For every child, answers
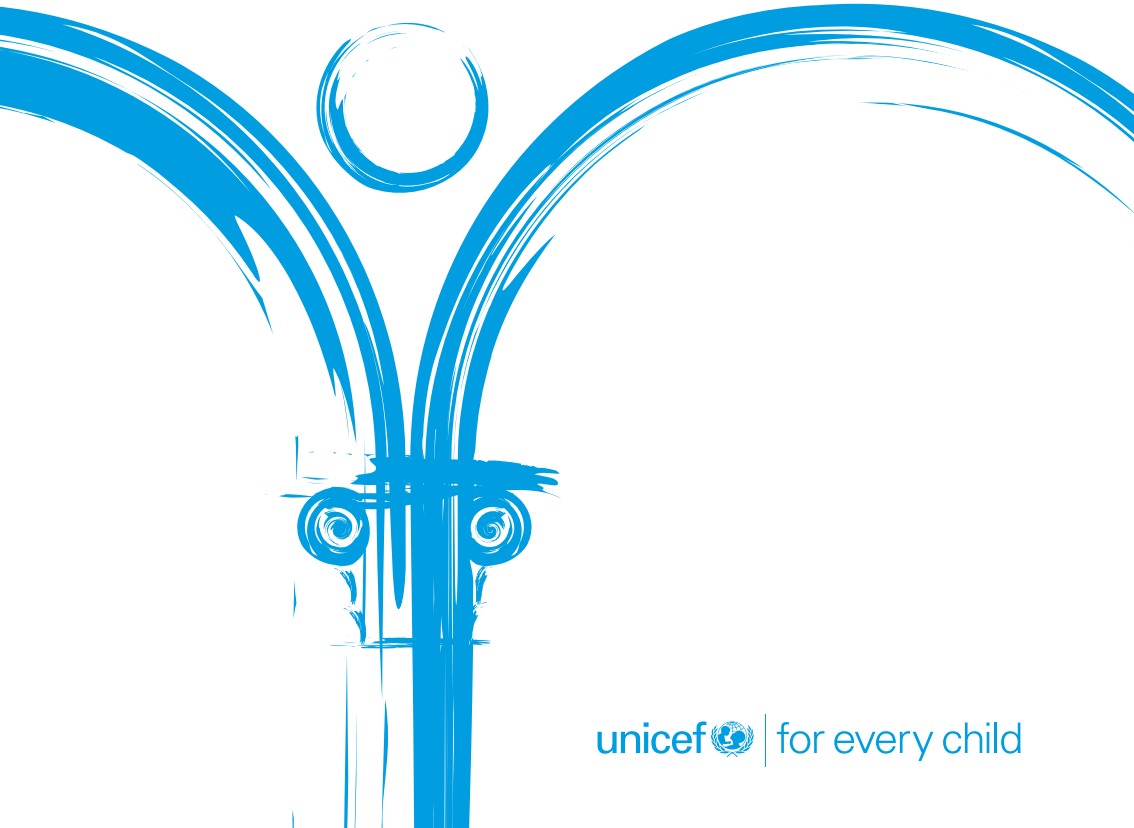
30 years of research for children at UNICEF Innocenti

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UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti

The Office of Research – Innocenti is UNICEF's dedicated research centre. It undertakes research on emerging or current issues to inform the strategic directions, policies and programmes of UNICEF and its partners, shape global debates on child rights and development, and inform the global research and policy agenda for all children, and particularly for the most vulnerable.

For every child, answers
30 years of research for children at UNICEF Innocenti

CRC30 YEARS

CONVENTION ON THE
RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

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DIRECTOR'S FOREWORD

For the past 30 years, UNICEF's Office of Research – Innocenti has probed the most pressing questions facing children, to find solutions that can help realize their rights under the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

We opened our doors in 1989 - the same year the Convention was approved by the UN General Assembly - thanks to the generosity of the *Istituto degli Innocenti* – a unique, historic institution founded over 600 years ago, and possibly the world's oldest continuously operating centre of care for vulnerable children. We are immensely grateful to the *Istituto,* and equally so to the Municipality of Florence, the Regional Administration of Tuscany and the Government of Italy, for their unstinting support over the years.

The Convention, which has become the most widely-ratified human rights treaty in history, is the foundation of our work here in Florence. From its outset, the Office has supported the interpretation and application of the Convention by governments through its research and advocacy. Some of our earliest work sought to clarify terms and concepts of the Convention, such as 'the best interests of the child' and the 'evolving capacities of the child', so they could be incorporated into constitutions, legislation and policy.

We have also monitored progress on implementing the Convention's general measures, including strengthening institutions in support of children's rights. Over the years UNICEF Innocenti has compiled a unique body of knowledge on the Convention's progress, its successes, and the key obstacles in its pathway.

Ten years ago, we evolved from a small research institute focused on interpreting the Convention into UNICEF's Office of Research, overseeing this portfolio for the organization's 140-plus Country and Regional Offices. As befits an organization with a wide-ranging mandate such as UNICEF, our research portfolio is broad and diverse. The Office undertakes research on key issues for children and young people and publishes in peer review journals to inform policy and programmes. We set standards and guidelines for research governance and support field offices in commissioning research. We train UNICEF staff in robust and ethical research methodologies and governance.

Collaboration and partnerships with external research and policy institutions are central to our work. We are regularly approached by governments and universities to work in partnership with others to generate and synthesize research. One such example of this is Global Kids Online, a partnership with the London School of Economics and

20 governments and research institutions, which researches children's online activities, access and risks. Another is our partnership with the School of Social Work at the University of Hargeisa in Somaliland to research the challenges facing children and youth on the move in the Horn of Africa. The Transfer Project, which examines the impact of cash transfers in a range countries, is a partnership with Save The Children UK, the University of North Carolina, UNICEF, the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, and national governments including Zambia and Malawi. Through these and other partnerships we connect to realities worldwide and amplify the results of our work.

As our work evolves over the next 30 years, emerging issues such as climate change, displacement, urbanization, mental health and technology, are assuming increasing importance to children, presenting risks and offering opportunities to realize their rights. Some established issues, such as learning and skills acquisition, will require more of our attention given slower global progress in recent years. And some areas of the world including sub-Saharan Africa and parts of Asia, and socioeconomic groups, first and foremost the poorest, most disadvantaged and marginalized in all countries, merit greater evidence generation and research support.

We are continuously striving to improve, particularly in monitoring and understanding the impact of our research and our outreach. This is always challenging since it is often hard to link evidence and outcomes. But new methodologies are emerging that can help us, our funders and our policymakers to better understand how high-quality, ethical research on children and young people can lead to improved policies and programmes for them, and ultimately to their greater well-being.

The 30 narratives in this publication showcase the range and depth of the work UNICEF Innocenti has undertaken over three decades of existence. Our staff and consultants who undertake this work, lie at the heart of our office, and we are immensely grateful to them for their dedication and expertise. In everything we do, our overarching objective is to seek answers to the most pressing challenges for children, and to make the Convention of the Rights of the Child a living reality for every child.

Priscilla Idele

Director a.i.
UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti

RIGHTS
OF THE CHILD

CHILD RIGHTS

Why do they matter?

There was a time when children were not seen as individuals with their own rights. They were not even seen as children, but as little adults. The 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the most widely ratified United Nations convention and the cornerstone of all our work, was the ultimate step in a lengthy process that finally made it possible to recognize children as rights-holders and active agents in society. The Convention sets out the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of children. For the Convention to be effective, its 196 signatories had to pass legislation and set up institutions to implement it, and monitor its progress. This was crucial to ensuring that the Convention would not be an empty promise to the world's children.

What have we done?

The Convention came into force the same year our office was founded. Research, analysis and study of the Convention were among our top priorities. We looked at the central principles and provisions of the Convention, which had important implications for stakeholders. Some of the world's most renowned experts on child rights worked with us on key publications: Philip Alston on *The Best Interests of the Child*; James Himes on resource mobilization for Convention implementation; Roger Hart on child

participation; Gerison Lansdown on the evolving capacities of the child; and Nigel Cantwell on the best interests of the child in intercountry adoption. Our analytical work over many years has been complemented more recently by research on the challenges to child rights arising from the rapid growth of children's internet use; on national child rights governance capacity; and on the ethics of rights-based approaches to research involving children and the use of big data and social media profiles to gather evidence on children.

What is the impact?

We have contributed to the work of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child in interpreting its provisions and translating them into general comments. We helped to prepare the handbook for its Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. Our analysis of law reform and implementation costs has been translated into six languages and has been used in Canada and South Africa for budgeting and planning purposes. Our thesaurus and glossary remain unique tools in the international discourse on child rights, making the Convention more accessible to legal experts, academics, researchers and governments as they draft legislation to implement the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Photo caption: Balloons flutter from a steel fence in Istanbul, Turkey (2019). 'Floating dreams' was taken by a 16-year-old participant in a project for Turkish and Syrian adolescents, aimed at using photography to learn about sharing and contributing to social cohesion. © UNICEF/UN0322282/Masri

BIRTH REGISTRATION

Why does it matter?

It seems like such a simple thing: A child is born, the birth is registered with the civil authorities, and the child becomes a legal person in her or his own right. Yet, more than 200 million children under the age of 5 worldwide are shut out of society. In 2015, it was estimated that less than seven per cent of children in Somaliland were registered, one of the lowest rates in the world largely due to the disintegration of civil registration systems caused by war. Without proof of age, children have a more difficult time asserting their rights and are more vulnerable to forced labour, child trafficking and child marriage. It may prevent them from being enrolled in school or sitting exams. Governments need proper statistics to set health and education policy and track progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals. Birth registration is every child's right and a stepping stone to enjoying other rights.

What have we done?

We published a research digest on birth registration in 2002, when governments were not giving it the attention it merits as a human right, and an estimated 50 million children were stateless. In 2007, we published *Birth Registration and Armed Conflict*, which explored the barriers to registration during times of upheaval and suggested how these could be dismantled – at least partially. This study drew on the expertise of the European Research Network on Children and Armed Conflict (EuroChiCoNet), which we helped develop. We advocated for national legislation to create simple, accessible and non-discriminatory birth registration for all children, and for temporary, informal measures, in emergency situations and conflict. Recently, case studies on Peru and Ghana explored the role of birth registration in public service provision for children.

What is the impact?

In 2015, the United Nations General Assembly set a target for universal birth registration as part of the Sustainable Development Goals, while the World Bank and World Health Organization embarked on a 10-year effort to ensure that all countries have sustainable civil registration and vital statistics. Many countries have made progress, including Brazil, which cut its proportion of unregistered births to 5.1 per cent in 2013 from more than 20 per cent a decade earlier; and Myanmar, which enacted a law in July 2019 to protect child rights, under which all children born in Myanmar are guaranteed the fundamental and unconditional right to registration at birth.

> **Birth registration is every child's right and a stepping stone to enjoying other rights.**

> **By increasing opportunities for children's engagement in civic life, we are shaping the societies of the future.**

CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION

Why does it matter?

Despite major advances in child health, education and protection, little formal progress on respecting a child's right to participation is discernible around the world. The participation of children, as outlined in a cluster of articles in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, calls for a fundamental reconsideration of the formal status of children in society, in line with their evolving capacities. This involves consulting children respectfully and taking their views into account. And adult society must discover new ways of engaging with children. This implies a profound cultural shift in our conception of democratic societies.

What have we done?

Democratic societies are defined in relation to the degree of participation that their citizens enjoy. By increasing opportunities for children's engagement in civic life, we are shaping the societies of the future. In 1992, an *Innocenti Essay* entitled 'Children's Participation: From tokenism to citizenship' addressed these issues and developed a 'ladder of participation' to measure varying degrees of participation: from exploitative or frivolous to authentic. Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child recognizes that children's ability to speak for themselves increases in line with their evolving capacities. 'Promoting

Children's Participation in Democratic Decision-making', a 2001 *Innocenti Insights* paper, took a deeper look at the true meaning of article 12 as a tool to help children challenge and defend abuses of their rights. It also helped to clarify that the right to be heard does not empower children to disregard the rights of others, particularly their parents.

What is the impact?

Roger Hart's ladder of participation received wide acclaim as a model for children's participation studies worldwide. It has shaped the way in which UNICEF addresses children's participation in formal decision-making processes, and remains, even today, an unsurpassed measurement tool. Following the release of that 1992 publication, all activities involving children had to be organized to elicit authentic – not tokenistic – contributions from children and young people. A watershed moment came in May 2002, when children formally took part in the Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly on Children. On this occasion, children from all over the globe took the floor to read aloud to world leaders the historic statement that they had authored – 'A World Fit for Us'.

Photo caption: Deborah Morayo Adegbile (left), speaks at a press conference at UN House, New York (2019). She is one of sixteen child petitioners from 12 countries, who, on 23 September, presented a landmark official complaint to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, on the lack of government action on the climate crisis. © UNICEF/UNI207485/Chalasani

> **Too often, these problems are dismissed as the consequences of poverty rather than discrimination.**

INDIGENOUS AND MINORITY CHILDREN

Why does it matter?

If you speak a different first language, dress differently or practise a different religion from most people in your country, you have probably experienced discrimination at some stage in your life. For children who belong to indigenous or minority groups, the experience is particularly harsh and the effects long-lasting. These children can be denied equal treatment before the law and equal access to health care. They may be forced to live in substandard housing or not have access to safe drinking water. Too often, these problems are dismissed as the consequences of poverty rather than discrimination.

What have we done?

The rights of minority children have always run through our research, often intersecting with our work on migrant children. A cross-country assessment on the children of migrants and ethnic minority children in Western countries was followed by a workshop and a report on the perilous situation of Roma children in Europe. In 1995, an Innocenti Insights paper looked at the deprivations and discrimination that indigenous and minority children face in the context of human rights. A 1997 research digest on indigenous and ethnic minority children led to an international gathering convened in Florence in 1999, with various Italian partners, which focused on the principle of non-descrimination of the children of indigenous peoples, minorities and immigrants. Ten young indigenous rights activists from Australia, Canada, Romania, South Africa, the State of Palestine, the United Kingdom and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela took part, along with thousands of children from schools in Tuscany. Another research digest in 2004 found that the most effective way to promote indigenous and minority children's rights was to recognize the inherent strength of indigenous community culture and to respect children's voices in all matters that affect them. More recently, we contributed a series of blogs and articles on child rights in relation to Rohingya refugees, which were published through major media channels.

What is the impact?

Our work over the years has shone a spotlight on this challenging problem. The Florentine Declaration, a product of the international gathering in 1999, and our reports have forcefully called for respect for the rights of minorities. The adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples by the United Nations General Assembly in 2007 was a giant step. But the continuing persecution and violation of the rights of indigenous peoples, including Native Americans in the United States, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia, are a sobering reminder of how much still needs to be done.

Photo caption: Tumpoun children shyly pose for the camera in their village in Ratanakiri Province, Cambodia (2019). The Tumpoun are an indigenous ethnic group who live in communal villages in the mountains of northeast Cambodia. © UNICEF/UN0322910/Seng

OMBUDS FOR CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

> **Our work has contributed to the visibility of ombuds for children over three decades.**

Why does it matter?

Children cannot vote and have little opportunity to influence government agendas or to enjoy legal representation. Violations of their rights are difficult to monitor. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child therefore recommends that states set up independent institutions to protect, promote and monitor children's rights. These institutions go by different names, such as 'ombuds for children', 'commissioners', and 'child advocates', but play the same role: monitoring violations of child rights and providing a space for dialogue between children and the state.

What have we done?

A global movement for ombuds for children emerged in the 1980s. Our first senior fellow, Målfrid Grude Flekkøy, was the world's first ombuds for children. In 1991, we published her analysis and reflections. Our first research digest mapped these relatively new institutions. A second edition in 2001 evaluated the impact of existing ombuds and defined the essential characteristics of ombuds. The Global Network of Independent Human Rights Institutions for Children, created in 2002 during the Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly on Children, designated UNICEF Innocenti its secretariat. We have since played a key role in supporting and strengthening regional networks of ombuds for children.

We have worked closely with the European Network of Ombudspersons for Children. In the run-up to the 2009 G8 Summit, in Italy, we supported the meeting of ombuds for children from all G8 countries. In 2012, we published a global study that analysed the role and impact of ombuds for children worldwide.

What is the impact?

In 1989, there were only three ombuds for children: in Costa Rica, Norway and Italy's Veneto region. By 2012, there were more than 200 such institutions in 70 countries. We have conducted research, supported the consolidation of networks and provided technical assistance for the creation and strengthening of these institutions. In 2002, we supported the First Global Meeting of Independent Human Rights Institutions for Children, which helped shape the outcome document, 'A World Fit for Children'. In 2007, we supported efforts by the Global Network of Independent Human Rights Institutions for Children for a strategic five-year review of the Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly on Children, and the launch of the Ibero-American Network for the Defense of Children's and Adolescents' Rights in Peru. Our work has contributed to the visibility of ombuds for children over three decades, including a comprehensive general comment issued by the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child.

Photo caption: A child stands at the door of a temporary shelter in Marsh Harbour, Abaco, Bahamas, after Category-5 Hurricane Dorian hit, leaving a path of destruction in its wake (2019). Her single mother says, "My home is completely destroyed … I don't have nowhere else to go … I don't know what to do. I have no family, no one I can seek help or support from." © UNICEF /UN0342066/Noorani

CHILD RIGHTS IN A DIGITAL WORLD

Why does it matter?

One in three internet users globally is a child. Just as in real life, children exploring the digital world can wander down dark alleys and fall prey to those with malicious intent. Yet, entering cyberspace can also be an adventure – a place to play games, learn about the wider world and make new friends. Researching what children do online is crucial to mitigating the risks they face while ensuring that they can take full advantage of the opportunities that the internet affords.

What have we done?

UNICEF Innocenti and its partners are making a major contribution to this research through the Global Kids Online programme. Since 2015, more than 20,000 children and over 12,000 parents in 18 countries have been surveyed in depth about children's digital habits. Researchers ask children how they access the internet, what they do online, whether they encounter cyberbullying or sexual messages, their level of digital skills, and who they turn to when something upsets them online. Parents are asked similar questions. The work has already revealed some surprising findings that will help policymakers to better focus their child protection efforts. Children, no matter which country they live in, tend not to seek teachers' help in this area, but prefer to talk to their parents or friends. Despite widespread concerns about the risks of meeting an online friend in real life, most of the children surveyed saw these meetings as a good thing, reporting positive experiences. Since 2019, UNICEF Innocenti has been co-leading a major new research effort on online child sexual exploitation and abuse in 14 countries across Africa and South East Asia, where our Global Kids Online survey will help countries and governments to generate unique data on these crimes.

What is the impact?

The Global Kids Online research and toolkit has helped to strengthen the global evidence base by enabling many countries to generate cross-nationally comparable evidence on children's online experiences for the first time. The research is already influencing international debate and action, helping to shape communications law in Argentina, criminal law in Ghana and digital literacy programmes in Bulgarian schools. By talking to children about what they want from technology, we can help them turn it into a tool that supports their creative expression, participation, play and learning.

> **Entering cyberspace can be an adventure – a place to play games, learn about the wider world and make new friends.**

Photo caption: One hundred young people, aged 15 to 24, attend a workshop in Serbia on innovative ways of gathering information and reporting, using primarily their mobile phones (2019). They will use their newfound skills to report on how their communities are making progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and their findings will feed into the Voluntary National Review to be submitted to the government. © UNICEF/UN0325554/Shubuckl

EDUCATION

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE

Why does it matter?

The benefits of early childhood education and care can be enormous. Yet, even in rich countries, it is not universally available. In preschool, children learn social skills and get a head start on learning. In poorer countries, formal care can reduce children's exposure to the risks of disease and violence. The benefits continue as children grow up: Those who attend preschool tend to do better at reading in primary school and are more likely to complete further levels of schooling and graduate from university. All of these benefits have multiplier effects for the child's community and for society at large. But they can only be achieved if preschool is of a high quality and available to all children, rich and poor.

What have we done?

Early childhood education and care has always been at the heart of our work. The first Innocenti Global Seminar in 1989 was on early childhood development. At that time, countries were grappling with underinvestment in early learning and with dramatic growth in the number of working women, which increased demand for quality childcare. We followed this with a workshop in 1995 and a report in 1996 to clarify which policies and programmes improve a child's chances of healthy development. Our 2008 Innocenti Report Card, *The Child Care Transition*, explored the tension between meeting a child's need for a loving, stable and secure environment and the need to support women's capacity to work. We then studied how to measure the quality of childcare and pre-primary education, and its governance in low-income countries, and how – as part of a suite of family policies – quality childcare could help countries to meet the Sustainable Development Goals for education and gender equality. Our 2019 research report entitled *Are the World's Richest Countries Family Friendly?* examined the mix of policies used to support parents and their young children.

What is the impact?

Our work informs public debate on early childhood education and care and influences government policy. The 2019 report on family-friendly policies received widespread media coverage in Canada, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America. Sometimes the link is strong, such as when the Government of New Zealand introduced new programmes for Maori students, partly in response to the country's low ranking in our 2018 Innocenti Report Card, *An Unfair Start*. Evidence of the effectiveness of childcare policies from our *Families, Family Policy and the Sustainable Development Goals* report has been presented to multiple government partners, including the Brazilian parliament, Buenos Aires City Council in Argentina and the Chilean Minister of Social Development and Family.

"The benefits of early childhood education and care continue as children grow up.

Photo caption: A child clutches a rainbow of coloured pencils in a preschool that provides learning opportunities for vulnerable children in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. (2014). Access to early childhood education benefits not only the child, but also the community and society at large. © UNICEF/UNI182574/Pirozzi

EDUCATION FOR ALL

Why does it matter?

Do you remember how you felt as a child when your teacher was absent? Probably delighted, especially if a test was scheduled or homework was due. Now imagine that your teacher did not show up on a regular basis, and even when physically present lacked the ability, tools or motivation to do the job. Your education would be incomplete. You might even have had difficulty moving to the next grade. Teacher absenteeism undermines a child's right to education.

What have we done?

As part of our work to address the global challenges of improving the quality of education we investigate why all children do not receive the same quality of education. We study how children learn; what it takes to make a school system, to keep the teachers and students within it, safe; and whether children across rich countries have an equal start in education. Our Time to Teach project, initiated in 2017, investigates teacher absenteeism in Africa. Recent World Bank data reported shocking levels of teacher absenteeism in parts of the continent. On any given day, 25 to 50 per cent of all primary school teachers are not in their classrooms. Our work in 20 African countries explores why. Is it due to low pay? Poor school management?

Inadequate teacher recruitment? Lack of training? Or is it related to factors beyond the school system, like roads, personal safety, weather and teachers' health? Once we have solid evidence and have analysed the data, we can make a case to governments on why and how teacher absenteeism should be tackled.

What is the impact?

Although our research on this topic is in its early stages, it has already served to raise the profile of teacher absenteeism as a common challenge across Africa. We have taken the conversation beyond pay and motivation to understand why teachers who want to teach can find it hard to do so. As part of this discourse, we have strengthened partnerships within and between countries, governments, international partners, UNICEF colleagues and teachers' unions. Many of these partners have supported the work through in-kind contributions or by committing research funds. To date, the Time to Teach project has raised over US$1 million, trained 20 national research groups in qualitative data collection, and interviewed more than 1,000 teachers in schools across Africa.

Photo caption: 13-year-old Zainab and other students wait for a teacher at Treichville Regional School, Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire (2011). Although the school has reopened, most teachers remain absent.
© UNICEF/UNI109664/Asselin

> **Sports programmes can teach children how to take responsibility for their actions, respect each other and solve problems as a group.**

SPORT FOR DEVELOPMENT

Why does it matter?

Sport is so much more than just a game. Policymakers and programmers have long recognized how sport can be used to help children in seemingly unrelated areas of their lives. Sports programmes can teach children how to take responsibility for their actions, respect each other and solve problems as a group. Their experiences on the playing field can influence how they interact with family members and how they fit in with and contribute to their community. But to achieve such results, programmes must be designed with these goals in mind.

What have we done?

There are more than 3,000 sport for development initiatives worldwide, including initiatives jointly organized and delivered in partnership by the Barça Foundation, Futbol Club Barcelona and UNICEF. In 2017, these two partners asked us to conduct the first global survey of sport for development programmes, to see what lessons could be learned from successful programmes. In our *Getting into the Game* report, released in 2019, we analysed the data and made recommendations on how to improve policy and practice. We found that children often join a programme for the sport – but stay for the support they

receive. Programmes that allow time for reflection and learning keep children interested and engaged for longer than those that just focus on the game.

What is the impact?

Following the high-profile launch of *Getting into the Game* at Camp Nou, FC Barcelona's home stadium, and a major media campaign amplified by Lionel Messi and other global sports stars, news of the ground-breaking research effort has spread to leading sport for development practitioners across UNICEF and beyond. The multi-sectoral sport for development working group brought into being by the Barça Foundation, which involves more than 50 leading programme managers and practitioners from across the globe, has taken on the role of an international reference group on child-focused sport for development. The working group is developing the first ever sport for development programming framework. A second phase of research, also funded by the Barça Foundation, will conduct secondary analysis to test findings and validate theories of change. UNICEF National Committees and country programmes have begun to actively use the research to improve sport for development programming.

Photo caption: A boy keeps his eye on the ball at the Acakoro Football Academy, Nairobi, Kenya (2019). The centre focuses on the development of children through participation in sports. Its coaches provide high quality training on a daily basis, both on and off pitch, for the holistic development of its children. © UNICEF/UN0322679/Dejongh

ADOLESCENCE, GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE, AND PARENTING

> **Harmful practices violate the rights of children and can have an impact that lasts a lifetime.**

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Why does it matter?

In the next 12 months, at least 6 million girls under the age of 18 will be forced to undergo female genital mutilation, while an estimated 12 million girls will be married before they turn 18. The terrible truth is that those who enforce these practices are the very people who should be protecting these children from harm: their parents, members of their extended family or their community. These adults may believe that they are doing the right thing, whether for cultural, economic or religious reasons. But these harmful practices violate the rights of children and can have an impact that lasts a lifetime.

What have we done?

Between 1997 and 2001, we produced three research digests on multiple forms of violence affecting children and their families. In 2005, we were appointed to support the United Nations Secretary-General's *Study on Violence against Children*, contributing with a series of papers on human rights standards in combating all forms of violence against children. As an offshoot of these efforts, we pioneered UNICEF research on female genital mutilation with the publication of seminal analyses and studies that helped to mainstream the exploration of the complex social dynamics and cultural norms underpinning these practices. In 2009, our research contributed to the discussion of violence against the girl

child in the report of the International Conference on Violence against the Girl Child, held in the Netherlands. More recently, we evaluated the impact of cash transfers on child marriage and have since begun to investigate the phenomenon of boy child marriage. We currently provide technical support to the joint United Nations Population Fund and UNICEF Global Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage, which is now under way in 12 countries.

What is the impact?

While still high, the rate of child marriage has been falling. More than 40 countries have banned female genital mutilation, and some countries now apply harsher penalties against medical staff who perform such procedures. In 2008, an international donor working group based at UNICEF Innocenti launched a global platform for action to end this harmful practice. In 2012, a United Nations General Assembly resolution called for intensified global efforts to eliminate female genital mutilation, identifying it as a violation of human rights, and in 2015, the United Nations set targets to eliminate all practices causing specific harm to women and girls, including child marriage.

Photo caption: Pupils of Tumboboi Primary School, Kapchorwa district, Uganda (2018). The school has been at the forefront of awareness campaign against female genital mutilation (FGM).
© UNICEF/UN0312307/Bongyereirwe

> **Adolescents are breadwinners, caregivers in their families and communities, and are socially and politically engaged.**

ADOLESCENT WELL-BEING

Why does it matter?

While remarkable advances in child well-being have been achieved globally over the last three decades, gains for adolescents have lagged. Adolescents are often portrayed as a problematic age group – no longer children, but not yet adults. Nothing could be further from the truth: Adolescents play a key role in society. In many places, they are breadwinners, caregivers in their families and communities, socially and politically engaged, and sometimes already parents themselves. Some capture global attention, such as Nobel Peace Prize winner Malala Yousafzai, who champions access to education, and Greta Thunberg, who is galvanizing global youth action around climate change. Millions more are quietly making a difference or have enormous potential to do so. More research on the 1.2 billion adolescents in the world is needed, to provide the support they need to realize their aspirations and live happy, healthy and productive lives.

What have we done?

Our global adolescent research programme in 2014 aimed to establish which programmes and policies could translate into benefits for adolescents. Since then, we have mapped the formal policies and institutions that exist for adolescents, to better understand the social and cultural norms that influence policy implementation. We have produced ground-breaking methodological guidance on conducting research on adolescence and have tracked global developments with the quarterly *Innocenti Research Digest on Adolescence*. Our research has delved into the brain development of adolescents; synthesised gender socialization in low- and middle-income countries; investigated what works to reduce sexual violence against girls; and examined why boys tend to be bullied more than girls, at school. We have also compiled and analysed a series of longitudinal studies that track children at various life stages, to determine what is unique about adolescence.

What is the impact?

Our work is helping to raise the profile of adolescence at the global and national levels. In 2018, we informed the development of Generation Unlimited – a global public-private partnership that connects education and training to employment and entrepreneurship opportunities for adolescents. Our research has also highlighted new areas for inclusion in programming for adolescents, such as parenting skills, violence prevention, social protection, sport, mentorship and mental health. Development organizations and universities are making use of our varied tools and resources for improving adolescence research, including the first ever *Handbook on Adolescent Development Research*, which is now informing policy, programming and teaching.

Photo caption: Ephraim Contini, 17, from the Congo, and Oussama Fahri, 18, born in Libya and now an Italian citizen, stand outside Alkadia youth centre in Turin, Italy (2014), which offers young people recreational and cultural activities, and help with schoolwork. © UNICEF/UNI173331/Pirozzi

> **Helping parents is often the most effective and cost-efficient way to help children.**

PARENTING AND FAMILY SUPPORT

Why does it matter?

Not every child has parents who can love and protect them. Sometimes parents are still children themselves or suffer from the effects of poverty, conflict or disease. The detrimental consequences of poor parenting are well documented and can lead to delayed childhood development and the risk of maltreatment. Helping parents is therefore often the most effective way to help children. Help can take many forms, ranging from the provision of child benefits to training in positive parenting skills. Knowing what help to give, and when and how to give it, are the keys to a successful parenting programme.

What have we done?

In response to growing awareness of the need to invest more in parenting support, we decided to research the impact, relevance and scalability of existing programmes. In 2014, we convened an international meeting of parenting experts and jointly agreed on a three-year research agenda in partnership with University of Oxford's Department of Social Policy and Intervention. Together, we examined support available to families and parents in Belarus, Chile, China, Croatia, Jamaica, the Philippines, South Africa, Sweden and the United Kingdom (England). In 2017, we published a

research brief that examined whether programmes effective in one country could be successfully transposed to others. In 2018, we produced a series of working papers on parenting and family support, which captured: the experiences of participants and service providers; evidence of what works in lower-income contexts; and the implications of taking parenting programmes to scale in South Africa and beyond. In 2019, we published a research report on family-friendly policies in rich countries.

What is the impact?

By getting international experts to agree to a three-year research framework, we ensured the global coordination of research efforts, and that each new piece of research contributed to a bigger picture. We have filled some evidence gaps ourselves. *Family and Parenting Support*, a report we published in 2015, broadened thinking within UNICEF on the range of options available to deal with child protection and child rights. Our work has increased global understanding of parenting support policy and programming and has provided important evidence of how effective parenting training can reduce violence in the home.

Photo caption: Fahiem plays with his children at their home in Cape Town, South Africa (2019). "My kids are my teachers", he says. "They show me the way to be a better person. One night my daughter asked why I wasn't helping [my wife] by doing the dishes. That really drove it home."
© UNICEF/UN0315651/Sokol

CHILD HEALTH
AND NUTRITION

> **Initiating breastfeeding in the first hour of life can dramatically improve the health of both mother and baby.**

BREASTFEEDING

Why does it matter?

Breastfeeding is widely considered the best possible form of nutrition for infants. Initiating breastfeeding in the first hour of life can dramatically improve the health of both mother and baby. Yet many women cannot or decide not to breastfeed, with potential impacts on the health of the child and on the health costs to the family, community and country. While some mothers in rich countries are swayed by social pressure, or by marketing by manufacturers on the convenience and safety of breast milk substitutes, the bigger problem is that too few health care systems provide the right encouragement, training and facilities to make the decision obvious. They are failing to protect and promote a child's right to the proven nutritional benefits of breastfeeding.

What have we done?

The research centre was barely one year old when we helped to spark a global effort to increase breastfeeding. In 1990, we convened a meeting of experts and policymakers, which produced the Innocenti Declaration on the Protection, Promotion and Support of Breastfeeding. It lays out the health benefits of breastfeeding and sets targets for increasing the breastfeeding rate, and it provides a road map on how to reach these goals. The Global Breastfeeding Collective, a partnership of more than

20 international agencies led by UNICEF and the World Health Organization, bases its work on the declaration. A follow-up meeting in 2005 produced new targets and the Innocenti Declaration on Infant and Young Child Feeding. The declarations are the cornerstone of our efforts to rally worldwide support for major international initiatives on breastfeeding, including the World Health Assembly International Code on the Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes and the Baby-friendly Hospital Initiative.

What is the impact?

The Innocenti Declaration of 1990 convinced UNICEF and the World Health Organization and UNICEF to create the Baby-friendly Hospital Initiative, which trains maternity staff and advises hospitals on how best to encourage breastfeeding. Maternity facilities can be designated 'baby-friendly' if they have implemented 10 specific steps to support breastfeeding and do not accept free or low-cost breast milk substitutes, bottles or teats. Since the initiative was launched in 1991, some 15,000 hospitals in 134 countries have earned this status. In terms of our research, we continue to rank breastfeeding prevalence rates in high-income countries – most recently in the 2019 research report, *Are the World's Richest Countries Family friendly?* – as a basis for advocacy.

Photo caption: Suchirani Mandi breastfeeds her 3-month-old baby in West Bengal, India (2010). Breastfeeding provides ideal nutrition for infants and contributes to women's health by reducing the risk of breast and ovarian cancer. © UNICEF/UNI94987/Pirozzi

> **Children feel the indirect impacts of HIV/AIDS even when they are not infected themselves.**

CHILDREN AND HIV

Why does it matter?

An estimated 160,000 children under 15 years of age were infected with HIV in 2018. Of the estimated 37.9 million people living with HIV globally, 1.7 million are children. Children feel the indirect impacts of HIV/AIDS even when they are not infected themselves. They can be orphaned, forced to work prematurely if family members fall ill, or become undernourished if family meals are stretched to provide for AIDS orphans. Their education suffers when their teachers are affected. There is a reason why HIV/AIDS has been called the new plague: It is a disease that devastates every part of society.

What have we done?

In 2000, our research centre undertook a global study on the impact of HIV and AIDS on children. A book focusing on six countries in Africa and Asia followed: *AIDS, Public Policy and Child Well-being* looked at the impact of HIV and AIDS on health, education and the economy, access to antiretroviral drugs, and the child impoverishment and abandonment that can result. In 2002 and 2003, two *Social Monitor* reports analysed the spread of HIV, and young people's knowledge of HIV prevention in transitional countries. In 2005, the Innocenti Declaration on Infant and Young Child Feeding

called for counselling and support for breastfeeding mothers with HIV. We published 'Caring for Children Affected by HIV and AIDS', an *Innocenti Insights* paper, which analysed how the epidemic undermines children's health and schooling and reinforces marginalization and deprivation. More recently, a Research Watch video debate addressed the question: Will there ever be an AIDS-free generation?

What is the impact?

We contributed to the evidence that led UNICEF and the World Health Organization to include specific advice to mothers with HIV in updated Baby-friendly Hospital Initiative guidelines in 2003. After our 2000 global study called attention to the multiple ways in which HIV/AIDS affects children, UNICEF and UNAIDS launched a five-year global campaign in 2005 – Unite for Children, Unite Against AIDS, which supported national and local programmes to prevent HIV infection among children. This was followed in 2015 by All In! to #EndAdolescentAIDS, a global initiative that aims to achieve this goal by 2030.

Photo caption: A family displays the results of their HIV tests, in Benjaminkro, Côte d'Ivoire (2019). The parents have been seropositive for over 10 years. To the family's delight, the tests showed that all the children are HIV negative. The father has become a social mobilizer to inform people in the village about the importance of being tested. © UNICEF/UN0343488/ Dejongh

> **Allowing climate change to progress unchecked violates most, if not all, of the rights embodied in the Convention.**

CLIMATE CHANGE AND CHILDREN

Why does it matter?

No issue is as critical to the current and future well-being of children as climate change. Children are most vulnerable to the consequences of global warming, which range from droughts and flash floods to failing crops and more diseases. They suffer disproportionately from the effects of climate-induced migration and war. And they will be the ones left to cope with the hostile environment we leave behind, if current trends continue. Allowing climate change to progress unchecked violates most, if not all, of the rights embodied in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

What have we done?

Following the 2007 report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, we were among the first to study the implications of climate change for children. In 2008, we published a review of existing policies and frameworks on climate change and human security. In 2009, a discussion paper reviewed correlations between climate change and children's health. In 2012, our Research Watch video debate widened the discussion on the impact of climate change on children. *The Challenges of Climate Change: Children on the front line*, a report we published in 2014, offered the most comprehensive picture of the impact of climate change on children and young people, with contributions from 40 experts. The critical role of younger generations in tackling the problem was finally recognized. More recently, we connected our work on cash transfers with climate change in a paper that explored how cash helps families in Zambia to cope with climate-induced shocks, such as droughts.

What is the impact?

Our research has contributed to the global scientific evidence base on children and climate change. A summary of our 2008 report was presented at the International Conference on Human Security and Climate Change and at the Ministerial Meeting of the Human Security Network, in Athens, Greece. *The Challenges of Climate Change: Children on the front line* was the most comprehensive review of the subject by UNICEF at the time and helped people to grasp concepts such as intergenerational justice and child leadership. The report played a central role in informing UNICEF's participation in the 2014 United Nations General Assembly debates on climate change. We helped build capacity to identify the effects of climate change and explore which mitigation policies would benefit children most. While we cannot claim to have directly influenced the recent wave of action by young climate activists, we were early cheerleaders of children's involvement in the climate change debate.

Photo caption: Azalea Danes,16, and other youth climate activists call for global action to combat climate change outside UN Headquarters, New York, USA (2019). The event was part of the 'Fridays for Future' movement that has gained momentum internationally over the past year.
© UNICEF/UN0340776/Nesbitt

CHILD PROTECTION AND CARE

INTERCOUNTRY ADOPTION

Why does it matter?

Adopting a child from another country sounds like humanitarian gesture. But, over the decades, the practice has shifted from finding families for desperate children to finding children for desperate families. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, many countries in the former Soviet bloc were confronted with a sharp rise in child rights violations in connection with intercountry adoption. Albania and Romania turned to UNICEF for assistance to stop the 'exodus' of children via intercountry adoption. While this was an area in which the international community had little knowledge or experience, unscrupulous individuals recognized the potential profits to be made. The fine line between adoption and trafficking became blurred and the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child proved too vague to fully protect children who were eligible for intercountry adoption.

What have we done?

Following many calls for assistance and the ratification of the Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption, we published a research digest in 1998 setting out the essentials of a legal framework to guarantee respect for child rights in the process of intercountry adoption. Our work underscored that intercountry adoption required adherence to strict procedural conditions and safeguards before, during and after the adoption process. We then organized a capacity-building seminar for UNICEF staff to increase the specific skills and understanding required in this area. In 1999, we started examining the conditions of institutionalized children in former Soviet Union countries, and designed deinstitutionalization programmes for children in Argentina, Chile, Italy, Spain and Uruguay. Our 2014 report *The Best Interests of the Child in Intercountry Adoption* emphasized the continuing lack of clarity in this area and called on States parties to move swiftly to define clearly the best interests of the child affected by intercountry adoption.

What is the impact?

In 2003, we provided input to the first UNICEF programme guidance note on intercountry adoption. In subsequent years, many UNICEF offices have been called upon by governments for technical assistance, and their guidance has been decisive. Following our publications on deinstitutionalization, many countries in Europe and Latin America started to work on alternative childcare measures. In 2010, the United Nations General Assembly adopted guidelines on alternative care for children deprived of parental care. These included the general principle that all efforts should be made to enable a child to remain with, or return to, her or his parents, or other family members. More than 20 countries no longer allow intercountry adoption.

The practice has shifted from finding families for desperate children to finding children for desperate families.

Photo caption: A boy is absorbed in his painting in a studio that is part of the Let's Raise Children in Families child protection initiative in Rwanda (2016). The initiative seeks to return institutionalized children to family-based care and provides support to families who adopt these children.
© UNICEF/UN0303873/Unknown

CHILDREN AND JUSTICE

Why does it matter?

The idea that children should be treated differently from adults when they come into conflict with the law is not new. Norway's penal code in the thirteenth century specified that an adult caught stealing could lose two hands, whereas a child could lose only one. Yet it was not until a series of global agreements were made in the twentieth century, culminating in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, that those differences were spelled out and child rights pertaining to the justice system were agreed. Signatories to the Convention agreed that children would not be sentenced to death or to life imprisonment without parole. They also agreed to give more consideration to punishments appropriate to young offenders and their social reintegration. While there has been progress, child rights are still routinely ignored when children enter the adult world of criminal justice.

What have we done?

We began our in-depth research into juvenile justice in the 1990s, when children were receiving a lot of negative publicity it the media. In Rwanda, more than 1,000 children were arrested on suspicion of taking part in the 1994 genocide. In Europe, criminal gangs were increasingly using children to commit crimes and there was a sharp rise in juvenile offenders. We conducted global and national studies of what happens when children enter the justice system and in 1998 produced a research digest that summarized a considerable body of work. It was followed in 2001 by a strategy paper that we put into the hands of UNICEF child protection officers. As some conflicts ended and others broke out in the 2000s, we began to focus on children's involvement in transitional justice, including through peace and reconciliation commissions and traditional justice mechanisms. We were conscious that while children are often the target of abuse and violence during conflict, they can also be perpetrators of violence.

What is the impact?

Our series of research papers on transitional justice, published in the 2000s, highlighted the challenges faced by post-conflict states intent on seeking peace through justice. Our work expanded the body of evidence available to policymakers as they increasingly turned their focus to restorative justice, both in South Africa and in other countries. Our work contributed to the global debate at a time when UNICEF was working with countries including Georgia, India, Kazakhstan, Mongolia and the Philippines on making their justice systems more child-friendly.

Photo caption: A 15-year-old boy arrested for stabbing another boy awaits trial at a juvenile detention centre in Freetown, Sierra Leone, (2013). © UNICEF/UNI150699/Asselin

CHILD-FRIENDLY CITIES

Why does it matter?

If you were asked to design a child-friendly city, you might well include parks, safe streets, clean air and safe drinking water. You might even include basic services like education, health care and shelter. But for a city to be truly child-friendly, its children must be equal citizens, able to express their opinions, influence decisions and not fall victim to exploitation or abuse. No city ticks all these boxes, and some fall far below this standard. The averages used to calculate the so-called 'urban advantage for children' can obscure deep pockets of deprivation. With the proportion of children living in urban areas rising from 50 per cent today to an expected 70 per cent by 2050, child-friendly urban planning is critical for child well-being.

What have we done?

One of our first programmes addressed the needs of the urban child, in sub-Saharan Africa. At that time, UNICEF was supporting programmes to provide basic urban services, such as health care and sanitation, and tackling the issue of children living and working on the streets. Our country case studies highlighted important lessons gleaned from policy decisions, for instance, that all citizens benefit from measures to improve cities for children. Since 2000, our history has crossed paths with that of the Child Friendly Cities Initiative (CFCI), which encourages cities around the world to consider the voices, needs, priorities and rights of children in their public policies and programmes. We hosted the CFCI secretariat for over 10 years, while UNICEF National Committees have always been a strong partner in CFCI implementation at the local level, as have our country offices. Building on evidence from our database of best practices, we published in 2004 *Building Child-friendly Cities: A framework for action* and a step-by-step guide, which helped to define a child-friendly city and set out how to create one. In 2010, a set of self-assessment tools was designed to enhance the collection and analysis of data for policymaking and local planning, advocacy and community action.

What is the impact?

We have helped to shape and influence global efforts to ensure that urban children's rights are respected. In Italy, CFCI led to projects in more than 400 cities. *Making Philippine Cities Child Friendly,* (2005), resulted in a major effort to measure improvement in 24 areas of urban child well-being. Brazil set up the Platforms for Urban Centres initiative to encourage municipal and state authorities to work together to improve the welfare of urban children. In 2018, UNICEF launched a new CFCI website and the *Child Friendly Cities and Communities Handbook*, which includes a revised version of the framework for action and step-by-step guide originally developed at UNICEF Innocenti in 2004.

Photo caption: An urban park in Vietnam's Ho Chi Minh city includes an inviting playground for children (2018). © UNICEF/UN0213446/Viet Hung

CHILD LABOUR

Why does it matter?

It is common the world over for children to contribute to the household income by working. But when the child is too young to work, or the job is hazardous or hinders their education, alarm bells should ring. An estimated 168 million children aged 5 to 17 fall into this category. They do hazardous agricultural or industrial work, or are recruited as sex workers, child soldiers or domestic workers. While child labour is declining globally, there is much more to be done if United Nations Member States are to meet the goal to end child labour by 2025.

What have we done?

Child labour was a major focus in the early years at UNICEF Innocenti. In 1992, we studied children living and working on the streets in Brazil and India and held a global seminar on this subject in 1993. Soon after, we looked at child labour and education in Latin America and the Caribbean and published a pivotal 1996 publication, *Better Schools, Less Child Work: Child Work and Education in Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala and Peru*. The same year, we also looked at historical perspectives on child labour, and in 1998, we examined the reality of working children and the best interests of the child, highlighting children's own perceptions. In 2002, we began to study child labour in home-based manufacturing. Following the 1997 Oslo Agenda for Action, we partnered with the International Labour Organization and the World Bank to generate evidence to eradicate the economic exploitation of children. In 2018, we studied the impacts on child labour and schooling of three large-scale government cash transfer programmes in Malawi, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia. In a related 2019 study, we investigated the effect of cash transfers on child labour in refugee camps in Lebanon. A new project entitled Evidence on Educational Strategies to Address Child Labour in South Asia will update our understanding of the prevalence, trends and characteristics of child labour in Bangladesh and India, to identify cost-effective, scalable strategies to reduce child labour.

What is the impact?

Our work has helped to gradually build a global focus on child protection within UNICEF. Our Understanding Children's Work and its Impact website and database provided, for nearly 20 years, one of the most comprehensive sources of data and research on this topic. It helped researchers to understand the scale of child labour and to access research to support their own endeavours. Evidence from the youth well-being impact evaluation in the United Republic of Tanzania facilitated discussion with the government on how productive and economic impacts affect child labour and schooling.

Photo caption: A seven-year-old girl stands at a stall, at Dushambe Central Market, Tajikistan (2016). She does not attend preschool, but spends the whole day here with her mother, who sells traditional bread. © UNICEF/UN040914/Pirozzi

CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICT

Why does it matter?

Children are the first to suffer in times of war. Armed conflict continues to jeopardize children's lives even when they survive the violence. Other hazards lie in wait: unsafe drinking water, lack of food, no medical care, and risks to their physical safety as they flee the conflict zone. They can survive but be mentally traumatized by their memories of war, violence and exploitation. And their lives can be permanently marred by displacement, the loss of a parent or the physical consequences of war. Armed conflict violates most, if not all, of children's rights.

What have we done?

Building on the momentum of Graça Machel's report to the United Nations on children and armed conflict, we published an insight paper in 1997 on the effects of conflict on children in post-genocide Rwanda. The same year, we invited Ben Majekodunmi, the first UNICEF international child protection officer, to publish his reflections on his experiences in Burundi. In 2001, we convened a seminar to discuss gaps in research on the impact of armed conflict on children, which led to the establishment of the European Research Network on Children and Armed Conflict (EuroChiCoNet) at UNICEF Innocenti. Following Ms. Machel's recommendations, we published working papers on restorative justice after mass violence, prosecution of international crimes against children, and genetic tracing. We studied how children's education is hindered by conflict; how conflict makes birth registration difficult; how adolescents deal with the catastrophic events, such as famine, that often accompany conflict; and the ethical approach to researching children traumatized by conflict. In 2015, we explored the role of young people as agents for peace in an edition of Research Watch that looked at how children can help to heal the scars of violence by participating in peacebuilding.

What is the impact?

We have helped to shape and influence the research agenda on children and conflict from a very early stage. Our 2001 seminar helped to set the evidence-gathering agenda for an emerging global challenge. In 2005, we contributed to the child-friendly version of the *United Nations Guidelines on Justice in Matters involving Child Victims and Witnesses of Crime*, launched in 2007 at the sixteenth session of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, in Vienna, Austria. In 2006, we helped to articulate the policies of the Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission on the protection of child victims and witnesses. Our 2019 report on displaced children in the Horn of Africa set a new standard for amplifying the voices of children affected by conflict and insecurity.

Photo caption: First graders sit in a classroom in Marinka, Ukraine, where the windows have been covered with sandbags (2017). Over three quarters of school teachers interviewed near the contact line reported striking behavioural changes in students before and after the conflict.
© UNICEF/UN0150813/Gilbertson VII Photo

CHILDREN ON THE MOVE

Why does it matter?

There are many reasons why children migrate, within or across national boundaries, with or without their families. Some go in search of better economic and educational opportunities. Others may be fleeing persecution, family disruption, human rights abuses, war or natural disaster. Their search for greater security and stability is often compromised by a lack of affordable, legal channels to move safely. When authorities along migratory routes impede their movement, some children throw in their lot with smugglers, increasing their vulnerability. Nonetheless, states have an obligation to ensure children's safety even while they are on the move.

What have we done?

Our research priorities are to increase understanding of what pushes children to migrate, and to identify how to improve the safety of children on the move. The Social Monitor report we published in 2004 found that children left behind can benefit from remittances sent by parents who have migrated. Our 2005 working paper found that although migrant children can face discrimination and marginalization, they can also flourish in their new communities. Our 2009 study of migrant children in eight rich countries revealed many challenges, including accessing to health care, education and jobs. In 2018, in *Protected on Paper?*, we examined how the Nordic countries have responded to the arrival of large numbers of asylum-seeking children since 2015, and how this has challenged their well-established child protection systems. The report compares policies, institutions and practices and makes recommendations on what more can be done to protect and integrate these vulnerable children. Our 2019 study on migration in the Horn of Africa, *No Mother Wants Her Child to Migrate*, focuses on why children migrate, the services available when they move, and their safety during their journeys.

What is the impact?

We sparked a lively public debate in the Nordic countries with *Protected on Paper?* challenging the notion that full access to their rights depends on children's legal status. In the Horn of Africa, our research has supported local authorities' and international partners' efforts to address child protection concerns, including combating smuggling and trafficking. Our support to the University of Hargeisa enabled the School of Social Work to set up its first research programme, a milestone for the University. UNICEF country offices are using our insights to support children on the move with vocational training, psychosocial support services and community-based child protection measures. Phase two of the research programme will reach more than 1,200 children and produce the largest and most comprehensive data set on the experiences of children on the move.

" States have an obligation to ensure children's safety while they are on the move.

Photo caption: The wall of a shelter in the border city of Tijuana, Mexico, is covered with support messages for the children and families of the migrant caravan from Central America (2018). The shelter offers child protection assistance and legal advice. © UNICEF/UN0271779/Kelly

> **Violence can affect children's mental health, cognitive development and ability to form stable relationships well into adulthood.**

VIOLENCE AFFECTING CHILDREN

Why does it matter?

A parent slaps a child in anger. A teacher humiliates a student in class. A predatory official extorts sexual favours from an adolescent. Over 1 billion children globally experience brutal discipline, emotional abuse or sexual violence. Such experiences can affect their mental health, cognitive development and ability to form stable relationships well into adulthood, with potential negative impacts for the next generation too. Ending violence against children is a global priority for UNICEF.

What have we done?

Our broad goal is to support and promote the use of evidence-based policies and strategies to prevent all forms of violence against children. In 2018, we concluded a four-year project to assemble evidence to illustrate the social benefits of reducing violence. We worked closely with governments and universities in Italy, Peru, Viet Nam and Zimbabwe. Evidence from Peru revealed that many adults believe corporal punishment is an effective way to discipline children and have personal histories of violence, and that the child protection system is inadequate. In 2018, we released *Research that Drives Change: Conceptualizing and conducting nationally led violence prevention research*, a report on the causes of violence. In March 2019, we hosted a consultation with technical experts and leading researchers on ways to improve the quality and availability of data at the national, regional and global levels, and a global network was established with this goal in mind. We are also identifying areas of knowledge related to violence prevention and pinpointing gaps where new research investments need to be focused.

What is the impact?

Discourse among policymakers is shifting from 'This does not happen here' to 'What is driving this?' and 'How can we address it?'. Governments and other stakeholders are gradually investing in efforts to prevent violence, starting from the earliest years of childhood. Our research in Peru, for instance, helped to focus the national conversation on the importance of preventing childhood violence. In December 2015, the Peruvian Congress passed a law to prohibit corporal punishment of children and launched a violence awareness campaign, featuring slogans such as "Belts adjust clothes, not behaviour".

Photo caption: An eight-year-old girl clutches her favourite toy at a shelter in the Philippines (2016). She is one of seven siblings rescued during a cyber-crime police raid police 6 years ago, when their parents were caught forcing the two oldest girls to participate in live streaming of child sexual abuse in their home. © UNICEF/UN014958/Estey

MULTIDIMENSIONAL CHILD POVERTY AND WELL-BEING

> **Children tend to be the biggest losers when countries are rocked by unexpected events.**

TRANSITIONAL ECONOMIES AND CHILDREN

Why does it matter?

Too often, economic crisis is measured in terms of how it affects companies and financial markets. The enormous impact on children is lost amidst the clamour of those with far greater financial and political clout. Yet it is children who tend to be the biggest losers when countries are rocked by unexpected events such as the debt crisis of the 1980s, the sudden transition from communism to capitalism in Eastern Europe in the 1990s, and the global financial crisis in the late 2000s. Children lose out when education and health programmes are cut. They lose out when parents lose their jobs or cannot cope with stress. And they lose out in the long term because damage inflicted during the years of crisis jeopardizes their potential. Even in the richest countries, a generation of educated, capable youth could be trapped in a limbo of unmet expectations and lasting vulnerability.

What have we done?

We began operations in 1989, the same year that the Berlin Wall fell, and some former Soviet republics began their transition to capitalism. It made sense to build on *Adjustment with a Human Face*, work done by UNICEF during the debt crisis of the 1980s, by turning our gaze to Eastern Europe. We brought together Eastern Europe's ministers of finance and social affairs and worked with them to systematically monitor how children were faring. Transition Monitoring in Eastern Europe, or TransMonEE, eventually grew to encompass all 27 countries that had broken away from the former Soviet bloc. There were some unexpected findings, including a massive increase in adult deaths between 1990 and 2000, resulting in a sharp increase in the number of orphans and the rate of child poverty. The lost decade for children in African and Latin American countries caused by the debt crisis in the 1980s was echoed in Eastern Europe in the 1990s.

What is the impact?

By monitoring the welfare of children in Eastern Europe and publishing our results, we brought social welfare issues closer to the centre of public and political debate in transition countries. Our TransMonEE database became an effective technical assistance tool for governments in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. When the financial and economic crisis swept the world in the late 2000s, we used our well-honed skills to document the damage to children in the 2014 Innocenti Report Card, *Children of the Recession*, and the 2017 book, *Children of Austerity: Impact of the Great Recession on Child Poverty in Rich Countries*. These sparked both policy and academic debate on the impact of the crisis, refocusing it on families, children and young people.

Photo caption: Sonya Karotkova, 16, outside the apartment block where she lives in Mayorsk in the Donetsk Region of Ukraine with her mother and little sister (2018).
© UNICEF/UN0243131/Morris VII Photo

CHILDREN IN HIGH-INCOME COUNTRIES

Why does it matter?

At first glance, studying child well-being in rich countries may seem superfluous when millions of children living in poor countries have neither food on the table nor a roof over their heads. But look again: There are children in the so-called rich world who live in conditions as difficult as those in the global South. In Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania, more than half of all children live in households that struggle to pay rent, heat their homes or eat protein regularly. In Canada, there are First Nations (indigenous) children living on 58 reserves where the water is unsafe to drink. How governments tackle these issues provides examples of promising practices that can be tried and tested elsewhere.

What have we done?

In 2000, we launched the *Innocenti Report Card* series on child well-being in countries of the European Union and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. The broad range of topics covered to date includes child deaths by injury, teenage births, child maltreatment, childcare, the impact of economic recession, and inequality in education. Each report contains a league table that ranks countries by performance. The researchers found no relationship between a country's wealth and how well it did in guaranteeing children's rights, regardless of the topic. Comparatively rich countries such as Luxembourg, Switzerland and the United States have often trailed behind less wealthy and smaller states such as Estonia and Slovenia. The research has also indicated room for improvement, even among the top performers.

What is the impact?

Our *Report Card* series has stimulated dialogue on hot topics and has helped to promote policy reform and increase resource allocation. It has served as a wake-up call for governments and advocacy groups to put children and families higher on the policy agenda. Poverty alleviation moved swiftly up the political agenda in the United Kingdom following the release of the 2007 Innocenti Report Card on child well-being, in which the United Kingdom ranked last. The 2017 Innocenti Report Card compared countries' progress in achieving nine of the Sustainable Development Goals, with Canada ranking 25th out of 41 countries, and New Zealand in 34th place. Following its publication, UNICEF Canada launched the One Youth Canada campaign to improve child well-being and New Zealand sprang into action, with Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern declaring that one of her goals was to make New Zealand "the best place in the world to be a child."

> **There are children in the so-called rich world who live in conditions as difficult as those in the global South.**

Photo caption: Young people get together ahead of the J7 Youth Summit in Berlin, Germany (2015). © UNICEF/UNI183642/Pfluegl

> **Not all the ways children are deprived can be measured in dollars and cents.**

MULTIDIMENSIONAL CHILD POVERTY

Why does it matter?

Not all of the ways in which children are deprived can be measured in dollars and cents. Some, like lack of food, warm clothing or shelter, can be roughly calculated by looking at household income. This is, in fact, the most common way of figuring out how many children live in poverty. But how can you put a dollar sign on access to health care and education or on protection from violence and exploitation? And if you are using household income as a proxy for poverty, how do you detect differences in deprivations between children within the same household? Unless we look at poverty from the vantage point of the child, we have no hope of meeting the Sustainable Development Goals target of halving poverty in all its dimensions by 2030.

What have we done?

This awareness led us to develop a valuable tool called MODA – short for Multiple Overlapping Deprivation Analysis. It approaches poverty from the perspective of child rights, including the rights to education, to nutrition, to proper housing and to sanitation. MODA is flexible enough for countries to select which dimensions and indicators of poverty to include. These may differ from country to country, and even from region to region. For example, a child without warm shoes living in a cold climate is

more deprived than one living in a warm country where frostbite is not a risk. The tool allows countries and regions to assess the true extent of child poverty and gives policymakers the information they need to develop an appropriate, multidimensional response. For instance, spending money on health care achieves little if the water supply is contaminated. Nor does building more schools help if children cannot reach them because of poor roads or a lack of affordable transport.

What is the impact?

MODA has become a standard tool for measuring and analysing multidimensional child poverty across UNICEF and beyond. National studies have been conducted using the tool in more than 70 countries. In 2013, MODA studies produced the first ever cross-country comparative studies of multidimensional child poverty covering regions as diverse as the European Union, sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East. This allowed policymakers to pinpoint exactly which specific deprivations – for example, those relating to health, nutrition, water, housing – are most critical for children. Our tool encourages government departments to abandon their silos and work together on a joint response.

Photo caption: Antionette, pictured here in her mother's arms, clutches a toy Pinocchio (2019). The family lives in extreme poverty in Sibiti, Congo, relying on community assistance and the wages this single mother of three earns as an occasional farm worker. © UNICEF/UN0316009/Pirozzi

CASH TRANSFERS FOR CHILD WELL-BEING

Even me, I am a person now, too. *

Why does it matter?

At least 100 countries provide some form of unconditional cash transfer – regular and predictable transfers of money to support poor and vulnerable populations. Critics of cash transfers think that beneficiaries will waste the money on alcohol and drugs, become dependent on handouts and stop working. Supporters point to evidence that recipients will buy more of life's necessities, such as food and clothing, or equipment to help them to earn a living, like a sewing machine or farm tools. Governments need evidence of how cash transfers can best help the estimated 1 billion children living in poverty globally.

What have we done?

We are building a body of strong empirical evidence on the impacts of cash transfers, much of which shows that cash makes a positive difference for children, young people, their families and the countries in which they live. We are doing this through the Transfer Project, a collaborative research venture with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, which spans more than a dozen countries. Our research demonstrates that cash transfers are not a handout or a gift. They are a redistribution of money from public resources, which can help families to meet their basic needs and invest in their futures. Importantly, they provide households with the freedom to decide how to address the challenges they face.

What is the impact?

Our work has been extensively published in scientific journals, and featured in the mainstream media, including on the *Forbes* and *Quartz Africa* websites. Governments have used our evidence to support the introduction or growth of national cash transfer programmes. Millions of families across Africa now receive this crucial assistance. For instance, in Malawi, our work helped to persuade the government to increase the amount allocated to and coverage of Mtukula Pakhomo, its flagship cash transfer programme. We inform the design of other government cash transfer programmes in Africa. Our latest research shows that cash combined with additional services, like health care and education, can have transformational impacts on people's lives. Cash transfers also have unexpected benefits such as reduced violence in the household and safe transitions into sexual and marital relationships for youth. Our latest research sheds light on the potential for cash transfers to make a difference to the lives of children in complex emergency settings.

Photo caption: Awa Jobe Dem, with her seven-month-old daughter, departs from a health centre in Juntaur, The Gambia, having just received her monthly cash transfer (2018). As part of a new social contract, lactating mothers in the area receive D600 (approx. US$13) to help mitigate food insecurity and malnutrition. © UNICEF/UN0218607/Noorani

* Transfer recipient, United Republic of Tanzania

CAPACITY BUILDING, EVIDENCE SYNTHESIS AND KNOWLEDGE SHARING

> **Our research is conducted in a quality assured and ethical manner, is produced collaboratively, and is trusted and widely cited.**

RESEARCH TOOLS AND METHODS

Why does it matter?

Research is like a ladder. If securely grounded in observation and documented evidence, it can provide the next steps to understanding the reality and complexity of children's lives. The more secure the ladder, the more likely it is that resulting actions will make a difference. Even before they start to climb, researchers must understand what has already been researched and what is left for them to do. This avoids unnecessary duplication of effort and clarifies opportunities to advance the entire body of knowledge.

What have we done?

We train UNICEF staff in all aspects of the research management cycle, including quality assurance, ethics, critical appraisal, data literacy and research uptake. To ensure that our recommendations are based on the entire body of available evidence, we provide funders, policymakers and researchers with snapshots that show where strong evidence already exists and where more attention and funding are needed. For example, our 2018 evidence gap map on adolescent well-being revealed a glaring lack of evidence on young people's use of information and communication technology. These evidence gap maps help to direct researchers to topics that require further examination. We also partner with some of the world's most advanced research institutions –

including Columbia University, the International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3iE) and the Lancet Commission on Adolescent Health and Well-being – to develop extensive methodological guidance on impact evaluation and adolescent well-being.

What is the impact?

Our adolescent research methodological briefs series has been widely disseminated and republished by global development organizations. An independent impact case study of our research on the drivers of violence affecting children in Peru documented how, despite the government's initial ambivalence, our findings supported the adoption of legislation that offers children greater protection from physical abuse. Through the approaches listed here, we are working to extend the skills of UNICEF staff to identify good and bad quality research, as well as to generate, communicate and use quality research to inform decision-making. We are also supporting UNICEF research managers to ensure that quality assured, UNICEF-generated research evidence reaches key decision-makers beyond our organization and that its subsequent impact is documented.

Photo caption: A child during a cognitive assessment Bandi Ravirala Village, Rangareddy District in Telangana, India (2016). © UNICEF/UN020876/Sharma

ETHICAL RESEARCH INVOLVING CHILDREN

Why does it matter?

Imagine a six-year-old child who has been separated from family and friends following an earthquake. Now imagine an adult asking the child questions about this experience for a research study. The child is confused and distressed. Researchers have an additional duty of care when engaging with children, particularly when researching children in difficult circumstances or when discussing sensitive issues. Researchers must listen, speak honestly and use language that is easily understood by the child. They must also make sure they are not reopening traumatic memories. The first question ethical researchers should ask themselves is: Should I research these children at all?

What have we done?

We are part of the partnership that developed Ethical Research Involving Children (ERIC), a website and resource that offers guidance, case studies and a discussion forum for researchers and others who commission research involving children. Our own research includes work on ethically complex areas such as children in humanitarian settings, and the use of various technologies and platforms to gather information on children. We have published work on obtaining consent when gathering data from social media sites and on the risks of using geospatial data to track moving populations in humanitarian emergencies. There is a common assumption that research is ultimately for good, but this assumption needs to be checked when the research involves children.

What is the impact?

In the past, there was limited active discussion and reflection on the ethical implications of child research beyond clinical studies involving children. Our website and associated research have encouraged greater dialogue on this critical issue, particularly in geographical contexts where research ethics was a consideration largely relegated to the biomedical fields. We were among the first organizations to publish a manual on the ethical considerations of research on children in humanitarian settings. This has led to greater reflection and discussion and more guidance available for researchers and research managers across government, academic institutions and service providers when doing research involving children. The importance of respecting children and their opinions in all aspects of research has been widely promoted.

> **Researchers have an additional duty of care when engaging with children.**

Photo caption: A six-year-old girl makes crafts from recyclable materials at a centre for children in the city of Djibouti, Djibouti (2018). She lives on the streets with her mother, who is a commercial sex worker, and social workers at the centre believe she is deeply traumatized.
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SHOWCASING UNICEF'S BEST RESEARCH

Why does it matter?

When a disaster strikes, how do we prioritize the response? How do we prevent violence against children? How can hospitals with small budgets improve care for newborns? These are the kind of questions we aim to answer through research that informs action for children. Good analysis highlights what works and what does not, how to scale up success and how to learn from mistakes what we could do better.

What have we done?

We organize an annual Best of UNICEF Research competition. UNICEF offices around the world submit examples of research best practice for consideration for inclusion in the *Best of UNICEF Research* publication that showcases the most outstanding entries. Since 2013, more than 500 entries have been reviewed and 80 pieces of research identified as being worthy of greater attention across UNICEF. The topics explored by the 2018 finalists included the positive effects of female teachers, the long-term disadvantages of experiencing drought during childhood, and the impact of growing up in the shadow of violence. The competition helps to strengthen a culture of evidence and rewards staff who do good research at UNICEF. It also shines a light on high quality, action-oriented research that might otherwise be overlooked. In 2019, we published our first Best of UNICEF Research Retrospective, which looks back at finalist research from six years of the *Best of UNICEF Research* exercise to gain perspective on its uptake and pathways to longer-term impact.

What is the impact?

Research featured in the *Best of UNICEF Research* over the past seven years has helped to create new, child-friendly laws and policies and to trigger reviews of programmes for children. It has informed national and international guidelines to enhance child rights and fed into reviews of national curricula for teachers, practitioners and front-line workers. Within UNICEF, the finalists' work has helped to raise the quality of our research and allowed staff to learn from and replicate work done elsewhere in the organization. It has also helped to identify opportunities to enhance or scale up existing projects and to increase the visibility of useful research, whilst also acknowledging our evidence champions working on behalf of children worldwide.

Photo caption: Smiling child in the first preschool classroom made of plastic bricks in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire (2019). This innovative building technique promotes recycling, creates jobs in plastic waste collection and is speeding up the construction of learning spaces at a lower cost.
© UNICEF/UN0318726/Diarassouba

> **When we bring leading minds together to discuss evidence, we often shape global research and policy debates on children.**

CONVENING
AND THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

Why does it matter?

Every year, the world's most powerful business and political leaders gather at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, and the World Bank/International Monetary Fund hold spring meetings, to address the most pressing global economic and social issues. Later in the year, the G7 and G20 Summits convene the world's most powerful nations. But children, who account for more than one third of the world's population, are rarely on the agenda. Perhaps we need a Davos for children? The world is scrambling to keep up with new challenges for children, including climate change, unplanned urbanization, displacement, mental health, and online access and safety. These challenges are springing up at a time when it is more important than ever to bring leaders together, face-to-face, to examine evidence, debate options, forge alliances and agree on joint action.

What have we done?

Convening has been part of UNICEF Innocenti's remit since its inception. From 1989 we hosted global seminars on a range of critical, often emerging, child rights issues. These seminars drew on UNICEF expertise from all over the world. Two Innocenti Lectures were held in 1995 and 1998, delivered respectively by Nobel Prize-winners Amartya Sen and Thomas Hammarberg. Expert meetings have since been hosted annually to highlight knowledge gaps and influence policy for children, in collaboration with research institutes, universities and international bodies. In 2019, we launched the annual Leading Minds conference – with world experts and decision-makers discussing the most pressing challenges for children and young people. The inaugural conference focused on mental health. The outcomes of Leading Minds will be amplified to transform the best ideas into action. Our aim is to make Florence as important for children and young people as Davos is for business and economics.

What is the impact?

When we bring leading minds together, we often shape global research and policy debate on children. These events have catalytic effects across UNICEF, and help to set international targets for action, such as the 1990 Innocenti Declaration on the Protection, Promotion and Support of Breastfeeding. Convening at UNICEF Innocenti stimulates critical thinking around sustainable, emerging solutions. Meetings in recent years have centred on innovative policies for social protection, child internet use and adolescent well-being. Convening contributes to the global debate on sensitive issues, as in the case of the expert consultations for the World Congress III against Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents in 2008. Each time we bring people together, we add to the global evidence base, push the boundaries of knowledge, form new connections and bolster existing partnerships.

Photo caption: Country representatives place pins on a world map at UN headquarters, New York to indicate their commitment to implementing the rights of children on the 30th anniversary of the signing of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (2019). © UNICEF/UN0344035/Chalasani

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