

Setting an ambitious agenda for children: The Sustainable Development Goals

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In 2015, the United Nations (UN) member states adopted an ambitious new agenda, *Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*,¹ establishing 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to be achieved by all countries and stakeholders by 2030.²

Children are at the heart of the 2030 Global Agenda, and the realisation of their rights is seen as the foundation of global security, sustainability and human progress.³ The SDGs impact every aspect of a child's life and outline a vision of a world in which all children not only "survive," but "thrive" and realise their full potential. This vision "encompasses the unfinished business of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), but goes well beyond poverty eradication, breaking significant new ground. The goals outline a universal, integrated and human rights-based agenda for sustainable development balancing economic growth, social justice and environmental stewardship and underlining the links between peace, development and human rights".⁴ However, translating these goals into practice is not without challenges. This essay considers:

- How do the SDGs relate to children's rights?
- How do the SDGs build on and extend the MDGs?
- How can the SDGs promote children's survival and development?
- How will the SDGs measure impact and track progress for children?
- What is the status of South Africa's children?

How do the SDGs relate to children's rights?

UNICEF has demonstrated how the SDGs map onto all the rights in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC),⁵ for example, the commitment to ensure that no one is left behind⁶ echoes the right to non-discrimination, a general principle of the UNCRC.⁷ The SDGs are not "a radical reinvention of rights and development standards",⁸ rather they set time-bound targets for the realisation of human rights. The UNCRC was adopted in 1989; however, millions of children across the world – and especially in Africa – are still being denied their rights: they live in extreme poverty, die from preventable causes, are subjected to abuse, and fail to learn due to poor quality education.⁹ Recognising this lack of progress, the SDGs call for a new approach – a coordinated global effort to reach those left furthest behind first.¹⁰

All rights in the UNCRC are interdependent and, while the treaty must be considered as a whole, there are four overarching

rights called "general principles" that must be considered and applied in the implementation of all other rights. They are: equality, respect for the best interests of the child, the right to survival and development, and the right to be heard.¹¹ While the right to equality is universal, the other three are unique to children. Together they contribute to a general attitude towards children and their rights. They recognise that children are dependent on adults, but that they have equal worth and value, and that when adults do anything that affects children they must consider their opinions, prioritise their best interests, and that the results should enable children to thrive.

There are various synergies between the SDGs and children's rights. They both paint a vision of a transformed world. They both recognise that rights and development are interdependent; and they both promote international cooperation. Hence, the goals could be viewed as a strategy for giving effect to children's rights and a mechanism for monitoring progress. However, the SDGs have a broader view and give effect to the human rights of everyone, whilst promoting the sustainable and efficient use of resources and energy, providing access to basic services, green and decent jobs, and protecting the environment. In short, children are just one element of the 2030 Global Agenda – and one of many vulnerable groups.¹ Yet, the UNCRC declares that children should get special protection and care; that their best interests should be a primary consideration;¹² and that investment in children should be to the maximum extent of available resources¹³. While there is little danger that we will lose sight of children in the 2030 Global Agenda, there is a danger that children could simply be lumped together with other vulnerable groups in a way that fails to consider and respect their best interests.

How do the SDGs build on and extend the MDGs?

Over the past two decades, impressive progress was made towards the MDGs, yet these gains often failed to reach those most in need – culminating in stark inequalities at global, regional, national and sub-national levels.¹⁴ While the East Asia and Pacific regions met all the MDGs, sub-Saharan Africa failed to reach most targets. Progress also varied sharply along the rural–urban divide with significant disparities in under-five mortality and access to sanitation. Generally, people living in cities saw far more progress than those in rural areas due to urban economies of scale and the challenges of providing services in more sparsely populated rural areas.¹⁵ The overarching progress towards the MDGs therefore

ⁱ For example, the 2030 Global Agenda recognises the following vulnerable groups: children, youth, persons with disabilities, people living with HIV/AIDS, older persons, indigenous peoples, refugees and internally displaced persons and migrants.

masked inequalities between countries, while the focus on national averages obscured inequalities within countries and failures to reach vulnerable groups, such as children.

While focusing on and investing in solutions in one sector is important, this often led to a siloed approach and did not necessarily provide the impetus to achieve broader developmental goals. For example, the targets for extreme poverty reduction, access to safe drinking water, and gender equality in education were met by 2015. Yet, global progress on many of the remaining MDG targets lagged behind, including universal completion of primary school; reductions in infant, child and maternal mortality; and improved access to basic sanitation.¹⁶

The SDGs build on the strengths of the MDGs and aim to overcome the challenges. Like the MDGs, the SDGs are goal directed and designed to serve as a springboard to drive “transformational” change. The SDGs emphasise the principles of universalism and interdependence with the intention of ensuring that no one is left behind and that progress takes place across all goals, equally and for everyone. States are encouraged to “design backwards” – starting with a vision and defining steps towards achieving it – and then measuring and accounting for progress. The design of the SDGs reflects a greater appreciation of the interrelatedness of goals and targets; and an emphasis on collaboration both across and within sectors, as well as within and across institutions.

Importantly, the SDGs are seen as integrated and indivisible. The success of one leads to the success of others, and engagement and advocacy at both the global and local level are seen as essential to synergise efforts and multiply impact. By bringing different stakeholders together around common goals and targets, the SDGs provide a platform to stimulate out-of-the-box (rather than siloed) thinking, deepening our understanding of the interplay of different factors, and promoting an integrated approach in

designing solutions. A country’s ability to combat hunger, for example, is linked to its infrastructure, land-tenure and health-care systems, and its capacity to manage natural resources and mitigate disasters. All of these areas are essential to combat malnutrition in children, address poverty, support economic growth, reduce inequalities and promote a safe and sustainable environment. At the same time, improvements in children’s nutritional status will contribute to improved education, health and economic outcomes.

The SDGs have a much more explicit focus on inequality than the MDGs and emphasise reaching the poorest, most excluded, and most vulnerable to ensure that no one is left behind. This includes Goal 10 which aims to reduce inequality within and between countries, and a call to disaggregate data wherever possible by age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion and economic or other status. This is particularly important for children who are affected by multi-dimensional forms of poverty,¹⁷ including income poverty, food insecurity, poor living conditions and poor access to services. These challenges may be compounded by discrimination and/or harassment on the basis of disability or ethnicity that may further compromise children’s access to services and opportunities across the life course, and drive an intergenerational cycle of poverty.

The SDGs have a strong emphasis on inclusion and participation, and the 2030 Global Agenda was negotiated by UN member states and informed by a UN-led global conversation involving 10 million people from all walks of life including leaders, experts and marginalised communities. This consultative process gave rise to a set of 17 goals, 169 targets and 232 unique indicators, a significant increase when compared to the MDGs which comprised of eight goals and 60 indicators. This speaks to a broad policy agenda that aims to promote both social justice and sustainable development, and there will need to be continued focus and efforts to ensure that children are not lost amongst competing priorities.

Figure 1: The global goals for sustainable development

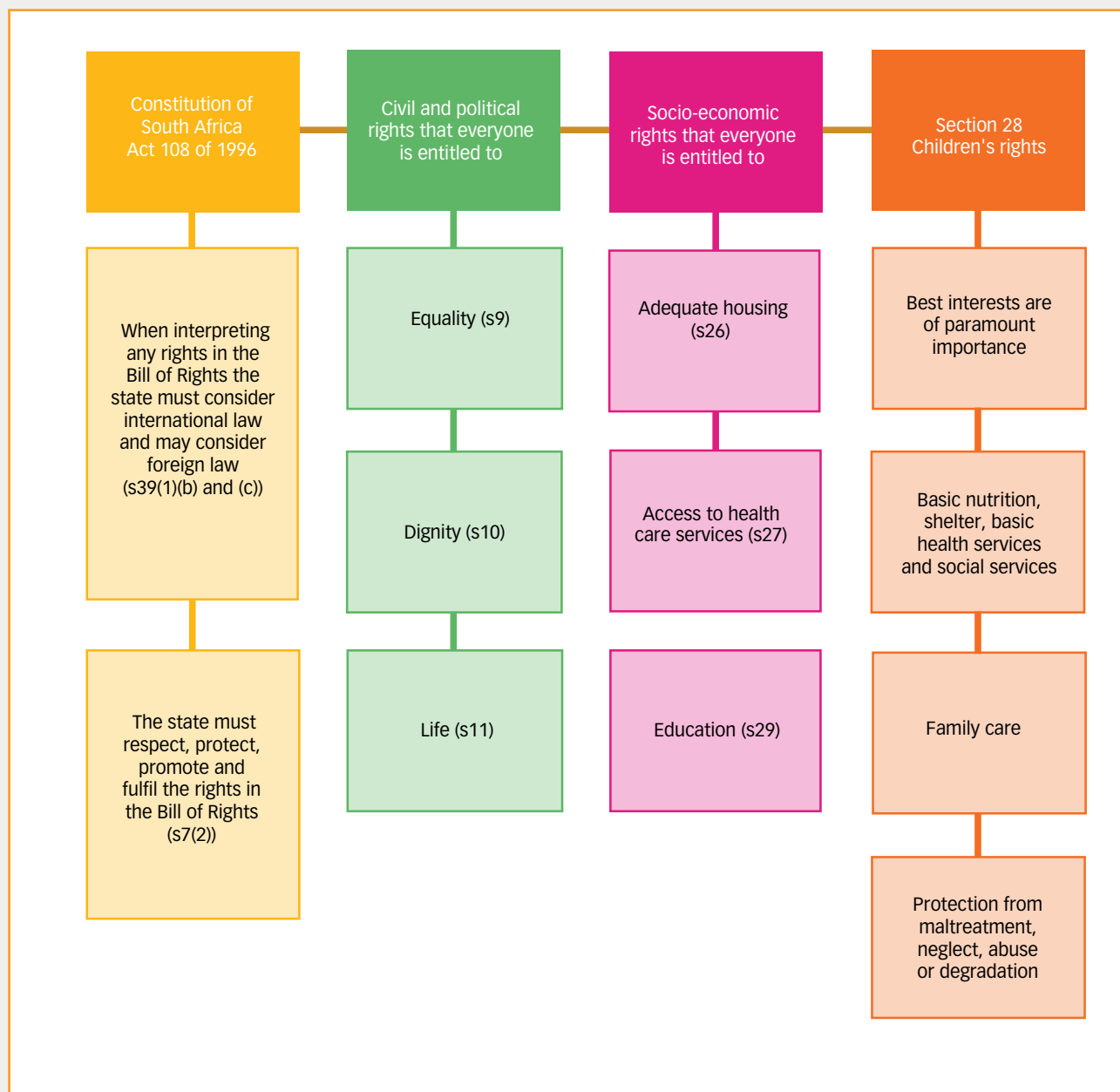


Box 1: Children's right to survival and development in the South African Constitution

The Constitution does not explicitly include a right to survival and development; however, all rights are interdependent and indivisible and, when read together, the rights to life, dignity, equality, education and the section on children's rights offer the same protection.¹⁸ The state has an obligation to provide services to prevent children from dying and to create an enabling environment in which children can develop to their full potential. Furthermore, the Constitutional Court ruled that: "The four great principles of the CRC ... guide all policy in South Africa in relation to children."¹⁹ Rights are legally binding, thus individuals or organisations can take the government to

court if the state violates or fails to realise any of the rights in the Constitution. Goals and targets such as the SDGs are not justiciable but, if linked to the rights framework, government can be held accountable for achieving the targets. For example, whilst the MDGs clearly put infant and child mortality on both the global and domestic agenda, the most important factor in reducing mortality rates in South Africa was the roll-out of antiretrovirals to prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV.²⁰ In this instance social justice advocates, namely the Treatment Action Campaign, won changes to government policy following a legal battle.²¹

Figure 2: Children's right to survival and development in the South African Constitution



How can the SDGs promote children's survival and development?

The UNCRC obliges states to ensure “to the maximum extent possible the survival and development of the child”;²² where a child is anyone under the age of 18.²³ Many articles of the UNCRC specifically refer to the concept of development highlighting its physical, mental, cultural, spiritual, moral and social dimensions.²⁴ The Committee on the Rights of the Child has issued guidance showing that the fulfilment of the right to survival and development is contingent on the implementation of other rights, including “health, adequate nutrition, social security, an adequate standard of living, a healthy and safe environment, education and play ... , as well as through respect for the responsibilities of parents and the provision of assistance and quality services”.²⁵ In other words, child survival and optimal development are multi-faceted and require many role-players to work together. Parents and families are primarily responsible for ensuring that children thrive, but the state and civil society organisations also have an obligation to support families and provide services such as schools, clinics, protection services, child grants, infrastructure, water and sanitation. Most of these are addressed in the 2030 Global Agenda; thus, the SDGs promote children’s right to survival and development.

The SDGs can only deliver on their promise for children if the world can ensure that every child is counted and that no one is left behind. It is therefore vital that the goals effect real change for all children, especially those most in need. It also is important that implementation strategies recognise and build on the interdependence and interrelatedness of the different goals, and adopt cross-sectoral and cross-institutional approaches, for example, working across education, health, water, agriculture and other sectors including academia, professional bodies and civil society to maximise potential synergies. These principles are clearly illustrated by the Global Strategy for Women’s, Children’s and Adolescents’ Health²⁶ which builds on SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being.

The strategy outlines an ambitious vision: “By 2030, a world in which every woman, child and adolescent in every setting realises their rights to physical and mental health and well-being, has social and economic opportunities, and is able to participate fully in shaping sustainable and prosperous societies.”

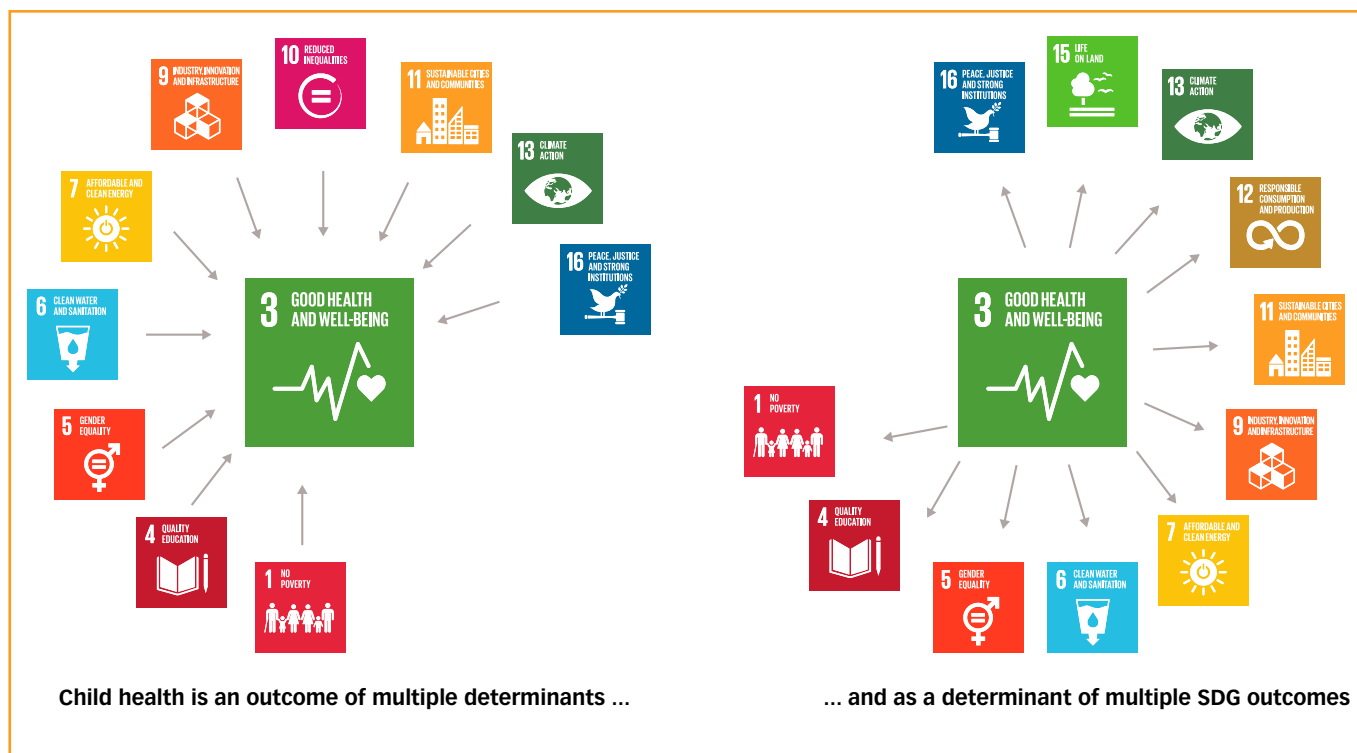
Survive, Thrive and Transform are three overarching objectives that drive the Global Strategy and aim to end preventable mortality, ensure health and well-being, and expand enabling environments in which women, children and adolescents can thrive.

Table 1: Key targets to ensure children survive, thrive and transform

Theme	Target	Indicators
Survive	End preventable deaths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce global maternal mortality to less than 70 per 100,000 live births Reduce newborn mortality to at least as low as 12 per 1,000 live births in every country Reduce under five mortality to at least as low as 25 per 1,000 live births in every country End epidemics of HIV, tuberculosis, malaria, neglected tropical diseases and other communicable diseases Reduce by one third premature mortality from non-communicable diseases and promote mental health and well-being
Thrive	Ensure health and well-being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> End all forms of malnutrition and address the nutritional needs of children, adolescent girls, and pregnant and lactating women Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health-care services (including family planning) and rights Ensure that all girls and boys have access to good quality early childhood development Substantially reduce pollution-related deaths and illnesses Achieve universal health coverage including financial risk protection and access to quality essential services, medicines and vaccines
Transform	Expand enabling environments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eradicate extreme poverty Ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and good quality primary and secondary education Eliminate all harmful practices and all discrimination and violence against women and girls Achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water and to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene Enhance scientific research, upgrade technological capabilities and encourage innovation Provide a legal identity for all, including birth registration Enhance the global partnership for sustainable development

Source: Every Woman, Every Child (2015) *The Global Strategy for Women’s, Children’s and Adolescents’ Health (2016 – 2030)*. Survive, Thrive, Transform. Every Woman, Every Child. New York: EWEC.

Figure 3: Child health is both an outcome and determinant of multiple SDGs



The indicators in table 1 are used to monitor progress in realising the Global Strategy and are derived from the SDGs.

The 2030 Global Strategy is transformative in a number of ways. Firstly, it adopts a life-cycle approach by identifying a series of evidence-based intervention packages to promote optimal development and continuity of care across the life course. Adolescents feature for the first time along with women and children, in recognition of the pivotal role they play as drivers of change, as well as the unique and often unaddressed challenges facing young people.

Secondly, the strategy looks beyond the health-care system and has adopted an intersectoral and integrated approach identifying a range of factors that are needed to create an enabling environment. In other words, the strategy recognises that child health is both an outcome and a determinant of multiple SDG outcomes (as outlined in figure 3). For example: good health is dependent on access to adequate food, housing, water and sanitation – as well as access to health-care services. While good nutrition enhances cognitive development, education and employment outcomes.²⁷

By adopting an integrated approach, the Global Strategy – while focusing on good health and well-being – has a potential “domino” or multiplier effect that may help leverage progress for children across various sectors.

The concepts of survive, thrive and transform can also be applied to other contexts. For example, in education, children need to be able to read (survive), learn (thrive) and have opportunities to apply what they read and learn (transform). These concepts are explored further in subsequent chapters.

How will the SDGs measure impact and track progress for children?

Understanding the situation of children in relation to the SDGs is crucial both for the well-being of children and for achieving the global goals. While none of the goals exclusively addresses the needs of children, most SDGs have targets that are either directly, indirectly or broadly related to children. The world cannot, and will not, realise these goals unless the specific needs of children are monitored and addressed throughout the course of the 2030 Global Agenda.

In fulfilling the SDGs, national strategies should aim to ensure that no child is left behind, and that those furthest behind are made the first priority of implementation efforts.²⁸ Critical to the success of the SDGs are accountability mechanisms to ensure governments are answerable for delivering on the goals for all children everywhere; and opportunities for children, youth and civil society to participate in this process at all levels.

It is often said, “what gets counted, gets done”, so to what extent do children count, and get counted in the SDGs? While the SDGs call for the disaggregation of indicators, this does not necessarily ensure that data will be disaggregated to child level. Instead government status reports often focus on population and household-level data, and fail to include child-centred statistics. This creates a challenge when monitoring progress for children, as previous research has indicated that children are disproportionately affected by poverty.²⁹ In other words, there is a risk that children’s specific needs will be overlooked and that they will continue to lag behind – especially in cases where the indicators do not explicitly

Box 2: National reviews of progress towards the SDGs

As part of monitoring progress towards realising the SDGs, member states are encouraged to undertake voluntary national reviews. These internal reviews should be conducted regularly, at national and sub-national levels; be transparent, inclusive and participatory; and be led by the state with representation from civil society groups, the private sector, general public (including children) and other stakeholders.³⁰ The reviews should also be rigorous and informed by evidence. In a nutshell, the voluntary reviews provide a platform for countries to scrutinise the extent to which the SDGs are integrated into local policies and programmes and their progress towards achieving the SDGs. A report is prepared, submitted to, and presented at the United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. This report is expected to include achievements and challenges that hinder the realisation of the targets, and statistics on the SDGs indicators. In 2016, 22 countries conducted national reviews and submitted reports to the forum; four of these were in sub-Saharan Africa (Madagascar, Sierra Leone, Togo and Uganda).³¹ In 2017, the number nearly doubled to 43 countries, including seven from

sub-Saharan Africa (Benin, Botswana, Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, and Togo).³² South Africa has not yet conducted a review, and it is unclear when the country will do so; as it has not yet signed up to submit a report in 2018.

It must be noted that these reviews are time intensive and demand human and financial resources, especially since they are to be conducted at different levels of government, and require involvement of various stakeholders. In addition, the lack of regular, high-quality and timely data means that developing countries are struggling to present national and disaggregated statistics for many of the SDG indicators. The majority of government departments and national statistical offices face capacity and financial constraints,³³ making it difficult for them to collect and analyse administrative data or conduct regular surveys. Consequently, some reports do not give a comprehensive picture on the welfare of children, and instead statistics are limited to “traditional” child indicators, such as malnutrition, education and mortality. Where data are available, not much focus is paid to disaggregating statistics across age, sex, geographical locations and other variables of interest.

ask for statistics to be disaggregated by age, or where indicators are not child specific.

In 2013, there was a call for a “Data Revolution”³⁴ – a significant increase in the production (quantitative and qualitative), use and dissemination of data to address inequalities in data access and use between and within countries, across people (information-rich and information-poor) and between the private and public sector, by 2020.³⁵ However, this will require significant financial investment to increase the capacity of national statistical offices, government departments and civil society organisations to produce, analyse and disseminate the data.

Child-centred indicators

To better understand the extent to which children’s specific needs are considered in the SDGs, we compared the measurement indices for the MDGs and SDGs, and focused on indicators that directly cover children (including those that mention children, and indicators where age disaggregation is specifically required).

While total number of child-centred indicators increased from the MDGs to the SDGs, the proportion of indicators directly focusing on children decreased from 50% to 37%,³⁶ raising concerns that children’s needs may get lost amidst competing interests.

This is not necessarily clear cut, as the goals and targets aim to promote the welfare of all people, including children. While some indicators such as household income or expenditure levels have a direct and immediate impact on children’s access to food, electricity, adequate water and basic sanitation, the links between other indicators and children’s welfare are more tenuous. Yet even the tracking of food price anomalies has an indirect impact on child

nutrition by limiting the volatility of food prices and safeguarding household food security.

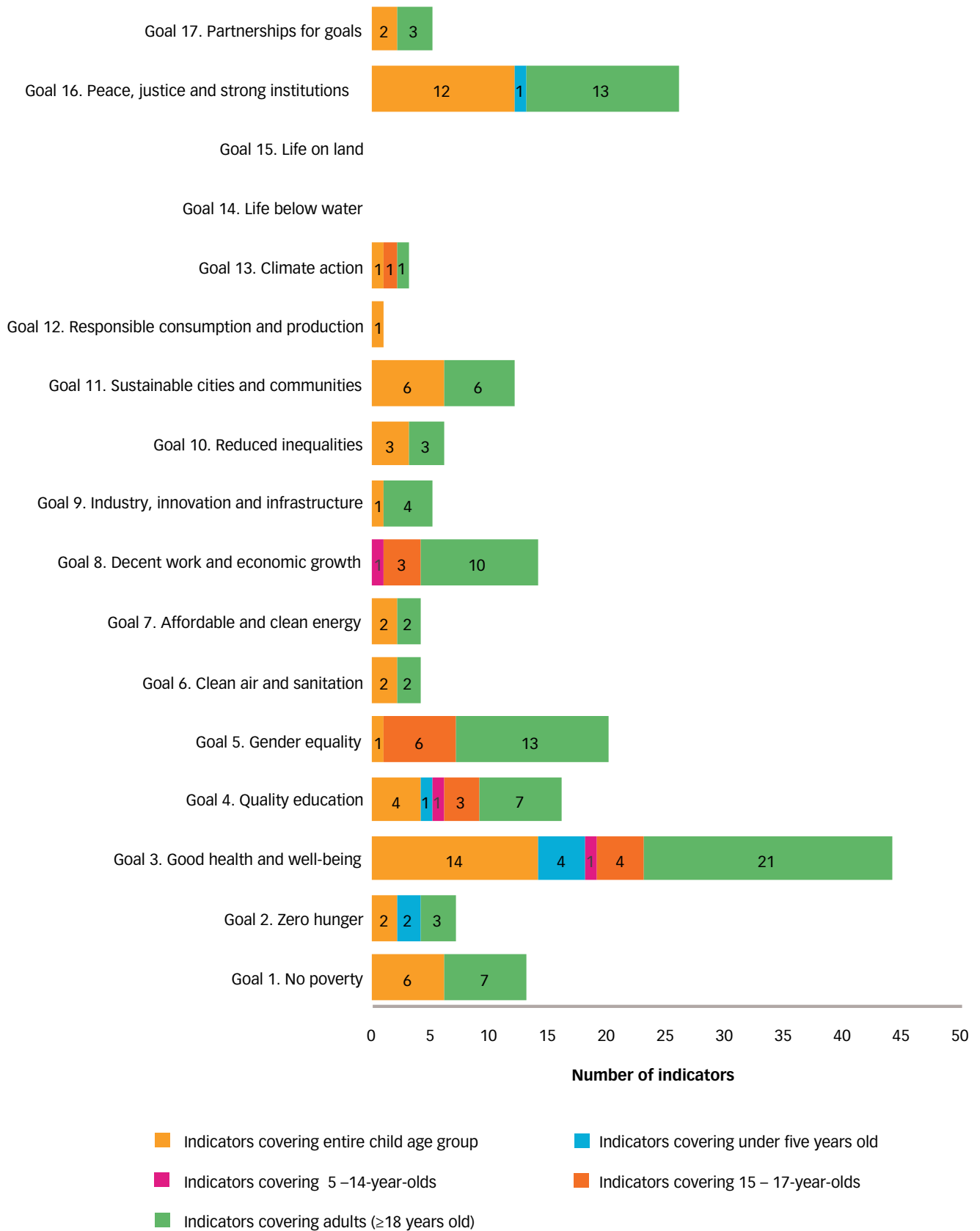
Figure 4 presents an analysis of the SDGs, showcasing the number of indicators that directly focus on children and adults across the 17 goals. Some goals have indicators that cover specific child age groups while the majority have at least one indicator that relates to all children. There are some goals, such as the one on gender equality, that have more indicators focusing on adults than on children.

Disaggregating statistics by age

At times it is important to disaggregate statistics by age to track progress at key points in the life course, as in the case of neonatal and under-five mortality as young children are particularly vulnerable. Yet this focus may also divert attention and resources away from other vulnerable groups. For example, Goal 2 contains several indicators to track stunting, wasting and overweight amongst children under five years of age, yet the goal fails to track the nutritional status of older children and the growing burden of overweight and obesity in adolescence. There are also indicators, such as those relating to education, employment, and sexual and reproductive health, that refer to individuals aged 15 years and older. This raises questions around the extent to which the specific needs of adolescents (15 – 17-year-olds) are addressed or obscured because they are conflated with those of “youth” or “adult women”.

In addition, there may be difficulties in measuring some indicators, including those that are child specific, as their interpretation, measurement and monitoring may differ across

Figure 4: Number of SDG indicators specific to children and adults



Analysis by Winnie Sambu, Children's Institute, UCT.

countries, government departments and civil society groups. Particularly in cases where indicators are not defined using easily understood measures such as incidence or prevalence, but focus on the extent or degree to which a condition (or service) exists.

As the SDGs are implemented, human rights should serve as a compass to guide effective delivery. The starting point is to ensure that implementation activities (and their unintended consequences) do not undermine children's rights. Secondly, the commitment to ensuring that no one will be left behind – and that those furthest behind will be reached first – is central to the realisation of children's rights. It requires placing the elimination of discrimination and reduction of inequalities at the forefront of efforts to implement the SDGs, alongside the prioritisation of efforts to reach those children at greatest risk of being excluded.³⁷

While there are certainly challenges in monitoring progress for children, the SDGs provide the opportunity to harness resources, measure impact and achieve better results for children.

What is the current status of South Africa's children?

The SDGs recognise that high-quality, timely and disaggregated data are essential at country level to direct government investments, shape policy and service delivery, achieve the SDGs, and, ultimately, fulfil the rights of every child. Therefore, Goal 17 includes a specific provision to strengthen data systems, and provides a unique opportunity for South Africa to review current data sources and close the data gaps.

Based on a child-centred analysis of the SDGs, table 2 lists a selection of indicators that capture the current status of South Africa's children, highlighting current strengths and challenges.

Table 2 shows that, while South Africa has met, or is on course to meet, some of the SDG targets, there are several areas where the country lags behind. Significant progress has been made in reducing under-five and infant mortality rates, and the country has already met the neonatal mortality target of 12 deaths per 1,000 live births. While nearly all school-going children attend school (97%),³⁸ the quality of education remains a concern, and a high percentage of children in grades 3 and 9 perform below the 50% mark in numeracy and literacy. A high proportion of children continue to live in households that lack access to basic services, such as adequate water and sanitation. There is also a significant proportion of children living in households where there are food insecurity and hunger. Stunting, a manifestation of inadequate

diets, disease and poor living environments is high and affects a large proportion of children in the country, particularly those in poor households. Significant investments are therefore needed to ensure that the country achieves SDG targets at all levels, especially where lagging behind. For example, Goal 1 (End poverty) targets a reduction in national poverty rates, by at least half, between 2015 and 2030. In 2015, 62% (11.6 million) of children in the country lived below an upper bound poverty line, down from 14.7 million children in 2003. This represents a 21% reduction in child poverty estimates over the 13-year period. If the country is to halve child poverty rates by 2030, then efforts to combat income poverty and inequality need to be intensified.

As highlighted in table 2, it is difficult to provide a complete picture of the status of children in South Africa due to the lack of certain data. In particular, data on child abuse are scarce. Where national estimates are available, they are limited to specific age groups, mainly focused on older children. This raises a concern about the extent to which younger children are overlooked, especially since some studies have shown that young children are particularly at risk.³⁹

Conclusion

The Sustainable Development Goals outline an ambitious agenda for all and, in particular, for children. They urge us collectively to reach every child, family and community and to change the trajectory of lives in a way that has never been done before. However, there are various challenges and constraints that must be addressed if we are to achieve the SDGs. In particular, many developing countries lack the financial and human resources to implement the SDGs, as well as to monitor and evaluate the programmes put in place to meet the targets and improve the welfare of all citizens, including children. Fiscal constraints remain a big challenge, particularly for low-income countries, and for middle-income countries like South Africa where there are competing national interests. Lack of regular administrative and survey data to monitor the SDGs, particularly for children, remains a serious concern; statistical agencies lack the resources and capacity to collect data at regular intervals, and on the scale that the SDGs require.

The emphasis on country-level action provides a huge opportunity to bring different sectors together to tailor a specific plan to address children's needs in the South African context. Let us maximise the opportunity. We owe it to our children.

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- 10 See no. 1 above.
- 11 See no. 7 above. Articles 2, 3, 6 and 12.
- 12 See no. 7 above. Article 3.
- 13 See no. 7 above. Article 4.

Table 2: A baseline analysis of the situation of children in South Africa, using child-centred indicators based on the SDGs

GOAL 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere
<p>By 2030, eradicate extreme poverty (people living below \$1.25 a day) and halve the proportion of children living in poverty, based on national definitions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2015, 13% of South Africa’s children still lived in extreme poverty,⁴⁰ and 62% of children lived below an upper bound poverty line of R965 per person per month.⁴¹ • 66% of children received a social grant in 2015.⁴² 11.7 million children received the Child Support Grant (CSG), 0.5 million the Foster Care Grant (FCG) and 130,000 received the Care Dependency Grant (CDG).⁴³ • 18% of children eligible for the CSG did not receive the grant.⁴⁴ It is difficult to estimate the number of children excluded from the FCG and CDG as there are no estimates on the number of children with disabilities or in need of foster care.
GOAL 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture
<p>By 2030, end hunger and malnutrition; ensure access to safe, nutritious and sufficient food; address nutritional needs of adolescent girls, pregnant and breastfeeding women; and achieve targets on stunting and wasting in children under five.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2015, 13% of children in South Africa lived in households that reported child hunger.⁴⁵ • 29% of children lived below the food poverty line of R415 per person per day.⁴⁶ • 25% of children 6 months – 2 years were stunted,⁴⁷ and 77% of children aged 6 – 23 months were not fed an acceptable diet.⁴⁸
GOAL 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages
<p>By 2030, end preventable deaths and reduce under-five mortality to at least 25 deaths per 1,000 live births and neonatal mortality to 12 deaths per 1,000 live births.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2014, the under-five mortality rate was 37 deaths per 1,000 live births,⁴⁹ and the neonatal mortality rate stood at 12 deaths per 1,000 live births.⁵⁰
GOAL 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
<p>By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 41% of 3 – 5-year-olds in the poorest 40% of households do not attend an early learning programme, compared to 17% of those in the richest 20% of households.⁵¹ • In 2014, 57% of grade 3 learners and 48% of grade 9 learners achieved at least 50% in their home language.⁵² • 56% of grade 3 learners and only 3% of grade 9 learners achieved 50% or more in mathematics.⁵³
GOAL 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
<p>By 2030, eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking, sexual and other types of exploitation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 34% of girls aged 15 –17 years have experienced some form of sexual abuse.⁵⁴ • Data on intimate partner violence (IPV) are not available. The 2016 Demographic and Health Survey collected data on IPV in the home, focusing on adult women, but these data have not yet been made public; so it is impossible to derive estimates on number of children exposed to IPV.
GOAL 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
<p>By 2030, achieve universal and equitable access to safe, affordable drinking water for all; adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene, and end open defecation (with special attention to women, girls and those in vulnerable situations).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2015, 68% of children lived in households with adequate water (access to piped water inside or on site).⁵⁵ Access varied across geographical areas: 91% of children in urban areas – but less than half (39%) of children in traditional areas or (44%) on commercial farms – had access to adequate water. • 76% of children had access to basic sanitation (flush toilets or ventilated pit latrines), yet 2.4 million children (13%) lived in households where there was no tap or water point to wash their hands after using the toilet.⁵⁶

GOAL 7: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all

By 2030, ensure universal access to affordable, reliable and modern energy services.

- In 2015, 89% of children in South Africa had access to a mains electricity supply.⁵⁷
- However, a significant proportion of children (34%) lived in households where biofuels (such as wood) and paraffin were used for cooking, heating or lighting.⁵⁸
- 25% of children living in informal housing used paraffin for cooking, lighting or heating.⁵⁹

GOAL 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all

By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value; and, by 2030, substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training.

- In 2015, 31% of children (and 70% of children in the poorest households) lived in households where no adult was employed.⁶⁰
- 3.3 million young people aged 15 – 24 years old (32%) were not in employment, education or training.⁶¹

GOAL 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialisation and foster innovation

Develop quality, reliable, sustainable and resilient infrastructure to support economic development and human well-being, with a focus on affordable and equitable access for all; and significantly increase access to information and communications technology and strive to provide universal and affordable access to the Internet in least developed countries by 2020.

- There are no data on the proportion of rural children living within 2 km of an all-season road.
- Almost all children (99%) live in households where there is a working cellular phone, but there is no household level data on the proportion of the population covered by a mobile network.⁶²

GOAL 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries

By 2030, empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status.

- There are high levels of income inequality in South Africa, and 43.5% of children live below 50% of the median per capita income.⁶³
- Inequality is highly racialised: 81% of African children live in the poorest 50% of households, compared to only 7% of White children.⁶⁴

GOAL 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

By 2030, all people living in urban areas, including children, should have access to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services.

- 1.3 million children (12%) live in informal housing in South Africa.⁶⁵
- 19% of children residing in urban areas live in overcrowded conditions and this increases to 59% for children living in informal housing.
- 2 million children in urban areas (19%) live in households where there is irregular or no removal of waste.⁶⁶

GOAL 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels

Significantly reduce all forms of violence; end abuse, torture, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against children.

- South Africa has high rates of child abuse: 1 in 3 children aged 15 – 17 years old are reported to have experienced some form of sexual abuse.⁶⁷ National and sub-national data on child protection, especially amongst younger age groups, are lacking.

GOAL 17: Strengthen implementation and revitalise the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development

By 2030, build on existing initiatives to develop measurements of progress on sustainable development that complement gross domestic product, and support statistical capacity building in developing countries (including 100% birth registration).

- In 2015, 85% of children in South Africa were registered in their year of their birth.⁶⁸

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- 15 See no. 2 above. P. 12.
- 16 See no. 2 above.
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