### *PRESS RELEASE*

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**Racism and discrimination against children rife in countries worldwide – UNICEF**

*New report outlines how children are discriminated against in health, access to government resources, and education; analysis of 22 countries shows advantaged groups are twice as likely to have basic reading skills*

**NEW YORK, 18 November 2022**– Racism and discrimination against children based on their ethnicity, language, and religion are rife in countries across the world, according to a new UNICEF report published ahead of World Children’s Day.

*[Rights denied: The impact of discrimination on children](http://www.unicef.org/reports/rights-denied-discrimination-children)* shows the extent to which racism and discrimination impact children’s education, health, access to a registered birth, and to a fair and equal justice system, and highlights widespread disparities among minority and ethnic groups.

“Systemic racism and discrimination put children at risk of deprivation and exclusion that can last a lifetime,” said UNICEF Executive Director Catherine Russell. “This hurts us all. Protecting the rights of every child – whoever they are, wherever they come from – is the surest way to build a more peaceful, prosperous, and just world for everyone.”

Among the new findings, the report shows that children from marginalized ethnic, language, and religious groups in an analysis of 22 countries lag far behind their peers in reading skills. On average, students aged 7-14 from the most advantaged group are more than twice as likely to have foundational reading skills than those from the least advantaged group.

An analysis of data on the rate of children registered at birth – a prerequisite for access to basic rights – found significant disparities among children of different religious and ethnic groups. For example, in Lao PDR, 59 per cent of children under 5 in the minority Mon-Khmer ethnic group have their births registered, compared to 80 per cent among the Lao-Tai ethnic group.

Discrimination and exclusion deepen intergenerational deprivation and poverty, and result in poorer health, nutrition, and learning outcomes for children, higher likelihood of incarceration, higher rates of pregnancy among adolescent girls, and lower employment rates and earnings in adulthood.

While COVID-19 exposed deep injustices and discrimination across the world, and the impacts of climate change and conflict continue to reveal inequities in many countries, the report highlights how discrimination and exclusion have long persisted for millions of children from ethnic and minority groups, including access to immunization, water and sanitation services, and a fair justice system.

For example, in disciplinary policies in the United States, Black children are almost four times more likely to receive out-of-school suspensions than white children, and more than twice as likely to face school-related arrests, the report notes.

The report also highlights how children and young people are feeling the burden of discrimination in their everyday lives. A new U-Report poll generating more than 407,000 responses found that almost two thirds feel discrimination is common in their environments, while almost half feel discrimination had impacted their lives or that of someone they know in a significant manner.

“On World Children’s Day and every day, every child has the right to be included, to be protected, and to have an equal chance to reach their full potential,” said Russell. “All of us have the power to fight discrimination against children – in our countries, our communities, our schools, our homes, and our own hearts. We need to use that power.”

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UNICEF works in some of the world’s toughest places, to reach the world’s most disadvantaged children. Across more than 190 countries and territories, we work for every child, everywhere, to build a better world for everyone.

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