addresses protection for children against conflict and all forms of abuse, exploitation and violence. As this report attests, the lack of these protections not only undermines a child’s well-being, but also increases the risk of exclusion from essential services.4

Meeting the Millennium Development Goals

Reaching the MDGs will improve the lives and prospects of millions of children

Achievement of the MDGs, though not a panacea for childhood’s ills, would certainly go a long way towards making the world a better place for children. Simply put, if the goals are met over the next 10 years, millions of children will be spared illness, premature death, extreme poverty or malnutrition and will enjoy good-quality schooling, as well as access to safe water and decent sanitation facilities (see Figure 1.1). The implications for children of missing the MDGs would be grave

Missing the MDGs would have devastating implications for the children of this generation, and for the adults they will become if they survive their childhoods. At current rates of progress, for example, 8.7 million children under five will still die in 2015, whereas if the target were met 3.8 million of those lives would be saved in that year alone.6 Similar calculations can be made for most of the other MDGs (see Figure 1.3). Meeting the goals is, therefore, a matter of life or death, of development or regression, for millions of children. It will also be crucial to the progress of their countries and societies.

The generational implications of missing the targets would also be grave. Children in the early years are particularly vulnerable: Deprivation at this stage affects human beings throughout their whole life cycle. Those who are neglected or abused in the first years of life suffer damage from which they may never fully recover and that may prevent them from reaching their full potential as older children, adolescents and adults.

Figure 1.1: Meeting the MDGs would transform millions of children’s lives in the next 10 years

These projections refer to the number of children who would gain access to essential services between now and 2015 if the MDGs are met.

Figure 1.2: Global progress towards reducing under-five mortality by two thirds*

At current rates of progress the goal will be reached 30 years late

Figure 1.3: At current rates of progress on the MDGs, millions of children who could have been reached will miss out

These projections refer to the number of children who could have enjoyed access to essential services if the MDGs had been met, but are set to miss out if current trends continue.