



Recommendations for a Post-2015 Development Agenda

“Recapturing the vision of a ‘World Fit For Children’

A Position Paper

The promise of human development that was embedded in the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals¹ is at the heart of an unfolding process, unmatched in both its outcomes and its rate of change. The human rights of more children than ever before are being fulfilled, as countries in every region of the world strive to meet the targets of the MDGs. Poverty rates, child and maternal death rates, access to clean water, access to health services, and enrollment in primary school for both girls and boys, have all seen unprecedented improvements at the global level, when compared with 1990 rates.

But, progress has been only true for some: millions of the world’s most vulnerable and marginalized children have been left behind facing discrimination, even more vulnerable and marginalized than before. Not only are these children denied their rights to fully live their potential, the human family is thus denied the intellectual, social and moral benefits that follow when the rights of all children are protected.

Now, as the international development community extends its attention to the post-2015 era, our six child-focused agencies - the ChildFund Alliance, Plan International, Save the Children, SOS Children’s Village, UNICEF and World Vision – have come together around a shared position:

that any new agenda for sustainable development that hopes to be successful must necessarily protect the rights and well-being of all children, including those most vulnerable and marginalized, without discrimination of any kind or for any reason.

Our agencies have worked individually and together over decades in more than 130 countries around the world. In the years immediately after the MDGs were set, we endorsed the goals and action plan of “A World Fit for Children”, the outcome document of the 2002 UN Special Session on Children. Together with the Millennium Declaration and the MDGs, “A World Fit for Children” provided a framework that pointed development efforts to focus on the best interests of the child.

¹ MDGs

We know that the global landscape is different today than it was at the beginning of the century when the Declaration, the Goals and “A World Fit for Children” were first adopted by United Nations Member States. As the international community faces declines in once prosperous countries, climate change, a growing urbanization, increased political instabilities, and extended conflicts and humanitarian crises, development’s challenges are different. The needs of children are different. But despite the differences, children’s rights remain the same. And so, we still seek to create such a world as was envisioned at the earlier time.

An urgent call for children

“... when the MDGs were first articulated, we knew that achieving them would, in a sense, be only half the job.” - UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon, at the launch of the 2011 Millennium Development Report

If the objective of the MDGs was to speed up progress, the first objectives of the post-2015 framework, as it takes on new realities and new commitments, must be to finish and build on the progress of the MDGs and to correct their key shortfalls and omissions. We believe the post-2015 era of development should carry on the central theme of the MDGs: that the situation of children and young people in any community is both a marker and maker of development; and that the Post-2015 Development Agenda should start with the most marginalized and vulnerable children and bring the unfinished work of the MDGs to completion.

Specifically, we believe that the Post-2015 Development Agenda must push to end extreme poverty in all its manifestations. It must tackle **inequalities**, within and between countries, of wealth, incomes and social outcomes that threaten human progress. The framework must commit to stopping **all forms of violence** against children, with specific targets on their protection and care. And it must be driven by its mandate for **accountability, transparency and equal participation**, accompanied by robust and effective mechanisms which include children throughout as they move from the sub- national to national levels and to the global stage.

A child-centered, human rights framework

“Children’s rights and well-being should remain at the centre of the post-2015 agenda. Investment in children is a fundamental means to eradicate poverty, boost shared prosperity, and enhance inter-generational equity. It is also essential for strengthening their ability to reach their potential as productive, engaged, and capable citizens, contributing fully to their families and societies.” – Anthony Lake, UNICEF Executive Director

Our six organizations have been working on development issues for a long time. We understand that its processes, though frustrating at times, can ultimately inspire and deliver a better future when governments, UN entities, civil society organizations, the private sector, communities and families strive together.

Our specific recommendations are grounded in one basic ask: that governments reaffirm their existing obligations to the Millennium Declaration and the Convention on the Rights of the Child², embracing the

² CRC

norms and principles of the human rights framework as guidelines to the policies and practices of any agenda for the future. And that the Convention's principle of the best interest of the child should be central to the Agenda's goals and an over-riding consideration for decision-makers in all aspects of the framework.

We believe that children are at the heart of sustainable development, and that a child-focused, human rights approach is the most practical and efficient way to ensure human progress. History, evidence and research, as well as what we have learned through our years of working with governments at the policy level and our programming work on the ground, help to make the case: until and unless children and young people grow up protected, healthy and well-educated, any advances in sustainable development are unnecessarily compromised.

What's more, we contend that children and young people, especially the most marginalized and vulnerable, must be engaged as full participants in shaping their own future. Their voices must be heard – and heeded – when the Post-2015 Agenda and Goals are set, as well as when policies and programs are implemented and monitored.

We believe this to be a moral imperative, based on their human rights, a legal obligation under the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other legal instruments, and a practical necessity for sustainable development. And we believe this to be true for ALL children, no matter their gender, race, religion, ethnicity, disability, economic or social status or geographic or physical location.

I. Ending extreme poverty: Including those now excluded

The work still to be done

In many societies, over-all social improvements and economic growth mask a persistent poverty that metastasizes and becomes stubbornly entrenched across generations. Poverty in all its reinforcing dimensions – social exclusion, economic deprivation, the many forms of discrimination, unequal treatment by service providers and legal systems, violence, abuse and exploitation – cannot be decisively reduced and eliminated through targeted interventions and economic growth alone.

Both the causes and effects of poverty are multi-dimensional. The structural barriers that poverty builds and reinforces cannot be dismantled piece by piece; they are simply too enmeshed in the social fabric. They must be taken on as a whole.

“Getting to zero” in the Post-2015 Development Agenda

Ending poverty in all its forms, including hunger, malnutrition, preventable child and maternal deaths, is within reach by the year 2030. The evidence and projections predict that reaching “zero” and near-zero goals, albeit ambitious, can be done.

Today, the world is at a dramatic point where a number of full-scale and sustainable breakthroughs in human development are possible due to the accelerated progress that marked the MDG era, the momentum the era generated, and advances in science and technology. We have the potential to live in a world where no child will die from preventable causes, every child will go to school, every child will be taken care of and protected from violence, and extreme poverty will be eradicated.

Specific recommendations

To get to “zero” on poverty in ways that are both sustainable and equitable, the Post-2015 Development Agenda must pursue universal access to quality services in health, education, nutrition, social protection, water and sanitation.

We believe that it is vital that the post-2015 development framework focuses on absolute “zero goals” and absolute success:

- 1) End extreme income poverty; eliminate hunger and halve stunting; end preventable child, newborn and maternal deaths; eliminate violence against children in all its forms; ensure universal access for all children and their families to quality health, education, water and sanitation.
- 2) Prioritize the poorest and most marginalized children, addressing systematic discrimination and inequalities, including targets and indicators that are specific to the marginalized populations.
- 3) Accelerate progress in fragile, disaster-prone and conflicted-affected societies.
- 4) Ensure full transparency and accountability at all levels for progress on the commitments that have been made.

II. Tackling inequalities head on

“Fighting inequalities matter not only to the bottom billion, but to all of us. Because equitable societies with accountable and transparent political systems promote the formation of human and social capital, social cohesion and stability, it spurs investments, innovation and economic growth. It brings with a more stable global economy and a more secure world.” – Christian Friis Bach, Minister of Development Cooperation, Denmark, Inequalities Leadership Meeting, February 2013

The work still to be done

While the MDGs enabled and inspired improvements in millions of lives around the world, the gap widened, in many instances, between those who enjoyed better opportunities and better outcomes and those who were or remain excluded and marginalized.

When one delves deep into the data generated by monitoring the MDGs, and searches beyond the aggregate numbers, beneath the averages of MDG reports, and outside the fractions of the targets, there are significantly different realities than the global numbers show.

Inequalities of opportunities and outcomes related to wealth, income, location and social status between and within countries remain wide and, in many places, have been growing. They disproportionately affect children, who experience exclusion directly, and who also face limited opportunities due to the inequalities their parents face.

These inequalities are de-stabilizing societies, countries and regions, and harming children and their families on both sides of the divide. They harm entire societies by undermining prosperity and increasing the risk of further destabilization. They threaten the development gains already won, as well as the future agenda for the post-2015 years.

Specific recommendations

We believe that the Post-2015 Development Agenda must identify the most vulnerable groups of children and address the root causes of the situations of inequality, discrimination, stigma and marginalization they face.

Further, we believe it is vital that the post-2015 development framework includes commitments and plans for all those involved to ensure:

- 1) **Explicit commitments** from national governments to specific goals that would have them move rapidly towards: universal access to essential services, zero-based outcomes, such as no more preventable deaths for children and women, and data that are disaggregated by age, gender, disability, ethnicity, income and geographic location.
- 2) **Multi-sector action plans** and strategies for advancing and protecting the rights of children that are developed, adapted and implemented with the full participation of affected groups, including those that are most deprived and excluded. The plans, at both national and sub-national level, should re-dress discrimination and inequalities and remove any remaining barriers to inclusion. They should include concrete and specific indicators of what success will look like for children.
- 3) **All goals, targets and indicators be monitored and evaluated for their impact on children.** This data on children must be disaggregated by gender, age, disability, ethnicity, family income, care situation and geographic location. There must be full transparency and availability of the data, and citizens should be enabled and empowered to generate their own data on which and how children are receiving which services.
- 4) Assistance from **international development partners should** prioritize support for national efforts tackling inequalities, discrimination and exclusion.

III. Protecting children from violence and harm: Survival is not enough

“The consequences of violence can be devastating. Above all, it can result in early death. But even children who survive must cope with terrible physical and emotional scars. Indeed, violence places at risk not only their health, but also their ability to learn and grow into adults who can create sound families and communities. Violence against children is thus a major threat to global development and our work to reach the Millennium Development Goals.” – Report of the UN Secretary-General’s Study on Violence Against Children, 2006

The work still to be done

Despite the significant progress that can be attributed to the MDGs, neither their goals nor targets addressed the universal right of children to live free from fear.

Violence against children takes place in every country, every region and at every socio-economic level – in their homes, schools and communities, in institutions, on line in virtual communities, and, in its latest manifestations, on mobile technologies.

As the Post-2015 Development Agenda is being shaped, millions of girls and boys are trafficked, raped, and sexually violated. Millions more are forced to work from early childhood in dangerous and hazard-filled environments. Millions are caught up in conflicts of adult making. Hidden from public view, uncountable numbers regularly endure violent discipline at home, while the dark side of technology exposes them to predators they will never even see.

On this critical issue of violence against children, the world is at a different starting point, with a longer way to go before “zero” or even “near zero” results are possible. The Post-2015 Agenda now needs to speak explicitly to the issue of violence against children, to the inequalities that heighten the risks of violence for certain children, to the impact of conflict on both girls and boys and to the root causes of the violence against children that we know exist.

As did the MDGs for other human rights issues, the Post-2015 Development Agenda has the potential to galvanize the development community to work together to ensure that all children will be safe and able to live free from all forms of violence, be protected in conflicts and disasters and be able thrive in a safe, caring family environment. Reinforcing the fact that violence can be stopped, the Agenda should build on the solutions that have proven effective and affordable.

Our call to our colleagues in the international community is to continue to build on the progress already achieved for children, and to bring the commitment and vigor they brought to the MDGs to ending – full stop – violence and exploitation perpetrated against children.

Specific recommendations

We believe that the Post-2015 Development Agenda must not be silent on this issue and should seek to wholly eliminate the widespread damage to human rights and development caused by all forms of violence against children and women.

Further, we believe it is vital that the issue of violence against children be explicitly included and addressed within the Post-2015 Development Agenda. The Agenda should include:

1. **Clear and measurable goals, targets and indicators** related to ending sexual violence and abuse against children, including violent discipline in the home, school and other settings; ensuring the quality of care for children living in alternative care and in institutions; protecting girls and boys affected by conflict; ending worst forms of child labor and child marriage; and achieving universal birth registration.
2. **A call** upon Governments and UN agencies to increase funding that will support a framework to prevent and respond to violence against children.

IV. Ensuring accountability: Towards a culture and practice of locally-led monitoring

“... the post-2015 framework must interpret global targets as collective ones; they can never be equated with national targets ... to be meaningful, they need to be tailored and adapted to the national targets and initial (sic) conditions.” Jan Vandemoortele, former Director of the Poverty Group at UNDP and former Chief of Policy at UNICEF

Work still to be done

For all their success in advancing development, the MDGs stumbled when it came to empowering and enabling citizens to hold their governments accountable for over-all and equitable progress at national and local levels. There was simply no mechanism to do so. Few countries instituted broad-based citizen reviews of progress and performance at any level, or made sustained efforts to democratize access to information about development programmes. Even fewer countries included children in their reviews.

Building the Post-2015 Development Agenda has included consultations with civil society organizations, academics, the private sector, and others who work in international development. Consultations with citizens about the design of the agenda must now be accompanied by a similar process that allows for participatory monitoring of how the agenda is eventually implemented. All these processes must include children and young people.

Greater participation in the post-2015 era

Promoting, enabling and recognizing locally-owned monitoring systems and opportunities is a means for the development agenda to remain relevant, rooted in people’s dynamism and in their own interests. Such an agenda can help turn “participation” from token, one-time consultations into on-going *conversation*. And it can help address the greatest weakness of the current approach: the lack of means for people to hold their local public service providers, contractors and political representatives to greater account for action or inaction, for performance against targets and standards, and for outcomes.

Furthermore, advances in technology and knowledge-sharing since the start of the MDG era provide unprecedented opportunities for more people to be active participants in monitoring progress on future development goals. Today, technology can be both a tool for and a driver of the more inclusive process now called for.

Specific recommendations

We believe it is vital in post-2015 development that

- 1) **Local** (sub national) monitoring and accountability links to a continuum of accountability that reaches to the global level
- 2) National commitments include specific, measurable commitments to **service delivery** at the local level and accompanies clear transparent communications to communities about what to expect from service providers and the services they provide
- 3) Donors and governments support and enable civil society by creating “spaces” that encourage **local civic engagement** and allow for evidence-based dialogue that is linked to mechanisms for structural planning and decision making

- 4) National-level commitments support platforms at the sub-national level that facilitate the **efficient flow of information and feedback** from the grass-roots to decision makers, who in turn are accountable for response
- 5) The particular situations of **fragile states** are recognized when developing accountability requirements.

Conclusion: Access to the future

How children live, grow and participate today are the pre-determinants of what that future will be, and who will have access to its benefits. Who those children are and what their capabilities will be as they grow into adults will determine the brightness – or bleakness – of the future.

The conversations and consultations continue about the particulars of what the Post-2015 Development Agenda might look like and which goals and targets should be included. Each of the six agencies on this position paper have sought out and engaged children in our regional, local and on-line consultations. As we join forces, we will amplify their voices and bring their concerns to the attention to those making decisions about development that will affect their young lives.

Our goal in coming together? That all involved in developing the Post-2015 Development Agenda will keep clearly in mind what we firmly believe: *that a world fit for ALL children is the world that we want for all of us.*

As child-focused agencies, we are committed to assist United Nations Member States in designing a Post-2015 Development Agenda that advances the rights of every child, including the most disadvantaged, excluded and discriminated, and that places children at the heart of the efforts of all societies to achieve sustainable development. We are further committed to work with partners – including children – in advocating for, implementing and monitoring such an Agenda.