

Sustainable Development Starts With Safe, Healthy and Well-Educated Children



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UNICEF's Post-2015 Key Messages

Guiding Principles*

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. 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.
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.

UNICEF's Key Asks

Key Asks

Targets should be included in the new Agenda for the following:

- By 2035, reduce the national under-five mortality rate to 20 or fewer deaths per 1,000 live births
- Eliminate all preventable maternal deaths
- By 2025, reduce stunting among children under five by 40% worldwide
- Universal, 100% effective coverage of basic health services, safe drinking water and sanitation, and successful completion by all children of quality basic education
- Protection of all girls and boys from all forms of violence, abuse and exploitation
- Protection and support for children and their families affected by conflict and humanitarian disasters.

Strategies to pursue these targets should focus on the worst-off as the first priority.

All targets in the Post-2015 Agenda should be disaggregated by gender, location, age, ethnicity, disability and wealth, as relevant, in order to track inequalities and ensure no one is left behind.

A Definition of Sustainable Development

Widely-accepted definition from the Brundtland Commission Report (1987):
“Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

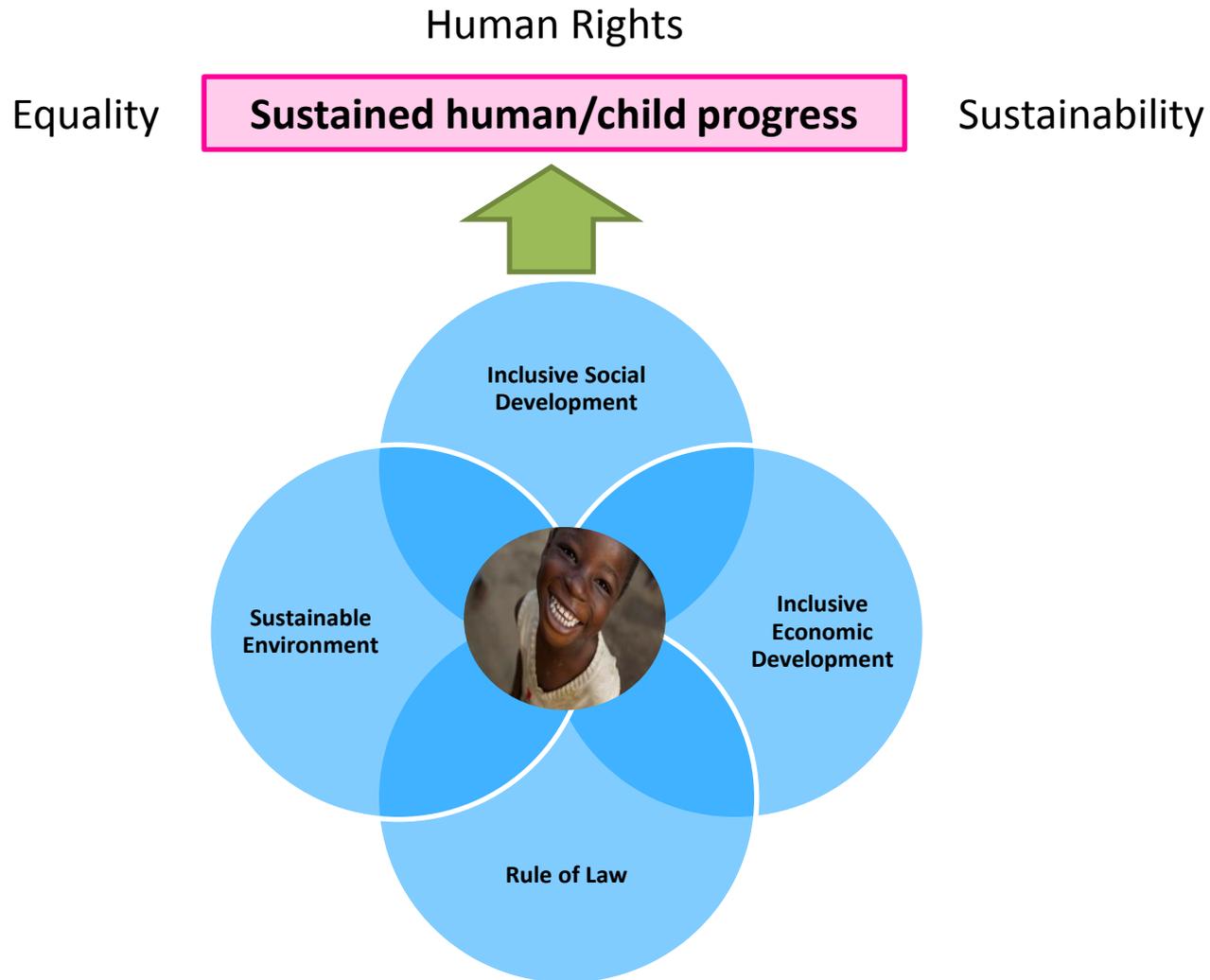


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Sustainable Development Framework



Putting children at the centre of sustainable development

Three Key Messages:

- 1. Sustainable development starts with safe, healthy and well-educated children.**
Children as drivers
- 2. Safe and sustainable societies are, in turn, essential for children.**
Children as stakeholders
- 3. Children's voices, choices and participation are critical for the sustainable future we want.**
Children as contributors



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Children and the Copenhagen Consensus 2012*

Top economists agree that priority investments should include:

- **Bundled interventions to reduce undernutrition in preschoolers (to fight hunger and improve nutrition)**
Expanding the subsidy for malaria combination treatment.
- **Expanded childhood immunization coverage**
- **Deworming of schoolchildren, to improve educational and health outcomes**
- **Expanding TB treatment**
- **Conditional cash transfers for school attendance**

*Source: How to spend \$75 billion to Make the World a Better Place by Bjørn Lomborg

Message 1

Sustainable development starts with safe, healthy and well-educated children

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 shows that **investing in children -- beginning with the first 1000 days of life -- yields high and long-lasting returns**, not only for individuals and families but **for entire societies and for generations to come.**

Children are drivers of sustainable development



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Message 1: Evidence

Sustainable development starts with safe, healthy and well-educated children

Sustainable development starts in early childhood and has high paybacks for societies and raising the ceiling of development potential.

- Evidence shows that addressing childhood stunting can help break the cycle of poverty and boost a country's GDP by at least 2-3% annually, recouping billions of dollars in lost productivity and avoidable healthcare spending.

Developmental impacts of education (particularly for girls) have multiple and intergenerational benefits for individuals, families and communities.

- Evidence shows that educated girls have higher earnings potential, delay marriage and pregnancy and have lower rates of maternal mortality. Child mortality is highly correlated to a mother's education. Estimates suggest that over 50% of the decline of child mortality in the past 40 years is due to education progress for women. Education has been shown to lower fertility rates which, in turn, reduce population pressures on environment.

Message 1: Evidence

Sustainable development starts with safe, healthy and well-educated children

To thrive, children need to live in safety – free from fear as well as free from want.

- (The impact of violence on children has many physical and mental consequences for the individual – from brain injury to depression to increased risk-taking behaviours. This has a negative impact on both individuals and societies that can last for generations.

Investing in children, especially from the poorest families, is a critical and cost-effective pathway to sustainable and inclusive economic growth and social development.

- More equal societies enjoy more sustained and robust periods of economic growth. Conversely countries with high and increasing economic inequality experience slower annual GDP growth and increased volatility in markets. Evidence also shows that focusing on early interventions in childhood (e.g. nutrition, immunization, deworming and malaria) and increasing pre-school attendance are cost-effective development investments that pay dividends later in life.

Message 2

Safe and sustainable societies are, in turn, essential for children

A sustainable society is one where **every child 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.**

Children are stakeholders in sustainable development – they have the most to gain, and to lose



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Message 2: Evidence

Safe and sustainable societies are, in turn, essential for children

The Need for Peaceful and Secure Societies

- Over 1.5 billion people live in conflict-affected and/or states with low delivery capacity. Poverty is over 20% higher in these countries and they are furthest away from achievement of the MDGs.
- Child mortality is over 150% higher in states with low delivery capacity than in low- and middle-income countries;
- States with low delivery capacity comprise 14% of the global population but half of the children who die before age 5, a third of the people living with HIV & AIDS and a third of mothers who die as a result of childbirth. Malaria death rates are 13 times higher in these states.

The Need for Access to Safe Water

- Safe water is the lynchpin of sustainable development. Secure water access requires international cooperation to reduce waste and pollution as well as shift to sustainable patterns of consumption.
- Water supply crises are a significant risk to society and the world potentially faces a 40% global shortfall between demand and supply for water by 2030;
- Water management is compounded by climate instability and unsustainable demand from an growing global population and water intensive activities;
- Water scarcity leads to reliance on unsafe sources, reduces hygiene and increases the risk of disease as well as child death or stunting.

Message 2: Evidence

Safe and sustainable societies are, in turn, essential for children

The Need for Healthy Physical Environments

- An unstable climate, non-sustainable energy consumption patterns, pollution-related deaths and illnesses and exposure to toxins all pose huge risks for present and future generations of children.
- Children are among the most vulnerable to disasters and climate change because: they are physiologically and metabolically less able than adults to adapt to heat and other climate-related exposures, demand adequate nutrition for cognitive and physical development and are dependent on adults for their safety;
- Children are particularly vulnerable to air pollutants and ground level contaminants due to height, behavior and immature immune and metabolic systems;
- Exposure to pollution and toxics can cause a wide variety of life-long health issues, from asthma to pulmonary and cardiovascular health issues to permanent intellectual and developmental disabilities;
- The poorest children face the most exposure to these risks (e.g. living and working in areas where toxics like lead from batteries are recycled).

Message 3

Children's voices, choices and participation are critical for the sustainable future we want

Children are not only the inheritors of the planet, they also actively shape the present. Experience has shown that **young people who have the education, skills and opportunities to participate and innovate become effective advocates, problem-solvers and agents for positive change.**

Children can and should be active contributors to sustainable development



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Message 3: Evidence

Children's voices, choices and participation are critical for the sustainable future we want

Sustainable change comes through an educated and aware society that can effectively cope with challenges and make sustainable choices.

- Quality education is a primary driver of development progress and social transformation;
- It is the fundamental tool to link the three core dimensions of sustainable development (economic, social, environmental);
- Education for Sustainable Development can equip children and young people with foundational skills, values and knowledge to create a more just and sustainable society.

Being heard is not only a right, it is an effective means for finding solutions and bringing attention, energy and momentum to relevant issues.

- Example: U-Report (started in Uganda and now being used in other countries) leverages simple mobile phone technology to poll citizens (especially young people) on key issues and bring those issues to the attention of decision makers in government;
- Innovations in technology are bringing unprecedented opportunities for mobilizing, listening and partnering with children and young people.

Message 3: Evidence

Children's voices, choices and participation are critical for the sustainable future we want

Children and Young People can be creative, passionate and innovative problem solvers. Engaging them to be part of the solution is critical for building their skills and confidence to be effective citizens and future leaders.

- Already making significant contributions in civic engagement, political activism, etc. (e.g. in Kosovo youth-led civic engagement project on cleaner public transportation);
- Child and youth participation in disaster-risk reduction has been shown to help children and their families cope more effectively, increasing their sense of control, security and even survival during a disaster.

Concluding Remarks

Children are the makers of a future sustainable world -- and they are also the markers of a sustainable future.

Children have the most at stake in the decisions we take now. Our actions today will be reflected directly in the growth of their bodies, minds and capacities.



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For a full list of references from the paper “Sustainable Development Starts with Safe, Health and Well-Educated Children,” please see here: http://www.unicef.org/post2015/files/SD_children_FINAL.pdf

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Sustainable Development Starts with Safe, Health and Well-Educated Children (UNICEF Working Paper)

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