

# Stop at Nothing: Put children at the centre in post-2015 goals

## Key Recommendations

*The success of the post-2015 framework that replaces the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) must be measured by its ability to reach the most disadvantaged and vulnerable children in the hardest places to live.*

**World Vision calls on the Government of Kenya to ensure that the post-2015 development framework:**

- Prioritises children's health and development, including through goals and targets to end preventable maternal, newborn and child deaths, eliminate childhood malnutrition and to end all forms of violence against girls and boys
- Focuses on the most vulnerable and the hardest-to-reach by targeting children in fragile and conflict affected contexts, including through a goal to achieve lasting peace and eliminate violence
- Delivers a strong system for implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the new development goals, including robust multi-stakeholder platforms to support national implementation and the participation of citizens at all levels

### Stop at nothing

As we near the 2015 deadline for achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), we can take pride in the fact that every day 17,000 fewer children die of preventable causes and that 700 million people have escaped the grip of absolute poverty.<sup>1</sup> For instance, the Government of Kenya's efforts towards the achievement of MDG 5 has resulted in the most recent drop in maternal mortality ratio to 400 from 488 deaths per 100,000 live births.<sup>2</sup>

The MDGs brought better health and living standards to hundreds of millions, yet their aggregate targets meant more than one billion people did not benefit from the tide that lifted their neighbours. The easiest to reach children and families were prioritised. Left behind were newborns, people in fragile and conflict-affected states, marginalised groups and those in the bottom quintile of middle-income economies. The post-2015 sustainable development framework must be different.

World Vision's aim is to secure a global framework that promotes well-being for all children including those in Kenya, by building on and finishing the challenges set out by the current MDGs with a strong system in place for implementation, monitoring and review. But that framework must give particular

priority to the children, issues and targets that are most critical to its achievement. Healthy, cared for, educated children have the best chances of becoming productive adults and of contributing to healthy, peaceful, productive societies - and, ultimately, to sustainable development. Towards this end, we recognize the Government of Kenya's efforts in abolishing user fees on primary health care & the introduction free maternal deliveries in public health facilities

### Start with vulnerable children

Worldwide, young children in the poorest households are two to three times more likely to die or to be malnourished than those in the best-off households.<sup>3</sup> In Kenya, children in rural areas are 1.6 times as likely to be underweight compared to children in urban areas. Also, the richest 20% of the population are 4 times more likely to have a skilled birth attendant than the poorest.<sup>4</sup> Research shows that 'a 5 per cent improvement in child survival raises economic growth by 1 per cent per year over the subsequent decade'.<sup>5</sup>

### Focus on children in the first 1,000 days

The first 1,000 days of each child's life, during pregnancy up to age two, is the critical foundation on which potential is built.<sup>6</sup> Improving nutrition during a child's critical 1,000-day window is one of the most cost-

effective investments we can make towards lasting progress in health and development.<sup>7</sup> Yet nutrition was poorly recognised in the MDGs. Globally, one in four of all children under five years are stunted, and undernutrition is an underlying cause of almost half of all under-five child deaths.<sup>8</sup> Notably in Kenya, currently 35% of children remain stunted compared to 33% in 2003; further there has been decline in the nutritional status of children where the percentage of under-5 children who were underweight increased from 6.5% in 2013 to 7.6% in 2014.<sup>9</sup>

Improving nutrition requires integrated, quality interventions that reach the most vulnerable, promoting effective feeding practices, access to the right types of food for pregnant mothers and very young children, and early education. A package of quality interventions that promote survival, health, nutrition, protection, care and early education of children needs to be made universally available. This must be prioritised in the post-2015 framework.

#### Children experiencing or at risk of violence

Violence against children is prevalent in almost every country and affects between 500 million and 1.5 billion children every year. Such violence includes harmful traditional practices like child marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM), physical and sexual abuse, labour exploitation and forced recruitment into armed forces.<sup>10</sup> In Kenya about 25% of children are engaged in child labour.<sup>11</sup> Child marriage, FGM and some forms of child labour correlate with injury, higher rates of maternal and infant mortality and directly increase survivors' vulnerability to poverty.

Children exposed to violence are more likely to drop out of school.<sup>12</sup> The 168 million children who forgo school in order to work reduce their potential lifetime earnings by an estimated 13-20% and increase their likelihood of being poor in later life by as much as 30%.<sup>13</sup> The omission of violence from the MDGs continues to undermine progress. Eradicating violence against children is essential to ending extreme poverty.

#### Children in fragile contexts

The world's most vulnerable children are those subject to multiple poverty drivers in the most marginal, fragile and conflict-affected contexts. A child born in a fragile state is twice as likely to die before the age of 5 as a child born in a more stable low-income country, and five times more likely to die as a child in a middle-income country.<sup>14</sup> Some 500 million children live in fragile countries or places, in fear for their lives and safety, with little to no access to the most basic nutrition, health care, education

or hope. These children were not reached by the MDGs, because of a lack of resources and because the goals failed to address the distinct drivers of poverty in fragile contexts, such as poor or absent governance, systemic injustice, corruption, displacement and violence. These must be addressed if sustainable change is to be achieved.

#### World Vision's global priorities for post-2015

To ensure a fairer world for all children, governments negotiating the post-2015 agenda must ensure that it:

- **Recognises that investing in children is the key to sustainable development.** Early intervention and investment in vulnerable children is the surest way to create a more just and prosperous world. The new framework should explicitly address the most vulnerable children by ensuring their health, nutrition and protection; targeting children in fragile contexts; and eliminating all forms of violence against children.
- **Spells out how it will achieve change for all children.** The new goals will not be delivered by simply doing more of what we are already doing. The framework will need to enable all sectors of society – citizens, government, business and civil society – to make their distinct and complementary contributions.
- **Measures success in improvements made for unseen, uncounted and invisible children.** When the girl from the poorest family in the most crowded slum or remotest village can grow to adulthood in good health and dream of the future her secondary education might provide, then we will know we are achieving sustainable development.

#### Ensuring global goals produce real local change

One of the principal weaknesses of the MDGs was the lack of a roadmap for delivery of the goals. The post-2015 process must make provisions for how the new thematic goals will be achieved, and how they will be monitored and reviewed. The framework must promote participatory monitoring and accountability mechanisms at all levels. Involving citizens, including children and youth, in gathering and sharing data and in planning, monitoring and reviewing is a key means to ensure that global goals translate into concrete local change.

## Cross-sector and multi-stakeholder partnerships

Ending extreme poverty will not be possible if we continue business as usual: innovative approaches are needed. The private sector, only partly engaged by the MDG process, is increasingly being seen as a crucial partner to advance national development plans. Furthermore, with the decline of official development assistance (ODA), financing for development needs to be reconsidered and more broadly defined.

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## Recommendations

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