

A POST-2015 WORLD FIT FOR CHILDREN

ISSUE BRIEF: Child Poverty



Why addressing child poverty is a critical component of the Post-2015 Development Agenda

Children are more likely to be poor

Eradicating poverty in all its dimensions remains one of the world's most important and urgent tasks. More than 1.2 billion people around the world survive on less than \$1.25 a day.¹ Nearly half of them – about 569 million – are 18 years old or less² (Figure 1).

Poverty hits children hardest. Poverty deprives children of the capabilities needed to survive, develop and thrive as well as access to adequate nutrition, safe drinking water, sanitation, healthcare services and education. These deficits often cannot be overcome later. Child poverty denies children the opportunity to reach their full potential.

Child poverty is widespread, and children are vulnerable to poverty anywhere in the world (Figure 2). In fact, approximately 30 million children³ are growing up poor in the world's richest countries.

Child poverty does long-term damage to children and societies

Poverty in childhood is a root cause of poverty in adulthood. Impoverished children often grow up to be impoverished parents who in turn bring up their own children in poverty. While the heaviest cost of growing up in poverty is borne by children themselves, societies also pay a very significant price, with lower levels of education and health and reduced productivity and economic growth.

Despite unprecedented progress through the MDGs, huge inequalities remain with the poorest and most vulnerable often left behind. Children in the poorest quintile are twice as likely to die before the age of five as those in the wealthiest quintile, and are nearly three times as likely to be underweight.⁴ They are also more likely to be out of school and engage in child labour.

How to include child poverty in the Post 2015 goals and targets

Explicitly include child poverty in the Post-2015 agenda

The world has an historic opportunity to end poverty and lay the foundation of a more prosperous, sustainable and equitable future. The Post-2015 Development Agenda should make an explicit commitment towards ending extreme poverty and reducing child poverty within the poverty goals and targets. Recognizing child poverty would be a first step to redress the disproportionate concentration among children, address root causes and intergenerational poverty, and accelerate sustainable development progress.

Prioritize the poorest children across all goals to meet the new goals with equity

It is widely recognized that equity was not adequately incorporated in the MDGs. To address this and ensure the poorest children are reached, it is crucial to have a standalone goal on equity, as well as a focus on the poorest children across all goal areas. To do this requires consistent monitoring of disaggregated data to assess progress of the poorest children and other vulnerable groups across all goals and targets.

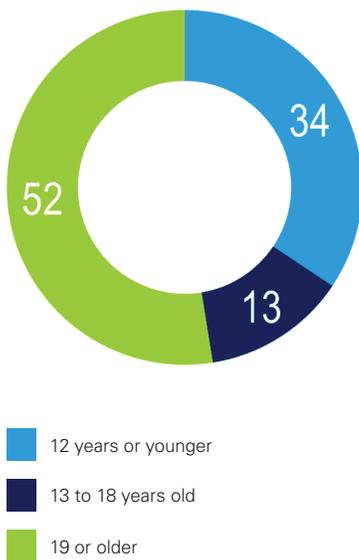
Suggested targets

1. By 2030, eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere, currently measured as people living on less than \$1.25 a day
2. By 2030, reduce at least by half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions
3. Implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable

4. Build the resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations, with special attention to households, women, children and those with disabilities, and reduce their exposure and vulnerability to climate-related extreme events and other economic, social and environmental shocks and disasters
5. Take immediate and effective measures to secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, eradicate forced labour, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms including recruitment and use of child soldiers

Figure 1: Children constitute nearly half of the world's people living in extreme poverty

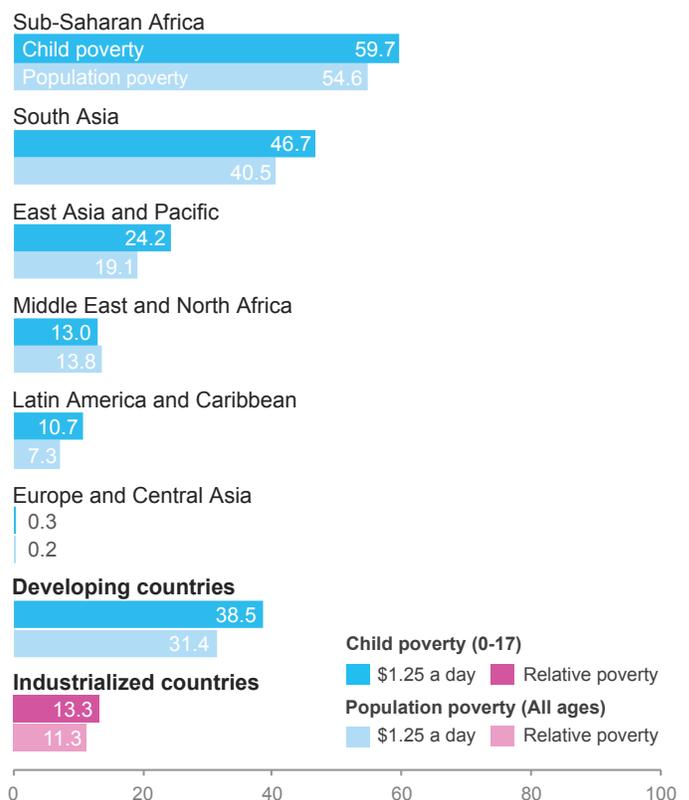
People living on less than \$1.25 a day by age, % of total



Figures do not add up to 100% due to rounding

Figure 2: Children are at disproportionate risk of poverty in most regions of the world

Poverty rates among children and the total population by region, %



For more information

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

¹ World Bank: Extreme poverty is defined as average daily consumption of \$1.25 or less and means living on the edge of subsistence.

² Olinto, P, Beegle, K, Sobrado, C and Uematsu, H, (2013), The State of the Poor: Where Are The Poor, Where Is Extreme Poverty Harder to End, and What Is the Current Profile of the World's Poor?, World Bank – Economic Premise, issue 125, p. 1-8. <http://EconPapers.repec.org/RePEc:wbk:prmecep:ep125>

³ United Nations Children's Fund, 'Measuring Child Poverty: New league tables of child poverty in the world's rich countries', Innocenti Report Card 10, UNICEF Office of Research, 2012.

⁴ United Nations Children's Fund, 'Progress for children: achieving the MDGs with equity', UNICEF 2010.

Figure 1: Source: The World Bank (2013) - Olinto, P, Beegle, K, Sobrado, C and Uematsu, H, (2013), The State of the Poor: Where Are The Poor, Where Is Extreme Poverty Harder to End, and What Is the Current Profile of the World's Poor?, World Bank – Economic Premise, issue 125, p. 1-8. <http://EconPapers.repec.org/RePEc:wbk:prmecep:ep125>

Figure 2: Notes: Relative poverty line: represents the proportion of people living in households with average incomes below 50% of the median income.

Sources:

¹ Batana, Yélé et al, 'Global extreme poverty rates for children, adults and the elderly', Economic Letters, Volume 20, Issue 3, September 2013, pp. 405-407.

² 'OECD Income Distribution Database: Gini, poverty, income, Methods and Concepts' <<http://www.oecd.org/social/income-distribution-database.htm>>, accessed 30 June, 2014.