

# High-Level Political Forum for Sustainable Development

10-19 July 2023

**TECHNICAL BRIEF**

World Vision has developed the following technical brief to support its advocacy and external engagement activities during the upcoming High-level Political Forum for Sustainable Development.

This technical brief focuses on the Sustainable Development Goals 6, 11, and 17 as well as on other priorities for World Vision, such as ending violence against children and child participation. It also addresses the impact of COVID-19 on children. This technical brief is based on evidence from World Vision's research, policies and programme outcomes.

## INTRODUCTION

For the first time in decades, the world is experiencing serious setbacks in the realization of children's rights and well-being due to the impact of 'poly-crisis' (COVID, climate change, conflicts, and increased costs of living). For

example, the sharp drop in immunization coverage that occurred during COVID 19 outbreak; the reversal in ending child marriage and child labour; the disruption of education, and growing child poverty.

If we are to achieve Agenda 2030, governments must prioritize children in achieving the SDG framework. These trends are drawing attention from children and urgent action is needed to address their impact on children and prevent further reversal of progress in the realization of children's rights. An adaptive, contextualized approach is needed in every country to help children accelerate gains in their development, and enable countries to achieve related SDG goals. This means increasing commitment and investment in children –across education, health, child, and social protection areas while ensuring children's righty to participate in decisions influencing their lives.



## SDG 6- Clean Water & Sanitation

- Partnering with communities, governments and the private sector is essential to ensure that all children and their families have access to sustainable clean water, dignified sanitation, and appropriate hygiene (WASH) close to home. At World Vision, we ensure sustainability through our long-term engagement with communities that ensures local ownership of projects. We also work with government entities to strengthen capacity to ensure sustained WASH services and involve private sector to ensure operation and maintenance.
- Increased investment is required to reach SDG6. We call on governments to commit to increased funding for capital investments in WASH as well as investments to support long-term maintenance of WASH services, including climate resiliency planning. Governments must also invest equitably in rural contexts that are often left behind.
- The use of data and technology must serve to reach the most vulnerable and achieve universal WASH services coverage. World Vision is a data driven organization. In WASH, we put a priority on digital monitoring. Our WASH monitoring agenda provides a framework to assess, adapt, and strengthen monitoring policies and practices to effectively identify service gaps, find solutions, and empower local government agencies and communities to maintain critical WASH assets. This approach assures sustainability, ensures confidence in the data we are reporting, guarantees accountability with partners, and assures water quality.
- Promoting integrated water resources management and climate-resilient WASH is critical in order to ensure a water-secure future.
- To drive progress toward SDG 6, World Vision is committed to leading the WASH sector in the transition towards sustainably managed piped-water networks that provide water as close to people's homes as possible, especially in rural areas.



## SDG 11- Sustainable Cities & Communities

- More investment in addressing intersectionality in urban contexts. We must learn more about the intersectionality of urban fragility, climate change and gender inequality and social exclusion that is driving children into extreme vulnerability, especially in cities. Supporting multi-stakeholder citywide engagement mechanisms is key to promoting just cities for children.
- More than one billion children reside in cities today, with 350-500 million living in slums and informal settlements and exposed to violence and exploitation of all kinds. There are inadequate safe spaces in these settings to learn, develop, and grow in a healthy, stable environment. Evidence based solutions, adequate financial resources and better budget allocations are needed to create healthy and protective built environments for children.
- Improve access to equitable, quality, and ethically provided urban public services, safe spaces, and a healthy, stable built environment. Lack of proper planning (especially in informal areas), child-friendly public spaces, and green areas force children to play in dangerous areas. Inadequate housing space to accommodate rapidly increasing populations can lead to lagging dense and fragmented neighborhoods, neglected with poor infrastructure, overcrowded housing, economic and geographic exclusion (no roads or transport), crime, violence, and micro-politics.
- With crises increasingly occurring in urban areas and urban growth projected to take place in countries and cities that are already fragile, it is imperative that organizations operating in cities take a triple nexus approach when designing programmes. Addressing immediate humanitarian needs should be done with a long-term vision of improving development outcomes and contributing to peacebuilding and social cohesion among diverse urban residents in order to ensure sustainability of outcomes.

- Climate change has been exacerbating urban displacement, migration and a wider range of environmental issues such as pollution, overuse of water resources, deforestation all of which contribute to physical loss of land and reduces viability of natural resource dependent livelihoods such as agriculture where most of the poorer populations work.



## SDG 17- Partnerships for the Goals

- Partnerships at all geographic levels, with a range of organizations from across societal sectors are critical to achieve meaningful and sustained change on the scale required. We must recognize that no one stakeholder is able to address the complex challenges involved in achieving the SDGs and ensuring that the rights of the most vulnerable children are upheld.

### Ending Violence against Children

- One billion children experience violence and abuse every year, but millions more children may be at risk of physical, sexual, and emotional violence caused by the compounding effects of COVID, conflict, climate change, and economic and food insecurity. The UN Population Fund estimates that 2 million more girls are likely to undergo Female Genital Mutilation over the next decade, while up to 110 million more girls will be at risk of becoming child brides according to UNICEF. Child labour has increased for the first time in 20 years from 152 to 160 million children. In addition, risks of online abuse, sexual violence, and exploitation have increased as more children spend time on the internet. Furthermore, more and more children are living in complex emergencies, are displaced or refugees, and thus are at an increased risk of violence against children. Of the 82 million people forcibly displaced worldwide, 42% are children.
- While progress has been made in addressing violence against children, the scope has

been limited and pace too slow in the face of growing threats. The Global Status Report on Prevention of Violence against Children shows that most countries have enacted legislation to address violence against children but have failed to fully enforce and implement it. The availability of prevention and response services also remains limited. Over 63% of surveyed countries do not have strong response services, while different prevention measures are implemented in only a small fraction of countries. Recent research of World Vision in 11 countries hosting refugees also showed that 44% of refugees do not have access to child protection services, a 13% increase from 2021. The commitments to end violence against children are rarely followed by sufficient investments at national and international levels. While most of the countries have reported in their VNRs on measures taken to achieve VAC related SDG targets, most of them have not reported significant progress nor disclosed data on prevalence of violence.

- Evidence shows, that addressing violence in childhood is extremely effective, yielding the highest benefits for survival and development of individuals and society, saving up to 5% of national GDP. Investment in proven, evidence-based prevention programmes and services can further children's health and educational outcomes and unlock economic development potential for individuals and societies alike.
- Preventing and responding to violence against children requires sustained political will and multisectoral collaboration. It also requires commitments to be backed up with sufficient investments and resources, especially in the current context of fiscal austerity and multiple crises (including humanitarian and fragile contexts) that are increasing vulnerability of children to violence.
- Strengthen political leadership to ensure strong policy frameworks and legislation, and availability of comprehensive, evidence-based, cross-sectoral and child-focused services to prevent and protect children from violence, especially the most vulnerable.

- Develop and revise National Plans of Action and strategies for ending violence against children to reflect on growing challenges while incorporating the prevention of violence against children into national economic growth and development strategies and plans.
- Formalize and fund processes to ensure meaningful and active inclusion of children in policies and programmes aimed at ending violence against children.
- Invest in data collection systems and provide disaggregated data on all forms of violence against children – especially by sex and age to monitor progress in achieving SDG targets.

### Child Participation

- The voices of children should be heard and listened to by providing the necessary spaces and mechanisms for them to meaningfully participate in decision-making processes. As recognized by the 2030 Agenda, children are agents of change, and it is important to acknowledge that children are often addressed within “young people” or “youth” terminologies excluding them from engaging in discussions that have an impact on their lives and their future. Children have specific sets of rights and needs, and more needs to be done in reframing discussions around “children and young people” and not only on youth, which can result in undermining the voices of children under 18 years old.

### The impact of COVID-19 on Children

- COVID-19 has exacerbated the exposure to physical, emotional and sexual violence. Prior to the pandemic, more than half of all children worldwide lived in daily exposure to different forms of violence. This number has increased as millions of children were at risk of experiencing or witnessing violence

at home due to the lockdowns and school closures. Evidence shows that violence against children can have a life-long impact on children’s emotional and behavioral development, educational attainment, health and overall well-being. Any recovery from COVID-19 should address effectively the issue of violence against children. Failing to do so can result in a massive loss of social and economic capital that could last for generations.

- Many children have experienced increased economic vulnerability due to COVID-19. The socioeconomic fallout from the pandemic resulted in sharp declines in household income due to job losses and/or reduced livelihoods options for families. It has been estimated that COVID-19 could have pushed an additional 42- 66 million children into extreme poverty. The realization of children’s rights to an adequate standard of living, access to sufficient nutritious food and social security could be severely curtailed thus limiting access to opportunities and posing challenges to the development of their full potential.
- Millions of children experienced disruptions in education. The effects that this disruption will have on their learning and development cannot be overstated. The pandemic radically amplified preexisting vulnerabilities and barriers many of the world’s most vulnerable children already faced to enjoy their right to quality, safe and inclusive education. These most vulnerable children – those living in poverty, girls, children with disabilities, refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs), and others in fragile and conflict affected contexts – are now confronted with the possibility of never recovering from the disruptions to their education, leaving them further behind by worsening inequality and jeopardizing their future potential.

For more information



World Vision is a Christian relief, development and advocacy organisation dedicated to working with children, families and communities to overcome poverty and injustice. Inspired by our Christian values, we are dedicated to working with the world’s most vulnerable people. We serve all people regardless of religion, race, ethnicity or gender.