

*Addressing Inclusion  
Among Children & Adolescents  
Living in Poverty*



In partnership with:

## ADVOCACY BRIEF – November 2018

### This brief proposes that:

- Even though extreme poverty has decreased over the last quarter century, with a recent slowdown due to change in regional composition of the poor, the persistence of extreme inequality and exclusion represents a critical challenge that must be addressed by public policy
- Since inclusion underlines many Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), its measurement is critical for the monitoring of the SDGs. Reducing inequality and ensuring inclusion of children and adolescents should be a central issue on the policy agenda.
- Many children are not counted in currently available statistics. Statistical experts and child advocacy organizations must find a way to include “invisible children” in their measurements as a critical step in promoting their access to basic services and fulfillment of their rights
- The many places and situations in which children and adolescents are exposed to violence must not be accepted or naturalized. On the contrary, governments, civil organizations and human rights advocates should address violence and work to prevent it, especially in the juvenile justice system and at school.
- Children and adolescents can be the motor for change and for reducing violence against them. Youth participation can make a real difference and have a positive impact, not only within youth but also on society as a whole.

### Overview

---

Equity for Children, together with Comparative Research Program on Poverty (CROP) Bergen University, UNICEF, SOS Children’s Villages, and ChildFund Alliance, developed the international conference “*Addressing Inclusion Among Children & Adolescents Living in Poverty: Progress Toward Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)*”, which took place on October 11<sup>th</sup>, 2018 at The New School.

Approximately 100 advocates, field practitioners, scholars and students gathered for discussions with a panel of experts from top child advocacy organizations. Statistical specialists and economists proposed ways to include “non-visible” children, who are not counted in standard surveys. Policy recommendations about violence against children were formulated by a panel of child protection experts who advocated for youth participation in the prevention of violence.

The conference made a concrete contribution to understanding, defining, measuring and addressing social inclusion and violence prevention within the context of the SDGs

It demonstrated the paramount importance of placing children first on United Nation’s 2030 Agenda, since social exclusion and poverty have a stronger impact on children and adolescents than they do on adults.

This advocacy brief summarizes the main ideas and recommendations proposed by the panelists. It is a tool for mobilizing the efforts of organizations toward effective policies to end child poverty and ensure social inclusion.

Panelists in a session about “invisible children” and how to include them were Tara Vishwanath, Lead Economist and Global Lead, Poverty and Equity Practice, from the World Bank; Shane M. Khan, Household Survey Specialist – Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, UNICEF; Richard Pichler, Specialist Representative for External Affairs and Resources, SOS Children’s Villages; and Enrique Delamonica, Social and Economic Policy Advisor for Latin America and the Caribbean, UNICEF.

Prevention of violence against children and adolescents through youth participation, programs and policies was discussed during another session. Panelists included Stephen Blight, Senior advisor on violence against children, UNICEF; Annette Lyth, Special Assistant to the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, United Nations; Jorge Menendez Rheineck, Country Director Paraguay, ChildFund Alliance; and Chris De Neubourg, Professor of Public Policy and Management at TIAS School for Business & Society.

Mary Watson, Executive Dean at The New School of Public Engagement, and Sakiko Fukuda-Parr, Director of the Julien J. Studley Graduate Programs in International Affairs at The New School, each stressed the importance of addressing inequality as a significant problem between and within countries. Equity for Children Executive Director Alberto Minujin and Alberto Cimadamore, Scientific Director of CROP, closed the event by leading a conversation about opportunities and challenges related to inclusion of children and adolescents living in poverty.

### About Equity for Children

Equity for Children develops actions and transformational processes to improve child well-being through the dissemination of original research, the creation of spaces where multiple stakeholders can discuss cutting edge issues and concepts and through advocacy with decision-makers. We promote innovative political actions and build effective solutions that guarantee the well-being and the rights of children and teenagers. We are committed to collaboration in order to make the Agenda 2030 a reality.

### Framing the issue

---

Ensuring the inclusion of children is essential to meaningful progress. Not only do children account for a third of the world’s population, and almost half the population in least-developed countries, but also they are most vulnerable to disease, malnutrition, violence and basic rights violations. Children, lacking personal resources to know, protect and assert their basic rights, are more than twice as likely as adults to live in extreme poverty.

Our partners within the Global Coalition to End Child Poverty stress that the lack of access to nutrition, education, health and protection diminish impoverished children’s prospects to

survive and thrive as adults. Poor children will not only not succeed themselves, but they will also be much more likely to perpetuate the cycle of poverty and transmit it to generations in the future. The inequality of access to basic well-being and opportunity, among children living in poverty, constitutes a human rights violation and legally binds signatory states of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989).

Our team at Equity for Children, in collaboration with the vital work of partner organizations, is committed to raising awareness, promoting professional and academic research and supporting global and national initiatives to tackle inequality among children and adolescents living in poverty.

We also emphasize the key role community leaders, journalists, politicians, businesses, civil society advocates and individuals can take to address this issue. One of the most critical factors in addressing and eradicating child poverty is gaining the knowledge necessary to account for everyone. Another is studying the impact of programs and policies.

To gain additional knowledge, we must advocate the use of quantitative and qualitative methods to measure multidimensional poverty and gain a fuller understanding of the lived experience of affected children. Researchers must continue to develop innovative strategies that include children who live so far from the mainstream that statistical data about poverty fails to capture them.

### **The Global Coalition to End Child Poverty**

Is a global initiative focused on raising awareness about children living in poverty across the world and supporting global and national action to alleviate it. Members work together as part of the Coalition, as well as individually, to achieve a world where all children grow up free from poverty, deprivation and exclusion. Equity for Children is one of its founding members.

### **Advocating for more inclusiveness and ending violence against children and adolescents**

Panelists at the October 11<sup>th</sup>, 2018 conference stressed the challenges that statistical experts, child advocates and policy makers should address in order to measure inclusion and count “invisible children”, as well as to prevent violence against children and adolescents.

### **Measuring inclusion to effect change**

- Measuring is not a mere theoretical exercise. It is also a way to achieve concrete change by efficiently informing policymakers about ways to allocate public child funding expenditures. For example, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the SDGs call on governments to strengthen monitoring of vulnerable children and to improve children’s outcomes and life chances through evidence-based policy making. Evaluation of policy and program effectiveness, and the extent to which goals have been achieved, can be made much easier through measurement.
- One of the struggles that practitioners and academics face regarding measuring inclusion is the lack of a standardized definition of the term. Some people synthesize a definition of

inclusion with the expression “no one must be left behind”. Others define it as a process of operationalizing rights and make them effective. Still others say that the concept of inclusion is a political term. The SDGs, for instance, lack a definition of inclusion. A discussion about how to measure goals and targets that refer to inclusion, therefore, becomes increasingly difficult.

- Whenever facing the opportunity to measure something new and different, statistical experts suggest formulating the questions: *“What do you really need to measure? Why do you need to measure? If you had the data, would that promote meaningful change in a child’s life?”*
- Regarding measuring tools, household surveys have improved to increase the scope and coverage of complex household surveys. They now cover consumption and income data at the household level and individual data on education, health and labor market outcomes and on social protection. They support measurement of monetary and non-monetary measures of welfare and provide a base to examine the distributional impact of structural and social policies. However, statistical experts recognize that there is still work to be done in order to include “invisible populations” who are not covered currently by household surveys.

### Counting “invisible children”

- There are children who are not covered by the most common measuring tools. Examples include children in institutions, children without parental care, refugees, boys and girls recruited by the army, those in boarding school and homeless children. Even though household surveys have improved in their scope, they still omit vulnerable populations. They exclude displaced populations, refugees, populations living in countries with conflict, inaccessible geographic areas and nomadic, slum and homeless populations.<sup>1</sup>
- With the intention of improving their statistical methods, over the last two years the World Bank Group (WBG) and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) joined forces to establish a shared data center about forced displacement that includes improved statistical data about refugees, urban slums, nomadic populations, street children and homeless populations. Moreover, UNICEF is working on a pilot project studying ways to collect objective and subjective data about children and adolescents living in residential care facilities. SOS Children’s Village has developed the Tracking Progress Initiative, which gathers information about children without parental care who are placed in the state care system. The initiative enables users to enter, review and analyze data about a country’s level of care of its children. It provides information on themes such as reasons for family separation and placement of children in state care.

### Addressing trends towards absence of violence against children and adolescents

Violence against children affects families and societies worldwide. It persists and in many cases it remains hidden.

---

<sup>1</sup> “UNHCR-World Bank Group Joint Data Center on Forced Displacement Fact Sheet”, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/programs/forceddisplacement/brief/unhcr-world-bank-group-joint-data-center-on-forced-displacement-fact-sheet>

- One place where violence against children, poverty, social exclusion and deprivation of dignity meet is the juvenile justice system. Violence at home, poverty and risky survival activities propel children into the juvenile justice system. “There is a worrying trend for children to be placed in institutions, rather than minimizing the risk of violence against children by ensuring effective prevention. Incidents of violence occur while in custody of police and security forces, in both pretrial and post-sentence detention, as well as a form of sentencing. Violence can be perpetrated by staff, adult detainees and other children, or be the result of self-harm.”(2012) <sup>2</sup>
- On the other hand, while it is common to think of schools as safe and encouraging spaces for children to learn and socialize, children are often exposed to violence against them and others at school. This is a critical issue that not only concerns the poor. It affects all social classes, communities, cities and countries. After family and home, school is the most important and influential institution in children’s development. Schools are expected to be a safe and encouraging space to learn and develop their skills. In many cases they protect children from labor and exploitation. For far too many children and adolescents, though, school is dangerous. Instead of learning, inclusivity and friendship, children and adolescents often must deal with exclusion and violence such as bullying, cyber bullying, fighting and physical attacks, violence as punishment, sexual violence and school attacks.<sup>3</sup>
- Schools are interrelated to their communities and to society as a whole. They can be mutually influenced. On the positive side, schools are controlled spaces where counselors, psychologist, child advocates and practitioners can offer effective interventions to bring a positive impact on the school population and their families, the community and on society as a whole. Some child advocate organizations, such as ChildFund Alliance, are implementing violence prevention programs involving children and adolescents. Child-friendly accountability initiatives encourage adolescents to find creative and peaceful ways to hold governments and local leaders accountable in order to end violence against children.

### Conclusions and recommendations for child advocates

---

1. Recent estimates show that there has been a large reduction in extreme poverty over last quarter century. However, the reduction has slowed recently, due to changes in the regional composition of the poor. These trends pose a challenge in achieving the SDGs.<sup>4</sup>
2. Despite significant steps by the international community to lift people out of poverty, inequality and exclusion persist. Large disparities remain regarding access to health, education and other basic services<sup>5</sup>. Inequality is a multidimensional concept, involving economics (incomes), politics (voice and decision making) and social (access to social opportunities) and cultural factors.
3. In many ways, the questions *“Is it possible for a child born in a poor urban or rural family to climb on the socio-economical ladder independently of the circumstances where*

---

<sup>2</sup> “Prevention of and responses to violence against children within the juvenile justice system”, Office of The Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence Against Children, 2012; [www.violenceagainstchildren.un.org](http://www.violenceagainstchildren.un.org)

<sup>3</sup> “An Everyday Lesson: #ENDviolence in Schools”, UNICEF, September 2018; [www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org)

<sup>4</sup> “Data for Development Impact – Making National Household Surveys More Inclusive”; Tara Vishwanath, World Bank

<sup>5</sup> “Sustainable Development Goals. Goal 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries”, [www.un.org](http://www.un.org)

- he/she was born?”* is answered by saying that the phenomenon of intergenerational persistence of poverty is a huge challenge that must be addressed through public policy.
4. Despite the SDGs and their intentional declaration of inclusivity, many children remain left behind. Many remain uncouneted in household surveys which complicates how evidence for policy-making is gathered. The household surveys are also being used to measure the SDGs’ achievements. Statistical experts and child advocates must find the way to include “invisible children” in their measurements.
  5. There are many situations in which children and adolescents are exposed to violence. Even though violence is a complex issue of human nature, it must not be accepted or normalized and should be addressed by governments, civil organizations and human rights advocates.
  6. In order to end the juvenile justice system’s vicious cycle of violence linked with deprivation of dignity, experts recommend:
    - a. Preventing children from becoming involved with the juvenile justice system
    - b. Protecting children from all forms of violence within the juvenile justice system
    - c. Ensuring the use of diversion and alternative non-custodial measures as priorities within the juvenile justice system
    - d. Ensuring that the deprivation of liberty is a measure of last resort
    - e. Ensuring that, when deprivation of liberty is absolutely necessary, conditions of detention and the treatment of children respect the dignity and special needs of the child, and minimize the risk of violence.<sup>6</sup>
  7. To end violence against children in and around schools, child advocates urge action to:
    - a. Implement laws and policies that protect students from violence
    - b. Strengthen safety measures in schools
    - c. Encourage students and communities to challenge surrounding cultures of violence
    - d. Raise and invest resources to implement violence reduction efforts
    - e. Generate and share evidence about what works to reduce violence.<sup>7</sup>
  8. Children and adolescents can be the motor for change and should be involved in programs that promote inclusion and violence prevention. Schools can be an entry point to address violence against children and adolescents and to change their situations, not only at school but also in their homes and communities.

## APPENDIX

### What are the Sustainable Development Goals?

---

The *Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)* are 17 global goals that were identified by the United Nations General Assembly in 2015. They are included in Resolution 70/01: "Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development." Each of these SDGs also lists achievable targets. The SDGs cover social and economic development issues including poverty, hunger, health, education, global warming, gender equality, water, sanitation, energy, urbanization, environment and social justice. They are a call for action to all countries.

---

<sup>6</sup> “Prevention of and responses to violence against children within the juvenile justice system”, Office of The Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence Against Children, 2012; [www.violenceagainstchildren.un.org](http://www.violenceagainstchildren.un.org)

<sup>7</sup> “An Everyday Lesson: #ENDviolence in Schools”, UNICEF, September 2018; [www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org)



**Source: The UN - Sustainable Development Goals.**

The preamble of the resolution 70/01 "Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" recognizes that the greatest global challenge is eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, and it resolves:

“...between now and 2030, to end **poverty** and hunger everywhere; to combat **inequalities** within and among countries; to build peaceful, just and inclusive societies; to protect human rights and promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls; and to ensure the lasting protection of the planet and its natural resources. We resolve also to create conditions for sustainable, inclusive and sustained economic growth, shared prosperity and decent work for all, taking into account different levels of national development and capacities. (...) we pledge that **no one will be left behind**. Recognizing that the dignity of the human person is fundamental...”  
 (“Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; A/RES/70/1

 [Equityforchildren.org](http://Equityforchildren.org)

 [Equity for Children](https://www.facebook.com/EquityforChildren)

 [@equity4children](https://twitter.com/equity4children)

 [@equity4children](https://www.instagram.com/equity4children)