**COVID-19: Number of children living in household poverty to soar by up to 86 million by end of year**

*New analysis from Save the Children and UNICEF reveals that without urgent action, the number of children living in poor households across low- and middle-income countries could increase by 15%*

**NEW YORK, 28 May 2020 –** The economic fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic could push up to 86 million more children into household poverty by the end of 2020, an increase of 15 per cent, according to a new analysis released today by Save the Children and UNICEF.

The analysis highlights that, without urgent action to protect families from the financial hardships caused by the pandemic, the total number of children living below the national poverty line in low- and middle-income countries could reach 672 million by year-end.

Countries across Europe and Central Asia could see the most significant increase, up to 44 per cent across the region.

“The coronavirus pandemic has triggered an unprecedented socio-economic crisis that is draining resources for families all over the world,” said Henrietta Fore, UNICEF Executive Director. “The scale and depth of financial hardship among families threatens to roll back years of progress in reducing child poverty and to leave children deprived of essential services. Without concerted action, families barely getting by could be pushed into poverty, and the poorest families could face levels of deprivation that have not been seen for decades.”

Before the pandemic, two-thirds of children worldwide did not have access to any form of social protection, making it impossible for families to withstand financial shocks when they hit and furthering the vicious cycle of intergenerational poverty.

Hundreds of millions of children remain multidimensionally poor - meaning they lack access to health care, education, proper nutrition, or adequate housing – often a reflection of inequitable investments by governments in social services.

For children living in countries already affected by conflict and violence, the impact of this crisis will further increase the risk of instability and of households falling into poverty.

To address and mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on children in poor households, Save the Children and UNICEF call for rapid and large-scale expansion of social protection systems and programmes including cash transfers, school feeding and child benefits – all critical investments that address immediate financial needs and lay the foundation for countries to prepare for future shocks.

Governments must also invest in other forms of social protection, fiscal policies, employment and labor market interventions to support families. This includes expanding universal access to quality healthcare and other services; and investing in family friendly policies, such as paid leave and childcare.

Since COVID-19 hit, many countries have already scaled up their social protection programmes. For example:

* In Indonesia, the Kartu Sembako programme, which provides monthly cash assistance for basic family consumption, expanded its reach to 20 million. Monthly cash assistance to families increased from Rp150 thousand to Rp200 thousand;
* In Argentina, the Universal Child Allowance programme provided an increase of $3,100 Argentine pesos (US$47) for its current beneficiaries;
* In Georgia, the Targeted Social Assistance (TSA) programme will be temporarily expanded to provide support to an additional 70,000 families; as well as provide an extra 100 GEL (US$31) a month to 21,000 TSA households with three or more children for 6 months.
* In Armenia, eligible families enrolled in the family benefit system will receive a top-up equal to 50 per cent of the benefit.
* In Colombia, the government has created the Solidarity Income Program to provide cash transfers to households that do not currently receive benefits from any other National Government programmes. As of 21 May, more than 2 million vulnerable families had received a 320,000 peso transfer (equivalent to US$81) through two equal payments made during March and May.

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