

ChildFund Alliance's Response to the HLP's Report to the UN Secretary-General:

A New Global Partnership: Eradicate Poverty and Transform Economies through Sustainable Development

Introduction

ChildFund Alliance is a worldwide alliance of children's development organizations, 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 of the report of the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, appointed by the UN Secretary-General, and highly commend the efforts of its Members and its Secretariat to outline an ambitious yet achievable development agenda post 2015.

Furthermore, we congratulate them for the open and transparent outreach process that has led to the report, including the MY World survey. All these efforts have made great inroads in the empowerment of citizens, including children and communities throughout the world, fostering the sense of ownership that will be fundamental for the successful implementation of the post-2015 development framework.

The report's vision of eradicating poverty in all its forms is an imperative for the next generation of sustainable development goals, and we welcome the articulation of the transformative shifts outlined therein to achieve these goals.

We welcome and bring attention to the illustrative goals and targets on birth registration, child marriage, disaster risk reduction, education, nutrition, preventable child deaths, and violence against girls and women. Particularly, we embrace the High-Level Panel's proposal for targeted action on early child development, through pre-primary education, and on eliminating all forms of violence against children. If enacted, these illustrative goals will have a major impact on the lives of billions of children throughout the world.

The High-Level Panel's recognition that children are particularly vulnerable to violence, exploitation and abuse, and their proposal of a target to eliminate all forms of violence against them is a major breakthrough for children to be free from violence and exploitation.

As the High-Level Panel report has been and as the Secretary-General's report will be paramount in defining the contours of the inter-governmental discussion about the post-2015 development agenda, we would like the following points to be taken into account:

- Violence against children occurs everywhere and cuts across class, culture, ethnicity, race, socio-economic status and religion.
- Children need to feature more prominently in the narrative that is beginning to form the contours of the post-2015 agenda, as they will be drivers and stakeholders of the five transformative shifts for which the High-Level Panel so vehemently calls.

- It is necessary to differentiate between children and youth, as two distinct constituencies with their own aspirations, claims and needs; and while they sometimes converge, their divergences must be also given their due attention.

Violence against children in the High-Level Panel report

ChildFund Alliance is committed to supporting the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), through efforts in over 50 countries in the Americas, Africa, Asia and Eastern Europe. However, for the post-2015 process, our global advocacy efforts have been focused on ensuring that whatever framework is agreed upon by Member States continues to build upon the successes for children of the MDGs and explicitly addresses the different forms of violence and exploitation perpetrated against children.

In its report, the High-Level Panel argues that “freedom from fear, conflict and violence is the most fundamental human right and the essential foundation for building peaceful and prosperous societies.”¹ In this sense, we regard the High-Level Panel’s targeted attention to violence against children in all its forms as a fundamental in bringing about the desired outcomes for the post-2015 agenda.

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 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 all forms of violence and exploitation, in all contexts, 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.

Furthermore, we are pleased that the High-Level Panel has listened to the voices of children and their families, who in the open and transparent process set out by different UN entities, including the outreach activities of the High-Level Panel, have called for actions to ensure that children are free from violence and exploitation.²

Throughout the consultation process, children have placed a high premium on addressing violence and exploitation perpetrated against them and/or their peers. Consistently they have expressed the need to eliminate all forms of violence and exploitation, as they constitute obstacles to the exercise of their fundamental freedoms. They have also called

¹ High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda (2013), *A New Global Partnership: Eradicate Poverty and Transform Economies through Sustainable Development*, p. vii.

² “Civil society Monrovia communiqué” (30 January 2013). Available at <https://docs.google.com/file/d/0BxBatz1AmF7xMwVvAMFE4ck13OUU/edit?usp=sharing>. Accessed June 1, 2013.

for stricter laws to address violence and exploitation, and for safer communities, neighbourhoods and schools.

Results from MY World survey, which has garnered the voices of almost 600,000 people in 194 countries, also indicate that children between the ages of 5-17 consistently rank protection against crime and violence as one of their top priorities.³

A greater presence of children in the narrative

It is encouraging to see that children are one of the central concerns of the High-Level Panel's illustrative goals and targets for the post-2015 development agenda.

While we acknowledge the centrality of women and youth to the post-2015 development agenda, it is equally important that children across life stages not only participate in the agenda-setting process, according to their evolving capacities, and enjoy the dividends of its outcome, but are also given their due prominence in the narratives that are beginning to form the contours of the post-2015 agenda.

Given the fact that that the 68th session of the UN General Assembly will be crucial in establishing the narrative framework for the post-2015 agenda, we would like to see a stronger presence of children therein; one that adequately reflects the active role that they are already playing and that does justice to the one they are bound to play during the implementation stages.

Ensuring the development, protection, survival and well-being of children is one of the major drivers of sustainable development, but for this to be effective we must also ensure that children are recognized as actors, participants and stakeholders from the formulation to the implementation and monitoring of whatever agenda is agreed upon.

Indeed, they will be crucial in bringing about each of the High-Level Panel's five transformative shifts; in ensuring that no person, regardless of their condition, is denied universal human rights and basic economic opportunities; in integrating once and for all the economic, environmental and social dimensions of sustainability; in generating the much needed quantum leap and a paradigm shift in economic thinking and practice; in building peace and effective, open and accountable institutions; and forging a new global partnership for development.

Children and the five transformative shifts

a) Leaving no one behind

In its report, the High-Level Panel calls for a transformative shift to ensure that no person, regardless of their condition, is denied universal human rights and basic economic

³ ChildFund Alliance (2013), *Voices of girls and boys in shaping the post-2015 development agenda: Child-led organisations talk about being free from violence and exploitation and an analysis of MY World data from children*. For updated results see <http://data.myworld2015.org>.

opportunities; that development actions help “not just the largest number of people, but the neediest and most vulnerable.”⁴

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, it will require a focus on the most marginalized and vulnerable populations, on precisely those groups that are most at risk and in need of protection.

Children are one of the populations that most disproportionately suffer the consequences of exclusion, inequality and poverty. Children make up more than 50 per cent of the world’s poor,⁵ and poverty takes the lives of 22,000 children under the age of five every single day.⁶ Furthermore, 1 billion children are deprived of one or more services essential to their survival and development: 148 million under the age of five are underweight, 101 million are not attending primary school, and 22 million are not protected from disease by routine immunization.⁷

While violence against children takes place in every society and within every country, the most vulnerable children are at increased risk of being subject to some form of violence. For example, there is a gender element, as girls are more likely to face child marriage, while boys are more vulnerable to the worst forms of child labour and coming into conflict with the law. At the same time, children with disabilities are at a higher risk of violence than their peers; and inequalities in income expose children to exploitation and entering the justice system.

Reaching them (those who are furthest from national averages and baselines) translates into education, health and well-being of all, and is indispensable to achieve the current MDGs. It is the only way to break the poverty cycle and bring intergenerational prosperity and well-being about.

b) Putting sustainable development at the core

The High-Level Panel also calls for a halt to the alarming pace of climate change and environmental degradation, by integrating once and for all the economic, environmental and social dimensions of sustainability.

Children are the most affected by emergencies related to climate change and environmental degradation. They may lack food, healthcare and shelter. They are more likely to be affected by disease or injury. Their emotional and physical development may be halted. They may not receive basic literacy and other essential life skills, and their education could be interrupted.

⁴ High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda (2013), *A New Global Partnership: Eradicate Poverty and Transform Economies through Sustainable Development*, p. 7.

⁵ UNICEF (2005), *State of the World’s Children: Childhood under Threat*.

⁶ UNICEF (2010), *State of the World’s Children: Celebrating 20 Years of the Convention on the Rights of the Child*.

⁷ Data taken from <http://www.childinfo.org>. Accessed on June 1, 2013.

In emergencies, children are often abandoned or orphaned, or become separated from their families. There is also a risk that with the loss of paperwork, such as birth certificates and proof of identity, they may lose their legal rights.

Indeed, children are one of the main stakeholders in this transformative shift. Now and in the future, they are the ones who stand to lose the most when natural disasters strike.

But for this transformative shift to occur, children need to be placed at the centre of the integration of the economic, environmental and social dimensions of sustainability. For example, children's involvement in disaster risk reduction (DRR) activities has been shown to have a positive impact beyond children themselves, with ripple effects that extend throughout the community and making it safer as a whole. Furthermore, children also often play the most active role in environmental protection activities and initiatives, demonstrating their awareness of the fact that they will be the ones who inherit our mistakes.

c) Transforming economies for jobs and inclusive growth

A quantum leap and a paradigm shift in economic thinking and practice are indeed needed, by embracing sustainable patterns of consumption and production, as well as by ensuring that every citizen –regardless of their age and condition– has access to the full range of services needed to grow and prosper.

When it comes to children, the stakes are particularly high. It has been amply demonstrated that guaranteeing and realizing children's rights to survival, development, protection and well-being is an investment in the future of society in general. Without access to quality education and healthcare, and without protection from violence and exploitation, today's children will not be able to productively join tomorrow's workforce, and reap the benefits of the proposed economic transformation.

But children will not only face the effects of our economic failures in the future. They are experiencing them in the present. A quantum leap, such as the one for which the High-Level Panel calls, requires addressing the issue of child labour. According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), approximately 215 million children are involved in some sort of work that deprives them from their childhood, dignity and potential; 115 million of which are involved in the worst forms of labour –including pornography, prostitution and slavery.

While not all forms of work done by children are considered prejudicial for the well-being of the child, in some cases it can deprive children of an education and the opportunity to acquire skills, and can also result in physical disabilities that further limit the earning potential of the child. Indeed, child labour is a potential cause of poverty for children.

The envisioned transformation will simply not occur if the issue of child labour, with a priority on the worst forms of child labour, is not explicitly addressed by the post-2015 development agenda.

d) Building peace and effective, open and accountable institutions

Violations to children's right to protection from violence and exploitation are massive, under-recognized and under-reported. Enhancing governance through effective, open and accountable institutions, especially at the local and national levels, can contribute to change this situation drastically. In terms of violence and exploitation against children, a key shift in governance is ensuring that all children, irrespective of ethnicity, class, gender or race, are registered at birth. Registration is not only the gateway to citizenship, but also key in the implementation of child protection services to prevent and respond to violence and exploitation against children.

The High-Level Panel is right to advocate for free and universal legal identity. Indeed, without guaranteeing this right (as per Article 7 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child) it will be impossible to put in place the aforementioned services.

Furthermore, good governance –one that is accountable, participative and transparent– can also contribute to successful child protection systems by leading to the enactment and enforcement of an appropriate legal framework and national strategy; an effective and efficient coordinating body and subnational protection services, with a well-trained workforce and adequate resourcing; enhanced child and community participation mechanisms; and data collection, and monitoring and evaluation systems. Particular attention should be paid to the participation of children in the formulation, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation of these policies and programmes to address violence and exploitation.

But good governance is not only a matter of institutions, as the proper functioning of these institutions also requires an active citizenry. Citizens are fundamental for accountability and participation, and it is only through them that good governance can be effectively operationalized.

Poverty, exclusion and violence can hamper children's active and engaged exercise of citizenship in adulthood. As a general rule with notable exceptions, it can be argued that children that experience them today will most likely not become the active and engaged citizens that good governance requires. Ensuring children's rights to survival, development, protection and well-being constitutes an investment in the future enhancement of governance –and its correlate effects on addressing inequalities and poverty alleviation today.

The High-Level Panel is right to envision that if the post-2015 development agenda wants to ensure successful democratic governance for the future, all forms of violence against children must be eliminated.

An active and engaged citizenry contributes to thriving economies, polities and societies. In this sense, we call for the continued engagement and participation involvement of children, particularly the most marginalized and vulnerable, throughout the remaining stages of the formulation of the post-2015 development agenda, as well as in its implementation, and monitoring and evaluation.

e) Forging a new global partnership

We are pleased with the High-Level Panel's recognition that any future framework should be "grounded in the voices of people, and the priorities identified during consultations, especially children, youth, women and marginalized and excluded populations."⁸

Indeed, this will be the first step to forge the new global partnership for which the High-Level Panel calls, and for building the shared vision that will be fundamental for the implementation of the next generation of development goals.

But for children's aspirations and needs –as voiced by them– to be taken seriously something more has to happen. This begins by challenging some of the assumptions that underlie the preconception of children as passive subjects; by shedding light on how children embody a powerful and transformative agency that is evinced in the way they advocate for themselves and address some of the most pressing issues they and their communities face.

All this needs to be reflected in the narrative that is giving its initial shape to the post-2015 development agenda.

Distinction between children and youth

Whilst we acknowledge that the High-Level Panel attempted to include children in the narrative by the use of the term "young people" this can often be interpreted as pertaining only to youth, and could be misinterpreted as excluding children. We define children as outlined in the CRC as persons up to the age of 18 years.

It is necessary to distinguish between children and youth, and acknowledge the commonalities, but also the divergences in their claims and needs. As the narrative continues to develop, we recommend that when issues directly impact children differently than youth this be made explicit for both population groups.

We welcome the call for the data revolution. The clearer distinction between children and youth will be important for the calls for adequately disaggregated data of the post-2015 development agenda, and ensure greater accountability and reliable monitoring and evaluation systems.

⁸ High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda (2013), *A New Global Partnership: Eradicate Poverty and Transform Economies through Sustainable Development*, p. 14.