

A goal and targets on child protection for the post-2015 development framework

The widespread failure to protect children is a global crisis, with 0.5-1.5 billion children experiencing violence each year (Pineiro 2006), 150 million girls and 73 million boys who are raped or subject to sexual violence (WHO 2000), and 115 million children engaged in extremely harmful forms of work (ILO 2010). This global crisis represents a major violation of children's rights; an unacceptable situation, which must be remedied urgently, no matter what the costs. In addition to impacting on the current well-being of children, the widespread inadequate care and protection of children is also affecting the achievement of broader development objectives relating to child survival and health, education, economic growth and equity. Many girls and boys die each year because they are abused, neglected or exploited. Vulnerable children who survive into adulthood can be at a significant disadvantage, with many experiencing developmental delays, gaps in their schooling and mental and physical health problems due to their maltreatment. The stigma, discrimination and diminished life chances faced by children who are abused, exploited and neglected exacerbates inequity, and in general these boys and girls are not able to contribute to economies to their full potential. In addition to the damaging impacts on children themselves, the negative effects of child maltreatment on human capital, combined with the costs associated with responding to abuse and neglect, means that inadequate care and protection also hinders economic growth.

The alarming impacts of child protection failures are likely to grow in significance unless something is done urgently. Global trends such as climate change, migration and urbanisation are all increasing children's vulnerability and governments are not investing enough resources in building and maintaining comprehensive child protection systems. Children around the world want more support to enable them to grow up free from violence, and within caring, safe families.

"The first thing that needs to be ensured is the protection of children. Otherwise there will be no education or anything else." (Moges, a boy from a community at high risk of disasters in Ethiopia)

It is therefore essential that governments, UN agencies and other actors engaged in the design of the framework that will replace the current Millennium Development Goals in 2015 include the following proposed goal and targets on child protection:

Goal:

All children live a life free from all forms of violence, are protected in conflicts and disasters, and thrive in a safe, caring, family environment.

Targets:

- End all forms of violence against all girls and boys in all settings
- Prevent the unnecessary separation of children from families and ensure no child is placed in institutional care
- End the worst forms of child labour
- End child marriage
- Birth registration for all children without discrimination
- All countries have strong systems for child protection that operate effectively across all levels and at all times, including emergency periods.

