**Conflict, climate crisis and COVID-19 pose great threats to the health of women and children**

**New York City, 26 September 2020 –** Fragile gains made to advance women and children’s health are threatened by conflict, the climate crisis and COVID-19, according to a new report.

[*Protect the Progress:* *Rise, Refocus, Recover, 2020*](https://data.unicef.org/resources/protect-the-progress-rise-refocus-recover-ewec-2020)highlights that since the Every Woman Every Child movement was launched 10 years ago, spearheaded by the United Nations Secretary-General, there has been remarkable progress in improving the health of the world’s women, children and adolescents. For example, under-five deaths reached an all-time recorded low in 2019, and more than 1 billion children were vaccinated over the past decade. Coverage of immunization, skilled birth attendant and access to safe drinking water reached over 80 per cent. Maternal deaths declined by 35 per cent since 2000, with the most significant declines occurring from 2010. An estimated 25 million child marriages were also prevented over the past decade.

However, conflict, climate instability and the COVID-19 pandemic are putting the health and well-being of all children and adolescents at risk. The COVID-19crisis, in particular, is exacerbating existing inequities, with reported disruptions in essential health interventions disproportionately impacting the most vulnerable women and children. At the height of pandemic lockdowns, schools were closed in 192 countries, affecting 1.6 billion students. Domestic violence and abuse of girls and women increased. Poverty and hunger are also on the rise.

“Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, a child under the age of five died every six seconds somewhere around the world,” said Henrietta Fore, UNICEF Executive Director. “Millions of children living in conflict zones and fragile settings face even greater hardship with the onset of the pandemic. We need to work collectively to meet immediate needs caused by the pandemic while also strengthening health systems. Only then can we protect and save lives.”

In 2019, 5.2 million children under the age of 5 and 1 million adolescents died of preventable causes. Every 13 seconds a newborn baby died. Every hour 33 women did not survive childbirth; and 33,000 girls a day were forced into marriages, usually to much older men.

The report calls upon the global community to fight COVID-19 while honoring and respecting commitments that can improve the lives of women and children, and not widen the gap between promise and reality.