

NO COUNTRY IS DOING ENOUGH TO PROTECT CHILDREN'S HEALTH, FINDS STUDY

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Rights & Welfare of Children - Schemes & their Performance, Mechanisms, Laws Institutions and Bodies

No single country is adequately protecting children's health, their environment and their future, according to a recently released report by a Commission of more than 40 child and adolescent health experts from around the world. The Commission was convened by the World Health Organization (WHO), UNICEF and *The Lancet*.

The report, titled *A Future for the World's Children?*, finds that the health and future of every child and adolescent worldwide is under immediate threat from ecological degradation, climate change and exploitative marketing practices that push heavily processed fast food, sugary drinks, alcohol and tobacco at them.

The index shows that children in Norway, the Republic of Korea and the Netherlands have the best chance at survival and well-being, while children in the Central African Republic, Chad, Somalia, Niger and Mali face the worst odds.

In the report assessing the capacity of 180 countries, India stands 77th (sustainability index) and is at 131st position on a ranking that measures the best chance at survival and well-being for children.

The report says although India has improved in health and sanitation, it has to increase its spending on health. It also cautions that globally, the number of children and adolescents who are obese has increased from 11 million in 1975 to 124 million in 2016 — an 11-fold increase.

The only countries on track to beat the CO2 emission targets by 2030, while also performing fairly (within the top 70) on child flourishing measures are: Albania, Armenia, Grenada, Jordan, Moldova, Sri Lanka, Tunisia, Uruguay and Vietnam. "Despite improvements in child and adolescent health over the past 20 years, progress has stalled and is set to reverse," said Helen Clark, co-chair of the Commission, adding that an estimated 250 million children under five in low- and middle-income countries are at risk of not reaching their developmental potential. Moreover, every child worldwide now faces existential threats from climate change and commercial pressures.

While the poorest countries need to do more to ensure healthy lives for children, carbon emissions — disproportionately from wealthier countries — threaten the future of all children, states the report. "This report shows that the world's decision makers are, too often, failing today's children and youth: failing to protect their health, failing to protect their rights and failing to protect their planet," said Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General, WHO.

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