

Status and Achievement of Children-Related SDG Indicators in Nepal



NGO Federation of Nepal





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Introduction

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were adopted by the United Nations in 2015 as a global framework to address multifaceted challenges and foster sustainable development across various dimensions (United Nations, 2015). Among these goals, several directly pertain to the well-being, education, health, and holistic development of children. Nepal has demonstrated significant commitment to achieving these children-related SDGs. The commitment of Nepal to the SDGs underscores its dedication to enhancing the lives of its children. The well-being of children is a central focus of Nepal's developmental agenda, recognizing that investing in children's well-being today contributes to a prosperous and sustainable future (Government of Nepal, 2016). The nation's endeavors are guided by a series of national policies, strategies, and action plans aimed at safeguarding children's rights, guaranteeing access to quality education and healthcare, and shielding them from violence, exploitation, and discrimination (Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizens, 2020).

Child participation is an important factor for the successful implementation of a goal that leaves no child behind and will accelerate the protection, respect, and fulfillment of children's rights under the Convention. Children should be systematically involved in SDG processes, implementation, and monitoring, and in policy and program design. Children are the future of a nation. The protection and participation of children promoted ensuring their education and good health. human rights and the 2030 Agenda aim to ensure children and future generations live with dignity and thrive. United Nations among other organizations places emphasis on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda by giving prominence to the youth and children.¹

In this context, this report provides an overview of the status and achievements of children-related SDGs indicators in Nepal. The SDGs are a set of 17 global goals adopted by United Nations member

¹ https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/26130Child_Rights_2030_Agenda_HLPF_2020.pdf Accessed on 29 August 2023.

states in 2015 to address various social, economic, and environmental challenges by 2030. The focus of this report is on the indicators directly related to children's well-being, education, health, and overall development in Nepal. Similarly, this report also assesses the progress made on SDGs indicators closely related to children's well-being and development. It outlines significant achievements, identifies existing gaps, discusses challenges faced, and offers recommendations for enhancing efforts towards fulfilling these goals.

Methodology

The information presented in this report is based on data collected from various national and international sources, including government reports, surveys, and international organizations' publications. The data analysis focuses on the period up to 2022.

A primary limitation of this study is its sole reliance on secondary data sources. Furthermore, the unavailability of data beyond the year 2019, as sourced from the National Planning Commission's documents, restricts the study's ability to analyze and account for developments or changes that may have occurred in the subject matter since that time.

Overview of Children-Related SDGs

Goal 1: No Poverty:

1.3.1 Proportion of population covered by social protection systems: In 2015, only 8.1% of the population was covered by social protection floors/systems, but by 2019, this figure had increased substantially to 27.3%. The 2030 target of achieving 80% coverage indicates a strong commitment to eradicating poverty by ensuring that vulnerable groups, including children, unemployed persons, older individuals, persons with disabilities, pregnant women, newborns, and work-injury victims, receive the necessary social support. While the progress is notable, further efforts and investment will be essential to bridge the gap and meet the ambitious 2030 target, ultimately contributing to the overarching goal of eliminating poverty and enhancing social inclusion.

Goal 2: Zero Hunger:

2.2.1 Prevalence of Stunting among Children under 5: In 2015, the prevalence of stunting among children under 5 years of age was 36%, which decreased to 31.6% by 2019. The target for 2030 is an ambitious reduction to 15%, indicating a significant effort is required to achieve this goal.

2.2.2 Prevalence of Malnutrition among Children under 5: In 2015, the prevalence of malnutrition among children under 5 was 11.3%, and it dropped to 10% by 2019. The target for 2030 is 4%, which demonstrates the need for substantial progress to combat malnutrition, including both wasting and overweight conditions.

1. Percentage of Children Under 5 Who Are Underweight: In 2015, 30.1% of children under 5 were underweight. By 2019, this figure had improved to 24.3%. Although there's no data for 2022, the target for 2030 is 9%, which is an ambitious goal, emphasizing the importance of addressing child undernutrition comprehensively.

3. Prevalence of Anemia among Children under 5: In 2015, the prevalence of anemia among children under 5 was 46%, and by 2019, it decreased to 33%. Progress in 2022 stands at 52.7%, which is higher than the 2019 figure, raising concerns. The target for 2030 is 10%, indicating a need for robust measures to reduce anemia among young children.

Goal 3: Good Health and Well-Being

3.2.1 Under-Five Mortality Rate (per 1000): In 2015, the under-five mortality rate was 38 per 1000 live births, which decreased to 28 in 2019. The progress in 2021 is 27.3, and the target for 2030 is 20, indicating significant progress in reducing child mortality, although further efforts are required to reach the target.

3.2.2 Neonatal Mortality Rate (per 1000): In 2015, the neonatal mortality rate was 23 per 1000 live births, which decreased to 18 in 2019. The progress in 2021 is 16.17, with a target of 12 for 2030. This indicates substantial progress in reducing neonatal mortality but challenges in reaching the ambitious 2030 target.

3.3.1 Number of New HIV Infections Among Adults: The number of new HIV infections among adults (aged 15-49) per 1000 uninfected population has seen a steady decline from 0.03 in 2015 to 0.018 in 2019, with a target of 0.014 for 2030.

3.3.5 Percentage of Children under Age 5 with Diarrhea: The percentage of children under age 5 with diarrhea in the last 2 weeks has decreased from 12% in 2015 to 8% in 2019. The target for 2030 is further reduction to 1%.

3.5.2 Percentage of People with Harmful Use of Alcohol: The percentage of people aged 15 years and older with harmful use of alcohol has shown progress, declining from 2% in 2015 to 1.9% in 2019. The target for 2030 is 1.8%.

3.7.1 Total Fertility Rate (TFR): The total fertility rate decreased from 2.3 in 2015 to 2.0 in 2019, with a target of 2.1 for 2030.

3.7.2 Adolescent Birth Rate: Adolescent birth rates (per 1,000 women aged 10–14 years and 15–19 years) have significantly reduced from 170 in 2015 to 56 and 63, respectively, in 2019. The target for 2030 is 30, indicating the need to continue reducing adolescent births.

3.8.1 Antenatal Care, Institutional Delivery, Postnatal Care, and Hepatitis B Vaccination: Antenatal care, institutional delivery, and postnatal care have all seen improvements, surpassing their respective 2019 targets. Hepatitis B vaccination coverage also improved from 90% in 2019 to 93%. The ambitious 2030 targets for these indicators emphasize the importance of maternal and child health care services.

Goal 4: Quality Education

The provided data pertains to Goal 4: Quality Education, focusing on various education-related indicators for the years 2015, and 2019, projected progress for 2022, and targets for 2030. Let's analyze this data:

4.1.1 Net Enrolment Rate in Primary Education: The net enrolment rate in primary education increased from 96.6% in 2015 to 97.2% in 2019. In 2021, it's reported as 97.64%, and the target for 2030 is 99.5%. Progress suggests that efforts are being made to improve access to primary education.

4.1.2 Primary Completion Rate: The primary completion rate increased from 80.6% in 2015 to 85.8% in 2019, exceeding the target of 96.95% in 2021 and 99.5% in 2030. This indicates positive progress in ensuring that students complete primary education.

4.1.3 Proportion of Pupils Enrolled in Grade One Who Reach Grade Eight: The proportion of pupils reaching Grade Eight increased from 76.6% in 2015 to 79.34% in 2019. The target for 2022 is 92%.

4.1.4 Ratio of Girls (to Boys) Enrolled in Grade One Who Reach Grade Eight: The ratio of girls to boys reaching grade eight has improved from 1.04 in 2015 to 1.02 in 2019, indicating increased gender parity in primary education.

4.1.5 Ratio of Girls (to Boys) Enrolled in Grade One Who Reach Grade Twelve: The ratio of girls to boys reaching grade twelve also improved from 1.1 in 2015 to 1.03 in 2019, suggesting progress in promoting gender equity in higher education levels.

4.2.2 Coverage of Child Grant for Pre-Primary Education: While there's no data for 2022, the target for 2030 is 700,000, indicating a planned expansion of child grants to support pre-primary education.

4.2.2 Attendance to Early Childhood Education: The attendance to early childhood education increased from 81% in 2015 to 89.4% in 2019, with a target of 99% for 2030, emphasizing the importance of early childhood development.

4.3.1 Ratio of Girls' Enrollment in Technical and Vocational Education: The ratio of girls' enrollment in technical and vocational education is projected to increase from 0.53 in 2015 to 0.75 in 2019, approaching the target of 1 for 2030, indicating efforts to promote gender equity in technical education.

4.3.2 Ratio of Girls' Enrollment in Tertiary Education: The ratio of girls' enrollment in tertiary education is expected to reach 0.94 in 2022, nearing the target of 1 for 2030, signifying progress in promoting girls' access to higher education.

4.3.3 Scholarship Coverage: Scholarship coverage is projected to increase from 37% in 2015 to 36% in 2019, with a target of 42% for 2030, reflecting efforts to support students financially.

4.5.1a Gender Parity Index (GPI): The GPI for primary and secondary school shows improvements, particularly in primary school, where it reached 1.06 in 2019, indicating progress in gender parity.

4.a.2 Schools with Access to Internet: Access to the Internet in schools is projected to increase from 3.9% in 2015 to 28% in 2019, with a target of 99% for 2030, highlighting the importance of digital access in education.

4.a.3 Basic Schools with Access to "WASH" Facilities: The target for 2030 is to have 99% of basic schools with access to WASH facilities, indicating a commitment to providing clean and safe environments for students.

4.a.4 Disability-Friendly Schools: The target for 2030 is to have disability-friendly schools, emphasizing inclusivity and accessibility for all students.

Goal 5: Gender Equality

The data presented pertains to SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and the progress made toward various indicators from 2015 to 2022:

5.2.1 Children aged 1-14 years who experienced psychological aggression or physical punishment: Progress is evident as the percentage dropped significantly from 81.7 in 2015 to 77.6 in 2019, though the 2030 target is 13.6.

5.2.2 Women aged 15-49 years who experience Physical/Sexual violence: There has been substantial progress, with the percentage decreasing from 26 in 2015 to 11.2 in 2019. The 2030 target is 6.5. This indicates a positive trend in reducing violence against women.

Women and Girls Trafficking: The number of women and girls trafficked decreased from 1697 in 2015 to 946 in 2019, suggesting significant progress towards combating human trafficking. The 2030 target is 325.

5.3.1 Women aged 15-19 years who are married or in union: The percentage has decreased from 24.5 in 2015 to 19.3 in 2019, exceeding the 2030 target of 4.1. This indicates a reduction in early and forced marriages, contributing to gender equality and women's empowerment.

5.6.1 Awareness about reproductive rights among girls and women: The percentage increased from 59.5 in 2015 to 57.5 in 2019.

Goal 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth

8.7.1 Child Labor and Children Working under hazardous conditions (%): The government of Nepal has aimed to reduce children's engagement in labor. 87 percent child labor in agriculture sector, 14 percent other forms of child labor, 62.3 percent hazardous work in agriculture, transport, domestic work, brick kiln, carpet factory are found in the supply chain. Progress has been made as the percentage decreased from 30 in 2015 to 22 in 2019. The target for 2030 is to eliminate children working under hazardous conditions entirely (0%). This data indicates significant steps towards achieving this goal.

8.7.2 Forced Labor: Labor Force Survey has indicated 31,338 people are in forced labor. Among which 56 percent are male and 17 are children. Mainly were engaged in the agriculture, adult entertainment sector, domestic work, foreign employment, construction sector and other.

Goal 10: Reduced Inequality

10.3.1 Childhood free of stunting (ratio of richest vs poorest quintile): Progress is evident as the ratio improved from 1.60 in 2015 to 1.44 in 2019, moving closer to the target of 1 by 2030. This suggests reduced inequality in terms of childhood stunting across wealth quintiles.

Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities

11.2.1 Availability of safe public transport (%): Considerable progress has been made, with the percentage increasing from a mere 0.1 in 2015 to 23.4 in 2019. The target for 2030 is 50%, indicating the need for further improvement but indicating a positive trend towards safer public transport.

Goal 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions

16.2.1 Children aged 1-14 years who experienced psychological aggression or physical punishment during the last month (%): Progress is noticeable as the percentage decreased from 81.7 in 2015 to 60 in 2019. The 2030 target is to eliminate such cases (0%), signifying ongoing efforts to improve child protection.

16.2.2 Children trafficking abroad (including India) per annum (reported number): Progress is evident, with the number decreasing from 64 in 2015 to 23 in 2019. The 2030 target is to eliminate this type of child trafficking entirely (0%).

16.9.2 Proportion of children under 5 years of age whose births have been registered: Progress is notable as the proportion increased from 58.1 in 2015 to 66 in 2019. The 2030 target is 100%, aiming for universal birth registration to strengthen institutions and ensure child rights.

Status of Children in Nepal Demographic and Health Survey

The Nepal Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS) of 2022, which meticulously collected and analyzed data from across the nation, presents a compelling portrait of the status of children in Nepal. According to the survey, there has been a notable decline in child mortality rates. Infant mortality, which was 38 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2016, has decreased to 29 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2022. Similarly, under-five mortality has decreased from 46 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2016 to 37 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2022.

These figures are encouraging and indicate the success of various healthcare and immunization programs in Nepal.

Nevertheless, the survey also highlights persistent challenges. Child malnutrition remains a significant concern, with 30% of children under the age of five being stunted, and 10% being wasted. This indicates the need for continued efforts to improve nutrition, especially in rural and marginalized communities. Additionally, access to quality education remains an issue, with 17% of children aged 5-16 years not attending school, emphasizing the importance of addressing barriers to education and promoting inclusive schooling practices. In summary, while the NDHS 2022 showcases progress in child health, it underscores the ongoing need for targeted interventions to ensure the well-being and future prospects of Nepal's children. Few more information as follows:

- The survey indicates substantial progress in immunization coverage among children. For instance, 91% of children aged 12-23 months have received the recommended measles vaccination, a significant improvement compared to previous years.
- The NDHS 2022 data reveals that 66% of infants under six months of age are exclusively breastfed, highlighting a positive trend in promoting early childhood nutrition.
- Approximately 57% of births are assisted by skilled health personnel, suggesting enhanced access to maternal and child healthcare services, which can significantly contribute to safer childbirth and better outcomes for newborns.
- The survey shows that the prevalence of child marriage has decreased, with 28% of women aged 20-24 marrying before the age of 18, a reduction from previous years.
- While challenges exist in access to quality education, the data indicates that educational attainment among children is improving. For instance, 78% of children aged 6-16 years attend primary school, representing a positive trend in primary education enrollment.
- The survey highlights the persistence of child labor in Nepal, with 10% of children aged 5-17 years engaged in some form of child labor. This underscores the need for continued efforts to eliminate child exploitation and ensure access to education.

- The data also indicates that 76% of children under five years of age with symptoms of acute respiratory infection or fever were taken to an appropriate healthcare provider, reflecting improved access to healthcare services.

Status of children in census 2021

According to the census report 2021, 36.27% of the population is 0-18 years. Out of the total the children aged 14 years or below 14 years is 27.83% which is a significant drop from 34.91 % in the 2011 census. The report further outlines, 34.4% have the first marriage between the age 18-20, 22.3 % in 15-17 years of age, 0.3% below 10 years and 7% in 10-14 years age. Children living with both father and mother is 77.9%, 17.1% is living with mother only, 3% with relative, and rest with other (CBS, 2021).

Key Achievements

- Achieved a remarkable decrease in child mortality under the age of five, reflecting improved population health and healthcare access.
- Made significant progress in reducing child malnutrition, addressing both undernutrition and overnutrition, ensuring optimal physical and cognitive development.
- Successfully increased birth registration rates, granting every child their fundamental right and legal identity for access to essential services and legal protection.
- Attained progress in providing equitable, quality education to all children, aligning with SDG Goal 4 and fostering cognitive development and future opportunities.
- Successfully reduced child labor rates, safeguarding children's rights and well-being.
- Achieved improved access to clean water and sanitation, enhancing children's health and hygiene.
- Made substantial strides in reducing violence, abuse, and exploitation of children, in alignment with SDG Goal 16.
- Achieved equal enrollment of boys and girls in educational institutions, promoting gender equality and aligning with SDG Goal 5.

- Ensured children's access to essential healthcare services, contributing to their overall well-being and aligning with SDG Goal 3.
- Successfully reduced child marriage rates, empowering and improving the well-being of girls.
- Ensured the safety and well-being of children in emergency situations, in line with SDG Goal 11.
- The Child Labor Report 2021 has indicated that the number of children engaged in labor sector has been decreased from 1.6 million (in 2008) to 1.1 million children. The engagement of children in hazardous work has been decreased from 0.6 million to 0.2 million.
- Integrated Act against forced labor has been drafted by MOLESS. The child labor free municipality procedures and National Master Plan to End Child Labor is under implementation.

Major Challenges

Numerous challenges impede the realization of SDG indicators related to children. Limited access to basic services in conflict-affected areas compromises child health, education, and protection (Save the Children, 2019). Economic inequalities contribute to unequal opportunities for children's development, perpetuating intergenerational cycles of poverty (World Bank, 2019). A few more challenges are as below:

- While there has been progress in various indicators, achieving the ambitious 2030 targets requires substantial financial resources and investment in social protection, healthcare, education, and other sectors. Nepal faces challenges in mobilizing adequate funds to sustain and scale up these initiatives.
- Despite progress, disparities persist in access to healthcare, education, and social protection, particularly in rural and remote areas. Ensuring that vulnerable and marginalized children have equitable access to these services remains a significant challenge.

- Addressing child malnutrition, reducing anemia, and achieving the targets for stunting and underweight children require a well-functioning healthcare infrastructure, including maternal and child health services, nutrition programs, and safe drinking water and sanitation facilities. Improving and expanding these services in remote areas is a formidable task.
- While enrollment rates have improved, ensuring the quality of education and retention of students until higher grades is crucial. Inadequate infrastructure, teacher shortages, and a lack of teaching materials remain challenges, particularly in rural schools.
- Despite progress in gender-related indicators, Nepal still faces gender disparities in education, child marriage, and violence against women and children. Achieving gender equality and eliminating harmful practices require comprehensive awareness and empowerment programs.
- Although there has been a reduction in children working under hazardous conditions, child labor remains a challenge. Ensuring that children are not engaged in hazardous work and have access to quality education is essential.
- Accurate and up-to-date data collection and monitoring are crucial for tracking progress and making informed policy decisions. Nepal needs to strengthen its data collection mechanisms to effectively measure the impact of interventions.
- Nepal is vulnerable to climate change and natural disasters, which can disproportionately affect children. Ensuring the resilience of communities and infrastructure to climate-related challenges is essential to achieving SDGs.
- Nepal's history of conflict and political instability has had long-lasting effects on its social and economic development. Ensuring peace, stability, and good governance is critical for achieving sustainable development and the well-being of children.
- Addressing these challenges requires collaboration between government agencies, civil society organizations, and international partners. Ensuring effective coordination and partnerships for sustainable development is an ongoing challenge.

- The quality of education remains a concern, with low proficiency levels in reading and mathematics. This challenge highlights the need for improvement in the quality of education provided to children in Nepal. Despite increased access to education, children may not acquire the necessary reading and mathematics skills.
- 1) Disparities in access to education and health services persist, particularly in rural and marginalized communities. The existence of disparities in access to education and healthcare services, especially in rural and marginalized communities, represents a significant challenge.
- The Child Labor Act 2056 BS has not been amended according to federal system of governance.
- The number of child labor free municipality has reached to 104.
- There is a lack of integrated policy to address forced labor.

Recommendations

- Allocate more funds to improve the quality of education, including teacher training, infrastructure development, and the availability of learning materials.
- Implement nutrition programs with a focus on reducing child malnutrition and anemia, especially in rural and remote areas.
- Strengthen healthcare infrastructure, particularly maternal and child health services, and ensure access to safe drinking water and sanitation facilities.
- Implement awareness and empowerment programs to address gender disparities in education, child marriage, and violence against women and children.
- Enforce laws to eradicate hazardous child labor and promote access to quality education for all children.
- Enhance data collection and monitoring mechanisms to track progress accurately and make informed policy decisions.
- Develop and implement strategies to enhance climate resilience in communities, considering the specific vulnerabilities of children.
- Prioritize peace, stability, and good governance to mitigate the long-lasting effects of conflicts and political instability on child development.

- Foster collaboration between government agencies, civil society organizations, and international partners to address the diverse challenges related to children's well-being.
- Involve local communities in decision-making and implementation processes to ensure that initiatives meet the unique needs of different regions and populations.
- Invest in early childhood education and development programs to ensure that children receive a strong foundation for their future learning and well-being.
- Implement comprehensive child protection measures to prevent child trafficking, violence, and abuse, ensuring the safety and rights of all children.
- Develop and implement policies that prioritize inclusivity and accessibility for children with disabilities, ensuring they have equal access to education and healthcare.
- Establish robust monitoring and evaluation systems to assess the effectiveness of interventions and make necessary adjustments for continuous improvement.
- Conduct campaigns to raise public awareness about the importance of children's well-being and their role in achieving the SDGs, encouraging broader community involvement.
- Strengthen and enforce legal frameworks and regulations related to child rights, protection, and access to quality services.
- Build the capacity of institutions and individuals involved in child-related programs and services to enhance their effectiveness in delivering positive outcomes for children.
- Explore diverse funding sources, including public-private partnerships and international support, to mobilize the necessary resources for child-related initiatives.
- Amend Child Labor Act 2056 BS according to the federal system of governance.
- Harmonise the policies related to children in terms of definition and age.
- The government and implementing CSOs and agencies need to adopt Area Based Approach to address Child Labor and Forced Labor.
- Engage private and business sector to make child labor free business.
- Implement 30km/hr speed limit at school and hospital zone.

Conclusion

Nepal has made commendable progress in achieving several children-related SDGs indicators. The reduction in child mortality rates and improvements in child malnutrition are noteworthy. However, challenges in ensuring quality education, addressing disparities, and providing proper sanitation and hygiene services for children persist. Continued efforts and targeted interventions are required to ensure the well-being and development of all children in Nepal, in alignment with the SDGs. Addressing these issues requires a holistic and collaborative approach, with equity, healthcare access, education quality, data collection, and cross-sector collaboration at the forefront. By taking strategic actions guided by these recommendations, the international community can make substantial strides toward achieving a brighter future for all children.

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