CHILDREN'S REPORT
A REVIEW OF SDG IMPLEMENTATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

Save the Children

A Children's VNR Complimentary Report
June 2024

Children's Report: SDG's in South Africa
June 2024

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Acronyms

ACRWC	**African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child**
ChP	**Child Participation**
CSO	**Civil Society Organisation**
GOSA	**Government of the Republic of South Africa**
NSNP	**National School Nutrition Programme**
SDG	**Sustainable Development Goal**
SCSA	**Save the Children South Africa**
UNCRC	**United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child**

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Executive Summary

Background

Save the children South Africa (SCSA) worked with children across 6 provinces of the country, through consultations and a children's survey, to make sure that children's voices are included in the SDG Voluntary National Review (VNR) process for South Africa.

This report shows the views and experiences of children on 6 SDGS that directly impact the everyday lives of children - SDG 1 (No poverty), SDG 2 (Zero hunger), SDG 3 (Good health & wellbeing), SDG4 (Quality Education), SDG 5 (Gender equality), and SDG 16 (Peace, justice and strong institutions).

Why did we conduct this study?

As article 12 of the UNCRC states, children should always be consulted in matters that affect them. Understanding this, SCSA wanted to work with children to make sure that children views, opinions and experiences are taken into account in the Voluntary National Reviews, a process when countries voluntarily present reports to the United Nations on the efforts they have made to achieve the SDGs in their country. This process provides an opportunity for children as rights-holders to help decision-makers understand the realities of children in their communities, alongside the Government of South African (GOSA) report, so decisions can be made with a "whole picture" understanding of the situation of children in the country.

How did we conduct the study?

The views of children on the 6 SDGs were collected in two ways:

- ✓ Consultations were conducted in 3 provinces with a total of 78 children that included migrant children and children with

> **Children's scorecard consultations**
>
> **Locations and dates:**
>
> Benoni, Gauteng – 04 May 2024
>
> Makhado, Limpopo – 11 May 2024
>
> Matsulu, Mupmalanga – 20 April 2024
>
> **Children represented:** Girls and Boys; Children and young people; Children with disabilities; Children discriminated by geographic area (informal settlements, rural areas); Migrants or undocumented children
>
> **Number of children consulted**: 78 - Gauteng (29); Limpopo (29); Mpumalanga (20)

> **Children's SDG survey**
>
> **Survey duration:** May – June 2024
>
> **Number of child researchers:** 9
>
> **Number of children participated:** 123
>
> **Number of provinces:** 6

disabilities. The children reviewed and rated the implementation of the 6 SDGs.

- ✓ To gather the inputs of more children in the country, a survey on the 6 SDGs was conducted by 9 volunteer child researchers, 3 children in each province. A total of 123 children participated in the survey.

A data validation session was done with 10 children in total once analysis and a draft report were developed. All 9 child researchers attended the data validation session. The purpose of the session was to make sure the report correctly reflects the views of the children, to give the researchers feedback on the data they collected and to allow for final inputs and the sign-off by the children.

Figure 1 Children providing their inputs through drawings

What did we find?

Children's SDG survey findings

Progress status of the 6 SDG's	
Sustainable Development Goal 1: No Poverty	**Progress:** ✓ Moderate (medium) **Challenges/ Areas of concern:** ✓ Households are food insecure and living conditions are not safe for all children. ✓ Limited access to clean water, sanitation, and electricity. ✓ Need for more inclusive and comprehensive community support systems
Sustainable Development Goal 2: Zero Hunger	**Progress:** ✓ Mixed (some highs and lows) **Challenges/ Areas of concern:** ✓ Some children experience hunger and malnutrition ✓ Many children do not know whether children are receiving their nutritional needs met in their communities ✓ Families are not able to produce their own food
Sustainable Development Goal 3: Good Health and Wellbeing	**Progress:** ✓ Moderate (medium) **Challenges/ Areas of concern:** ✓ Gaps in access to clean water and sanitation ✓ Gaps in access to full healthcare
Sustainable Development Goal 4: Quality Education	**Progress:** ✓ Very low **Challenges/ Areas of concern:** ✓ Some gaps in school completion rates ✓ Mixed results on whether children and teenagers get the reading and math skills they need by the end of their schooling ✓ Schools lack of essential resources like clean water, working toilets and safe environments
Sustainable Development Goal 5: Gender Equality	**Progress:** ✓ Mixed (some highs and lows) **Challenges/ Areas of concern:** ✓ High rate of teenage pregnancy in communities ✓ Not all children report when they are harmed or inappropriately touched ✓ Most children report that only some women in their community have the power to decide on family planning. Many children were unsure.

Sustainable Development Goal 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions	**Progress:** ✓ Low to moderate **Challenges/ Areas of concern:** ✓ Not all babies are being documented at birth ✓ Safety issues, bullying and inappropriate touching ✓ People still face discrimination and social exclusion

Children's Scorecard consultation findings

The findings from the consultations with children show that the GOSA has made progress on a number of SDGs, although a number of gaps and challenges are still present in the country. The children believe that addressing these key challenges will have a positive impact on the situation of children in South Africa.

Gauteng	
Sustainable Development Goal 1: No Poverty	**Progress:** ✓ Increases of child social grant amounts ✓ Efforts by government to reduce effects of climate change **Challenges:** ✓ High rates of corruption in South Africa's government denies children their rights ✓ Access to social grants for undocumented children ✓ Underdevelopment of rural communities and informal settlements limiting access to services such as long travels to schools, shopping centres etc. ✓ Child labour of children who come from impoverished homes ✓ Efforts to combat climate change are minimal and are not joint with efforts to combat poverty for greater impact. ✓ Solutions to combat poverty are not long-term ✓ Local government does not partner with communities to address this SDG ✓ Communities are only heard by government when they protest ✓ Inflation and high cost of living
Sustainable Development Goal 2: Zero Hunger	**Progress:** ✓ Implementation of the National School Nutrition Programme in schools ✓ Programmes to support agricultural practices in rural communities ✓ Increased health education programming in schools **Challenges:** ✓ The rising cost of living ✓ Lack of food programmes to feed children who are not in school ✓ The threat of climate change on subsistence farming and food security ✓ Children are not consulted on the SDG ✓ NSNP challenges: corruption by responsible staff; small meal portions; attitudes of kitchen staff; poor management

Sustainable Development Goal 3: Good Health and Wellbeing	**Progress:** ✓ Availability of free primary healthcare ✓ Efforts of health education and awareness from CSO's **Challenges:** ✓ Under funding and under resourcing of public healthcare facilities (hospitals and clinics) ✓ Corruption in public healthcare facilities such as health professions who sell medicine that is meant to be free ✓ Water disruptions, the lack of WASH infrastructure and safe dumping sites in rural and urban communities. ✓ Discrimination of youth and migrant children by health professionals ✓ Mental health awareness: Lacking awareness on mental health and mental health services in schools and communities ✓ Lack of knowledge and awareness on proper recycling systems
Sustainable Development Goal 4: Quality Education	**Progress**: ✓ Increased technology access and teaching in most urban schools ✓ Civil society advocacy on quality education and curriculum strengthening that includes the inputs of learners ✓ International GOSA partnerships to educate and train South African citizens with rare skills **Challenges**: ✓ Under resourcing of schools in poorer areas and special schools, including technology and digital resources ✓ Overcrowding in schools ✓ Undocumented and migrant children lack education opportunities ✓ LO teachers/ curriculum not adequate or comprehensive ✓ Not all schools are being inclusive of physical exercise and sports
Sustainable Development Goal 5: Gender Equality	**Progress:** ✓ Increased representation of women in leadership roles, including parliament ✓ Slight improvement in the public acceptance of people with non-binary gender identities and those of the LGBTQI+ community ✓ Gender sensitive laws and policies ✓ Improved awareness in society and programming to combat issues affecting women and girls **Challenges:** ✓ Underreporting of violent crimes by men and boys due to treatment by public officials ✓ Lack of consultation with children around this issue ✓ Undocumented children face inequality and become vulnerable to exploitation
Sustainable Development Goal 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions	**Progress:** ✓ Decreased racial tensions among learners in schools ✓ South Africa's stand against human rights violations in other countries **Challenges:** ✓ Certain groups still experience violence (children, LGBTQI+, migrants) ✓ Political instability which incites violence

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✓ Justice system that is weakened by corruption
✓ Vicious cycle of xenophobia

Limpopo

Sustainable Development Goal 1: No Poverty	**Progress**: ✓ Efforts by government to address poverty: providing food parcels and water; the NSNP; social grants **Challenges**: ✓ High rate of unemployment ✓ Child labour ✓ Social grant support is not enough to support children's needs fully ✓ Interventions do not cover all people in need in communities ✓ Corruption in government ✓ Children are not consulted on issues around poverty
Sustainable Development Goal 2: Zero Hunger	**Progress:** ✓ Government's provision of land and support for agriculture activities **Challenges:** ✓ Threat of climate and man-made disasters on farming activities ✓ Lack of knowledge on adequate farming activities ✓ Not all children benefit from NSNP and food parcels provided by government due to shortages ✓ Poor quality of food provided in food schemes ✓ Loadshedding ✓ Not all communities are given the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes
Sustainable Development Goal 3: Good Health and Wellbeing	**Progress:** ✓ Health education in schools being prioritised **Challenges:** ✓ Poor conditions of public healthcare facilities ✓ Teenage pregnancy ✓ Substance abuse among youth and children ✓ Discrimination of youth and migrant children by health professionals ✓ Water and power outages (loadshedding) in hospitals and under resourcing ✓ Communities are not heard, or given platform to be heard, until they protest
Sustainable Development Goal 4: Quality Education	**Progress:** ✓ Court judgement in favour of the admission of undocumented learners to public schools **Challenges:** ✓ Poor safety conditions of schools and under resourcing ✓ Lack of schools leading to overcrowding of classes ✓ Lack of staff members in schools such as cleaners

	✓ Learner are not being taught skills needed for future employment in schools ✓ 'No fee schools' that force parents to pay school fees ✓ Children being forced to drop out of school due to teenage pregnancy or not affording school supplies
Sustainable Development Goal 5: Gender Equality	**Progress:** ✓ Increased representation of women in leadership roles, including parliament ✓ Policies promote gender equality **Challenges:** ✓ Gender roles are being forced onto boys and girls in their homes ✓ Boys do not access dignity packs as girls do ✓ Girls and women still face discrimination
Sustainable Development Goal 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions	**Challenges:** ✓ Trafficking of women and girls is high ✓ South Africa has a weak justice system ✓ Communities resort to mob justice because of the weak criminal justice system ✓ LGBTQI+ issues are not taken seriously by leadership ✓ Bullying is not addressed in communities which has adverse effects such as suicide ✓
Mpumalanga	
Sustainable Development Goal 1: No Poverty	**Progress:** ✓ Provision of social grants **Challenges:** ✓ High unemployment rate ✓ The competing needs that families face with little to no income ✓ Parents are unable to find employment which may lead to crime, leave their children in further poverty
Sustainable Development Goal 2: Zero Hunger	**Progress:** ✓ Social grants and the NSNP decrease risk of hunger **Challenges:** ✓ Climate change affects crop production that families rely on for food ✓ Access to land for agriculture activities is limited ✓ Children do not have access to the school feeding programmes during school holidays ✓ NSNP management is not adequate and is affected by corruption ✓
Sustainable Development Goal 3: Good Health and Wellbeing	**Progress:** ✓ Increased health education talks by nurses ✓ Increased access to family planning services **Challenges:** ✓ Teenage pregnancy is rife

	✓ Clinics are not child-friendly and are under resourced ✓ Quality of services is inadequate, and certified youth and child services/ centres need to be monitored and strengthened ✓ Undocumented children cannot access clinic services
Sustainable Development Goal 4: Quality Education	**Challenges:** ✓ Children must travel long distances to access resourced schools (between provinces) ✓ Overcrowding in rural schools ✓ Undocumented children cannot access schools ✓ Limited schools and overcrowded classes which leads to spreading of contagious diseases ✓ Lack of proper infrastructure in schools ✓ Inadequate school management
Sustainable Development Goal 5: Gender Equality	**Challenges:** ✓ Outdated gender norms hold girls and women back ✓ Poverty makes women and girls especially vulnerable to abuse ✓ No action against GBV cases
Sustainable Development Goal 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions	**Progress:** ✓ South Africa works to help with peace keeping globally **Challenges:** ✓ People do not have knowledge of how the justice system works and do not know how to access justice ✓ Children's issues often get overlooked in court proceedings ✓ The Human Rights Commission doesn't seem to effectively advocate for children's rights ✓ Corporal punishment is still used in some schools ✓ Children are still discriminated against in the country ✓ Government employees are not being thoroughly vetted for criminal records ✓ Lack of knowledge of country's laws, policies and plans contributing to little community involvement in public participation processes

Children's recommendations

In all 6 SDGs the children found a need for meaningful child participation. Children still do not have platforms for meaningful participation in the countries decision-making and to place the voice of children at the centre of important discussions. For platforms that have been established such as the Nelson Mandela Children's Parliament (NMCP), participation has been limited as most children are not informed of the existence of such opportunities for participation. The children believe that this is, in part, due to the informal nature of most child participation platforms. The children believe that GOSA can move towards a country that values the voice of the children within its borders by making child participation structures such as the NMCP an officially recognised sitting of parliament. By formalising the Children's parliament, opportunities for children from all provinces will

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greatly increase. Leaders will be held to account and children will be better able to contribute to solutions that will move the country closer to achieving the SDGs.

The children's recommendations specific to each SDG are as follows:

Goal 1: No poverty

- ✓ Build partnerships with private businesses to create more employment opportunities for the unemployed and create more sustainable projects to combat poverty.

- ✓ Address the issue of undocumented children so these children can also benefit from social protection programmes.

- ✓ Information on social protection and poverty relief programmes need to be made more publicly available with efforts to include children to champion information sharing in their communities.

- ✓ Corruption needs to be better monitored and efforts made to combat it so all people can benefit from government funds and resources. Government aid must be fairly distributed to communities.
- ✓ Further increase child grants so it can cover all needs that children have.

- ✓ Government should invest in the development of rural areas for better access to services and economic growth opportunities to address poverty.

Goal 2: Zero hunger:

- ✓ Public education, that includes children, on agriculture and the importance of subsistence farming so communities can have the knowledge to provide for themselves and can also contribute to solutions to issues affecting agriculture such as climate change.

- ✓ Implement initiatives to protect agriculture activities and provide families with land so people can sustain themselves.

- ✓ Government must partner more with the food production sector and invest in innovation for sustainable agriculture practices and innovations.

- ✓ Prioritise partnerships with children to find solutions for climate change.

- ✓ Involve children in the monitoring of activities and resource allocation in communities

- ✓ Address gaps in the NSNP, expand food provision initiatives to children who are not in school and food is still available to children in need during school holidays

Goal 3: Good Health and Wellbeing

- ✓ Government needs to monitor the use of resources and intervene in the discrimination of certain groups in healthcare settings.
- ✓ Strengthen health education and awareness raising in school. More education and resources are needed to help young people make healthy choices.
- ✓ Improve access to healthcare in marginalised communities by:

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- Improving disease control and health monitoring
- Employing more doctors and place them strategically in rural communities for easy for members and to increase efficiency in clinics and hospitals

✓ Government must make more efforts to improve access to water so health and sanitation for children. Medical facilities need to be provided with a more reliable supply of water and electricity that does not disrupt services.

✓ Government should partner with communities and CSOs to allow for more open communication and collaboration that includes children to create real change that improves children's health and well-being.

✓ Local leaders, civil society, businesses and other stakeholders are included in government processes because they can raise awareness regarding this SDG. Children participation needs to be prioritised.

✓ Awareness raising about mental health issues

✓ Build more clinics and hospitals in vulnerable communities, including mobile clinics

✓ Have more routine monitoring and inspections of healthcare resources like medicines and the quality of healthcare services provided

Goal 4: Quality Education

✓ Empower children through investing in their education. By investing in SDG 4, government will make progress towards achieving SDG 1.

✓ Revise the CAPS curriculum so learners finish their schooling with the skills they need for future employment. Education on social issues needs to be expanded through the Life Orientation subject in all schools as was done for Comprehensive Sexual Education.

✓ Invest more in training teachers to produce educators who are able to deliver the curriculum well and meet all the education needs of learners

✓ Ensure all schools are able to cater for physical exercise and sports

✓ Resourcing and infrastructure in schools needs to be improved for under resourced schools so children can learn safely and with the tools they need

✓ Efforts towards inclusive education and addressing the needs of children with disabilities must be prioritised. The White paper 6 policy needs to be implemented in South African schools

✓ More schools are needed in communities where there is overcrowding

Goal 5: Gender Equality

✓ Society, especially older people, needs to be educated on issues of gender equality to combat outdated ways of thinking and discrimination. More interventions should be implemented to educate the public on gender equality, as well as sexuality, GBV and VAC. People need to be educated on how to treat people of all genders equally and that everyone should be treated the same and with respect.

✓ All interventions and programming must be inclusive of all genders and gender sensitive.

✓ Interventions should be implemented that focuses on deal with trauma that specifically encourages the participation of men.

Goal 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

- ✓ Develop proper and effective child protection system, especially for disabled and migrant children.
- ✓ Action must be taken against mismanagement of funds and corruption at all levels of government and ways to prevent corruption must be implemented.
- ✓ Make sure there is enough police force and security for protection of children in communities by engaging children and youth / junior commissioners.
- ✓ Prioritise the vetting of government officials and workers.
- ✓ Implementation of South Africa's laws and policies need to be better monitored by the relevant governmental departments.

Background

South Africa's commitment to a sustainable future extends beyond its borders. The Government of the Republic of South Africa (GOSA) has sought to actively domesticate the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by integrating them into national plans like the National Development Plan (NDP) Vision 2030 and budgets with SDG targets. This alignment strengthens accountability and ensures existing initiatives contribute to the broader SDG framework[1].

South Africa's domestication efforts extend beyond national plans and are interwoven with its commitment to other international and regional treaties such as the African Union's Agenda 2063, which in similarity to the SDGs, focuses on African development and prosperity and the Paris Agreement that addresses climate change, a key SDG target. For children, more specifically, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC), as ratified by the GOSA in 1995 and 2000 respectively, are inextricably linked to the SDGs in reinforcing the GOSA's commitment and responsibilities to uphold children's full spectrum of rights.

As a key stakeholder group, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in South Africa, play a vital role in working with the government on the SDGs[2], policy development and program execution. Through advocacy, CSOs are crucial in raising awareness of the SDGs and the national policies and plans that aim to achieve the SDGs. They are key in holding government accountable to its commitments, and pushing for ambitious goals, while also driving the implementation of the SDGs by delivering essential services on the ground, particularly in marginalized communities. CSOs bring expertise, local knowledge, and a strong connection to communities in working towards SDGs. Their active participation is crucial for inclusive and effective SDG implementation, as highlighted by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs[3].

Complementary to advocacy efforts to drive accountability, civil society has an important role in the monitoring of SDG implementation through tracking progress, identifying gaps, and providing data-driven recommendations. As such, civil society is instrumental complementary reporting on the GOSA's commitments and elevating the voices of all members of society to gain their insight into the realities experienced in communities across the country.

Child participation (ChP) is a vital for a truly inclusive measure of human rights commitments in the country. As a form of public consultation, the GOSA has made efforts to acknowledge its importance through legislation [The South African Constitution, Children's Act (2005)], frameworks (the National Programme of Action for Children, the National Child Participation Framework), and initiatives (Children's parliament, school governance). However, much is still to be desired as children still remain ignored and often excluded from having their views incorporated into public discourse and decision-making around issues that affect them. Save the children South Africa (SCSA), as a part of civil society in South Africa, is committed to ensuring that the voices of often the most marginalised in society – children – are heard to be taken into consideration in all matters that affect them through inclusion in monitoring processes.

To this end, Save the children South Africa (SCSA) worked collaboratively with children across 6 provinces of the country with the aim of facilitating the exercising of their right to hold the GOSA to account through the Sustainable Development Goals Voluntary National Review (SDG VNR) process. Through a series of consultations and a children's survey, children contributed their views on 6 SDGS that directly impact the everyday lives of children - SDG 1 (No poverty), SDG 2 (Zero hunger), SDG 3 (Good health & wellbeing), SDG4

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[1] Stats SA. (2019). Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): Country Report 2019 - South Africa https://www.statssa.gov.za/?cat=55

[2] United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. (n.d.). Civil society plays critical role to deliver on the SDGs https://www.un.org/en/desa/civil-society-plays-critical-role-deliver-sdgs

[3] Ibid.

(Quality Education), SDG 5 (Gender equality), and SDG 16 (Peace, justice and strong institutions). The following report is, therefore, geared towards reflecting the realities and opinions of children in South Africa on the GOSA's progress, and shortcomings, in its implementation of the SGDs in the country and to provide recommendations to address persisting gaps.

Study Objectives

Focusing on 6 of the 17 SDGs, the study sought to gather firsthand evidence from children on the status of child rights and progress towards relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) using the Children's Scorecard, a child friendly toolkit developed by Save the Children in alignment to the People's Scorecard. This collaborative data collection method gathers evidence based on children's perceptions and lived realities.

	No poverty	**To make sure countries end poverty in all its forms everywhere by 2030. Poverty denies children their fundamental rights to good nutrition, health, water, education, protection and shelter – undercutting their ability to realize their potential.**
	Zero hunger	**To end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.**
	Good health & wellbeing	**To ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.**
	Quality Education	**Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.**
	Gender Equality	**Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.**
	Peace & justice	**To end violence, including violence against children; and to make the world safer and more peaceful through laws, justice, freedom and access to information. People including children should have a say in decisions that affect them.**

Information collected through the scorecard can be disseminated to various stakeholders, including local and national authorities, and potentially the United Nations. This empowers children to contribute their perspectives to progress monitoring processes.

By incorporating child-derived data, the scorecard fosters accountability for government commitments towards children's rights. This valuable information can also inform the development and implementation of laws and policies that directly impact their lives.

Methodology

The study followed a mixed methods design and involved two approaches to gather the views of children on SDG progress.

Children's SDG survey

Following the consultations, the children were informed of the SDG children's survey, what it would entail and were given the opportunity to volunteer to be child researchers who would conduct the survey to gather the inputs of children in their communities. Nine children volunteered to collect data as child researchers. The data was collected in their communities and school environments (convenience sampling), commencing from mid-May and concluding in early June 2024. A total of 123 children were approached for the survey, and a total of 112 children, from 6 provinces (Eastern cape, Free State, Gauteng, Limpopo, Mpumalanga, North West) consented to participate in the children's SDG survey. The survey was conducted with only one child in the Eastern cape, Free State, and North West provinces.

The survey tool (see appendix I) consisted of the SDG indicators that were converted into child friendly indicators by Save the Children and used a quantitative approach.

Prior to data collection, the volunteers attended a virtual training that focussed on and reviewed:

- ✓ The importance of child-specific data;
- ✓ Data disaggregation;
- ✓ Research ethics, the principle of "doing no harm" and the importance of obtaining informed parental consent and child assent;
- ✓ Data protection mechanisms and procedures;
- ✓ Child participation and the requirements for meaningful and ethical participation (ensuring child participation is safe, inclusive and gender sensitive)

Informed parental consent (see appendix I) of all children who participated in the survey was acquired, as well as the children's assent to participate. Project Officers and Community Change Agents (CCAs) employed by SCSA, assisted with obtaining informed consent of parents and caregivers either telephonically or in-person.

KoboToolbox (Enketo web forms) was used to collect the data, and as such, volunteers were also selected on the basis that they had regular access to a smartphone with a browser app that could access and submit web forms. The data collection form was developed in English, however, the children could translate the questions into their home languages as they administered the tool.

Children's Scorecard consultations

One-day consultations with children that are involved in Save the Children's programming, were conducted across 3 provinces – Gauteng, Limpopo, and Mpumalanga – in April/May 2024. The children invited to participate in the consultations are part of existing children's networks from SCSA's Migration & Displacement and Child Rights Governance (CRG) programmes. A total of 78 children participated in these consultations. Participation in the consultations was voluntary and informed parental consent was acquired for each child prior to the consultations.

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A significant proportion of the children who participated in the consultations are migrant children, many of them being undocumented, and a large majority of the children come from vulnerable geographic areas (i.e. informal settlements, and rural areas). Three children with hearing impairments were also included in the Gauteng consultation and were assisted by two sign-language interpreters.

In each consultation, facilitated by SCSA staff members from the Programmes and MEAL teams, the children completed the Children's Scorecard, an adaptation of the People's Scorecard with a focus on 6 SDGs. The scorecard provides a detailed review of each of the Goals using the 5 guiding principles (Universality, Leaving No One Behind, Interconnectedness and Indivisibility, Transformative, and Partnerships) as criteria for the evaluation of the progress of each of the SDGs. Prior to the evaluation, the children were briefed on the following to ensure all children could approach the discussions with a solid background understanding:

- ✓ The 2030 Agenda, the SDGs and why they are important;
- ✓ What children's rights are;
- ✓ How the SDGs are linked to children's rights;
- ✓ The principles of the 2030 agenda;
- ✓ Barriers to progress on the SDGs (COVID-19, climate change, conflict);
- ✓ The SDG Accountability Cycle.

In groups, the children reviewed the principles and rated each principle for each SDG on a 5-point scale (*see below*) scorecard (see appendix I). Each group then presented its rating, with reasoning for ratings, to the plenary. Time was given for any objections to the rating or additions to be raised with the larger group and following discussions, a final rating was agreed upon.

-2	-1	0	1	2
large reduction	small reduction	no progress	low progress	high progress

Data analysis

The quantitative data was analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software v29. This was done by running frequencies on the datasets. This type of analysis helped provide a comprehensive summary of the distribution of categorical variables.

Qualitative data analysis

A qualitative analysis of data from the provincial consultations was conducted to consolidate children's insights on the SDGs. This manual process, facilitated through Microsoft Word, involved a close reading of children's inputs. Recurring topics, concerns, and suggestions were identified and grouped to understand the overarching challenges and priorities expressed by children across the provinces. This analysis provided valuable insights into children's lived experiences and perspectives on how the SDGs are, or are not, being addressed in their communities.

Data validation

A data validation session was conducted with 10 children, that included the 9 volunteer child researchers and an additional consultation attendee from the Limpopo province. The children were taken through the findings and recommendations for their comment or additional inputs. This process was done to ensure the accuracy, reliability and integrity of data gathered during the consultations and survey data collection.

Findings

Children's SDG survey findings

Goal 1: No Poverty

Table 1. Valid data statistics for goal 1

		Children with not enough food to eat or a safe place to sleep	All the children you know have clean water, a toilet and electricity at home	All different people in your community get help and support when they need it
N	Valid	106	110	110
	Missing	17	13	13

Table 1 presents statistical data regarding various aspects of Goal 1 (No Poverty). Three sub-questions were asked *under this goal. The results for each sub-question were as follows:*

Figure 1. Children with not enough food to eat or safe place to sleep
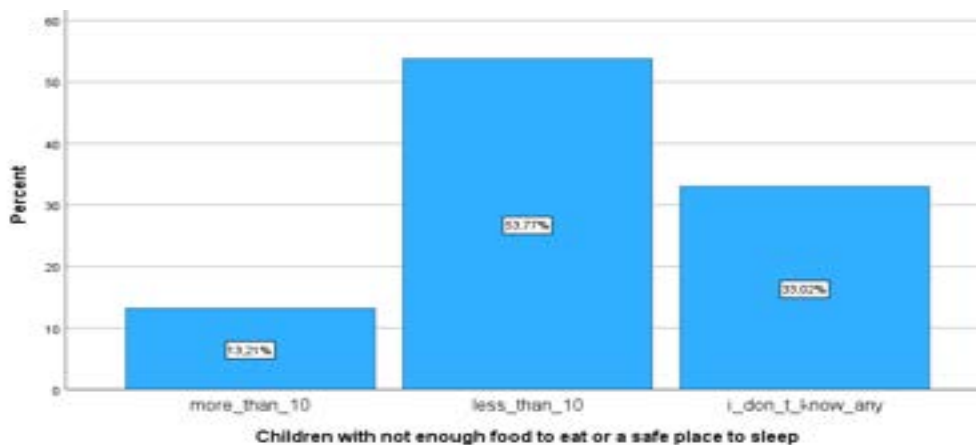

Figure 1 represents the distribution of responses across three categories for the first question under goal 1.

- More children (53,77%) know less than 10 children who do not have enough food to eat or a safe place to sleep. 33,02% of the children don't know any, while 13,21% of the children know more than 10 children who do not have enough food to eat or a safe place to sleep.

Figure 2. All children you know have clean water, a toilet and electricity at home

All the children you know have clean water, a toilet and electricity at home

Figure 2 represents the distribution of responses across four categories for the second question under goal 1.

- More children (69,09%) indicated that only some of children they know have clean water, a toilet, and electricity at home; 15,45% of the children indicated that all children they know have clean water, a toilet and electricity, while 3,64% of the children indicated that all the children they know don't have clean water, a toilet and electricity. The rest of the children (11,82%) did not know.

Figure 3. All different people in your community get help and support when they need it

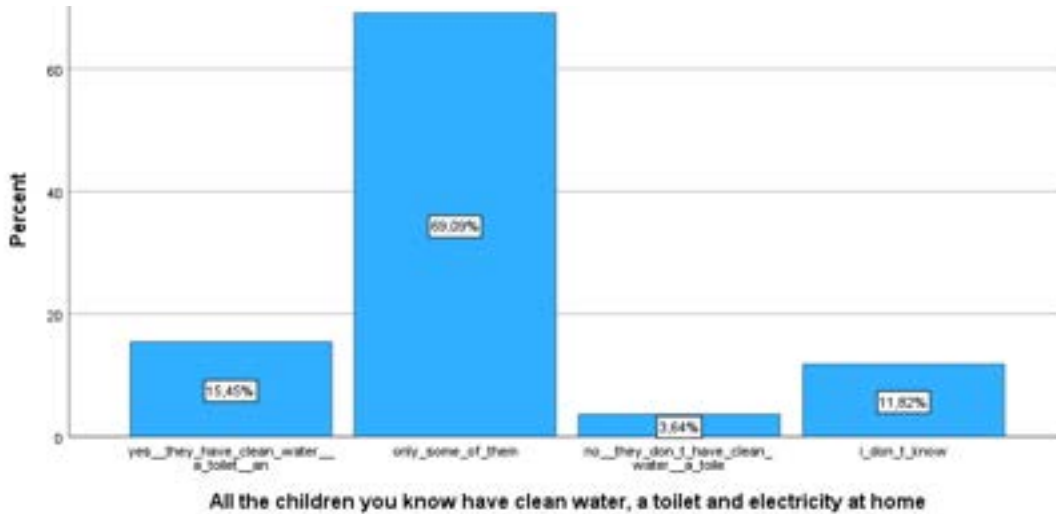All different people in your community get help and support when they need it
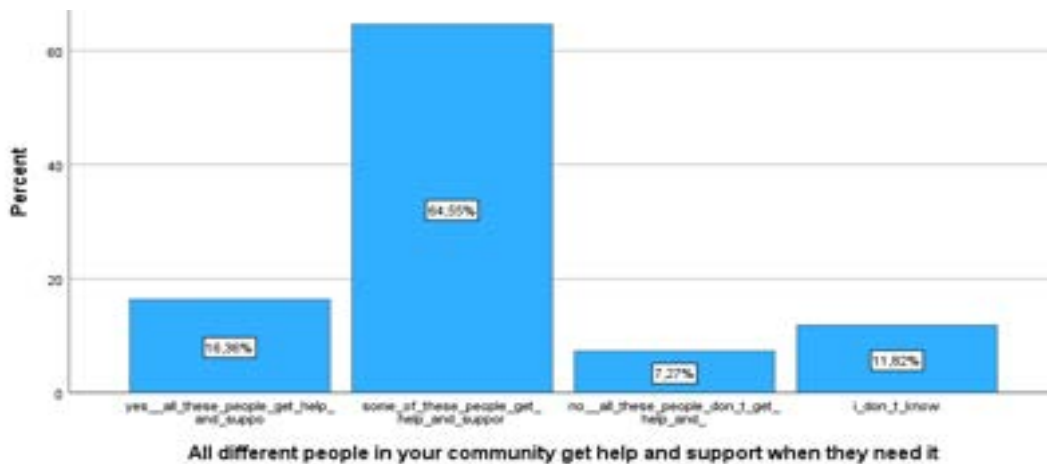
Figure 3 represents the distribution of responses across four categories for the third question under goal 1.

- More children (64,55%) indicated that some of the people in their community get help and support when they need it, but other don't; 16,36% of the children indicated that all people in their community get help and support

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when they need it, while 7,27% of the children indicated that all people don't get help and support when they need it. The rest of the children (11,82%) did not know.

Figures 1, 2 and 3 are a graphical representation of each of the sub-questions under goal 1 (No Poverty).

- *The data suggests moderate progress towards goal 1, but significant challenges remain. Key areas needing improvement include:*
- ➢ *Ensuring food security and safe living conditions for all children.*
- ➢ *Expanding access to clean water, sanitation, and electricity.*
- ➢ *Enhancing community support systems to be more inclusive and comprehensive.*

Goal 2: Zero Hunger

Table 2. Valid data statistics for goal 2

		Children in your community who go to bed hungry because they don't have enough food	Children in your school who are very thin or look too small for their age because they don't have enough to eat	Children in your community who are shorter than they should be for their age because they don't have enough healthy food	Families in your community that are able to grow enough food in their gardens or farms to feed themselves and others
N	Valid	109	106	104	110
	Missing	14	17	19	13

Table 2 presents statistical data regarding various aspects of Goal 2 (Zero Hunger) on child hunger and family food sufficiency within a community and school. Four sub-questions were asked under this goal. The results for each sub-question were as follows:

Figure 4. Children in your community who got to bed hungry because they don't have enough food

Figure 4 represents the distribution of responses across four categories for the first question under goal 2.

- More children (55,96%) know only a few children in their community who go to bed hungry because they don't have enough food; 9,17% of the children know a lot of children who go to bed hungry, while 1,83% of the children don't know any children who go to bed hungry. The rest of the children (33,03%) did not know)

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Figure 5. Children in your school who are very thin or look too small for their age because they don't have enough to eat

Figure 5 represents the distribution of responses across four categories for the second question under goal 2.

- More children (66,04%) know only a few children in their school who are very thin or look too small for their age because they don't have enough to eat; 9,43% of children know a lot of children in their school who are very thin or look too small for their age because they don't have enough to eat, while 4,72% don't know many children in their school who are very thin or look too small for their age because they don't have enough to eat. The rest of the children (19,81%) did not know.

Figure 6. Children in your community who are shorter than they should be for their age because they don't have enough healthy food

Children in your community who are shorter than they should be for their age because they don't have enough healthy food
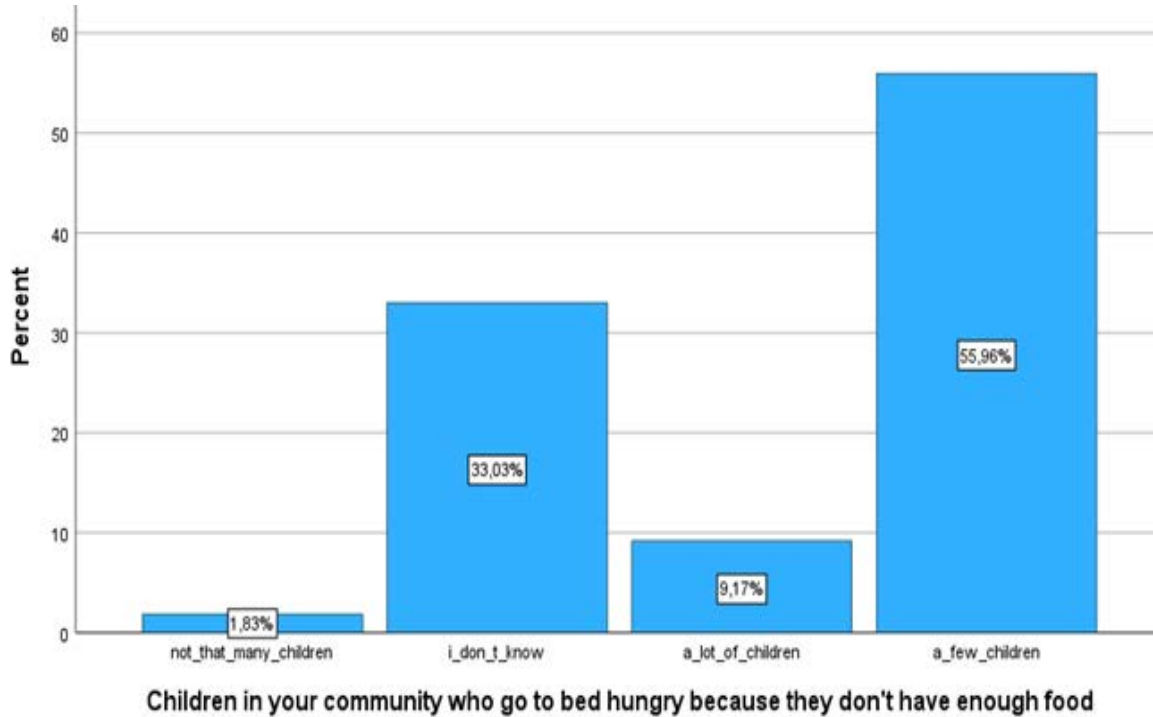
Figure 6 represents the distribution of responses across four categories for the third question under goal 2.

- More children (58,65%) know only a few children in their community who are shorter than they should be for their age because they don't have enough healthy food; 7,69% of the children know a lot of children who are shorter than they should be for their age because they don't have enough healthy food, while 5,77% of the children don't know many children in their community who are shorter than they should be for their age because they don't have enough healthy food. The rest of the children (27,88%) did not know.

Figure 7. Families in your community that are able to grow enough food in their gardens or farms to feed themselves and others
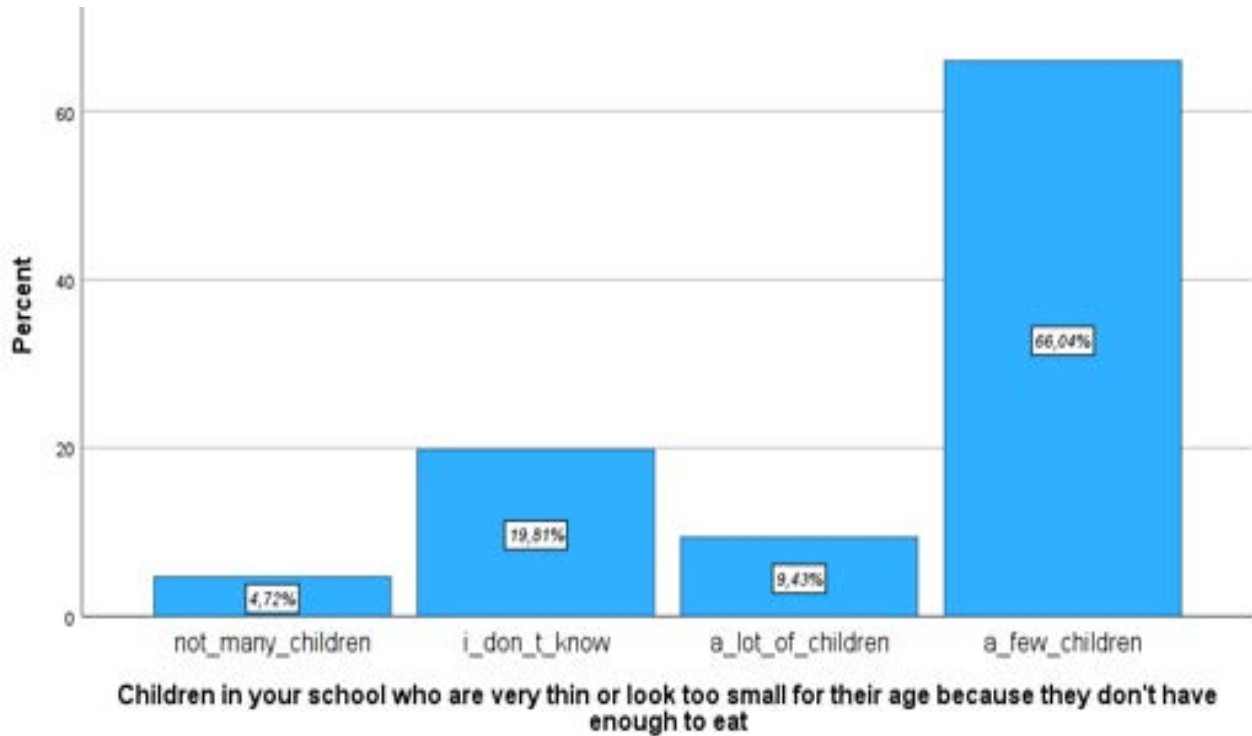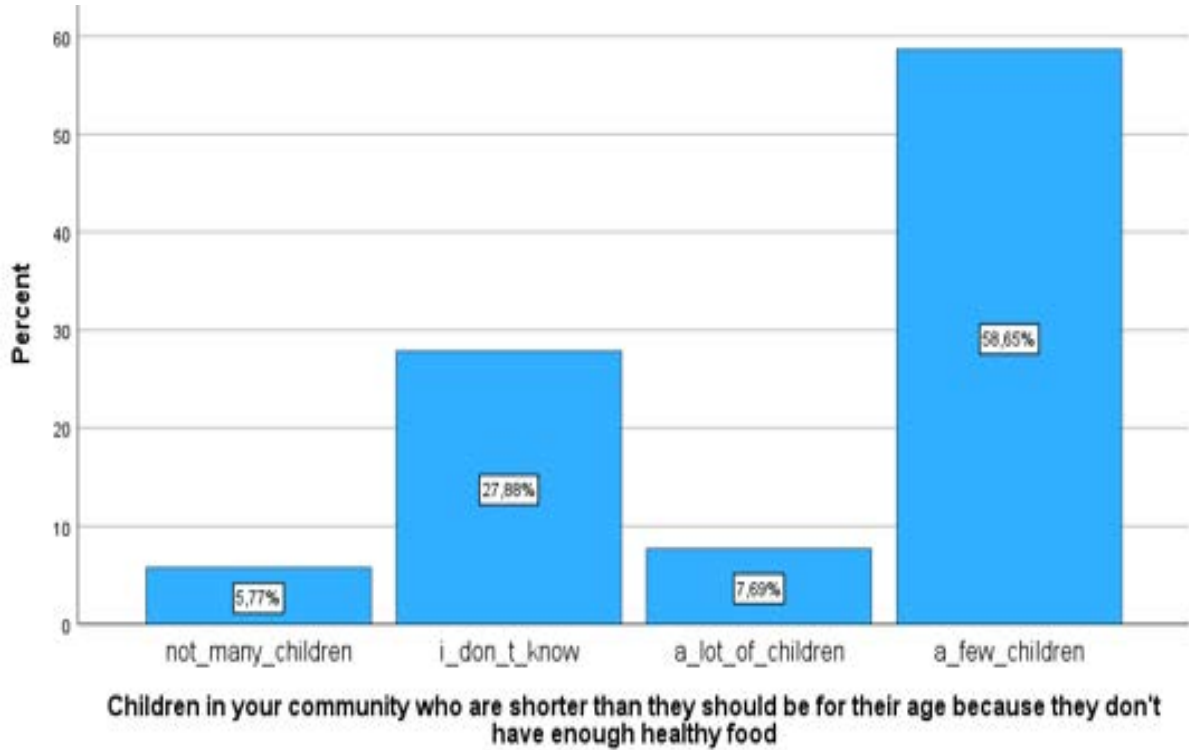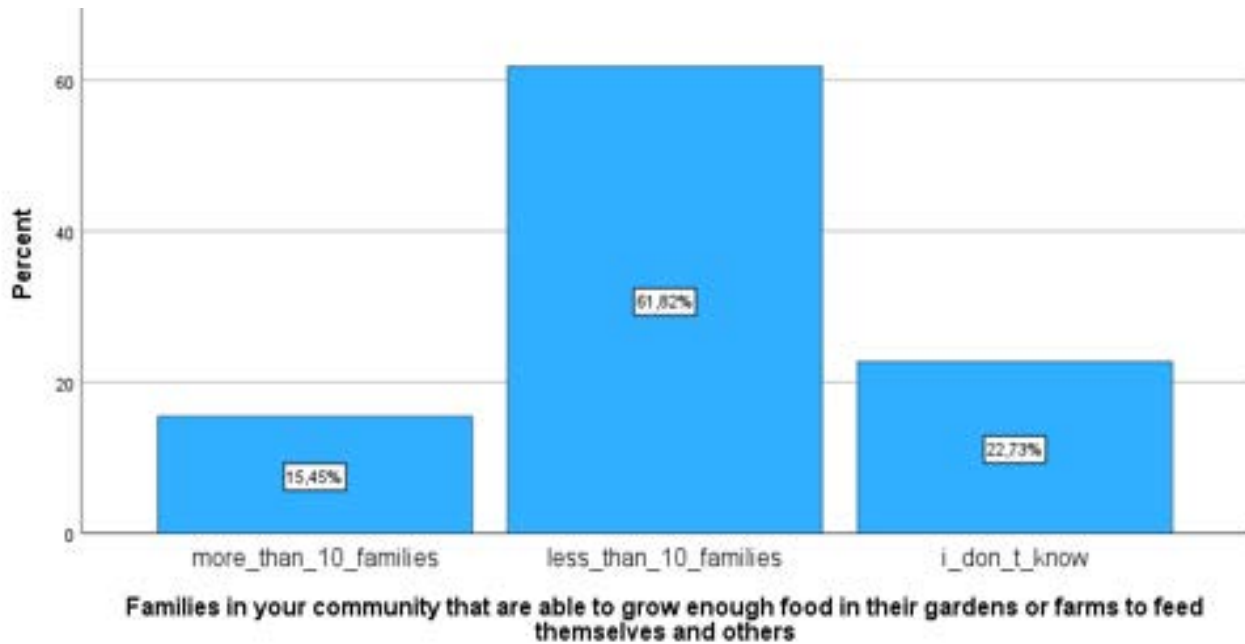

Figure 7 represents the distribution of responses across three categories for the fourth question under goal 2.

- More children (61,82%) know less than 10 families in their communities who are able to grow enough food in their gardens or farms to feed themselves and others, while 15,45% of the children know more than 10 families in their communities who are able to grow enough food in their gardens or farms to feed themselves and others. The rest of the children (22,73%) did not know.

Figures 4, 5, 6 and 7 are a graphical representation of each of the sub-questions under goal 2 (Zero Hunger).

- *The data suggests mixed progress towards achieving goal 2. Key points include:*
  - *Prevalence of Hunger and Malnutrition: A significant number of children still experience hunger, are underweight, or are stunted due to inadequate food. The responses indicate that while the issues are present, the extent varies across different respondents' perceptions.*
  - *Uncertainty and Awareness: A substantial proportion of respondents were unsure about the prevalence of hunger and malnutrition, pointing to a need for better awareness and monitoring.*
  - *Food Self-Sufficiency: Limited capacity for self-sufficiency in food production among families suggests a need for increased support and resources for local agriculture.*

Goal 3: Good Health and Wellbeing

Table 3. Valid data statistics for goal 3

		How many of your friends or classmates have trouble running and playing because they are too big	All the children you know have clean water to drink at home and at school	All the children you know have toilets that work properly at home and at school	All the children you know have access to medicine when they are sick, like if they have a fever or a cough
N	Valid	111	110	111	107
	Missing	12	13	12	16

Table 3 presents statistical data regarding various aspects of Goal 3 (Good Health and Wellbeing). Four sub-questions were asked under this goal, the results for each sub-question were as follows:

Figure 8. Friends or classmates that have trouble running and playing because they are too big

**How many of your friends or classmates have trouble running and playing because they are too big**

Figure 8 represents the distribution of responses across three categories for the first question under goal 3

- More children (65,77%) have less than half of their friends experiencing trouble running or playing because they are too big, 6,31% of children have more than half of their friends experiencing trouble running or playing because they are too big. The rest of the children (27,93%) are not sure.

Figure 9. All children you know that have clean water to drink at home and at school

All the children you know have clean water to drink at home and at school

Figure 9 represents the distribution of responses across the four categories for the second question under goal 3.

- More children (73,64%) indicated that only some children they know have clean water to drink at home and at school; 14,55% of the children indicated that all the children they know have clean water to drink at home and at school, while 3,64% of the children indicated that all the children they know don't have clean water to drink at home and at school. The rest of the children (8,18%) did not know.

Figure 10. All children you know have access to medicine when they are sick

All the children you know have access to medicine when they are sick, like if they have a fever or a cough
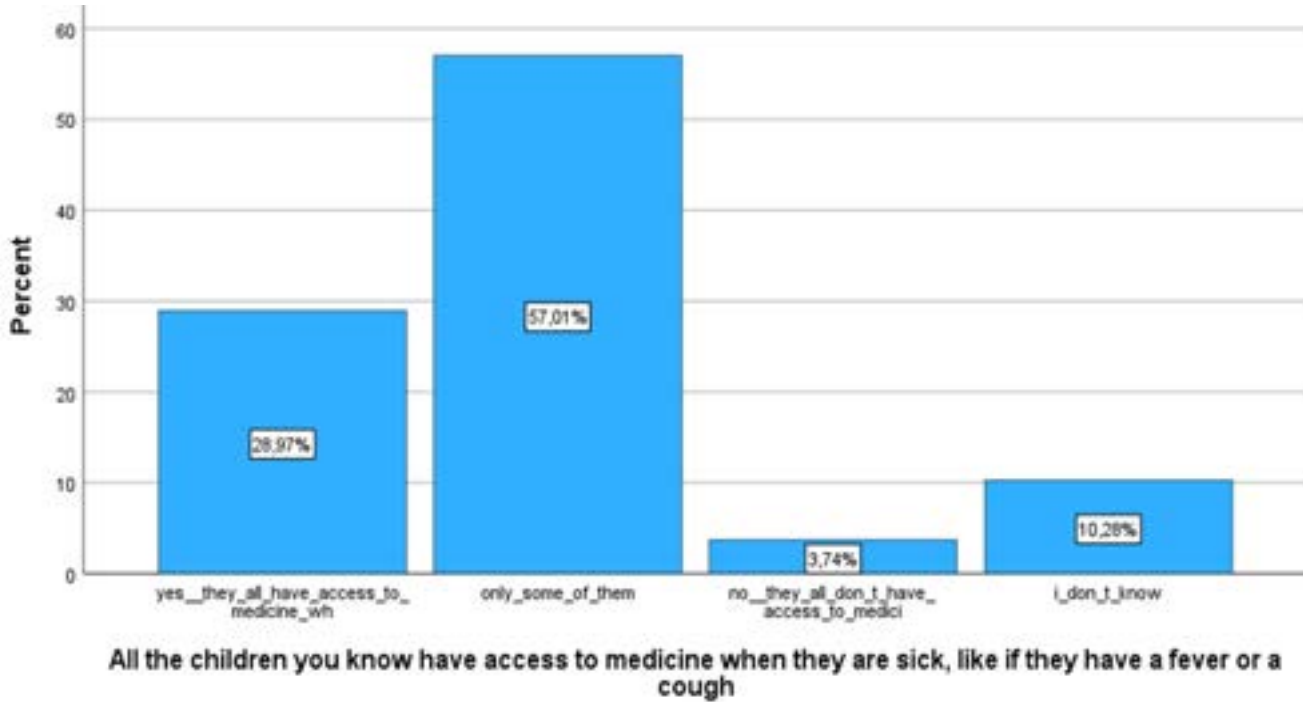
Figure 10 represents the distribution of responses across the four categories for the third question under goal 3.

- More children (57,01%) indicated that only some of the children they know have access to medicine when they are sick; 28,97% of the children indicated that all the children they know have access to medicine, while 3,74% of the children indicated that all the children they know do not have access to medicine. The rest of the children (10,38%) did not know.

Figure 11. All children you know that have toilet that work properly at home and at school

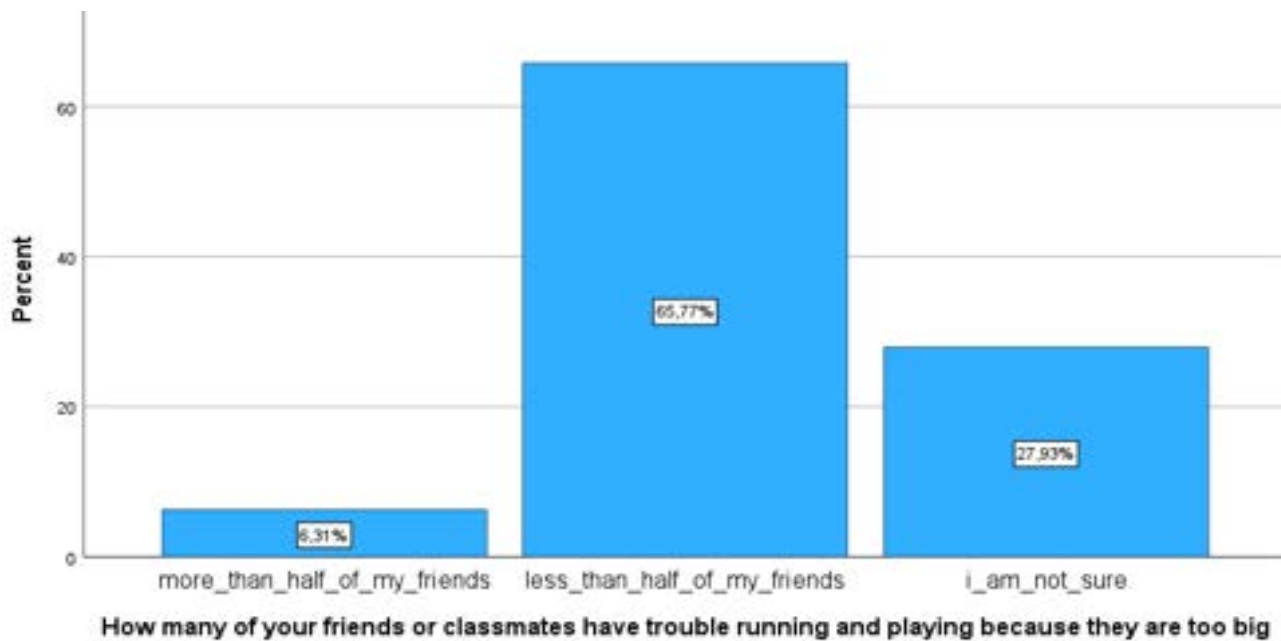All the children you know have toilets that work properly at home and at school
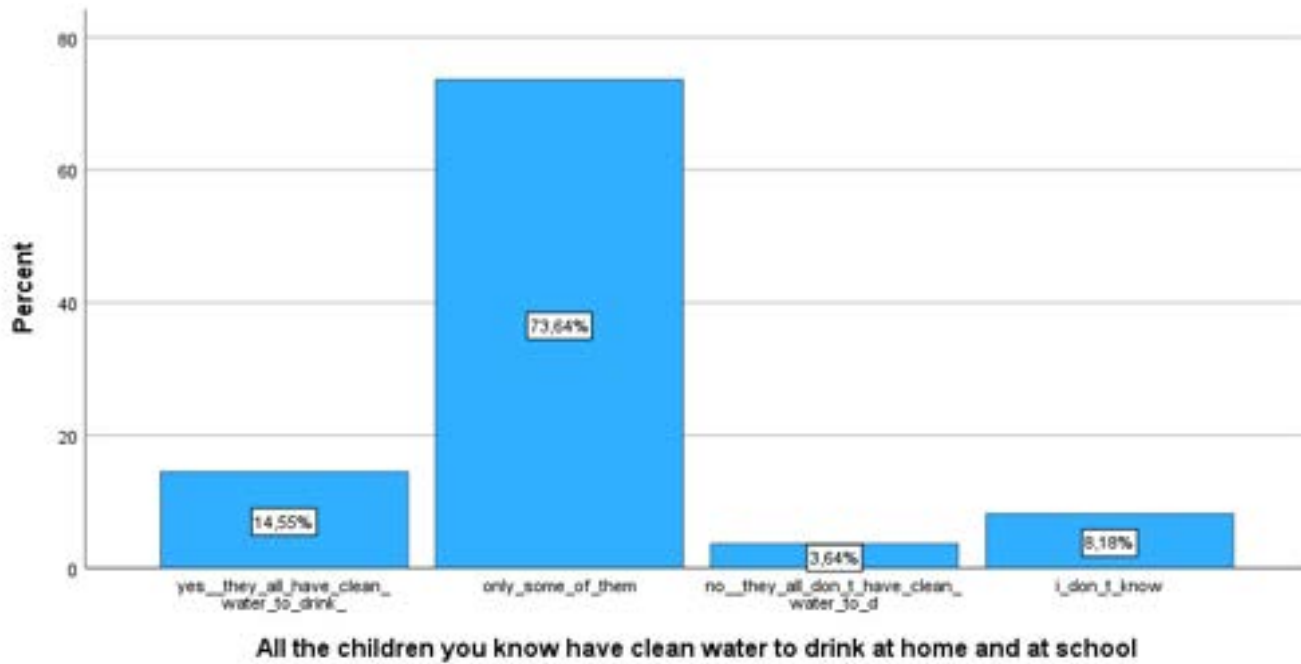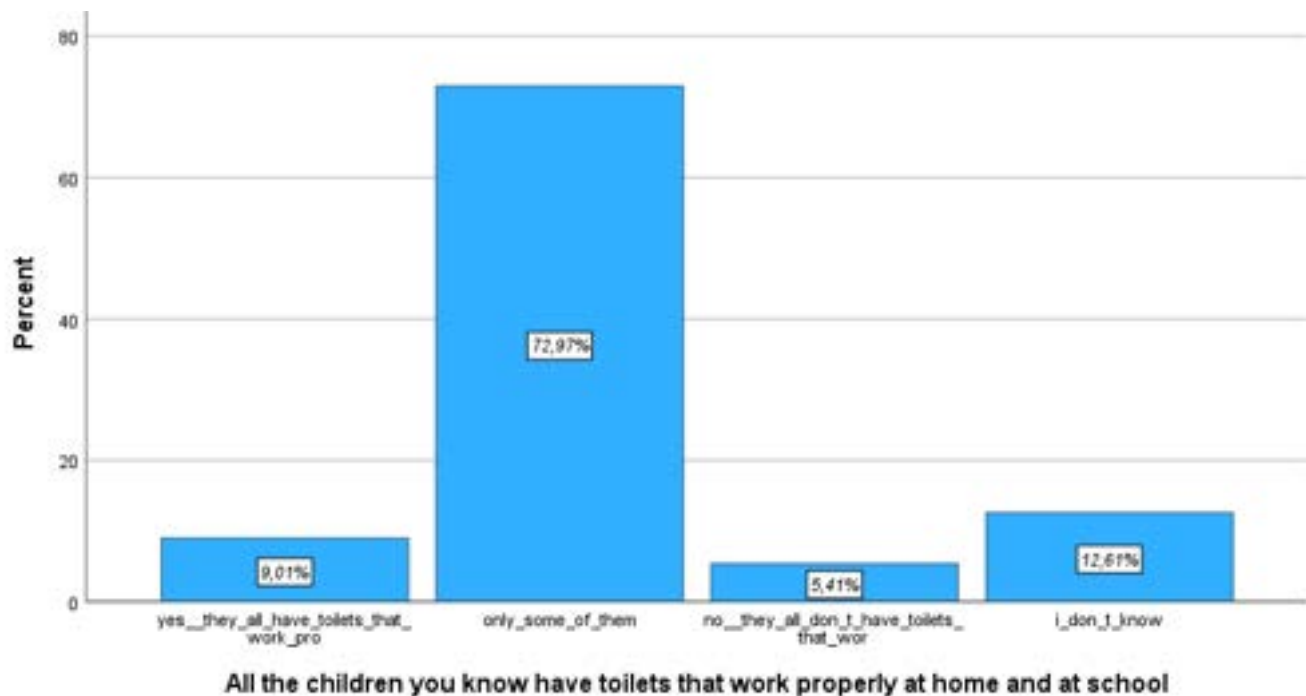
Figure 11 represents the distribution of responses across the four categories for the fourth question under goal 3.

- More children (72,97%) indicated that only some of the children they know have toilets that work properly at home and at school; 9,01% of the children indicated that all the children they know have toilets that work properly at home and at school, while 5,41% of the children indicated that all the children they know do not have toilets that work properly at home and at school. The rest of the children (12,61%) did not know.

Figures 8, 9, 10 and 11 are a graphical representation of each of the sub-questions under goal 3 (Good Health and Wellbeing).

- The data suggests moderate progress towards achieving goal 3, with notable areas needing improvement. Key points include:
  - Access to Clean Water and Sanitation: While a majority have partial access, there are gaps in ensuring that all children have clean water and properly functioning toilets.
  - Access to Medicine: Partial access to medicine is reported, with a significant number of children lacking full healthcare access when needed.

Goal 4: Quality Education

Table 4. Valid data statistics for goal 4

		Children who finish all their grades of school without stopping	Do the children at the end of primary school, and teenagers at the end of high school know enough to read and do math well?	Schools in your area that provide important things like clean water, working toilets, and a safe place to learn and play
N	Valid	111	108	108
	Missing	12	15	15

Table 4 presents statistical data regarding various aspects of Goal 4 (Quality Education). Three sub-questions were asked under this goal. The results for each sub-question were as follows:

Figure 12. Children who finish all their grades of school without stopping


Children who finish all their grades of school without stopping

Figure 12 represents the distribution of responses across the four categories for the first question under goal 4.

- According to majority of the children (90,99%), only some children finish all their grades of school without stopping; 6,31% of the children indicated that all children finish their grades without stopping, while 0,90% of the children indicated that none of the children finish their grades without stopping. The rest of the children (1,80%) did not know.

*Figure 13. Children who know enough to read and do math well*

Figure 13 represents the distribution of responses across the three categories for the second question under goal 4.

- Most of the children (45,37%) indicated that most of the children they know do not know enough to read and do math well (at the end of primary and high school), while 39,81% of the children indicated that most of the children they know do know enough to read and do math well. The rest of the children (14,81%) did not know.

Figure 14. Schools in your area that provide important things like clean water, working toilets, and a safe place to learn and play
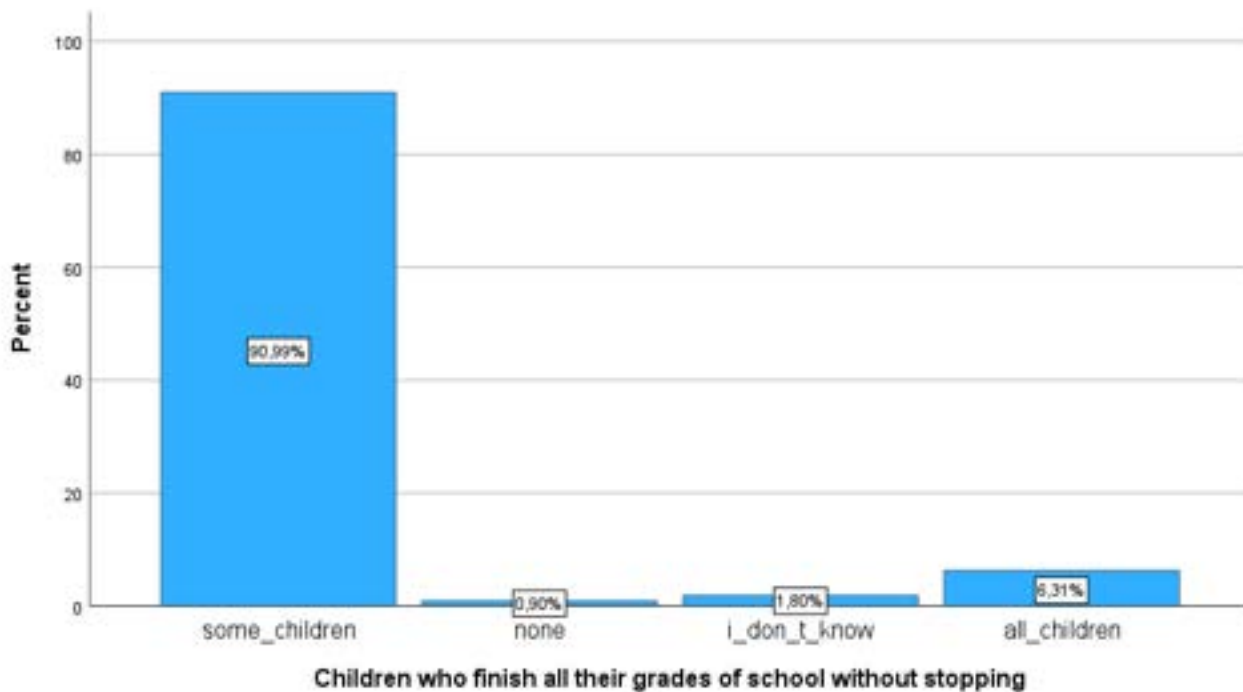

Figure 14 represents the distribution of responses across the three categories for the third question under goal 4.

- Most of the children (71,30%) indicated that less than 5 schools in their area provided important things like clean water, working toilets, and a safe place to learn and play, while according to 17,59% of the children, more than 5 schools in their area provided these important things. The rest of the children (11,11%) did not know.

Figures 12, 13 and 14 graphical representations of each of the sub-questions under goal 4 (quality education).

- *The data indicates several critical insights about progress toward goal 4, revealing significant areas that need attention and improvement:*
  - *School Completion Rates: While some children finish their grades without stopping, there are still some gaps and uncertainties. This suggests that while many children manage to continue their education, a significant number still face barriers that prevent them from completing their schooling without stopping.*
  - *Literacy and Numeracy Skills: There are mixed outcomes regarding whether children and teenagers acquire sufficient reading and math skills by the end of their schooling, indicating a need for improved educational quality and effectiveness.*
  - *Provision of Resources in Schools: Many schools lack essential resources like clean water, working toilets, and safe environments, highlighting a critical area for improvement.*

Goal 5: Gender Equality

Table 5. Valid data statistics for goal 5

		Girls your age that are getting married or falling pregnant as teenagers when they should be having fun and learning in school	Girls and women in our community feel safe from being hurt or touched in a bad way by someone who is not a friend or family member	Girls and women in our community have the power to decide when they want to have babies and how many babies they want	The rules in our country say that boys and girls should be treated fairly and equally
N	Valid	110	111	109	108
	Missing	13	12	14	15

Table 5 presents statistical data regarding various aspects of Goal 5 (Gender Equality). Four sub-questions were asked under this goal. The results for each sub-question were as follows:

Figure 15. Girls your age that are getting married or falling pregnant

Girls your age that are getting married or falling pregnant as teenagers when they should be having fun and learning in school
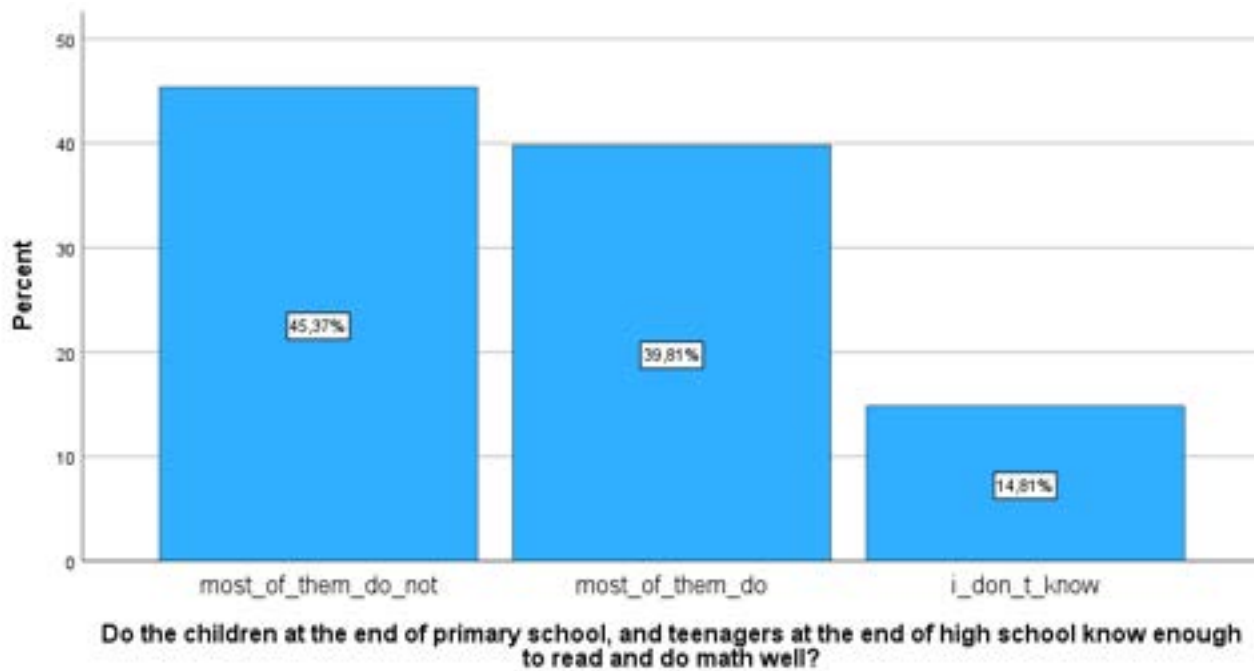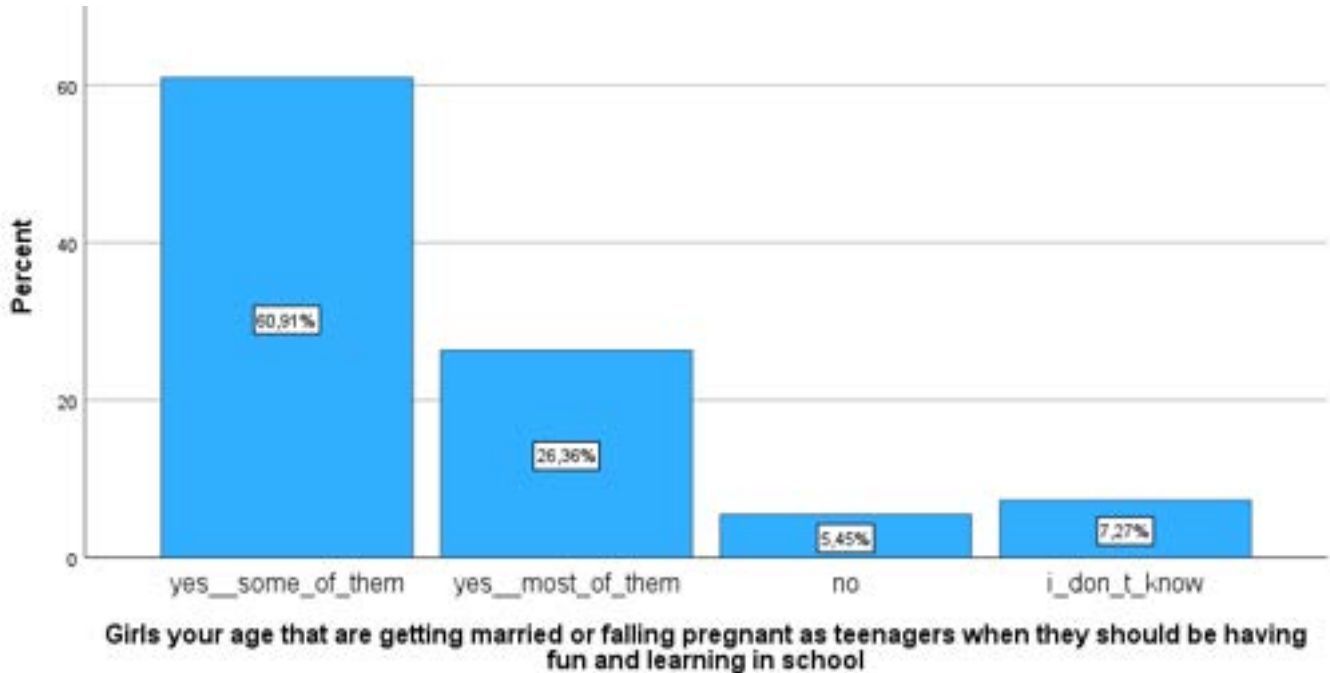
Figure 15 represents the distribution of responses across the four categories for the first question under goal 5.

- According to most of the children (60,91%), only some girls their age are getting married or falling pregnant as teenagers when they should be having fun and learning in school; 26,36% of the children indicated that most girls their age are getting married or falling pregnant as teenagers, while 5,45% of the children indicated that none of the girls their age are getting married or falling pregnant as teenagers. The rest of the children (7,27%) did not know.

Figure 16. Girls and women in your community that feel safe from being hurt or touched in a bad way
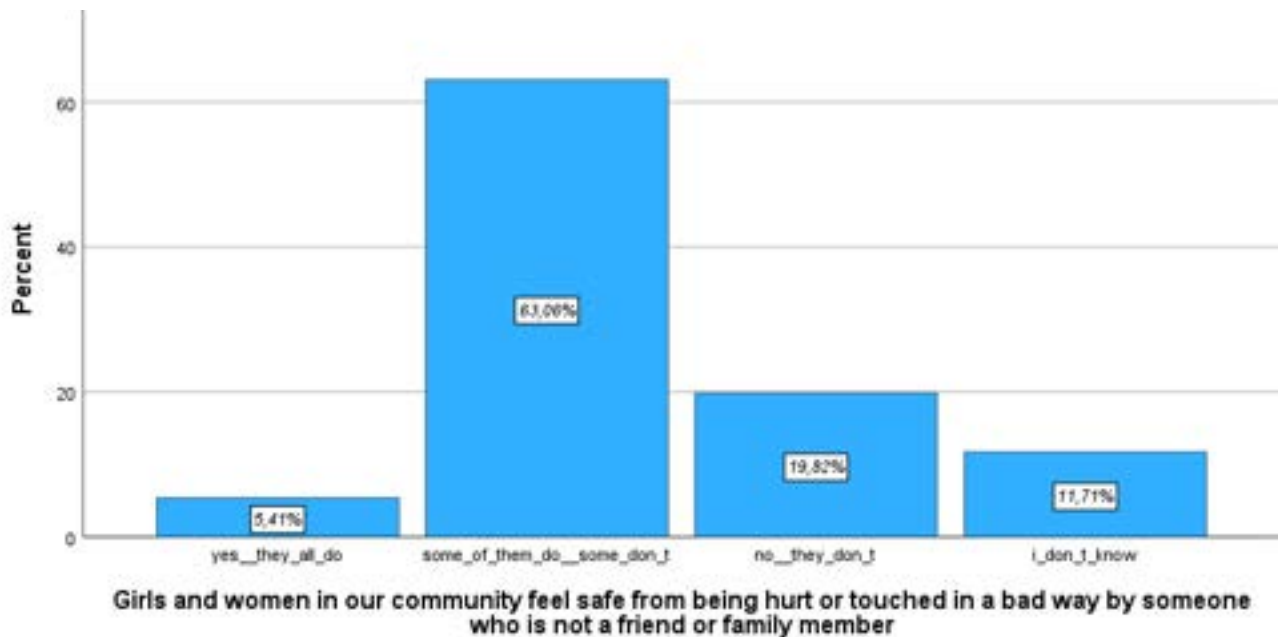
Girls and women in our community feel safe from being hurt or touched in a bad way by someone who is not a friend or family member

Figure 16 represents the distribution of responses across the four categories for the second question under goal 5.

- More children (63,06%) indicated that some of the girls and women in their community feel safe from being hurt or touched in a bad way by someone who is not a friend or family member, and some don't. 19,82% of the children indicated that girls and women in their community do not feel safe from being hurt or touched in a bad way. 5,41% of the children indicated that girls and women in their community do not feel safe from being hurt or touched in a bad way. The rest of the children (11,71%) did not know.

Figure 16. Girls and women in your community that have power to decide when they want to have babies and how many babies they want
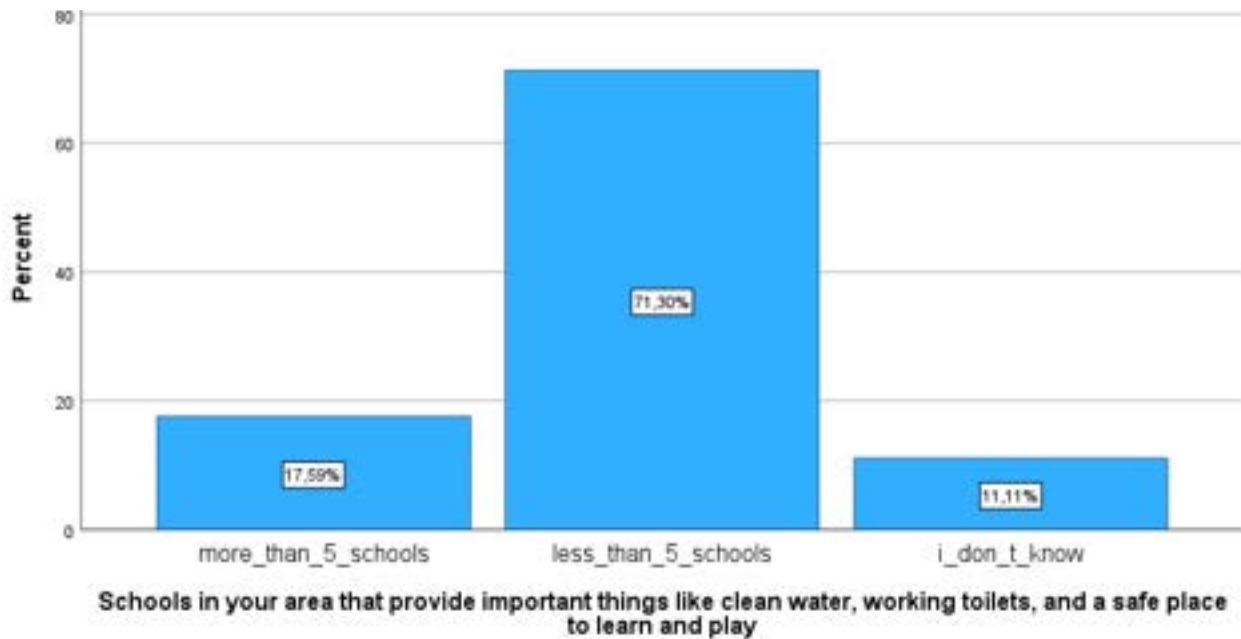

Figure 16 represents the distribution of responses across the four categories for the third question under goal 5.

- Most of the children (45,87%) indicated that some of the girls and women in their community have power to decide when they want to have babies and how many babies they want, and some don't. 12,84% indicated that all the girls and women in their community do have power to decide when they want to have babies and how many babies they want. 9,17% of the children indicated that girls and women in their community don't have power to decide when they want to have babies and how many babies they want. The rest of the children (32,11%) did not know.

Figure 18.There are rules in our country that say boys and girls should be treated fairly and equally

The rules in our country say that boys and girls should be treated fairly and equally

Figure 18 represents the distribution of responses across the three categories for the fourth question under goal 5.

- Most children (82,41%) indicated that rules in our country say that boys and girls should be treated fairly and equally, while 11,11% of the children indicated that rules in our country do not say that boys and girls should be treated fairly and equally. The rest of the children (6,48%) did not know.

Figures 15, 16, 17 and 18 are graphical representations of each of the sub-questions under goal 5 (Gender Equality)

- The data provides mixed insights into the progress towards achieving goal 5. The findings reveal significant areas needing improvement, alongside some positive indications of progress.
  - ➢ High prevalence of Teenage Marriage and Pregnancy: A majority of children reported that some or most girls their age are getting married or falling pregnant as teenagers, which significantly impedes their educational and personal development opportunities.
  - ➢ Safety from Harm or Inappropriate Touching: A few reported that all girls and women feel safe from harm, while the majority indicated that only some feel safe, with a section proportion stating that girls and women do not feel safe. This disparity underscores ongoing safety concerns that require immediate attention.
  - ➢ Only a few of the children stated that all girls and women in their community have the power to decide when to have babies and how many, with most reporting that some have this power. A significant portion were unsure, indicating a lack of clarity and potentially limited access to reproductive health education and services.
  - ➢ The majority acknowledged that the rules in their country promote fair and equal treatment for boys and girls. However, a few disagreed, suggesting gaps in the enforcement or understanding of these laws.

Goal 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

Table 6. Valid data statistics for goal 16

		Babies in our community that have been given birth certificates	Children, adults, and families in our community feel safe from being hurt, bullied, or touched in a bad way	People in our community felt like they were treated badly or bullied in the past year because of who they are, like their skin color, religion, where they are from or how they look
N	Valid	108	106	107
	Missing	15	17	16

Table 6 presents statistical data regarding various aspects of Goal 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions). Three sub-questions were asked under this goal. The results for each sub-question were as follows:

Figure 19. Babies in our community have been given birth certificates
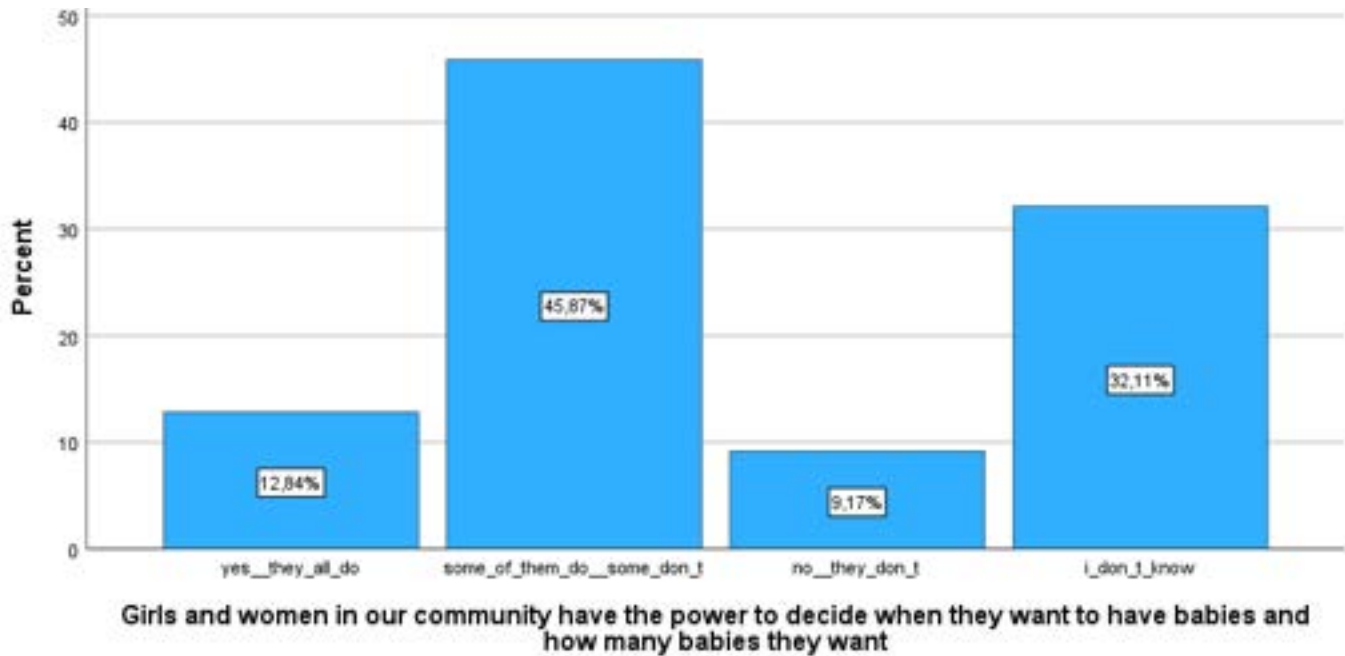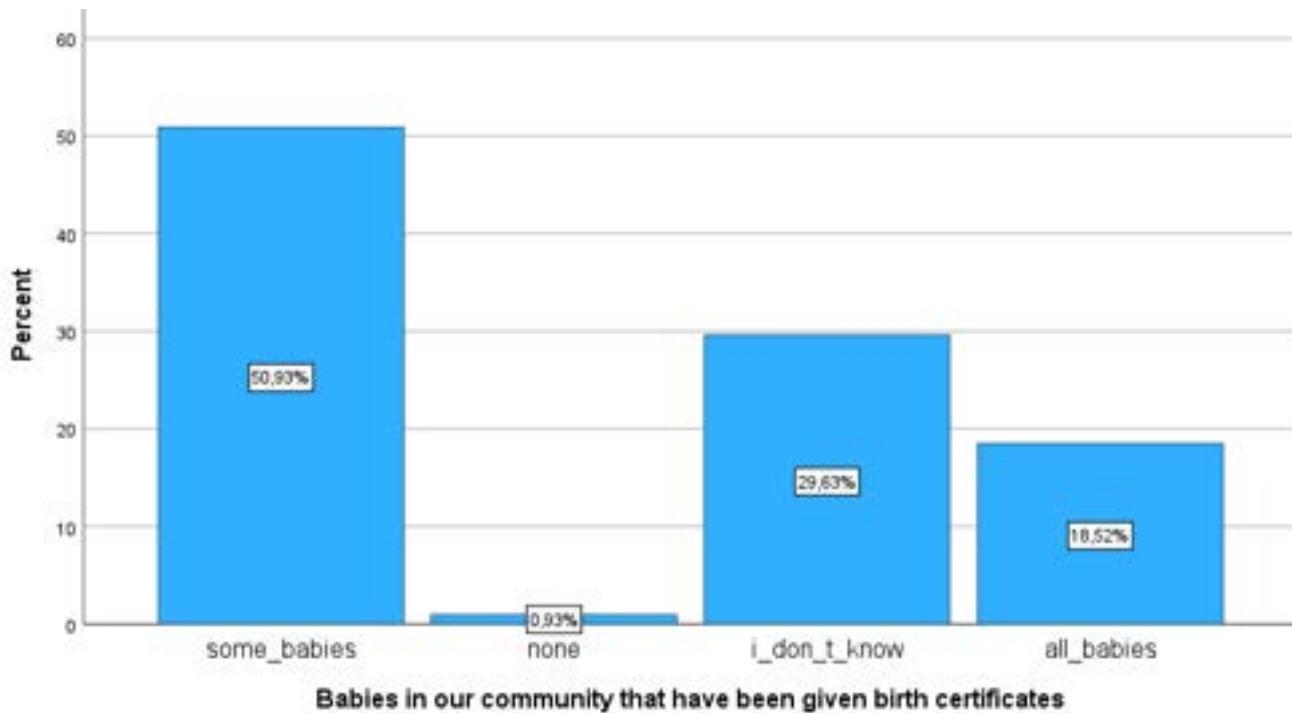
Figure 19 represents the distribution of responses across the four categories for the first question under goal 16.

- According to most of the children (50,93%), only some babies in their community have been given birth certificates; 18,52% of the children indicated that all babies in their community have been given birth certificates, while 0,93% of the children indicated that none of the babies have been given birth certifica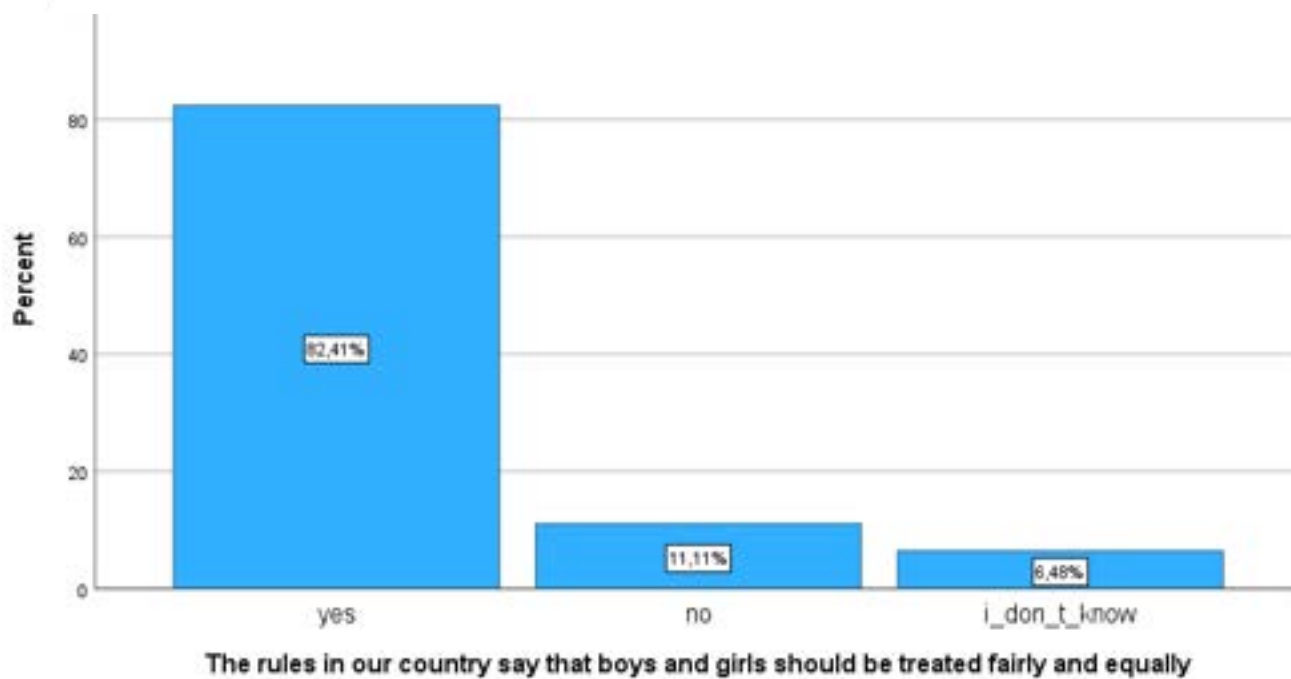tes. The rest of the children (29,63%) did not know. Figure 20 represents the distribution of responses across the four categories for the second question under goal 16.
- Most of the children (64,49%) indicated some of the people in their community felt like they were treated badly or bullied in the past year because of who they are, and some don't. 20,56% of the children indicated that all people in their community felt like they were treated badly or bullied in the past year because of who they are, while 7,48% of the children indicated that people in their community don't feel like they were treated badly or bullied in the past year because of who they are. The rest of the children (7,48%) did not know.

Figure 20. Children, adults and families in our community feel safe from being hurt, bullied, or touched in a bad way

Figure 20 represents the distribution of responses across the four categories for the third question under goal 16.

- Most of the children (59,43%) indicated that some of the children, adults and families in their community feel safe from being hurt, bullied or touched in a bad way and some don't. 20,75% of the children indicated that the children, adults and families in their community don't feel safe from being hurt, bullied or touched in a bad way

while 7,55% of the children indicated that all the children, adults and families in their community feel safe from being hurt, bullied or touched in a bad way. The rest of the children (12,26%) did not know.

*Figure 2. People in our community felt like they were treated badly or bullied in the past year because of who they are*
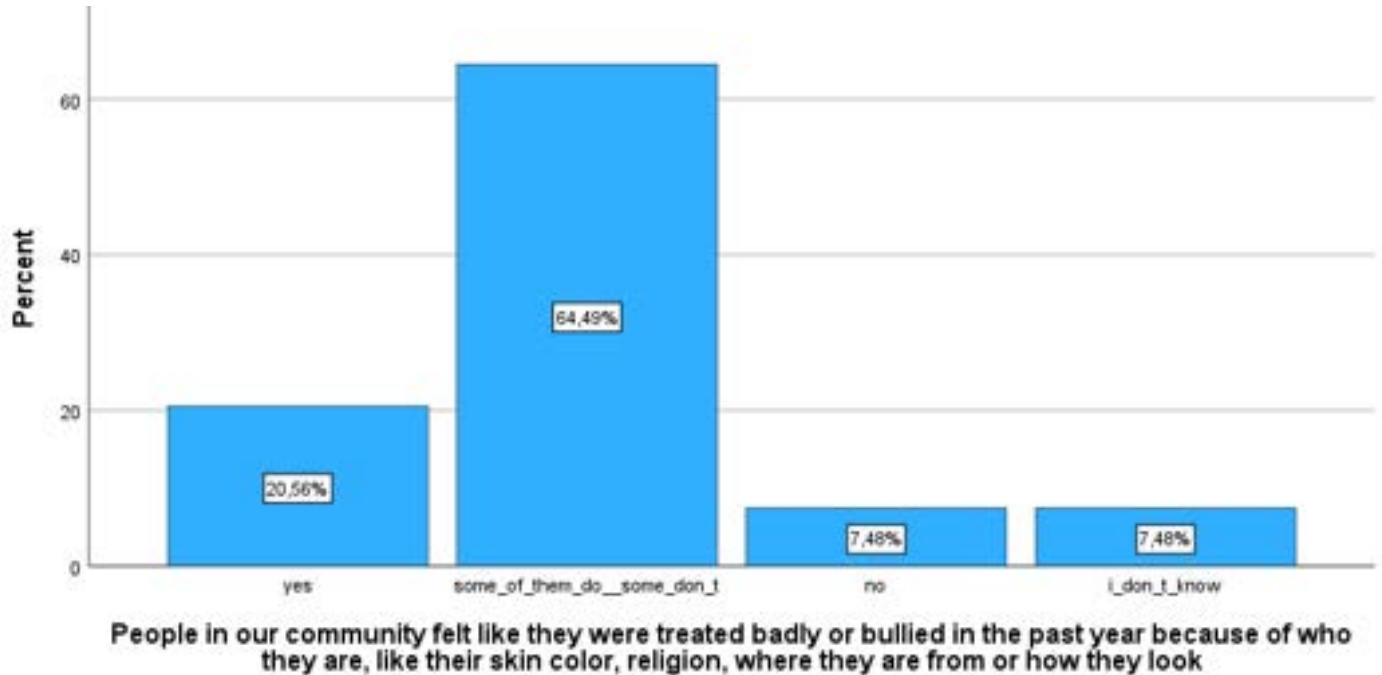
Figure 21 represents the distribution of responses across the four categories for the third question under goal 16.

- Most of the children (59,43%) indicated that some of the children, adults and families in their community feel safe from being hurt, bullied or touched in a bad way and some don't. 20,75% of the children indicated that the children, adults and families in their community don't feel safe from being hurt, bullied or touched in a bad way while 7,55% of the children indicated that all the children, adults and families in their community feel safe from being hurt, bullied or touched in a bad way. The rest of the children (12,26%) did not know.

Figures 19, 20 and 21 are graphical representations of each of the sub-questions under goal 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions).

- The data provides insights into various aspects of community well-being, focusing on safety, legal recognition, 9and perceptions of discrimination.
- ➢ Incomplete documentation: A significant portion reported that only some babies in the community have birth certificates. This suggests a gap in administrative procedures or accessibility to birth registration services. While

notable percentage indicated uncertainty (don't know) about the status of birth certificates, highlighting potential issues with awareness or access to information.

➢ Safety from harm, bullying or inappropriate touching: While a few reported that all individuals feel safe from harm, bullying, or inappropriate touching, the majority indicated that only some feel safe. Additionally, a significant portion stated that individuals do not feel safe, pointing to existing safety concerns within the community.

➢ Perceptions of Discrimination: A substantial percentage reported that some individuals in the community feel they were treated badly or bullied in the past year due to factors like their skin colour, religion, or appearance. This highlights ongoing issues of discrimination and social exclusion.

Children's scorecard findings

The following section reflects the children's rating ratings and qualitative contributions on each of the SDGs. The criteria for discussions focused on key dimensions such as Universality, Leave No One Behind, Interconnectedness and Indivisibility, Transformative, and Partnerships – see appendix I for the scorecard.

Gauteng

Goal 1: No Poverty

Table 7. Goal 1 data for Gauteng

Principles	-2 (large reduction)	-1 (small reduction)	0 (no progress)	+1 (low progress)	+2 (high progress)
1. Universality				X	
2.Leave No One Behind			X		
3. Interconnectedness and Indivisibility				X	
4. Transformative			X		
5. Partnerships			X		
Overall rating			X		

Table 13 presents statistical data for Goal 1 (No Poverty), as captured in the Gauteng province.

- Minimal to no progress is observed for this goal, with "low progress" and "no progress" statuses in most dimensions.
- Overall, this goal received a 0 rating, suggesting no progress towards achieving goal 1.

The principle of universality relies on leaders taking up their responsibility to make efforts to fulfil children's rights, however, corruption in South Africa's government is a major problem that is holding the country back from progressing towards achieving the SDGs. The high corruption in the country keeps poor children and their families poor and their rights unfulfilled.

Social protection programmes that the government has put in place to protect children from the effects of poverty such as social grants (Children's Grants) and by providing food parcels, have had a large impact on vulnerable communities that are in need of assistance. Although the children acknowledge that there has been progress on the universality of goal 1 as seen through the increases in social grant amounts, progress is low. Goal 1 is not being applied to all members of society who experience poverty as not all are able to access social grants, especially those who do not have any form of identification which is required. Therefore, children who are undocumented are excluded from accessing social protection.

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There are differences between access to opportunities and services between urban and rural communities. In certain rural areas, shopping centres are located far from most communities. As one Gauteng child noted "the money one must spend to access these services takes from the little they [vulnerable families] have". The underdevelopment of rural communities therefore pushes families further into poverty meaning that children from these communities are being left behind.

> *"Some are benefitting from government funds while others are not"*
>
> **- Gauteng participant**

Regarding the interconnectedness of children's rights, the children note that the current state of poverty in the country is both being impacted by and worsening other child rights issues:

- ✓ Many poor families rely on child labour to generate income for households, and so poverty is continuing to keep children from their right to having a childhood and is affecting their development in many ways.
- ✓ Children who do not have their right to an identity realised, many of them being undocumented migrant children, are being kept from social protection through social grants and are being kept in a situation of poverty.
- ✓ In recent years, issues around climate change have been receiving more attention as seen in the GOSA's efforts to address the issue, and this has been a positive change. However, the link between climate change and poverty (inequality) as child rights issues are not being considered jointly, meaning efforts to address both issues are not making a significant enough impact on children.

Efforts to address poverty in South Africa have created a "culture of dependency" in the country because these efforts are temporary and not long-term. Adults in families have no choice but to stay dependent on social grants rather than benefitting from more permanent solutions like employment because the state of country is not changing and with issues such as unemployment getting worse. Parents and caregivers are not able to care for their children and meet their needs. This is made worse by the rising cost of living that is making it harder for families to care for children's needs.

The importance of partnerships is not being given a centre-role in work towards achieving the SDGs. Partnerships are mostly formed at national level with other countries and international organisations (e.g. World Bank and WHO). There is a gap at local level as local government is not working with communities to address each communities issues. It is operating alone without the inputs and views of other stakeholders in communities. People in communities are, therefore, reliant on protesting in order to be heard by government. They are not heard until they protest because they lack of platforms to work with government to address poverty. Children are especially left out of engagements and are not being given avenues to work with stakeholders to address poverty in different levels of society (schools, communities, provincially, nationally).

Goal 2: Zero Hunger

Table 8. Goal 2 data for Gauteng

Principles	-2 (large reduction)	-1 (small reduction)	0 (no progress)	+1 (low progress)	+2 (high progress)
1. Universality				X	
2.Leave No One Behind			X		
3. Interconnectedness and Indivisibility				X	
4. Transformative				X	
5. Partnerships		X			
Overall rating				X	

Table 14 presents statistical data for Goal 2 (Zero Hunger), as captured in the Gauteng province.

- There is some progress with this goal, although minimal, with three dimensions scoring a +1 (low progress) rating and only one dimension scoring a +1 (no progress) rating. There are, however, concerns with the Partnerships dimension where a -1 (small reduction) rating was scored, indicating a need for more substantial efforts.
- Overall, this goal received a +1 rating, suggesting low progress towards achieving goal 2.

The GOSA has made progress to alleviate hunger for vulnerable children through the implementation of social grants and, notably, the National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP). The NSNP, particularly, has had a great positive impact on many children in vulnerable areas. The food received from the programme allows children who come from homes that cannot afford to provide them with food, to learn. It gives them the opportunity to make use of the education they receive.

However, the programme is not without its challenges in its implementation. Misuse of resources by some staff responsible of implementing the programme in schools results in small meal portions for benefitting children and in some cases, some children will not receive meals at all. These staff members misuse meals by taking food home with them to feed their families or to sell the food from the programme. The need for more routine monitoring of the programme is also highlighted in the reported lack of child friendly treatment by kitchen staff and managing of lines for food.

Although children are generally able to access nutrition in their school environments, the cost of living has gotten to the point where people are no able to afford food and have to choose between having food and other needs. The food security of households are, therefore, being threatened.

Programmes such as the NSNP that aim to support Goal 2 to end hunger are limited to support the right to nutrition for school-going children but are not benefitting children who are not in school. The lack of programming to feed children who do not attend school means their right to nutrition is not being met and they

are being left behind on this SDG. The children therefore believe that school-going children are being prioritised over those who are not in school.

The GOSA's support of the agricultural sector in the country, especially in rural areas, and to its efforts to relieve communities of the effects of climate change is greatly contributed to the Goal 2 objective of ending hunger. Protecting the country's agriculture and agricultural practices is important because many communities rely on the crops and livestock for food and economic activities to generate income. Climate change as a threat to the food and resources that communities can produce to live on, needs to be focused on more to achieve this SDG.

CSOs have been very active in communities to tackle hunger in communities. Through programmes, CSOs have been a source of help for communities in providing food for families and supporting agricultural activities. CSOs are the main stakeholder that government works with on hunger alleviation programming but more could be done to have more partnership between government and civil society to reach more people.

Goal 3: Good Health and Wellbeing

Table 9. Goal 3 data for Gauteng

Principles	-2 (large reduction)	-1 (small reduction)	0 (no progress)	+1 (low progress)	+2 (high progress)
1. Universality				X	
2. Leave No One Behind			X		
3. Interconnectedness and Indivisibility				X	
4. Transformative				X	
5. Partnerships				X	
Overall rating				X	

Table 15 presents statistical data for Goal 3 (Good Health and Wellbeing), as captured in the Gauteng province

- There is predominantly low progress across dimensions, with four of them having scored a +1 rating, and one instance of a 0 rating, indicating "no progress" in the Leave No One Behind dimension.
- Overall, this goal received a +1 rating, suggesting low progress towards achieving goal 3.

Despite having one of the highest HIV rates in the world, the availability of healthcare in the country has improved greatly in the last four years. The availability of free primary healthcare at public healthcare facilities is enabling all people to receive and access their basic healthcare needs, including children with disabilities. Despite increased accessibility, the children note that public healthcare facilities in the country remain severely

underfunded and under resourced, and therefore, are unable to serve all people in all communities. As a result, not everyone can receive services that are needed for their health and well-being. Public health officials are also known to resort to corruption and will tell people that they must pay for services that they should be receiving for free.

The children have noted that awareness about HIV transmission, PREP and contraceptives has become more widespread among youth and has increased in recent years, mainly due to health education programming that is taking place in schools. Awareness on mental health and mental health services available, however, is lacking in schools and communities in general. Children are unable to receive required support to address mental health issues if they are not aware of services that can help them. The situation is also made worse by the fact that many adults in communities either do not recognise mental health as a health issue that needs addressing or are unaware of it entirely.

Discrimination against certain groups of people is a major barrier to access to healthcare in South Africa:

- ✓ Young people (children and adolescents) often experience discrimination from healthcare professionals due to their age which keeps them from being able to access healthcare services. Negative attitudes from healthcare professionals negatively affects the children that they are meant to serve. The children shared various experiences in which young people have been turned away from healthcare facilities because they were not being accompanied by an adult.
- ✓ Discrimination against migrants in communities is still a major issue that affects migrant children in South Africa. Many hospitals still turn away migrant children who do not have documentation keeping them from their right to health.

Access to clean and safe water is an important right that is linked to children's right to SDG 3. Water disruptions that have been occurring in both urban and rural communities around the country and has impacted children's health and well-being. In addition, not all communities have access to WASH infrastructure and illegal dumping sites are a norm in many communities because households do not have access proper ways to remove waste. Recycling is not a practice that is done in most communities. Poorer communities experience poor service delivery the most and as a result, the lives children from these communities at various risks to their health and wellbeing.

Goal 4: Quality Education

Table 10. Goal 4 data for Gauteng

Principles	-2 (large reduction)	-1 (small reduction)	0 (no progress)	+1 (low progress)	+2 (high progress)
1. Universality				X	
2.Leave No One Behind				X	
3. Interconnectedness and Indivisibility				X	
4. Transformative				X	
5. Partnerships				X	
Overall rating				X	

Table 16 presents statistical data for Goal 4 (Quality Education), as captured in the Gauteng province.

- There is consistently "low progress" (+1 rating) across all dimensions.
- Overall, this goal received a +1 rating, indicating "low progress", suggesting room for substantial improvements in terms of working towards achieving goal 4.

To keep in line with the "Fourth Industrial Revolution", the children note improved efforts that have been made to include technology in urban schools which has in many ways improved the quality of education for many schools in urban areas. By increasing the accessibility and use of technologies in schools, children now have more access to information that helps them learn and are new skills through learning how to use these technologies. Children from rural, poorer areas, however, who attend schools that are under resourced are being left behind in terms of the "Fourth Industrial Revolution". The quality of education that children in these schools experience is very different from urban schools and so children from these areas do not enjoy the same rights. This does not only affect "mainstream" public schools but the schools that children with disabilities attend as well. Apart from resourcing struggles, overcrowding is still an issue in these schools due to low accessibility of schools in marginalised communities.

There is need for improvement in the teaching of the Life orientation subject in schools. In the children's experience, the subject is often disregarded and the curriculum not focused on providing children with important information and life skills to navigate their current and future adult lives.

Organisations such as Save the Children have worked with government to ensure that children are consulted in matters regarding their education, such as the national child consultations that took place in 2022 where learners were consulted on the strengthening of the CAPS Curriculum. Partnerships such as these will bring about positive changes for basic education in South Africa.

The GOSA has formed partnerships internationally to train South African youth on rare skills abroad which has benefitted the youth and the country as a whole.

Goal 5: Gender Equality

Table 11. Goal 5 data for Gauteng

Principles	-2 (large reduction)	-1 (small reduction)	0 (no progress)	+1 (low progress)	+2 (high progress)
1. Universality				X	
2.Leave No One Behind				X	
3. Interconnectedness and Indivisibility			X		
4. Transformative				X	
5. Partnerships				X	
Overall rating				X	

Table 17 presents statistical data for Goal 5 (Gender Equality), as captured in the Gauteng province.

- There is predominantly low progress across the dimensions, with four of them having scored a +1 rating, and one instance of a 0 rating, indicating "no progress" in the Interconnected and Indivisibility dimensions.
- Overall, this goal received a +1 rating, suggesting low progress towards achieving goal 5.

South Africa is making good progress towards achieving SDG 5. We are seeing more women in leadership roles, including parliament. People in society are becoming more accepting of non-binary people and people of sexual orientations outside of heterosexuality. Finally, the country's laws and policies are inclusive and gender sensitive in nature.

However, although there have been steps forward towards the achievement of SDG 5, children still encounter practices in society that keep the country from progressing into a country where all people, regardless of gender, are accepted and treated fairly in society. Boys and men often do not report crimes that they have been victim of out of fear of being mocked and disregarded by police officials. Many officials still believe that boys and men cannot be victims of abuse and so do not treat male victims of crime as they would treat women or girls. This harmful perception of boys and men in society is strongly held in communities and limits their right to protection and equality.

Issues affecting women and girls, such as the rampant rate of GBV in the country which is one of the highest in the world, have been receiving the needed attention in media and general society in recent years. Programming to combat this issue such as raising awareness and provision of support to victims of this crime are being actively implemented by duty-bearers. It is mostly CSOs and government that work together to address these issues in

nationally and in communities. Children are largely not included in programming and awareness raising around these issues.

Goal 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

Table 12. Goal 16 data for Gauteng

Principles	-2 (large reduction)	-1 (small reduction)	0 (no progress)	+1 (low progress)	+2 (high progress)
1. Universality			X		
2.Leave No One Behind			X		
3. Interconnectedness and Indivisibility			X		
4. Transformative				X	
5. Partnerships			X		
Overall rating			X		

Table 18 presents statistical data for Goal 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions), as captured in the Gauteng province.

- There is predominantly no progress across the dimensions, with four of them having scored a +0 rating, and one instance of a +1 rating, indicating "low progress" in the Transformative dimension.
- Overall, this goal received a 0 rating, suggesting no progress towards achieving goal 16.

Violence in South Africa remains a great threat to the wellbeing and freedoms of many groups of people in the country. Certain groups of people who are discriminated against, live in fear of become victims of violence because of who they are or where they are from. Many of them are unable to trust the justice system and institutions that are meant to protect them:

✓ LGBTQI+ people are still being discriminated against because of beliefs that are still held in communities, especially in rural communities;
✓ South Africa experiences political instability that is caused by many political parties that compete for power resulting in political unrest;
✓ The justice system is weak and prosecution of criminals for VAC is low;
✓ Corruption and abuse of power is rife in government and in many other areas of society as it has become

> *"We have principals without principles"*
> **- Gauteng participant**

normalised for leaders and public officials to use resources that are meant to benefit children for their own gain;
✓ Xenophobia, as seen in recent xenophobic attacks by the anti-migrant group Operation Dudula, remains rife in South Africa and continues to greatly impact the lives of many migrant children.

Progress in promoting stronger institutions has been seen in the decreases in racial tensions in schools.

South Africa has also implemented SDG 16 outside of it borders by electing to intervene in conflicts in other countries (Israeli–Palestinian conflict) to fight against human rights violations internationally. This effort is an important step forward to promote peace and to protect the rights of children who are being subjected to conflict.

Limpopo

Goal 1: No Poverty

Table 13. Goal 1 data for Limpopo

Principles	-2 (large reduction)	-1 (small reduction)	0 (no progress)	+1 (low progress)	+2 (high progress)
1. Universality			X		
2. Leave No One Behind			X		
3. Interconnectedness and Indivisibility			X		
4. Transformative			X		
5. Partnerships			X		
Overall rating			X		

Table 19 presents statistical data for Goal 1 (No Poverty), as captured in the Limpopo province.

- There is consistently "no progress" (+0 rating) across all dimensions.
- Overall, this goal received a +0 rating, indicating no progress towards achieving goal 1.

The children consulted in the Limpopo province report active efforts by the GOSA to reduce poverty in their communities: Local government has been providing needed resources to vulnerable households in need such as water and food parcels. The NSNP in schools is also protecting children from the effects of poverty. People who are in need of social grants are receiving grant money from government (SASSA).

Despite social protection efforts, challenges remain:
✓ High rates of unemployment that impacts parents and caregivers' ability to provide for their children

- ✓ Children are forced by their circumstances to contribute to household income and to provide for their families, meaning that they cannot attend school and receive a full education.
- ✓ The government is doing well by providing grant money, however it is not enough to support household needs fully, especially when everyone or most of the household are not employed.
- ✓ Interventions and provision of assistance is sparce (not all wards receive food parcels) because of high populations, shortage of resources.
- ✓ Corruption in government means that there is unequal distribution of services and resources. Those in positions of power force community members to pay bribes to receive services or resources.

Government works mostly with adults to create the programmes seen in communities. Children in communities are not consulted or included in decision-making around poverty alleviation.

Goal 2: Zero Hunger

Table 14. Goal 2 data for Limpopo

Principles	-2 (large reduction)	-1 (small reduction)	0 (no progress)	+1 (low progress)	+2 (high progress)
1. Universality				X	
2. Leave No One Behind			X		
3. Interconnectedness and Indivisibility			X		
4. Transformative				X	
5. Partnerships				X	
Overall rating				X	

Table 20 presents statistical data for Goal 2 (Zero Hunger), as captured in the Limpopo province.

- There is some progress with this goal, although minimal, with three dimensions scoring a +1 rating, indicating low progress, and two scoring a 0 rating, indicating no progress.
- Overall, this goal received a +1 rating, indicating low progress towards achieving goal 2.

Agriculture is an important source for food and nutrition for many communities in Limpopo given the high rate of unemployment in the province. The provision of tools and supplies from the government helps these communities to provide food for their households. Land has in the last four years been provided to families so that they would be able to farm the land for food. This has positively affected families who received land, although there have been issues in terms of the quality of the land and its suitability to grow crops. Some families use land and agriculture to generate an income for themselves.

Save the Children

Climate change and resulting natural disasters, such as drought, that have affected the province and have posed a threat to the ability of families to sustain themselves off of their farming activities. Communities' farming activities need to be protected to protect children's right to good nutrition.

The NSNP and food provision programmes in Limpopo communities experience challenges that result in not all children benefitting from these programmes and the support is limited. There usually are not enough food parcels or food provided by the NSNP to meet the demand; the parcels are not provided regularly and only at certain times in the year, meaning families must go long periods of time without support; the quality of the food provided is not always up to standard and nutritious.

Loadshedding (rolling electricity blackouts) increases the risk of hunger in households as most households cannot afford alternative energy solutions or to replace food that becomes inedible.

Social grant money supports families by reducing the risk of hunger, allowing for children to be fed and despite increases, the amounts still do not cover all needs of children.

In some communities, adults community members work with government find solutions to improve the issue of hunger but not all communities have a say in how to improve the situation for children everywhere.

Goal 3: Good Health and Wellbeing

Table 15. Goal 3 data for Limpopo

Principles	-2 (large reduction)	-1 (small reduction)	0 (no progress)	+1 (low progress)	+2 (high progress)
1. Universality				X	
2.Leave No One Behind				X	
3. Interconnectedness and Indivisibility				X	
4. Transformative				X	
5. Partnerships			X		
Overall rating				X	

Table 21 presents statistical data for Goal 3 (Good Health and Wellbeing), as captured in the Limpopo province.

- There is predominantly low progress across the dimensions, with four of them having scored a +1 rating, and one instance of a 0 rating, indicating "no progress" in the Partnerships dimension.
- Overall, this goal received a +1 rating, suggesting low progress towards achieving goal 3

Save the Children

While the children appreciate the government for providing medicine and healthcare through clinics and hospitals, these facilities are often not in good enough condition to provide the services needed. This makes it harder for doctors and nurses to do their jobs and creates an unpleasant environment for patients.

> *"The clinics are doing their best but there are people that are using the [medications] as a drug, like cough syrup mixed with sprite called lean. That is very bad for your health"*
>
> - *Limpopo participant*

There's a serious problem with teenage pregnancy, especially in rural areas. Youth are also facing substance abuse issues in communities. Some young people misuse medications as drugs such as cough syrup. Learning about health and well-being in school through health education provided by government is a great start.

Healthcare access is not as widespread as it should be due to discriminatory practices by healthcare professionals. Children are turned away from clinics or hospitals if they are not with an adult and are being denied their right to care. Undocumented children and their families are being left without medical attention because of discrimination.

> *"Water shortages are affecting our ability to care for crops. It's been more than three years that my community has been having water shortage"*
>
> - *Limpopo participant*

Water disruptions and power outages are a major problem for hospitals. They cannot properly care for patients without these basic resources. Hospitals and clinics are also struggling because they don't have enough supplies and medicine to provide proper care for everyone.

A clean environment is crucial for child health. More government programs to reduce pollution and support initiatives that keep our communities clean are needed.

People have to strike to get the attention of the government in communities because they are not receiving access to water and they cannot afford to pay for this resource. The government's minimal partnership with communities is a step in the right direction, but it's not enough.

Goal 4: Quality Education

Table 16. Goal 4 data for Limpopo

Principles	-2 (large reduction)	-1 (small reduction)	0 (no progress)	+1 (low progress)	+2 (high progress)
1. Universality				X	
2. Leave No One Behind			X		
3. Interconnectedness and Indivisibility				X	
4. Transformative				X	
5. Partnerships					X
Overall rating				X	

Table 22 presents statistical data for Goal 4 (Quality Education), as captured in the Limpopo province.

- There is some progress observed with this goal, with three dimensions scoring a +1 rating, indicating "low progress", only one dimension scoring a 0-rating indicating "no progress", and one dimension scoring a +2-rating indicating "high progress".
- Overall, this goal received a +1 rating, suggesting low, (although promising) progress towards achieving goal 4.

The physical state of some schools creates safety concerns and prevents children from being able to learn to the best of their ability due to a lack of necessary resources for learning. School's also lack enough staff needed to properly maintain the school environment, therefore adding to the already poor state of school infrastructure.

A positive development in the access to education in South Africa was the removal of the need for children's documentation in order for a child to be enrolled in a school. This is a positive step towards inclusivity in the education space and for undocumented children, especially migrant children, to access their right to education. Additionally, the existence of no-fee schools offers increased access to education for children from poor homes.

There is a concerning gap between the skills students learn in school and the skills that are required for future employment once children leave school. This suggests that there is a need for the national curriculum to be revised to better prepare students for the workforce.

Communities struggle with accessing quality education. These issues include:

- ✓ Overcrowding of classrooms, in which it is common for one classroom to have over 40 students, due to the lack of schools in underdeveloped areas.
- ✓ In certain rural no-fee schools, parents are sometimes forced to pay fees to the school their child is enrolled . This creates financial barriers for families that cannot afford school fees, and threatens children's access to education.

- ✓ Teenage mothers are, in many cases, forced to choose between their education and caring for their children.
- ✓ Poverty is keeping many children away from being able to learn, as children from disadvantaged backgrounds may lack access to stationery that are needed for learning.
- ✓ The quality of food provided in some school feeding programs sometimes does not meet the nutritional needs of students, and this has an impact on children's ability to learn when they are malnourished.

Goal 5: Gender Equality

Table 17. Goal 5 data for Limpopo

Principles	-2 (large reduction)	-1 (small reduction)	0 (no progress)	+1 (low progress)	+2 (high progress)
1. Universality				X	
2.Leave No One Behind			X		
3. Interconnectedness and Indivisibility			X		
4. Transformative			X		
5. Partnerships				X	
Overall rating			X		

Table 23 presents statistical data for Goal 5 (Gender Equality), as captured in the Limpopo province.

- There is limited to no progress with this goal, with two dimensions scoring a +1 rating, indicating low progress.
- Overall, this goal received a 0 rating, suggesting no progress towards achieving goal 5

The children believe that SDG 5 is being universally applied in the country. They note that more women are represented in parliament, which shows that there is increased participation in leadership roles by women.

Despite this, there remain issues with how boys and girls are treated in different areas of life that affects children's freedom to be who they would like to be:

- ✓ Gender roles are still given to children at home and school, and this limiting their opportunities and reinforces gender stereotypes. For example girls are told to do housework, while boys are told to take care of cattle.
- ✓ Access to hygiene products such as dignity packs is not equal across genders, which suggests that the health and wellbeing of girls is being given more priority than that of boys.
- ✓ Despite policies promoting equality, girls and women still face discrimination in areas like business, education, and leadership. They are not always taken seriously and their leadership abilities are questioned.

Goal 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

Table 18. Goal 16 data for Limpopo

Principles	-2 (large reduction)	-1 (small reduction)	0 (no progress)	+1 (low progress)	+2 (high progress)
1. Universality	X				
2.Leave No One Behind			X		
3. Interconnectedness and Indivisibility				X	
4. Transformative			X		
5. Partnerships			X		
Overall rating			X		

Table 24 presents statistical data for Goal 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institution), as captured in the Limpopo province.

- There is limited progress with most dimensions scoring a 0 rating, indicating "no progress", while the Universality dimension scored a -2 rating, indicating large reduction, and the Interconnectedness and Indivisibility dimension scored a +1 rating, indicating low progress.
- Overall, this goal received a 0 rating, suggesting no progress towards achieving goal 16.

Every day, women and girls are trafficked, but anti-trafficking efforts are not being strengthened to keep people informed and to support the organizations that are fighting this crime. The justice system and institutions in South Africa are not strong enough to prevent crimes such as these.

Mob justice against perpetrators of crimes is what many communities feel they must resort to in order to receive justice for crimes committed a. This is because many communities do not have faith in the criminal justice system in the country mainly due to corruption.

Issues affecting children who are part of the LGBTQI+ are not being taken seriously by leadership and in need of an inclusive environment where their voices are heard. Children deserve a voice in the decisions that impact their lives.

Mpumalanga

Goal 1: No Poverty

Table 19. Goal 1 data for Mpumalanga

Principles	-2 (large reduction)	-1 (small reduction)	0 (no progress)	+1 (low progress)	+2 (high progress)
1. Universality			X		
2.Leave No One Behind			X		
3. Interconnectedness and Indivisibility				X	
4. Transformative				X	
5. Partnerships				X	
Overall rating				X	

Table 7 presents statistical data for Goal 1 (No Poverty), as captured in the Mpumalanga province.

- There is some progress with this goal, although minimal, with three dimensions scoring a +1 rating, indicating low progress, and two scoring a 0 rating, indicating no progress.
- Overall, this goal received a +1 rating, suggesting low progress towards achieving goal 1.

South Africa's high unemployment rate means some children go to bed hungry. While the child support grant is useful to vulnerable families, it is not always used to directly benefit children, for school uniforms and projects for example, as it is meant to be used because families have competing needs and priorities. This gap between the grant's purpose and the reality of how it is used leaves some children lacking basic necessities.

In addition, especially for families that are unable to access social grants due to documentation issues, poverty places caregivers in a position where they may feel forced to commit crimes to meet their family's needs. The crimes committed affects many people's lives and leaves children in a worse and even more impoverished situation when their caregivers are arrested for their crimes. This leaves families stuck in a continued cycle of poverty that needs focused and long-term intervention to break.

Goal 2: Zero Hunger

Table 20. Goal 2 data for Mpumalanga

Principles	-2 (large reduction)	-1 (small reduction)	0 (no progress)	+1 (low progress)	+2 (high progress)
1. Universality				X	
2.Leave No One Behind				X	
3. Interconnectedness and Indivisibility				X	
4. Transformative			X		
5. Partnerships			X		
Overall rating				X	

Table 8 presents statistical data for Goal 2 (Zero Hunger), as captured in the Mpumalanga province.

- There is minimal to no progress with this goal, with three dimensions scoring a +1 rating, indicating low progress, and two dimensions scoring a 0 rating, indicating no progress.
- Overall, this goal received a rating of +1, indicating low progress towards achieving goal 2.

Children in Mpumalanga are facing challenges in achieving SDG 2. Rising temperatures due to climate change are hurting crop production, making it harder for many families to put food on the table. Access to land for growing our food is limited, and often families have to rely on expensive shops instead. While the child support grant and the NSNP help with nutrition sometimes, there are still gaps, especially during school holidays, leaving some children hungry.

Goal 3: Good Health and Wellbeing

Table 21. Goal 3 data for Mpumalanga

Principles	-2 (large reduction)	-1 (small reduction)	0 (no progress)	+1 (low progress)	+2 (high progress)
1. Universality			X		
2.Leave No One Behind				X	
3. Interconnectedness and Indivisibility				X	
4. Transformative				X	
5. Partnerships			X		
Overall rating				X	

Table 9 presents statistical data for Goal 3 (Good Health and Wellbeing), as captured in the Mpumalanga province.

- Similar to goal 2, there is minimal to no progress with this goal, with three dimensions scoring a +1 rating, indicating low progress, and two dimensions scoring a 0 rating, indicating no progress.
- Overall, this goal received a rating of +1, indicating low progress towards achieving goal 3.

Despite this, South Africa faces a big challenge in achieving SDG 3, especially with teenage pregnancy. Young girls as young as 10 fall pregnant, affecting their right to education there's a lack of accountability for the perpetrators of these teenage pregnancies. Clinics exist, but they are not youth-friendly or resourced with medication, making it harder for adolescents to get the healthcare they need.

School and clinic-based programs implemented by nurses aim to educate children about contraceptive options for preventing teenage pregnancy and have been doing so more in recent years. While these programs provide information, a potential gap exists regarding the comprehensive explanation of potential side effects to children who make use of these services. This lack of complete information leads children to experience unanticipated and poorly understood side effects when they choose to use contraceptives.

Goal 4: Quality Education

Table 22. Goal 4 data for Mpumalanga

Principles	-2 (large reduction)	-1 (small reduction)	0 (no progress)	+1 (low progress)	+2 (high progress)
1. Universality			X		
2.Leave No One Behind		X			
3. Interconnectedness and Indivisibility			X		
4. Transformative			X		
5. Partnerships			X		
Overall rating			X		

Table 10 presents statistical data for Goal 4 (Quality Education), as captured in the Mpumalanga province.

- There is no progress across most of the dimensions, with four of them scoring a 0 rating, while one dimension scored a -1 rating, indicating small reduction for the Leave No One Behind dimension.
- Overall, this goal received a rating of 0, suggesting no progress towards achieving goal 4.

South African children experience an uneven education system. Many travel long distances to Gauteng for better resources, highlighting the underdevelopment of rural areas. Schools in these areas are often overcrowded, lack proper infrastructure and lack technology and opportunities for hands-on learning.

Goal 5: Gender Equality

Table 23. Goal 5 data for Mpumalanga

Principles	-2 (large reduction)	-1 (small reduction)	0 (no progress)	+1 (low progress)	+2 (high progress)
1. Universality			X		
2.Leave No One Behind			X		
3. Interconnectedness and Indivisibility			X		
4. Transformative			X		
5. Partnerships			X		
Overall rating			X		

Table 11 presents statistical data for Goal 5 (Gender Equality), as captured in the Mpumalanga province.

- There is consistently "no progress" (+0 rating) across all dimensions.
- Overall, this goal received a +0 rating, indicating no progress towards achieving goal 5.

South Africa still struggles with achieving SDG 5. Outdated gender norms are still very common in communities that hold girls and women back from living fulfilling lives. There is a need break down these outdated norms so equal opportunities can be made available to everyone no matter their gender.

Poverty makes women and girls especially vulnerable, forcing them to rely on others, which can sometimes lead to abuse.

Goal 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

Table 24. Goal 16 data for Mpumalanga

Principles	-2 (large reduction)	-1 (small reduction)	0 (no progress)	+1 (low progress)	+2 (high progress)
1. Universality		X			
2.Leave No One Behind			X		
3. Interconnectedness and Indivisibility			X		
4. Transformative			X		
5. Partnerships				X	
Overall rating			X		

Table 12 presents statistical data for Goal 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institution), as captured in the Mpumalanga province.

- There is very little to no progress, with three dimensions scoring a 0 progress, indicating no progress, one dimension scoring a -1 rating, indicating small reduction, while one dimension scored a +1 rating, indicating low progress.
- Overall, this goal received a 0 rating, suggesting no progress towards achieving goal 16.

Acknowledging South Africa's peacekeeping efforts internationally, the children noted that South Africa has helped to create a more stable and secure environment in various regions and should continue to do so.

South Africa has established institutions and strong laws, but many people in the country, especially children, lack the knowledge of how to access justice when they are victimised in some way. Furthermore, when cases involving children are opened, they are often overlooked in court proceedings and are easily thrown out of court. The children believe that this is because children are not fully recognised as members of society by many adults and so maters that affect them are not always taken seriously.

The children noted that there is a need for more to be done to ensure that children are protected in all areas of society. The vetting of government employees, especially those that have direct contact with children, needs to become a high priority when employing officials to verify that they are fit to take up these positions. Taking up this important step will prevent many instances of VAC that have become common in South Africa.

Institutions such as the Human Rights Commission does not seem to effectively advocate for children's rights. Public knowledge around South Africa's laws and policies is lacking and so people are not able to participate in the

processes that affect their everyday lives. Children are the least able to participate in these processes, denying them of their right to have their voices heard. Advocacy on child participation in all areas that affect children is needed and must be taken forward by such institutions.

Corporal punishment is still used in some schools. Children do not know who to report incidences of corporal punishment to and are not confident that they will be protected if they do.

Recommendations

See Executive Summary for recommendations.

Conclusions

In all three provinces, the children recognised the beneficial role of children's grants to address SDG 1 (No Poverty) and highlight the increase of social grant amounts and the overall positive impact this has had on children's lives. Children across Gauteng, Mpumalanga and Limpopo face similar challenges linked to poverty, unemployment, and inadequate government support. High unemployment rates in all three provinces limit family income, impacting children's access to basic necessities and education. Additionally, corruption within the government is a concern for children in all areas, as it hinders effective implementation of programs aimed at poverty reduction and social welfare. Children in Gauteng specifically highlight the underdevelopment of rural areas and long distances to access services. In Mpumalanga, the focus is on the competing needs families face with limited resources, while Limpopo emphasizes the lack of comprehensive support programs and the exclusion of children's voices in discussions around poverty.

Regarding SDG2 (Zero Hunger), the provinces share concerns about poverty, food insecurity, and limited access to government programs. High unemployment rates and the rising cost of living create challenges for families to meet basic needs. All three regions mentioned issues with the NSNP, including insufficient portions, poor quality food, and potential corruption or discrimination by staff. Gauteng children specifically highlighted the impact of climate change on subsistence farming, while Mpumalanga focused on the difficult choices families face due to their limited income. Limpopo children additionally pointed to knowledge gaps in sustainable farming practices and the exclusion of some communities from decision-making processes.

Children across the provinces shared concerns about public healthcare access and quality with regard to SDG 3. All three provinces mentioned under-resourced facilities, highlighting issues like poor infrastructure, water disruptions, and power outages. Discrimination against youth and migrants by healthcare professionals is another shared concern. Gauteng specifically mentions mental health awareness and a lack of proper recycling systems, while Limpopo focuses on teenage pregnancy and substance abuse among youth. Mpumalanga places a stronger emphasis on the needs of undocumented children and the need for stricter monitoring of youth and child services.

In terms of quality education (SDG 4), all provinces reported facing challenges related to overcrowded and under-resourced schools. Common concerns include a lack of staff, inadequate infrastructure, and limited access to technology and learning materials. These issues are common in poorer areas and special schools. Gauteng children specifically highlighted the exclusion of undocumented and migrant children, while Mpumalanga focused on the long distances children must travel to access better schools. Limpopo, on the other hand, emphasized the lack of skills training provided in schools and the existence of "no-fee schools" that still pressure parents for payments.

Regarding gender equality (SDG 5) provinces expressed concerns about gender-based violence (GBV) and unequal treatment. Between provinces the lack of support for victims was mentioned, with Mpumalanga highlighting the absence of action in GBV cases. Both Mpumalanga and Limpopo emphasized the negative impacts of poverty on girls' and women's vulnerability to abuse. Gauteng specifically mentioned underreporting

of violence by boys and men due to police treatment, while Limpopo focused on the unequal distribution of hygiene products and the enforcement of traditional gender roles within homes.

Lastly, for Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions (SDG 16), the children mentioned South Africa's weak justice system and the prevalence of violence. A shared concern is the lack of access to justice, with Mpumalanga highlighting children's issues being overlooked in courts and a general lack of public knowledge about navigating the legal system. Limpopo emphasizes the problem of mob justice due to a weak formal system. Violence against marginalized groups, including children, LGBTQI+ individuals, and migrants, is another concern in both Gauteng and Mpumalanga. Gauteng specifically mentioned political instability and xenophobia as factors contributing to violence, while Limpopo focused on human trafficking and the neglect of LGBTQI+ issues. Mpumalanga highlighted the use of corporal punishment in schools and inadequate vetting of government employees, suggesting a broader concern about societal norms and institutional gaps.

Personal reflections from the 9 child researchers

"It was interesting & painful at the same time I never thought I would find more than 20 to 30 people that go to sleep with empty stomach. It's was pretty sad because there's was nothing I can do at that time. I'm so happy that I get the chance to do the survey, now I can get the chance to help other children who are [in need]. I'm so proud of myself that I was part of the ground [team]. I had a wonderful time & the best experience ever"

-Relebogile

"The SDG data collection was a beautiful experience where I encountered diverse-minded children, leading to beautiful interactions. Although it was tiring and sometimes frustrating, it paved the way for fulfilling moments of learning and communication. I gained a deeper understanding of the importance of inclusive data collection and the impact of the SDGs on local communities."

-Velegreat

"SDGs unite all the countries day and night. Guiding us towards a brighter light. No poverty, hunger, or corruption. Just equality, sustainability, and peace in life."

- Justin

Save the Children

"...When I collected data I felt really sad when I noticed that in our province we have a really low progress in many of the SDGs. I really enjoyed the time when we were trained because I was able to express what I know about the SDGs and debating with my peers was really fun. The experience in Johannesburg was really good because I was able to meet new people . All I can say is: BE THE CHANGE YOU WANT TO SEE IN FUTURE".

-Busisiwe

"I got to learn many things I never thought I would learn. And the time we collected data felt painful to other children because they go to sleep without eating. I'm happy that I got to communicate with other children and being part of Save the Children is the biggest thing that's ever happened to me".

-Siyamthanda

"Collecting data on the sustainable development goals was an amazing experience for me. Through this experience I learned that making a difference isn't always easy but it's possible when we work together & support each other, I thank you!"

- Xongi

"Conducting the survey telephonically was difficult but through this I learnt how to reach people that were unreachable physically. I learnt people's skills and how to persevere when others couldn't be surveyed. In the end it was a delightful experience."

- Khomotso

"It was really good and exciting to [take] part because I learnt a lot of things that happen to us child all over the world leaving no migrant behind. When I collected data around my community I felt so emotional then I figured out that many children are actually facing a lot of challenges. I was so emotional, I did the survey with a migrant child from Mozambique.

The [consultation] was the best ever, I met new age mates from different provinces talking about the challenges they are facing and putting our ideas together and brainstorming. I wish to see change taking place starting now."

- Praise

"I had a very good experience during the survey in my community. I learnt so many things which I did not know about challenges faced by many children. I look forward to seeing some progress by the government concerning the SDGs. In [the consultation] I also learned a lot about climate change and was an eye opener. I am aware of what is happening in my surroundings and wish the change on the SDGs could start soon. I will remain a champion of change from now on."

- Emily

Appendix I: Data Collection Instruments

SDG Children's survey

SDG Children's survey

Consent

Save The Children South Africa (SCSA) is conducting a survey with children on 6 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) - No Poverty; Zero Hunger; Good Health & Wellbeing; Quality Education; Peace, Justice & Strong institutions. We would like your help by completing this survey. The information from this survey will help us understand what children are experiencing in their communities and what progress has been made to achieve the SDGs. The survey will take between 20 to 30 minutes to complete.

You do not have to participate in this survey if you do not want to. Some questions ask about sensitive issues like the number of children that experience things like hunger, violence or abuse in your community. If you feel uncomfortable answering any questions, please tell me. You can skip any question or stop participating in the survey at any time and you will not be affected if you refuse to participate or choose to stop the survey.

SCSA will not collect any information that will allow us or anyone else to know who you are. We will only ask for your age, gender and the province you live in but you can skip these questions if you are not comfortable answering them. The information you give SCSA will be shared in reports along with the information we get from other children. This information will be kept safe on password protected devices.

Do you have any questions about the survey?

_____

Do you agree to do this survey with me?

◯ Yes

◯ No

What is your age?

If the child does not want to answer this question, please type "999"

_____

What is your gender?

◯ Girl

◯ Boy

◯ Non-binary

◯ I don't want to say

Which province are you living in?

- ◯ Gauteng
- ◯ Limpopo
- ◯ Mpumalanga
- ◯ North West
- ◯ KwaZulu-Natal
- ◯ Free State
- ◯ Western Cape
- ◯ Eastern cape
- ◯ Northern Cape

Goal 1: No Poverty

1.1. How many children do you know who don't have enough food to eat or a safe place to sleep?

- ◯ More than 10 children
- ◯ Less than 10 children
- ◯ I don't know any

1.2. Do all the children you know have clean water, a toilet, and electricity at home?

- ◯ Yes, they have clean water, a toilet, and electricity at home
- ◯ Only some of them
- ◯ No, they all don't have clean water, a toilet, and electricity at home
- ◯ I don't know

1.3. Do all the different people in our community, like children, adults without jobs, older people, people who are sick or hurt, mothers who are going to have a baby, babies who have just been born, and families who don't have much money, get help and support when they need it?

- ◯ Yes, all these people get help and support when they need it
- ◯ Some of these people get help and support when they need it, but others don't
- ◯ No, all these people don't get help and support when they need it
- ◯ I don't know

Goal 2: Zero Hunger

2.1. How many children in your community go to bed hungry because they don't have enough food?

- ◯ A lot of children
- ◯ A few children
- ◯ No children
- ◯ I don't know

2.2. How many children in your school are very thin or look too small for their age because they don't have enough to eat?

○ A lot of children

○ A few children

○ No children

○ I don't know

2.3. How many children in your community are shorter than they should be for their age because they don't have enough healthy food?

○ A lot of children

○ A few children

○ No children

○ I don't know

2.4. How many families in your community are able to grow enough food in their gardens or farms to feed themselves and others?

○ More than 10 families

○ Less than 10 families

○ I don't know

Goal 3: Good Health & Wellbeing

3.1. How many of your friends or classmates have trouble running and playing because they are too big?

○ More than half of my friends

○ Less than half of my friends

○ I am not sure

3.2. Do all the children you know have clean water to drink at home and at school?

○ Yes, they all have clean water to drink at home and at school

○ Only some of them

○ No, they all don't have clean water to drink at home and at school

○ I don't know

3.3. Do all the children you know have toilets that work properly at home and at school?

○ Yes, they all have toilets that work properly at home and at school

○ Only some of them

○ No, they all don't have toilets that work properly at home and at school

○ I don't know

3.4. Do all the children you know have access to medicine when they are sick, like if they have a fever or a cough?

○ Yes, they all have access to medicine when they are sick

○ Only some of them

○ No, they all don't have access to medicine

○ I don't know

Goal 4: Quality Education

4.1. How many children finish all their grades of school without stopping?

Help: How many children finish grade 1 to grade 12?

○ All children

○ Some children

○ None

○ I don't know

4.2. Do the children at the end of primary school, and teenagers at the end of high school know enough to read and do math well?

○ Most of them know enough to read and do math

○ Most of them DO NOT know enough to read and do math

○ I don't know

4.3. How many schools in your area provide important things like clean water, working toilets, and a safe place to learn and play?

○ More than 5 schools

○ Less than 5 schools

○ I don't know

Goal 5: Gender Equality

5.1. Are girls your age getting married or falling pregnant as teenagers when they should be having fun and learning in school?

○ Yes, most of them

○ Yes, some of them

○ No, none of them

○ I don't know

5.2. Do girls and women in our community feel safe from being hurt or touched in a bad way by someone who is not a friend or family member?

○ Yes, they all do

○ Some of them do, some don't

○ No, they don't

○ I don't know

5.3. Do girls and women in our community have the power to decide when they want to have babies and how many babies they want?

- ( ) Yes, they all do
- ( ) Some of them do, some don't
- ( ) No, they don't
- ( ) I don't know

5.4. Do the rules in our country say that boys and girls should be treated fairly and equally?

- ( ) Yes
- ( ) No
- ( ) I don't know

Goal 6: Peace, Justice & Strong Institutions

6.1. How many babies in our community have been given birth certificates?

- ( ) All babies
- ( ) Some babies
- ( ) None
- ( ) I don't know

6.2. Do children, adults, and families in our community feel safe from being hurt, bullied, or touched in a bad way?

- ( ) Yes, they all do
- ( ) Some of them do, some don't
- ( ) No, they don't
- ( ) I don't know

6.3. Have people in our community felt like they were treated badly or bullied in the past year because of who they are, like their skin color, religion, where they are from or how they look?

- ( ) Yes, many people have
- ( ) Some of them do, some don't
- ( ) No, no people have
- ( ) I don't know

Thank you for completing the survey and for your time. We would love to hear any feedback you might have about this survey or any other SCSA programming. You can contact SCSAs feedback hotline. I will share the contact details with you. Any positive or negative feedback is welcome.

Parental consent form

Save the Children

Parental Consent for children to participate in SDG children's survey

Dear Parent/Caregiver

Save The Children South Africa (SCSA) is conducting a survey with children on 6 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) - No Poverty; Zero Hunger; Good Health & Wellbeing; Quality Education; Peace, Justice & Strong Institutions. We would like your child's help by completing this survey. The information we receive will help us understand what children are experiencing in their communities and what progress has been made to achieve the SDGs. The survey will take between 20 to 30 minutes to complete.

The survey will be conducted by a child from our children's network in your province. This child has volunteered to be a child researcher for this research project. The child researchers will be conducting the survey with their peers from the school or home environment so they can gather information from children in their communities so their voices can be included in discussions and reporting on the SDGs.

Your child does not have to participate in this survey if they do not want to. Please note that some of the questions ask about sensitive issues like the number of children that experience things like hunger, violence or abuse in your community. If these questions make your child feel uncomfortable, they can skip any question or stop participating at any time. You and your child will not be affected if you or your child refuse to participate in the survey.

SCSA will not collect any information that will allow us or anyone else to the identity of your child. We will only ask for their age, gender and the province they live in but they can skip these questions if they are not comfortable answering them. The information they give SCSA will be shared in reports along with the information we get from other children. This information will be kept safe on password protected devices.

You and your child will not receive anything from Save the Children South Africa (SCSA) for taking part in the research.

You have the right to know what information we have kept about you and your child. You also have the right to have this information destroyed. You can ask for this at any time.

If you have any questions about this survey, or change your mind about consent to the use of your data, you can contact us on the following **toll-free number: 0800 604 605**. You can contact the same details to raise any concern about this discussion or any other feedback related to SCSA's work as well.

By signing this form, you are telling us that you understand the above information.

Yes, I agree for my child to do the survey
No, I do not want my child to do the survey

Name of parent:
Date:

Signature of Parent:

Save the Children

Save the Children

YOUR VOICE MATTERS TO US

Help us make our programs better for our communities

Share any feedback about our Programmes including:-

- Valid suggestions
- Complaints
- Request for Information related to our programmes
- Significant change stories
- Messages of Gratitude

You can also report anonymously any incidents of:

- Fraud
- Corruption
- Misconduct
- Unethical behaviour
- Abuse and Exploitation of Children in our programs
- Sexual Exploitation, Abuse & Harassment of adults in our Programs

To the Save the Children reporting channels

REPORTING CHANNELS

✉ EMAIL: Savethechildren@behonest.co.za

💬 SMS NUMBER: 48691

📞 24HR TOLL FREE NUMBER: 0800 604 605

🟢 WHATSAPP NUMBER: 0860 004 004

▦ WEBSITE AND CHAT LINK: www.behonest.co.za

📱 FREE POST: BNT165, Brooklyn Square, 0075

Save the Children

Children's Scorecard

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Principles	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	-2	Assessment / Comments
1. Universality							
2. Leave No One Behind							
3. Interconnectedness and Indivisibility							
4. Transformative							
5. Partnerships							
Overall rating							
Do you have specific ideas for what more they could do to address this issue? What can you and your peers do in your community to create positive changes? What support do you need?							

Save the Children

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT G☉ALS

Principles	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	-2	Assessment / Comments
1. Universality							
2.Leave No One Behind							
3. Interconnectedness and Indivisibility							
4. Transformative							
5. Partnerships							
Overall rating							
Do you have specific ideas for what more they could do to address this issue? What can you and your peers do in your community to create positive changes? What support do you need?							

3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Principles	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	-2	Assessment / Comments
1. Universality							
2.Leave No One Behind							
3. Interconnectedness and Indivisibility							
4. Transformative							
5. Partnerships							
Overall rating							
Do you have specific ideas for what more they could do to address this issue? What can you and your peers do in your community to create positive changes? What support do you need?							

Principles	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	-2	Assessment / Comments
1. Universality							
2.Leave No One Behind							
3. Interconnectedness and Indivisibility							
4. Transformative							
5. Partnerships							
Overall rating							
Do you have specific ideas for what more they could do to address this issue? What can you and your peers do in your community to create positive changes? What support do you need?							

Principles	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	-2	Assessment / Comments
1. Universality							
2. Leave No One Behind							
3. Interconnectedness and Indivisibility							
4. Transformative							
5. Partnerships							
Overall rating							
Do you have specific ideas for what more they could do to address this issue? What can you and your peers do in your community to create positive changes? What support do you need?							

Save the Children

Principles	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	-2	Assessment / Comments
1. Universality							
2.Leave No One Behind							
3. Interconnectedness and Indivisibility							
4. Transformative							
5. Partnerships							
Overall rating							
Do you have specific ideas for what more they could do to address this issue? What can you and your peers do in your community to create positive changes? What support do you need?							