



a post-2015 world fit for children



UNICEF KEY MESSAGES ON THE POST-2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

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*“We have a collective responsibility to uphold the principles of **human dignity, equality and equity** at the global level. As leaders we have a duty therefore to all the world’s people, especially the most vulnerable and, in particular, **the children of the world**, to whom the future belongs.”ⁱ*

-- *United Nations Millennium Declaration (para 2), UN General Assembly, 2000.*

*“We stress our commitment to create a **world fit for children**, in which sustainable human development, taking into account the best interests of the child, is founded on principles of democracy, equality, non-discrimination, peace and social justice and the universality, indivisibility, interdependence and interrelatedness of all human rights, including the right to development.”ⁱⁱ*

-- *A World Fit for Children (para 5), UN General Assembly, 2002.*

*“**Protect the earth for children**: we must safeguard our natural environment, with its diversity of life, its beauty and its resources, all of which enhance the quality of life, **for present and future generations**. We will give every assistance to protect children and minimize the impact of natural disasters and environmental degradation on them.*

-- *A World Fit for Children (principle 10), UN General Assembly, 2002.*

*Children’s rights and well-being should remain at the centre of the post-2015 agenda. Investment in children is a fundamental means to eradicate poverty, boost shared prosperity, and enhance inter-generational equity. It is also essential for strengthening their ability to reach their potential as productive, engaged, and capable citizens, contributing fully to their families and societies.
Sustainable development starts with safe, healthy and well-educated children.*

--- *Anthony Lake, UNICEF Executive Director, April 2013.*

TOWARDS A POST-2015 WORLD FIT FOR CHILDREN

HEADLINE KEY MESSAGES

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. The Millennium Development Goals have been a success and achieved a lot for children and young people. However they have not fully been met. The unfinished and continuing business of investing in the rights and well-being of children – as well as emerging and neglected issues - must be boldly addressed in a vision of a world fit for children and future generations, with achievable goals for the post-2015 development agenda.
2. Governments should reaffirm their existing commitments – specifically to the Millennium Declaration and to the Convention on the Rights of the Child – to underpin future efforts for inclusive and equitable human progress.
3. Sustainable Development starts with safe, healthy and well-educated children. And safe and sustainable societies are, in turn, essential for children. The post-2015 development agenda must provide comprehensive solutions to advance peace, prosperity and a sustainable world – for both the present and future generations.
4. The new development agenda needs to be universal – relevant for all societies and about all people regardless of where they live.
5. Countries cannot achieve sustained growth and shared prosperity without investing effectively in their people, and above all, in their children.

SUGGESTED ACTIONS

6. Well-defined indicators and targets should be used to track the main disparities in all areas of human development so inequalities can be overcome. As stated by the UN Secretary-General's High Level Panel, "targets will only be considered 'achieved' if they are met for all relevant groups".
7. Monitoring at all levels – national, subnational and local – needs to be strengthened so that evidence can be used to identify and invest in the most disadvantaged, excluded and vulnerable.
8. Children and young people must play a key part in shaping the new development agenda – and in seeing that governments follow through on their commitments.
9. Citizens need to be able to hold their governments accountable for both overall and equitable progress. The new development agenda must include a mechanism allowing this.
10. The post-2015 development agenda must be relevant to all people and responsive to change. It must be especially innovative in tackling the dire risks and uncertainties that children and women face in societies affected by conflict or natural disasters, and in countries where the public sector has limited capacity.

PART 1: KEY MESSAGES ON GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Message 1: The Millennium Development Goals have been a success and achieved a lot for children and young people. However they have not fully met. The unfinished and continuing business of investing in the rights and well-being of children -- as well as emerging and neglected issues -- must be boldly addressed in a vision of a world fit for children and future generations, with achievable goals for the post-2015 development agenda.

For over a decade, the MDGs have inspired development efforts and advocacy –an unprecedented and admirable feat. Their simplicity and measurability, as well as their focus on human development, have helped to set global and national priorities, mobilize resources and focus actions that have benefited many millions of girls, boys and young adults. But there is an unfinished agenda in terms of *goals not yet achieved*, people not yet reached, and *major commitments* in the Millennium Declaration, including to peace and security, not fulfilled. This calls for accelerated efforts between now and 2015, and this will need to continue *well beyond 2015* in many countries and sub-national situations.

Additionally, there are missing elements and emerging issues of importance that must also now be addressed through both national policies and intensified global cooperation. These include: persistent and deepening inequalities and the many groups “left behind,” a changing and unstable climate, environmental degradation, changing population dynamics, vulnerabilities to shocks, inadequate governance and accountability and multiple challenges to human security, including the protection of children.

Bold and ambitious efforts will **continue** to be needed on behalf of children and women, and should be clearly encapsulated in the new post-2015 development agenda:

- *We need to “get to zero” in terms of preventable child and maternal deaths* - as recognized by the UN Secretary-General’s High Level Panel (HLP) on the Post-2015 Agendaⁱⁱⁱ. The *A Promise Renewed*^{iv} Initiative on child survival which involves setting forward targets for reducing child deaths up to 2035, is a major vehicle for achieving this, adding momentum to the UN Secretary-General’s *Every Woman, Every Child*^v movement. It will help the Post-2015 Agenda retain the necessary focus on the fulfillment of the promise and commitment of MDG 4, country by country, as well as helping to complete the commitment of MDG 5.
- The accelerating drive for *HIV-free future generations* – UNAIDS’ *Getting to Zero*^{vi} on new HIV infections and AIDS-related deaths - will be a further centerpiece of the effort to finish the work of the MDGs (MDG 6).
- *Child stunting, child hunger and child poverty* are further major moral and developmental challenges that *must be decisively resolved by all societies* beyond 2015. The *Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN)*^{vii} Initiative is a central effort to achieve this – one of the major means by which countries can complete the unmet commitments made under MDG 1.
- The post-2015 world can only be considered “A World Fit for Children” if we collectively ensure that children everywhere are safe from *violence, exploitation, abuse and neglect*. The protection of children should be an integral part^{viii} of the Post-2015 Agenda – and is a *sine qua non* for just and sustainable future development. This too was clearly recognized by the

Secretary-General's High Level Panel, stating that "freedom from fear, conflict and violence is the most fundamental human right, and the essential foundation for building prosperous societies." The Panel also suggested specific targets to end all forms of violence against children, girls and women, as well as to end child marriage.

Message 2: Governments should reaffirm their existing commitments – specifically to the Millennium Declaration and to the Convention on the Rights of the Child – to underpin future efforts for inclusive and equitable human progress.

There has been inadequate emphasis on and uneven progress in addressing the seven key objectives outlined in the Millennium Declaration. These are: peace, security and disarmament; development and poverty eradication; protecting our common environment; human rights; democracy and good governance; protecting the vulnerable; and meeting the special needs of Africa. While the MDGs have addressed "development and poverty eradication", all of these elements of the Declaration are critical for development progress and for the ensuring of rights under the *Convention of the Rights of the Child*.

Child protection is featured especially prominently in *A World Fit for Children* (adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2002, and reaffirmed by Member States in 2007), and is an essential component of any new framework.

Based on the lessons of the first decade of the 21st Century, in which development goals became "detached" from these normative frameworks and their underpinnings in human rights obligations, the world should use the opportunity of the new, post-2015 agenda to *reaffirm and recommit to these norms and values, as guidelines and inspiration for the pursuit of human progress*. Principles of accountability, participation, universality and non-discrimination should be explicitly recognized for their central relevance to the practical policies and strategies by which development goals are pursued. These principles and their values should both inform and inspire the choices that governments and societies make about their development paths and actions.

Message 3: Sustainable Development starts with safe, healthy and well-educated children. And safe and sustainable societies are, in turn, essential for children. The post-2015 development agenda must provide comprehensive solutions to advance peace, prosperity and a sustainable world – for both the present and future generations.¹

The relationship between children and sustainable development is symbiotic. Progress in sustainable development underpins child rights and well-being, and conversely, child rights and well-being underpin lasting and equitable development progress. Finding the balance to achieve progress for all in today's world *and* for future generations depends upon three key propositions:

- *Sustainable Development starts with safe, healthy and well-educated children*. Children are at the heart of sustainable development. Safe, healthy and well-educated children are the foundations of a thriving and equitable society, sustainable growth and proper management of natural resources. Societies can only develop in a sustainable manner if the basic needs and rights of children, particularly the poorest and most vulnerable, are met. Evidence

¹ See detailed paper for this Message: "Sustainable Development starts and ends with Safe, Healthy and Well-educated Children" – UNICEF, May 2013: http://www.unicef.org/socialpolicy/files/Sustainable_Development_post_2015.pdf

shows that investing in children yields high and long-lasting returns, not only for individuals and families but for entire societies and for the generations to come.

Goals addressing children's rights, equity and the MDGs "unfinished and continuing business" must remain at the core of the development agenda, for it to be truly sustainable and sustained.

- *Safe and sustainable societies are, in turn, essential for children.* A sustainable society is one where every child -- in both the current and future generations and from his or her earliest years -- has access to care, nutritious food and clean water and a safe environment in which to grow, participate and learn -- free of violence, pollution and the risks of disaster. Childhood is a unique and fragile period of physical, mental and emotional development. Children are particularly vulnerable to violence and trauma, conflict, disasters, environmental pollution, climate instability and economic crisis. Violations and neglect of children's rights have life-long, irreversible and trans-generational consequences. Sustainable development which considers children's needs can prevent harm, manage risks and promote the ability of children to contribute to their societies in the future. The well-being of children serves as both a maker and a marker of progress in sustainable development.

The collective responsibility to ensure all children's rights to survive and grow, and to reduce the risks to children that arise from economic, social and environmental degradation and disasters, should be clearly reflected in the Post-2015 Development Agenda. Child-centred metrics of well-being should be prominent in the monitoring and assessment of all dimensions of our global progress on sustainable development.

- *Sustainable development is also about intergenerational responsibility.* This is our collective responsibility to ensure a safer, cleaner, healthier and more inclusive world for today's children; and for their children in turn. A sustainable future requires that children have the opportunity to grow up healthy, well-nourished, well-educated and protected from violence and neglect, to realize their full potential for the benefit of society as a whole. It also requires that they have access to a sustainable, safe and protected key ecosystem as well as goods and services, such as clean water and air. These are the conditions necessary to break the intergenerational cycle of poverty, exclusion and deprivation.

Children's needs and rights are thus interdependent with sustainable development. To achieve the greatest impact on the lives of children, the forthcoming Sustainable Development Goals framework *should include goals and targets that purposefully consider children's rights and needs within each of the dimensions of economic development, social development and environmental sustainability*, whilst building on their synergies and adequately addressing the fair and inclusive application of the rule of law so that children grow safe and free from fear, as well as from want.

Message 4: The new development agenda needs to be universal – relevant for all societies and about all people regardless of where they live.

The MDGs tended to focus on and be understood as most relevant for the poorest countries and regions. But the majority of poor people living in the world today do not reside in least developed, but rather, middle income countries.^{ix} Furthermore, in *virtually all countries* - least developed,

middle income and developed nations alike - there are significant groups among whom child mortality rates remain unacceptably high, where children and young people face grave risks of violence, where the education system is failing and learning outcomes are poor, where children live in poverty and where young people face high levels of unemployment. In very few societies are girls truly safe from violence and abuse and do women have equal opportunities and pay.

Human rights are universally applicable – and the violation of a child’s rights is not more or less important depending on the society he or she happens to live in. Furthermore, in a time where we are seeing intensified inter-dependence ... and as clearly recognized by the Rio+20 Conference, global challenges that require global solutions ... together with the rising global influence of the BRICs and other rapidly developing nations -- the dichotomy between so-called donor countries and aid recipient countries is becoming less and less relevant.^x

We believe that there will need to be flexibility for countries - and for regions within countries - to set their own, tailored, time-bound targets that reflect their specific and local challenges, within a broad global framework. Not all goals will be equally relevant to all societies. However, the post-2015 agenda should represent a truly universal, commonly-owned framework, one which all nations contribute towards – and that provides *inspiration for government and civil society actions in all societies*.

Message 5: Countries cannot achieve sustained growth and shared prosperity without investing effectively in their people, and above all, in their children.

There is, understandably, concern among some influential thinkers and constituencies that greater emphasis should now be given to the pursuit economic growth, following the strong “human development” focus of the MDGs. There is a move to refocus on “the productive sector” - including infrastructure, agriculture and industry - in the post-2015 agenda.^{xi} Both these types of investment, however, need to go together. Investments fostering economic growth and human development are mutually reinforcing and are necessary for each other. *A society where individuals grow up healthy, properly nourished, educated and protected is one with the human capacities needed for inclusive economic growth and sustained prosperity.*

Effective, sustained and broad-based investments in children are the basis for a productive adult workforce and for skilled, capable entrepreneurs – able to compete, attract investment and generate shared prosperity. An emphasis on early childhood – on the physical, emotional and cognitive growth and development of young children – brings especially high returns to families and societies.^{xii} Conversely, countries which neglect the health, nutrition, education and protection of their children – including their girls – cannot expect to fully reap or sustain the benefits of the investments they make in physical capital and elsewhere.

To give a few examples from recent research: reducing child deaths by 4.25 per thousand children born (i.e. about 5%) to mothers with low levels of education can result in an almost 8% increase in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita ten years later.^{xiii} And a one-year increase in the mean years of schooling has been shown to be associated with a rise in per-capita income of 3-6%, or a higher growth rate of 1 percentage point.^{xiv}

Skills and capabilities developed in childhood form the basis for future learning and labor market success. Failure to develop these foundational skills – or their undermining through the traumas of violence, abuse, displacement, school drop-out, major illness or serious malnutrition - can lead to

long-term and often irreversible effects on educational attainment, health, fertility and productive earnings, which later create significant costs for both individuals and society.^{xv}

Non-state actors, starting with families and parents but also notably business and civil society organizations, will have a critical role in ensuring these investments in children. Businesses are called upon to respect children's rights – to prevent harm to children – and encouraged to support and advance these rights through their operations and partnerships. With official flows to developing nations in decline in recent years, private flows are becoming ever more important in determining the future of nations. Partnerships between governments, civil society and private actors - such as local business associations and migrants - for investing in the realization of children's rights will be essential to break the intergenerational transmission of poverty and inequality, and to achieve sustainable, equitable and inclusive growth.

PART 2: KEY MESSAGES ON SUGGESTED ACTIONS

Message 6: Well-defined indicators and targets must be used to track the main disparities in all areas of human development so inequalities can be overcome. As stated by the UN Secretary-General's High Level Panel, "targets will only be considered 'achieved' if they are met for all relevant groups".

One of the major "lesson learned" from the MDGs is that their focus on global aggregates and national averages meant that troubling trends with regard to disparities (e.g. widening disparities or stagnating progress among certain groups, types of households or individuals) were often masked or overlooked. The lack of attention to disparities, and the dearth of data, research and analysis on the worst-off groups, helped to perpetuate their neglect by decision-makers in many countries. Attention to disparities is essential for placing equity at the center of development policies.

The post-2015 framework should track, understand and aim to address the *dominant inequalities* across *each* of the main indicators of human development progress, such as child mortality, nutrition, maternal mortality, basic education, access to water and sanitation – as well as in new goal areas such as *Sustainable Energy for All*. Examples include disaggregating data on stunting by wealth quintile,^{xvi} years of school completion by gender^{xvii} or household access to sanitation facilities by location^{xviii}.

The new agenda should also strongly encourage countries to use participatory research/situation analysis and causality analysis to *identify those who are excluded* or lagging behind and *the reasons why* their rights are not being met. Understanding who the most vulnerable populations are and where they reside, and undertaking participatory analysis of the barriers they face to social and economic inclusion, are critical prerequisites to being able to more effectively reach these populations with programming and policy instruments.

A number of options are being discussed that should help to better reflect inequalities in the post-2015 agenda: equity-weighted indicators^{xix}; a specific goal or goals on inequality (including a strengthened gender equality goal); and/or time-bound universal-access targets ("reaching every child", "getting to zero"). The use of indicators at national and sub-national levels that build in and help to track the specific, dominant inequalities related to specific goal areas would also be highly desirable.

Regardless of format, the tracking of goals, targets and indicators that help address and understand inequalities will explicitly require *substantial investments in capacities and programmes for disaggregated data collection and its analysis, dissemination and use*. This is a critical part of building and maintaining the evidence base needed for effective policy action and sustained impact.

Message 7: Monitoring at all levels – national, subnational and local – needs to be strengthened so that evidence can be used to identify and invest in the most disadvantaged, excluded and vulnerable.

As part of a “data revolution” based on transparency and innovative uses of information technology, targets and indicators in the post-2015 framework should be informed by data and qualitative information at disaggregated levels to allow for a better focus on the real bottlenecks and barriers to development. These efforts should *build on existing national household surveys and complement them with increased community-level monitoring*, including the use of new and innovative technology for “real-time monitoring.”^{xxi} Inclusive consultations, locally-owned development scorecards, service delivery performance feedback mechanisms, social audits, participatory budget reviews and other “reality checks”^{xxi} with groups who are the most often excluded – such as people with disabilities, minorities subject to discrimination, and, often, girls and women - are all important options for strengthening field monitoring and evidence. UNICEF’s *MoRES* (Monitoring Results for Equity System) initiative will contribute to these efforts in many developing countries.

Combined with greater capacities in local authorities and the mobilization of community groups, local planners and community actors can increasingly set, pursue and monitor their own development goals within overall national frameworks. This can form the basis for greater *mutual accountability for development*, for example through performance contracts with health, water and education providers, or co-responsibility compacts built around local goals.

Message 8: Children and young people must play a key part in shaping the new development agenda – and in seeing that governments follow through on their commitments.

Children, adolescents and young people – as creators of innovative solutions and as stakeholders in both present and future progress – should be highly involved, as a matter of course, in the discussions, design and eventual implementation and monitoring of the post-2015 development agenda. This starts with their own communities – their schools, local health and recreation facilities – and extends far beyond. Exciting developments over the past few years in mobile phone technology and social media – and their penetration into the societies of both the developed and developing world -- make connecting and organizing possible in ways that simply were not fathomable when the MDGs were crafted. Young people who are born and are growing up in the digital age and “information economy” will be central to this.

At the same time off-line engagement is equally important so that those not connected are not excluded. A combination of high tech (e.g. use of mobile phones to engage youth on key development topics as done through the U-report initiative in Uganda^{xxii}) and low tech (e.g. through parent/teacher or health community groups) will be needed to ensure broad-based, meaningful participation. Initiatives of this kind should form part of *a new culture and practice of listening to and learning from children/adolescents and young people*, on a continuous basis.

The participation of children and young people is both a human right and vital to achieving equitable, sustained development. Children are not only the inheritors of the planet. They also actively shape it in the present. Children and young people should be recognized as critical partners for sustainable change. Experience has shown that young people who have the education, skills and opportunities to participate and innovate become effective advocates, problem-solvers, catalysts and agents for positive change. Inclusive and people-centred development means investing in the well-being and empowerment of children and young people so they can grow into responsible, capable and skilled citizens, and effective guardians of a sustainable world.

Message 9: Citizens need to be able to hold their governments accountable for both overall and equitable progress. The new development agenda must include a mechanism allowing this.

A major omission of the MDGs was the lack of a *mechanism for citizens to hold governments accountable for both overall and equitable progress* towards development goals in their nationally-adapted formulation. While some governments incorporated the MDGs in national development objectives -- and allocated resources for programmes and monitoring accordingly -- others did not. Few countries instituted broad-based citizen reviews of progress and performance at any level, or made sustained efforts to “democratize” access to information about development programmes.

Mechanisms should be established as part of the post-2015 framework for civil society groups to both participate in the setting of and monitoring of disaggregated goals and targets – including in districts and municipalities– and for them to hold public sector agencies to account for their efforts and performance. These mechanisms – such as local development scorecards, crowdsourcing, municipal budget transparency, SMS feedback on service delivery performance - should become routine and institutionalized. They should also be used to encourage and enable private sector accountability and partnership.

Message 10: The post-2015 development agenda must be relevant to all people and responsive to change. It must be especially innovative in tackling the dire risks and uncertainties that children and women face in societies affected by conflict or natural disasters, and in countries where the public sector has limited capacity.

Like the MDGs before, the post-2015 framework is likely to have a time horizon of 15-25 years. Trends such as changing population dynamics,^{xxiii} (e.g. youth bulges in some parts of the world and aging populations in others), the effects of urbanization^{xxiv}, climate change and migration, must be taken into account in the post-2015 agenda. There will also be other changes that we can neither predict nor anticipate – both good and bad. The post-2015 framework must be designed in a way to *allow for and encourage local innovations and initiatives*, the review and updating of interim targets, and -- as needed -- course-corrections based on learning and adaptation.

Conflicts and natural disasters will inevitably form a major, continuing part of the challenges to be faced by the new agenda, and are inherently unpredictable. They also pose the greatest, most severe risks both to global progress under a universal framework and to children and women specifically. These risks and vulnerabilities are also most stark for children in the most deprived and poorest families and communities – whether in remote, rural or urban areas – and where governments are least able to respond.

Poor people and families are particularly vulnerable to the negative effects of climate instability, often living in places prone to natural disasters or in settlements and rural areas that are highly vulnerable and hard to reach during disasters.^{xxv} By 2015 about 375 million people per year are estimated to be at risk of climate-related disasters.^{xxvi} Young children and girls, persons with disabilities and socially marginalized or excluded groups are and will be among those especially at risk in situations of disaster and conflict.

The post-2015 framework should explicitly encompass *targets and innovative strategies to reduce disaster risks and vulnerabilities for these children most-at-risk and their families*, and to build resilience at local levels and capacities at national levels to withstand and manage disasters. Well-designed disaster risk reduction strategies, well-focused social protection programmes, the strengthening of cultures of peace and tolerance and conflict-resolution mechanisms will be among the essential elements. The *New Deal on Engagement in Fragile States* and its peace-building and state-building goals, adopted in Busan in 2011, represent a historic recognition of and potential foundation for more effective approaches to capacity development and more equitable provision of essential services in the future.^{xxvii}

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OTHER RESOURCES:

UNICEF has developed three key resource papers regarding the positioning of children and young people in the Post-2015 Development Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) negotiations. Please also see:

- [Sustainable Development Starts with Safe, Healthy and Well-Educated Children](#)
- [UNICEF Key Asks on the Post-2015 Development Agenda](#)

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

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