

A POST-2015 WORLD FIT FOR CHILDREN

AN AGENDA FOR #EVERYCHILD 2015



World leaders are setting out a roadmap for human progress over the next 15 years. Known as the Sustainable Development Goals, these new global targets will drive investment and action in virtually every country on earth, touching millions of lives. That is why it is vital that every child, girls and boys alike, is included – and that children everywhere are at the heart of the new global agenda.

2015 should be a year of global action for children, engaging everyone – governments, institutions, corporations, communities, families, and individuals in every country – to demand and drive change for every child, especially the most disadvantaged and vulnerable.

An Agenda for #EVERYChild 2015

- 1. End violence against children.** In a world where almost one billion children under 15 suffer regular physical punishment, and nearly a quarter of all girls between the ages of 15 and 19 report experiencing physical violence, violence against children affects every country and every community. While violence against children is often invisible, its impact on individual children and their societies is profound and far-reaching, undermining development gains made in other areas. Because violence against children is a universal problem, investing in protecting children from violence, exploitation and abuse must be a global priority. More must be done to raise awareness of violence and encourage people to speak out when they see or suspect violence against children, and to strengthen social welfare systems and services that protect children from harm and provide support to those who are already victims of violence.
- 2. Put ending child poverty at the center of global poverty eradication.** Children make up nearly half of the world's extreme poor, with nearly 570 million people under the age of 18 living below the international poverty line of \$1.25 a day. Poverty in childhood is often the root cause of poverty in adulthood. To break the cycle of poverty, we need to understand child poverty in all its dimensions. Poverty measurements must go beyond income, examining factors such as access to services and social protection systems, health, nutrition, water and sanitation, shelter, quality education from early childhood to adolescence, and other issues like discrimination, stigmatization and exclusion. More also needs to be done to reduce the impact of poverty – for example, by reducing the vulnerability of households, tackling the worst forms of child labour, and strengthening the systems that protect poor families.
- 3. Renew the global effort to end preventable newborn, child and maternal deaths.** Children growing up in the poorest 20 per cent of households are twice as likely as those in the richest 20 per cent to die before reaching their fifth birthday, and nearly twice as likely to suffer from stunting, making them more vulnerable. And despite greater public attention to the problem of maternal mortality, we have not made enough progress. To save more lives, we must build better health systems and target resources to provide children with a better start in life – making pregnancy and childbirth safer for mothers and infants alike, increasing rates of breastfeeding, reducing childhood stunting, ending mother to child transmission of HIV, increasing access to clean water, sanitation and hygiene, and investing in early childhood development programmes.

4. Pay more attention to adolescence, the second decade of life. Adolescence is a pivotal period during which we can either consolidate – or lose – the gains made during early childhood. All too often, adolescents – especially girls – are endangered by violence, limited by a lack of quality education, and unable to access critical health services. To protect adolescents, nurture their potential, and better prepare them to become productive adults, we need to focus more attention on providing quality learning and better preparation for the world of work; fostering healthy behaviours that reduce non-communicable diseases, obesity, HIV, and other health risks; and protecting adolescents from becoming involved in or the victims of violence. And we must do more than invest in adolescence – we need to engage adolescents in developing policies and delivering services that improve their lives.

5. Leverage the growing ‘Data Revolution’ to support the rights of every child. Timely, credible data are critical to developing and implementing policies that can improve the lives and futures of the most disadvantaged, marginalized, and vulnerable children. Disaggregated data help us to see the children and communities that are being left behind – and left out of policy decision making. Data are also crucial to measuring the results, so we can track progress and change course where necessary.

6. Increase investments in all children, especially the most vulnerable and marginalized. There is no better investment than investment in our children – through development finance, humanitarian finance, climate finance, and domestic finance. Whether in education, nutrition, water and sanitation, health care or social protection, sufficient money must be allocated to deliver results for the children and families in greatest need. Special attention must be paid to removing barriers that currently prevent girls from accessing basic services, or impede their development. This is not only a moral and strategic imperative, it is a practical one: Growing evidence shows that investing in the most disadvantaged children contributes to sustained growth and the stability of societies and nations.

7. Break the cycle of chronic crises affecting children. With 230 million children living in countries affected by conflicts in 2014, and many others affected by disasters, the world’s response to humanitarian crises – whether natural or man-made – should include investments in safer futures for children. Building resilience – by investing in initiatives to help children, families, and communities to better withstand future shocks – is crucial to ending the terrible cycle of crises that too many endure today.

8. Prioritize education so that all children and adolescents are in school and learning. Education is not only every child’s right, it is the key to a better life and critical to every nation’s ability to build stronger, more peaceful, and more equitable societies. To achieve the new development goals, we need to increase access

to quality educational opportunity, from early childhood through adolescence and beyond – especially for the most disadvantaged and marginalized children most likely to be excluded or for whom educational attainment can be inhibited by social barriers, including girls and children with disabilities.

9. Stop girls being left out, held back and pushed aside. Increasing investments in girls’ health, education, protection and skills development can tackle social exclusion and discrimination, alongside changing the attitudes and policies that create inequalities for women. Infrastructure that impacts on women’s lives – such as water, sanitation, energy and transport – should be adapted and managed in ways that benefit and protect women.

10. Tackle climate change for the sake of future generations. Climate change and natural disasters have a disproportionate impact on today’s children, especially the most disadvantaged – and managing the long-term impact will fall on the shoulders of today’s youngest generation. The voices, ideas and specific needs of children should be recognized and prioritized in all policies and investments to tackle climate change, reduce greenhouse gases, lessen the impact of disasters and protect an already fragile environment.

If the significant gains made for many children in recent years are not to be lost, if growing nations are to continue to thrive, if troubled regions are to become more stable, if girls as well as boys are to have equitable opportunity, if the natural environment is to be safeguarded for today’s generations and for those to come, then children must be at the heart of the new global agenda. And children, young people, and people in poverty must have a voice in setting this agenda and a role in helping move it forward.

The global community – led by governments and supported by citizens and partners from every sector – has an historic opportunity to dismantle the barriers that continue to exclude too many children from progress, and to complete the work of building a society in which every child can survive and thrive, learn and grow, participate and contribute fully to society. It’s not just the right thing to do – it is in everyone’s interests.

The world can shape a better future for all children, by coming together and taking action for #EVERYChild.

To read more on UNICEF’s position on the SDGs, please see our set of issue briefs.

http://www.unicef.org/post2015/files/P2015_issue_brief_set.pdf

For more information

Please see UNICEF’s webpage on Children and the Post-2015 Development Agenda: <http://www.unicef.org/post2015/>