

Forum: The Economic and Social Council

Issue: Reducing inequities in children's outcomes in high and middle income countries

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INTRODUCTION

Every human being was once a child who had to be protected and aided by adults to sustain his/her life. The children have explicit needs, such as access to shelter, nutrition, protection, and clothing, as well as implicit needs, the satisfaction of which is granted to them by international documents. As children require help from adults through the processes of development, growth, and maturity, their rights and outcomes, both explicit and implicit, are and should be concerns of their guardians, as well as of governments and international platforms.

While all children are granted equal fundamental rights based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child targeting specifically children's special needs and protection, many disadvantaged children, due to several reasons, such as belonging to marginalized groups or having low economic and social status etc., lack opportunities that should be provided to them. Thus, children's outcomes usually differ depending on the societal group they belong to leading to inequities, which will further be discussed in this study guide.

When we discuss inequities regarding children's outcomes, we should bear in mind the differences in different countries. Even though low income countries appear to suffer from more explicit inequities in children's outcomes, such as child mortality and access to nutrition, middle and high income countries, in which child mortality, nutrition, access to water, and many other problems that appear in low income countries are mostly resolved, also do suffer from such problem due to different reasons and to a different extent. Therefore, delegates should bear in mind the specific reasons why high and middle income countries suffer from inequities in

DEFINITION OF KEY-TERMS

Inequity

Inequity refers to a situation that is not fair or equal. However, as similar as they may seem, the terms inequity and inequality are not used interchangeably since

Inequality simply refers to uneven distribution of resources while inequity refers to avoidable, unfair differences arising from different factors, including “poor governance, corruption, cultural exclusion”, and marginalization (BMJ) (Cambridge Dictionary).

Children’s Outcomes

Children’s outcomes, according to UNICEF, refer to five main dimensions of the children’s well-being during the first 18 years of their life, which is the time span that includes the transition from total dependency to adulthood: physical, educational, social, psychological/emotional, and material. Research by the IRC UNICEF concludes that a social gradient exists in a way that poorer children tend to do badly across all these interrelated and interdependent dimensions.

Gross National Income (GNI) Per Capita

Gross national income per capita refers to a country’s final income, which is the “sum of the value added by all the goods and services produced within a determined country, including foreign investment, to which are added any product taxes (excluding subsidies), and the value earned by the nation through overseas ventures” per year divided by its population which reflects the average income of a citizen of a country per year. This is a commonly used aggregation methodology when classifying countries as low, middle, or high income. While GNI per capita gives an insight into an average “wealth”, it is not capable of reflecting every individual’s income. Thus, in countries that involve both extremely rich and poor, even though the GNI per capita is high, many individuals do not earn even close to that value (World Atlas).

High Income Country

According to World Economic Situation and Prospects of United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, countries with more than 12,615 US dollars GNI per capita are high income countries.

Middle Income Country

According to World Economic Situation and Prospects of United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, middle income countries can be segregated into two categories: lower middle income countries and higher middle income countries. While countries with between 1,036 and 4,085 US dollars GNI per capita are considered lower middle income countries, countries with between 4,086 and 12,615 US dollars GNI per capita are considered higher middle income countries.

Economies by per capita GNI in 2012^a

High-income		Upper middle income		Lower middle income	Low-income
Australia	Lithuania ^b	Albania ^b	Jordan	Armenia	Bangladesh
Austria	Luxembourg	Algeria	Kazakhstan	Bolivia	Benin
Bahrain	Malta	Angola	Lebanon	Cameroon	Burkina Faso
Barbados	Netherlands	Argentina	Libya	Cape Verde	Burundi
Belgium	New Zealand	Azerbaijan	Malaysia	Congo	Central African Republic
Brunei Darussalam	Norway	Belarus	Mauritius	Côte d'Ivoire	Chad
Canada	Oman	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Mexico	Djibouti	Comoros
Chile ^b	Poland	Botswana	Montenegro	Egypt	Democratic Republic of the Congo
Croatia	Portugal	Brazil	Namibia	El Salvador	Eritrea
Cyprus	Qatar	Bulgaria	Panama	Georgia	Ethiopia
Czech Republic	Republic of Korea	China	Peru	Ghana	Gambia, The
Denmark	Russian Federation ^b	Colombia	Romania	Guatemala	Guinea
Equatorial Guinea	Saudi Arabia	Costa Rica	Serbia	Guyana	Guinea-Bissau
Estonia	Singapore	Cuba	South Africa	Honduras	Haiti
Finland	Slovak Republic	Dominican Republic	Thailand	India	Kenya
France	Slovenia	Ecuador	The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	Indonesia	Kyrgyz Republic
Germany	Spain	Gabon	Tunisia	Lesotho	Liberia
Greece	Sweden	Hungary ^c	Turkey	Moldova	Madagascar
Hong Kong SAR ^d	Switzerland	Iran, Islamic Republic	Turkmenistan	Morocco	Malawi
Iceland	Taiwan Province of China	Iraq ^b	Venezuela, RB	Nicaragua	Mali
Ireland	Trinidad and Tobago	Jamaica		Nigeria	Mozambique
Israel	United Arab Emirates			Pakistan	Myanmar
Italy	United Kingdom			Papua New Guinea	Nepal
Japan	United States			Paraguay	Niger
Kuwait	Uruguay ^b			Philippines	Rwanda
Latvia ^b				São Tomé and Príncipe	Sierra Leone
				Senegal	Somalia
				Sri Lanka	Tajikistan
				Sudan	Tanzania
				Syrian Arab Republic	Togo
				Ukraine	Uganda
				Uzbekistan	Zimbabwe
				Vietnam	
				Yemen, Rep.	
				Zambia	

Image 1: List of High, Middle, and low Income Countries based on UN Classification of 2012

Socioeconomic Status

According to American Psychology Association, socioeconomic status refers to “the social standing or class of an individual or group” and its measure is dependent on a combination of education, income and occupation. Since socioeconomic status shows correlation with access to resources, belonging to different socioeconomic status reveal inequities in different aspects, including prosperity, well-being, education, health care, and a voice and inclusion in the society. As the child’s outcomes are dependent on the family’s socioeconomic status, the inequities caused by socioeconomic status based on the aforementioned five major dimensions are highly significant in this agenda.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

History of the Children’s Rights in High and Middle Income Countries

Until nineteenth century, no discussions or concerns were raised about children’s rights and outcomes around the world, not even in middle and high income countries. Besides, discussions



about human rights in general were not common either. Thus, children were not granted rights or promised outcomes.

Industrial Revolution:

With the advent of Industrial Revolution, concerns over rights and outcomes of children started to be raised in late nineteenth century. Since children in industrialized middle and low

Image 2: Millennium Development Goals

income countries, mostly in Europe and the United States, were in really bad condition that affected their physical, psychological, social, and material life with underpaid and even forced labor, many groups of people started raising the issue of children's outcomes and encouraged governments to take legal measures concerning children's rights.

World War I:

With World War I (1914-1918), discussions concerning children's rights and outcomes were not in the picture anymore and all the focus was on the war that was affecting everyone, including children. The latter's physical, psychological, social, and material lives were brutally affected by the war as they had no access to even the simplest rights, such as protection, nutrition, and education. Thus, the number of children affected was quite high. After World War I, actions had to be taken in order to protect children through legislative measures and policies, such as a declaration granting children certain rights, which was adopted by the League of Nations with the help of several non-governmental organizations because children affected by the war needed immediate aid to sustain their lives.

World War II:

Similarly, children were affected by World War II. Even though children were now granted certain rights under the Geneva Declaration, their rights were not exercised during the war. After the WWII, United Nations took actions comparable to those of the League of Nations, but in a more inclusive and extended way, by adopting several resolutions on issues concerning human rights, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which was adopted in 1948. Later on, the UN adopted resolutions targeting specifically children and their outcomes, including the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, which is a following on the Geneva Declaration granting children's rights to "protection, education, health care, shelter and good nutrition" in Particular. The Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted in 1989

by the UN General Assembly as an international legal framework concerning children as individuals with granted rights and explicitly stated some rights tied to outcomes of children, including education, healthcare, freedom of



expression, safety,
imprisonment, well-being,
and social development.
This convention was ratified
by more countries than any
other UN treaty with
the exception of only
one country: the US.

Image 3: Sustainable Development Goals

Inequities in Children's Outcomes

After all these historical events that led to children's rights and outcomes to be universally granted, children's rights and outcomes still remain an issue today. Even though each child is granted equal rights and promised equity of outcomes in the aforementioned conventions and declarations, inequities arise in reality due to several factors. Inequities mostly stem from different disadvantages children have in high and middle income countries, including material prosperity of parents, socioeconomic status, religion, race, gender, cultural exclusivity, and disabilities. Across the five aforementioned dimensions, when a child is marginalized or disadvantaged based on any of the factors listed, they tend to do poorly in any of the outcomes. Also, the dimensions are interrelated and interdependent, which means that, if a child does poorly in one, it is most likely that he/she will do poorly in the others.

MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED

UNICEF (The United Nations Children's Fund, previously referred to as the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund)

is a permanent part of the United Nations that has worked toward defending children around the world in a spirit of inclusivity since its foundation in 1946 and later on since its integration in the UN System as a permanent part in 1953, when it retained the famous acronym "UNICEF" dropping at the same time the words "International" and "Emergency". Over the course of more than 70 years, UNICEF has focused on children's rights to seeking safe shelter, nutrition, protection from disaster and conflicts, and equality. UNICEF's mission as a major organization is to actually take initiatives in reducing inequities in children outcomes all around the world, including the high and middle income countries. Since the 5 aforementioned major outcomes of children are designated by the UNICEF IRC (Office of Research - Innocenti), the UNICEF's role in this agenda is quite significant.

WHO (World Health Organization)

works as a part of the UN with the aim of promoting access to health care and medical assistance for every single individual all around the globe. As the WHO aims to build a better and healthier future for every individual, including children, health inequities among children in high and middle income countries is its primary concern. The WHO defines health inequities as systematic differences in health outcomes that are dependent on social conditions of people. The organization explicitly states that health inequities are unfair and should be reduced through government policies. Bearing in mind the WHO's work toward reducing such health inequities, delegates should be aware of the organization's important stance on the agenda.

UNESCO (The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization)

operates as a part of the UN with the aim of establishing peace through international cooperation in education, sciences, and culture. One of UNESCO's preeminent goals is to grant access to quality education for every child eliminating if possible inequities based on their ethnic background, race, religion, gender, socioeconomic state, or cultural status. Aspiring to reduce inequities in children's education, UNESCO plays a major role in one of the five dimensions in children's outcomes set by UNICEF.

OHCHR (The United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights)

is the leading UN entity on human rights. Its major aim is to promote and protect the rights of all individuals, including children. The OHCHR operates many programs focused on the promotion of human rights. It assists governments in implementing policies concerning human rights and violations of these rights by identifying, highlighting, and developing responses to problems. The OHCHR, acknowledging inequities in children's outcomes, also focuses on violations of the aforementioned children's rights.

The United States of America

Being the eighth wealthiest country in the world with 55,200 US dollars GNI per capita, the inequities in children's outcomes in the US definitely play a significant role in its social dynamic. While the GNI per capita appears high, the top 10% controls 73.1% of total wealth in 2007 and the bottom 60% only 4.2% indicating there is no equal distribution of wealth among different socioeconomic strata and poverty is a major problem. According to a research conducted by Stanford University, more than 21% of all American children are in poverty, which is higher compared to that of other high income countries. Inequities in children's outcomes in the US are predominantly noticed in the dimensions of education and healthcare. In education, for instance, racial discrimination plays a major role in high school dropouts, which leads to less material prosperity during adulthood

due to wage differences. The rate of high school dropouts among Hispanics is higher than that among African-Americans, which is higher than that among White high school students. Apart from racial differences that lead to inequities concerning educational outcomes of children, health care is a major problem American children face. Bearing in mind the expensive costs of healthcare in the US and the fact that 21% of all children are poor, it is appalling to notice that many children do not have health insurance. In 2008, 8.1 million children under 18 did not have health insurance. Also, a correlation between socioeconomic status of children and their ethnicity is visible in these statistics: Hispanic children or poor children

League Table 5 Average rank across all dimensions of inequality

Rank	Country	Income	Education	Health	Life satisfaction	Missing indicators
1	Denmark	4	8	5	3	0
2=	Finland	3	16	6	11	0
2=	Norway	1	23	4	8	0
2=	Switzerland	6	20	3	7	0
5	Austria	11	21	1	9	0
6	Netherlands	8	30	8	1	0
7	Ireland	10	9	20	13	0
8	Estonia	28	3	13	10	0
9	Slovenia	19	11	16	12	0
10	Latvia	32	4	17	6	0
11	Czech Republic	5	13	9	34	0
12	Croatia	26	5	12	23	0
13	Australia	14	24	27	2	0
14=	Germany	12	28	2	29	0
14=	Greece	38	18	11	4	0
14=	Hungary	21	17	18	15	0
14=	United Kingdom	7	25	19	20	0
18	United States	30	10	14	21	0
19	Portugal	33	19	7	18	0
20	Iceland	2	26	31	19	0
21	Romania	41	2	32	5	0
22	Spain	36	12	10	24	0
23	Sweden	16	29	22	17	0
24	Malta	20		30	14	1
25	Lithuania	27	7	25	27	0
26	Canada	24	14	24	25	0
27	Poland	23	6	33	33	0
28	France	13	35	23	28	0
29=	Belgium	22	36	15	30	0
29=	Luxembourg	9	33	29	32	0
31	Slovakia	25	34	21	26	0
32	Italy	35	22	28	22	0
33	Bulgaria	40	32	26	16	0
34	Turkey	29		34	35	1
35	Israel	37	37	35	31	0
-	Republic of Korea	15	15			2
-	Chile	31	1			2
-	New Zealand	17	31			2
-	Japan	34	27			2
-	Cyprus	18				3
-	Mexico	39				3

n.a.
 top third
 middle third
 bottom third
 two or more indicators missing

Image 4: List of High and Middle in Countries Based on Inequality in Children’s Outcomes in Five Dimensions

in general were more likely to be uninsured. While the percentage of uninsured children in poverty goes up to 17.6, the respective percentage declines to 11% when all children are taken into consideration. Also, among White children the respective percentage is 7.3, while among African-American is 12.2, among Asian-American 11.7, and 20% among children from Hispanic background. In addition to all of these statistics

only country that has not ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child, although as of 1995 it has signed it.

Denmark

Based on research conducted by the UNICEF IRC, Denmark, with a child poverty rate of 4.8%, ranks first among high and middle income European countries regarding all dimensions of child well-being, i.e., income, education, health, and life satisfaction. In Denmark, the relative income gap of children is 39.54, the achievement gap in education is 0.66, the relative health gap is 25.50, and the relative life satisfaction is 25.12, which are on a lower scale indicating equity in children's outcomes in these dimensions. Denmark is also the only country that was ranked in the top 3 in all dimensions. Thus, Denmark sets a good example for high and middle income countries in order to reduce inequities in the outcomes of children.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

DATE	DESCRIPTION OF EVENT
Nineteenth century	For the first time, the protection of children's needs became acknowledged by different governments and groups. Some European countries, bearing in mind the Industrial Revolution's harmful effects on children, passed legislations concerning child labor and obligatory
1919	Eglantyne Jebb founded the Save the Children Fund located in London with the aim of providing assistance and protecting children affected by World War I.

192 0	Save the Children Fund structured around the International Save the Children Union with the support of the International Committee of the Red Cross.
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<p>23 February 1923</p>	<p>The first version of the Declaration of the Rights of the Child was adopted by the International Save the Children Union. It was ratified on 28 February 1924 and was sent to the League of Nations.</p>
<p>26 September 1924</p>	<p>The League of Nations adopted the declaration renaming it as the Geneva Declaration. This was the first instance, where specific rights for children were recognized internationally.</p>
<p>10 December 1948</p>	<p>The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, which granted each individual, including children, certain fundamental rights.</p>
<p>20 November 1959</p>	<p>The United Nations General Assembly adopted the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, which is a follow-up to the Geneva Declaration granting children rights to “protection, education, health care, shelter and good nutrition”.</p>
<p>1 January 1971</p>	<p>The United Nations Secretary General Kurt Waldheim signed the proclamation of 1979 as the International Year of the Child by UNESCO. This proclamation aimed to draw attention to children-related issues around the world, including education, malnutrition, and health care.</p>

20 November 1989	The Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted by the UN General Assembly as an international legal framework concerning children as individuals with granted rights, becoming the most “widely and rapidly ratified human rights treaty in the history”, according to Human Rights Watch.
16 February 1995	The United States of America signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

<p>September 2000</p>	<p>The Millennium Development Goals were adopted by the UN under the Millennium Declaration, which included eight goals with the purpose to be achieved by 2015.</p>
<p>23 January 2015</p>	<p>South Sudan ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child leaving Somalia and the United States of America the only two nations who did not ratify the Convention.</p>
<p>September 2015</p>	<p>The Sustainable Development Goals were adopted by the UN at the UN Sustainable Development Summit, which included seventeen goals that are aimed to be achieved by 2030.</p>
<p>1 October 2015</p>	<p>Somalia ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child leaving the United States of America the only nation who did not ratify the convention.</p>

RELEVANT UN RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES AND EVENTS

Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Adopted by the 183rd session of the UN General Assembly as Resolution 217 on December 10, 1948, Universal Declaration of Human Rights grants every individual, regardless of sex, gender, race, age, socioeconomic status, disabilities, or any kind of criterion, certain rights.

Declaration of the Rights of the Child

Adopted by the 14th session of the UN General Assembly as Resolution

1386 on November 20, 1959, Declaration of the Rights of the Child grants each child certain rights regardless of sex, gender, race, age, socioeconomic status, disabilities, or any kind of criterion. This declaration also focuses on the outcomes of children listed in previous parts of this guide.

Convention on the Rights of the Child

Adopted by the UN General Assembly as Resolution 44/25 on November 20, 1989, this convention is an international legal framework concerning children's rights. It is the most ratified human rights convention in the UN history.

Resolution 60/231

Adopted by the UN General Assembly on December 23, 2005 concerning the rights of the child, this resolution focuses on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and adds optional protocols concerning the promotion and protection of the rights of the child.

Resolution 60/141

Adopted by the UN General Assembly on December 16, 2005 concerning the rights of the child, this resolution focuses specifically on the promotion and protection of "the girl child's" rights.

Resolution 61/146

Adopted by the UN General Assembly on December 19, 2006 concerning the rights of the child, this resolution focuses on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as the adopted optional protocols. In addition, this resolution tackles issues concerning children affected from poverty.

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

As mentioned above, many steps have been taken internationally by several UN entities, such as UNICEF and UNESCO, to reduce inequities in children's outcomes around the world, including in high and middle income families. The ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child by nearly all countries was a major attempt to actually grant children fundamental and equal rights independently of their ethnic and socioeconomic background. In addition, Millennium Development Goals and Sustainable Development Goals promoted specific goals targeted at children's outcomes.

Also, some OECD countries focused on developing policies toward enhancing income equality, education, gender, anti-discrimination, family, and child care. Countries, like Denmark, setting a good example for equity in children's outcomes, focused on achieving high employment rates, little wage dispersion, and no poverty in order to establish a society without huge socioeconomic differences and ensure that children's outcomes do not get affected by their families' socioeconomic status.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

The first and most important measure to take is to ensure the ratification of all international declarations, conventions and resolutions concerning children's rights by each and every country. If countries do not ratify an international legal framework concerning children's rights and outcomes, they would not be legally bound to provide equity in children's outcomes, as seen in the example of the United States of America. Also, countries should be advised to further revise their policies and legislation in each dimension with the wanted assistance of UNICEF. Since UNICEF already advises many countries in terms of their policies concerning children, this should be a feasible proposal for many countries.

Programs that enable disadvantaged children to have access to certain resources, including adequate education and healthcare, should be established if not present and enhanced if already operating. As far as education is concerned, teachers should be trained with regard to ways of approaching children from different backgrounds and providing equity in their outcomes. Since many countries already do provide such education, delegates should focus on improving it. Programs designed specifically for children with disabilities should be a major focus. The cooperation of aforementioned UN entities and governments is essential in the applicability of such programs on an inclusive scale. Also, disadvantaged children should have access to services concerning their psychological well-being. To ensure social inclusion among children from different socioeconomic statuses, events and community gatherings should be organized.

Data collection and analysis, such as the research conducted and the reports produced by the UNICEF IRC, are quite important for governments to beware of the extent of inequities in children's outcomes in their countries. Collected data and conducted research should also be made public in order to help societies acknowledge their current state.

Since disadvantaged parents often cannot or do not provide their children with adequate resources, assistance and help should be provided to them. They should also be informed of the correlation between higher outcomes of children and education, psychological well-being, and social inclusion. Since parents' socioeconomic status shows an explicit relation with

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children's outcomes, employment and wage distribution policies of governments should also be prioritized.

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