



www.viennafamilycommittee.org
Digital Networks:
www.10yearsIYF.org
www.civilsocietynetworks.org
www.20yearsIYF.org

Quarterly Bulletin of the Vienna NGO Committee on the Family

December 2025, No.136
Deadline for contributions: 15.02.2026

Vienna NGO Committee on the Family

ULRIKE EHRGOTT
c/o RASALAS eU
BÄCKERSTRASSE 14/7
A-1010 VIENNA
AUSTRIA
EMAIL: CONTACT@VIENNAFAMILYCOMMITTEE.ORG



Dear Readers of 'Families International',

We open this 136th issue of the quarterly bulletin Families International (FI) with a special highlight: a Laudatory Speech honouring Dr. Peter Crowley for his longstanding commitment to the Vienna NGO Committee on the Family and his advocacy for the International Year of the Family. His dedication has helped strengthen the conversation on family well-being and policy, and we are pleased to recognise his outstanding contributions.

Following this, UNICEF Innocenti provides a feature on the ongoing challenge of ending child poverty. This issue also includes two contributions from the Women's Federation for World Peace, both focusing on the importance of strengthening resilience among young people in challenging times.

In addition, we are pleased to share an article from our member organisation Make Mothers Matter (MMM), which presents findings on the State of Motherhood in Europe 2024, as recently discussed at the European Parliament.

As always, at the end of this 136th issue of Families International, you will also find a list of current and upcoming events relevant to families and family policy.

Sincerely,
Christin Kohler, MA
Executive Editor

Table of Contents

From the Vienna NGO Committee on the Family

Laudatory Speech for Dr. Peter Crowley	3
--	---

From UNICEF Innocenti

Ending child poverty: Our shared imperative	5
---	---

Women's Federation for World Peace

Strengthening Resilience in Youth Challenging Times	18
Strengthening Resilience in Young People	21

From Member Organisations of the Vienna NGO Committee on the Family

<u>Make Mothers Matter</u>	
State of Motherhood in Europe 2024 at the European Parliament	23

Upcoming Events	30
------------------------	----

Impressum	31
------------------	----

From the Vienna NGO Committee on the Family**Laudatory Speech for Dr. Peter Crowley**

On the occasion of his commitment to the Vienna NGO Committee on the Family and the promotion of the International Year of the Family

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is both an honor and a sincere pleasure for me to deliver this laudatory speech today for a man whose decades of dedication to the cause of the family — and this is no exaggeration — has earned recognition across the globe: **Dr. Peter Crowley**.

When we speak of people who build bridges — between cultures, between generations, between civil society organizations and international institutions — then we must speak of **Peter Crowley**. For many years, he has been *the* leading figure of the **Vienna NGO Committee on the Family**, guiding and shaping it with great foresight, reliability, and humanity.

With his calm yet determined manner, he not only led the Committee with stability but transformed it into a platform of active exchange and lasting cooperation. Under his leadership, the dialogue between NGOs, UN bodies, academics engaged in family policy, and representatives of various states was maintained and fostered at a high level.

Especially noteworthy is his tireless dedication to promoting and embedding the **International Year of the Family**, proclaimed by the United Nations in 1994. For many, this was a symbolic event. For Dr. Crowley, it was the beginning of a long-term process.

We gladly look back on outstanding events such as the major Family Congress in **Malta**, with more than 200 participants from all parts of the world, and many significant seminars and forums held at the **Vienna International Centre (VIC)**, which were also published and have inspired family-related work worldwide. In this context, particular mention should be made of the two major studies marking the **10th and 20th anniversaries of the IYF**, both of which were initiated and edited under your leadership.

Even when the UN's social affairs departments relocated from Vienna to New York, you ensured that the **Vienna NGO Committee on the Family** remained active, and you carefully maintained connections with the relevant offices in New York.

Peter Crowley understood that the recognition and support of the family as a fundamental unit of society must be a continuous and evolving process. That is why he persistently advocated for follow-up initiatives, for the annual visibility of family issues, and for the consistent development of family-friendly frameworks in the international context.

With his ongoing focus on research and science, he was always aware: family is not a static construct, but a living space — full of challenges, changes, but also full of hope. Dr. Crowley's work has contributed significantly to ensuring that families, in all their diversity, are seen, protected, and strengthened.

Dear Peter,

Your dedication to families worldwide, your commitment to intergenerational solidarity, and your

steadfast belief that the interests of families must always be considered in policy and science — all of this deserves our respect, our recognition, and our heartfelt thanks.

On behalf of all those who had the privilege of working with you and who were strengthened through your work: **Thank you.**

Thank you for your perseverance in this cause, for your tireless energy, and for all your efforts in the service of families!

And all the very best for your personal future!

From Unicef Innocenti

unicef 
for every child

The State of the World's Children 2025

Ending Child Poverty: Our shared imperative

Executive summary

Poverty poisons childhood – and our collective future

It claims children's lives, undermines their health and development, and constrains their learning. The consequences extend far beyond childhood: Adults who grew up in poverty face weaker job prospects, shorter lives, and higher rates of depression and anxiety.

It is not a question of scarcity or resources – it is a question of priorities.

Poverty also harms societies. By limiting children's ability to realize their full potential, it undermines future economic prosperity. By dividing the haves from the have-nots, it frays the bonds that tie us together. And by depriving communities of hope, it creates conditions in which violence and extremism can thrive.¹

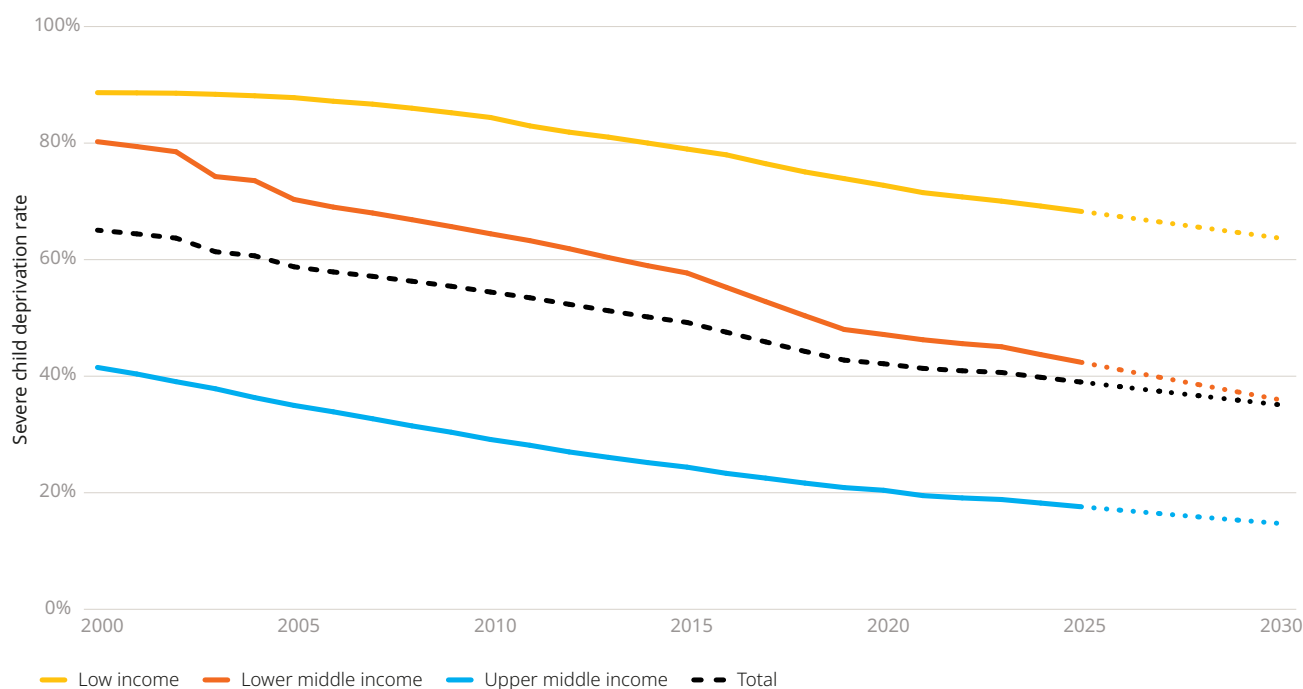
At a time when global military spending has reached a record US\$2.72 trillion,² hundreds of millions of children continue to live in deprivation, lacking basics like schooling, clean water and adequate shelter.

This reality is not a question of scarcity or resources – it is a question of priorities.

Progress is possible

While far too many children still live in poverty, the world has made significant progress. In this century so far, the rate of children living in severe deprivation has fallen by a third, declining from three out of five children in 2000 to two out of five in 2023. (see Figure 1).³

Figure 1 Severe child deprivation rates by income group, historical and projected, 2000–2030



Note: This chart shows the percentage of children aged 0–17 with one or more severe deprivations. Household survey data that serve as the basis for the estimates cover less than 50 per cent of the child population in upper-middle-income countries.

Source: Save the Children estimates of multidimensional poverty rates, 2023 and UNICEF projections for 2024–2030.

The reasons behind these gains are not a mystery: Governments, civil society and the international community took strategic and decisive action. They made ending child poverty a national priority and prioritized child rights. They embedded children's needs into economic planning, provided cash assistance to families, expanded access to essential public services and promoted decent work for parents and caregivers.⁴

The success of these approaches proves that progress is within reach.

Yet momentum has slowed. The COVID-19 pandemic brought progress to a halt, and recovery has been sluggish.⁵ In sub-Saharan Africa, major setbacks began even earlier, with some countries making little or no progress in reducing child poverty since 2014.⁶

Without coordinated action to reverse this slowdown, we risk consigning millions more children to deprivation.⁷ We risk creating an indebted generation – a cohort of children whose futures are compromised as countries struggle to service debt incurred before they were born.⁸

A better future demands action now

The State of the World's Children 2024 demonstrated that three powerful megatrends – demographic shifts, climate and environmental crises, and frontier technologies – will create a world for children in 2050 that is vastly different from today's. Acute crises, such as rising levels of armed conflict and mounting debt burdens, further compound these long-term trends.

Our response to these shifts will determine how far we advance in reducing child poverty. That response cannot wait.

Climate change and conflict threaten to drive ever more families into poverty. Already, four out of five children face at least one extreme climate hazard every year.⁹ In 2024, almost one in five children lived in a conflict area – nearly double the rate in the mid-1990s.¹⁰

Economic growth is slowing in many developing economies, risking their ability to expand anti-poverty programmes and public services for children. Unprecedented cuts in development aid could result in the deaths of at least 4.5 million children under age 5 by 2030 – each one a tragedy for a family and a grave loss of human potential.¹¹ Aid cuts will also limit children's opportunity to learn. Projected to fall by almost a quarter by 2026, aid reductions in education will put 6 million more children at risk of being out of school.¹²

Moreover, inequalities in digital access are increasingly shaping children's access to education, health care and economic opportunity.¹³ Digital technology has become a gateway need: Without it, children cannot access essential services and realize their rights,¹⁴ deepening existing divides.

And then there is debt: 45 of the world's developing countries now pay more on interest than they spend on health, and 22 spend more on interest than education.¹⁵ When countries underinvest in children, it creates a vicious cycle – failing to invest in children weakens economies, which in turn hinders countries' ability to repay debt.

Young people know what is happening. They experience the gap between rhetoric and reality.

“They said the economy was recovering. We didn’t feel it. They said schools were open. Ours were underwater. They said children were resilient. We were exhausted. They said we were the future. We asked: Whose?”

Nahjae Nunes, 2023 United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) Youth Foresight Fellow

Child poverty today

Poverty violates children’s fundamental rights. In a world where hundreds of millions of children suffer deprivation, the rights enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child – including rights to education, housing, sanitation and more – are not being fully realized.

Monetary poverty: A crisis of extremes

Today, almost one in five of the world’s children – more than 412 million – live in extreme monetary poverty, surviving on less than \$3.00 per day.¹⁶ Children are more than twice as likely as adults to live in extreme poverty,¹⁷ reflecting higher costs for families raising children. Because their bodies and minds are still developing, children are also more vulnerable to poverty’s effects and face potentially lifelong consequences in terms of their well-being.¹⁸

▼
1 in 5
of the world’s
children
live in extreme
monetary
poverty.

Children living in extreme poverty are increasingly concentrated in sub-Saharan Africa, which accounts for more than three out of four of all children who live in extreme poverty, even though the region is home to fewer than one in four of the world’s children.¹⁹ Together, sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia account for almost 9 out of 10 children living in extreme poverty, while representing only about half of the world’s children.²⁰

But child poverty is not confined to the world’s poorest regions. Based on a higher poverty threshold in upper-middle-income countries (\$8.30 per day), almost two out of three children globally – 1.4 billion – are living in monetary poverty.²¹

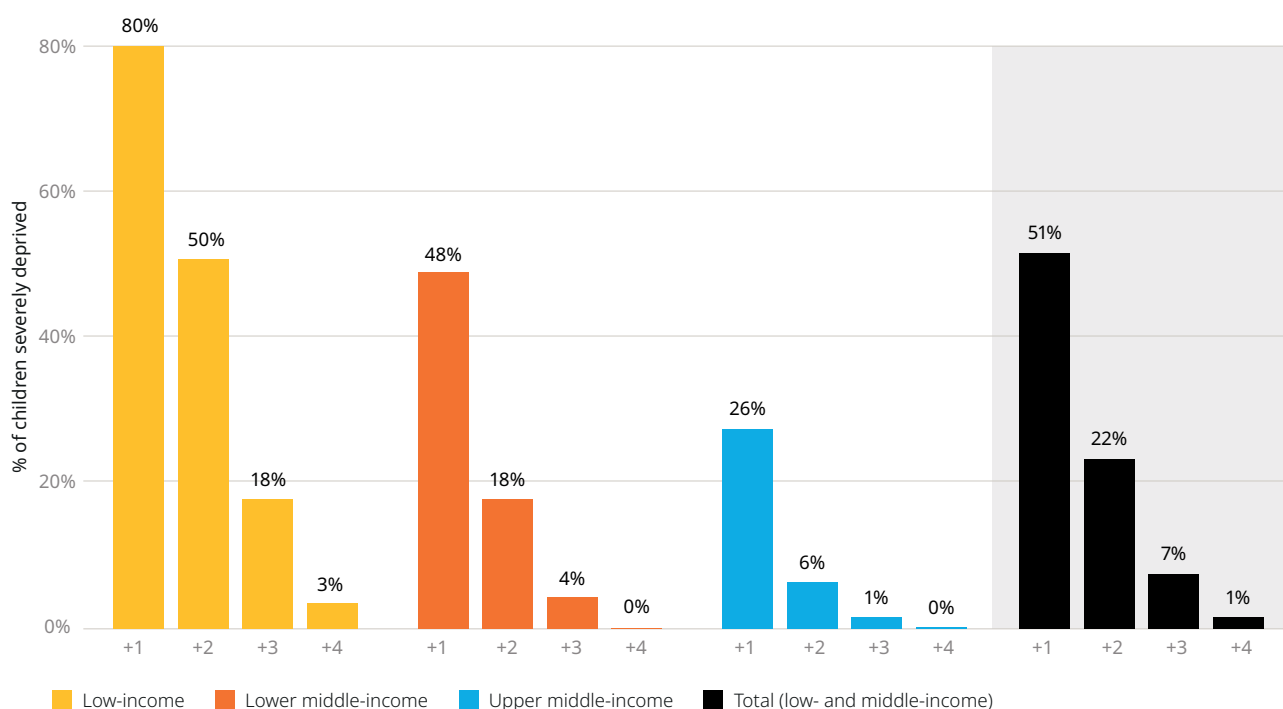
Severe deprivation: The multiple elements of poverty

Monetary measures tell only part of the story. In low- and middle-income countries, more than one in five children (417 million) are severely deprived in two or more of the following areas: education, health, housing, nutrition, sanitation and clean water (see Figure 2).²² The highest rates of severe deprivation among children are concentrated in sub-Saharan Africa, with South Asia, East Asia and the Pacific also showing high rates.

So far this century, countries have made progress towards reducing child poverty as measured by severe deprivation. Estimates show that poverty based on severe deprivation in at least one area has fallen by one third since 2000 in low- and middle-income countries.²³

But progress has stalled in wealthy countries in recent years. High-income countries use different indicators to measure severe deprivation among children; data are not directly comparable to those of low- and middle-income countries, although the concept of deprivation is the same. In the European Union (EU), severe deprivation among children declined between 2015 and 2024, but progress occurred only in the first half of the period. More than 6 million children in the region currently live in severe deprivation.

Figure 2 Severe deprivation rates among children, by country income group (based on number of deprivations)



Source: Joint analysis of data from Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) and Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) by Save the Children and UNICEF.

Children at heightened risk

The world's **youngest children** experience the highest rates of poverty. In 2024, 22.3 per cent of children aged 0 to 4 lived in extreme monetary poverty, compared with 14.9 per cent of 15- to 17-year-olds.²⁴

Half of all children living in **fragile and conflict-affected settings** live in extreme poverty, versus 11.4 per cent of children outside of such states.²⁵ **The education background of the head of household** is also a factor: Children face an extreme poverty rate of 32.9 per cent when the head of their household has no education, compared with just 5.8 per cent when the head of household has completed tertiary education.²⁶

Nearly 79 per cent of children facing extreme monetary poverty live in **rural areas** based on available data, though poverty in **urban slums** and informal settlements is much higher than the average in urban areas.²⁷ **Children with disabilities** are far more likely to live in poverty than other children,²⁸ because their families face disproportionately higher health care costs and their parents may be unable to work outside the home due to caregiving duties.

Children who are displaced or refugees, although often undercounted, face heightened poverty risk both in transit and upon arrival. Studies from Colombia, Lebanon and Uganda indicate elevated poverty rates among displaced populations.²⁹ **Indigenous children** also face substantially higher poverty rates. In the 23 countries that ratified the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 18.7 per cent of indigenous peoples lived in extreme monetary poverty compared with 9.3 per cent of the general population.³⁰



In low- and middle-income countries, **417 million** children experience two or more deprivations.

Proven ways to reduce child poverty

Evidence from countries that have made substantial reductions in child poverty points to five core policy areas that, when combined, create lasting impact:

- 1. Make ending child poverty a national priority.** Embedding child poverty reduction in laws, plans and budgets transforms it from aspiration into binding obligation.
- 2. Create fiscal space and supportive macroeconomic policies.** Reducing child poverty requires children's needs to be embedded into economic and fiscal governance. Central banks should assess how interest rate changes affect families, and legal frameworks should protect child-related spending and include automatic inflation adjustments. Child-sensitive budgeting and transparency mechanisms also support accountability: Countries with more transparent budgets tend to spend more on health care and child well-being.
- 3. Expand inclusive social protection.** Both universal and targeted family and child benefits have demonstrably helped reduce child poverty rates, improved nutrition and health, and increased school attendance and completion.³¹ Targeted cash transfer programmes have proven effective in countries including Brazil, Mexico and South Africa, while Poland's universal child benefit has helped drive a substantial reduction in child poverty rates.³² Still, approximately 1.8 billion children globally lack any form of social protection coverage.³³
- 4. Expand access to quality public services.** Children need reliable access to education, health care, water, sanitation, nutrition, information, play and housing to support their learning, development and well-being. Indonesia's School Operational Assistance programme has reduced financial burdens on families while increasing enrolment and retention.³⁴ Meanwhile, Bangladesh's integrated maternal and infant nutrition efforts have steadily lowered the country's stunting rates.³⁵ The European Child Guarantee ensures access to free early childhood education and health care, at least one healthy school meal daily, and adequate housing for marginalized children.
- 5. Promote decent work.** Children's well-being is closely tied to their caregivers' economic security. Despite low global unemployment, more than 58 per cent of the global workforce were informally employed in 2023.³⁶ In Africa, 29 per cent of working people were living in poverty – more than four times the global rate.³⁷ Practical steps to ensure decent work include legislating and enforcing minimum wages, increasing formalization through incentives, and extending social security to informal workers. Policies must also support workers' care responsibilities through paid parental leave and affordable childcare.

These five pillars require **enabling conditions**: recognizing shared global responsibility, catalysing public support for change, improving data collection and disaggregation, listening to children, and building foresight capacity to prepare for the future.

Three crises threatening progress

Although proven solutions exist, three immediate crises – climate and environmental crises, rising levels of conflict and the funding shortfall – threaten to undermine efforts to reduce child poverty. Alongside long-term megatrends that offer both opportunities and risks, acute crises are harming children now – destroying livelihoods, displacing families, disrupting education, and causing hunger and malnutrition.

The climate and environmental crisis

Each year, four out of five children face at least one extreme climate hazard, such as a heatwave, flood or drought. In 2023, nearly 9 million children were displaced by such disasters.³⁸ Projections for 2050 show that about eight times more children will be exposed to extreme heatwaves, three times more to extreme river floods and nearly twice as many to extreme wildfires.³⁹

In combination, climate hazards and poverty compound each other. Children living in poverty are more likely to be exposed to extreme climate hazards, and these hazards push families deeper into poverty. In 2024, at least one in seven children – 242 million – experienced school disruptions due to climate shocks, leading to learning losses.⁴⁰ Research estimates that climate change effects could force between 32 million and 132 million people into extreme poverty by 2030, with the most affected populations in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.⁴¹

The burden is heaviest in countries least responsible for the climate crisis, and least equipped to adapt.⁴²

Climate-responsive solutions

Through decisive climate action, up to 175 million people could be lifted out of extreme poverty by 2050.⁴³ It involves the following:

Expanding shock-responsive social protection in fragile and conflict-affected contexts. Bangladesh's anticipatory cash transfer programme delivers funds to vulnerable households before floods reach critical levels, allowing families to protect their assets and therefore reducing their anxiety.⁴⁴ Similar national social protection systems can be scaled to provide automatic responses to climate triggers.

Supporting displaced children. As climate-driven displacement increases, countries must strengthen systems to ensure displaced children retain access to education, health care, social protection and legal identity. Countries including Brazil, Morocco and Türkiye have policies that ensure migrant and refugee children can access services, regardless of their status.⁴⁵

Enabling community-led solutions. As an example, in South Sudan's Maban County, community consultations led to locally defined flood preparedness strategies.⁴⁶ These included early warning systems and child-led anticipatory action plans. Children designed evacuation strategies and safe learning spaces, building both practical readiness and emotional resilience.



Acute crises are harming children now. They are destroying livelihoods, displacing families, disrupting education, and causing hunger and malnutrition.

In 2024, at least, **1 in 7** children experience school disruptions from climate shocks, leading to learning losses.

Strengthening climate-resilient infrastructure and services. Governments should invest in early warning systems, rapid response protocols, and climate-adaptive schools and health facilities. For example, European cities like Barcelona, Madrid and Paris have transformed schoolyards into ‘cool islands’, using trees, gardens and shaded areas to combat urban heat.⁴⁷

Rising levels of conflict

The world is experiencing a historic rise in armed conflict: 2024 and 2025 have seen the highest number of countries engaged in armed conflict since World War II.⁴⁸ In 2024, about 19 per cent of the world’s children lived in a conflict area – nearly double the rate in the mid-1990s.⁴⁹

In 2024, the United Nations verified 41,370 grave violations against children in conflict – a 25 per cent surge from 2023.⁵⁰ Denial of humanitarian access, with more than 7,900 verified instances in 2024, puts children at acute risk of abuse, exploitation, disease and famine.⁵¹

A well-established link exists between monetary poverty and armed conflict.⁵² Between 2014 and 2024, the extreme child monetary poverty rate in fragile and conflict-affected states rose from 46 per cent to 50.2 per cent, while in all other states it fell from 19.9 per cent to 11.4 per cent.⁵³ This means half of children in fragile and conflict-affected settings live in extreme poverty, compared to roughly one in nine children in all other states.

Conflict causes poverty by undermining economic stability, destroying infrastructure and disrupting public services like water, education and energy.⁵⁴ Disruptions to education violate children’s right to learn and develop, eroding both individual potential and shared prosperity. Countries experiencing repeated or prolonged conflicts accumulate a ‘conflict debt’ – cumulative, long-term economic damage that stalls poverty reduction.⁵⁵

Protecting children in conflict

Effective strategies combine flexible humanitarian transfers, education continuity and psychosocial support. Governments need to:

Ensure humanitarian access and uphold children’s rights. Governments and armed actors must respect international humanitarian law, remove barriers to aid delivery and uphold the best interests of children in all decisions affecting children in conflict zones.

Invest in social protection in fragile and conflict-affected contexts. Provide unconditional cash transfers to vulnerable families, supplemented with in-kind support such as food, shelter and supplies. Where digital infrastructure exists, use it to deliver aid efficiently while linking beneficiaries to mental health services, case management and other essential services. Strengthen social protection systems to ensure sustained delivery.

Prioritize education in crisis response. Treat education as a core component of emergency response by establishing temporary learning spaces, catch-up classes and hybrid learning models. Invest in digital tools, such as solar-powered tablets for remote learning during power outages.

Restore essential systems. Rebuild health, education and civil registration systems quickly to ensure children have the legal identity documents they need to access services. Technology providers can create secure digital platforms for aid delivery, while educators can apply trauma-informed approaches in safe learning spaces.

▼
In 2024, **19%**
of the world’s
children lived in
a conflict area –
nearly double the
rate in the mid-
1990s.

Empower local actors. Civil society organizations, community leaders and youth groups, which are trusted by communities, are often the first responders. Support them with training, resources and coordination mechanisms to extend outreach through mobile schools and community-based programmes.

The funding crisis and underinvestment in children

Too many governments face an impossible challenge: How to invest adequately in children when funding is scarce. Most low-income countries collect 7–15 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) in taxes, but 25–30 per cent is needed to fund universal health care, education and social protection.⁵⁶ Climate adaptation requires roughly 3–3.5 per cent of GDP annually in low-income countries, further pressuring budgets.⁵⁷

International financing has failed to fill the gap. Official development assistance has stagnated in real terms, with the share reaching the least-developed countries falling from one third to under one quarter in a decade.⁵⁸ Meanwhile, foreign direct investment in developing countries has declined sharply after peaking in the early 2000s. The least-developed countries receive less than 5 per cent of foreign direct investment flowing to developing countries, and less than 2 per cent of global flows.⁵⁹

With private investment flowing elsewhere, aid stagnating and domestic revenue covering barely half of basic needs, governments now face a crisis. External debt service consumes around one fifth of government revenue in many low-income countries, often exceeding health and education spending combined.⁶⁰ In Africa, per-capita spending on interest (US\$70) exceeds spending on health (US\$44) or education (US\$63).⁶¹



External debt service consumes around one fifth of government revenue in many low-income countries, often exceeding health and education spending combined.

Structural solutions for sustainable change

Traditional solutions – debt cancellation, increased aid, austerity or borrowing from new sources – have fallen short or deepened the crisis. Instead, debt restructuring is needed to transform obligations into opportunities for governments to make robust, sustainable investments in children. The key is to align incentives around reducing child poverty and enhancing children's well-being. Elements of such a programme would include:

Linking debt relief to investments in children. Countries would work with creditors to reduce debt payments while improving tax collection. The resulting savings – combined with increased tax revenue – would fund investments in children's nutrition, education, health, and protection from violence and exploitation.

Providing rapid technical support. International partners would help countries upgrade digital tax systems and strengthen revenue collection, with gains realized within two to three years. As domestic revenue increases, it would be shared between creditors and child-focused programmes, with the majority supporting social investments.

Creating a sustainable path forward. Countries would graduate from the framework as they meet benchmarks in both revenue capacity and child development outcomes.

This approach creates shared benefits: Governments achieve visible social progress, creditors receive predictable returns and more children escape the grip of poverty.

A question of will

Ending child poverty in the twenty-first century is within our power. We know from both evidence and experience that we can make significant progress quickly, even in economically challenging times. We know which policies and investments accelerate progress. And we have the foresight and experience to lay the groundwork today to meet future challenges.

We also know this is a shared imperative. Economic crises, climate shocks and conflicts know no borders. In a world of plenty, too many children are suffering as poverty strips them of their rights and endangers their futures. And when poverty undermines social cohesion and economic prosperity, we all lose.

So why aren't we achieving more?

In the first-ever edition of *The State of the World's Children* report in 1980, UNICEF Executive Director James P. Grant assessed the extent of global resources and knowledge available to combat child poverty and declared they were sufficient to do the job.

Just like today, we knew then what to do and we had the resources to do it.

“It is not over our capacity to achieve this goal that the question mark now hovers. ...
It is over our wisdom and our will to do so.”

James P. Grant, Former UNICEF Executive Director

The progress the world has made to reduce child poverty since 1980 shows that will was found.

Even amid today's mounting crises, we believe that will to end child poverty can – and must – be found again.

Endnotes

- 1 United Nations Development Programme, 'Preventing Violent Extremism through Promoting Inclusive Development, Tolerance and Respect for Diversity', Discussion paper, UNDP, New York, 1 June 2016.
- 2 Liang, Xiao, et al., *Trends in World Military Expenditure*, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, Stockholm, April 2025, <<https://doi.org/10.55163/AVEC8366>>, accessed 20 October 2025.
- 3 United Nations Children's Fund analysis of data from Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) and Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) compiled by Save the Children.
- 4 Global Coalition to End Child Poverty. *What Works to Reduce Child Poverty? Insights from Across the Globe*, Global Coalition to End Child Poverty, New York, 2025.
- 5 The World Bank, UNICEF, et al., 'Children in Monetary Poor Households: Global, regional, and select national trends in the progress against child poverty', Policy Research Working Paper 11203, The World Bank, Washington, D.C., September 2025, <<https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099151009052581696/pdf/IDU-439588fb-b2c2-4d7f-941b-90275692e782.pdf>>, accessed 20 October 2025.
- 6 Ibid., p. 9.
- 7 United Nations, 'Outcome Document of the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development', United Nations, n.p., 16 June 2025, <<https://financing.desa.un.org/sites/default/files/ffd4-documents/2025/Compromiso%20de%20Sevilla%20for%20action%2016%20June.pdf>>, accessed 20 October 2025.
- 8 Act for Early Years, *Generation Debt: From crisis to opportunity for Africa's youngest children*, Act for Early Years, London, 24 September 2025, <<https://actforearlyyears.org/resources/generation-debt-from-crisis-to-opportunity-for-africas-youngest-children>>, accessed 20 October 2025.
- 9 Global Coalition to End Child Poverty, *A Disproportionate Burden: Children in poverty bearing the brunt of the climate crisis*, Global Coalition to End Child Poverty, New York, December 2023, p. 4.
- 10 United Nations Children's Fund, "'Not the New Normal" – 2024 "one of the worst years in UNICEF's history" for children in conflict', Press release, UNICEF, New York, 28 December 2024, <www.unicef.org/press-releases/not-new-normal-2024-one-worst-years-unicefs-history-children-conflict>, accessed 20 October 2025.
- 11 Medeiros Cavalcanti, Daniella, et al., 'Evaluating the Impact of Two Decades of USAID Interventions and Projecting the Effects of Defunding on Mortality up to 2030: A retrospective impact evaluation and forecasting analysis', *The Lancet*, vol. 406, no. 10500, pp. 283–294.
- 12 United Nations Children's Fund, *Education Aid Cuts: A broken promise to children*, UNICEF, New York, 2025, <www.unicef.org/media/173911/file/Funding_cut_analysis_-_education.pdf>, accessed 20 October 2025.
- 13 United Nations Children's Fund, *Childhood in a Digital World: Screen time, skills and mental health*, UNICEF Innocenti, Florence, June 2025, p. 7.
- 14 United Nations Children's Fund, *Innocenti Report Card 19: Child well-being in an unpredictable world*, UNICEF Innocenti, Florence, May 2025.
- 15 United Nations Trade and Development, 2025, 'A World of Debt Dashboard', UNCTAD, <<https://unctad.org/publication/world-of-debt/dashboard>>, accessed on 27 October 2025.
- 16 'Children in Monetary Poor Households'.
- 17 Ibid.
- 18 United Nations Children's Fund, 'Child Poverty: What you need to know about child poverty and UNICEF's work to tackle it', UNICEF, New York, <www.unicef.org/social-policy/child-poverty>, accessed 23 October 2025.
- 19 'Children in Monetary Poor Households', p. 8.
- 20 Ibid., p. 8.
- 21 Ibid., p. 12.
- 22 UNICEF analysis of data from MICS and DHS.
- 23 *What Works to Reduce Child Poverty?*, p. 9.
- 24 World Bank and UNICEF analysis based on data used for the monetary child poverty update released in September 2025, <<https://www.endchildhoodpoverty.org/news-and-updates-1/2021/3/16/infographic-children-living-monetary-and-multidimensional-poverty>>.
- 25 'Children in Monetary Poor Households', p. 6.
- 26 World Bank and UNICEF analysis based on data used for the monetary child poverty update released in September 2025, <<https://www.endchildhoodpoverty.org/news-and-updates-1/2021/3/16/infographic-children-living-monetary-and-multidimensional-poverty>>.
- 27 World Bank and UNICEF analysis based on data used for the monetary child poverty update released in September 2025, <<https://www.endchildhoodpoverty.org/news-and-updates-1/2021/3/16/infographic-children-living-monetary-and-multidimensional-poverty>>; Lucci, Paula, Tanvi Bhatkal and Amina Khan, 'Are We Underestimating Urban Poverty?', *World Development*, vol. 103, March 2018, pp. 297–310, <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2017.10.022>>; and 'Children in Monetary Poor Households'.
- 28 United Nations Children's Fund, *Seen, Counted, Included: Using data to shed light on the well-being of children with disabilities*, UNICEF, New York, 2021.
- 29 Wirtz, Andrea L., et al., 'Persistent Food Insecurity and Material Hardships: A latent class analysis of experiences among Venezuelan refugees and migrants in urban Colombia', *Nutrients*, vol. 16, no. 7, 2024, p. 1060, <<https://doi.org/10.3390/nu16071060>>; Economic Policy Research Centre, et al., *Child Poverty and Deprivation in Refugee-Hosting Areas: Evidence from Uganda*, EPRC, UNICEF and Cardiff University, Kampala, 2018; Jamaluddine, Zeina, et al., 'Inequalities in Wellbeing in Lebanese Children and Different Refugee Subpopulations: A multidimensional child deprivation analysis', *Child Indicators Research*, vol. 16, no. 5, 2023, pp. 2055–73, <<https://doi.org/10.1007/s12187-023-10040-2>>.
- 30 International Labour Organization, *Implementing the ILO Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention No. 169: Towards an inclusive, sustainable and just future*, ILO, Geneva, 3 February 2020.
- 31 Overseas Development Institute and United Nations Children's Fund, *Universal Child Benefits: Policy issues and options*. London, ODI and New York, UNICEF, 2020; and Tirivayi, N., Waidler, J. and Otchere, F. on behalf of the Transfer Project. *Cash transfers: Past, Present and Future. Evidence and lessons learned from the Transfer Project*. UNICEF Innocenti Research Brief, Florence, Italy, July 2021.
- 32 United Nations Children's Fund, *Innocenti Report Card 18: Child poverty in the midst of wealth*, UNICEF Innocenti, Florence, December 2023.
- 33 International Labour Office. *World Social Protection Report 2024–2026: Universal Social Protection for Climate Action and a Just Transition*. Geneva, International Labour Office, 2024, <www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/2024-09/WSPR_2024_EN_WEB_1.pdf>, accessed 25 October 2025. The 1.8 billion figure reflects an age grouping of 0–18.
- 34 Indonesian Ministry of Education, *School Operational Assistance (BOS) Program Evaluation Report*, Ministry of Education, Jakarta, 2023, pp. 1–3, 17–25.
- 35 United Nations Children's Fund, 'Nutrition and Child Growth Success: The case of stunting decline', Policy brief, UNICEF Bangladesh, n.p., 2024, pp. 1–2, 5–9, 12–15.

- 36 International Labour Organization, 'Charting Progress on the Global Goals and Decent Work', ILO, Geneva, 19 March 2024, <<https://ilostat.ilo.org/charting-progress-on-the-global-goals-and-decent-work/>>, accessed 23 October 2025.
- 37 Ibid.
- 38 *A Disproportionate Burden*, p. 4.
- 39 United Nations Children's Fund, *The State of the World's Children 2024: The future of childhood in a changing world*, UNICEF Innocenti, Florence, November 2024, p. 43.
- 40 United Nations Children's Fund, *Learning Interrupted: Global snapshot of climate-related school disruptions in 2024*, UNICEF, New York, January 2025.
- 41 Jafino, Bramka Arga, et al., 'Revised Estimates of the Impact of Climate Change on Extreme Poverty by 2030', Policy Research Working Paper 9417, The World Bank, Washington, D.C., September 2020, p. 10.
- 42 UNICEF, *The Climate Crisis is a Child Rights Crisis: Introducing the Children's Climate Risk Index*, United Nations Children's Fund, New York, 2021, p. 5.
- 43 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and the United Nations Development Programme, *Investing in Climate for Growth and Development: The case for enhanced NDCs*, OECD, Paris, 2025, p. 27.
- 44 United Nations World Food Programme, et al., *Anticipatory Cash Transfers in Bangladesh: Results and lessons*, WFP, Rome, 2021, pp. 1–13.
- 45 Andrade, Marina, Lucas Sato and Maya Hammad, *Improving Social Protection for Migrants, Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Egypt: An overview of international practices*, IPC-IG and UNICEF, n.p., 2021, pp. 32–49, 64–69.
- 46 Emmanuel, Yengi and William Lagu, *Stepping Back, Going Forward: Learnings from locally led anticipatory action in Maban, South Sudan*, Save the Children, n.p., August 2024.
- 47 Baró, Francesc, et al., 'Nature-Based Climate Solutions in European Schools: A pioneering co-designed strategy towards urban resilience', in *Urban Resilience to the Climate Emergency*, edited by Isabel Ruiz-Mallén, Hug March and Mar Satorras, Springer International Publishing, Cham, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-07301-4_6>.
- 48 Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project, *Conflict Trends Report: First Quarter 2025*, ACLED, New York, 2025, p. 2.
- 49 "Not the New Normal".
- 50 United Nations, Children and Armed Conflict: Report of the Secretary-General, A/79/878-S/2025/247, United Nations, New York, 17 June 2025, p. 2.
- 51 United Nations, *Children and armed conflict annual report of the Secretary-General*, Summary 2024, Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, <<https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/Summary-of-the-Annual-Report-on-Children-and-Armed-Conflict.pdf>>, accessed on 30 October 2025.
- 52 Corral, Paul, et al., *Fragility and Conflict: On the frontlines of the fight against poverty*, The World Bank, Washington, D.C., February 2020, p. 1; The World Bank, 'Classification of Fragile and Conflict-Affected Situations', Policy brief, The World Bank, n.p., 8 July 2025, <www.worldbank.org/en/topic/fragilityconflictviolence/brief/classification-of-fragile-and-conflict-affected-situations>, accessed 19 July 2025.
- 53 The World Bank, UNICEF, et al., 'Children in Monetary Poor Households: Global, regional, and select national trends in the progress against child poverty', Policy Research Working Paper 11203, The World Bank, Washington, D.C., September 2025, p. 6 <<https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099151009052581696/pdf/IDU-439588fb-b2c2-4d7f-941b-90275692e782.pdf>>, accessed 20 October 2025.
- 54 Mueller, Hannes, and Chanon Techasunthornwat, 'Conflict and Poverty', Policy Research Working Paper 9455, The World Bank, Washington, D.C., October 2020, p. 2.
- 55 Ibid.
- 56 International Monetary Fund and The World Bank, 'Macroeconomic Developments and Prospects For Low-Income Countries—2024', Paper 011, IMF, Washington, D.C., 2024, <<https://doi.org/10.5089/9798400272400.007>>, accessed 7 October 2025.
- 57 United Nations Environment Programme, *Adaptation Gap Report 2023: Underfinanced, underprepared – Inadequate investment and planning on climate adaptation leaves world exposed*, UNEP, Nairobi, 2023, <<https://doi.org/10.59117/20.500.11822/43796>>, accessed 23 October 2025.
- 58 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 'Preliminary Official Development Assistance Levels in 2024', Detailed summary note, OECD, Paris, 16 April 2025, <[https://one.oecd.org/document/DCD\(2025\)6/en/pdf](https://one.oecd.org/document/DCD(2025)6/en/pdf)>, accessed 23 October 2025.
- 59 United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, *Investment flows to least developed countries affected disproportionately by global crisis*, Global Investment Trends Monitor, No. 45, Special Issue for LDC5, UNCTAD, Geneva, 6 March 2023, p. 1. <<https://unctad.org/publication/investment-flows-least-developed-countries-affected-disproportionally-global-crises>>, accessed 24 October 2025.
- 60 The World Bank, 'Debt', The World Bank, Washington, D.C., <www.worldbank.org/en/topic/debt/overview>, accessed 20 October 2025.
- 61 United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, *A World of Debt*, UNCTAD, Geneva, 2025, <https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/osqgtinf2025d4_summary_en.pdf>, accessed 20 October 2025.

Editorial note

The following corrections have been made to an earlier version of this Executive Summary:

- On page 1, the following statement "In this century so far, the number of children living in severe deprivation has fallen by a third, declining from three out of five children in 2000 to two out of five in 2023." has been corrected to: "In this century so far, the rate of children living in severe deprivation has fallen by a third, declining from three out of five children in 2000 to two out of five in 2023."
- On page 2, the statement "Unprecedented cuts in development aid could result in the deaths of an estimated 4.5 million children under age 5 by 2030" has been corrected to "Unprecedented cuts in development aid could result in the deaths of at least 4.5 million children under age 5 by 2030"
- On page 3, the statement: "Building on progress made since 2000, the number of children in severe deprivation has decreased by an estimated 10 to 15 per cent since the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals were adopted in 2015." has been corrected to: "So far this century, countries have made progress towards reducing child poverty as measured by severe deprivation. Estimates show that poverty based on severe deprivation in at least one area has fallen by one third since 2000 in low- and middle-income countries."
- On page 5, the figure "1.6 billion children globally lack any form of social protection coverage" has been corrected to 1.8 billion reflecting an age grouping of 0–18 years.
- On page 6, the statement: "The burden is heaviest in countries least equipped to adapt: 40 per cent of people affected by climate disasters live in low-income countries, which contain only 9 per cent of the global population." has been corrected to: "The burden is heaviest in countries least responsible for the climate crisis, and least equipped to adapt."

About us

UNICEF, the United Nations agency for children, works to protect the rights of every child, everywhere, especially the most disadvantaged children and in the toughest places to reach. Across more than 190 countries and territories, we do whatever it takes to help children survive, thrive, and fulfil their potential.

UNICEF Innocenti – Global Office of Research and Foresight tackles the questions of greatest importance for children, both current and emerging. It drives change through research and foresight on a wide range of child rights issues, sparking global discourse and actively engaging young people in its work.

UNICEF Innocenti equips thought leaders and decision-makers with the evidence they need to build a better, safer world for children. The office undertakes research on unresolved and emerging issues, using primary and secondary data that represent the voices of children and families themselves. It uses foresight to set the agenda for children, including horizon scanning, trends analysis and scenario development. The office produces a diverse and dynamic library of high-level reports, analyses and policy papers, and provides a platform for debate and advocacy on a wide range of child rights issues.

UNICEF Innocenti provides, for every child, answers to their most pressing concerns.

Published by

UNICEF Innocenti – Global office of Research and Foresight

Via degli Alfani, 58

50121, Florence, Italy

Web: unicef.org/innocenti

Email: innocenti@unicef.org

ISBN: 978-92-806-5705-0

© United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), November 2025

Cover photo: © UNICEF/UNI864582/Ponce

To access a compendium of vital statistics that track progress towards global goals for women and children, visit: <https://unicef.link/sowcdata25>

For more information and access to the full report, scan the QR code or follow this link: <https://www.unicef.org/reports/state-of-worlds-children/2025>



From Women's Federation for World Peace



United Nations
Office on Drugs and Crime

Strengthening Resilience in Youth in challenging Times

-The Role of Family and Society-

Side Event at Commission on Narcotic Drugs, CND68, March 13th, 2025



YouTube:

<https://youtu.be/A9SQny1u5oo>

On March 13, 2025, the side event ***Strengthening the Resilience of Youth in Challenging Times – The Role of Family and Society*** took place during the 68th Session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND68). Organized by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the Women's Federation for World Peace (WFWP), and the Permanent Mission of Mexico, the event gathered over 40 participants in a hybrid format. The discussion focused on the impact of political and environmental crises on youth and highlighted the importance of a comprehensive approach involving families, communities, and governments in fostering resilience. Experts from various organizations shared strategies and best practices aimed at preventing substance use and supporting youth development.

Dr. Maria Riehl, Director of the WFWP UN Vienna Office, opened the event by emphasizing the significance of the social environment in the treatment of substance use disorders. She underscored that trust and patience between doctors and patients are key to effective treatment, while active family engagement plays a crucial role in the recovery process. She also highlighted the importance of effective communication and empathy, noting that these skills are valuable across multiple professional fields.

Lic. Martha Rodriguez Nava, Director of Regulation of Narcotic & Psychotropic Drugs and substances, at COFEPRIS, (Ministry of Mexico) spoke about the need for a comprehensive approach to drug use prevention, emphasizing the fundamental role of families, society, and governments. She pointed out that promoting emotional regulation, improving family communication, and ensuring access to mental health

UNODC- -Family United- Universal Family Skills Programme
Women's Federation for World Peace

www.wfwp.org, [f: WFWP-Europe](#), [WFWP Europe-YouTube](#)

NGO-ECOSOC/DPIUN/VIE, Z.V.R.367192876

services are essential strategies for strengthening youth resilience. Noting a rise in adolescent drug use, she stressed the importance of early detection of risk factors at the community, school, and family levels. She called for targeted programs and services that equip young people with the tools necessary to grow into responsible individuals.

Dr. Aala El-Khani, International Consultant of Drug Prevention and Health Branch, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) addressed the role of family skills in preventing substance use and risky behaviors. She explained that youth resilience is shaped by a stable and supportive home environment, which significantly reduces the likelihood of engagement in substance misuse and criminal activities. She presented UNODC's multi-level caregiver support model, which includes low-intensity tools such as WhatsApp leaflets and videos, parenting booklets focused on key relationship-building skills, multisession programs like the *Strong Families Program*, and trauma recovery initiatives incorporating *Teaching Recovery Techniques (TRT+)* for children with PTSD and their caregivers. She emphasized that equipping parents and caregivers with effective skills directly contributes to reducing youth vulnerability.

Anna Tarasenko, Neuroscience and Psychology researcher from Ukraine, presented a case study on the implementation of parenting resources during the war. The initiative targeted internally displaced persons, particularly caregivers of children aged 9 to 14, and included online and offline discussion groups, pre- and post-intervention assessments, and the distribution of tip sheets, booklets, and videos on effective parenting. The results demonstrated positive behavioral changes, reduced aggression, and improved communication between children and their caregivers. She concluded that even in crisis situations, lowcost interventions can yield significant improvements in family relationships and youth well-being.

Kefilwe Lebepe, Coordinator, WFWP Young Professionals International, provided an overview of WFWP's global youth empowerment initiatives, highlighting efforts across Africa, Asia, and Europe. In Africa, WFWP has established schools in Senegal, Kenya, and Mozambique, along with self-support assistance centers. In Asia, the organization has provided cultural, social, and educational support in Afghanistan and nine other countries. In Europe, WFWP has organized the Young Women's Speech Contest, developed an alumni network in Albania, Spain, and Uganda, and coordinated internship programs. She emphasized that by equipping young people with education and leadership opportunities, societies can reduce youth involvement in crime and substance use while fostering a more promising future.

Lic. Anabel Garcia Morales from WFWP Mexico shared insights into the organization's prevention and social support initiatives. WFWP Mexico has implemented virtual and in-person courses in academic institutions and trained over 800 parents on building social skills and supporting youth. The organization also runs economic empowerment programs, offering business and social enterprise training to young people, ensuring financial stability as a protective factor against risky behaviors. Additional initiatives include educational programs such as book clubs to promote constructive engagement, as well as women's health initiatives, including breast cancer screenings and programs addressing sexual abuse. She concluded with a call for broader collaboration to support WFWP's ongoing efforts in fostering peace and justice.

UNODC- -Family United- Universal Family Skills Programme
Women's Federation for World Peace

www.wfwp.org, [f: WFWP-Europe](#), [WFWP Europe-YouTube](#)

NGO-ECOSOC/DPIUN/VIE, Z.V.R.367192876

Renate Amesbauer, President of WFWP Austria, delivered the closing remarks, expressing gratitude to all speakers and participants. She reaffirmed the crucial role of families and communities in shaping a safer and healthier future for youth and acknowledged UNODC's contributions to the discussion. She also extended thanks to both in-person and online attendees for their engagement.

The event highlighted the need for multi-stakeholder collaboration in fostering youth resilience. It not only provided a platform to exchange effective strategies but also set the stage for continued engagement.

Daria Gorbushina, WFWP Intern & Renate Amesbauer, WFWP Austria



***UNODC- -Family United- Universal Family Skills Programme
Women's Federation for World Peace***

www.wfwp.org, [f: WFWP-Europe](#), [WFWP Europe-YouTube](#)

NGO-ECOSOC/DPIUN/VIE, Z.V.R.367192876



Gemeinschaft
Cenacolo



UNODC
United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime



Strengthening Resilience in Young People

Youtube:

<https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLMkrxc4IY3miY8TRM89uscdwWkb6tIOcw&si=qh5nFAFkCLpe>
BitY



Dr. Maria RIEHL, Director, WFWP -UN-Vienna-Office welcomed everyone with a motherly heart. The opening remarks were given by **HE: Ms. Rana ABIDA, Minister Plenipotentiary of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan**, who expressed her appreciation for this topic, being a mother herself! She expresses the concern of the growing menace of drug abuse that has a grave effect on our society and the family as its core. She highlights every effort of prevention, quoting: “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of jewels. She calls on all stakeholders to work together to protect the youth!

Atty. Daryll Generyn MIGANO, Attache´ & Assistant, Permanent Mission of the Philippines emphasized the constructive cooperation with WFWP!

Quoting Ms Ghada WALY the executive director of UNODC, who mentions the rising danger and devastating effect of misuse of narcotic drugs, Ms. Migano compliments the topic chosen for this side-Event, highlighting substantive projects to counter this development.

Gwendoline TSHIMBANA, President WFWP South Africa introduced the “Mmangwana Literacy Project”. for children in primary education. Ms. Tshimbana and her team found out that through the COVID 19 lockdown the educational level had gone down remarkably. So to support the learners has been their immediate response: They started a supplementary learning program, but at the same time providing a safe supportive space, where there was also time for creativity and sports. But also caring for teenagers in providing character education. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eEO8ZmKQg48>

Su HONG, UNODC Associate Expert introduced: ‘Friends in Focus’, a new program, developed by the UNODC -PTRS Section (PREVENTION-TREATMENT-REHABILITATION SECTION). UNODC puts an emphasis on evidence-based early prevention. One focus is strengthening the family-relationships. But it also needs special programs for young people to educate and empower them to be active in Drug-prevention and protecting not only their own health, but also the well being of their peers. For this purpose the program “FRIENDS IN FOCUS” has been developed. It strengthens young people to

www.frauenfuerweltfrieden.org, www.wfwp.org, www.wfwp-europe.org
YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCivDqrGEvVrfGaP8hlw50Aw>

support (not exclusively) their peers and develop the strength to become gamechangers in their society.

Georg SCHWARZ introduced in impressive ways the ‘**CENACOLO-project**’, a **Rehabilitation** program for persons with addiction which has been developed by a nun, Sr. Elvira. It offers to live in a community, doing practical work like gardening, farming, woodwork and other activities. Living together with clear structure and tasks to fulfil enables individuals who had completely disconnected and lost the sense for real life to turn around and become healthy again! This process takes at least one year but many stay longer, starting to help the “newcomers”. This way they build a solid bases to lead a solid life, starting their own families... something that was almost unbelievable before they started on this journey. cenacolo.at

The last speaker of the day was **Blessie Belle RAMOS, President of the regional chapter of international Association for World Peace -IAYSP Philippines**. Ms. Ramos expanded spoke about the way they educate youth: Through leadership seminars they encourage young people to a positive responsible lifestyle, enabling them to make informed decisions about their lives.

But the young people are also encouraged to take care of nature and to get involved in community projects.

Sulva JOSHI, LL:M Student in international law, at University Vienna, moderated the event with great intuition! Ms. Joshi has worked as a ‘Legal Aid Officer’ in her own country Nepal, related to Foreign Employment.

www.frauenfuerweltfrieden.org, www.wfwp.org, www.wfwp-europe.org
YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCivDqrGEvVrfGaP8hlw50Aw>

From Member Organisations of the Vienna NGO Committee of the Family

November 2025



MMM ACTIVITIES TO PROMOTE MOTHERS' ROLE AND RIGHTS

MMM State of Motherhood in Europe 2024 at the European Parliament

On 22 September 2025, the voices of mothers took centre stage in Brussels as Make Mothers Matter (MMM) presented its landmark report at the European Parliament, urging EU leaders to take urgent, concrete action to support mothers and families across Europe.

Mothers' Voices at the Heart of Europe:

What the State of Motherhood 2024 Reveals about the Realities of Care

In a packed event room of the European Parliament in Brussels, mothers' voices echoed through the heart of Europe. They spoke not of abstract rights or distant policies, but of everyday realities – of exhaustion, joy and invisible labour. With the [State of Motherhood in Europe 2024](#) report, MMM presented an unprecedented study capturing the experiences of nearly 10,000 mothers across 11 EU countries and the UK. The findings paint a vivid picture of motherhood in today's Europe: resilient yet burdened, hopeful yet often unsupported.

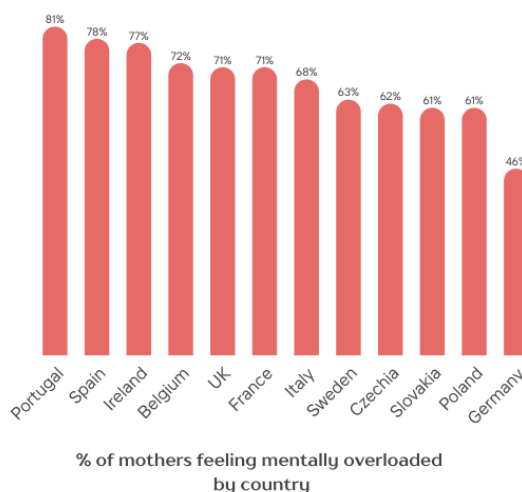
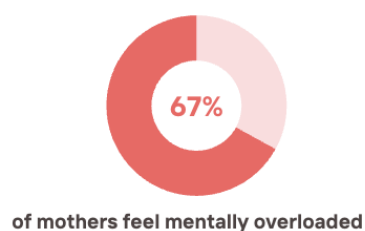
A survey to make mothers visible

The 2024 State of Motherhood survey, conducted by MMM in collaboration with global research leader [Kantar](#), sought to fill a persistent gap in European policy-making: the lack of comprehensive, cross-country data reflecting mothers' lived experiences. From Lisbon to Stockholm, from Dublin to Warsaw, mothers shared how becoming a parent reshaped their mental health, professional lives, and sense of recognition in society. At a time when Europe prides itself on gender equality progress – from the Work-Life Balance Directive to the EU Care Strategy – the survey reveals how much remains to be done to translate principles into practice.



Mental overload and mental health issues: the silent epidemic

The first finding strikes at the core of maternal well-being. Two out of three mothers – 67% – report feeling mentally overloaded. Half of all respondents experienced mental health challenges such as anxiety, depression or burnout. The intensity varies across Europe: in Portugal, 81% of mothers feel overwhelmed; in Germany, 46%. Behind these numbers are women balancing work, care and identity in societies that still romanticise endurance. One respondent summed it up starkly: “Nobody helped me; I just had to get on with it.”



The motherhood penalty: work without flexibility

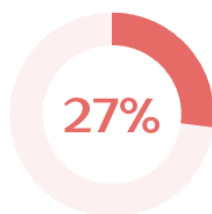
Motherhood remains one of the strongest determinants of professional inequality. 55% of mothers changed their working status after having a child – one of the main reasons to do so came down to wanting to have more time with their child/children.

Before having children, 74% of women surveyed worked full-time. After their first child, this figure drops to 49%. 15% leave the workforce entirely. Only a minority, 35%, benefit from a gradual return to work; fewer than half have flexible hours; and barely one in four can telework.

Working status at various life stages



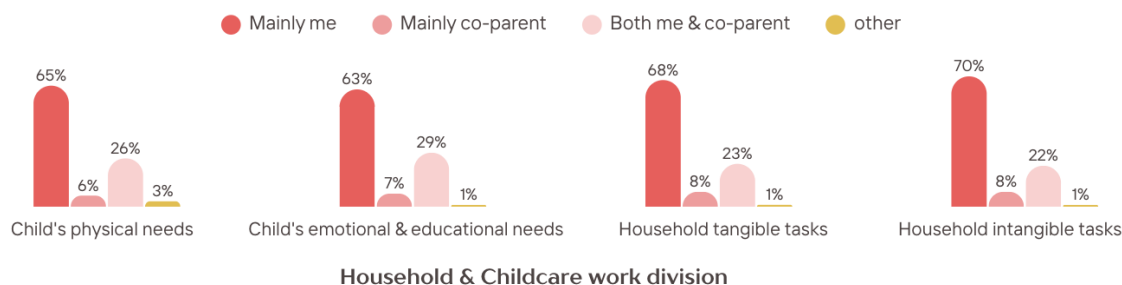
More than one in four mothers (27% of the total sample) report that motherhood negatively impacted their work or career. This perception is most prevalent among mothers from Ireland (36%), Germany and the UK (31%) each, who report the highest rates of negative impacts on their work due to motherhood. 23% of mothers in our report reduced their working hours, with many transitioning from full-time to part-time employment: they sacrifice career progression and rewards to have more control over their working time and gain flexibility. The cost is tangible: 39% report income loss and 30% feel their career progress was halted. These figures confirm what many have long sensed: workplace structures are designed for workers without caregiving roles.



of mothers stated motherhood has negatively affected their work/career

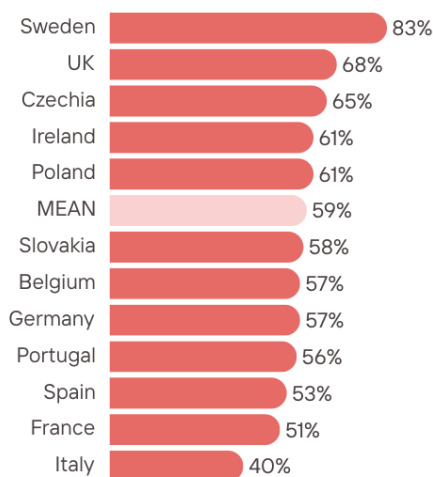
Unbalanced loads at home

At home, the imbalance persists. Across Europe, mothers shoulder up to 70% of household and caregiving tasks – a figure unchanged by employment status. Fathers' participation remains limited, with one in four taking no paternity leave, most often for financial or professional reasons. The result is predictable yet troubling: women's time shrinks, stress mounts, and equality in the labour market becomes impossible without equality in the home.



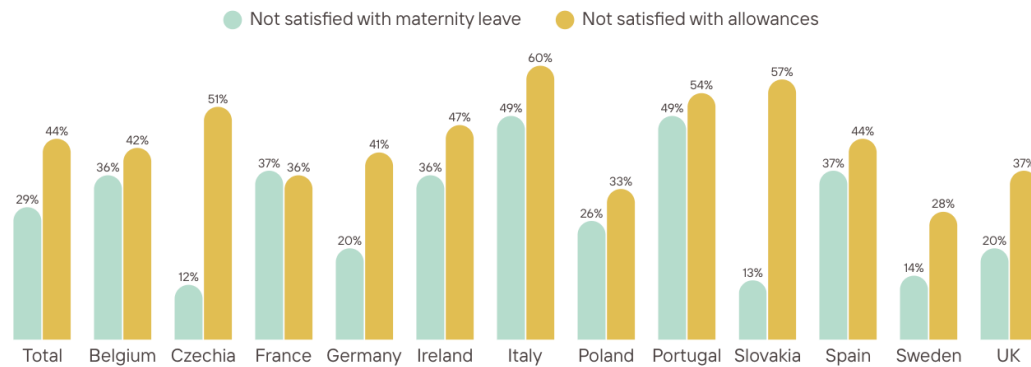
Recognition without rights

Despite the emotional richness of motherhood – 80% of emotive words used by mothers to describe parenthood were positive, using words like “love”, “joy” and “purpose” – 41% say society does not value their role.



Recognition of motherhood role by society across countries

30% are dissatisfied with the length of maternity leave; 44% with allowances received. In Italy and Portugal, dissatisfaction exceeds 50%. For many, extending leave means sacrificing income or career security. Meanwhile, childcare costs consume over 20% of household budgets in one third of the families, reaching over half in Spain. These pressures reveal a policy gap: Europe values families in rhetoric, but not in budget lines.



Dissatisfaction with maternity leave and allowances by country

At the heart of Europe: the European Parliament event

When MMM brought these findings to the European Parliament, the atmosphere was both emotional and political. MEP Maria Noichl, S&D, opened the event by stressing that “listening to mothers is the first step to understanding Europe’s social fabric”. The conference featured two panels, one on juggling care and career, another on maternal mental health, bringing together EU officials, academics and civil society. Speakers like Christa Schweng, Vice President of the Group on Equality of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), Ana Carla Pereira, Director for Equality and Non-Discrimination at the Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers (JUST) of the European Commission, and Lorena Boix Alonso, Deputy Director-General for Health at the Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety (SANTE) of the European Commission, acknowledged the need to close the gap between policy design and mothers’ realities. The event concluded with MMM President Anne-Claire de Liedekerke’s call for a cultural shift: **“It is time for Europe to care for its carers.”**



S&D MOTHERHOOD IN EUROPE THE REAL STORY

CARE & CAREER

- JULIE FOUBERT**
Founder
Be the Change
Moderator
- ANA CARLA PEREIRA**
Director 'Equality and Non-Discrimination',
DG JUST
European Commission
- CHRISTA SCHWENG**
Vice-President Equality Group
European Economic and Social Committee
- SYLVIANE BALUSTRE-D'ERNEVILLE**
Engagement & Social Innovation Director and Engage
& Care Corporate Coalition founder
L'Oréal
- DOMINIC RICHARDSON**
Executive Director
Learning for Well-being Foundation

MATERNAL MENTAL HEALTH

- PR. ALAIN GREGOIRE**
Chair
Global Alliance for Maternal Mental Health
Moderator
- MEP MARIA WALSH**
Member of European Parliament
EPP
- LORENA BOIX ALONSO**
Deputy Director-General for Health, DG SANTE
European Commission
- CHIARA PICCOLO**
European Partnerships and Advocacy Lead (LAWB)
and Managing Director
Alliance for Childhood (on behalf of Eurochild)
- IBONE OLZA**
Child and Perinatal Psychiatrist & cofounder
European Institute of Perinatal Mental Health

#MMMEU2025

Towards a Europe that cares

The survey and the dialogue it sparked point towards a new social contract for mothers – one rooted in recognition, redistribution and reform. MMM’s recommendations call for investment in maternal mental health services, flexible and well-paid parental leave, and a renewed commitment to affordable, quality childcare. They urge policy-makers to introduce care credits towards pensions, to recognise unpaid care work in national statistics, and to enforce anti-discrimination measures against parents in the workplace. Equally,

the private sector must lead by example: offering flexible hours, supporting breastfeeding facilities, and ensuring that a career pause for caregiving does not become a permanent setback.

Conclusion: listening is the beginning

The State of Motherhood in Europe 2024 is more than a survey – it is a mirror. It reflects both the resilience of mothers and the fragility of systems built without them in mind. In amplifying these voices at the European Parliament, MMM has placed mothers back at the centre of the European project. Now the task is to transform listening into lasting change: policies that protect, workplaces that adapt, and societies that truly value care. Because when mothers thrive, Europe does too.

For more information, visit [State of Motherhood in Europe 2024](#)

MMM @ UN Geneva: A Roadmap to Eradicating Poverty beyond Growth Must Centre on Care

MMM's contribution to the initiative led by Olivier De Schutter, the UN Special Rapporteur on Poverty, aimed at establishing a **Roadmap for eradicating poverty beyond growth**, calls for the establishment of robust care systems as its foundation.

In its written submission to this process, MMM highlights a fundamental reality: **the care gap is a major driver of gender inequality and poverty**. Unpaid care and domestic work, carried out primarily by women, in particular when they are mothers, prevents them from accessing decent work and from fully participating in society. This is economic injustice, keeping millions of women trapped in poverty.

The COVID-19 pandemic made this crystal clear: both paid and unpaid care work are essential for well-being, for the sustainability of life, and for the functioning of our families, communities and economies. Yet they remain undervalued and unsupported.

This is why MMM insists that a roadmap to eradicating poverty beyond growth must include the progressive building of strong care systems. [Read more here](#) on what this means and [access the full MMM submission](#) with many concrete examples.

MMM's message is simple and urgent: **care must be at the heart of the Roadmap**. Without care, there is no economy, no well-being, and no future. But with strong care and equitable systems, we can truly eradicate poverty beyond growth and move towards a society that values and sustains life.

Amplifying Mothers' Voices at 60th UN Human Rights Council

At the [60th session of the UN Human Rights Council](#) that took place from 8 September to 8 October 2025 in Geneva, MMM seized opportunities to shed light on the multiple human rights violations mothers face, and to call for care-centred policies, and the recognition and empowerment of mothers.

Motherhood impacts economic security in old age

In the discussion on the rights of older persons, which focused on the intersection between older persons' right to social protection and their right to work, MMM highlighted the *care gap* as a root cause of inequities for older women.

The increased risk of poverty faced by older women is directly linked to a lifetime of disproportionate share of unpaid care work, including caregiving that often continues into old age, as they support older relatives or grandchildren.

MMM also called for recognising and addressing the specific discriminations and obstacles faced by mothers, the "motherhood penalty", their frequently interrupted working lives, and the impact of motherhood on women's economic security in old age.

[Read MMM statement](#)

Recognising and valuing care is key to the realisation of the right to development

MMM welcomed the report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to development, which focused on the nexus between gender equality and the right to development. The report rightly calls for a feminist economy, one that invests in care infrastructure, values unpaid care, and ensures its equal distribution between women and men, families and society, public and private actors.

MMM therefore urged States to:

- invest in cross-sectorial care systems – from quality, accessible childcare and parental leaves to universal healthcare and social protection;
- place care and mothers at the centre of national and international development strategies.

[Read MMM statement](#)

Child labour is directly linked to gender inequality and mothers' rights

The report of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery focused on child labour.

Child labour is a symptom of poverty and family vulnerability. It is also directly linked to gender inequality and mothers' inability to participate in the labour market. We know that when women have better education and can participate in the labour force, child labour seldom takes place.

For MMM, children's rights are interconnected with mothers' rights: preventing child labour therefore requires the economic empowerment of mothers through policies that recognise, value and support the unpaid work of caring, and redistribute this vital work more equitably, both between men and women and across society.

[Read MMM Statement](#)

Mothers must be recognised and involved in transitional justice processes

Speaking at the panel on *Strengthening gender perspectives in transitional justice processes*, MMM highlighted the role of mothers during conflicts and called for the equal participation of women, especially mothers, in all stages of transitional justice, and transformative reparations that value care work, restore livelihoods and healthcare, uphold dignity, and address intergenerational impacts.

Mothers stand at the heart of families and communities. In times of conflict, they are caregivers, providers, and protectors, holding together the fabric of communities and society while bearing the compounded costs of violence. Their unpaid care work sustains not only survival but also resilience and recovery. Despite this, mothers remain largely invisible in transitional justice processes.

Recognizing mothers' multiple roles and ensuring their rights is not only a matter of justice, but also essential for rebuilding societies, preventing recurrence, and achieving sustainable peace.

[Read MMM Statement](#)

New resolution on preventable maternal mortality and morbidity

MMM welcomed the [resolution on Preventable maternal mortality and morbidity and human rights](#) (A/HRC/RES/60/18), which was unanimously adopted by the Council. The resolution calls for renewed attention to this "major human rights issue", recognising that it is grounded in poverty, as well as "discriminatory laws and practices, harmful gender norms and practices, a lack of functioning health systems and services, information and education, shortages of skilled health workers, a lack of access to healthcare services and necessary medicines and medical equipment, in particular in rural and remote areas and islands and the poorest urban areas, and a lack of accountability".

Maternal mortality remains unacceptably high: according to [WHO](#), about 260,000 women died during and following pregnancy and childbirth in 2023. That is more than 700 per day, one every two minutes.

Approximately 92% of all maternal deaths occurred in low- and lower-middle-income countries, and **most could have been prevented**.

The resolution urges states to prioritize the elimination of preventable maternal mortality and morbidity.

Compiled by Irina Pálffy-Daun-Seiler, MMM Representative to the United Nations in Vienna, with input from Johanna Schima, MMM Vice-President and Head of Advocacy at the European Union, Angela Garcia Romero, MMM Project Director, and Valérie Bichelmeier, MMM Vice-President and Head of Advocacy at the UN.

Recent & Upcoming Events

All upcoming events can be attended digitally. Many events also take place on multiple dates (see <https://waset.org/>).

December

- 8.-19. in Rome, Italy: 8-19, 2025 in Rome, Italy: 19. International Conference on Law, Policy and the Family
<https://waset.org/law-policy-and-the-family-conference-in-december-2025-in-rome>
- 29.-30. in Karachi, Pakistan: 19. International Conference on Child and Family Studies
<https://waset.org/child-and-family-studies-conference-in-december-2025-in-karachi>

January

- 12.-13. in Zurich, Switzerland: International Conference on Child Protection and Family Support
<https://waset.org/child-protection-and-family-support-conference-in-january-2026-in-zurich>
- 26.-27. in Sydney, Australia: 20. International Conference on Family Studies and Human Development
<https://waset.org/family-studies-and-human-development-conference-in-january-2026-in-sydney>

February

- 12.-13. in Barcelona, Spain: 20. International Conference on Family Nursing
<https://waset.org/family-nursing-conference-in-february-2026-in-barcelona>
- 16.-17. in Manila, Philippines: 20. International Conference on Bullying, Cyberbullying and Family
<https://waset.org/bullying-cyberbullying-and-family-conference-in-february-2026-in-manila>
- 23.-24. in Buenos Aires, Argentina: 20. International Conference on Human Ecology and Family Sciences
<https://waset.org/human-ecology-and-family-sciences-conference-in-february-2026-in-buenos-aires>

<i>Impressum</i>

'Families International' is published by:

Vienna NGO Committee on the Family:

Office of the Chairperson:

ULRIKE EHRGOTT
BÄCKERSTRASSE 14/7
A-1010 VIENNA
AUSTRIA

EMAIL: CONTACT@VIENNAFAMILYCOMMITTEE.ORG

Web: <http://www.viennafamilycommittee.org>

Editorial Committee:

Ulrike Ehrgott – Chairperson

Julia Birner B.A. B.Sc., Christin Kohler M.A., Karin Kuzmanov M.Sc., Hannah Prüwasser B.A. – Editors

Peter Crowley Ph.D. – Deputy Editor

Christin Kohler, M.A. – Executive Editor & Layout Current Issue No. 136

If you do not wish to be informed when a new issue of our Quarterly Bulletin 'Families International' is online and available to download, please just send an E-Mail, indicating such, to: contact@viennafamilycommittee.org