **The multifaceted nature of challenges affecting children's wellbeing necessitates a collaborative approach.** Unity, built on shared goals and diverse expertise, ensures a comprehensive and multi-pronged strategy, maximizing the chances of creating a world where every child has the opportunity to flourish. Broad coalitions and partnerships across diverse stakeholders, including governments, NGOs, civil society, the private sector, and international bodies, with clear plans, budgets and accountability mechanisms are invaluable in accelerating towards key goals.
- **Equity-focused and gender responsive<sup>iii iv</sup> actions can have exponential impact across the life-course.** Identifying children at greater risk of deprivation and gender discrimination and tailoring the design of policies and programmes to meet the specific needs of these children including monitoring and evaluating the impact of these initiatives can greatly accelerate SDG focused actions and change the arc of implementation across multiple SDGs.

### 3) Examples of specific actions, policies and measures that are most urgently needed to effectively deliver sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions to eradicate poverty and reinforce the 2030 Agenda, building on interlinkages and transformative pathways for achieving the SDGs.

- **Making Finance Systems deliver the SDGs and Children's Rights.** Embracing Financing for Development that integrates public and private financing sources, both domestic and international, should be considered a key strategy to effectively achieve the SDGs. At the heart of this vision lies the acknowledgment that public expenditure, predominantly from domestic sources, serves as the foundational pillar for sustainable SDG financing in developing countries. This approach underscores the critical role of strategic mobilization of government revenue, ensuring allocation are aligned to accelerated achievement of SDG targets, and the efficient utilization of these resources. Through such concerted efforts, governments are empowered to foster human capital development and significantly enhance the inclusivity and quality of a continuum of social services, from early childhood to adulthood. However, the broader picture reveals a compelling need to transcend beyond traditional financing mechanisms. In this context, the role of international cooperation becomes paramount, facilitating support through concessional loans and grants to bolster the fiscal capacities of low- and lower-middle-income countries amidst fiscal constraints and recurrent shocks. Moreover, as recognized in the *SDG Stimulus*, the FFD vision advocates for sustainable debt restructuring and, where necessary, debt relief for the poorest countries facing or at high risk of debt distress. This approach not only aims to bridge immediate financial shortfalls but also to forge a resilient and sustainable financial architecture that leverages the synergies between public and private, domestic and international financial flows. By doing so, it aspires to create an enabling environment that accelerates progress towards the SDGs, with a particular focus on uplifting the most vulnerable segments of society and ensuring no one is left behind. Additional details in UNICEF's report [Too Little, Too Late](#).
- Lessons learned from past disasters and recovery processes underline the **continued need to enhance the preparedness and resilience of communities, systems, and services**. Investing in resilience helps prevent and curtail economic, environmental, and human losses in the event of a crisis, thereby reducing human suffering and protecting development gains. **A resilience lens** helps those who are most marginalized, ensuring that no one is left behind on the path towards sustainable development. The integration of a **risk-informed approach** into routine programming strengthens national systems and builds resilience to shocks and stresses by identifying and addressing root causes and drivers of risk. For this, it is paramount to invest in both social and productive resilient infrastructure and services. Schools, health and nutrition centers and WASH services, including the population using and the personnel managing them must withstand natural and man-made hazards and remain functional at all times.
- **Early investments in children's well-being matter.** There is overwhelming evidence that early investments in children's wellbeing meaningfully contribute to achieving the SDGs. However, funding for social sectors – early childhood development, nutrition, health, and social protection -- continues to be insufficient and, when faced with fiscal crises, is at high risk of further cuts. A good start to life for every child is increasingly urgent in a world where many millions of infants and young children are exposed to multiple interacting deprivations<sup>v</sup>. Investments in early childhood are one of the most cost-effective ways to protect child rights and achieve more sustainable growth. As children transition to the school-age years, early gains must be maintained and reinforced while their evolving needs and vulnerabilities are addressed. Adolescence provides a second chance to tackle inequalities and shape the future, particularly among children who faced severe deprivations or rights violations during the early years<sup>vii</sup>. To cut through inter-generational cycles of inequity and increase sustainable development – social services that are benefitting children should be last in line for cuts to critical investments.
- Countries and the international community must continue to **collaborate to bridge the data gaps** that currently hinder our understanding of children's wellbeing and our capacity to monitor progress effectively. Enabled with comprehensive and up-to-date data, countries will be better equipped to adjust national strategies as needed, scaling up successful interventions and redirecting resources where they are most impactful.

### 4) Follow-up actions and measures being undertaken by your intergovernmental body or forum to support implementation of the Political Declaration of the SDG Summit.

- UNICEF has consistently aligned its programmatic work with the SDGs since their adoption. Our 2022-2025 Strategic Plan is the second to fully integrate the SDGs and SDG indicators into our corporate results framework. UNICEF closely follows 35 SDG indicators to ensure that our programmes for children – across health, nutrition, education,

social protection, climate, and WASH – are supporting country-level progress towards achieving the SDGs in alignment with the Political declaration of the SDG Summit.

- UNICEF is encouraging a paradigm shift towards investing in child-centric institutions and infrastructure and transitioning away from project-based grants to large-scale, predictable financing. The importance of this integrated approach can be observed, for example, in the eighty-six countries using the Integrated National Finance Framework approach to address gaps between planning and financing systems and strengthen the sustainable finance architecture at the national level.
- One of the complex challenges impacting the rights and wellbeing of children is an invisible yet pivotal issue: data gaps. Reliable and actionable data play a central role in addressing issues communities face. The data gap for children is particularly acute as among the 47 SDG indicators relating to child health, wellbeing, and rights only 17 have enough data available for reliable monitoring. Across more than 190 countries approximately 50% of the 47 child-related indicators do not have any data. UNICEF has played a vital role in "**closing data gaps.**" As a custodian for 19 SDG indicators, UNICEF is supporting Governments worldwide to collect and analyze high-quality SDG data on children (including through the Multiple Indicators Cluster Survey (MICS) which supports 38 SDGs) and filling in essential data gaps related to child marriage, early learning, and water quality. Together, we have made commendable progress in making these data available to monitor and report SDG progress.
- UNICEF's evaluation of approaches to social protection programming in humanitarian situations recommends investing in building shock responsive social protection systems in countries. It states, "irrespective of the nature of the shock, strong shock responsive social protection systems have been evidenced as key to setting the stage for the effective and efficient use of cash through social protection systems as it allows for a reduction in duplication, while simultaneously enhancing national capacity, the coverage of needs, as well as the adequacy, comprehensiveness, and timeliness". ***UNICEF is supporting strengthening and preparing national social protection systems*** to support the needs of crisis-affected children, with encouraging results. The number of countries with nascent/low readiness to respond to crises fell to 39 in 2022 from 54 in 2021, whereas the number of countries with moderate readiness grew from 68 to 78 over the same period. Progressing to strong readiness, however, is slower and more challenging: while it was hoped to build up to 20 countries with strong shock-responsive systems by 2022, it was only 18 up from 17 in 2021. This reflects the challenges in strengthening the shock-responsiveness of social protection systems – and the critical need to continue working in this area.
- From our research during COVID-19, we also know that diverse approaches are needed to reach children in all contexts. [The Comprehensive School Safety Framework](#) supports the education sector policymakers, planners, school administrators, and their partners to promote child rights, sustainability, and resilience in the education sector. The framework provides a comprehensive approach to resilience and safety from all hazards and all risks confronting education and child protection sector populations, systems, and programmes. It supports access, quality, and management strategies in the education sector. It is supported by the global alliance for disaster risk reduction in Education (GADRRRES) a global partnership that strengthens co-ordination on risk reduction education and safety. UNICEF and UNESCO have also launched "Gateways to Public Digital Learning", a flagship initiative from the 2022 Transforming Education Summit to support governments in building accessible and high quality national digital learning platforms and content, and therefore ensuring education continuity by making digital learning available to all children. UNICEF and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) are collaborating via the [global GIGA initiative](#) to connect every school to the internet.

## 5) Recommendations and key messages for inclusion into the Ministerial Declaration of the 2024 HLPF.

### Chapeau

Improving children's well-being is not only an ethical imperative but of critical importance to building the human capital needed for sustained growth and progress toward equitable, efficient, and just societies. The United Nations Secretary-General recently called for a centralization of children within sustainable development policies, **recognizing child rights as a fundamental pillar in achieving the SDGs**. The needed framework focuses on five core areas: political commitment, matching ambition with action, financing systems, knowledge and evidence, and a commitment towards a livable planet, thereby creating an environment that enables the transformation of solutions from intentions to tangible, large-scale results for children. ***Engendering widespread commitment to child rights can be achieved by embedding child-centric actions focused on accelerating towards the SDGs in national strategies and legislation as a road map for long-lasting change.*** This will support rectification of systemic issues such as lack of access to safe water, inadequate

sanitation, poor nutrition, food insecurity and weak health systems ensures a resilient future for every child. Shared learning, co-ordinated efforts and pooled resources can also greatly shape the national and global commitment to children's rights but cannot be done without dramatically increasing investments in the adaptation and resilience of social services that children depend on for their health and well-being. This will require:

### ***Match ambition with action (All SDGs)***

The SDGs present an ambitious and multifaceted agenda for improving child well-being. Realizing this agenda will require countries to set and work towards contextualized national targets, while accounting for local realities.

- Local action should begin via a national, objective assessment of the current status across all SDG areas, being conscious of data gaps. National and subnational targets can then be defined through an inclusive process of consultations. Targets must consider technical capacities, policy and governance constraints, availability of disaggregated data for monitoring, and realistic projections of financing. Feasibility assessments will also be an important source of information for planning and resource mobilization.
- Localization of global targets, contextualized and adapted to local realities will help break down goals into easily achievable actions through to stretch targets in a holistic manner - comprehensive yet realistic road maps. These should include policy reforms, resource mobilization strategies, multisectoral co-ordination mechanisms and capacity building of implementation systems at national and subnational levels.
- Independent technical advice can also help match ambitions to implementable actions grounded in local knowledge.
- The thread of international cooperation can also help tie all these elements together, strengthening their collective impact on child rights.

### ***Prioritize knowledge and evidence for children. (HII for Data)***

Achieving the SDGs will require more than addressing the sectoral, supply-driven and immediate issues faced by children and their communities. Governments must design and implement policies that take into account deeply entrenched and sensitive determinants such as cultural and social norms, power structures, markets dynamics, gender roles, socialization processes and societal divides. In this context, a body of high-quality evidence will play a fundamental role in leading our understanding of the multiple societal challenges affecting children and will also play a leading role in shaping policies and driving action.

- Strong partnerships and collaboration among stakeholders to facilitate data sharing, learning and improved data use can transform and accelerate SDG progress for children.
- Building high-quality evidence will also require leveraging insights from behavioural science, enhancing our capacity to use human-centered approaches to investigate and respond to challenges.
- Innovative approaches and partnerships have the potential to support this process, helping countries to be ahead of the curve with cutting-edge solutions at scale.

### ***Make financing systems work to accelerate progress (SDG 1)***

Achieving the ambition of the SDGs hinges on the capacity of financial systems to adapt and evolve. Effective investments in children across sectors such as health, education and nutrition generate high economic and social returns. Comprehensive, multisectoral approaches are needed, however, to minimize fragmentation across these sectors and to facilitate enhanced domestic financing. Evolution of financial systems to put child rights at the center and multiply the positive impact on child well-being will require:

- Recognition of the most pressing challenges faced by children, adolescents and youth and prioritization of resources directed towards programmes designed to address these.
- Extensive collaboration from governments, civil society and the private sector manifested by concrete budget allocations, efficient financing strategies and absorption of innovative funding sources.
- Alignment of financial strategies with global agendas such as climate change and responsible business practices
- Exploration of innovative domestic and international financing options underscored by the principles of results-based financing, emphasizing equity and effectiveness, and improving coherence of investments in cross-cutting areas like child protection and gender equality.
- Inbuilt protection for social sector investments via up front investments in resilience and risk-mitigation to withstand crises.

## Ending hunger and the triple threat of malnutrition (SDG 2)

While mal- and under- nutrition are undercutting achievement of multiple SDGs including affecting 100s of millions of children, there is also the growing epidemic of overweight and obesity now affecting almost 400 million children and adolescents (0 to 19 years). This **double burden** of malnutrition is largely driven by a **double failure** of food systems. On one hand, food systems are failing to provide children with sufficient, affordable, nutritious foods, contributing to high levels of undernutrition. Girls and women remain especially vulnerable, with more than one billion adolescent girls and women suffering from undernutrition, deficiencies, and anemia, and zero to small declines in prevalence of underweight since 2000. On the other hand, children are increasingly exposed to aggressive offer of unhealthy food products, very high in sugar, salt, fats, and other harmful ingredients that contribute to high levels of obesity, which continue to increase. It is imperative that we undertake investments in doing away with malnutrition and hunger—including efforts to build resilient and sustainable food systems. In its strategy to transform food systems for children, UNICEF has identified 3 key action areas, with high potential for impact:

1. **Improving children's foods and diets**, through actions in public policy, guidelines and standards, and food supply chains – including diversified agricultural investments, fortified foods, food supplements and therapeutic foods for children.
2. **Improving children's food environments**, including the places where children live, learn, eat and meet, through actions in public sector policies and programmes and in private sector practices, products and supply chains.
3. **Improving children's especially girls' feeding practices**, through policies, strategies and programmes that promote positive individual behaviours, caregiver practices and social norms.

**Key public policies with proven effectiveness to transform food environments** include: i) fiscal policies (increased taxation of unhealthy foods and beverages, and increased incentives on healthy foods); nutrition warning labels on packaged foods, understandable to children, clearly indicating the presence of harmful ingredients; iii) regulation of marketing of unhealthy food products directed to children, in all spaces; iv) transformation of school environments, to regulate the offer, sale and marketing of unhealthy food products inside and outside schools. Producers and suppliers need to ensure that food systems deliver nutritious, safe, affordable, and sustainable food options for children and that their actions – including food production, distribution, labelling, marketing, and retailing – are aligned with national policies and in the best interests of children right to nutrition.

**Bolder global leadership is needed.** We must ensure that the policies, practices, and products of all stakeholders in food systems are aligned with children's right to nutritious food, nutrition, health, clean water, and a sustainable planet. Governments have primary accountability for upholding the right to food and nutrition for their children. Governments must establish public policies that are aligned with children's best interests including looking at social protection measures that support access to food for the poorest and most vulnerable children, their families, and communities. Tackling child hunger and accelerating progress towards SDG 2 will require investments in preventing conflict, peacebuilding and securing the nutritious diets, essential nutrition services, and positive feeding and care practices that children need to survive, grow, and develop to their full potential is the pathway to reducing child food poverty and malnutrition, and safeguarding the prosperity of nations.

## Strengthen commitment towards building a livable planet for every child. (SDG 13)

Environmental harms disproportionately affect children's health and development. Building a livable planet for every child will necessitate robust strategies focused on sustainable development and greater flows of climate finance into child-focused social sectors. Integrating emergency preparedness, disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation into local planning and budgeting systems fosters climate resilience. Strengthening the resilience of the economically and socially vulnerable – particularly against climate-related hazards, shocks and stresses – is integral to this mission. Efficient, effective, and equitable child-focused social spending can reduce underlying vulnerabilities and support a greener, more sustainable economy. This will require:

- Accelerating the reduction of harmful greenhouse gas emissions to safeguard current and future generations of children. The only long-term solution to protect children from the climate crisis is to reduce emissions – primarily by ending the burning of fossil fuels and transitioning to clean, secure energy. Developed economies – especially the major emitters – must reach net zero emissions as close to 2040 as possible and support emerging economies. They must support emerging economies with know-how and climate finance to hit their 2050 targets. This will prevent the worsening of the climate crisis for children and young people.

- Aligning development and humanitarian approaches to protect children before, during and after disasters. This work requires an emphasis on early warning systems, rapid response and financing mechanisms that provide quick resources when and where they are needed most. It also requires building schools and health-care centres to be climate and disaster resilient as standard practice before a disaster and prioritizing low-carbon and environmentally sustainable approaches during recovery. These approaches must rely on data systems and policies that work with governments and communities across development and disaster management to identify and prioritize the most vulnerable children and the services they need.
- Empowering children and young people to lead the call for change and equip them with the tools to help lead the way to a just and equitable transition. Children and young people are both critical stakeholders and essential voices in the public debate on climate action. Foundational for long-term change is educating children and young people throughout their lives on climate threats, providing them opportunities to craft solutions to change course, giving them a stake in plans and policy outcomes, and empowering them to take action. Investments must include a commitment to educate children and young people on climate change, sustainability and disaster risk reduction inside and outside the classroom. Early involvement in environmental education can help young people understand the urgency of the issues, the consequences of inaction and their power to use their voices to change outcomes.
- Following through on climate financing commitments that are equal to the global goals and aspirations. Climate financing is drastically inadequate and fails to prioritize children who will endure the most severe climate change impacts. Pledges to double climate finance must be honored, and then increased. Funding for adaptation must be drastically scaled-up to at least US\$100 billion annually, with clear mandates to prioritize strengthening child-focused social services. These mandates must be accompanied by monitoring systems that connect financial flows with results for children.
- Reducing inequity and promoting resilience necessitates increased investments in essential social services, including water and sanitation, health, education and nutrition to strengthen children's adaptive capacity to climate impacts and withstand shocks.
- Addressing the major contributors to greenhouse gas emissions, such as fossil fuel use for energy and transport, via urgent shifts towards clean energy and environmentally sustainable infrastructure.
- Fulfilment of ambitious international agreements via the greening of supply chains and reduction of environmental footprints.
- Mitigation of environmental threats like air pollution, contamination of drinking water, inadequate sanitation and unsafe housing which are undermining progress in child health and development.
- Enhancing physical and mental health for children via efficient urban planning that promotes public transport, active transport opportunities, green spaces and safe public areas.
- Recognition of children as agents of change. This will require that they are not only included in discussions but also equipped with reliable, continuous information.

Additional details in UNICEF's report "[Children need urgent action on climate change](#)".

#### [Fragile setting where public institutions will not be able to deliver \(SDG 16\)](#)

It is vital that financing solutions address the rights of the most vulnerable groups, including women and children, and particularly their rights to sexual and reproductive health and the right to education, social protection, health, and other services. The United Nations mandate guides its actions to adapt, strengthen and implement crisis-sensitive sustainable financing efforts including supporting countries to adopt approaches that strengthen the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. This includes exploring financing solutions beyond ODA, such as innovative financing, improving inclusive coordination mechanisms and generating evidence on investment impacts. It also includes strengthening partnerships with civil society at national and grassroots levels to foster more inclusive processes and institutions.

The United Nations aims to strengthen the capacities of governments to build inclusive and resilient national systems and processes following the principles of "leave no one behind". The United Nations system can continue to build national institutional capacity to access and effectively manage increasingly diverse sources of financing and build new partnerships. This is imperative to ensure inclusive and sustainable national institutions that do not require ongoing United Nations system support, particularly considering declining resources and rising needs.

Six recommendations for more sustainable solutions to financing social spending in humanitarian emergencies include:

- Increasing the volume of finance available to low-and middle-income countries – including ODA, climate finance and development lending, as well as establishing more equitable and affordable access to financial markets
- Scaling up climate adaptation and mitigation efforts through humanitarian response, in line with the 2016 recommendations of the UN High Level Panel on Humanitarian Financing
- The harmonisation of donor support - integrating humanitarian, development, and climate finance - to reduce silos and projectization of SDG acceleration actions and policies.
- Enhanced support to governments in low- and middle-income countries to strengthen their public finance systems, improve their capacity to absorb shocks, and provide a rapid response to humanitarian need.
- Greater knowledge-building on pre-arranged financing for humanitarian emergencies, focusing on risk transfer mechanisms to establish early response and preparedness.
- Speeding up the development of, and financing for, shock responsive social protection systems, in order to enhance the resilience of vulnerable populations in low-and middle-income countries.

#### Building political commitment at the national level and via broad national coalitions (SDG 17, Partnerships)

- National leadership influencing public and policy discourses towards engagement in building a future that respects and promotes child rights is pivotal.
- Ensuring the finance systems are aligned and fit for purpose, so that financial resources towards sectors critical to children's lives, such as education, health, social services and social protection are appropriately allocated and efficiently utilized. The true commitment of leaders to the wellbeing of children is measured by how much resources they allocate to their protection, survival, learning, development, and resilience. This will begin with integration of children's issues into national development plans, medium term expenditure plans and annual budgets.
- Stimulate changes in societal attitudes and behaviours by enacting legislative measures. Laws that combat child labour and child marriage, ensure education for all and safeguard health and welfare support carving out a nurturing environment for children to thrive.
- Engagement of diverse stakeholders – from businesses to community groups – can have a direct, positive impact on children's issues at a grassroots level, serving as a powerful instrument of change and engraving a nation's commitment to children's rights within the social fabric.
- Implementing a robust monitoring and reporting system is a necessity to ensure accountability. Regularly tracking and publicly sharing the progress made towards SDGs not only ensures transparency but also keeps child rights at the forefront of public and political discussions. Such persistent evaluation plays a crucial role in shaping the necessary conditions for the realization of child rights.
- **Strong national leadership and ownership focused on our greatest investment – our children – can bring about cohesion, collaboration and cooperation across multiple stakeholders including international actors and investments.**

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<sup>i</sup> World Health Organization (2018). *The Life-Course Approach: From Theory to Practice. Case Stories from Two Small Countries in Europe*. WHO Regional Office for Europe, Geneva.

<sup>ii</sup> World Health Organization (2018). *The Life-Course Approach: From Theory to Practice. Case Stories from Two Small Countries in Europe*. WHO Regional Office for Europe, Geneva.

<sup>iii</sup> World Health Organization (2018). *The Life-Course Approach: From Theory to Practice. Case Stories from Two Small Countries in Europe*. WHO Regional Office for Europe, Geneva.

<sup>iv</sup> United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). Early Childhood Development. UNICEF Vision for Every Child. UNICEF, New York, 2023

<sup>v</sup> World Health Organization, United Nations Children's Fund, & World Bank Group (2018). *Nurturing Care for Early Childhood Development: a Framework for Helping Children Survive and Thrive to Transform Health and Human Potential*. WHO, Geneva.

<sup>vi</sup> United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). Early Childhood Development. UNICEF Vision for Every Child. UNICEF, New York, 2023.

<sup>vii</sup> United Nations Children's Fund (2011). *The State of the World's Children 2011. Investing in adolescents for breaking the cycles of poverty and inequity*. UNICEF, New York.