

# Child poverty in the post-2015 agenda <sup>[1]</sup>

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## AVAILABILITY

Brief in PDF <sup>[2]</sup>

### Summary:

This Issues Brief outlines why the post-2015 agenda should include an explicit focus on child poverty towards achieving a world fit for children. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have galvanized historic progress in child survival and development, but this progress has been inequitable, with children from the poorest backgrounds seeing the fewest gains. Vast numbers of children continue to live in poverty, a problem that afflicts both developed and developing countries alike. In low and middle-income countries 39 percent of children still struggle to survive in 'extreme poverty' - defined internationally as living on less than \$1.25 a day - including some 569 million children aged 18 and under. Across the developing world, children in the poorest quintiles are still twice as likely to die before the age of five as those in the wealthiest quintile, and nearly three times as likely to be underweight. Poorer children also achieve less in school at all stages of education. Furthermore, one out of every eight children in industrialized countries is still poor.

Poverty in childhood has especially devastating effects, often distorting children's physical, cognitive and social development. Poverty can also set children on a lifelong trajectory of low education levels and reduced productivity, and undermine their physical and mental health. Children living in poverty are more likely to become impoverished adults and have poor children, creating and sustaining intergenerational cycles of poverty. While the largest costs of child poverty are borne directly by children themselves, society also pays a high price through reduced productivity, untapped potential and the costs of responding to chronic poverty. Child poverty damages children's life chances and harms us all.

UNICEF believes that the post-2015 framework must reflect a commitment to eradicate child poverty as part of the new development goals. Tackling child poverty is morally right, but it is also central to eradicating overall extreme poverty and accelerating progress on other crucial development goals. To end extreme child poverty we must tackle its multiple roots. There must be clear commitments to eradicate child poverty, an expansion of child sensitive social protection systems, increased access to quality services for the poorest children, and the benefits of inclusive growth must reach the poorest families.

The new development agenda offers great hope for the millions of children and youth that are struggling in poverty. Much remains to be defined, but it is likely that eradicating extreme poverty will be a core part of the new set of goals. UNICEF welcomes this focus and considers that ending extreme poverty experienced by children, who are overrepresented among the poor, should be an integral part of this common goal.

### Key recommendations:

1. The post-2015 agenda should make an explicit commitment towards ending child poverty.
2. As the post-2015 goals and indicators come into focus, ensuring disaggregation by age, poverty status and wealth will be vital to ensuring the poorest are reached.

**Region:** International <sup>[3]</sup>

**Tags:** poverty <sup>[4]</sup>

children's rights <sup>[5]</sup>

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