

Children's Health Care as a Human Right: The Impact of Poverty on the Health of the Most Vulnerable

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What Got Me Here



UNICEF Headquarters
New York City

“In everything we do, the most disadvantaged children and the countries in greatest need have priority.”

— UNICEF Mission Statement



Ospedale degli Innocenti
Florence, Italy



Sierra Leone



Flood in India



Flood in Pakistan

Highlights

Major challenges facing our world

- **Poverty**
- **Humanitarian crisis:** War and natural disasters
- **Impact** on children within the context of human rights
- Implications for policies and programs

The focus is on the most vulnerable children.

Our International Commitments

Universal Declaration of Human Rights	1968
Convention on the Rights of the Child	1989
UN Millennium Declaration	2000-2015
Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities	2006
Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	2015
Paris Agreement (Climate Change)	2015
Bonn (Climate Change)	2017

Universal Declaration of Human Rights

“The recognition of the inherent dignity and of the **equal and inalienable rights** of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.”

Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)

- Defines a child as a person up to the age of 18
- Legally binding document once ratified
- Children are entitled to their own rights but also have responsibilities
- Compliance is monitored by UN Committee on the Rights of the Child:
Submits a report to the General Assembly once a year

Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)

“Article 24: **Right to health care and health services...** Children have the right to good quality healthcare, safe drinking water, nutritious food, a clean and safe environment, and information to help them stay healthy.”

Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) 2000-2015

The world made much progress, but MDGs failed the most vulnerable children.

“In 2015, **5.9 million children died** before reaching age 5 due to preventable diseases.”

UNICEF (2016), *The State of World's Children*:

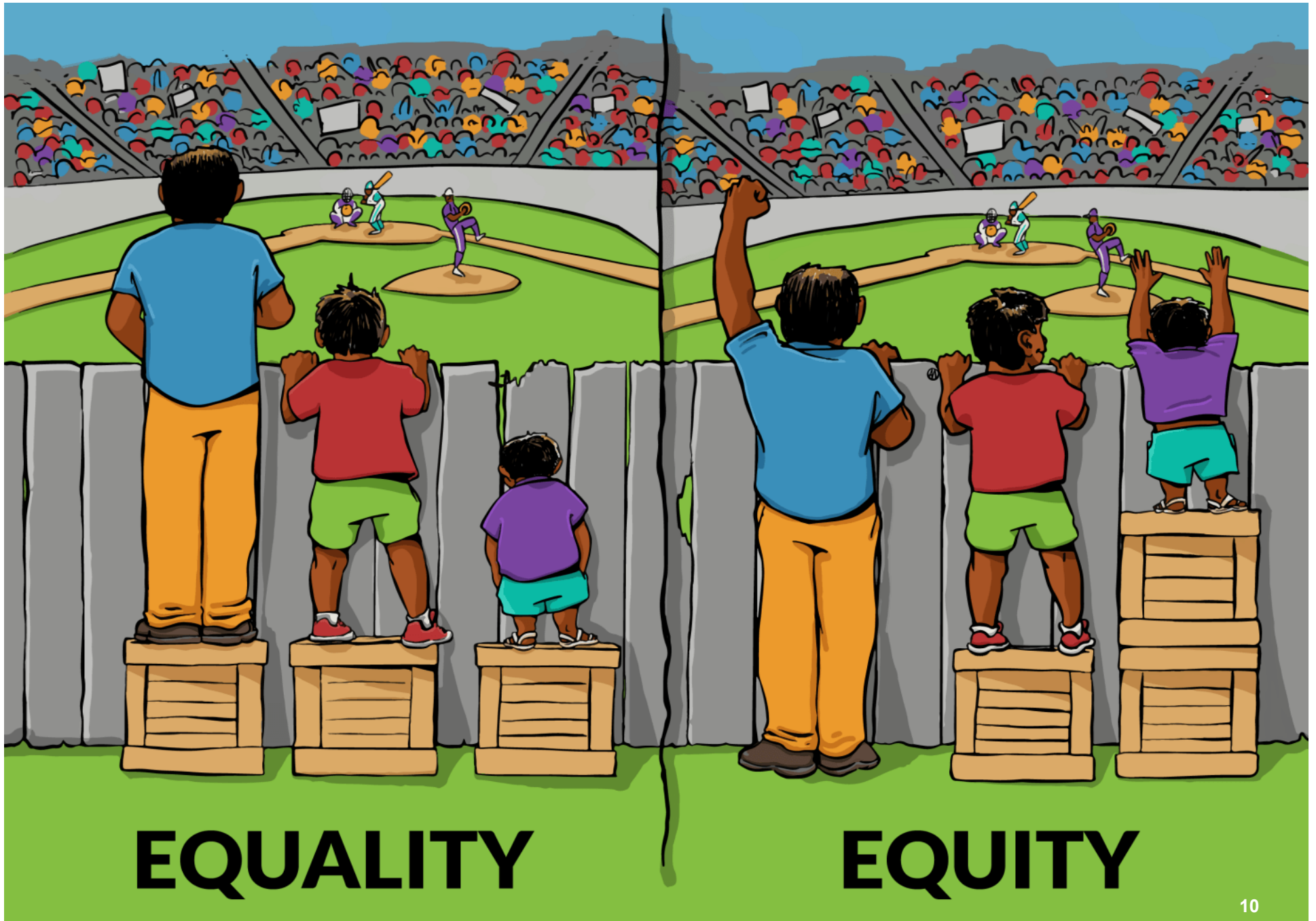
MDGs

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
2. Achieve universal education primary
3. Promote gender equality and empower women
4. **Reduce child mortality**
5. Improve maternal health
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
7. Ensure environmental sustainability
8. Develop a global partnership for development

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Agenda 2030





Human Rights-Based Approach

This is the conceptual framework used by UNICEF.

The Key Elements

1. Addressing disparities, inequalities and inequities
2. Building local capacity, local participation and local ownership to better guarantee sustainability
3. Instilling accountability
4. Advocating for the rights of the most vulnerable: Making their voices heard
5. Using human-rights language

“If you’ve come here to save us, then go on home. But if you’ve come to struggle with us on our common problems, then let’s get to work.”

-- Aboriginal woman to concerned Australians
(Davidson, 1994, p. 195)

The Major Challenges We Face

Poverty

- Lack of access to basic services: healthcare, education, clean water, and legal protection

Humanitarian crisis

- War and conflict: resources being spent on war and armed conflicts
- Natural disasters, environmental injustice, and climate change

Societal/Cultural

- Discrimination, bias against girls and women, lack of control over resources

Political

- Governance, lack of political will, corruption

Climate change

- Half a billion children live in flood prone areas
- 160 million live in high drought risk regions

The Magnitude of the Problem

Poverty

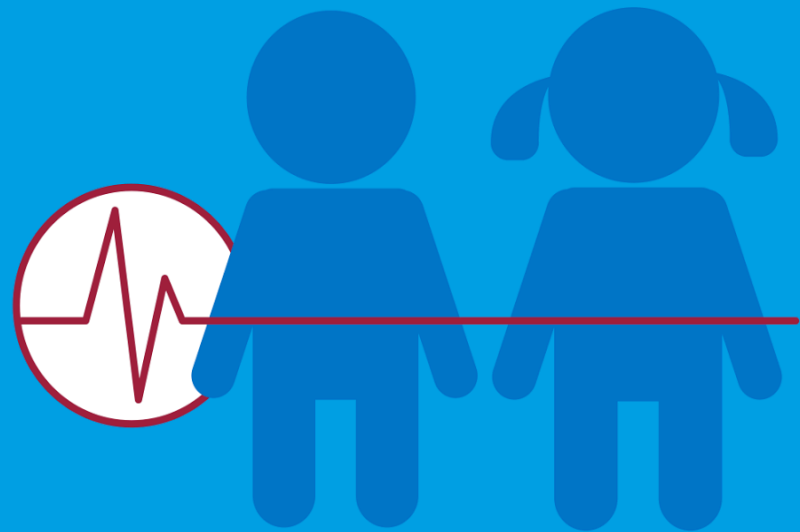
- 2013: Estimated 767 million people live on less than \$1.90 per day, half of them under the age of 18
- Almost 50% in Sub-Saharan Africa; 36% in South East Asia-- World Bank (2017)

Child Mortality

Compared to the richest children,
the **poorest children** are:

1.9 times

as likely to **die before age 5**



UNICEF, The State of the World's Children, 2016

Child Mortality

2016 highest Under-5 Mortality Rates (U5MR)*

Chad	127.3
Somalia	132.5
Sierra Leone	113.5
Central African Republic	123.6
Mali	110.6



*Per 1000 live births

Ref: https://data.unicef.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/U5MR_mortality_rate_2017.xls

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Malnutrition

- Underlying cause of 1/3 of child mortality
- Climate change destabilizes already fragile food production system



Gender Inequalities: Twins



Impact of War

Estimated **230 million children** live in countries affected by war
10 million child refugees

Between 2005-2015 number of child refugees under UNHCR mandate doubled
UNICEF 2016, Uprooted



UNICEF, 2015; Results Report, Humanitarian Action 2015; Annual Report, 2014; Save the Children, 2012

Impact of War on Children

Child protection issues

- Children are recruited as soldiers
- In 2010, over 1,200 children died due to land mines
- A majority of recruits and child deaths by land mines are boys



Monitoring Child Rights Violations in Conflict Situations

Six violations as starting points for monitoring abuses:

- Killing or maiming of children
 - Recruiting or using child soldiers
 - Attacks against schools or hospitals
 - Rape or other sexual violence against children
 - Abduction of children
 - Denial of humanitarian access for children
- Ref: United Nations Office the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children and Armed conflict

Impact on Education

1 in 4

of the world's school-aged
children live in countries
affected by crises



UNICEF, The State of the World's Children, 2016

Attacks on Hospitals and Schools

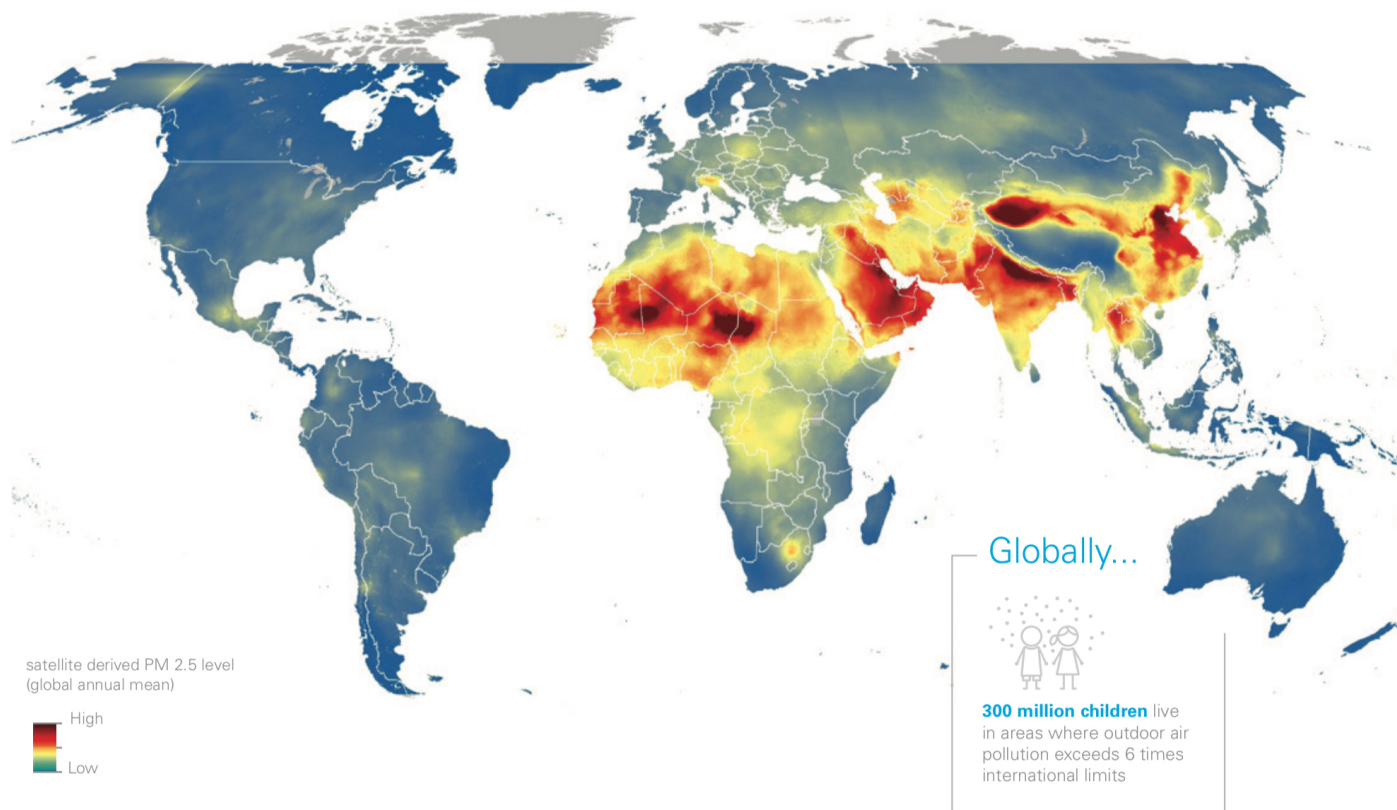


Hospital attack in Yemen

Environmental Factors Impacting Children

Around 2 billion children live in areas where outdoor air pollution exceeds international limits.

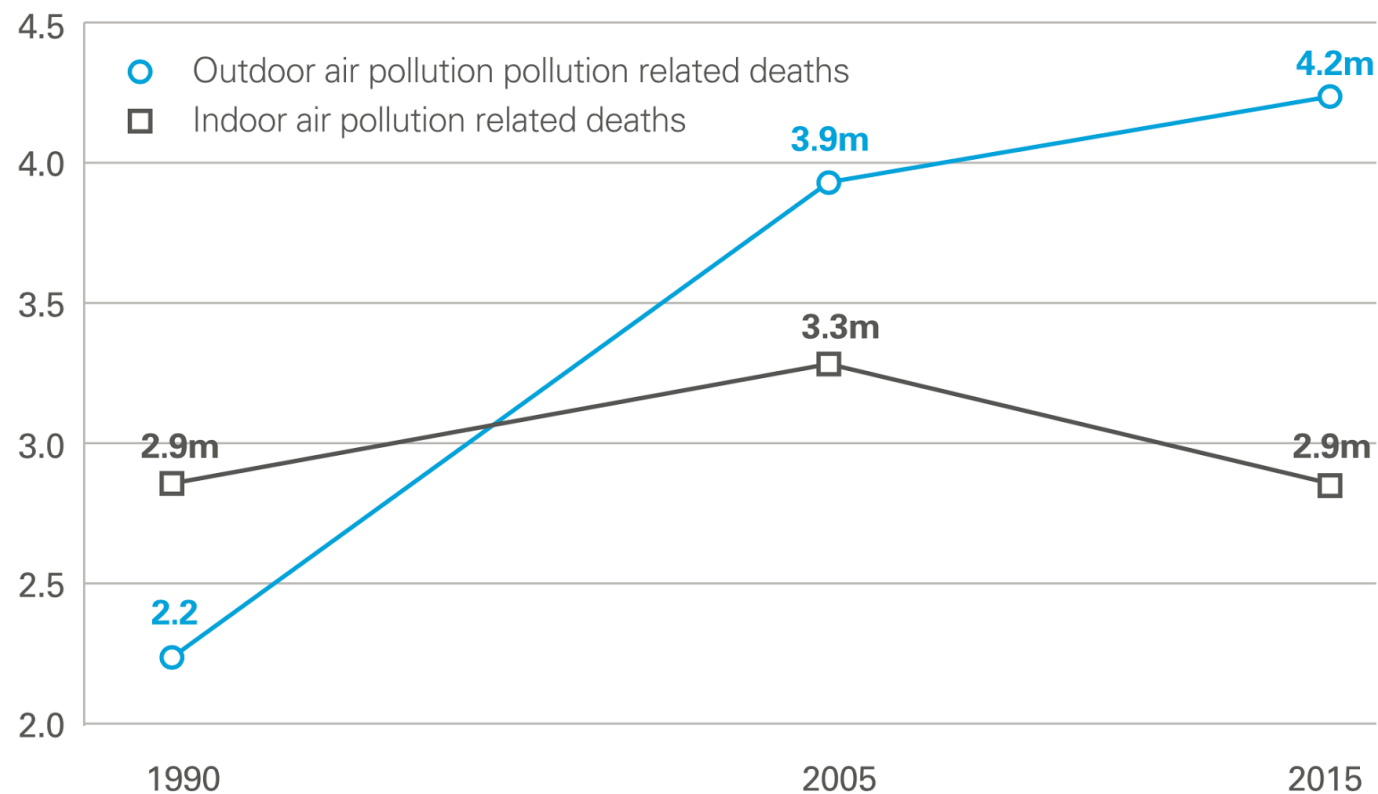
Fig. 23: Satellite derived PM 2.5 level (global annual average), 2012-2014



UNICEF (October 2016). "Clear the Air for Children."

Deaths Caused by Air Pollution, 1990-2015

Fig. 5: Deaths caused by outdoor and indoor air pollution, 1990 - 2015



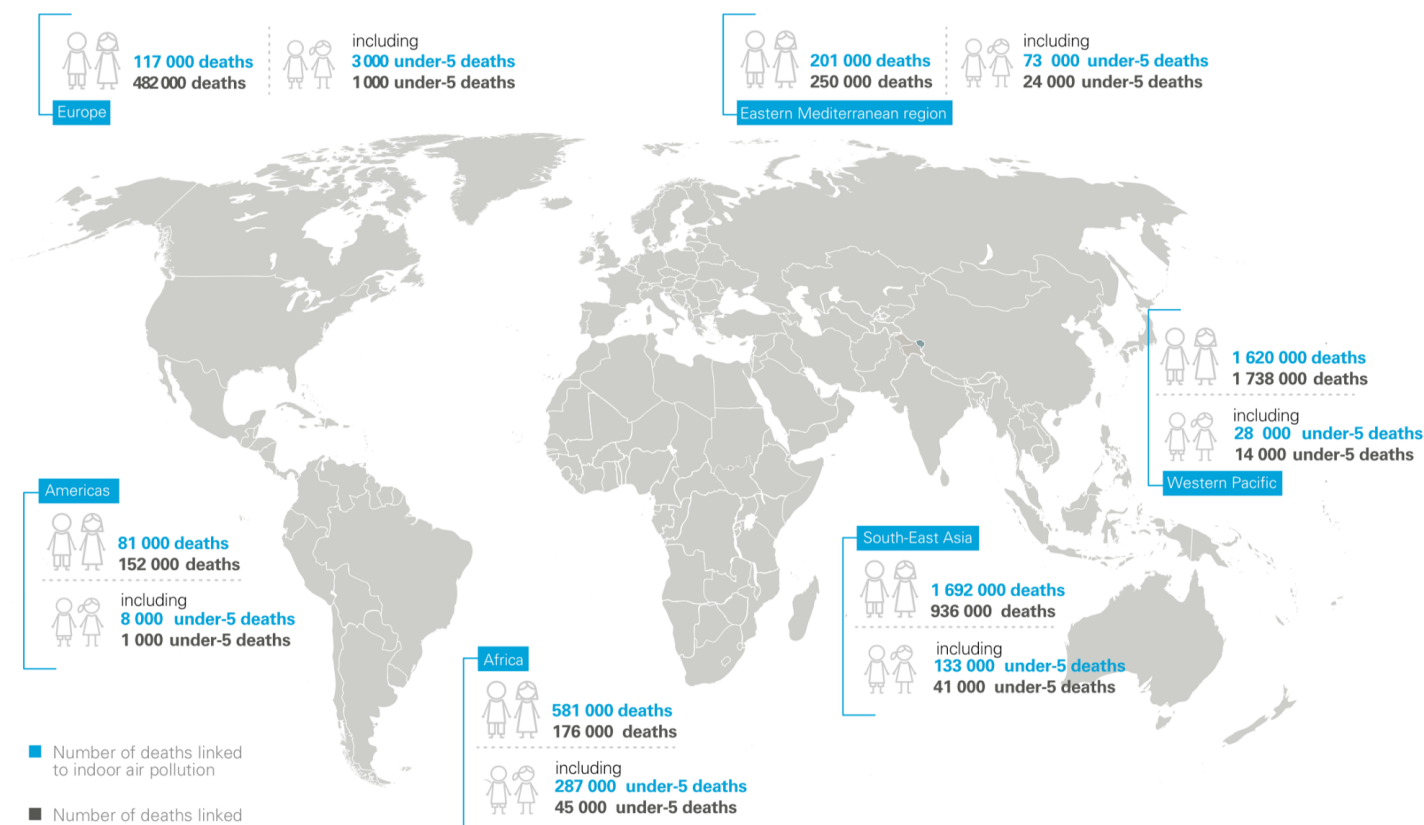
Source: IMHE, Global Burden of Disease, 2016

UNICEF (October 2016). "Clear the Air for Children."

Child Mortality Due to Air Pollution

Nearly 1 in 10 under-5 deaths is linked to air pollution

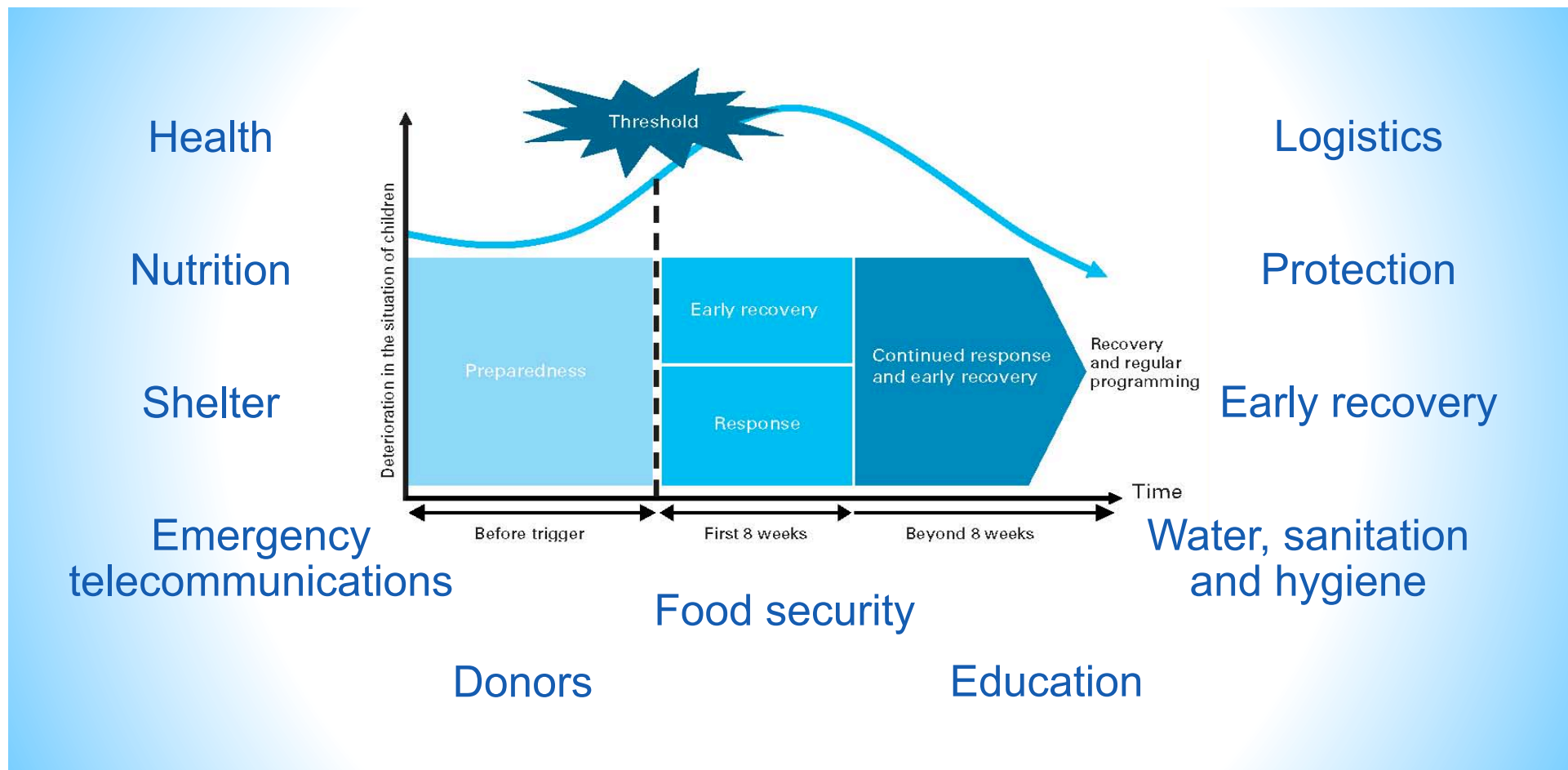
Fig. 7: Regional breakdown of deaths from outdoor and indoor air pollution, 2012



What Is Being Done: The Response to Humanitarian Crisis

Humanitarian Response: Cluster System

Sector Clusters: Collaborative, immediate response among local government, UN agencies, NGOs, and other aid agencies



Example of Health Cluster

- Activities:
 - Conduct rapid assessment
 - Deliver packages of services rapidly
 - HIV prevention and treatment services (e.g., measles vaccination, insecticide-treated nets, de-worming medication)
 - Mental health services, particularly for survivors of sexual violence and child abuse
 - Dissemination of health messages (e.g., breastfeeding, safe motherhood, hygiene and sanitation)
 - Supply distribution and essential items to affected communities (winterization kits)
- Clusters transfer responsibilities to locals
- Clusters are deactivated after emergency response

Path to Equity

- Identify the poorest children and communities; disaggregate data
- Using national averages ignores the most vulnerable
- Invest in proven, low-cost, high impact interventions
- Strengthen health systems
 - Focus on deadly preventable diseases: Malaria, diarrhea and respiratory infections
 - Training of health workers
- Use innovative approaches to reach the hardest to reach
- Monitor results for equity



Narrowing the Gap: The Power of Investing in the Poorest Children, UNICEF (2017)

Preparedness

- Preparation and response-planning include:
- Delivery of services, human and financial resources requirements, supply (e.g. vaccines, bed nets, antibiotics)
- Training of local health workers
- Appropriate communication strategy
- Data collection, analysis, monitoring and evaluation plan
- Assistance in placing Early Warning Systems, with focus on most vulnerable children and women requiring immediate care, including food, shelter, health care and psychosocial support, clean water, legal and physical protection

Recovery

- Link emergency or humanitarian response to long-term development (e.g. national health systems; support national and local stakeholders in national and local ownership)
- Establish/Re-establish routine health services, e.g., routine immunizations
- Build local capacity in disaster risk reduction

Light at the End of the Tunnel

- Building back better
- Emergencies are opportunities to improve infrastructure
- Children and young people as partners



Examples: Response

■ Mexico

- High density population centers have shifted to using ultra low sulphur diesel

■ Chile

- Ministry of Environment exchanges old cook stoves with new & clean cook stoves to minimize pollution from residential wood burning

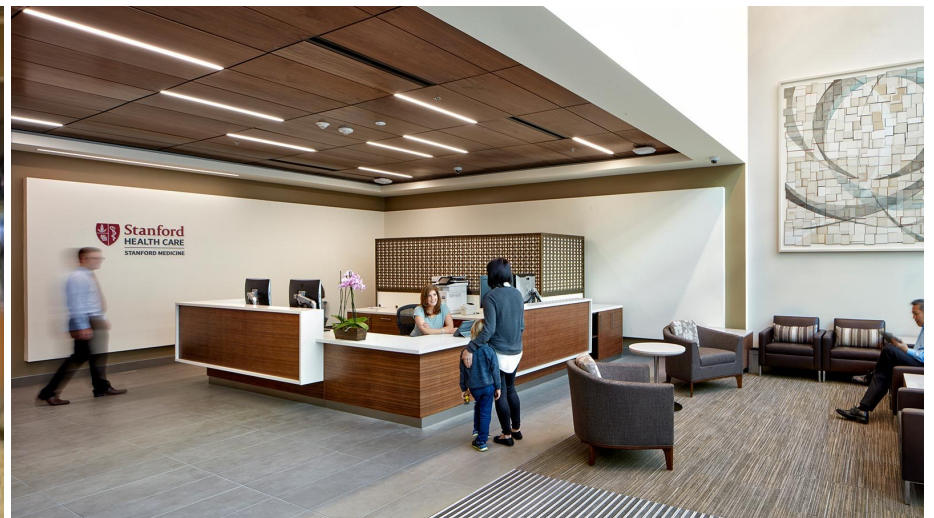
■ Rwanda

- Banned non biodegradable plastic bag to reduce the amount of burnt plastic

Think Globally. Act Locally.

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- Advocating, supporting and treating the most vulnerable
- Expanding to areas with large underserved populations (Houston, New Orleans)
- Improving access and delivery of care
- Fostering community partnership



Long Beach/Los Angeles –2006 Clean Air Action Plan

- The United States largest port complex
- In 2006 developed an action plan that resulted in a reduction of 85% for diesel particulate matter, 50% for nitrogen oxides, & 97% for sulfur oxides



<https://www.ajot.com/images/uploads/article/long-beach-arial-5282016.jpg>

Long Beach/Los Angeles – 2017 New Clean Air Action Plan

- Goal:
 - By 2050 will phase out diesel trucks in favor of natural gas and ultimately zero-emission trucks and cargo handling equipment
 - Freight moving trucks, trains, and ships will shift to cleaner technologies through 2035
 - Reduce greenhouse gas emission 80% and ease asthma by 2050
- Projections:
 - By 2024 most of the 17,000 trucks serving the port will be near zero or natural gas fueled
 - By 2036 zero emission trucks will be the majority
- Action
 - Expanding the use of emission capturing devices to reduce pollution from docked cargo ships
 - Clean Trucks program
 - Fees on trucks entering port terminals to phase out the oldest dirtiest diesel trucks transition
 - Cost: \$7-14 billion.
 - Ref: https://lbpost.com/images/stockintros/POLB_PierA.jpg

A Few Comparisons Across Industrialized Countries

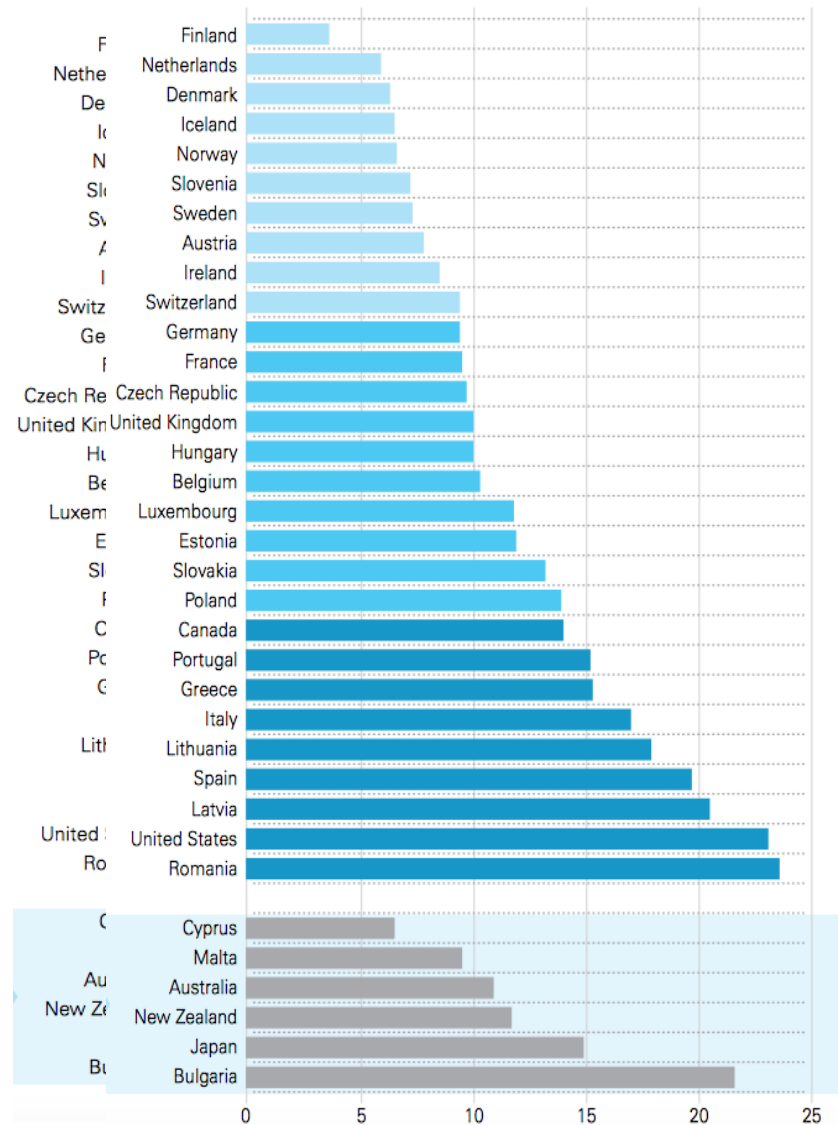
Child Well-Being in Industrialized Nations

Report Card

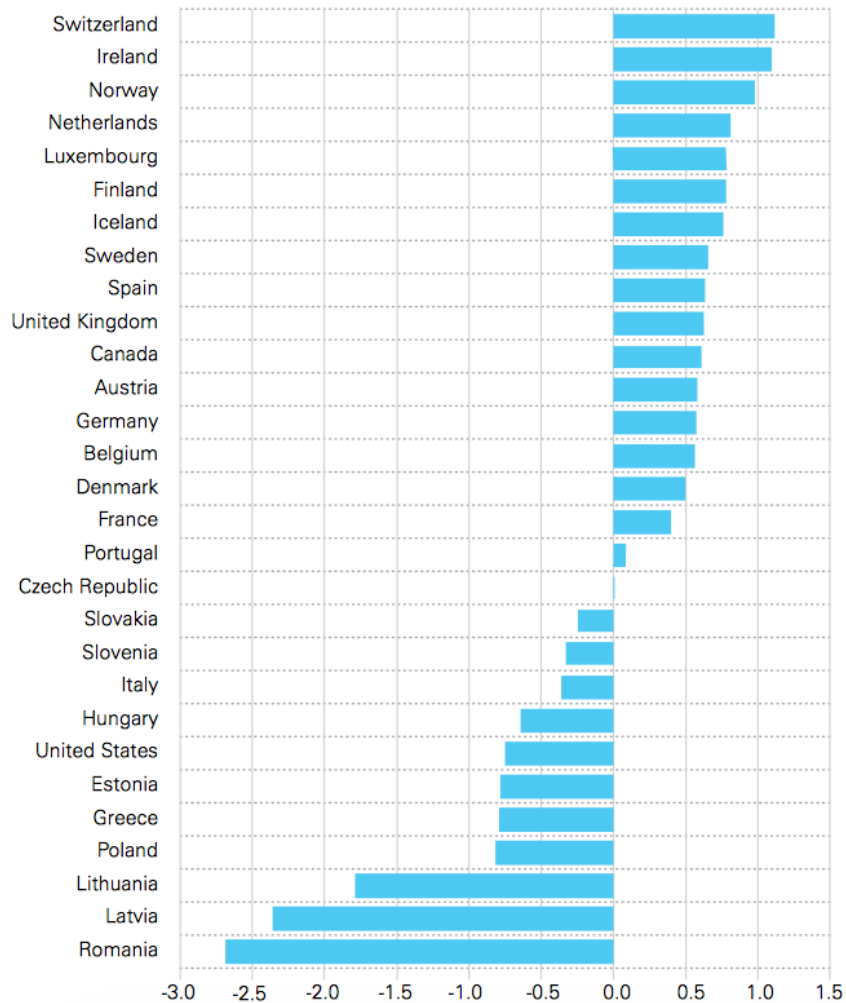
		Overall well-being	Dimension 1	Dimension 2	Dimension 3	Dimension 4	Dimension 5
		Average rank (all 5 dimensions)	Material well-being	Health and safety	Education	Behaviours and risks	Housing and environment
			(rank)	(rank)	(rank)	(rank)	(rank)
1	Netherlands	2.4	1	5	1	1	4
2	Norway	4.6	3	7	6	4	3
3	Iceland	5	4	1	10	3	7
4	Finland	5.4	2	3	4	12	6
5	Sweden	6.2	5	2	11	5	8
6	Germany	9	11	12	3	6	13
7	Luxembourg	9.2	6	4	22	9	5
8	Switzerland	9.6	9	11	16	11	1
9	Belgium	11.2	13	13	2	14	14
10	Ireland	11.6	17	15	17	7	2
11	Denmark	11.8	12	23	7	2	15
12	Slovenia	12	8	6	5	21	20
13	France	12.8	10	10	15	13	16
14	Czech Republic	15.2	16	8	12	22	18
15	Portugal	15.6	21	14	18	8	17
16	United Kingdom	15.8	14	16	24	15	10
17	Canada	16.6	15	27	14	16	11
18	Austria	17	7	26	23	17	12
19	Spain	17.6	24	9	26	20	9
20	Hungary	18.4	18	20	8	24	22
21	Poland	18.8	22	18	9	19	26
22	Italy	19.2	23	17	25	10	21
23	Estonia	20.8	19	22	13	26	24
23	Slovakia	20.8	25	21	21	18	19
25	Greece	23.4	20	19	28	25	25
26	United States	24.8	26	25	27	23	23
27	Lithuania	25.2	27	24	19	29	27
28	Latvia	26.4	28	28	20	28	28
29	Romania	28.6	29	29	29	27	29

UNICEF. Child Well-Being in Rich Countries: A Comparative Review. April 2013.

Relative Child Poverty Rate



Housing & Environment



Assessing housing and environment

COMPONENTS	INDICATORS
Housing	Rooms per person
	% of households with children reporting more than one housing problem
Environmental safety	Homicide rate (annual number of homicides per 100,000)
	Air pollution (annual PM10 [$\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$])

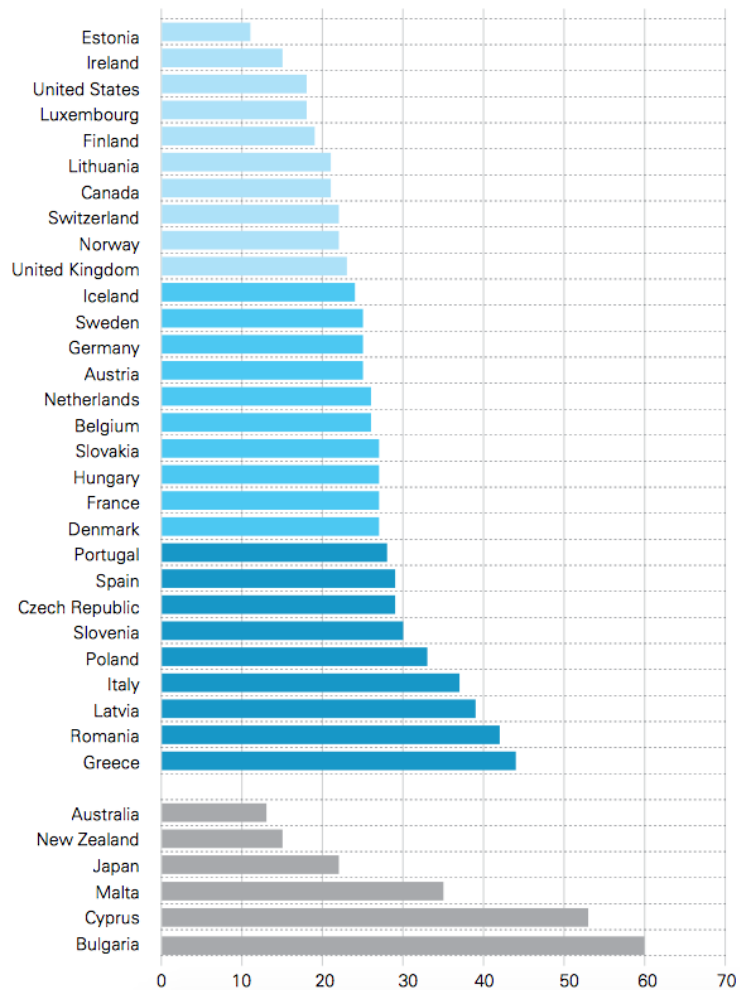
In the U.S.

- 1 in 10 US low-income families live in inadequate housing with exposure to allergens and air pollution
- Native American children have asthma rates 6 times higher than white children
- South Bronx, asthma rates 4 times higher than national average
- African American children 2 times more likely to visit ER for asthma and 4 times more likely to die from asthma than white children.

American Lung Association. Socioeconomic Disparities in Asthma.

American Journal of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine "Health Disparities In Asthma."

Air Pollution



Findings

- » The lowest levels of air pollution are found in Estonia, Finland, Ireland, Luxembourg and the United States (all below 20 parts per million). The good result for the United States is influenced by legislation on air pollution (1997, revised in 2006) which enforced stricter limits than in most European countries.
- » The highest levels are found in Greece, Italy, Latvia, Poland and Romania (all higher than 30 parts per million).

Need for More Effective Response

Addressing the Root Causes

Poverty

Lack of access to basic services: healthcare, education, clean water and legal protection

Humanitarian Crisis

Natural disasters, environmental injustice and climate change; resources devoted to war and armed conflicts

Societal/Cultural

Discrimination, bias against girls and women, lack of control over resources

Political

Governance, lack of political will, corruption

“Reaching the Unreached” Farzanegan, UNICEF (2005)

Building the Future



“If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost; that is where they should be. Now put the foundations under them.”

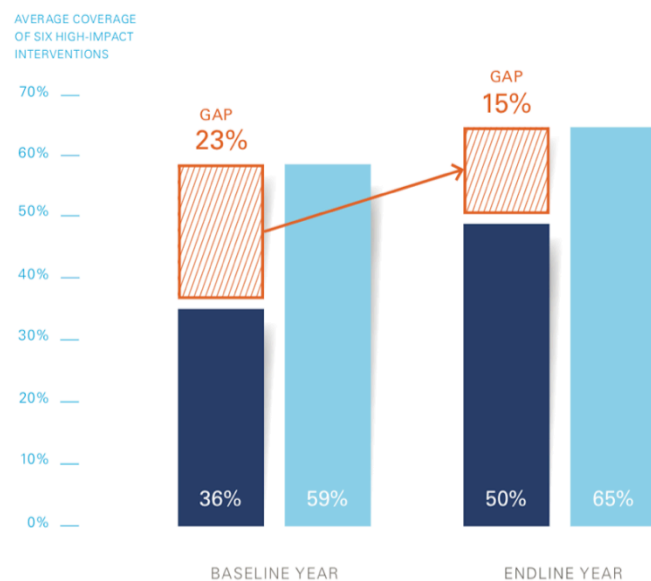
— Henry David Thoreau

Addressing Poverty

- SDG #1: Eradicating extreme poverty for all
- Breaking the intergenerational cycle of poverty
- Current rates of progress are insufficient to interrupt those cycles and close gaps in equity by 2030 – the target year for reaching the SDGs

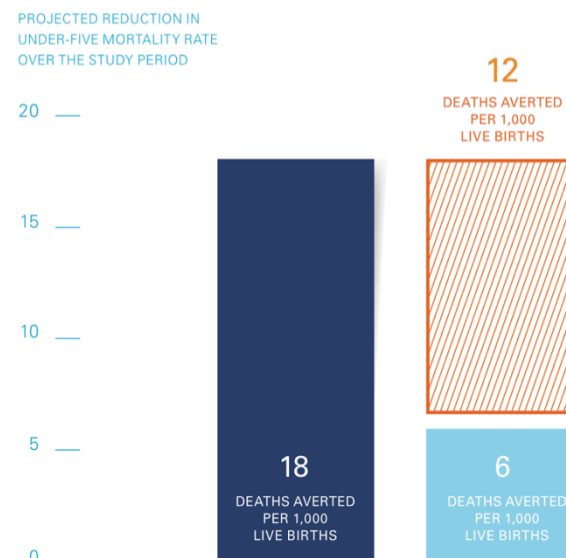
Outcomes of Investing in Children

Figure 1: Coverage of high-impact interventions increased more rapidly for poor than non-poor
Average intervention coverage in poor and non-poor populations in 51 countries



Source: UNICEF analysis based on data from Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) and Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS).

Figure 3: Narrowing of intervention coverage gaps led to a narrowing of mortality gaps
Changes in average under-five mortality rates for poor and non-poor groups across 51 countries

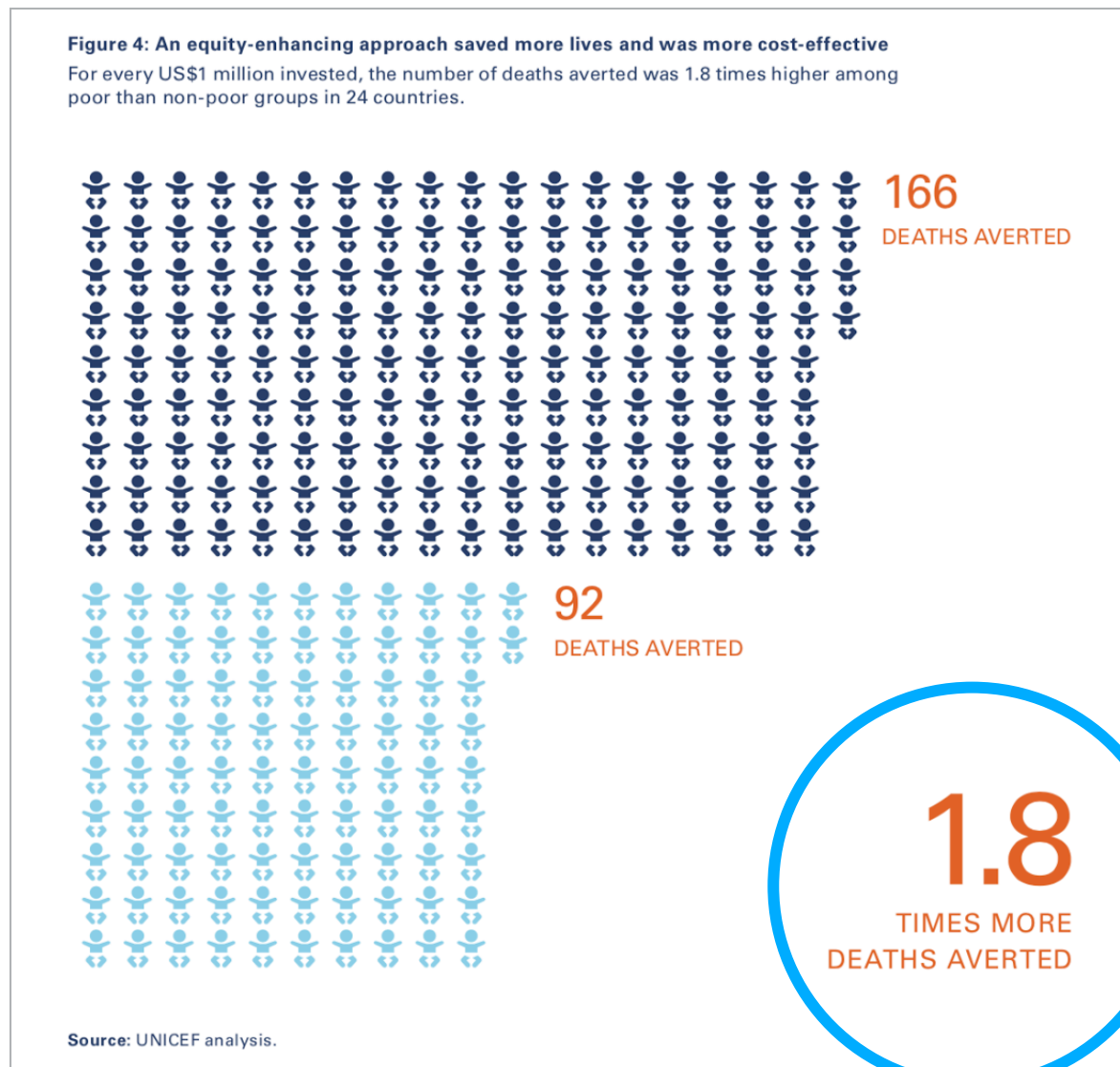


Source: UNICEF analysis based on data from DHS and MICS.

Use equity-focused budgeting to reach the most excluded children

Narrowing the Gap: The Power of Investing in the Poorest Children, UNICEF (2017)

Outcomes of Investing in Children



Narrowing the Gap: The Power of Investing in the Poorest Children, UNICEF (2017)

Example: Sierra Leone Investing in Poor

- Introduced a package of basic services in 2010 targeting major killers of vulnerable children & women
- Insecticide treated nets, promotion of early & exclusive breastfeeding, immunization, & birth attendance
- Government trained 15,000 community health workers between 2000-2015 & provided on the job training for primary health care workers at each of the country's 1,200 primary health care centers
- Conducted mass malaria prevention campaigns every 2 years distributing insecticide treated nets to pregnant women & children
- In 2010, launched the Free Healthcare Initiative to improve access to health care for mothers & children
- Results
 - Between 2008 and 2013 under 5 mortality fell annually by an estimated 14 deaths per 1,000 live births among the poor, compared to 9 deaths per 1,000 live births among non poor groups
 - 2014-2015 Ebola virus outbreak was devastating- potentially set back decades of progress in the country
 - Showed need to scale up resources & staff hospitals for most deprived in crises

UNICEF, July 2017. Narrowing the Gap: The Power of Investing in the Poorest Children. July 2017.

“the **WORLD** is **OVER-ARMED** and **PEACE** is **UNDERFUNDED**”

BAN Ki-moon,
United Nations Secretary-General

ANNUAL EXPENDITURES

**\$1630
BILLION**

**Military
Expenditures
Worldwide**

Source - SIPRI - 2010

DAILY MILITARY EXPENDITURE WORLDWIDE

How much has been spent today starting at midnight?

\$2,547,755,355



ANNUAL EXPENDITURES

**\$128
BILLION**

**Official
Development
Assistance ¹**

Source - OECD - 2010

ANNUAL EXPENDITURES

**\$44
BILLION**

**Official
Development
Assistance
to
Least Developed Countries ²**

Source - OECD - 2010

ANNUAL EXPENDITURES

**\$2.7
BILLION**

**UN Regular
Budget
for Peace and Security,
Development,
Humanitarian Affairs,
Human Rights, and
International Law**

Source - U.N. 2010

ANNUAL EXPENDITURES

**\$0.65
BILLION**

**International
Disarmament and
Non-proliferation
Organizations ³**

Sources - listed below

(IAEA) US\$ 419 M

<https://www.un.org/disarmament/over-armed/>

What Should Be Done

Make the most vulnerable and marginalized a priority

- **Fight inequity with human rights:** use the CRC and SDGs as advocacy tools
- Build alliances with government officials, civil society, lawmakers, businesses and academic institutions
- Increase investment in equity-focused policies and programs
- **Integrated approach** to service delivery: safe water, health, psychosocial support, nutrition, education, legal protection
- Put in place **social protection** measures
 - Social safety nets/cash transfers
- Combat discrimination with education, laws and non-violent action

What Should Be Done

Political accountability

- Advocate with the U.S. government to ratify the CRC Work with other countries to implement the CRC
- Advocate with government officials and lawmakers to adopt Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Address root causes of humanitarian crises

- War, environmental injustice and climate change
- Put in place measures to protect displaced and refugee children
- Foster community partnership and ownership
- Long-term vision
- Monitor for equity

What You Can Do to Help Give Vulnerable Children a Good Future...

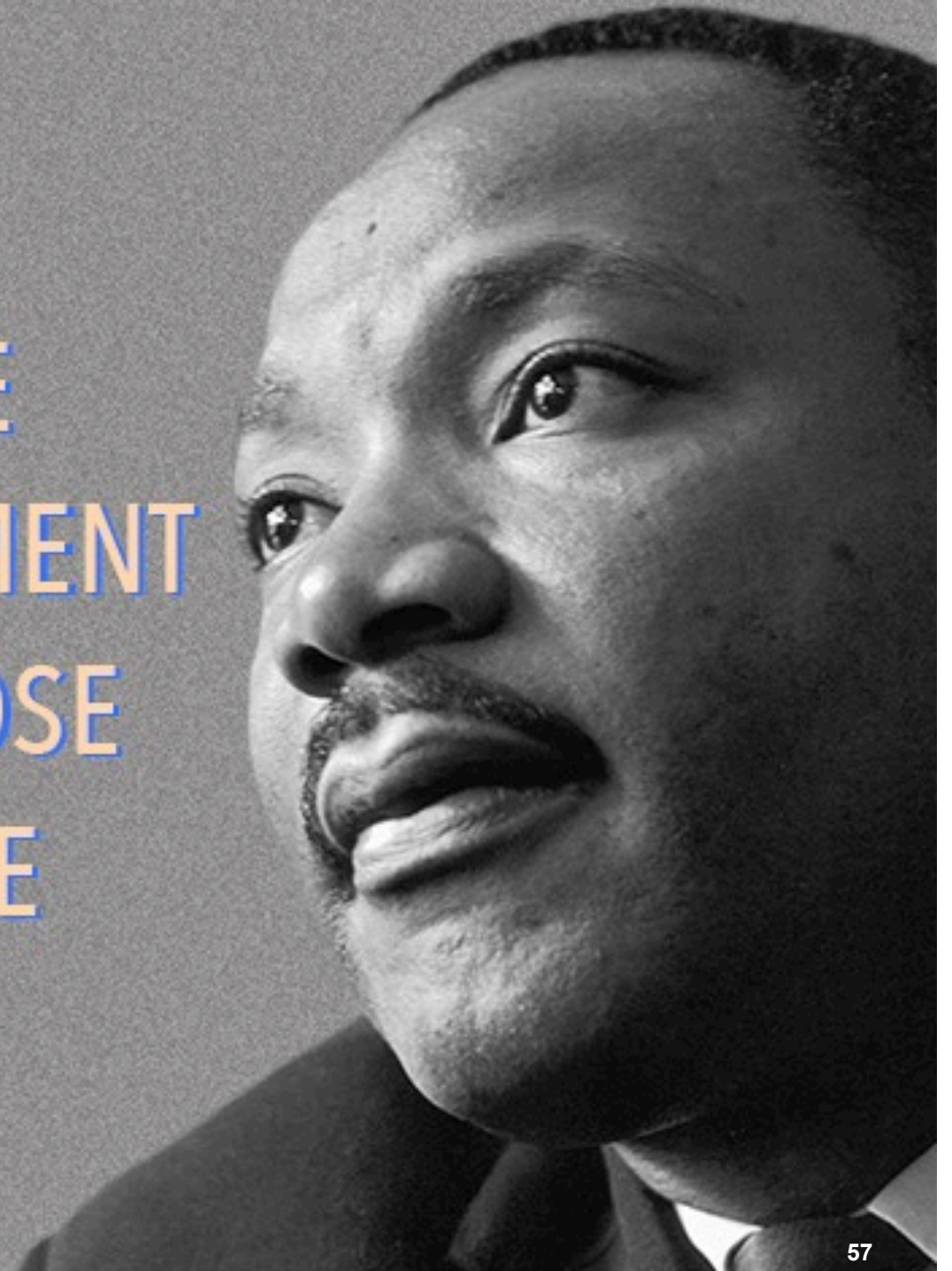
- Interdisciplinary research to identify who is left out and why
- Use research results to advocate for policies and programs
- Academic/Community partnerships
- Training/Capacity building
- Foster innovation to reach the underserved and hardest to reach
- Help make the most vulnerable peoples' voices heard
- Advocate for ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child CRC and adoption of SDGs



Be a voice for those
who are not heard

YOU MUST
ACCEPT FINITE
DISAPPOINTMENT
BUT NEVER LOSE
INFINITE HOPE

Martin Luther King, Jr.



Thank You