

TO SHARE OBSERVATORY

1. Why is UNICEF participating in an observatory on the fair distribution of wealth?

Every child has the right to a fair chance in life. Yet millions of children around the world are trapped in an intergenerational cycle of disadvantage, putting their futures and the future of their societies at risk. This vicious circle is not inevitable. We can make the decision to change it. When governments direct their public spending policies, programmes and priorities towards the most disadvantaged children, they help transform the lives of these children and their societies.

Not investing and not protecting investments in the child population now, from an equity perspective, means having a less cohesive, less skilled and less productive society in the future, which will require more social spending and in which today's children will have to face, as adults, part of the consequences of the crisis and assume the demands of a Welfare State with an increasingly ageing population.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) provides for the recognition by ratifying States of the "right of every child to a standard of living adequate for the child's physical, mental and spiritual, moral and social development" (Article 27.1), while committing States Parties, in accordance with their national conditions and means, to take the necessary measures to assist parents and others responsible for children to give effect to this right and, where necessary, to provide material assistance and support programmes (Article 27.3). Article 4 of the Convention also sets out the obligation to take these measures "to the maximum extent of available resources".

According to the Basque Government's 2018 Poverty and Social Inequality Survey, the real poverty rate in families with children is 9.5 per cent in 2018, more than double the 4.4 per cent corresponding in that year to households without children. Families with children currently account for 49.8% of poverty situations (as opposed to 36.9% of poor people represented by households without children).

The favourable dynamics of child poverty can also be observed by considering exclusively the situation of the population under 14 years of

age. Thus, after increasing from 7.3 per cent in 2008 to 9.5 per cent in 2012 and 11.2 per cent in 2014, the impact of child poverty in 2018 was 10.3 per cent. The weight of the population under 14 years of age in real poverty situations as a whole is 22.4% in 2018. In other words, in the context of real poverty, almost 1 in 4 people is a child under 14 years of age.

However, the most relevant data for the period 2016-2018 is related to the increase in real poverty among people between 15 and 24 years of age. In this case, it is the group that most clearly sees its position worsen in the medium term and goes from 9.1% to 10.4%, equaling that existing among children under 15.

In the Basque Country 18.36%, 401.766, are people aged 0-19. We want to make their rights better known, thus contributing to their greater social visibility as a group, rights holders and agents of transformation, and to broaden and deepen the dialogue of the whole of society around children and adolescents.

2. Why is the accumulation of wealth and the inequality it generates a problem?

In the first place, inequality currently imposes a disadvantage on children from families with fewer resources (economic, but also educational and cultural) in aspects as basic to their development as education, health and housing, which translates into a violation of their most basic rights and a deteriorated perception of what life offers them. Objective indicators often hide subjective elements such as unhappiness, anxiety, suffering and fear, which determine children's lives far beyond what we adults are capable of understanding.

Second, inequality today may in the future become a trap that traps the individual in vicious circles of precariousness and poverty, implying a restriction of children's social mobility. Because in the absence of effective corrective mechanisms, there is a close relationship between children's starting point and their future opportunities. On the other hand, the growing gap between safe and vulnerable populations feeds the former's disinterest in the quality of public services they do not use, which further damages the position of the latter. Unemployment and the weakening of safety nets have created an unprecedented gap between those who live in

safety and those who are victims of a structural vulnerability that determines their present and future.

And thirdly, increasing inequality is an unwise strategy for society as a whole. On the one hand, extreme inequalities are a drag on economic growth and limit the opportunities to translate this growth into poverty reduction. On the other hand, they become at best a factor of political disaffection, and at worst a source of social instability and insecurity.

3. What are the proposed solutions?

The adoption of the Agenda for Sustainable Development 2030 has meant a change of paradigm and a great opportunity for the implementation of policies -at the domestic and international level- at the state, autonomous and local level aimed at protecting the rights of children, under the slogan of not leaving anyone behind. The Basque Country has a fundamental opportunity to tackle the main problems that affect an important part of childhood, such as poverty (ODS 1), inequality and social exclusion (ODS 10).

In this sense we can propose some ways such as increasing the amounts and coverage of the economic benefit per child in charge of Social Security (up to 1.200 euros/year) for children with fewer resources, taking into account the official threshold of risk of poverty for the determination of income levels that give access to the benefit. At state level with an estimated cost of 3.068 million euros per year would reduce severe child poverty by 30%.(*data 2016)

Reinforce the inclusive approach of the system: guarantee school support and scholarships to the students who need it, and in general, eliminate any barriers that hinder equal access to these services and resources by boys and girls; advance towards real and effective free compulsory education.

Provide resources and actively promote access to education from 0 to 3 years of age, especially in the case of children who are disadvantaged by their social, economic, family or disability situation.

Actively guarantee access to health for those adults and their children who, because of their national or ethnic origin or their administrative situation, may be compromised. Promote the dissemination of clear and transparent

information on the conditions of access to health among parents, children themselves, and professionals in the sector.

To reduce to 10% the contribution of the users to the pharmaceutical payment in the case that the beneficiaries of the medicines are under 18 years of age and the income does not exceed 18.000 euros, maintaining the current exemptions.

Elaborate an annual "barometer" specifically aimed at children under 18 years of age that systematically collects opinions, concerns and the assessment of the welfare of children in different areas. A survey that allows policy-makers to identify the problems and expectations faced by children.

To develop specific indicators of inequality in different dimensions, which also include children, and to establish a follow-up and supervision of their evolution from the public administrations. Establish targets associated with the improvement of these indicators in accordance with the necessary commitment to the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and the 17 ODS.