



Time to pick up the pace for children: The 6 commitments Member States must make to accelerate action and progress

Children cannot wait

Nearly four years into the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals, progress is slow. Too slow. World Vision believes we urgently need to see greater commitment and action from Member States and other stakeholders to accelerate implementation and make significant gains for those at risk of being left behind, especially the world's most vulnerable children.

There are six key steps Member States must make and announce at the Sustainable Development Goals Summit and related events in September 2019 to pick up the pace in progress for children:

1. Focus on ending child poverty in all its forms
2. Invest in ending all forms of violence against children
3. Realize Universal Health coverage, including nutrition, for all children
4. Commit to ensuring children living in fragile contexts are not left behind
5. Involve children – as agents of change – in implementing and reviewing the Goals
6. Support child-centred disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation

Why now

The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015 marked a pivotal moment in human history. Its achievement is critical in order to transform the world into a more equitable, sustainable, prosperous and peaceful place for all people, especially children. With just over a decade to go until 2030 however, much work remains to be done to realize this transformation.

The High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (“the SDG Summit”) under the auspices of the UN General Assembly, to be held September 24-25 2019, provides a key opportunity for countries to identify ways to accelerate progress on the SDGs, especially for children. World Vision believes that Member States should each make six commitments at the SDG Summit and other related events, in order to fast-track progress for children.

1. Focus on ending child poverty in all its forms

Poverty affects children disproportionately. Close to half (46%) of extremely poor people are children under 14 years of ageⁱ. Two in every five children are living in multidimensional povertyⁱⁱ. While childhood eventually ends, the effects of child poverty can last a lifetime, negatively impacting children's health, nutrition and education, limiting their economic potential and placing them at greater risk of violence.

Ending poverty by 2030 cannot be achieved without a concerted focus on ending child poverty in all its forms. Focusing on child poverty will also accelerate progress on other SDGs and targets, especially in relation to health, nutrition, education, economic growth and ending violence.

In order to end child poverty, Member States should prioritize:

- **Measuring levels of child poverty** – including extreme, national and multidimensional poverty – and identify specific groups of children more vulnerable to poverty. Special care should be made to assess levels of poverty among children who are not captured by household surveys, such as children in institutional care or on the street.
- **Ending child poverty in national poverty reduction strategies**, policies and programs and/or adopt a dedicated strategy and national action plan to address child poverty. Plans should identify national targets to end poverty among all children.
- **Ensuring social protection systems target children living in or at risk of poverty**. Only one third of children are covered by social protectionⁱⁱⁱ. Member States should expand social protection coverage to all children and make social protection measures child-sensitive.
- **Providing access to quality public services for children living in or at risk of poverty**, including health, education, water, sanitation, and child protection services. These services should be free at the point of use for all vulnerable families and children.

2. Invest in ending all forms of violence against children

Violence against children affects more than 1.7 billion children each year – in every community, city and country – with devastating impacts on individual children's development, health, education and income potential. It erodes a society's human and social capital, slowing overall economic development and jeopardizing sustainable development outcomes. The global cost of violence against children is estimated to be up to USD \$7 trillion each year^{iv}. Despite this cost, financial investments to address violence against children remain low, with only a small fraction of Official Development Assistance (ODA) allocated to address the issue^v.

Ending all forms of violence against children – including physical, sexual and mental violence, physical or psychological punishment, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, harm or abuse, including commercial sexual exploitation, trafficking, child labor and harmful practices, such as female genital mutilation/cutting and child marriage^{vi} – will be essential to achieve peaceful and inclusive societies and economic growth, as well as child-focused targets across a range of SDGs.

To achieve this end, Member States should prioritize:

- **Prohibiting all forms of violence against children** in all settings and legally ban all forms of violence against children in any settings^{vii}.
- **Investing in what works** to prevent and respond to violence and scale up existing proven and effective solutions, such as INSPIRE^{viii} strategies, by ensuring that they are integrated into government strategies and plans, delivered through strong child protection systems, guided by policy solutions that mobilize multi-sectoral responses, and backed by investments that enable their application at scale necessary to reduce prevalence of violence against children.
- **Increasing funding and transparency in budgets** allocated to interventions to end violence against children at national and sub-national levels, and across all sectors, and mobilize additional funding from other sources including ODA.
- **Addressing harmful social norms and practices** that condone violence by through investment in interventions that promote gender equality, positive parenting, child rights education, and safe learning environments and by building capacity and collaborating with communities, parents/caregivers and children to challenge harmful behaviors, and adopt positive norms.
- **Fully implementing the Global Compact on Refugees and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration**, which present an historic opportunity to realize the objective of the Sustainable Development Goals to leave no one behind and protect children on the move from violence.

3. Realize Universal Health Coverage including nutrition

While significant progress has been made in global health for young children since 1990, each year 5.4 million continue to die from preventable causes, of which 2.5 million are newborns^{ix}, 557,000 children between the ages of 5 and 9 die from pneumonia, diarrhea and other causes, and 1.2 million adolescents are killed by disease, accidents and violence^x. Malnutrition is the single biggest contributor to child mortality and is associated with poor cognitive development and physical health, with lifelong implications for health, education and economic growth.

These children constitute the most vulnerable in the world, and are twice as likely to die from preventable causes as those in the wealthier quintiles in their countries.^{xi} For the most part, their coverage and quality of essential primary health care services has remained unchanged. Health services alone will not resolve these issues – multi-sectoral and multiple partner interventions are required to ensure address of diverse determinants like violence, mental health, gender equality and food security – but it is a start.

In order to achieve healthy and well-nurtured children, Member States should prioritize:

- **Ratifying and fully realizing Universal Health Coverage** for all children, women of reproductive age, and pregnant and lactating women, with priority.
- **Investing no less than 5% of GDP** on their national health sector budgets. Within these budgets, Primary Health Care plans should be fully funded prior to any other allocations, and be fully implemented.
- **Fulfilling health workforce staffing at Primary Health Care level**, per WHO guidelines.
- **Formally and fully adopting and accelerating** the 2019 updated WHO Essential Nutrition Actions.

- **Supporting the financing of national nutrition policies and action plans** that have targets on reducing child malnutrition. While many countries have national nutrition policies and targets, financing remains a key challenge to implementation^{xii}.
- **Participating in and committing to the 2020 Nutrition for Growth** policy and financing agenda.

4. Commit to ensuring children living in fragile contexts are not left

Today two billion people live in countries where development outcomes are deeply affected by fragility, conflict and violence^{xiii}. If trends continue, by 2030 the share of extreme poor living in fragile and conflict-affected contexts – including children – will reach more than 80 per cent^{xiv}. In these contexts, children face extreme levels of abuse, exploitation, deprivation and violence often with high levels of food insecurity, hunger and malnutrition. These children are nearly three times more likely to be out of primary school than children in other low-income countries^{xv}. In addition, one in six children live in areas affected by armed conflict, a rise of 74 per cent in the past decade.^{xvi}

Achieving the SDGs for children everywhere will require a dedicated focus on children living in fragile contexts. It will also require collective efforts to build a stronger nexus between humanitarian, development and peace-building interventions.

To ensure children living in fragile contexts are not left behind, Member States should prioritize:

- **Strengthening protective systems** for children at multiple levels by implementing programs across the humanitarian, development and peacebuilding nexus that first and foremost focus on strengthening systems that build and reinforce a protective environment for the world’s most vulnerable girls and boys.
- **Using measures of success** that are based on the perceptions and self-assessment of the affected populations about their ability to survive, adapt to new circumstances, and thrive.
- **Building an effective nexus** amongst humanitarian, development and peace approaches that are context specific and context appropriate. Common goals that align to the 2030 Agenda and more coordinated ways of working must be underpinned by international law and reinforce norms and behaviors that do not compromise one another’s principles.
- **Investing long-term political will** as well as technical and financial resources to address disputes between state and non-state actors before they lead to violence and conflict by building the capacity of states to support peace and reconciliation processes, including local capacities for peace, and increasing mediation capacity and informal diplomacy.

5. Involve children in implementing and reviewing the Goals

Paragraph 51 of the 2030 Agenda recognizes children and young women and men as “critical agents of change” who “will find in the new Goals a platform to channel their infinite capacities for activism into the creation of a better world”^{xvii}. Child participation is also one of the core principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) to which nearly all Member States are legally bound. Despite formal recognition, children’s participation in development processes is often overlooked, undervalued or tokenistic.

Children and young people's meaningful participation^{xviii} can make a significant contribution to achieving the SDGs by providing governments with a better understanding and insight into why progress is or is not being made in relation to children. It can also help to create democratic societies with informed and engaged citizens.

In order to capitalize on the contribution children can make to sustainable development, Member States should prioritize:

- **Supporting and facilitating effective mechanisms** for children's meaningful and safe participation in the implementation of the SDGs – such as children's parliaments, children's councils and other child-led groups – at national and sub-national levels.
- **Promoting sustainable development education** among children and provide opportunities for them to participate in sustainable development activities in accordance with their evolving capacities and gradually increasing autonomy.
- **Empowering crisis-affected children and communities** as agents of change, peace and development in their own right. Involve and give them a voice in issues which affect them, including those related to recovery from crisis as well as those on achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- **Involving children in collecting and generating data and research** to assess progress on the SDGs. A growing body of evidence suggests that child-led research provides promising opportunities to engage children and young people in shaping policies and practices, ultimately creating changes that lead to better lives for them^{xix}.
- **Providing opportunities for children to engage** in accountability processes related to the SDGs including facilitating consultations with children at national and subnational levels, incorporating their perspectives in Voluntary National Review reports and supporting their participation in official delegations to and presentations at the HLPF.
- **Establishing adequately resourced mechanisms** to ensure regular and meaningful participation of children in decision-making processes that affect them directly.

6. Support child-centred disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation

Children are disproportionately affected by shocks and stresses related to climate change and natural disasters. They face greater risks than adults from vector-borne diseases, undernutrition, diarrheal diseases and heat-related health risks. The physical, economic and psychological impacts of climate-related shocks and stresses exacerbate existing inequalities between children in terms of nutrition, health and achievement in the long term^{xx}. Despite contributing the least to the causes of climate change, children are – and will continue to be – the worst affected by its impacts.

Children should be at the heart of actions to tackle and adapt to climate change. They are also an important part of the solutions to address climate change and reduce disaster risk.

In addressing climate change, Member States should prioritize:

- **Ensuring children are prioritized** in national and local disaster risk reduction strategies and national adaptation plans, including by identifying the short and long-term risks faced by children in a changing climate. Strategies and plans should recognize children's unique needs, vulnerabilities,

rights and capacities, identify child-centered disaster risk reduction (DRR) and climate change adaptation (CCA) targets and address education, health, child protection and social protection needs for children.

- **Promoting climate change and DRR education** among children – including by integrating DRR and CCA into school curriculum – in order to educate and empower children to respond and adapt to climate change and reduce their vulnerability to disasters.
- **Involving children** in CCA and DRR, including by ensuring their meaningful participation in undertaking climate and disaster risk assessments, planning and implementing CCA and DRR and raising awareness of climate risks and solutions^{xxi}. Children’s participation should also be facilitated in decision-making, monitoring and review processes related to climate change and disaster risk reduction.

ⁱ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) (2019), *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2019*, p. 22. Online: <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2019/The-Sustainable-Development-Goals-Report-2019.pdf>.

ⁱⁱ The Global Coalition to End Child Poverty (2019). Online: <http://www.endchildhoodpoverty.org/global-goals-with-sdg-guide>.

ⁱⁱⁱ UN DESA (2019), *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2019*, p. 23.

^{iv} World Vision International (2018), *It Takes Investment: Financing the End of Violence Against Children*, p. 5. <https://www.wvi.org/fr/node/74216>

^v According to one report, less than 0.6 per cent of total ODA spending in 2015 was allocated to projects that contributed to ending violence against children, while just over 0.1 per cent was spent on projects that fully addressed violence against children. See: ChildFund Alliance, Save the Children, SOS Children’s Villages International, World Vision International, and Development Initiatives (2017), *Counting Pennies: A review of official development assistance to end violence against children*, p. 2. Online: https://www.wvi.org/sites/default/files/Counting_Pennies_WEB_FINAL.pdf.

^{vi} World Vision International (2019), *Small Cracks, Big Gaps: How governments allow violence against children to persist*, p. 2. <https://www.wvi.org/publications/report/it-takes-world/small-cracks-big-gaps>

^{vii} World Vision International (2019), *Small Cracks, Big Gaps: How governments allow violence against children to persist*

^{viii} INSPIRE is a set of seven strategies that have shown success in reducing violence against children. Developed by experts, INSPIRE places a strong emphasis on prevention through a multi-sectoral response, with strategies that include health, social welfare, education, and finance and justice sectors. For more information, see: http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/violence/inspire/en/.

^{ix} EWEC. 2018. Survive, thrive, and transform global strategy for women’s, children’s and adolescents’ health (2016–2030) 2018 monitoring report: current status and strategic priorities. <https://www.everwomaneverychild.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/EWECGSMonitoringReport2018.pdf>

^x WHO. 2017. Global Accelerated Action for the Health of Adolescents (AA-HA!): guidance to support country implementation. Geneva: World Health Organization. License: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO.

https://www.who.int/maternal_child_adolescent/documents/global-aa-ha-annexes.pdf

^{xi} UNICEF. 2018. Level and trends in child mortality: Report 2018. <file:///C:/Users/dirvine.WVIGCMANILA/Downloads/UN-IGME-Child-Mortality-Report-2018.pdf>

^{xii} WHO (2018), *The 2018 Global Nutrition Report*, p. 15. <https://www.who.int/nutrition/globalnutritionreport/en/>

^{xiii} World Vision defines fragile and conflict-affected contexts as the ones where political and social stresses result in extreme vulnerability of children to violence, exploitation, abuse and neglect. In some fragile and conflict-affected contexts, the government is unable or unwilling to ensure the basic rights and well-being of its population and lacks the capacity to manage conflict without violence. In extreme cases, the state may be either non-existent or actively involved in perpetrating violence against its people. Fragility and conflict are neither fixed nor immutable but move along a spectrum. They can affect entire countries or be contained in particular parts of a country, and they can cross borders to affect neighboring states that are vulnerable to instability.

^{xiv} World Vision International (2019), *A Brighter Future for Children: Our approach to fragile contexts*, p. 3. <https://www.wvi.org/publications/brighter-future-fragile-contexts>

^{xv} Ibid

^{xvi} World Vision International (2019), *No Choice: It takes a world to end the use of child soldiers* <https://www.wvi.org/it-takes-world/publication/no-choice-it-takes-world-end-use-child-soldiers>

^{xvii} United Nations, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, General Assembly Resolution A/RES/70/1, United Nations, New York, 25 September 2015, para. 51.

^{xviii} In addition to the UN Child Rights Convention and several UNGA resolutions, Security Council resolution 2250 call for meaningful involvement of children and young people in peace processes. UN Secretary-General added his voice to this call in his report “The Missing Peace” – see Section 6.

^{xix} World Vision International (2019), *Child-led Research: From participating in research to leading it* <https://www.wvi.org/stories/child-participation/child-led-research-participating-research-leading-it>.

^{xx} The Children in a Changing Climate Coalition (2016), *A View from 2016: Child-Centered Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, p. 8. <http://www.childreninachangingclimate.org/a-view-from-2016.html>.

^{xxi} The Children in a Changing Climate Coalition (2015), *Child-centered Adaptation: Realizing children's rights in a changing climate*, p. 2. <http://www.childreninachangingclimate.org/realising-childrens-rights-in-a-changing-climate.html>.

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