

VNR LAB: HLPF 2021

INVESTING IN CHILDREN: DEVELOPING A CHILD-SENSITIVE SDG VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REVIEW (VNR) FOR AN INCLUSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE RECOVERY

Date: 13 July

Time: 7:30-9:00 (EST)

Format: Online platform (link to register to be provided)

Co-organized by: UNICEF and the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children (OSRSG-VAC).

Background:

During the last year, the world has experienced unprecedented challenges from COVID-19 that have the potential to reverse global gains towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Children’s rights to protection, health, good nutrition, and education have been compromised – diminishing their life chances and ability to realize their potential. COVID-19 has exposed and exacerbated existing inequalities and fragilities. It has changed the lives of everyone around the world putting an enormous pressure on national systems. COVID-19 is both a global health and humanitarian crisis, and risks becoming a broader child rights’ crisis.

The Impact of COVID-19 on Children in numbers:

- Globally, the number of children living in multidimensional poverty—without access to education, health, housing, nutrition, sanitation or water— soared to approximately **1.2 billion children** in 2020 due to COVID.
- An estimated **additional 6.7 million children** could suffer from wasting to Covid-19.
- At their peak, nationwide school closures disrupted the learning of **91 percent** of students worldwide.
- Around 10 million additional child marriages may occur before the end of the decade due to COVID-19

As the world is slowly moving towards the recovery phase, strengthening social protection systems and social services are good economic and social investments for an inclusive and sustainable recovery for children, families and for the health and future of economies and societies. It is estimated that thirteen of the most cost-effective of all SDGs targets relate to investing in children. Investments in children are consistently shown to yield the highest return on public investments. System strengthening of integrated social services for children (education, child protection, nutrition, health, early childhood development, and justice) that are gender responsive and inclusive will be essential to building back better after COVID-19. Children must be at the heart of the COVID-19 recovery and resources for critical social services for children, including the poorest, most vulnerable and marginalized, must be recognized as long-term investments. Governments and partners must act to safeguard critical social spending, ensure efficient and effective use of public budgets, and identify and deploy additional domestic and international financing options, using innovative approaches as necessary.

The Lab will be an opportunity to hear how Governments have made their VNR process child-sensitive, showing how they have tried to ensure children were prioritized in the national response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the challenges they have faced and how they are planning to finance, preserve and enhance services for children in the immediate recovery phase and beyond. It also aims at presenting

evidence-based perspectives on how public spending on strengthened social services for children is a sound long-term investment that is the foundation for a sustainable recovery from the pandemic, and essential for accelerated progress towards reaching the SDGs and implementing the 2030 Agenda.

Objectives of VNR Lab:

- Provide a platform for Governments and partners to share experience and approaches that bring a focus on children's rights, data and evidence, and children's voices into VNRs.
- Governments and other key partners/stakeholders share their experience and learning on how strengthening social protection systems and social services for children can contribute to the successful achievement of the SDGs.
- Highlight the importance of joint efforts between Governments and key stakeholders to reduce the impact of COVID-19 and take measures to finance an inclusive and resilient recovery that both protects and invests in children, especially the poorest and the most marginalized.

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