

Side-event on Children's Voices in the Post-2015 Agenda

Co-hosted by ChildFund Alliance and the United Nations Millennium Campaign

New York City, NY – September 26, 2013

Engaging children in decisions that affect their lives leads to better decision-making and outcomes, as well as to a more active participation in democratic processes in adulthood.

MY World, the United Nations global survey for a better world, has been able to actively involve over 200,000 children – with the aim to capture their voices, priorities and views, so world leaders can be informed as they begin the process of defining the next set of global development goals.

ChildFund Alliance has also been consulting with children all over the world to bring their views to the attention of the Members of the United Nations community. ChildFund's study, conducted with over 1,300 children from 41 countries, provides an insight into children's views about violence and exploitation, including recommendations for world leaders to enact as they define the new set of global priorities.

Recognizing the critical historical conjuncture of the formulation of the post-2015 development agenda, ChildFund Alliance and the UN Millennium Campaign co-hosted a **side-event on Children's Voices in the Post-2015 Agenda**. This meeting, which constituted a significant step in the process to formulate the next generation of development goals, took place on September 26, 2013, at the Danny Kaye Visitors Center at UNICEF Headquarters in New York City.

The goal of this event was to present to Member States and other stakeholders the results of different consultation modalities –from MY World to focus group discussions– on children's aspirations and priorities for the post-2015 development agenda, and galvanize children's voices so that their issues become central in the intergovernmental process leading up to its formulation.

Leveraging the current momentum on children's participation, the event aimed to highlight the importance of listening to them and of an explicit commitment to include children in the formation, implementation and monitoring of the post-2015 development agenda.



Children from the **NINEISMINE** campaign deliver their address from the 'People's Podium.'

The meeting opened with powerful statements by representatives from the child-led campaign **NINEISMINE** from India, on children's engagement in the current efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and in the process to define the next generation of development goals.

They made a resounding call for world leaders to fulfil the promises of the MDGs, and to take children's voices into account in the post-2015 process.

A panel, moderated by H. E. Ms Signe Burgstaller, Deputy Permanent Representative of Sweden to the United Nations, then addressed an audience of 100 people, which included representatives from Governments, UN entities, and civil society organizations.



Amina Mohammed, Special Advisor to the UN Secretary-General on Post-2015 Development Planning.

“Your voices do matter and we need them. It is about the world you want,” said **Amina Mohammed**, the UN Secretary-General’s Special Advisor for Post-2015 Development Planning, addressing the children in the audience. She remarked that, as the consultation phase of the post-2015 process comes to fruition, we need to keep in mind the need to fulfil the MDGs and the promises made in 2000. Referring to the UN Secretary-General’s report, she pointed to the need for a transition from a narrow agenda to a much broader one that addresses the range of complex issues that we face today. “We really need to see a development agenda that is not only a wish list and an aspiration, but that has resources behind it to make the world they [children] want a reality.”

Ms. Mohammed also noted that while children’s rights form a critical part of the MDGs, this is not enough and we have to make sure that no one is left behind. Children’s rights have been constantly addressed in the different consultations, but “I can’t say that we have heard enough of children’s voices universally,” she said. “Critical to this is going to be mapping where the voices of children are and the specific issues that matter to them.” She acknowledged the need to reach many more: “You certainly have the support of the Secretary-General in making this a truly consultative process, so at the end of the day we hit the ground running in 2015 to achieve the rights of the child all over the world.”

In turn, **Corinne Woods**, Global Director of the UN Millennium Campaign, addressed the child representatives from **NINEISMINE** and reminded them that “children have the right to have their voices heard: it is enshrined in the Convention and we need to make sure that your voices are heard.” One third of the million votes from MY World are from children, and more than half have been collected offline. She stated that there have been positive indications that the voices of citizens have been heard, such as the High-Level Panel report and the outcome document of the MDGs Special Event, but also reminded that there is still much work to be done. “Let’s go from one million voices to ten million voices to a hundred million voices,” she stated.

Ms. Theresa Kilbane, from UNICEF, stated the importance of addressing the unfinished business of the MDGs to fulfil children’s rights around the world, but also to pay attention to the issues that were not addressed in this set of goals. As the MY World survey has shown, children are calling for survival challenges in health, nutrition, water and sanitation to be met, but also for good governance and protection from violence. She further highlighted the efforts of UNICEF and other child-focused organizations to jointly advocate for children’s issues in the post-2015 process. To bring the voices of children into the discussion, UNICEF is working at the country level with children from across the world and from different backgrounds. One example of this work is Uganda’s U-Report, as part of its efforts to raise the voices of children and young people, as actors for change in the issues that affect their communities.

Ms. Ivana Savic, organising partner of the Major Group on Children and Youth, focused on the questions of why children need to be engaged in the post-2015 process, and of how to make that happen. She remarked on the need to invest more time and resources to listen to the voices of children, and have them taken into account. Participation requires child-friendly and age-appropriate information; it requires children being consulted; and it requires that children actually influence the decision-making processes in which they engage. “We need to ensure the participation of children in the post-2015 process, not only as a matter of political commitment, but as a right,” she said.

Andrew Johnson, Deputy Secretary General of ChildFund Alliance, thanked all the panellists and particularly Ms. Mohammed and Ms. Woods, congratulating them for their efforts to bring the views of citizens to bear, in New York and capitals throughout the world. Mr. Johnson presented the results of ChildFund Alliance's efforts to capture 6,500 votes of children for MY World, through one-on-one interviews, and particularly highlighted children's prioritization of protection against crime and violence. "When you examine the other top priorities, protection from violence and exploitation is the issue children want to be added to the MDGs agenda," he said.

Mr. Johnson then proceeded to present the results of ChildFund Alliance's study on the views of over 1,300 children on violence and exploitation. In these focus groups discussions, the top three forms of violence and exploitation identified by children were sexual violence, child labour and physical and humiliating punishment. Further, the top three calls to world leaders were to create and enforce legislation against violence; to fund and run awareness campaigns at all levels; and to ensure offenders are punished so that children feel safe. "Children have made it clear that we should not miss this once-in-a-generation opportunity to make them free from violence and exploitation," he concluded.



Ambassador Signe Burgstaller reads a statement on behalf of the Government of Sweden.

On behalf of the Government of Sweden, **Ambassador Burgstaller** highlighted that violence against children is a serious obstacle to development and to fulfilling the MDGs. She pointed out that Governments have a legal obligation to address the proliferation of violence against children, and to protect children from all forms of violence, abuse and exploitation. This requires working in partnership and resources, as the successful experience of Sweden has shown. "Preventing and responding to violence and exploitation is essential to ensure children's right to survival, development and well-being. And we must continue to work together to ensure that the elimination of all forms of violence is included in the post-2015 development agenda," she concluded.

The panellists then answered questions from the audience, which included children, as well as representatives from Governments, UN entities, and civil society organizations.