



A Children in Conflict Resource



# The Path to 2030

Achieving the Sustainable  
Development Goals for  
Children Living in Conflict



THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH  
Global Health Academy



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Achieving the Sustainable  
Development Goals for  
Children Living in Conflict

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the Global Health Academy and the Children in Conflict  
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***“Investing in children changes  
the world. We have one  
reason for acting: to ensure  
that instead of some children  
developing some of their  
potential in some of the  
world's countries, all children  
can develop all their potential  
in every country.”***

– Gordon Brown  
UN Special Envoy for Global Education





## A 'Children in Conflict' Resource

Our Children in Conflict Group at the University of Edinburgh is led by the Global Health Academy.

We bring together alumni, students and faculty committed to better understanding the experiences of children in different types of conflict in order to advance the Sustainable Development Goals.

We conduct research and draw together evidence of children's needs and the ways in which systems are impacting on their development.

Our Group works with partners within the University bringing together our collective of expertise in children's wellbeing and livelihood, and with national and global partners committed to a safe secure future for all children.



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## Foreword

Interconnectedness is at the heart of the Sustainable Development Goals, and children are at the heart of an interconnected planet.

Across the globe more effort is needed to deliver these goals, and in the multiple situations of conflict, this effort is urgent. An estimated 420 million children live in conflict zones, where the SDGs remain largely out of reach.

The Global Health Academy is committed to advancing human and planetary health for all through the Sustainable Development Goals. The goals provide a vision of a world that is safe and secure for children, and a blueprint for reducing suffering and enabling flourishing. Woven through all these goals is a call to care – with compassion at the very centre. They call us to notice and to take action. This resource, with its dedicated infographics for each SDG as they relate to children, sets out the pathway of action.

The authors of this vital resource know there needs to be distinctive and focused efforts in relation to children who have been, and who are currently affected by war and conflict. They have provided crucial analysis as well as clear 'next steps' for the things that we – as leaders across the world – need to do.

### Professor Liz Grant

Assistant Principal (Global Health) and Director of the Global Health Academy,  
University of Edinburgh





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# THE PATH TO 2030: INTRODUCTION

**“There can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development”**

(Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development)

Children living in conflict-affected countries suffer in so many ways. Conventions and laws seek to protect, and yet Save the Children’s 2019 report “Stop the War on Children” estimates that 420 million children—almost 20% of the world’s population of children—still live in conflict zones.

In 2015, the United Nations (UN) unveiled 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): goals designed to address the world’s social issues ranging from poverty and hunger to sustainability and climate change; goals to take the world forward, to address inequality and to ensure no child, woman or man is left behind.

For children living in conflict zones, however, achieving these goals is a real challenge.

Measuring the occurrence of the six grave violations against children ensures the harm suffered by children in conflict is monitored. These six violations are still being committed on a regular basis—increasing the vulnerability of children in conflict, in an environment that is significantly more difficult than most.

In this study, for each SDG, we consider where we are now (What is the Impact?), give examples of the progress that has been made (Progress and Change), and consider what must happen if the world is to achieve the SDGs for children in conflict (Path to 2030).

For not only do we need to give children living in conflict a better life today, we need to recognize that they are our future—our peaceful future. And this is a future that all children—including those living in conflict—truly deserve.



## The Six Grave Violations

The UN Resolution on Children and Armed Conflict, introduced in 1999, identifies six grave violations affecting children in conflict:

1. Killing and Maiming of Children
2. Recruitment or Use of Children as Soldiers
3. Sexual Violence against Children
4. Abduction of Children
5. Attacks against Schools or Hospitals
6. Denial of Humanitarian Access for Children

In 2020 almost 26,500 grave violations were verified by the UN—affecting almost 20,000 children in 21 situations.\*

\*It is likely that this number is not complete due to the lack of available data from conflict situations.

## The 17 Sustainable Development Goals

On 1 January 2016, following the 15-year Millennium Development Goals programme, 17 SDGs, including 169 targets, were released as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Varying numbers of targets can be found in each goal—each with clear indicators to enable accurate measurement. Sixty-two of the targets (SDG 17 plus those in other goals identified with small letters) are ‘means of implementation’ targets, ensuring the inclusion of relevant processes and global resourcing.

At first glance—SDG 16 “Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions” appears most relevant to children in conflict—but as our analysis demonstrates, relevance can be found in all the SDGs. Inter-linking between SDGs is also prevalent (this has only been specifically highlighted in SDG 1 in this study) and the reality is that achieving the SDGs for conflict-affected countries requires planning to be diverse and multi-sectoral, which for states embroiled in often internal conflict is a clear challenge.

# The Sustainable Development Goals: A Summary

End poverty in all its forms everywhere



Reduce inequality within and among countries

End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture



Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages



Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns

Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all



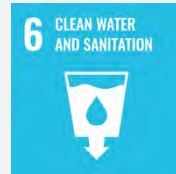
Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls



Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development

Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all



Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss

Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all



Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all



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

Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation



Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development



From Now to 2030:  
A Page for Each Goal

## No Poverty — 2021

Poverty can no longer be measured by wealth alone—but should be considered through a multi-dimensional lens, measuring access to health, education and an appropriate standard of living. Almost twice as many children than adults live with poverty and for those in fragile and conflict-affected countries (FCACs)—the number is even greater. The issue is further complicated by strong linkages between poverty and the other SDGs—a complex web that must be addressed.



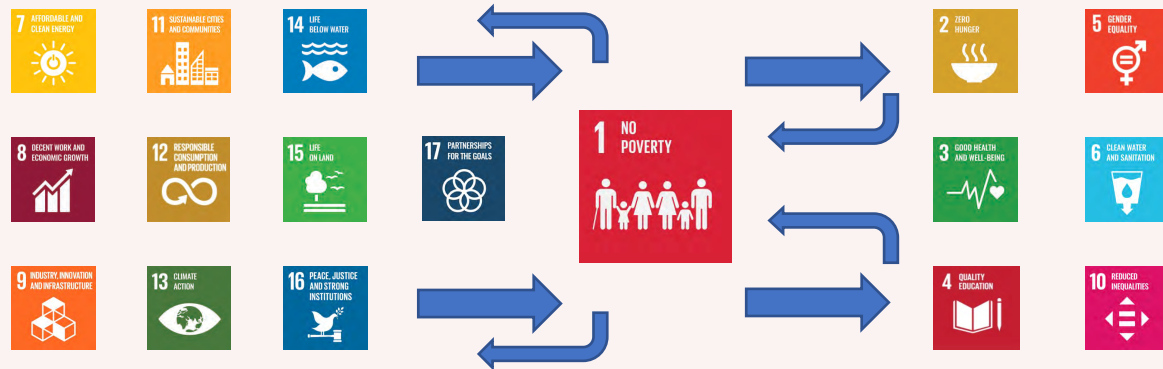
## No Poverty — 2030

SDG 1 (Targets 1 and 2) seeks to reduce poverty in all forms, with specific goals of no children living in extremely poor households (under USD 1.90 a day) and reducing by half the number of children living below national poverty lines or in poverty in all its dimensions. Target 4 expands on the multi-dimensional approach, seeking access to basic health and sanitation services for all, whilst Target 3 seeks access for a higher proportion of children to social protection schemes.

### What is the Impact?

- 58% of the urban population in FCACs live in slums (2018)
- In 2017, 38.4% of people in FCACs lived on less than USD 1.90 per day
- Just 35% of children globally have social protection benefits
- Estimates state that by 2030, over 2/3 of the world's extremely poor will live in FCACs
- Up-to-date poverty data for the majority of FCACs is unavailable or hard to find

Poverty is affected by or affects every Sustainable Development Goal



### Progress and Change

The following initiatives are examples of how Targets 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3 have been achieved in FCACs.

The World Bank's International Development Association assists the poorest countries via concessional loans and grants. This type of funding has been used in Rwanda to return—and re-integrate—thousands of soldiers. Amongst these are child soldiers who have been supported through education and either returned to their families or re-homed.

Ukraine has been involved in a difficult conflict since 2014, and the International Red Cross has been involved in cash and voucher transfer systems in the country for several years.

This has enabled families impacted by conflict to receive support in areas where the social system is lacking—giving children access to food, clothes and healthcare.

The Global Coalition to End Child Poverty was established to ensure the issue of child poverty is raised and addressed globally. With 22 member organizations the coalition works to identify mechanisms to address child poverty, including the consideration of social protection, measuring and monitoring, and raising its profile globally. Focusing on all countries affected by poverty—there is a chance, at least, that the coalition's approach will bring some benefit to children in conflict.

### Path to 2030

- Improve national budgets for social protection benefits for children and youths—child-related interventions are lower cost but higher return
- Improve data availability by ensuring: a) all households are reached (including displaced people); and b) conflict-affected countries can produce child poverty reports
- Provide global support to enable sustainable employment opportunities to be developed at a community level
- Poverty impacts education, health, access to clean water and ongoing equity. Country level policy and planning must be cross-sectoral.
- Promote opportunities to involve children and youths in designing, developing and implementing poverty reduction programmes

### Case Study — Central African Republic (CAR)

Ranking 188<sup>th</sup> out of 189 in the UN Human Development Index—and with 79% of the population in multidimensional poverty—CAR remains highly fragile. Violence has impacted CAR for many years—with significant turmoil since 2013—and yet despite recent attempts at peace, conflict persists. With over 40% of the population being 0 to 14 years old, this combination of poverty and violence means that children living in CAR suffer significantly.

The World Bank supports several programmes in CAR—and the breadth of these, which make up a national development plan, demonstrates how the movement towards sustainable growth requires a multi-dimensional approach.

This in turn confirms the interrelationship of SDG 1 with the other SDG goals.

Examples of such projects are a cash transfer programme to communities, enabling refugees to return; the implementation of surveys to ensure government decisions are based on strong data; budgetary support for government to provide free healthcare; and the re-paving of trade corridors to enhance connectivity.

The Bank is involved in 17 projects—totalling USD 780 million—and current commitments stretch to 2025. Whilst progress is slow, there is an opportunity for a brighter future for CAR—one which its children surely deserve.



## Zero Hunger — 2021

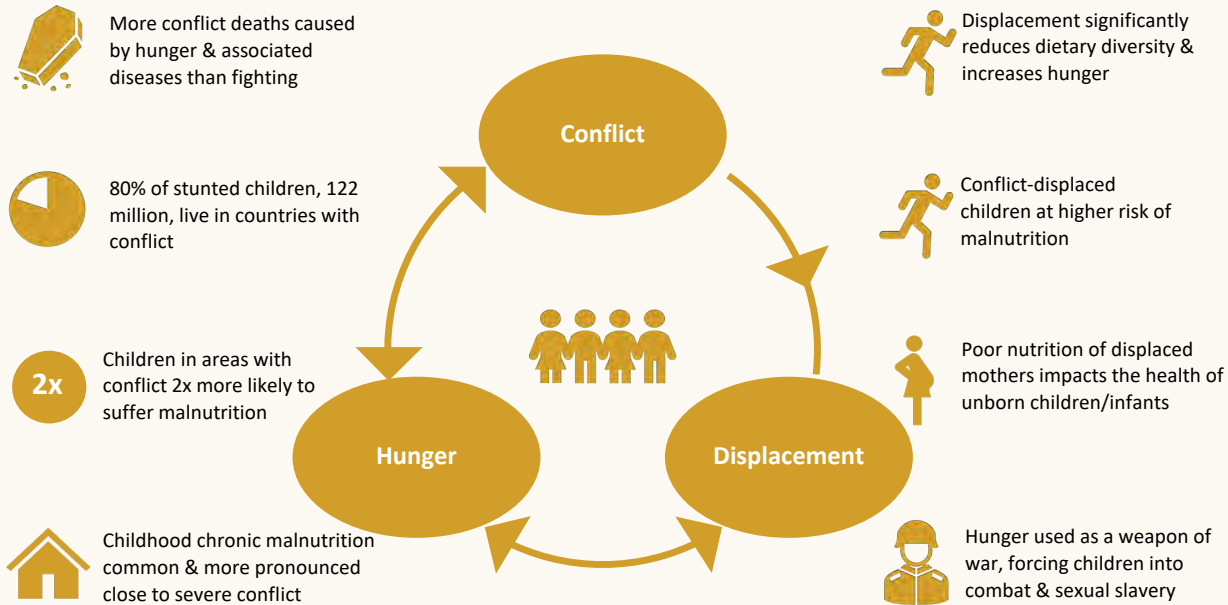
Conflict is a key driver of food insecurity and is linked to over 75% of global food crises. People's inability to feed themselves adequately or access an acceptable variety of food leads to high levels of chronic malnutrition and increased hunger in children living close to, or in conflict areas, and in those displaced by conflict. Children living in FCACs are also more vulnerable to other drivers of food insecurity, such as climate change related disasters and economic shocks.



## Zero Hunger — 2030

SDG 2 (Targets 1 and 2) seeks to end hunger by ensuring that everyone has access to safe, nutritious and sufficient food, with an emphasis on providing for people in vulnerable situations such as armed conflicts. The Goal includes reaching internationally agreed targets on stunting and wasting in children under five by 2025, and ensuring that the nutritional needs of girls, and pregnant and lactating women are met to improve the health of future generations.

### What is the Impact?



### Progress and Change

The 2021 Global Report on Food Crises (GRFC) points to conflict as a key driver behind food insecurity, often in combination with climate change and economic shocks. Progress towards Targets 2.1 and 2.2 for children in conflict-affected states, has therefore, been poor.

Overall, in recent years, progress to end hunger has reversed, with an increase of 20 million people in crisis or worse (IPC/CH Phase 3 or above) from 2019 to 2020. While this number is forecast to decrease again in 2021, the number of people facing catastrophe is expected to increase by over 20,000, with the majority in conflict-ravaged South Sudan. The 2021 GRFC report also warns that, thanks in part to COVID-19, the situation for many is likely to worsen.

Most food assistance is delivered by the World Food Programme (WFP), which assisted 11.5 million people in 2020—the largest number since 2012. Of the 17 million children fed by the WFP in 2019, almost 40% were in countries suffering from conflict or crises. The WFP is now shifting from food aid to food assistance, and expanding projects like the School Meals Project, a key nutrition safeguard to protect children from hunger and malnourishment.

Cash transfer alternatives have also been introduced in some areas by humanitarian actors such as UNICEF who recognise that using local markets provides a better diversity of diet, is simpler to deliver and can produce longer-term benefits to development.

### Path to 2030

**“We will never achieve the goal of zero hunger unless we also put an end to war and armed conflict”**  
(UN Security Council Resolution 2417)

The World Food Programme lists five of the most effective tools to combat conflict & hunger, not only addressing the immediate needs of those affected but improving the chances of lasting peace and stability:



**Additional actions not directly related to conflict, but which would have positive impacts include:**



Establish clear, meaningful commitments and take action on them to meet global & national-level targets



Collect accurate and reliable data which reflects the true figures for children experiencing hunger in conflict



Improve WASH facilities to combat dual effects of malnutrition & unsafe water



Tackle gender inequality—to combat girls suffering from eating last and least

### Case Study — South Sudan

Continuing conflict, extreme weather and economic shocks have led to a perfect storm of food insecurity in South Sudan. The 2021 GRFC states that 7.2 million people are forecast to be in food crisis or worse in 2021, up from 6.5 million in 2020 with only 12.8% of children receiving a sufficiently diverse diet.

The WFP has been running School Feeding Programmes (SFPs) in South Sudan since 2003 to enhance access to food and provide a nutritional safety net. Meals are either cooked daily on-site or given as a take home ration at the end of the month. The design encourages parents to send children to school and combats hunger amongst pupils so that they can concentrate, breaking the cycle of

hunger, malnutrition, illiteracy and poverty.

Running an SFP in times of conflict requires careful planning. Routes to and from school must be secure, for example, so that children are not endangered by attending. Despite such issues, in 2020, 511,000 children in 1,100 schools received a daily school meal.

Even after the forced closure of schools due to the COVID-19 crisis, the WFP provided take-home rations to 23,000 children in the most food insecure counties, and a joint project between WFP and UNICEF targeted 400,000 children with a School Health and Nutrition package and COVID-19 messaging in schools.

## Good Health and Well-being — 2021

Children in conflict situations and fragile states are vulnerable to both direct and indirect threats to their lives and health as well as poorer health outcomes overall. Globally between 1995 and 2015, more than 10 million deaths in children under the age of five were attributed to conflict. Conflict is linked to malnutrition, physical injuries, acute and infectious diseases, poor mental health, and poor sexual and reproductive health.

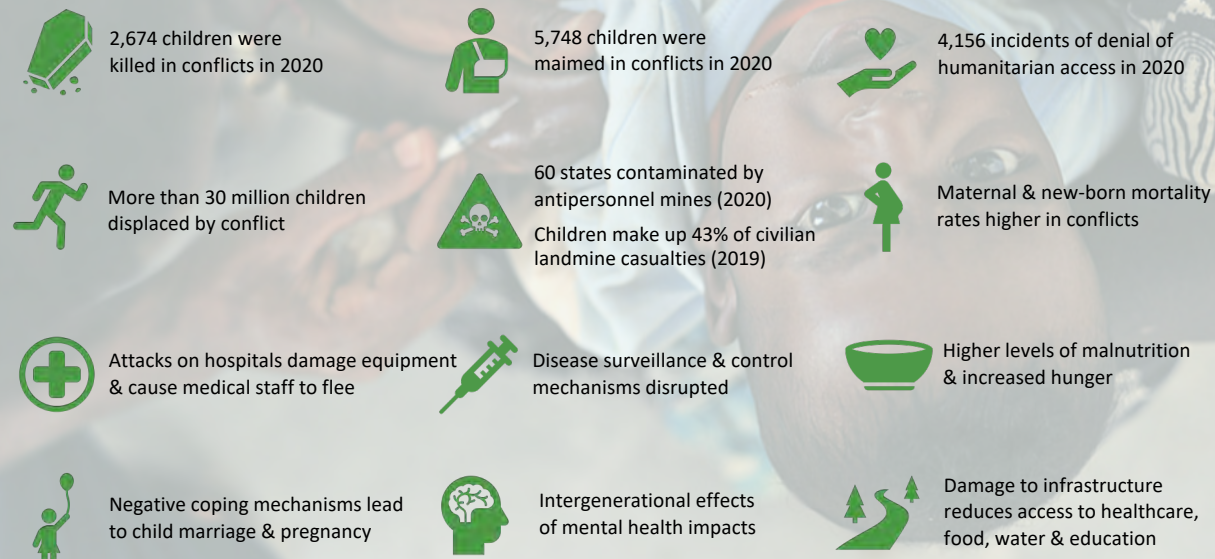


## Good Health and Well-being — 2030

SDG 3 (Targets 1, 2, 3, 7, 8 and 9) directly and indirectly seeks to improve children's health and well-being. Directly, through reducing the global maternal mortality ratio, ending preventable deaths under the age of five and reducing the adolescent birth rate. And indirectly, via ending the epidemics of AIDS, TB, malaria and neglected tropical diseases, combatting communicable diseases, achieving universal health cover and reducing mortalities attributed to air pollution.

### What is the Impact?

Globally, between 1995 and 2015, more than 10 million deaths in children under the age of five, could be linked to conflict



### Progress and Change

The following NGOs and projects are working for progress towards SDG 3 in relation to children in conflict situations.

UNICEF's Humanitarian Action for Children Annual Appeal raises funds which are then used to assist children and young people living through conflict and crisis in the challenges they face. In 2020, UNICEF treated 1.5 million children with severe acute malnutrition, vaccinated 3.4 million children against measles and provided WASH facilities for 14.2 million people.

The humanitarian work of UNICEF ranges from the provision of emergency packs, provisions and water supplies to longer-term initiatives like conditional cash transfers to assist families.

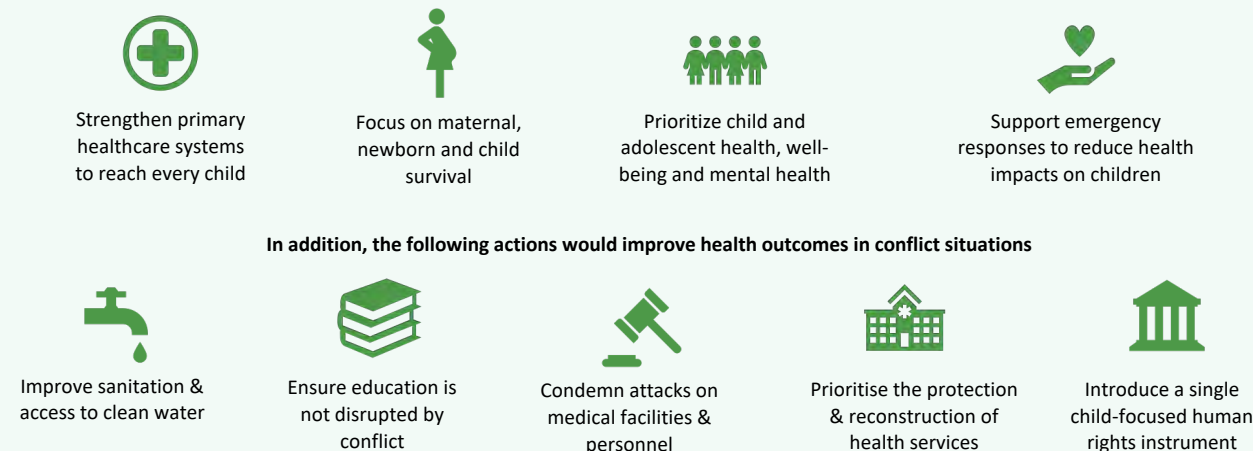
UNICEF's aim is to work sustainably to bridge the divide between humanitarian and development assistance.

The World Food Programme (WFP) School Feeding Programme (SFP) improves outcomes by providing a nutritious meal or ration pack to school children—an initiative to boost the interlinked issues of health, poverty, hunger and education.

A multi-agency project, the Somalia Mental Health Project has been set up to improve access to mental health support and psychotherapy services to young people suffering from mental health issues as a result of conflict, with the long-term aim of enabling community reconciliation and social integration.

### Path to 2030

To ensure healthy lives and promote the well-being of all children, UNICEF has four key asks of governments



### COVID-19 Pandemic

More than 420 million children were living in areas affected by conflict at the beginning of the pandemic. In addition to continuing existing humanitarian support and work towards SDG 3, it is essential that these children are not forgotten, and that life-saving equipment such as medicines, vaccines, sanitation and education supplies, and personal protective equipment are distributed fairly across the world.

### Case Study — Democratic Republic of Congo

Decades of instability and violent conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has resulted in the country ranking 175th out of 189 countries in the Human Development Index. The impact of this on children's health in the country is profound, with one in 10 children dying before the age of five, and chronic malnutrition or stunting affecting six million children. Conflict continues to displace large swathes of the population. Accessing safe water is a particular issue and cholera is endemic.

In addition, the country continues to battle an Ebola outbreak which started in 2018 and now faces the rapid spread of COVID-19, with over 28,000 cases confirmed and 23 out of its 26 provinces affected.

UNICEF has been working to improve the health and safety of millions of children through projects like: the Healthy Schools and Villages National Programme, which works to improve water, hygiene and sanitation services; the Child Survival Programme, which aims to reduce maternal, newborn and child mortalities; and the First 1,000 Days project to support children's nutrition in early life.

Despite ongoing conflict in DRC, UNICEF describes the country as having made significant progress. However, frequent recurrences of violence like the recent escalation in Ituri Province, threaten progress, and the current situation for many children is bleak.

## Quality Education — 2021

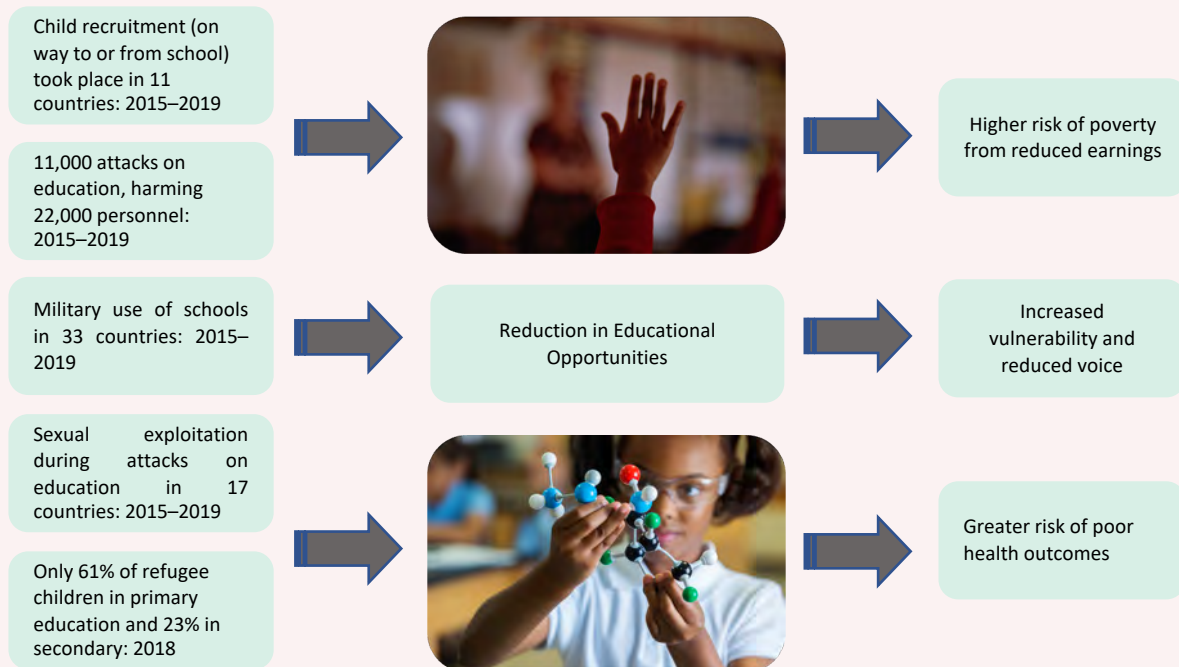
2019 data demonstrates that, globally, 50% of children did not complete secondary school (in 65/115 countries). However, those living in conflict-affected or fragile states have less chance of completion due to attacks on schools and educators, displacement from home, impairment from attack, and the recruitment of child soldiers. In 2017, it was estimated that 27 million children (from 24 conflict-affected countries) did not attend school.



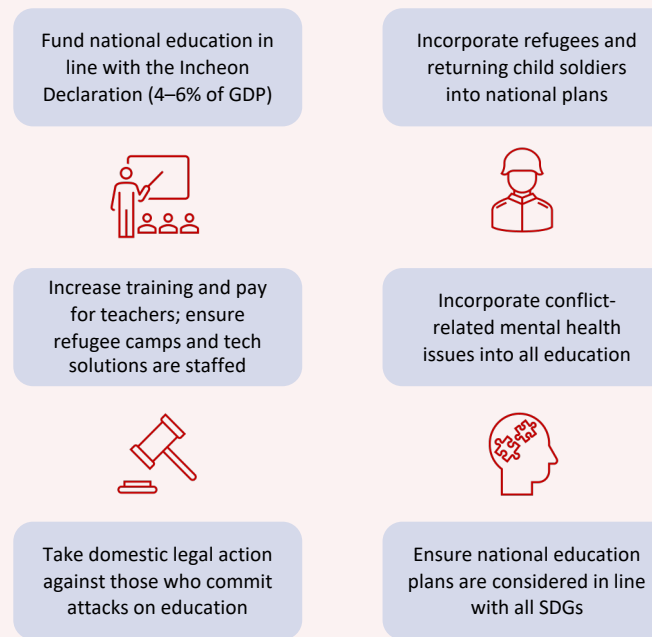
## Quality Education — 2030

SDG 4 (Targets 1, 2, a and c) seeks for all children—in conflict and non-conflict states—to complete their education with competent teachers, in safe, healthy and effective environments; attending school from the year below primary school, achieving minimum standards in reading and maths, being educated in schools designed for both able-bodied and disabled children, and displaying strong health and well-being.

### What is the Impact?



### Path to 2030



### Progress and Change

SDG Targets 4.1 and 4.2 promote attendance and completion of pre-primary, primary and secondary education, with the aim that all children will achieve appropriate attainment measures. Target 4.a seeks to ensure that facilities (with access for all) have WASH, power, technology, Internet and resources, whilst 4.c requires an adequate supply of qualified teachers. The following initiatives could help to achieve this in conflict:

The Safe Schools Declaration (May 2015) seeks to protect schools, students and educators from being attacked—maximizing attendance and reducing the risk of damaged facilities. In total, 108 states have signed the declaration to date.

The 2018 Global Compact on Refugees invites pledges which will improve education for refugees. By early 2020, 205 pledges were received—e.g., Save the Children’s ‘Ready to Learn’ Programme supported early learning education for Syrian Refugees.

The global fund Education Cannot Wait, launched in 2016 to support education in emergency situations (for state and non-state actors) has so far helped 3.9m children and added 47K teachers in conflict situations (by 2021). In addition, the fund established a COVID-19 response helping a further 9.3 m children (in conflict and non-conflict areas) and adding 57,000 teachers.

### Case Study — Afghanistan

Pre-primary education in Afghanistan is significantly limited and although data is reportedly difficult to obtain, statistics suggest that just 28% of pre-school aged children attended pre-primary in 2019 (split evenly between boys and girls). Limited resources restrict the speed of progression within the government’s own education system — but it does support partner and community groups delivering pre-school education.

One such organization is the Aka Khan Development Network (AKDN), which over the past ten years has provided education services at all levels in Afghanistan.

This has included creating a significant number of early learning centres—of which 145 remain active today. In addition, AKDN supports parent and teacher development through the provision of teacher resource centres focused on early learning. AKDN plans to implement another 33 early learning centres during 2021, with the aim of supporting these for a further five years.

The results speak for themselves—readiness and learning are significantly higher in children who have attended such centres. The challenge now is to ensure this opportunity is available for all.

## Gender Equality — 2021

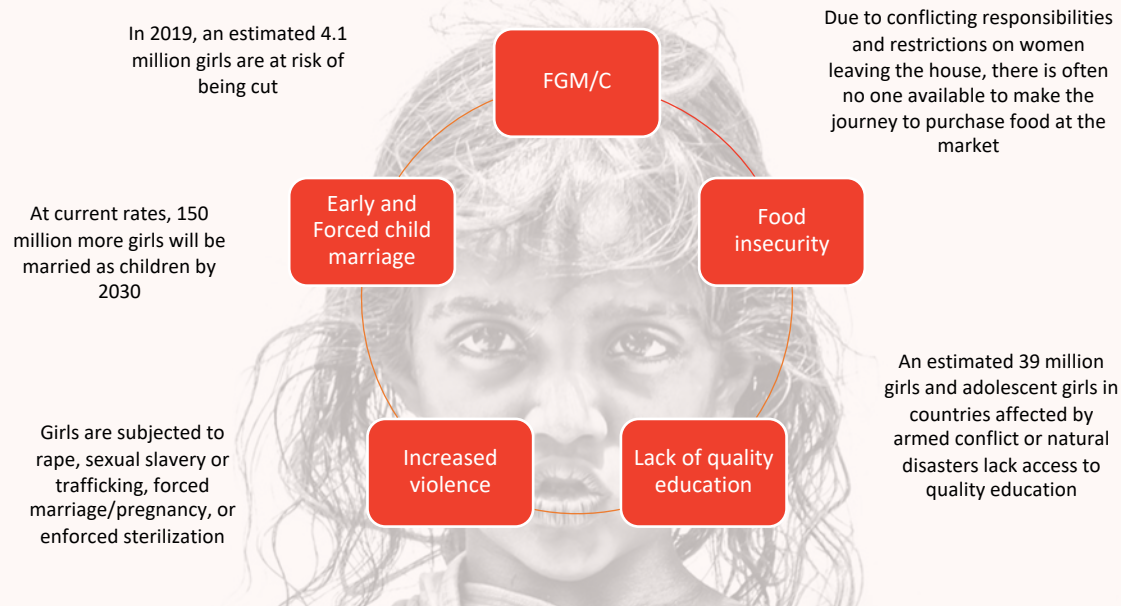
Girl children in conflict are more at risk of experiencing gender inequality. There are increased risks of forced child marriage, gender-based violence (psychological, physical and sexual), female genital mutilation or cutting (FGM/C), and lowered school attendance. These are, in turn, all linked to high levels of mortality and morbidity. Globally, in 2017, one in three girls aged 15 to 19 have been subjected to FGM/C.



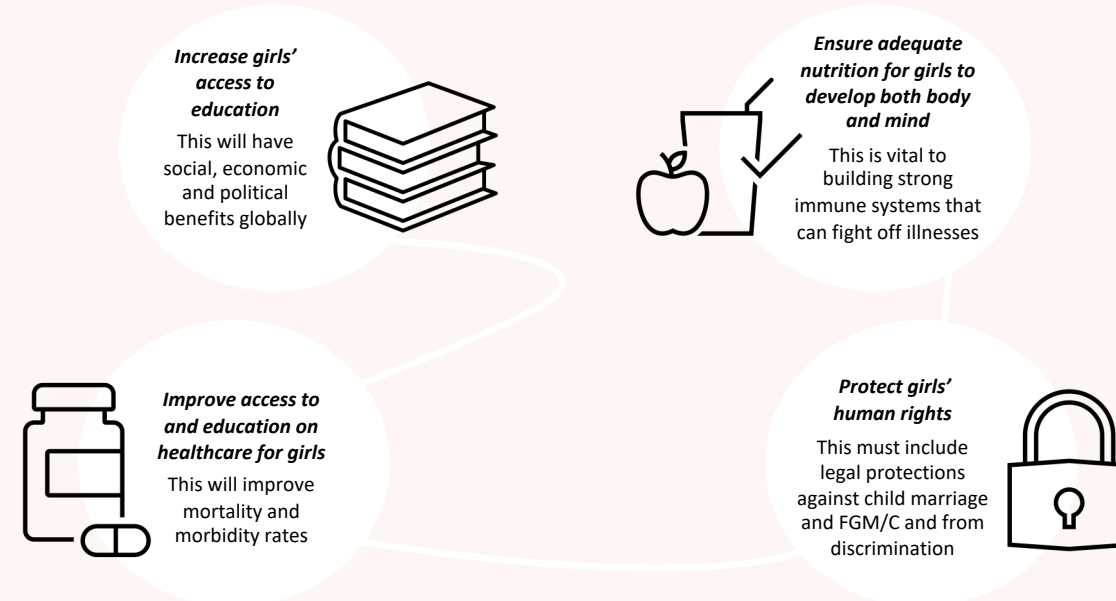
## Gender Equality — 2030

SDG 5's nine targets collectively aim to reduce the disparity between genders and empower girls. This includes ending all forms of violence (psychological, sexual and physical) against girls, including harmful practices such as FGM/C. Girls in conflict zones deserve to live without fear of gender-based violence and increased gender disparities preventing them from accessing equal opportunities to grow up to safely contribute socially, economically and politically.

### What is the Impact?



### Path to 2030



### Progress and Change

While gender equality disparity has decreased globally by 23% in the last 20 years overall, the targets of SDG 5 are largely unmet. Globally, 129 million girls are out of school. On top of this, in countries affected by conflict, girls are more than twice as likely to be out of school than girls in peaceful countries. Illiteracy rates for girls are at risk of increasing during this time. As of 2020, forced child marriage rates have declined globally to one in five young women having been married as girls.

However, COVID-19 is predicted to have adverse affects on child marriage, with up to 10 million girls at increased risk as a result. FGM/C has affected 200 million girls and women globally, and this gross violation of human rights must be eliminated.

In conflict zones, girls are at greater risk of harm than boys. Living in conflict zones is even linked to higher child marriage rates, leading to higher pregnancy rates and morbidity and mortality rates due to the fact that child pregnancy can increase the risk of obstetric fistula and obstructed labour. Girls are impacted by conflict for their entire lives, ending up left with their freedom and potential stripped away.

Overall, there is progress towards closing the gender inequality gap, like work done by the Girls Rights Platform, which aims to facilitate strengthening of policies "positioning girls at the heart of the agenda." However, more interventions must be introduced to combat the damaging effects of COVID-19, which has resulted in the reversal of decades worth of progress.

### Case Study — Myanmar

Myanmar has faced the world's longest civil war since the end of colonial rule in 1948 until the 1995 ceasefire. This was followed by a dictatorship until 2015, when the country had its first democratic election, which has resulted in a fractured society. During this time, girls were affected disproportionately and differently compared with boys, and it has had devastating effects.

Girls suffered hugely during the conflict—facing human rights violations, the loss of potential livelihoods, and forced displacement. Hundreds were forced into combat training to be 'backup' soldiers to those on the front lines. In Mon State, rape and sexual slavery were reportedly used by the Myanmar military as punishment for supposedly supporting rebels. Thousands of girls had their potential livelihoods stripped away before they even had a chance to reach a small amount of their potential.

The Alliance for Gender Inclusion in the Peace Process works with partners to provide opportunities for girls to have access to education and leadership training (aimed especially at adolescent girls). It does this through work in strategic networking, capacity building, changing perceptions, promoting more women in public life, and implementing international standards. As women and girls are promoted in society and included in more decision-making, action towards gender equality for future generations becomes more effective.

Through organizing events where women are presented as valuable members of society, the Alliance builds momentum for legal change and inclusion for women and girls. This is just one example of how concerted efforts can help societies that have been through decades of hardship begin to heal.

## Clean Water and Sanitation — 2021

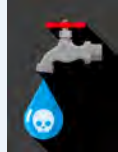
The percentage of people worldwide using safely managed drinking water services rose from 61% in 2000 to 70% in 2017. While an improvement on 28% in 2000, still only 44% have access to safely managed sanitation. Access to basic handwashing facilities on premises fell from 62% in 2013 to 60% in 2017. There is still much progress to be made and the situation is exacerbated for children in conflict situations due to the impact of attacks on water and sanitation services.



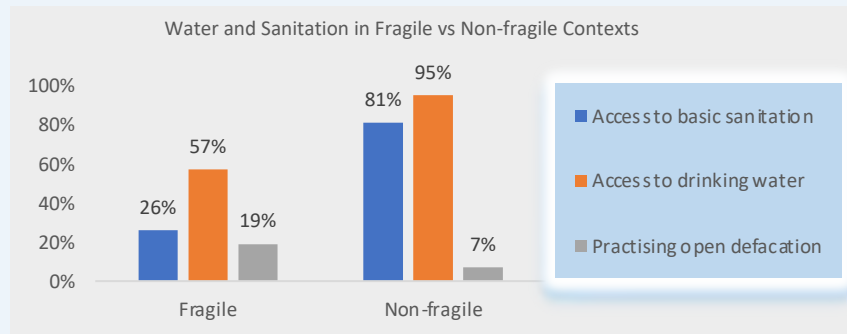
## Clean Water and Sanitation — 2030

Goal 6 seeks to ensure that all people have access to safely managed drinking water and sanitation services. In conflict situations, children are often deprived of these services and are left without even access to soap and water for handwashing. While the UN has declared 2018–2028 the “water action decade,” the world is still not on track to achieve Goal 6. Water and sanitation is in crisis globally and an immediate and integrated global response is needed.

### What is the Impact?



In protracted conflicts, **children under 15** years of age are nearly **three times more likely to die** from **diarrhoeal disease** linked to **unsafe water** and **sanitation** than violence directly linked to conflict and war. And **under-fives** are more than **20 times likely to die** in the same circumstances.



Those who live in extremely fragile contexts are:

- 3x** as likely to practice open defecation
- 4x** as likely to lack basic sanitation services
- 8x** as likely to lack basic drinking water services

*The difference in access to safe water and sanitation between a child born in a fragile context and a child born into a non-fragile context*

### Progress and Change

Since 2000, 1.6 billion people have gained access to safely managed drinking water services. In the same period, however, people without safely managed drinking water increased from 531 to 747 million in Sub Saharan Africa (where at least one in three countries was in active conflict in 2019).

In order to meet Goal 6, since July 2020 UN-Water has been spearheading the SDG 6 Global Acceleration Framework, which focuses on global solidarity and action in the following five areas to achieve SDG 6: Financing; Data and information; Capacity development; Innovation; and Governance. The initiative is a key element in the UN’s Decade of Action to deliver the SDGs by 2030. The Framework includes efforts to scale up innovative practices and technologies and generate validated and standardized data.

One example of application of an innovative but simple technological solution comes from Burkina Faso, a country caught up in cross-border conflict since 2015.

BILADA is a pioneering Burkinabe social enterprise that has been working on the local production and distribution of chlorine solution disinfectants for water treatment. The advantage of this system in conflict contexts is that it can effectively treat water at the point of use and accordingly save lives even if clean water infrastructure is attacked. It is expected to reduce the occurrence of diarrheal diseases in under-fives by 39% in target areas. With one million, or one in 20 people, displaced as of 2020 in the country, this solution has the potential to contribute significantly to Target 6.1 of achieving access to safe and affordable drinking water for all.

### Path to 2030

National governments and non-state actors must get behind the UN’s SDG 6 Global Acceleration Framework to deliver results at pace in order to meet the challenges to water and sanitation by 2030.

#### The following actions are vital in conflict-affected contexts

Introduce a single instrument of human rights law for children to make it easier for all parties to conflict to be aware of their obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law and thereby ensure every child’s right to water and sanitation

Promote action on initiatives in the field, notably UNICEF’s “Water Under Fire” campaign launched in 2019, which sets out to:

- 1) Accelerate delivery of water and sanitation services in conflict-affected contexts
- 2) Strengthen the humanitarian sector’s capacity to deliver water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) response
- 3) Prevent and better respond to attacks on and misuse of water and sanitation services



### Case Study — Yemen

Even before the conflict broke out in Yemen in 2015, the country was suffering from water scarcity.

Today, 17.8 million Yemenis, or two thirds of the population are in need of WASH assistance. 12.6 million, many in major cities, are facing acute needs. Over half of the urban population is not connected to water networks, and those that reach the remaining 46% are only partially functioning. This situation has led to the spread of diseases such as cholera and diarrhoea, particularly in children under five. At least 122 air strikes on water and sanitation infrastructure were recorded from the end of March 2015 to the end of February 2021.

Over 110 water networks in both urban and rural areas have deteriorated considerably, and local water corporations have been prevented from servicing the infrastructure.

After initially trucking water to meet the needs of displaced and vulnerable people in Sa’ada in the north of the country, UNICEF and partners initiated the Nushor water project using solar power to provide a more sustainable solution. The system was attacked three times but it was rebuilt and after a further attack in 2019 continued functioning. The project is a symbol of resilience in the face of adversity and continues to provide sustainable, safe water to over 10,000 people.

## Affordable and Clean Energy — 2021

Globally 789m people have no access to electricity (2018), and only 60% of people have access to clean fuels for cooking (2016). In a country impacted by conflict, the risk of being in this position is significantly greater as infrastructure is damaged and progression stalled by the war. For children living in conflict this reduces their opportunities to interact at home and with friends, while also restricting education and health through both reduced access and pollution.



## Affordable and Clean Energy — 2030

SDG 7 seeks access to energy—affordable, reliable and sustainable energy—for all. This includes access to electricity and reliance on clean fuels (Target 1) as well as increasing the prevalence of renewable energy (Targets 2, a and b) whilst also improving energy efficiency (Target 3). Children in conflict deserve to live in sustainable neighborhoods, regularly attending school and socializing with their friends. Sustainable, clean energy is vital.

### What is the Impact?

54% of people in conflict and fragile situations (35% of those living rurally) have access to electricity (2019)

0.05% of electricity in conflict and fragile situations is from renewable sources (2015)

23% of people in conflict and fragile situations have access to clean cooking fuel (2016)

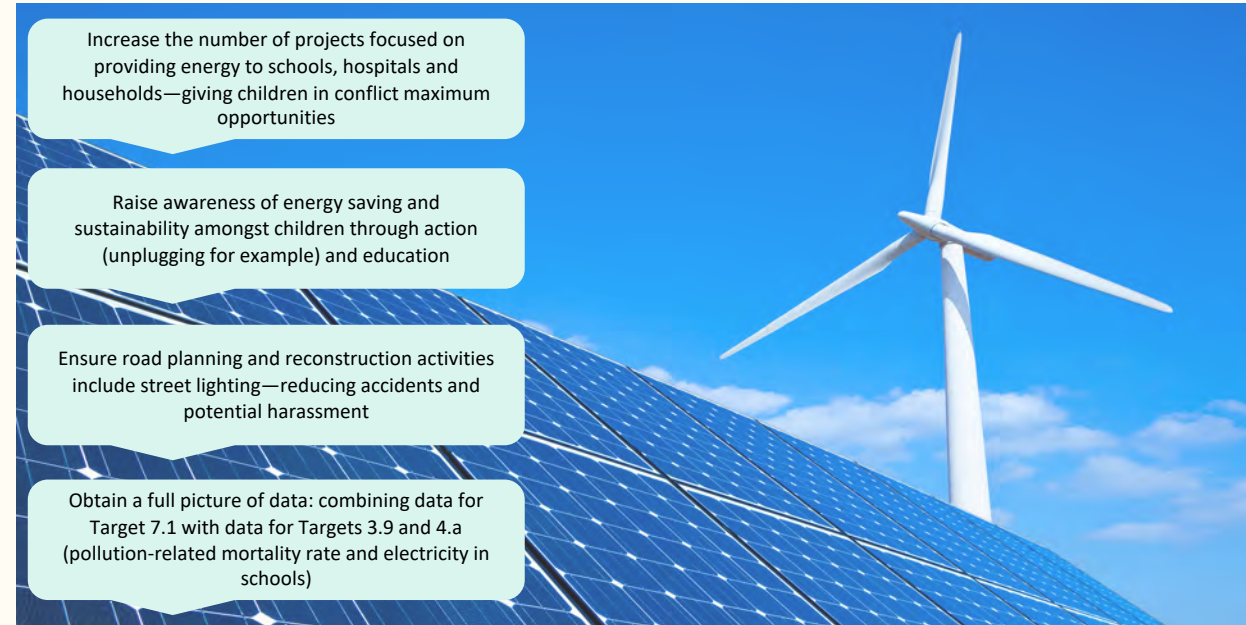


Reduced access to education and health, but also increased safety risk when travelling or doing chores in the dark

Sustainable energy would ensure a stable, continuing and affordable supply, including for clean water and sanitation

Cooking with open fires or polluting fuels is unhealthy—and fuel collection (by women and children) is a safety risk

### Path to 2030



Increase the number of projects focused on providing energy to schools, hospitals and households—giving children in conflict maximum opportunities

Raise awareness of energy saving and sustainability amongst children through action (unplugging for example) and education

Ensure road planning and reconstruction activities include street lighting—reducing accidents and potential harassment

Obtain a full picture of data: combining data for Target 7.1 with data for Targets 3.9 and 4.a (pollution-related mortality rate and electricity in schools)

### Progress and Change

Increasing access to electricity, clean cooking fuels and renewable energy are all targets of SDG 7. The following initiatives give examples of how these can be achieved:

Forty-six thousand of Rwanda's 150,000 refugees live in three camps—and three years ago, two thirds of their homes had no permanent night lighting and 'dirty' diesel generators supported off grid businesses. Three years later, via the Renewable Energy for Refugees project (RE4R)—life has changed. Using a market-driven approach, coupled with clustering, mentoring and training, entrepreneurs can now run their businesses on cleaner, affordable energy, thereby improving their household income and family life.

The Clean Cooking Alliance works globally to find clean cooking solutions and co-chairs SAFE (Safe Access to Fuel and Energy)—an alliance facilitating access to cleaner energy in conflict areas through research, advocacy, capacity building and co-ordination.

Syria Solar—through UOSSM (a large medical aid NGO inside Syria)—has installed 780 solar panels at two hospitals, reducing the need for diesel generators, which had become the main source of electricity due to the impact of the conflict. Phase Three will apply the same approach to 64 other healthcare facilities as well as running the Health Integrated Resilience System project combining solar power, electric ambulances and telemedicine.

### Case Study — Yemen

Energy supply in Yemen has always been a challenge—with less than 50% of the population having access to electricity in the year 2000. Although this increased to 66% in 2014, just before the current conflict in Yemen broke out only 51% had access in rural areas (60% in 2019), and during the conflict communities (often displaced) have struggled to access anything requiring energy due to damaged infrastructure and fossil fuel shortages.

Fourteen districts in four rural governorates of the country are, however, now in a much stronger position due to an EU-funded community-based solar project—Enhanced Rural Resilience in Yemen (ERRY). The project aims to help build resilient communities

(targeting women, youths and those marginalized) through the establishment of solar microgrids for households and businesses.

By the end of 2018, 5,600 solar lanterns had been distributed to rural homes; 212 solar systems were established in schools, hospitals and businesses; 72 solar powered refrigerators were storing vaccines in hospitals; and four drinking water systems were in place in areas with affected water. Daily electricity has now been provided—giving children access to improved health and education as well as the chance to live a more normal life—and a second project has been established (ERRY II) to build on the first's success.

## Decent Work and Economic Growth — 2021

In 2012, ILO estimated 215 million children globally were engaged in child labour, with over half of those children engaged in the “worst forms of child labour”—activities including participation in armed conflict, mining and prostitution. By 2016, this number fell to 152 million, but as of June 2021 had risen again to 160 million children, or almost one child in 10. In 2019, 7,747 children were verified as having been recruited and used as child soldiers in conflicts.

## 8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH



## Decent Work and Economic Growth — 2030

SDG 8 focuses on economic growth and decent work as a means to increase living standards. A key part of this effort for children in conflict is Target 7, which sets out to expeditiously eliminate the worst forms of child labour, including the recruitment and use of child soldiers, and to ultimately end all forms of child labour by 2025. The indicator for this target is the proportion and number of children aged 5–17 years engaged in child labour, by sex and age.

### What is the Impact?

Child labour is more prevalent in countries affected by conflict and disaster.

Since 2005, more than 75,000 children have been recruited to work as soldiers.

Thousands of children are deprived of liberty each year for alleged participation in hostilities.

Conflict increases the possibility for children already in child labour to be involved in more hazardous work.

Adjusted net savings as a % of Gross National Income is an indicator of economic growth used by the World Bank. In 2019, the world average was 11.5%, but in fragile and conflict-affected states it was just under 2.3%.

Children associated with armed forces account for only a small percentage of children subjected to the worst forms of child labour due to armed conflict.

These include slavery, sexual exploitation, involvement in illicit activities such as drug production and trafficking, and work that is harmful to the health, safety or morals of children.



### Path to 2030



Ratify and implement ILO labour standards and compliance in law and practice



Develop and implement measures to protect children's rights in peace processes



Identify and address the root causes of child labour through social and economic development



Raise awareness of recruitment or use of child soldiers as one of the six grave violations against children



Eliminate child detention and prioritize reunification of families



Build up better data to inform further positive action

The Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labour has been ratified by all 187 ILO Member, but to achieve SDG 8 greater efforts for implementation are key.

Poor data presents challenges in accurately gauging numbers of children recruited as soldiers, and this has been compounded by COVID-19's impact on the UN's capacity to monitor and verify grave violations against children.



### Empty classrooms and crowded camps

Armed conflict leads to displacement and economic deprivation. These in turn lead to empty classrooms and crowded camps, where children are more likely to be exploited for the worst forms of child labour.



### Progress and Change

While the number of children engaged in child labour is on the rise, there are initiatives in place to stem the tide and bring the change needed to achieve SDG 8. The following are just some of the ones focused on meeting Target 8.7.

Between 2014 and 2017, UNICEF and its partners assisted over 42,000 children released from armed forces and groups to reintegrate with their families and communities. The Global Coalition for Reintegration of Child Soldiers was also launched in 2018 to identify gaps and needs in child reintegration.

In 2017, the Dallaire Institute and the Canadian government developed the Vancouver Principles on Peacekeeping and the Prevention of the Recruitment and Use of Child Soldiers. These are political commitments endorsed by over 100 states that identify gaps in frameworks used by the UN and national security forces.

Several conflict-affected countries have also been pledging action in 2021—the International Year for the Elimination of Child Labour. For example, Mali has pledged to strengthen its child labour inspector workforce and end the worst forms of child labour.

### Case Study — Iraq

Child labour has been on the increase in Iraq due to a combination of armed conflict, displacement and economic challenges. Since 1990, the number of children working doubled to reach 575,000 in 2016. The situation is graver in conflict-affected governorates where over 90% of school-age children are excluded from the education system.

Out-of-school children are more likely to end up forced to work and coercion of children into the worst forms of child labour is a serious problem. Child soldiers have been used by forces on both sides of the conflict. This includes the Islamic State group's recruitment of 39 children and detainment of more than 900 children in 2018.

In response, the International Labour Organization (ILO) has launched a nationwide campaign to tackle the issue of child labour in the country that will target 100,000 children.

The campaign will endeavour to change societal and institutional behaviour by making child labour unacceptable for both responsible authorities and businesses. It will use existing ILO tools that will be adapted to the Iraqi context. These include: SCREAM, an initiative to help educators raise awareness of child labour among young people; and an “inter-agency toolkit” that acts as a guide for humanitarian actors to prevent and respond to child labour on the ground.

## Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure — 2021

As of 2019, 29% of children globally did not have online access—and with conflict destroying logistics infrastructure and causing energy breakdowns it is anticipated that the number without online access in conflict areas is considerably more. Combine that with near daily attacks on buildings such as schools and hospitals and it is perhaps understandable to see how challenging it is to meet SDG 9 in conflict areas.



## Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure — 2030

SDG 9 is focused on ensuring that all populations have access to roads (Target 1), information technology (Target c), innovation opportunities (Target b) and science and research (Target 5). For children living in conflict zones, this means being able to access transport to travel to school or for health reasons, having communication and information access through technology, and being able to learn skills that will encourage involvement in innovation.

### What is the Impact?

18.9% of people use the Internet in conflict/fragile states (2017)

75% of people have a mobile cellular subscription in conflict (2019)

The most fragile states have the lowest per capita density of infrastructure services

15,375 attacks on schools and hospitals (between 2005-16)



Access to technology can improve education and social contact

Better communication tools can prevent children from being in the line of attack

Improved physical infrastructure = improved health and education

Technology can be used to report against the six grievances

### Progress and Change

Target 9.1 includes increasing the % of rural populations living within 2km of an all-season road in addition to ensuring adequate passenger transport is available. Target 9.c aims to increase the amount of people with access to communication technology and the Internet. The following initiatives will help to achieve this.

The Dialogue Project—a joint initiative in Somalia (Somalia Stability Fund, Danish Refugee Council, Shaqadoon)—adopted a conciliatory approach by funding community-led projects to rebuild schools, roads, dams and healthcare centres. This in turn assisted the region in resolving tensions and promoting peace.

Connectivity for Refugees (now called Digital Access, Inclusion and Participation) is a UNHCR project working with technology providers to give refugees access to affordable and usable mobile networks. The Nyarugusu camp (Tanzania), which houses approximately 150,000 refugees, now has three working mobile 3G towers as a result.

UNICEF has been working in the conflict-affected areas of Mali to ensure children have access to education using solar-powered radios. One radio can serve 15 children who are able to listen to lessons and continue their education. In the Segou region alone, 1,500 households have benefitted.

### Path to 2030

Continue to invest in mobile and land technology to increase connectivity for all

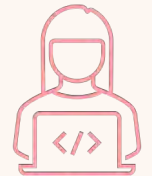


Prioritize Internet safety and child privacy in all technology initiatives

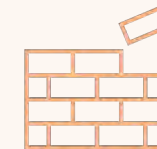


Harness big data concepts to improve collection of data from conflict areas

Make Internet access culturally acceptable for girls at home



To re-build infrastructure treat it as a system, strongly coordinated and funded by partners



Ensure innovation and STEM opportunities are built into secondary school curriculums

### Case Study — Colombia, Peru and Brazil

Although there is no active fighting in Venezuela, reports of unrest, a lack of democracy and the presence of armed groups mean that Venezuela is an extremely worrying environment for children. As a result, the number of people leaving continues to grow. Since February 2018, those fleeing into surrounding Latin American and Caribbean countries have more than trebled to an estimated 4.6m (June 2021). Three million of the displaced now live in Colombia, Peru and Brazil—and a significant number are young children.

Sesame Workshop is a not-for-profit organization adhering to the Sesame Street concept of bringing education to disadvantaged children. In the above three countries, it has plans to enable young

Venezuelan migrants to access educational content via its two technological solutions—Jardín Sésamo and Sésamo Chatbot. The former is a small plug-in device which is both suitable to environments where mobile usage is high but connectivity is expensive, and allows content to be broadcast over a local wi-fi set up. The latter uses the WhatsApp application to enable users to request resources which are then made available to download.

Both solutions demonstrate the availability of content to children who can access technology—but also show how important it is that children have the opportunity to connect in a safe and managed environment, so that they can gain the maximum benefit.



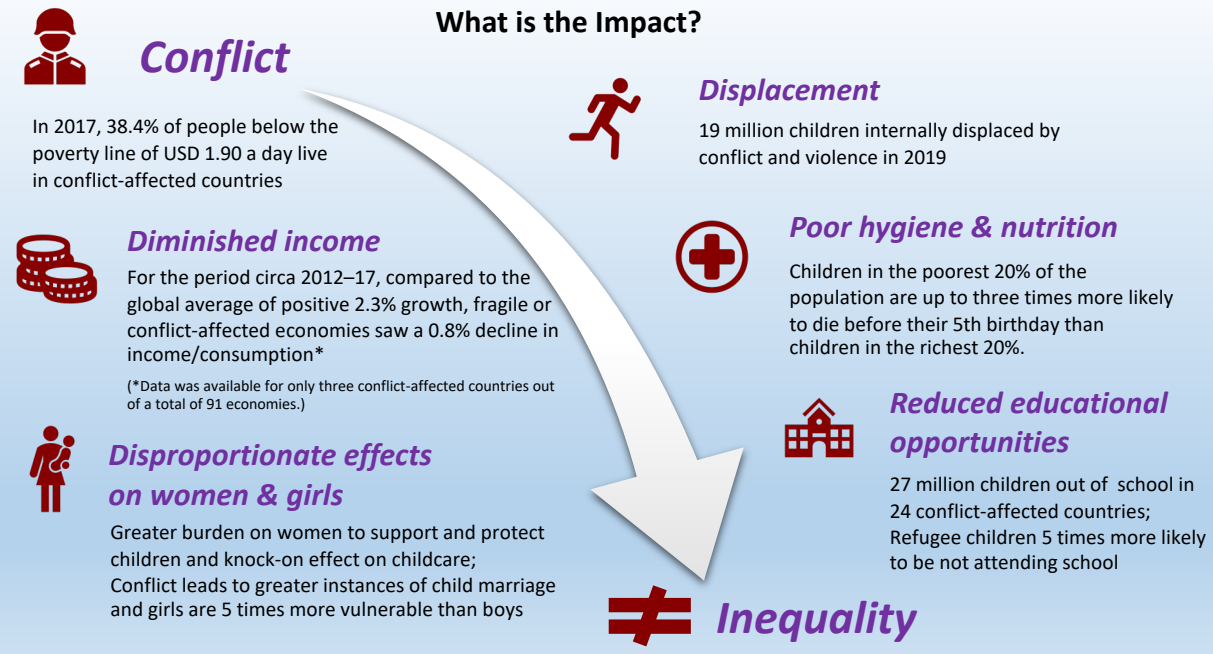
## Reduced Inequalities — 2021

For the period circa 2012–2017, the income of the poorest 40% of the population in 49 out of 90 countries grew faster than the national average. Conflict-affected countries, however, saw income decline. From 2005 to 2020, the number of refugees worldwide doubled to 26.3 million, half of whom are children. While in 2019 over half of 111 countries with available data had comprehensive policy measures to enable better migration, stronger implementation is needed.



## Reduced Inequalities — 2030

SDG 10 sets out to reduce inequality within and among countries. Targets of particular pertinence to children in conflict are: 10.1, which sets out to achieve rapid income growth for the bottom 40% of the population; 10.3, which endeavors to ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome, particularly from the perspective of laws and policies; and 10.7, which aims to facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people.



### Path to 2030

Transformative change is needed to eliminate poverty and hunger and strengthen health, education, social protections, and decent work, especially for vulnerable groups such as young people and those displaced by conflict



COVID-19: Vaccinate 30% of the population of all countries by the end of 2021 in line with WHO recommendation; waive intellectual property rules for vaccines, tests and treatments, and share life-saving technology

Support countries to enact recommendations by the Committee on the Rights of the Child; Encourage the adoption of regional strategies such as the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child

Eliminate laws, policies and practices that discriminate against children

In line with SDG 1, eliminate child poverty through a cross-sectoral approach that promotes and strengthens child-sensitive social protection systems as advocated by UNICEF

Ensure access to services for children with disabilities (1 child in 10), noting that conflict can both lead to the acquisition of disabilities and exacerbate existing disabilities

### Progress and Change

COVID-19 has seriously deepened global inequalities. Estimates of its impact include: 49 million people pushed into extreme poverty; 265 million on the brink of starvation; 1.6 billion informal economy workers' livelihoods severely impacted; and 1 billion slum dwellers at risk of infection. The pandemic has also exposed the rift between the connected and the unconnected.

Progress against indicators for Goal 10 is poor in conflict-affected contexts. Indicator 10.1.1, for example, is growth rates of household expenditure or income per capita among the bottom 40% of the population and the total population. This indicator is calculated using the concept of "shared prosperity," which is measured by calculating changes in income or consumption of the poorest 40% between two years. This makes it particularly challenging to measure progress against this indicator in conflict.

In a recent call to action from the private sector, the Connecting Businesses initiative (CBI) has highlighted the importance of empowering women in conflict-affected contexts. Recognizing that conflict-affected areas often have weak legal and regulatory systems, CBI has called for businesses to push for systemic change and engage in policy dialogue to improve legislation for gender equality. In doing so, the private sector can make a significant contribution to achieving both Targets 10.1 and 10.3.

A positive step towards achieving Target 10.7 has been seen in the formulation of the global compacts for refugees and migration adopted in 2018. While not legally binding, these set out to increase international responsibility-sharing and cooperation for refugees and migrants and incorporate formal review mechanisms by which States can hold each other to account.

### Case Study — Nigeria

Conflict has been raging in northern Nigeria for the past 30 years, severely impacting the futures of its children. Over half of Nigeria's population of 180 million is under 15 years old and 3/4 of those children live below the poverty line. One third of primary-school age children are out of school. In the north, almost one in two eligible girls is out of school (44%). The conflict has also displaced millions, leaving them with poor access to water, sanitation and hygiene.

In 2019, the national rate of under-5 deaths was 117 per 1,000 live births—over 2.5 times that in nearby Ghana. A study of 1,278 host community households and 531 internally displaced households in the north east identified a correlation between displacement and a 57% greater likelihood of acute malnutrition. This was found to be more notable among infants and in conflict-prone areas.

A great barrier to equality in Nigeria is the ongoing practice of child marriage. Some Nigerian states have introduced laws to prohibit the withdrawal of girls from school for early marriage. But this has clearly not been enough. With 43% of girls married before turning 18, Nigeria has the world's eleventh-highest prevalence of child marriage.

Three Nigerian teenagers have been taking action to change the situation. They have been carrying out a petition to revise the Nigerian constitution in order to unequivocally declare the age of consent as 18 years old. The three teenagers behind the Never Your Fault campaign have to date raised almost half a million signatures on Change.org. A rights-based approach and citizen-led action can make a difference for greater equality.

## Sustainable Cities and Communities — 2021

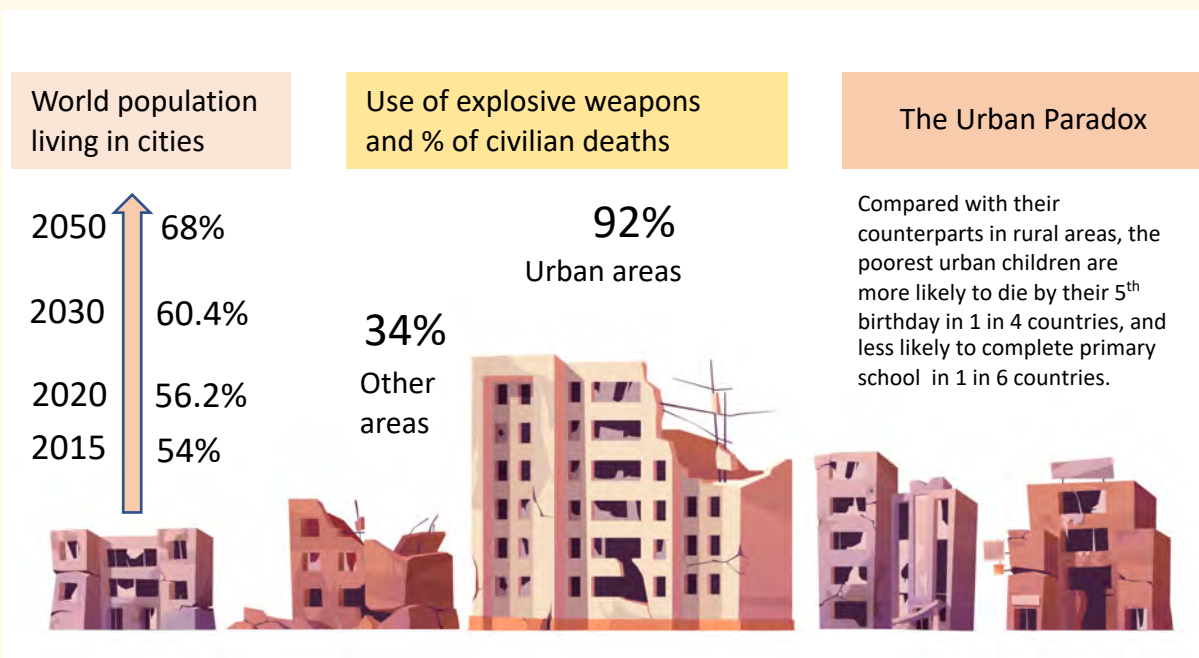
As the world urbanizes, so too does conflict, with an estimated 50 million people suffering from urban warfare today. One study on battle trends in Syria and Iraq between 2014 and 2017 found that civilians were five times more likely to die in urban conflicts. With homes and schools transformed into battlegrounds, children are particularly hard hit. They are more vulnerable to injury than adults, and impacts on education and healthcare also jeopardize their very futures.



## Sustainable Cities and Communities — 2030

SDG 11 sets out to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. For vulnerable groups like children, particularly in conflict zones, safety and inclusion are crucial. Particularly pertinent targets for children in conflict are: 11.1 to ensure safe housing; 11.5 on reducing mortalities and economic losses due to disasters, including water-related disasters; and 11.6 on reducing cities' adverse environmental impacts, notably from air pollution and waste.

### What is the Impact?



### Progress and Change

Indicator 11.1.1 is the proportion of urban population living in slums. Examination of this indicator for 11 countries in conflict that Save the Children has termed “the worst places in the world to be a child” reveals that in 2014, in nine of those countries over half the urban population were living in slums. This was true for over 90% of the population in South Sudan, Sudan and the DRC.

Slum upgrading is a holistic approach to driving the economic, social, institutional, and community activities needed to transform slums into places fit for living. UN Habitat’s global-scale Participatory Slum Upgrading Programme (PSUP) has, for example, benefited 7,000 households in Mtwapa, Kenya by improving water and sanitation systems.

Respect for International Law does make a difference in urban warfare. An example of this is NATO’s International Security Assistance force in Afghanistan, which between 2007 and 2014 managed to reduce the number of civilian casualties attributed to its operations by almost 75% as a result of policies such as restricting use of certain air-delivered weapons.

In terms of Target 11.5, the impact of disasters is often exacerbated by conflict. A 2016 study has shown that 58% of people killed by disasters lived in the world’s 30 most fragile states. Lebanon is an example of one state that has taken integrated action to protect children from the double threat of armed conflict and disasters such as fire and earthquakes.



### Path to 2030



- Promote respect for IHL among warring parties
- Strengthen the international legal framework for protection of the environment in situations of armed conflict (international and non-international) to protect children from the effects of environmental damage, such as exposure to toxic substances
- Develop universal principles on safe zones and safe corridors in conflict, while ensuring such spaces are not just a way to reduce asylum needs



- Establish proper humanitarian and migration channels to enable people to safely move within and between countries
- Plan urban expansion to create inclusive cities that are open to the benefits of migration



- Develop appropriate policies for well managed urbanisation and upgrading of current slums
- Include slum households in official statistics to ensure access for all to services such as health and sanitation



- Integrate Disaster Risk Reduction and preparation for future disasters into emergency response in fragile states (for every USD 100 spent on the latter, only USD 1.30 is spent on the former)

### Case Study — Lebanon

Close to 90% of Lebanon’s population live in urban areas. The country suffers from inadequate basic infrastructure, a proliferation of slums, and a lack of adequate housing due to poorly managed urbanization. A huge influx of refugees over the past 10 years has added to the strain. As of 2020, the country was hosting an estimated 1.5 million Syrian refugees and almost 300,000 Palestinian refugees. Lebanon is also reeling from the triple blow of COVID-19, the Port of Beirut explosion, and one of the world’s most severe economic and financial crises in recent times. The World Bank has warned of the dangers of the potential long-term damage to human capital from the Lebanese crisis.

UN Habitat has set out a three-year plan from 2021 to 2023 to contribute to improving the living conditions of people in Lebanon—regardless of nationality—by creating effectively planned and managed urban areas.

The children’s charity Theirworld has also worked with the Lebanese government to develop a “double-shift school” system for Syrian refugees. Following an extensive campaign to raise funds and political will, the proposal developed into a key pillar of the government’s national strategy—Reaching All Children with Education (RACE). This has contributed to providing over 300,000 refugee and vulnerable children with an education.

## Responsible Consumption and Production — 2021

Increased consumerism in developed countries has increased demand for cheap labour forces in developing countries. The repercussions of this heightened demand are exacerbated during times of conflict when families can experience greater than normal financial strain and children may even lose a caregiver to conflict, forcing them into the work force where they are at increased risk of human trafficking and sexual, physical, and psychological violence.



## Responsible Consumption and Production — 2030

SDG 12 aims to take actions to improve sustainable consumption (Target 1) and by 2030, achieve sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources (Target 2). By achieving these targets there will be decreased demand for cheap child labour to be taken advantage of during times of conflict, as it is during these times that children's rights are compromised with no secure legal governance to protect them in their home countries.

### What is the Impact?



### Path to 2030

Without mitigation measures, the number of children in child labour could rise from 160 million in 2020 to **168.9 million** by the end of 2022



### Progress and Change

Globally, action is being taken to share information to ensure sustainable consumption and production targets are reached and made more environmentally friendly. In 2020, the number of policies and implemented activities totaled 700, showing progress.

However, global progress against child labour, which affects boys more heavily than girls, has reportedly stalled since 2016. Forced child labour is estimated to generate USD 150 billion a year in illegal profits.

Responsible consumerism must be promoted in countries, especially in the West, whose consumption results in a chain of effects extending to developing countries, including those facing conflict such as civil wars.

Progress, albeit slow, is happening. There have been 40 countries, as of December 2020, who have reported introducing Sustainable Public Procurement policies and action plans (or equivalent legal dispositions). This will promote more socially responsible purchasing practices and sustainable supply chains, and in turn have a knock-on effect lowering child labour around the world, especially in conflict zones.

In a move to re-highlight and renew momentum towards this issue, 2021 was declared the International Year for the Elimination of Child Labour by the UN General Assembly. In January, The UN Global Compact announced a new action pledge to end child labour, calling on businesses to move from aspiration to action for the sake of the millions of children who still lose their childhood globally.

### Case Study — Sierra Leone

During Sierra Leone's civil war (1991–2002) child labour was not illegal. This period led to widespread poverty and children were forced into mass child labour to survive. The work they did was specifically mining for diamonds to supply the high demand of irresponsible consumption in primarily Western countries.

Postwar, today child labour remains widespread with an estimated 900,000 children working illegally. Children working in diamond mines (in dangerous conditions and often the victims of violent coercion) typically earn USD 0.15–0.60 per day without a contract, or USD 2.10 per day with one. The latter amount is still barely more than the international poverty line of USD 1.90 a day. Furthermore, diamond mines threaten the lives of children due to being infested with mosquitos carrying infectious diseases.

Child trafficking was so high in Sierra Leone a state of emergency was declared in 2018, all while the country's economic growth is highly dependent on diamonds. Not only diamonds but cocoa, which is highly in demand, is another product linked to high levels of child labour.

The nonprofit, Hope for Lives, has been successfully working to provide education for children so that they can escape work. This organization is a grassroots initiative founded by a local person, Thomas Bobby Smith. By providing opportunities to use computers, it gives over 3,000 children access to education and accordingly to a chance at a better life, free from conflict. This is an example of how local initiatives combined with large-scale initiatives are also important for achieving the 2030 Agenda.

## Climate Action — 2021

In 2020, almost all disaster-related displacements (30.7 million) were caused by extreme weather events—more than three times the number caused by violence and conflict (9.8 million). Whilst a direct causal link between climate change and weather events cannot be proven, the scientific consensus is that the changing climate is causing more frequent extreme weather events which will intensify in strength and duration if urgent action is not taken.



## Climate Action — 2030

SDG 13 (Targets 1, 3 and b) aims to protect children by strengthening all countries' resilience and adaptability to climate related disasters. The Goal aims to improve climate change education and awareness, as well as improve individual and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, reducing impacts and utilizing early warning systems. Finally, SDG 13 seeks to involve youth in climate change planning and management for their futures.

### What is the Impact?



30.7 million displacements caused by natural disasters in 2020—almost all were related to extreme weather

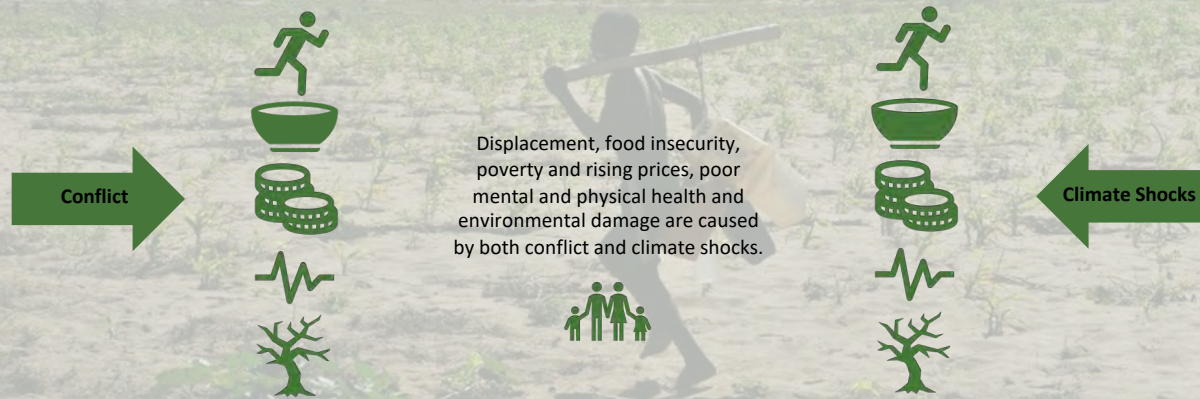


60% of the countries considered most vulnerable to climate change are affected by armed conflict



Of the 34 countries in food crisis in 2017, 14 experienced both conflict and climate shocks

### The Dual Burden of Conflict and Climate Shocks



*“Conflicts sharply increase the fragility of the institutions, essential services, infrastructure and governance that are critical for strengthening people’s resilience to a changing climate and environment.” ICRC, 2020*

## Progress and Change

Goal 13 remains critical in regions affected by conflict. Whilst the extent and ease of adaptation required varies geographically, fragile and conflict-affected states are least able to make necessary changes or investments due to already weakened institutions. Whilst the focus of governments is understandably on restoring national security, the economy and infrastructure, it remains important to pursue Targets 13.3, and 13.b as meeting these will improve future outcomes, increase understanding of the consequences of climate change, and provide sustainable solutions.

In 2020, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) published *When Rain Turns to Dust* to raise awareness and understanding of the combined impact of conflict and climate on

people’s lives. In the same year, the ICRC updated its 1994 Guidelines for the Protection of the Natural Environment in Situations of Armed Conflict with the aim of highlighting and encouraging respect for International Humanitarian Law (IHL) rules which protect the natural environment, including those which limit the environmental consequences of armed conflict that can directly contribute to climate change. All 193 members of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) were urged to reflect these guidelines as part of the UNEA-2 Resolution on the Protection of the Environment in Areas Affected by Armed Conflict adopted in 2016.

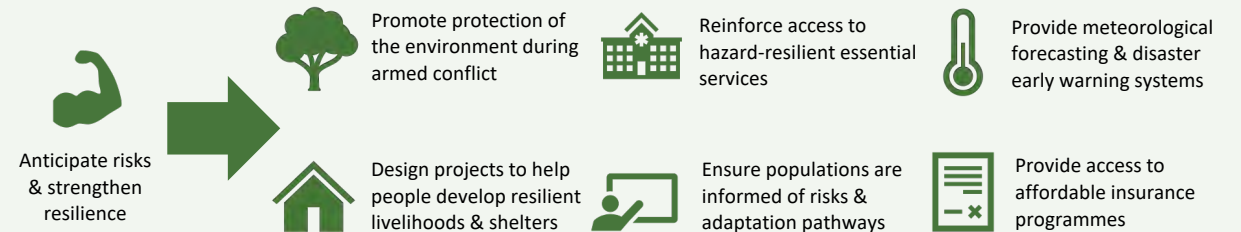
Despite all of the above, tangible progress is still limited by a lack of commitment internationally to support meaningful change.

### Path to 2030

Five lines of action for humanitarian organisations to prepare for climate resilience & action are suggested in *When Rain Turns to Dust*:



### How to help communities in conflict strengthen their climate resilience (from ICRC 2020 & USAID 2017):



## Case Study — Mali

Mali was making positive strides in development before conflict broke out in 2012 in the north, an area hampered by decades of desertification, unpredictable rains and poor infrastructure.

Prior to the outbreak of conflict, Malians were freely able to adapt to the effects of climate change. During droughts, pastoralists were able to travel to find grazing and water for their herds, and family members could travel to find work. The state also provided support. With the violence, however, came restrictions on movement. Herders were unable to move freely because they feared for their safety. Economic migrants were trapped by their fear of being attacked by armed bandits, and the state withdrew from the north.

Heavy rains in 2018 destroyed crops and flooded fields leading to a

scarcity of grazing land. Unable to travel with their herds, pastoralists gathered in areas close to water, creating conflict with locals over scarce resources. With no food, grazing or income, they watched their herds die and were unable to support their families.

When interviewed by the ICRC, Malians understood little of climate change but were aware of the increasingly unpredictable weather patterns and the effects of conflict on their ability to adapt. This inability to adapt has led to a reversal in development and some of the worst conditions for children anywhere in the world; Mali currently ranks 184<sup>th</sup> out of 189 in the Human Development Index. Without a concerted effort to combat the dual impacts of conflict and climate change, the outlook for Malian children is poor.

## Life Below Water — 2021

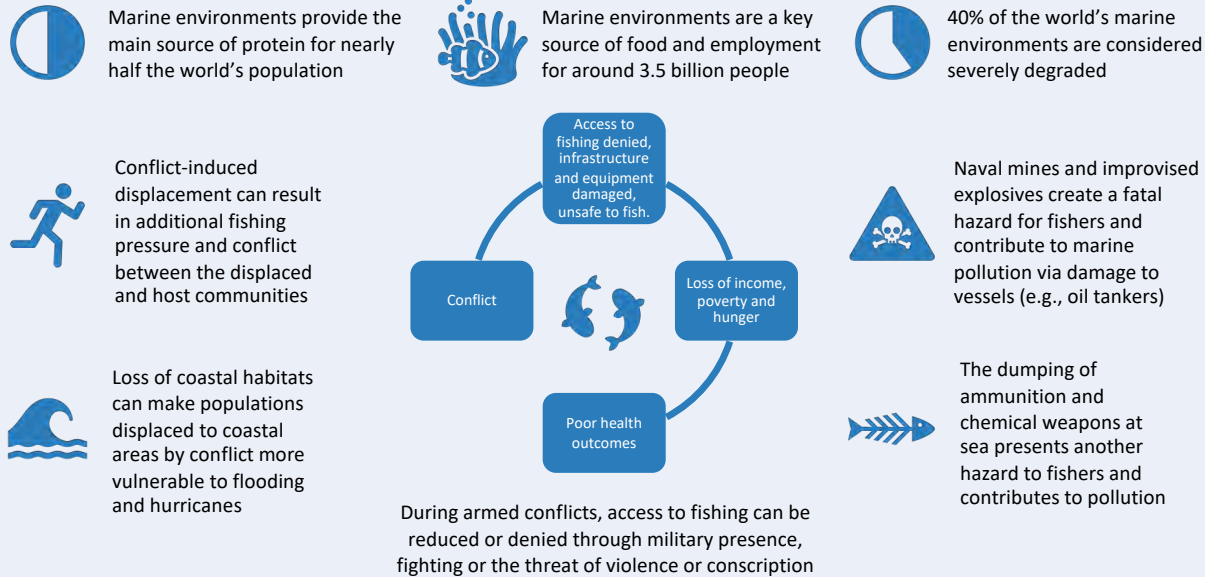
A healthy marine ecosystem is critical to preserve a healthy climate. However, climate change, marine pollution and over-fishing are degrading marine environments—threatening progress towards this goal, which is vital to the livelihoods and food security of billions. Currently, only 2.7% of the world’s oceans are highly protected. Conflict-related poverty and displacement can increase fishing pressure, and conflict can reduce or prevent access to marine resources.



## Life Below Water — 2030

The success of SDG 14 is critical to reducing the likelihood of future conflicts over resources. Targets 4, 7 and b seek to restore and protect fish stocks by regulating harvesting, preventing illegal and damaging fishing practices, and promoting the sustainable use of marine resources via alternatives, such as tourism, to increase economic benefits. They further seek to protect the rights of small fishers through the application of legal/regulatory frameworks.

### What is the Impact?



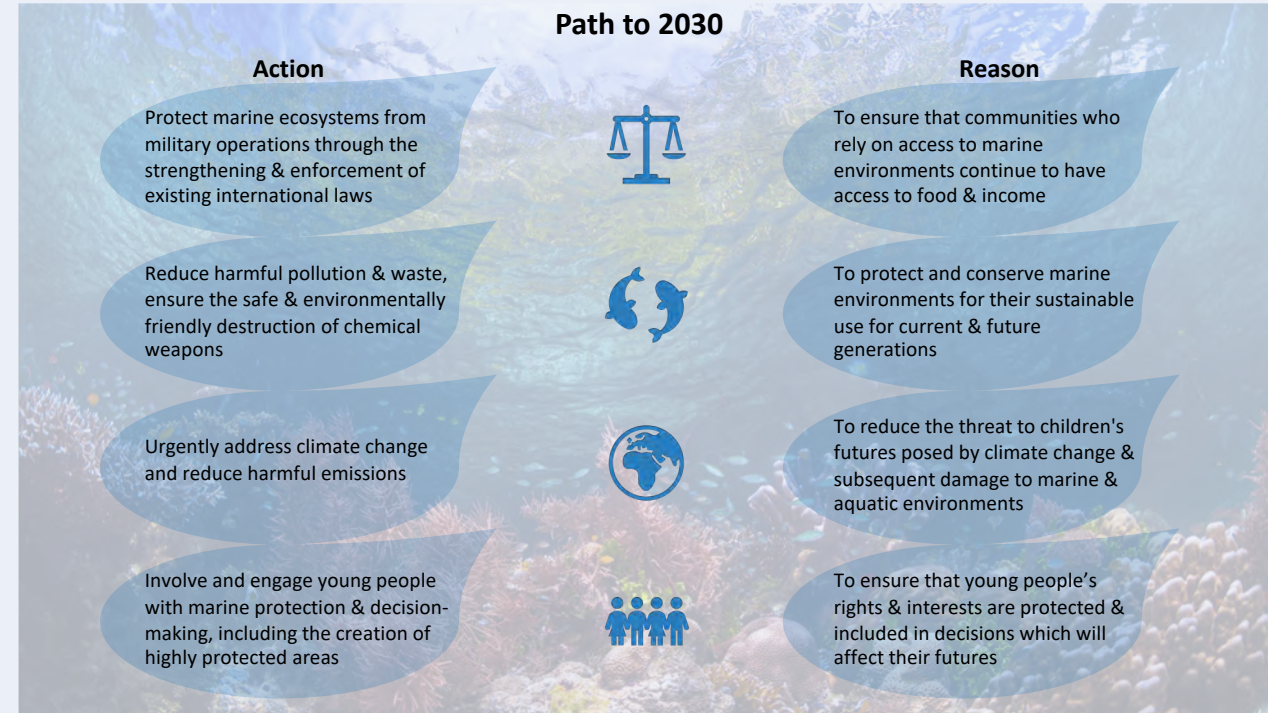
**When access to fisheries is denied, or when fishing becomes impossible or fish stocks so depleted as to no longer sustain the communities reliant on them, the children in those communities suffer from hunger, poverty and associated health and social problems**

### Progress and Change

To date, no binding legal agreement has been reached to protect marine environments. The closest is the San Remo Manual which encourages the parties of a conflict at sea to agree to avoid hostilities in areas containing rare or fragile ecosystems or the habitats of depleted, threatened or endangered species. Though International Humanitarian Law (IHL) rules exist to protect vital human infrastructure and the natural environment in conflict, these rules have rarely prevented attacks or been enforced. Recognizing this gap in protection, the International Committee of the Red Cross published Guidelines on the Protection of the Natural Environment in Armed Conflict in 1994 (revised 2020).

Following this, a number of steps were taken: in 2009, The UN Environment Programme published Protecting the Environment During Armed Conflict; in 2011, the UN’s International Law Commission included the protection of the environment in relation to armed conflicts in its programme of work; and in 2016 the Environment Assembly of the UN adopted the UNEA-2 Resolution on the Protection of the Environment in Areas Affected by Armed Conflict, urging its 193 members to reflect the ICRC guidelines. Despite this progress on paper, the natural environment continues to be damaged by conflict with little or no consequences for the armed groups and states responsible.

### Path to 2030



### Case Study — Yemen

After a decade of civil unrest and a civil war the population of Yemen is now experiencing a major humanitarian crisis. Caught up in the conflict were Yemeni fishers who relied on fishing already over-exploited fishing grounds for their main source of food and income. Prior to the hostilities, 1.7 million people were supported by over half a million individuals in fishing-related work. As the sea and beaches in the north became the backdrop to hostilities, fishermen—who were either denied access to fishing grounds or forced to venture further offshore due to depleted fish stocks—found themselves at risk from Marine-Borne Improvised Explosive Devices, naval mines and terrorist attacks. In time, fish

markets and landing sites were also destroyed by the fighting. Those who fled to the south are now being assisted by the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) who are working to restore fishing infrastructure and assist fishermen and their families. NRC provides new equipment, training on GPS systems and engine maintenance, and is restoring the fish markets and landing sites. International efforts to protect life under the seas during peace and conflict, through climate action, marine protection, sustainable fisheries management and IHL, remains critical to the future of fishing in the region. Without such protection, the children of Yemeni fishers face an uncertain future and continued hardship.

## Life on Land — 2021

Healthy terrestrial ecosystems provide a key source of food, fuel, employment and shelter, and are critical to preserving a healthy climate. However, land degradation is a global problem. Competition over terrestrial resources such as forests and pasturelands in fragile states can lead to conflict, and conflict can reduce or prevent access leading to poverty, hunger and poor health outcomes. In addition, conflict itself can damage and degrade terrestrial ecosystems.



## Life on Land — 2030

SDG 15 does not directly mention children in conflict. However, the success of SDG 15 is critical to reducing the likelihood of future conflicts over resources and to increasing the resilience of communities and children suffering from the dual burden of conflict and climate change. Targets 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 relate to the restoration, conservation and sustainable use of freshwater and terrestrial ecosystems and reversing the degradation of natural habitats and desertification.

### What is the Impact?



Over the past 40 years one third of the world's cropland has been abandoned because of erosion



Between 1950 & 2000, 80% of all major armed conflicts took place directly in biodiversity hotspots



56% of the 25 countries most vulnerable to climate change are embroiled in conflict



Conflict both restricts movement, leading to difficulties for pastoralists, or displaces people, leading to additional pressure in specific areas



Destruction of natural resources increases the effort & distance required to gather firewood & forest products, a burden which falls predominantly on women & children



Wild plants & meat form an important source of nutrition for many children during conflicts, without which health issues such as anaemia may increase



55 states & five other areas have an identified threat of antipersonnel mine contamination, as of January 2021  
Nature can benefit from areas abandoned by humans; however, land mines have been blamed for pushing some mammal species closer to extinction



### Progress and Change

Whilst none of the targets and indicators for SDG 15 relate directly to children, achievement of this goal is nonetheless vital.

As for SDG 14, International Humanitarian Law (IHL) in theory, protects vital human infrastructure, for example agriculture, and the natural environment. The progress on paper described in SDG 14—the ICRC guidelines, UN publications, recognition by the UN International Law Commission and the UN Environment Assembly resolution—is progress, yet falls short of effective legal protection.

More practical efforts to protect terrestrial ecosystems and promote peace include the following:

The Peace Parks Foundation (PPF) was established in 1997 to

create transfrontier conservation areas in Southern Africa which support sustainable economic development, biodiversity conservation and regional peace and stability. To date, PPF has been involved in the creation of 10 of the 18 transfrontier conservation areas found throughout southern Africa.

Conflict Sensitive Conservation (CSC) is a method of integrating conflict sensitivity into conservation programmes in order to minimize conflict risks and maximize peace-building opportunities. Developed by the International Institute for Sustainable Development, CSC has been successful in countries, including some affected by armed conflict, in Africa and Latin America.

### Path to 2030

#### Action

Enforce existing IHL rules on the damage/destruction that can be inflicted on agricultural lands and natural environment (e.g., forests)

Use IHL to create a framework to protect biodiversity hotspots from degradation by designating them as demilitarized zones

Reduce harmful pollution and waste, including ensuring the safe disposal of chemical weapons and clearance of land mines

Involve and engage young people with environmental protection and decision-making



#### Reason

To ensure that communities who rely on agriculture, forests and other environments continue to have access for food and income

To protect and conserve biodiversity and natural resources for planetary health and the sustainable use of resources

To protect and conserve terrestrial environments for their sustainable use for current and future generations

To ensure that young people's rights and interests are protected and included in decisions which will affect their futures

### Case Study — Mozambique

Ecosystems at Gorongosa National park, established in 1960, were badly damaged by the civil war in Mozambique, which ended in 1992, and more than 95% of the large mammal population was wiped out.

Beginning tentatively in 1994, efforts to rewild and restore the park accelerated when in 2004 the Government of Mozambique and the US-based Carr Foundation formed a partnership to restore wildlife and develop sustainable economic opportunities in the park.

Today the park is thriving, with ample wildlife to re-seed other recovering national parks and community projects committed to benefitting the 200,000 people who live in or near it. Park outreach

initiatives also target health, education and community-based natural resource management, with a focus on women and girls.

The park is a positive example of how working towards SDG 15 can be of direct benefit to children in local communities (and further afield via positive ecosystem services) and how such parks should be protected from conflict. Had the area been designated a demilitarized zone it is unlikely that the damage to ecosystems would have been so catastrophic. However, involving local communities in the restoration work and ensuring that they benefit directly from sustainable activities, can only increase the chances of peace in the future.

## Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions — 2021

Achieving global peace is an essential step to achieving all SDGs—and for countries embroiled in conflict, requires action from multiple stakeholders. Until peace is achieved, however, conflict remains. And the over 400 million children currently living in conflict areas are exposed to domestic instability, with reduced access to education and health facilities. As a result, the need for practical and legal protection during conflicts is paramount.

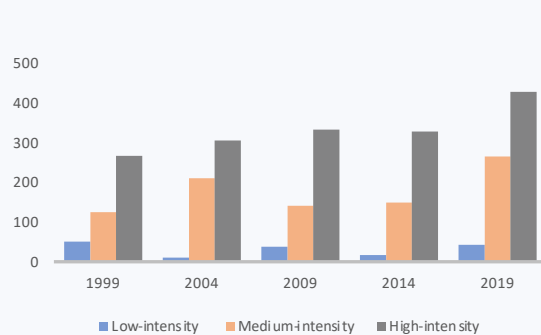


## Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions — 2030

SDG 16 (Targets 1, 2 and 9) seeks for children to be free from violence, abuse and exploitation; to feel safe—both in public places and in their own homes—whilst also having the legal identity to benefit from civil rights. Whilst these targets can be approached using varying methods, Targets 3 and a, also seek for law and governance to be strengthened to enhance protection, giving children in conflict the chance to live peaceful lives.

### What is the Impact?

(Data relates to statistics for the year 2019 unless stated)



Children (millions) living in high, medium and low-intensity conflicts, by year

No. of children known to be killed or maimed in 2020: 8,422

Percentage of killing and maiming violations in conflict zones due to explosive weapons: 37%

No. of children living in conflict zones that report sexual violence against children: 72m

No. of verified cases of sexual violence in conflict zones: 749 (98% female)

No. of rape and sexual assaults cases estimated unreported in conflict zones: 80%

No. of children deprived detained for association with armed groups (2020): 3,243

No. of children abducted in conflict zones: 1,804 (80% male)

### Path to 2030



### Progress and Change

Since 2015, several initiatives have been developed to drive change towards achieving SDG 16:

In 2016, WHO developed the INSPIRE package comprising seven strategies designed to help governments and agencies develop interventions which would promote a reduction in violence against children, including those living in conflict.

The SRSG/CAAC reports annually regarding children in armed conflict and highlights countries of significant concern. The UN Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) is key to this process, enabling the six grave violations against children living in armed conflict to be tracked (26,425 verified violations in 2020).

By 2019, 163 countries had signed up to the Mine Ban Convention, and 120 to the Convention on Cluster Munitions. These agreements promote the prevention of harm as a result of weapons by banning their production as well as requiring stockpiles to be cleared.

Call to Action, established in 2013, is a multi-stakeholder group (currently with 80 global partners) with an aim of driving change to address gender-based violence in emergency situations. To date the group has successfully advocated for increased resources and developed guidance for policymakers. A recent 2021–2025 road map highlights its continuing goals.

### Case Study — Ethiopia

Ethiopia's Tigray region has been the focus of international attention since November 2020 due to continued fighting in the area (involving both Ethiopian and Eritrean troops). In a short period of time, reports of atrocities against children were apparent for all six grave violations: killing of children during the Axum massacre; recruitment of high school pupils as child soldiers; cases of gender-based violence against girls, including rape; evidence of the abduction of refugees; damage to or occupation of schools and healthcare facilities; and blocking or restriction of humanitarian teams from reaching the zones that require help.

The six grave violations against children, monitored by the Special Representative to the UNSG, are based on international law.

International Humanitarian Law (requiring the protection of civilians) is covered by the Geneva Conventions, which Ethiopia and Eritrea have both signed (Ethiopia has also signed Protocol II). And yet clearly, the protection of children has not been a priority in this region.

The Inquiry on Protecting Children in Conflict found that the laws around the protection of children in conflict are numerous and complicated and has called for change. It is clear that something must change to drive accountability and strengthen the law, so that situations like Tigray cannot continue. Peace could drive forward progress in so many other SDGs—change is simply essential.

## Partnerships for the Goals — 2021

Achieving the SDGs requires partnership. It requires the world to work together, to share common goals and common values. In 1970, the UN set a target for aid from developed countries to be 0.7% of national income. In 2020, the average was just 0.31% (albeit an increase on previous years), and in 2018 only 4% of DAC ODA was provided for conflict, peace and security. As COVID-19 impacts the world, these amounts are only expected to decrease.



## Partnerships for the Goals — 2030

The 19 targets of SDG 17 seek financial commitment, advancement and sustainability, with cooperation for trading, development of science and technology, and information access via fixed broadband. In addition, SDG 17 seeks for data and statistics, including population data, to be readily available in countries. Many initiatives need to succeed to achieve the SDGs for children in conflict zones. They are all influenced by the success of SDG 17.

### What is the Impact?

The global SDG funding gap is estimated at USD 2.5–3 trillion per year (2019)

Total ODA to conflict-affected countries (2018)—31.2%; ODA for peacebuilding (2018)—11.2%

COVAX objectives: 3.8bn doses of COVID-19 vaccines to lower income economies by 2022; G7 will donate 1bn (covering <30%)

Only 3 of the 10 countries in conflict considered the worst places for a child have produced censuses in the past 15 years

Difficulty in gathering data from conflict zones due to access, concealment and definition challenges

Only 1.6% of people in fragile and conflict-affected situations have fixed broadband subscriptions

### Progress and Change

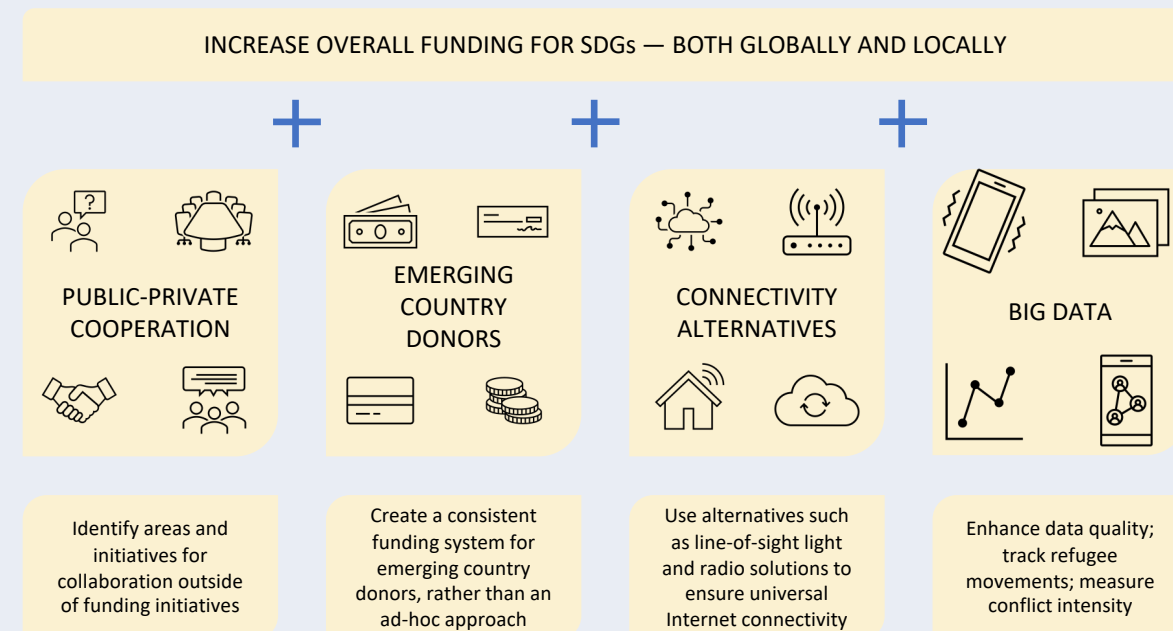
The targets of SDG 17 are extensive, with 21 indicators to measure against. For children in conflict, data quality and access to the Internet are important direct targets. However, all of the SDG 17 targets underpin whether the SDGs can be achieved for children living in conflict, and the following initiatives are examples of how this can be achieved:

The Global Investors for Sustainable Development Alliance was established to drive forward investment in order to reduce the SDG funding gap. Partnered by the UN, its members represent international finance institutions—and its goal is to develop projects and strategies to mobilize and scale up investment.

The Uppsala Conflict Data Programme (UCDP) has produced conflict-related data for 40 years, based on publicly available material and using a defined methodology aimed at achieving transparency and reliability. This data has assisted the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) in mapping children in conflict areas with the intent of influencing policy and research.

GIGA, established by UNICEF and ITU in 2019, aims to connect every school to the Internet—and therefore every child to information. Set up in response to COVID-19, the project is focused globally (including countries in conflict), mapping gap areas and seeking funding sources to meet needs.

### Path to 2030



### Case Study — Global and Syria

UNICEF published the 2021 Humanitarian Action for Children appeal in December 2021 with a target to raise USD 6.4 billion. Forty-two percent of this amount is required for the top 10 countries considered by Save the Children to be the worst places of conflict for children in 2020. Funding in 2020 for these 10 countries ranged from 15% to 37% of funding required—demonstrating the extent of the shortfall seen in that year. The unexpected global impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has negatively affected funding, but it has also exacerbated needs.

The largest funding requirement for 2021 is designated for Syrian Refugees—at USD 1 billion—and the statistics remain

startling with 3.2 million people needing improved WASH facilities, 3.4 million children needing protection, 4.8 million children needing educational support, and 2.5 million refugee and migrant children needing assistance. The scale of the issue is made greater by the fact that displaced people are spread over the five countries of Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Turkey.

The global community must work together to achieve these funding targets. In 2020, Syrian refugees received just 26% of the amount that was required to meet their needs. The world simply cannot afford to allow this to happen again.



## GLOSSARY

**CEPI:** The Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations.

**Change.org:** A platform that allows members of the public to drive change through the establishment of online petitions.

**Committee on the Rights of the child:** A group of experts responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

**Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labour:** A convention adopted by the ILO requiring ratifying countries to act to prohibit and eliminate the worst forms of child labour.

**COVAX:** A collaboration co-led by Gavi (the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization), WHO and CEPI designed to manufacture and distribute COVID-19 vaccines equitably, around the world.

**COVID-19:** A disease caused by the coronavirus SARS-CoV-2, which caused a global pandemic (emerged in 2019).

**DAC:** The OECD Development Assistance Committee—a forum for the discussion of development- and aid-related issues in developing countries.

**EU:** The European Union—an economic and political union composed of 27 European countries.

**Fragile and Conflict-Affected Countries (FCAC):** Low- and middle-income countries impacted by fragility and conflict, according to a World Bank classification.

**Geneva Conventions:** The Geneva Conventions are a series of treaties (with four additional protocols) that form the basis for International Humanitarian Law, relating to conduct in armed conflict.

**GPS:** Global Positioning System that gives the location of something on earth.

**Gross National Income:** A country's gross domestic product combined with net income from overseas.

**G7:** The Group of Seven—a forum where the leaders of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the UK and the US meet to discuss global issues.

**IHL:** International Humanitarian Law—a set of laws that aims to minimise the effects of armed conflict from a humanitarian perspective.

**ILO:** The International Labour Organization—a tripartite UN agency with government, employer and worker representatives that seeks to improve working conditions and rights at work, globally.

**Incheon Declaration:** A declaration seeking equality, improved outcomes and appropriate funding for global education.

**INSPIRE:** A set of seven evidence-based strategies for countries to use to end violence against children.

**International Institute for Sustainable Development:** A registered charitable organization in Canada working in the field of sustainability and climate.

**IPC/CH:** An international classification scale that classifies the intensity of food and nutrition insecurity.

**ITU:** The International Telecommunication Union—the UN agency for information and communication technology.

**Millennium Development Goals:** A blueprint of eight goals agreed by the world that focussed on development prior to the adoption of the SDGs.

**MRM:** The UN Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism for grave violations against children in armed conflict.

**NATO:** The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation—a political and military alliance of European Countries and North America (30 member states).

**ODA:** Official Development Assistance.

**OECD:** The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development—an inter-governmental forum for economic progress and world trade with 38 member countries.

**NGO:** Non-Governmental Organisation.

**SCREAM:** Supporting Children's Rights through Education, the Arts and the Media—an ILO initiative to help educators raise awareness of child labour among young people.

**SRSR/CAAC:** The Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict.

**STEM:** science, technology, engineering and maths.

**2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development:** The Agenda adopted at a 2015 UN summit that drives the Sustainable Development Goals.

**UN Decade of Action:** A call made to all countries, by the UN in 2020, to enhance efforts to achieve the SDGs by 2030.

**UN Environment Assembly:** A global environmental decision-making body.

**UN Human Development Index:** A composite index (combining education, life expectancy and per capita indices) used to rank countries for human development.

**UN International Law Commission:** A body of legal experts, elected by the UN General Assembly, that develops international law.

**UN Resolution on Children and Armed Conflict:** A resolution containing a framework to stop violations against children in armed conflict.

**UN Security Council Resolution 2417:** A resolution recognising the link between conflict and hunger and denouncing the use of starvation as warfare.

## GLOSSARY

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**UNEA-2 Resolution on the Protection of the Environment in Areas Affected by Armed Conflict:**

A resolution that urges states to comply with environmental aspects of IHL.

**UNHCR:** The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees—the UN agency working for refugees, asylum-seekers, displaced personnel and stateless people.

**UNICEF:** The United Nations Children’s Fund—the UN agency responsible for the global welfare and development of children.

**UNICEF Humanitarian Action for Children Appeal:** A funding appeal to support UNICEF’s work with children affected by conflict and disaster.

**UNSG:** The UN Security General—the chief administrative officer of the UN.

**UOSSM:** The Union of Medical Care and Relief Organizations—a group of organisations from eight countries who work together to provide medical care to war victims in Syria.

**USAID:** The United States Agency for International Development—an agency that manages US government programs responsible for development assistance and foreign aid.

**WASH:** water access, sanitation and hygiene.

**WHO:** The World Health Organisation—the UN agency that is responsible for international public health.

**World Bank:** The World Bank—a global partnership that lends money to member countries, where required, to achieve poverty reduction.

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### Figures

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### Contribution Statement

JA and AM planned the document design. AM drafted content for the introduction, SDGs 1, 4, 7, 9, 16, 17 and the glossary. JA drafted content for SDG's 2, 3, 13, 14 & 15 and collated the reference set. DM drafted content for SDGs 6, 8, 10 & 11 and ES drafted content for SDGs 5 & 12. JA, AM and DM reviewed the drafts of fellow authors. All authors contributed to the final design. AM project managed the process and format edited the final version, and DM copyedited the final version.



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