

A Child-Focused paper for submission to the 2017 HLPF
on the theme “eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world”

Executive Summary (Final Word Count: 600 words)

Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity is possible if children, especially those most at risk of being left behind such as girls, refugees, ethnic minorities, children without parental care, children with disabilities, and indigenous and migrant children, are prioritized.

Measuring progress on the SDGs for children will require more high-quality disaggregated data. Member States should align existing household surveys with the SDGs, invest in data collection on children living outside of households, and support innovations to allow children to collect data. Member States at the HLPF should include child-specific data from existing mechanisms and report on progress for marginalized groups of children.

Child participation in accountability processes is critical but remains more rhetoric than reality. To ensure meaningful participation, Member States should ensure accountability mechanisms are child-sensitive with child-friendly materials, spaces and processes that allow children to participate in monitoring the SDGs and in voluntary national reviews. At the global level, Member States should ensure HLPF meetings are open, inclusive and interactive, supporting child inputs and representatives on official delegations. Member States should also support an annual intergovernmental forum on children and the SDGs to hear children’s views.

For Goal 1, eradicating poverty will require a focus on ending child poverty since children represent a disproportionate percentage of the world’s poor. Member States should reaffirm their commitment to end child poverty, support national statistical offices and others to better measure child poverty, and report on national actions to address child poverty, especially those targeting the poorest children. These should include expanding access to child and gender-sensitive social protection programs and quality basic services, and addressing the interrelated causes of child poverty such as violence against women and children.

For Goal 2, investing in nutrition for children and adolescents is an investment in achieving all of the SDGs. Member States should mainstream nutrition-specific interventions within other sectors and make other sectors more nutrition-sensitive, implement an equity-based approach to nutrition, ensure national statistical systems provide disaggregated data every 3-5 years on the prevalence of stunting and malnutrition among children under age five, and promote the monitoring of key nutrition indicators at local levels, such as breastfeeding and anemia.

For Goal 3, improving the health of children, adolescent girls and women will be critical to eradicate poverty. Member States should address inequities in health outcomes by prioritizing the policies and services that benefit the most marginalized, strengthen national and community health systems, including emergency preparedness, response and resilience, and promote integrated, multi-sectoral policies and interventions that go beyond the health sector, such as ending violence against children. They should also ensure children and adolescents who have experienced trauma have access to psychological support.

For Goal 5, there can be no prosperity without gender equality. Member States should provide legal equality to women and girls, reaffirm their commitment to adolescent girls and their potential, and adopt legislation establishing 18 years as the minimum age of marriage for girls and boys. They should also ensure national budgets are gender-sensitive with resources allocated to end child marriage, end gender-based violence and improve girls’ education, while improving reporting on expenditures and programs that increase gender equality.

For Goal 17, investing in children is essential to ensure no child is left behind. Member States should improve reporting on expenditures and programs that impact children, increase investments on new child-focused SDG priorities and adopt principles of results-based reporting for spending on children focusing on equity and effectiveness. They should also foster public awareness of the budgeting process, undertake systematic equity gap analysis to understand which children are lagging behind and where, and support multi-stakeholder partnerships and initiatives that benefit children.

Position Paper (Final Word Count: 2,787 words)

Introduction

1. This paper is submitted on behalf of the following organizations, ChildFund Alliance, Plan International, Save the Children, and SOS Children's Villages, for consideration at the 2017 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.
2. *Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world* is possible, but only if the views of children, especially those furthest behind, and the issues that impact them are considered and addressed. This paper provides recommendations on the following set of SDGs to be reviewed in-depth – Goals 1, 2, 3, 5 and 17 – as well as the enabling factors essential to achieve the SDGs for all children – disaggregated data and participation.

Measuring progress for children

3. Measuring progress on the SDGs for children, especially for the groups of children most at risk of being left behind such as girls, refugees, ethnic minorities, children without parental care, children with disabilities, and indigenous and migrant children, will require more and better data. It will also require mechanisms such as the implementation of interim equity targets to measure whether the furthest behind groups are on track to meet SDG targets.
4. According to a recent UNICEF report, *Is Every Child Counted?*, sufficient disaggregated data is available for only half of the child-focused SDG indicators. In the case of SDG 1 indicators directly relevant to children living in poverty, data is available for less than 50% of all countries, with no relevant stratified data available for factors such as location, wealth, age or sex.¹ For vulnerable groups of children, official data is often not collected, making them invisible to policy makers.
5. Without high-quality disaggregated data, it will be impossible for governments to track progress for children or address the complex challenges facing excluded groups of children. A lack of disaggregated data by age and sex, in particular, will impede the assessment of how policies, including those aimed at eradicating poverty, reach or affect vulnerable children. In addition, data that does not reflect the realities of excluded groups of children can inadvertently become a factor for further exclusion.
6. To improve the availability and quality of child-focused disaggregated data in line with Target 17.18, Member States should:
 - a. Ensure household surveys, the main source of data for children, are aligned and adapted to the SDGs and the key principles of data disaggregation;

- b. Invest in data collection on the situation of children living in conflict-affected, fragile and vulnerable circumstances, including those living outside of households and without parental care based on “care status”; and
 - c. Promote innovations in technology that support participatory monitoring and accountability and enable children and young people to collect and analyze data.
7. Member States at the 2017 HLPF should also:
- a. Include child-specific data and information in reporting on all goals and targets;
 - b. Report on the policies and programs that have been put in place to address the situation of marginalized groups of children and any progress made; and
 - c. Leverage existing monitoring and reporting mechanisms, such as reporting on the Convention on the Rights of the Child, to reflect progress, or lack thereof, on the SDGs for children.

Ensuring child participation

8. The Convention on the Rights of the Child states that children have the right to participate, while paragraph 51 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognizes children as agents of change and sets itself to be “a platform to channel their infinite capacities.”²
9. Despite these pledges and the benefits that listening and responding to children’s views brings to decision-making and accountability processes, children continue to be excluded from such processes due to their different capacities and requirements for engagement.
10. At a global level, the participation of children in UN processes remains more rhetoric than reality. UN regulations and procedures only allow children 16 years and older to access UN headquarters unaccompanied, while requests for participation often have strict age minimums which exclude children. Further, unlike other groups addressed in the 2030 Agenda, there is no existing mechanism in the ECOSOC system for children to report on progress on child-focused goals and targets.
11. To ensure the meaningful and safe participation of children, Member States should:
- a. Ensure that accountability mechanisms for the 2030 Agenda at all levels are child and gender-sensitive with child-friendly and age-appropriate materials, spaces and processes provided that allow children to participate in monitoring the SDGs;
 - b. At the national level, involve children, especially those who are marginalized or excluded, in processes for the review and implementation of the 2030 Agenda including by:
 - i. Fostering awareness-raising of the SDGs among children and encouraging their regular, active and meaningful participation; and
 - ii. Providing formal and informal opportunities for children to participate in consultations in preparation for voluntary national reviews and reporting on these efforts.
 - c. At the international level, Member States should support children’s participation in the HLPF by:

- i. Ensuring official meetings are open and inclusive with interactive dialogue between Member States and civil society including children;
- ii. Allowing input to the HLPF via a child-friendly online portal;
- iii. Participating in an annual intergovernmental forum on children and the SDGs where children's views on how they are faring in SDG implementation can be heard; and
- iv. Supporting child representatives a part of their official delegation to the HLPF.

Goal 1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere

12. Children represent a disproportionate proportion of the world's poor. The World Bank estimates that 50.2% of all people who live in extreme income poverty are children, with children roughly two times more likely to be extremely income-poor than adults. Girls face a double burden – an estimated 70 percent of the one billion people living in extreme poverty are women and girls.³ Overall, children are more likely to live in poverty than any other group in nearly every country in the world.⁴
13. Children are the most vulnerable to the negative effects of poverty. The consequences of economic poverty among children lead to failures in survival, physical and cognitive growth, learning and child protection, which are often irreversible and passed on through generations.
14. In order to end child poverty, governments will need to take both targeted poverty-reduction actions and seek to tackle the underlying and contributing factors that keep children, especially excluded groups of children, trapped in the cycle of poverty.
15. To end child poverty in support of SDG 1, Member States at the 2017 HLPF should:
- a. Reaffirm their commitment to address poverty among children, as a key building block for sustained development that leaves no one behind;
 - b. Support national statistical offices and grassroots organizations to regularly measure progress on ending child poverty, in all its dimensions, through both traditional methods such as surveys as well as participatory processes which empower girls and boys to participate in accountability;
 - c. Report progress on national actions taken to address child poverty, especially those that target the poorest and most vulnerable groups of children, including:
 - i. Expanding access to child and gender-sensitive social protection programs for children living inside and outside of households, including for children without parental care;
 - ii. Expanding access to equitable and quality basic services that achieve better outcomes for health, learning and nutrition; and
 - iii. Addressing the contributing and interrelated causes of child poverty such as gender-based violence and discrimination, violence against children, and a lack of decent work for caregivers and adolescents.

Goal 2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture

16. Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity will greatly depend on government's ability to address poverty at its root – namely, investing in children's nutrition and overall health. Progress on nutrition will be critical not just to achieve Goal 2 but many other SDGs and targets.
17. Although there has been progress in reducing stunting due to malnutrition, almost one-quarter of children under five years old were stunted in 2015. According to UNICEF, if the current global trajectory continues, 119 million children under five years old will be stunted in 2030.⁵
18. In addition, adolescent girls in poor countries face a high risk of anemia and malnutrition, which can have long-term consequences for their health and that of their children.⁶ In many cases, girls living in poverty and food-insecure households eat only after male family members.
19. To improve nutritional outcomes in support of SDG 2, Member States should:
 - a. Mainstream nutrition-specific interventions within other sectors – especially Water, Sanitation and Hygiene, Early Childhood Development, Alternative Care Systems, Gender, Social Protection, Agriculture and Health – and make other sectors more nutrition-sensitive;
 - b. Implement an equity-based approach to nutrition, including by supporting initiatives that promote education on nutrition and adequate and equitable infant and young child feeding at the household level for both girls and boys;
 - c. Ensure national statistical systems responsible for reporting on nutrition provide disaggregated data every three to five years on the following critical child malnutrition indicators: prevalence of stunting (2.2.1) and prevalence of malnutrition (wasting and overweight) among children under age five (2.2.2);
 - d. Promote the monitoring of other key indicators on nutrition at a local level, such as exclusive breastfeeding in the first 6 months of life, low birthweight, anemia in adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women, and indicators related to complementary foods and feeding for infants 6-23 months, to help track progress towards national goals to improve nutrition.

Goal 3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

20. Similar to nutrition, investments in health and well-being – especially for children, adolescent girls and women – will be critical to eradicate poverty.
21. Despite being among the most important indicators of progress, child and maternal mortality rates remain unacceptably high. Among adolescent girls, maternal mortality remains the second leading cause of death of girls aged 15-19 with 70,000 adolescents in developing countries dying annually of causes related to pregnancy.⁷ Further, self-harm/suicide is now the leading cause of death among adolescent girls aged 15-19 according to the World Health Organization.
22. Improving overall health and well-being will require governments to address related SDG targets – such as ending violence against women and girls, and children – in an integrated manner. Violence against children contributes to poorer health outcomes with survivors more likely to experience mental and physical health problems such as diabetes, cancer and substance abuse.
23. To improve the health and well-being of children, adolescent girls and women in support of SDG 3, Member States should:

- a. Address inequities in health outcomes and access to health services by prioritizing the policies, programs, services and resources that benefit the most marginalized;
- b. Strengthen national and community health systems, including emergency preparedness, response and resilience, in order to reach and sustain progress for the most marginalized children, adolescents and women;
- c. Promote integrated, multi-sectoral policies and interventions beyond just the health sector, in order to improve overall health outcomes. Multi-sectoral approaches must address underlying challenges to children's, adolescent's and women's health such as violence against women and children, child, early and forced marriage, and gender and age-related barriers to healthcare such as lack of access to sexual and reproductive health information and services; and
- d. Ensure children and adolescents who have experienced traumatic situations such as violence, neglect or abandonment, have access to psychological support.

Goal 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

24. There can be no poverty eradication or prosperity without ensuring that women and girls – over half of the world's population – are treated as equal partners.
25. While progress has been made to reduce discrimination, girls and women continue to face significant discrimination and human rights violations in law, custom and practice.
26. Violence against girls remains prevalent with an estimated 150 million girls under age 18 having experienced rape or other forms of sexual violence.⁸ Other types of harmful practices facing adolescent girls include child, early and forced marriage with approximately 15 million girls married every year before they reach age 18⁹ and female genital mutilation, with the girls at highest risk for female genital mutilation often below the age of 15.
27. In many developing countries, girls perform a higher burden of unpaid domestic labor and care work than their male counterparts which continues to place girls' education and empowerment at risk. An increase in the number of hours spent on household chores correlates with a decline in school attendance for girls.¹⁰
28. In support of SDG 5, Member States should:
 - a. Provide legal equality to women and girls as a critical first step towards ending discrimination, including as it relates to marriage, divorce, inheritance, education and property rights;
 - b. Reaffirm their commitment to adolescent girls, recognizing both their potential to contribute to sustainable development as "agents of change" and the importance of their welfare to achieving key economic and social objectives;
 - c. Adopt legislation establishing 18 years as the minimum age of marriage for both girls and boys;
 - d. Ensure national budgets are gender-sensitive with resources for gender action plans allocated to cover issues such as ending child marriage, ending violence against girls and women, and improving girls' education; and

- e. Improve reporting on expenditures and programs that have direct and indirect impacts on increasing gender equality.

Goal 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development

- 29. Investing in children's quality education, protection, care, health and well-being is the best investment governments can make to fulfil the promises of the 2030 Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda to leave no one and no child behind.
- 30. Promises made to invest in children however, will need to be matched with transparency in child-focused spending. Presently, many governments do not regularly report on how much public expenditure directly or indirectly benefits children, since country budgets tend to be organized by sector and functional area.
- 31. In support of SDG 17, Member States should:
 - a. Improve reporting on expenditures and programs that have direct and indirect impacts on child and adolescent well-being, disaggregated by age and gender;
 - b. Monitor and increase investments on new child-focused SDG priorities that are of a cross-cutting nature but sit less easily within traditional sectoral budgets, such as investments to prevent and respond to violence against children;
 - c. Adopt principles of results-based reporting for spending on children, with a particular focus on equity and effectiveness. For example, governments should track spending that seeks to address disparities in service provision for children, and evaluate the effectiveness of such spending in achieving outcomes for excluded groups of children;
 - d. Carry out public awareness and engagement around the taxation and budgeting process, including through routine budget briefs, fiscal space analysis, analysis of domestic resource mobilization efforts and related advocacy with parliamentarians, civil society including children and media;
 - e. Carry out systematic equity gap analysis to better understand which children are lagging behind in which areas and to determine the underlying causes and bottlenecks; and
 - f. Support multi-stakeholder partnerships that benefit children such as the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children and the Global Coalition to End Child Poverty.

Conclusion

- 32. The 2030 Agenda provides a unique and long overdue opportunity to invest in children and prioritize the foundations that are critical to eradicate poverty and promote shared prosperity. Better data and participation will also be essential to ensure no child is left behind by 2030.
- 33. The above recommendations demonstrate that governments will need to take a multi-pronged and integrated approach to tackling the issues that impact the lives of children. Working together with other countries, subnational governments, the United Nations, civil society and children themselves, we can collectively ensure that children remain at the heart of the success of the SDGs.

¹ UNICEF, *Is every child counted? Status of data for children in the SDGs* (New York: March 2017). Available from: <https://data.unicef.org/resources/every-child-counted-status-data-children-sdgs/>.

² General Assembly resolution 70/1, *Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* A/RES/70/1 (21 October 2015).

³ WHO, “A Recommendation for Poverty Alleviation: Adolescent Girls, the UN Millennium Development Goals and the Post-2015 Development Agenda” (2015). Available from:

http://www.who.int/pmnch/media/press_materials/pr/2013/adolescent_girls_post2015.pdf.

⁴ UNICEF and the World Bank Group, *Ending Extreme Poverty: A Focus on Children*, Briefing Note (New York: 2016).

⁵ UNICEF, “Key Asks and Principles for 2017 National Review Activities: SDG 2: No Hunger and Improved Nutrition” (2017).

Available from: https://www.unicef.org/agenda2030/files/sector_2_pagers_national_reviews_hunger_nutrition.pdf.

⁶ ICRW and 2CV, *I Know. I Want. I Dream: Girls’ Insights for Building a Better World* (London: 2013). Available from:

<http://www.girleffect.org/2015-beyond/making-of/>.

⁷ State of the World Population, *Motherhood in Childhood, Facing the challenge of adolescent pregnancy*, (2013), p. iiiii.

Available from: <http://www.unfpa.org/webdav/site/global/shared/swp2013/EN-SWOP2013-final.pdf>.

⁸ WHO, *Global Estimates of Health Consequences Due to Violence against Children*. Background Paper to the UN Secretary-General’s Study on Violence against Children (2006).

⁹ UNICEF, “Ending Child, early and forced marriage: Progress and Prospects” (2014), p. 6.

¹⁰ The World’s Women, Trends and Statistics, UN Women 2010 and the Journal of Gender and Development, Volume 22, (November 2014).