

ChildFund Alliance's Response to UNDG's Report on Post-2015 Consultations:

The Global Conversation Begins: Emerging Views for a New Development Agenda

Introduction

ChildFund Alliance is a worldwide alliance of children's development organisations, working in 58 countries to improve the lives of vulnerable and excluded children, help them overcome poverty and achieve their rights. We welcome the release by the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) of the report on the initial findings of the different consultation modalities around the post-2015 development framework, The Global Conversation Begins: Emerging Views for a New Development Agenda.

We fully support the open and transparent consultative process that the UNDG has led and implemented for the past year. This process will empower communities throughout the world, and foster a sense of ownership that will be fundamental for the success of the post-2015 development framework.

We welcome the fact that the report highlights the currency of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the foresight of the Millennium Declaration, which explicitly envisioned a world where the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) would be fully implemented. To realize this vision the issues of violence and exploitation perpetrated against children must be addressed. For the international community to finish the job, it will be essential to reach those who are furthest from national averages and baselines.

Communities and children themselves are calling for actions to create a world free from violence and exploitation. Given the prominence and weight that this issue has been given in the various consultative mechanisms, including the High-Level Panel's outreach activities and different thematic consultations, we recommend that it be more explicitly included in the narrative that is shaping the post-2015 development framework.

The greater prominence of violence and exploitation perpetrated against children would be consistent with the widespread call to recommit to the foundational principles of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the CRC, and the Millennium Declaration.

The Millennium Declaration and the MDGs

Whilst the MDGs do not relate to reducing violence and exploitation of children, the Millennium Declaration acknowledges pervasive violence in all its forms as a hindrance to development. Protection of the world's most vulnerable populations, including children, is at the heart of the agreements that underlie the MDGs. In this sense, the Millennium Declaration commits Member States to "encourage the ratification and full implementation

of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its optional protocols on the involvement of children in armed conflict and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.”¹

Freedom from violence and exploitation for all children is one of the underpinning rights of the CRC. And indeed its full implementation –as called for by the Millennium Declaration– depends on addressing several child protection issues: preventing family separation (Article 9); ensuring family reunification across borders (Article 10); stopping the illicit transfer of children (Article 11); protecting children from violence, injury, abuse, neglect, maltreatment or exploitation (Article 19); reviewing and ensuring appropriate and alternative care (Article 20); protecting children from economic exploitation and hazardous work (Article 32); protecting children within juvenile justice systems (Article 37); protecting children in armed conflict, including recruitment (Article 38); and ensuring recovery and reintegration (Article 40).

We agree with the UNDG’s assessment of “freedom from insecurity and violence” as a fundamental issue for development, but one that was crucially omitted by the current development framework.²

Freeing children from violence and exploitation is not only part of the Millennium Declaration, but also an issue of great importance for finishing the job initiated by the MDGs. The UN Task Team on the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda acknowledges this in its *Realizing the Future We Want for All* report, stating that “sustainability also implies ensuring inter-generational justice and a future world fit for children. This entails safeguarding a sustainable future in which children will be able to grow up healthy, well-nourished, resilient, well-educated, culturally sensitive and protected from violence and neglect.”³

Consultations: What people are saying?

The inclusive and open process that the UNDG has led for the past year, with online and offline consultations and outreach activities to engage citizens and stakeholders throughout the world, is not only an acknowledgement of the lessons yielded by the MDGs experience, but also a once-in-a-generation opportunity to foster true ownership and facilitate the implementation and accountability of whatever framework is agreed upon.

ChildFund Alliance is committed to helping the voices of children reach decision-makers in Governments and multilateral institutions. To this purpose, we coordinated a series of focus group discussions with child-led organisations to gather children’s views on their own protection from violence and exploitation.

¹ United Nations General Assembly, Res. A/55/L.2 United Nations Millennium Declaration, para. 26.

² United Nations Development Group, *The Global Conversation Begins: Emerging Views for a New Development Agenda*, p. 3.

³ UN Task Team on the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda, *Realizing the Future We Want for All: Report to the Secretary-General*, para. 64.

Results from this child-led process indicate the importance that children and young people place on addressing violence and exploitation perpetrated against them and/or their peers. Consistently in all focus group discussions, participating children expressed the need to eliminate all forms of violence and exploitation, as they constitute obstacles to the exercise of their fundamental freedoms –i.e. of expression, of movement, etc. Throughout the world, children are calling for stricter laws to address violence and exploitation, and for safer communities, neighbourhoods and schools.

This is certainly in line with the results obtained from UNMC's MY World survey, in which children between the ages of 5-17 have consistently ranked protection against crime and violence as one of the top priorities they would like the post-2015 development framework to address. Particularly significant is the fact that violence is a priority for over 50% of participating children in all continents –the Americas, Asia, Europe, and Oceania–, except Africa –where nonetheless a larger number of votes have been cast in this sense.⁴

Moreover, as the World We Want searchable database reveals, the issue of violence and exploitation perpetrated against children also features in the outputs from national and thematic consultations.

For example, from 17 December 2012 to 18 January 2013, UNICEF and UN Women conducted an online consultation on Young People and Inequalities, in which hundreds of children and youth participated. The discussion synopsis highlights that “human rights and the protection of those rights was [a] thread that ran through many of the responses.” As a result of this process, participating children and youth issued a series of recommendations for the post-2015 development framework, among which there is the recommendation to “protect human rights of girls and advance gender equality, especially from all forms of child abuse, violence, exploitation, trafficking, and work towards the elimination of harmful practices.”⁵ The Summary Report of the Global Public Consultation on Addressing Inequalities echoes this claim and explicitly acknowledges that “gender-based violence and violence against children, LGBTI people, ethnic minorities and others require integrated efforts to ensure full legal protection, properly implemented protection and response services, and measures to reduce the incidence of violence.”⁶

Furthermore, in the frame of the thematic consultation on Violence, Conflict and Disaster, over 150 delegates from 32 countries met in Panama City, Panama, for a two-day meeting on Violence, Citizen Security and the Post-2015 Development Agenda. In the outcome document, delegates explicitly acknowledge that “many forms of violence are holding back states and societies from fulfilling their development potential including achieving the MDGs,” that “although there has been progress toward many MDG targets [...] violence threatens the sustainability of these gains,” and that “prevention and reduction of violence [...] can yield major development dividends.” In this sense, delegates recommend that the

⁴ Analysis performed by ChildFund Alliance, with disaggregated data from <http://www.myworld2015.org>.

⁵ UNICEF et al., Young People and Inequalities: Online Discussion Synopsis. Available at <http://www.worldwewant2015.org/file/307837/download/334466>.

⁶ UNICEF and UN Women, Synthesis Report on the Global Thematic Consultation on Addressing Inequalities, p. 60. Available at <http://www.worldwewant2015.org/file/299198/download/324584>.

post-2015 development framework contains a standalone goal to “reduce violence, and promote freedom from fear and sustainable peace,” and acknowledges that calls were also made to include a goal on the “protection of children and youth from violence.”⁷

Finally, civil society organisations have consistently brought this issue forth in during the outreach activities at High-Level Panel meetings in Monrovia, Liberia, and Bali, Indonesia. For example, children representatives at the meeting in Monrovia, with the support of ChildFund Alliance and other civil society organisations, came together to issue a declaration on their own priorities for post-2015, among which was an explicit call for “protection from violence, including harmful traditional practices, and exploitation.” This call was replicated by civil society as whole in its communiqué to the High-Level Panel.⁸

Finishing the unfinished business of the MDGs

The UNDG report rightly points out the currency of the Millennium Declaration and the MDGs, as citizens throughout the world have not only highlighted the successes they have achieved in the last decade, but also the challenges that still remain to realize their vision.

ChildFund Alliance calls on Member States and UN entities to continue to build on the progress achieved for children in the areas of child survival, education, gender equality and HIV and AIDS; so that all children, particularly those who suffer the worst deprivations, have access to clean water and sanitation services, to adequate education and healthcare, and to protection and other services necessary for their survival, development and well-being.

The concerted efforts of the international community and National Governments have saved more children than ever before from preventable diseases, and have provided them with access to clean water and sanitation. But if we truly want the survival agenda to be fully achieved, the reality is that we will need to guarantee that children are protected and can engage, grow and thrive as active citizens in their communities, across every stage of their life cycle.

Violations to children’s right to protection from violence and exploitation cut across class, culture, race and religion: they are massive, under-recognized and under-reported

Our call to the international community is to continue to build on the progress achieved for children, but also to address with the same commitment and vigour the issue of violence and exploitation perpetrated against children.

Throughout the world, children are subject to the worst forms of child labour, living and working in the streets; to harmful traditional practices, such as child marriage, and female genital mutilation and cutting; to sexual abuse; to the impact of armed conflict, including

⁷ Global Thematic Consultation on Violence, Citizen Security and the Post-2015 Development Agenda (Panama City, Panama, 31 January-1 February 2013), Key Conclusions. Available at <http://www.worldwewant2015.org/file/306337/download/332698>.

⁸ CSOs Monrovia Consultation for the Post-2015 Development Agenda (Monrovia, Liberia, 30 January-1 February 2013), Outcome Document. Available at <https://docs.google.com/file/d/0BxBatz1AmF7xMWVvaMFE4ck13OUU/edit>.

the use of child soldiers by armed forces and groups; to lack of access to justice, and to unnecessary institutionalization, among others.

Preventing and responding to violence and exploitation is essential to ensuring children's rights to survival, development and well-being. The impact of violence and exploitation is known. Countries with high rates of child labour tend to have low rates of school attendance. Children who study in a violent environment achieve lower academic results than those who do not. A child victim of abuse and exploitation can be affected emotionally, mentally and physically, and his or her ability to learn and socialize can be seriously hampered.

If the post-2015 development framework is to further the positive impacts achieved through the MDGs, and if the next generation of development goals is to finish the job of the current one, violence and exploitation will need to be explicitly included and addressed. In order to further the achievements of MDGs 1 through 6, and reach the most marginalized and vulnerable populations, the post-2015 development framework will require a focus on precisely those groups that are most at risk and in need of protection. Reaching them – those who are furthest from national averages and baselines– ensures the education, health and well-being of all, and is indispensable to achieve the current MDGs.

Without goals and targets that capture the disparate impact on children of violence, exploitation and abuse, there is no way a country will be able to 'get to zero.'

As was recently argued at the High-Level Event on the Prevention of Violence Against Children and Its Place in the Post-2015 Agenda, co-hosted by the Governments of Canada and Liberia, child protection should be a central concern of the next generation of development goals. Without an explicit focus on the prevention of and response to violence and exploitation perpetrated against children, it will be impossible to finish the job of the survival agenda –as exemplified in some of the current goals.

ChildFund Alliance thus calls for a post-2015 development framework that aims to finish the unfinished business of the MDGs, while building on the progress achieved so far, and explicitly acknowledging and addressing the different manifestations of violence and exploitation perpetrated against children.

Conclusion

ChildFund Alliance is convinced of the intrinsic benefits of these consultations, as a means to garner ownership at the grassroots level, and sees in The Global Conversation Begins a great example of the work and leadership the UNDG has displayed in this phase of the post-2015 process.

We are pleased that the report rightly points out the need for the post-2015 development framework to reduce violence and promote freedom from fear, “including the elimination of all forms of violence against women, girls and boys.”⁹

Nonetheless, we would like the following points to be taken into account in future iterations of this report:

- To fully realise the vision of the Millennium Declaration and to finish the job that the MDGs began, the post-2015 development agenda should explicitly recognise and address the issues of violence and exploitation perpetrated against children.
- Given the fact that communities and children themselves are calling for actions to create a world free from violence and exploitation, we recommend that this issue be more explicitly included in the narrative that is shaping the post-2015 development framework.

⁹ United Nations Development Group, *The Global Conversation Begins: Emerging Views for a New Development Agenda*, p. 36.