

Communiqué

A Call to Identify Solutions and Take Action to Tackle Child Poverty and Inequality in Africa

We, the participants of the International Conference on “**Putting Children First: Identifying Solutions and Taking Action to Tackle Poverty and Inequality in Africa**” gathered in Addis Ababa, 23-25 October 2017, to deliberate on solutions for fighting child poverty and inequality in Africa, drawing on numerous research and practical experiences presented at the Conference.

We highly appreciate, from the outset, the commitment of African Governments to foster an Africa Fit for Children. This has been demonstrated through the adoption of Africa’s Agenda for Children 2040 and other regional and global development frameworks, which include clear calls for combating child poverty. We also commend the achievements made so far in enhancing the survival of Africa’s children, improving access to healthcare and education services, quantifying the extent of child poverty, and reducing the impacts on children of the vulnerabilities faced by poor families.

These positive developments notwithstanding, we note, with great concern that:

- **Africa will account, over the next 15 years, for a fast-rising share of the world’s children in extreme poverty.** Reversing this trend, and ensuring successful entrance to the workforce, requires urgent action to fulfil the promise of Africa’s children, adolescents, and young people through expanding opportunities and addressing deprivations. Such action can unlock vast economic and social dividends.
- **Children across the world are the people most likely to be poor.** Children are also those most affected and deprived – often in lifelong ways – by poverty’s many faces. Confronting child poverty should therefore be seen as an ethical and practical necessity and a central component of national efforts to realize the rights of all children, girls and boys alike. It is also essential to breaking the intergenerational cycle of poverty and to promoting future prosperity for all.
- **Poverty affects girls and boys in both visible and immediately measurable ways** – death, malnutrition, poor health, lack of success in school, harmful labour and an overall poor quality of life – **and also in unseen ways**, through its psychosocial impacts. Children widely internalize the shame and stigma they are often made to feel, including among peers and members of the communities in which they live. This can lead to depression and low self-esteem which reduce life-chances. The psychosocial aspects of child poverty need to be better understood in policies and programmes.
- **Poverty is reinforced by inequalities** which are based on a wide range of factors - including gender, economic status, disability, geography and lack of access to basic services and other essential resources. **These inequalities deeply affect the life-chances of children in the poorest families.** While awareness and understanding of “intersecting inequalities” has grown, further insights are needed into how they can best be responded to.

Effective responses to child poverty are both available and affordable, increasingly rooted in Africa’s own experience. Child-sensitive approaches to social protection and the equitable provision of basic services to reach every child have now been widely tested and proven by African countries. We realise, however, that there is still much room and urgency for

improvement, prioritization and scaling up for universal access to these programmes. Learning about what works and the development of innovative solutions for children in poverty are needed, most of all, in places where there is instability, conflict and weak institutional capacity to deliver.

We therefore recommend the following six priority measures to combat child poverty; and **call upon** African governments, with their national and international partners, to take urgent action to implement them and improve the lives of children languishing in poverty, in the light of the huge challenges and opportunities facing African children today and in the spirit of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development of “leaving no one behind”:

1. *Recognize child poverty* as an explicit priority area in national strategies, policies and programmes, and as a distinct component of the struggle, in Africa as elsewhere, to eliminate poverty in all its dimensions. This will provide a basis for prosperous, equitable societies and sustainable national development in future generations.
2. *Develop programmes specifically targeted* to address poverty and deprivations among girls and boys at all stages of childhood. Proven initiatives include: child-sensitive social protection that is universal and that effectively reaches the poorest children and families; the delivery of basic services, including for early childhood, health, nutrition and education, that ensure access for the most marginalised children and population groups; and programmes aimed at secure transitions of adolescents and young people to adulthood with regard to education, decent work, family life and managing their aspirations.
3. *Measure child poverty in its various dimensions*. Routine national and local assessment and reporting on child poverty, as part of overall SDG monitoring, will be central to supporting progress. The ‘invisible’ impacts of poverty on girls and boys, such as shame and stigma, also need much greater research and understanding. In all these efforts, it is vital to seek and listen to the voices and views of children themselves, and their caregivers, and involve them as key stakeholders.
4. *Strengthen existing national information systems* to focus on and distinguish the situation of the poorest families and most deprived children. National statistical systems need to be invested in and supplemented by cost-effective, locally-led innovations that address pressing gaps in information and knowledge. In doing so, particular emphasis should be given to information about children with disabilities, the psychosocial impacts of poverty, children affected by conflict and instability, those living without family care, and other children who are “invisible and uncounted”.
5. *Strengthen research and analysis* on the many dimensions and causes of child poverty, in order to inform and motivate policy action. Every opportunity should be taken to build networks of learning on the causes of poverty and inequality among Africa’s children and young people, and how their rights can practically be realized.
6. *Establish an African Child Poverty Centre* in Africa led by African researchers and supported by other associated networks. Such a Centre could focus on: local, national and cross-sectoral solutions; boosting knowledge and monitoring of children in poverty; and strengthening the linkages of research and evidence to policy, in order to mobilize decision-making and action for the rights of the poorest children.

The Conference was hosted by a unique partnership of the Comparative Research Programme on Poverty (CROP), the Ethiopian Centre for Child Research (ECCR) at the Ethiopian Development Research Institute (EDRI), the ESRC-DFID Impact Initiative for International Development Research, the Ethiopia Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MoWCA), the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and the Global Coalition to End Child Poverty, including the African Child Poverty Forum (ACPF), the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), the Partnership for Economic Policy (PEP), Save the Children, UNICEF and Young Lives.

