



Human Rights Office

International Institute Maria Ausiliatrice - IIMA

NGO in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations

Geneva, 3 October 2016

IIMA Human Rights Office

Contribution for the report of the OHCHR (following the General Assembly Resolution 31/7) on:

“The protection of the rights of the child in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”

INTRODUCTION

IIMA (Istituto Internazionale Maria Ausiliatrice), is an NGO with Special Consultative Status with ECOSOC based on the principles of St. John Bosco, which require the dedication of oneself to the service of young people and children, in particular the poorest and those living in difficult situations. IIMA promotes and defends the right to education and—specifically—Human Rights education of children, young people and women, and carries out its work in 1455 centres in 95 countries on five continents. IIMA has developed this paper as a contribution to the forthcoming report by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) on the protection of the Rights of the Child in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, following Human Rights Council (HRC) Resolution 31/7 of 23 March 2016. The paragraph 23 of ties resolution *requests* “the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to prepare a report on that theme, in close cooperation with all relevant stakeholders, including States, the United Nations Children’s Fund, other relevant United Nations bodies and agencies, relevant special procedure mandate holders, regional organizations and human rights bodies, civil society, national human rights institutions and children themselves, and to present it to the Human Rights Council at its thirty-fourth session, with a view to providing information for the annual day of discussion on the rights of the child”..¹

1. WHAT HAVE THE MDGs ACHIEVED BY 2015?

The Millennium Development Goals were created at the beginning of the new millennium by world leaders in order to address inequalities in their many dimensions. That vision, translated into eight goals, tried to fight against extreme poverty rates, to provide universal primary education, to avoid child and maternal mortality, among other objectives to be achieved by the end of 2015, which were measured through 21 targets and 60 official indicators.

Reaching the end of 2015, the MDGs were able to save millions of lives and improve the condition of many, thanks to international, regional, national and local efforts. In fact, the MDGs were called the “most successful anti-poverty movement in history”², according to Millennium Development Goals Report -2015.”

According to the “Millennium Development Goals Report -2015”³, the eight MDGs have achieved various “profound achievements” like:

- Reducing the number of people living on less \$1.25 a day in the developing world to 14%
- Reaching 91% net enrolment in primary schools in the developing regions and lowering the number of out-of-school children of primary school age from 100 million to 57 million
- Dropping the global under-five mortality rate to 43 deaths per 1,000 live births.

¹A/HRC/31/L.9/Rev.1

² Millennium Development Goals Report 2015 – Frequently Asked Questions DPI /2594/7 E

³ The Millennium Development Goals Report 2015. New York: United Nations, 2015. Print



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The MDGs achieved positive results, but it is now the task of the new Agenda to address the remaining inequalities.

WHICH GOALS MUST STILL BE MET?

The MDGs, though ambitious, were unable to completely address the plight of the most vulnerable groups in society that are being left behind because of their sex, age, disability, ethnicity, etc.

In fact, gender inequality still exists and women continue to face discrimination in access to work and private and public decision-making; big gaps remain between the poorest and the richest households; about 800 million still live in extreme poverty and suffer from hunger; about 50% of people living in rural areas don't have improved sanitation systems; climate change affects many and few policies have been created to solve this problem. Furthermore, armed-conflicts have been one of the biggest threats to human development, especially in countries with the highest poverty rates. By the end of 2014, conflicts forced almost 60 million people to abandon their homes—the highest level recorded since the Second World War, in accordance with the data from the United Nations.⁴ Refugee status disproportionately affects children, who corresponded for half of the global refugee population under the responsibility of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in 2014. In conflict-ridden countries, the proportion of out-of-school children increased from 30% in 1999 to 36% in 2012.⁵

HOW WILL THE LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE MDGs ENSURE THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN IN THE SDGs?

The Progress achieved towards the MDGs between 2000 and 2015 demonstrated the power of national action, supported by international partnerships, to reach incredible results: as the UNICEF World Children Report of 2016 stated “children born today are significantly less likely to live in poverty than those born at the start of the new millennium.”⁶ However millions of children continue suffer in deplorable conditions. In 2015, 5.9 million children died before reaching age 5, from preventable causes. Moreover children are still denied access to education simply because of poverty, gender or conflict situations. Finally approximately half of the poorest people in the world are children.

There are many lessons from the experience of the MDGs that can be built upon to better implement the rights of children. For example:

- The recognition of children as a vulnerable group demanding specific recognition ;
- The importance of an country-specific, inclusive and participatory process to implement the SDGs;
- The mobilization of financial resources (public and private, domestic and international) as well as capacity-building
- The necessity to reduce vulnerabilities and building resilience within communities to achieve sustainable development through investment in human capacity.

The path of progress in the next 15 years will have to more ambitious than the MDG period because the consequences and costs of failure to meet the goals could be huge.

In fact, according to UNICEF, “if the trends of the past 15 years continue for the next 15 years, by 2030, an estimated 167 million children, the great majority in sub-Saharan Africa, will still be living in extreme poverty. Approximately 3.6 million children under age 5 will die that year, still from mostly

⁴ *Ibidem*

⁵ *Ibidem*

⁶ The “UNICEF World Children Report 2016-A fair chance for every child” – United Nations Children’s Fund..New York: UNICEF, 2016.



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preventable causes. And there could still be more than 60 million primary-school-aged children out of school.”⁷

The 2030 Agenda recognizes the importance of promoting equity: the 17 goals and 169 associated targets engage the world’s governments, recalling, “That no one will be left behind ... and we will endeavour to reach the furthest behind first.”⁸

2. NO CHILD IS LEFT BEHIND: NEW APPROACHES TO IMPLEMENT THE 2030 AGENDA AND THE RESPECT OF THE EQUITY IMPERATIVE

Every child is born with the same inalienable right to a healthy start in life, a secure childhood and to the right to be educated: basic needs to become empowered youth and adults who will contribute to the development of their own societies. New approaches could be implemented to ensure the protection for the rights of child, especially in five different fields:

a. EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION:

One of the effective instruments to reach an equal development and to defend the rights of children is education: without it, poor and disadvantaged children are more likely to be low-skilled adults, poorly paid and with unstable employment.

Education has the power to end intergenerational cycles of inequity and improve the lives of children and the societies in which they live. However, reaching equal levels of learning for all children is a big challenge. The goal is to create equitable and quality educational environments.

These systems must strive to recognize that the needs of the most disadvantaged pupils are as important as the accomplishments of the most advantaged.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have the commitment to focus their attention on childhood development with an "equity approach," identifying those children at the highest risk and fighting especially against discrimination caused by poverty, lack of services and harmful cultural values. They demand for an integrated approach to obtain full equality and non-discrimination, working together at both national and international levels to reach every child.

b. INVESTING IN CHILDREN:

Every country of the world has to understand that investing in children means to invest in future human capital. This can be achieved through the SDGs by creating targeted social investments to raise communities above social deprivation, especially those that live in remote areas that have limited access to government services. Besides, it is necessary to give additional financial resources to the SDGs related to children’s rights that are underfunded, address more private funding to the countries with lower revenue capacities and finally ameliorate the transparency of the information related the child-spending policies.

c. PARTNERSHIP FOR IMPLEMENTATIONS:

For the 2030 Agenda to be successful there must be partnership and collaboration between government, society and the private actors. In fact, the last goal is related to enhancing the partnership between stakeholders to achieve sustainable development. It is important to reinforce the idea of the need to implement these goals and to revitalize cooperation. Even if these goals do not contain specific references to children, they are important because children are one of the principle stakeholders for this cooperation. Moreover, partnership relies on important standards like accountability, governance, transparency and inclusivity, which

⁷ *Ibidem*

⁸ The “UNICEF Annual Report 2015” –New York: UNICEF, 2015.



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enhance the achievement of policies of the 2030 Agenda and create a common strategy of economic and social development.

d. ACCOUNTABILITY AND MONITORING

The seventeen goals SDGs must be reached by the 2030; therefore, they are a benchmark to be evaluated and reported. Nowadays there are gaps in the government system of gathering data, which can be used to better implement the SDGs or to modify policies that are inefficient. This can be done by strengthening political commitment, mobilizing civil society and attaining the high level of accountability. Finally, it is necessary to put adequate budgets at national and international levels to support the statistical offices. It is also necessary to refer to human rights standards like the international human rights treaty as well as the recommendations from national and international human rights mechanisms.

e. OTHER RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS : THE ROLE OF EDUCATORS IN THE SDG AGENDA

The Convention on the Right of the Child (CRC) recognizes that every child has the right to a quality education. This is one of the reasons why the SDGs require a governmental commitment to “ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education.”⁹ It is important that the teachers all over the world are qualified and informed about the SDGs and their implication. These would benefit from an international programme for teacher’s training, where they can compare their own experiences and exchange advice on how to improve their teaching methods. There is growing support for permanent and qualified teachers rather than teachers with short-term contracts.

SDG 4 focuses on ensuring quality education. The goal’s target 4.c calls for an increase in the supply of qualified teachers but it fails to define the specific quantity of this increase. The developing world is seeing a lack of teachers, therefore setting a target number would especially benefit LDCs and SIDS that are in need of educators in general.

Furthermore, SDG 4 should include the importance of motivating the teachers through adequate salaries, decent working conditions and appreciation of their skills.

Education is a powerful instrument in every part of the world, which can be used not only to achieve the goals of the Agenda but also for the defence of the rights of a child.

⁹ SDG 4.2. A/RES/70/1