

## Media Release

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### Report shows remarkable progress in protecting childhoods

At least 280 million children have a better chance to grow up healthy, educated and safe than at any time in the past two decades, a new report by Save the Children has found. The annual report evaluates 176 countries on children's access to health care, education, nutrition and protection from harmful practices like child labour and child marriage.

However, one in four children are still denied the right to a safe and healthy childhood, with children living in or fleeing conflict zones among the most disadvantaged.

Save the Children's 2019 [Global Childhood Report](#) shows the world has made remarkable progress in protecting childhoods, thanks to strong political leadership, social investments, and the success of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

In the year 2000, an estimated 970 million children were robbed of their childhoods due to 'childhood enders' – life-changing events like child marriage, early pregnancy, exclusion from education, sickness, malnutrition and violent deaths. That number today has been reduced to 690 million – meaning that at least 280 million children are better off today than they would have been two decades ago. Together, China and India account for more than half of the global decline in stunting alone.

Launched ahead of International Children's Day on June 1<sup>st</sup>, Save the Children's *Global Childhood Report* includes the annual *End of Childhood Index*, which finds that circumstances for children have improved in 173 out of 176 countries since 2000. This means today there are:

- 4.4 million fewer child deaths per year
- 49 million fewer stunted children
- 130 million more children in school
- 94 million fewer child laborers
- 11 million fewer girls forced into marriage or married early
- 3 million fewer teen births per year
- 12,000 fewer child homicides per year

Of the eight 'childhood enders' examined in the report, displacement due to conflict is the only one on the rise, with 30.5 million more forcibly displaced people now than there were in 2000, an 80 percent increase.

Singapore tops the rankings as the country that best protects and provides for its children, with eight Western European countries and South Korea also ranking in the top 10. New Zealand ranked 25<sup>th</sup>, an increase on last year's ranking of 28.

The most dramatic progress was among some of the world's poorest countries, with Sierra Leone making the biggest improvements since 2000, followed by Rwanda, Ethiopia and Niger. The Central African Republic ranks last, with Niger – despite recent progress - and Chad rounding out the bottom three countries where childhoods are most threatened.

Helle Thorning-Schmidt, CEO of Save the Children International said:

*“A hundred years ago, following one of the most destructive wars in human history, Save the Children’s founder Eglantyne Jebb drafted the Declaration on the Rights of the Child. Today children are healthier, wealthier and better educated than ever before.*

*While progress has been remarkable, millions of children continue to be robbed of a childhood. We now need to continue to push to reach every last child and ensure they receive the childhood they deserve.*

*Governments can and must do more to give every child the best possible start in life. Greater investment and more focus is needed if every child is able to enjoy a safe, healthy and happy childhood.”*

For those countries that made the most progress, including Sierra Leone, Rwanda, Ethiopia and Niger, the results showed that political choices can matter more than national wealth. Specifically:

- Twenty-five years on from the Rwandan genocide, the country has improved on most of the ‘childhood enders’. The number of children dying before the age of 5 has decreased by 79 percent. Many more children are in school and many fewer children are married before the age of 18. Rwanda has also cut child labor, adolescent births and child homicides in half since 2000.
- Sierra Leone achieved a 99 percent reduction in the number of people forcibly displaced from home, with 1 in every 5 people displaced in 2000, compared to 1 in 700 today.
- Ethiopia achieved a 41 percent decrease in teen births, 33 percent decrease in stunting, 30 percent decrease in child homicide, and a halving of child deaths, children out of school and child marriage.
- In relative terms, Niger improved most out of any country on the list, with its score more than doubling over two decades and with the rate of children dying before their fifth birthday plummeting by 62 percent. Niger still has a long way to go, but its sustained improvements over the years point to a brighter future for many of Niger’s children.

## **ENDS**

### **NOTES TO EDITORS**

- Today, nearly 31 million children have been forcibly displaced from their homes. Millions more – an estimated 420 million children in total – are living in conflict zones, more than double the number in 1995. Conflict-affected countries have the highest child mortality rates, a disproportionate number of the world's stunted children and a rising share of out-of-school children globally. Rates of child marriage and child labour are also increasing in many of these contexts (e.g., Syria, Yemen). For more, see pages 35-39 in Save the Children's *Global Childhood Report*.

- In the year 2000, an estimated 970 million children had been robbed of their childhoods due to “childhood enders” – life-changing events like child marriage, early pregnancy, exclusion from education, sickness, malnutrition and violent death. That number today has been reduced to 690 million. One-fifth of these children have died. The rest – 545 million - are alive and missing out on childhood. This is 24 percent or 1 in 4 of the 2.3 billion children under the age of 18 worldwide. To reach this number, a series of reasonable assumptions were made based on evidence of overlap

between groups of children who have experienced one or more childhood ender events. It includes: 152 million stunted children under age 5, an estimated 30 million children age 5 who are stunted, 262 million children aged 6-17 who are out of school and a subset of child laborers (86 million) and forcibly displaced children (16 million) who are not likely to be stunted or out of school. The reference year for this analysis is 2017. For details, see Methodology and Research Notes in Save the Children's *Global Childhood Report*.

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