

SOCIAL POLICY BRIEF SERIES

MULTIDIMENSIONAL CHILD DEPRIVATIONS

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KEY MESSAGES

- Addressing multidimensional child deprivations is an urgent task for developed and developing countries. Globally, the climate crisis, increased conflict and the COVID-19 pandemic have significantly affected the well-being of children and their families.
- China is making progress in alleviating poverty and promoting common prosperity for all, but children, especially in rural areas, continue to face multidimensional deprivations and this needs to be further addressed.
- Addressing multidimensional child deprivations requires better monitoring and reporting, as well as prioritized and tailored policies and measures to support children's multidimensional needs. It also calls for stronger partnerships among key stakeholders and influencers.

FACTS AND FIGURES

Globally



Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, around **1 billion children** were deprived in at least one of the following dimensions: education, health, housing, nutrition, sanitation or water.¹



Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, **100 million more children** have been plunged into multidimensional deprivations.²



Children are more than **twice** as likely to live in extreme poverty than adults.³

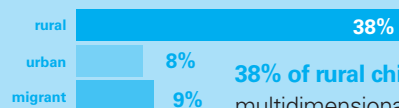


Nearly a quarter of children in the European Union were at risk of poverty and social exclusion in 2021.⁴

In China



Around **one in five children** in China experienced multiple deprivations in 2018. The share of children experiencing multidimensional deprivations declined from 49% in 2013 to 19% in 2018.⁵



38% of rural children were multidimensionally deprived in 2018, compared to **8%** of urban children and **9%** of migrant children.⁶



The rate of multidimensional deprivations among the lowest income quintile of rural children was **nearly half** in 2018.⁷



19% of the people were estimated to have consumption levels below the typical upper-middle-income poverty line in 2022.⁸

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

- Poverty and deprivations impact the realization of children's rights, including their right to an adequate standard of living, their right to social protection, and their right to access services such as health and education.⁹
- If unaddressed, poverty and deprivations can persist from one generation to the next, creating an intergenerational cycle of poverty.¹⁰
- The impacts of child poverty and deprivations reverberate over time, where children who experience poverty become adults who receive less education, have poorer health, fewer labour prospects, diminished human capital, and reduced productivity.¹¹
- Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 1 calls for ending poverty in all its forms everywhere.

WHAT IS POVERTY?

- **Absolute monetary poverty** refers to circumstances when people live below a minimum income threshold required to meet basic calorie intake and other non-food goods needs.¹² In China, from 2011 to 2020, the poverty line was set at RMB 2,300 per person per year using 2010 constant prices.
- **Relative poverty** describes circumstances when people cannot afford to actively participate in society and benefit from the activities and experiences that most people take for granted.¹³ It is usually measured using disposable household income below a certain percentage, typically 50% or 60%, of the median income of that country (after adjusting for household size and composition).¹⁴
- **Multidimensional deprivations** goes beyond monetary poverty. A UNICEF-commissioned study, *Child Multidimensional Poverty in China: From 2013 to 2018*, considered key dimensions including water, sanitation facilities, shelter, education, health, information, and consumer durables.



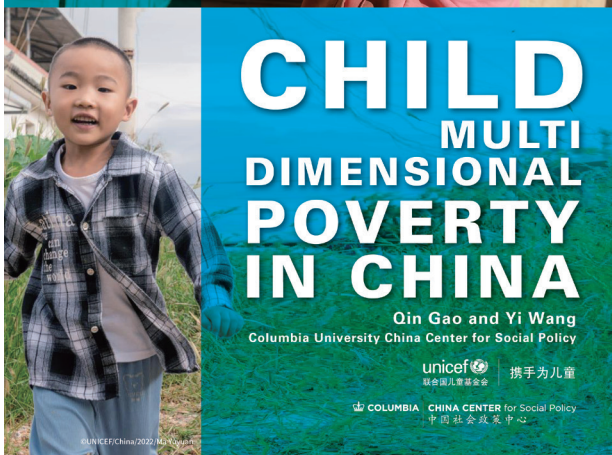
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A POLICY CHOICE

While poverty and deprivations during childhood have lasting impacts, they are not inevitable, nor are they immune to efforts to address them. Ending child poverty and multidimensional child deprivations is a policy choice, and countries that have made this choice have drastically reduced the number of children growing up impoverished.

Contexts vary, but experiences have shown that a core agenda of actions to address child poverty and multidimensional child deprivations include:

- National support on routine measurement, and inclusion of child poverty and deprivations in national budgets, policies and laws;
- Improving access to quality public services, particularly for vulnerable children;
- Promoting decent work and inclusive growth;
- Establishing and expanding social protection systems and programmes, alongside family-friendly policies crucial for children, women, and parents, especially in the early years of childhood;
- Increasing investment to address child poverty and deprivations.



UNICEF'S WORK IN CHINA

In line with national priorities, and to ensure that children are at the centre of policy development and equally benefit from the commitments and goals of the Government of China (GoC), UNICEF China supported the GoC to address multidimensional child deprivations by:

- Supporting the monitoring and understanding of multidimensional child deprivations through evidence-based research. Monitoring of child multidimensional deprivations should include both monetary and multidimensional indicators to capture the actual deprivations that children face, so that policies and resource allocation can be more responsive to the needs of girls and boys;
- Engaging in policy dialogues to prioritize children's needs in national policies and tailoring targeted measures for the most vulnerable children to meet their developmental needs. The goal is to increase the disposable income of families, and address children's multidimensional needs including health, education, water and sanitation, and protection in an integrated way;
- Building partnerships with line ministries, think tanks and renowned international and domestic experts, with the goal of reaching consensus on strategies and approaches to monitor and address multidimensional deprivations for children;
- Supporting knowledge and experience sharing between countries.



EXAMPLES OF UNICEF'S GLOBAL EFFORTS

LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Colombia: An evidence-informed policy package to address multidimensional child poverty¹⁵

Colombia is among the pioneers in multidimensional poverty measurement, particularly in its use in policy and programming. This included developing a child-specific multidimensional poverty measure and a comprehensive policy package to lift children out of poverty, as part of the commitments in the National Development Plan. The design of the National Strategy for Eliminating Child Poverty has commenced, where UNICEF along with the World Bank, the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) and Universidad de los Andes provided technical support to the National Planning Department through conducting comparative social policy analysis and microsimulations.

WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA

Ghana: Multidimensional child poverty analysis to inform national development plans¹⁶

In 2019, UNICEF supported the Government of Ghana to conduct a multidimensional child poverty analysis. The analysis was incorporated into policy discussions of the forthcoming Medium-Term National Development Policy Framework (MTNDPF 2022-2025). At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, UNICEF, in collaboration with the National Development Planning Commission and the Social Policy Research Institute carried out a study to assess the primary and secondary effects of COVID-19 on women and children. The 2019 multidimensional child poverty analysis alongside the key findings of the COVID-19 assessment helped build capacity of metropolitan, municipal and district assemblies, relevant ministries, departments and agencies, as well as the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development to incorporate children's issues into their forthcoming medium-term plans, and into the National Urban Policy.

SOUTH ASIA

Nepal: The Child and Family Tracker, developed during the COVID-19 pandemic¹⁷

There was a strong need for data on the impact on children at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. UNICEF responded to this need by launching the Child and Family Tracker (CFT). Through a survey composed of telephonic interviews and interactive voice responses (IVRs), the CFT captured over 7,000 households with children, and served as a real-time monitoring and tracking tool for assessing the social and economic impacts of COVID-19. With over 100 social and economic indicators, the survey provided an in-depth insight into children's situations, including their caregivers' income and livelihood loss, and how COVID-19 affected their lives socially and economically.

THE WAY FORWARD

The GoC announced the eradication of rural extreme poverty in China in February 2021. The rural revitalization strategy was put in place to consolidate poverty alleviation outcomes in rural areas and enhance equitable development between urban and rural areas. In this context, the Social Assistance Reform agenda was elevated to dynamically identify and monitor vulnerable populations, and prevent them from falling back into poverty. In addition, common prosperity was instituted as a national development goal to achieve high-quality equitable development. In the 14th Five Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development (2021-2025), the GoC aims to develop 100 models of Child Friendly Cities across China, and support enabling policies for affordable and quality early childhood care services to reach all children aged 0-3 in rural and urban areas.

Against this policy backdrop, to further address multidimensional deprivations among children and ensure their rights are fulfilled, stakeholders should jointly support the following actions:

Routinely monitor and report multidimensional child deprivations.

- Monitoring of child multidimensional deprivations should include both monetary and multidimensional indicators to reflect children's full experiences of deprivations;
- In response to evidence on the number and severity of

multidimensional child deprivations, policies and resource allocation should be more responsive to children in need and the actual needs of children.

Prioritize children's needs in national policies, and tailor targeted measures for the most vulnerable children to meet their developmental needs.

This includes but is not limited to:

- Increasing the disposable income of families and promoting decent work opportunities for families and young people;
- Increasing the coverage and child-sensitivity of social protection programmes, alongside family-friendly policies critical for children, including child benefits, paid maternity and parental leaves, childcare services, and policies that enable women to work in the formal and informal economy;
- Improving the availability, accessibility, affordability and quality of essential social services, including health, education, water and sanitation, and protection;
- Continuing investment in social sectors for children and ensuring financial resources are equitably and effectively used.

Establish national, regional and global partnerships with government entities, private sectors, civil society, and academia to share insights and experiences in addressing child deprivations.



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ENDNOTES

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