

Overcoming challenges to global child and adolescent health

September 28 2021



Children, kids, childhood, games, play, fun, playful, silhouettes, sunset, vietnam.
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The latest special issue of *PLOS Medicine* outlines different aspects of

child and adolescent health and development, and the social determinants of health. The studies within the collection were selected by *PLOS Medicine's* editorial team and guest editors Zulfiqar A. Bhutta, Kathryn M. Yount, and Quique Bassat. The accompanying Editorial publishing on September 28th is cowritten by the guest editors and Caitlin Moyer, and focuses specifically on the health of infants, children, and adolescents in the context of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The guest editors stress the relevance of the special issue in light of the ongoing pandemic. They point out that "there are legitimate concerns that COVID-19 has negatively impacted progress in achieving the SDGs globally, and that urgent redirective strategies are needed before hard-earned gains from the 2000-2015 MDG [Millennium Development Goal] period are reversed."

The research studies publishing in the issue include papers examining the drivers and determinants of child and adolescent health in diverse and challenging contexts. Adversity brought by poverty, pollution, worsening climate, and by experiencing violence and conflict can impact [child health](#). Reports on key health issues and interventions across childhood and adolescence include severe bacterial infections among neonates, anti-infection measures and nutritional supplementation to improve neonatal and child outcomes, cash transfers combined with additional interventions to improve child health in low- and [middle-income countries](#), and sexual and reproductive health factors among [adolescent girls](#).

Further studies focus on the intersection of child health and existing and challenging environments, including pre- and post-natal care for women in conflict settings, air pollution and neonatal outcomes, vaccination coverage in drought conditions in sub-Saharan Africa, and psychosocial circumstances relating to injuries in adolescents. Additional *PLOS*

Medicine papers will continue to be added to the special issue over the coming weeks.

The guest editors note that to maintain the focus on child and adolescent health with reference to the SDGs: "...it is necessary to recognize and attend to the health inequities among children and adolescents arising from differentiated exposures to dynamic social contexts around the globe, including urban poverty, [environmental degradation](#) and extreme climates, violence and conflict, and unsafe school, family, and social environments".

The guest editors add, "This collection of studies from across the world underscores the importance of the social and contextual determinants of child and [adolescent health](#) and development, as well as promising innovations to improve survival, health, and well-being."

More information: Editorial: Bhutta ZA, Yount KM, Bassat Q, Moyer CE (2021) Sustainable Developmental Goals interrupted: Overcoming challenges to global child and adolescent health. *PLoS Med* 18(9): e1003802. doi.org/10.1371/journal.pmed.1003802

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