



## Open letter from child-focused agencies to the Co-Chairs and Members of the UN Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals regarding the release of their 'Focus Areas' Paper.

**12 March 2014, New York** – ChildFund Alliance, Plan International, Save the Children, SOS Children's Villages and World Vision jointly welcome the "Focus Areas" report from the Member States of the UN Open Working Group (OWG) on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), released on the 21<sup>st</sup> of February. We look forward to your further articulation of a people-centered framework, integrated across all dimensions of sustainable development and human progress.

First, we commend the UN Open Working Group for beginning the formidable task of pulling together the thousands of inputs for the SDGs into one concise document. We know this is not an easy task. Your swiftness, transparency and level of ambition are appreciated.

We are encouraged to see several issues of critical importance for children reflected in the document, for example: *elimination of preventable child and maternal deaths, ensuring food security and nutrition and eradication of hunger, universal access to and quality of education and reduction of crime, violence, abuse, exploitation, including against children and women.*

We also note the strong focus on promoting equality through **empowering and inclusion of marginalized groups, including indigenous peoples, minorities, migrants, and refugees, persons with disabilities, older persons, children and youth.**

Additionally, the recognition that poverty eradication is an **overriding priority and necessary condition for sustainable development** is a critical distinction.

As we are all aware however, there are still many challenges we face in seeing a transformative agenda – anchored by the principles of human rights, equality and sustainability – come to fruition.

Equitable human development is rooted in child development. The life opportunities to which every child has a right are the foundations of sustainable development. Transformative human development

starts in the earliest years of a person's life – investing in children has individual benefits, but also social and economic benefits for all. In crafting the normative framework that will underpin the future SDGs, children must be at the center. Equitable human development goes beyond including children's "issues" in certain goals, targets and indicators. It is also the recognition that ensuring all children are safe, protected, cared for, healthy, well-nourished, well-educated and get the best start in life is a prerequisite to sustainable, peaceful and prosperous societies.

A framework that shows this understanding of the **centrality of children** would ensure that, for example:

- A goal on poverty eradication or promoting equality includes social protection measures that directly improve the child's safety and well-being;
- A goal on food security and nutrition includes targets on nutritional growth and maternal care and feeding practices;
- A goal on employment and decent work includes provisions so that workers with family responsibilities do not have to choose between a job and the quality care of their children;
- A goal on peaceful and non-violent societies includes a target on eliminating violence, abuse and neglect of children;
- A goal on governance includes provisions for the meaningful participation of children and young people in development planning, implementation, and monitoring.

On the issue of poverty -- in all its intersecting and multidimensional forms -- we strongly recommend that the UN Open Working Group's final report includes a specific provision to ensure all goals, targets and indicators are monitored and evaluated by the progress made across all social groups, especially marginalized and at-risk groups, including the most vulnerable children. Data disaggregation is a key element to achieving more equitable progress and outcomes, which will only be successful through investment in robust civil registration and vital statistics systems at the national level.

The ***Means of Implementation*** for the next agenda are also critical to its success. We note that ***trade, financing for sustainable development, capacity building, and development and transfer of environmentally sound technologies*** are specifically listed as strategies for implementing the next agenda. However, the centrality of investing in people as ***a fundamental*** strategy must not be left out. People – especially all children and young people -- must be equipped with the skills, knowledge and confidence to deal with the challenges and seize the opportunities of today and the future. Furthermore, they must be empowered and enabled to hold governments accountable for equitable progress at national and local levels through participatory and people-led monitoring of the new framework.

The UN Open Working Group faces the dual challenge of crafting an agenda that is comprehensive yet concise – as well as transformational and inspirational. This can be achieved by building on the strengths as well as the lessons learned from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), deepening commitments to those issues covered by the MDGs but also addressing issues distinctly absent from that framework. We have noted that Focus Area 19 includes many of the issues falling into the latter category – including governance, rule of law, justice and human security. If these issues are not boldly

and directly addressed in the next framework through explicit targets, all other efforts towards development outcomes will be compromised.

Finally, the inter-linkages and dependencies across all focus areas must be supported by a unifying conceptual and organizing framework. For example, achievements in sustainable economic growth are highly dependent on addressing the structural causes of inequality, not only on investments in infrastructure. Furthermore, this framework must reflect how all issues will affect children – and vice versa. An agenda that puts people – beginning with children – at the center will be an agenda that best serves the planet and all its inhabitants, now and in the future.

For further information, please see ***Recommendations for a Post-2015 Development Agenda*** “***Recapturing the vision of a ‘World Fit For Children’*** [Position Paper](#) and [Key Messages](#) developed by **ChildFund Alliance, Plan International, Save the Children, SOS Children's Villages, UNICEF and World Vision.**