

STRONGER TOGETHER

World Vision's Recommendations for
the 2026 World Bank Spring Meetings.

Children's futures are largely determined in their earliest years, when over 90% of brain development takes place. Investing in young children yields exceptionally high returns up to ten dollars in long-term social and economic benefits for every dollar spent. Yet global progress is faltering. Many countries now spend more on debt than on health or education, nearly half of under-five deaths are linked to malnutrition and human capital gains are slowing or reversing, especially in fragile and climate-vulnerable regions.

At the same time, major aid cuts are putting children at further risk. UNICEF warns that reduced education funding could leave 6 million more children out of school by 2026, and analysis from Lancet Global Health suggests severe aid reductions could result in 5.4 million additional child deaths by 2030. These setbacks threaten children's survival, learning, and future productivity. With 1.2 billion young people in emerging economies entering the workforce in the next decade, preparing them for meaningful work and leadership demands early, sustained investment in health, nutrition, education, and protection.



The World Bank/ IMF Spring Meetings presents a critical opportunity to strengthen the focus on children across development financing, policy, and delivery, accelerating human capital and driving more inclusive and sustainable growth

Our Recommendations

1. Strengthen the Alignment of Financing with Human Capital Outcomes

Ensuring that development financing reflects the central role of children in long-term growth will be critical.

- Prioritise funding for essential services and sectors for children including health, education, nutrition, WASH and social protection as part of IDA and broader development financing, particularly in contexts where human capital outcomes are under pressure.
- Sustain and deepen investment in early childhood development and foundational services.
- Ensure that financing approaches reflect the long-term economic returns of investing in children.

Early investment in children remains one of the highest-return pathways to sustainable growth.

2. Systematically Integrate a Child Lens Across Strategy and Operations

Children remain inconsistently visible across diagnostics, financing, and results systems.

- Strengthen the integration of child-focused analysis within Country Partnership Frameworks and other country diagnostics.
- Expand the use of age-disaggregated data within the World Bank Scorecard to better understand how the World Bank's financing and programmes deliver for children.
- Enhance the visibility of child-related outcomes within results frameworks.
- Integrate a stronger child lens into job creation strategies and consistently recognise early childhood development as a core component of job creation and prioritise investments in this area.
- Develop a child focused strategy aligned with the Human Capital agenda, using cross-sectoral approaches across education, nutrition, health and protection.

A more consistent child lens would strengthen both targeting and development impact.



In Phamong Village in Lesotho, 13-year-old Senate once walked through a forest each day to collect water from an uncovered well.

“The day I had access to clean water felt like my life had changed for good,” Senate said with a smile. “Fetching water from the tap has become my favourite household chore.” she said.

3. Safeguard Investments in Children in the Context of Fiscal Constraints

Current fiscal pressures risk crowding out essential investments in children.

- Strengthen consideration of social sector impacts within debt sustainability and fiscal analyses.
- Support financing modalities that balance short-term fiscal pressures with long-term human capital needs.

Protecting investments in children is essential to avoiding long-term development reversals.

4. Position WASH as Foundational to Human Capital

Water, sanitation, and hygiene remain under-recognised as core enablers of development outcomes.

- Integrate WASH more systematically within human capital and sectoral strategies.
- Strengthen the linkages between WASH, nutrition, health, and education outcomes
- Prioritise equity in WASH financing directing investments towards the poorest and most marginalised communities including those affected by conflict and fragility where children face the greatest risks.

Without safe water and sanitation, gains in health, nutrition, and education cannot be sustained.

5. Enhance the Effectiveness of Country-Level Delivery through Partnerships

Delivery challenges continue to affect the timeliness and effectiveness of implementation.

- Strengthen structured engagement with NGOs and community-based actors across country processes.
- Explore approaches to improve implementation efficiency, particularly in fragile and crisis contexts.
- Enhance mechanisms for inclusive, multi-stakeholder engagement.

More effective partnerships can help translate financing into results more efficiently.



In Tildanga Village in southwest Bangladesh, 25-year-old Shamoli and her family once relied on a nearby pond for drinking, bathing and washing a daily reality that led to frequent illness.

“Before, my children were always sick,” Shamoli says. “Now our home is cleaner, my children are healthier, and we no longer live with fear of disease. The greatest gift I received is a healthy child.”

6. Deepen the Operationalisation of the FCV Strategy for Children

Fragile and conflict-affected settings present distinct challenges for delivery and impact.

- Ensure that FCV approaches adequately reflect the differentiated impacts on children and youth.
- Strengthen clarity on delivery modalities in contexts with limited state capacity.
- Support flexible and context-adapted approaches that can respond to evolving risks.

A more explicit focus on children within FCV approaches can strengthen long-term resilience and stability.

7. Elevate Nutrition and Community Health within the Human Capital Agenda

Nutrition and primary health care remain foundational yet underfunded components of development.

- Strengthen the integration of nutrition across sectors and financing streams.
- Reinforce the role of community-based delivery systems in reaching vulnerable populations.
- Align financing ambition with the scale of current needs.

Nutrition underpins progress across human capital, productivity, and resilience.

Delivering Impact for Children: Now is the Moment

The Spring Meetings are a critical opportunity to align global financing with what matters most: children. By putting children at the centre of financing, policy, and delivery, the World Bank can accelerate human capital, strengthen resilience, and drive inclusive economic growth.

Background to World Vision and VisionFund International

World Vision is a Christian humanitarian, development and advocacy organisation dedicated to working with children, families and communities worldwide to reach their full potential by tackling the causes of poverty and injustice. World Vision serves all people, regardless of religion, race, ethnicity or gender delivering results for children, even in the hardest places. We operate in nearly 100 countries with more than 31,000 staff members and we reach millions of children each year with essential services, and working alongside governments and the World Bank to deliver at scale.

VisionFund International is the microfinance arm of World Vision International, providing financial services that strengthen the organization's broader development and disaster-response work. It focuses on helping vulnerable families especially those in remote, underserved communities build income and employment through microloans, insurance, savings access, digital payments and remittances, and financial education. By expanding financial inclusion for women and men in rural areas, VisionFund's services contributed to improved livelihoods for 5.2 million children in 2023. The organization operates microfinance institutions in 25 countries and extends additional financial services through World Vision and partner networks in several others.



CONTACT US FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Sini Maria Heikkila,
Senior Advisor for External Engagement
Email: sini_heikkila@wvi.org

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