

# CHILD ACTORS POSITION ON CHILDREN IN THE POST 2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA FOR UGANDA



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## Preamble:

We recognize that the year 2015, will be a major historical landmark in the world of development. The era of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) will come to a close, and a new development era will be ushered in. The time to celebrate our achievements, to reflect on challenges of the past and to define our vision of the future is upon us. The discourse on the Post 2015 development agenda is well underway at various levels throughout the world. It's our position that one important domain and group that should be given priority is children – by far the biggest demographic group in Uganda, the most vulnerable segment of Ugandan society, yet the most important and decisive element for not only Uganda, but Africa's sustained growth, prosperity and participation in the world economy.

## Progress to date:

We acknowledge that government and the international community for their efforts towards improving the lives of children in the last decade of the Millennium Development Goals (2000-2015). According to the 2007, MDG progress report, there were 2.2 million pupils in primary schools in Uganda by the year 2000, but by 2007 the number had risen to 7.5 million. The same report notes that the infant mortality rate (IMR), declined to 76 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2007 from 122 deaths per 1,000 live births in 1991, while the under-five mortality rate- declined from 167 to 137 deaths per 1,000 live births during the same period.

Despite this laudable progress, children continue to live in conditions characterized by inadequate access to quality health and education services, hunger and malnutrition, biting poverty in homes, exploitation, neglect, and violence. Such living conditions for children in Uganda undermine the four cardinal rights of a child to survival, development, protection and participation.

## Recommendations:

We the undersigned Child Rights focused actors in Uganda welcome the opportunity to input into the Post 2015 development agenda process. We support the development of an ambitious zero based target development framework at the expiry of the current MDGs and ensuring that Children issues are strongly reflected in the Post 2015 development Agenda. Working in close consultations with Ugandan children and basing on the review of documents on the UN led Post2015 development process, the 2011 Children Manifesto, CRAs/ CFAs recommend the following to be considered for integration into the Ugandan negotiating position;

- 1. Child Protection:** All the children need to be supported and protected to thrive and grow into their full potential. Millions of Ugandan children continue to face different forms of abuse, exploitation, neglect and violence. Children are victims of early marriage, child labour, child prostitution, criminal activities, child trafficking and armed conflicts among others. The post 2015 development agenda should ensure



that child protection systems including, juvenile justice are an integral component of broader systems of rule of law. It is vital that the issue of violence perpetrated against *all children*, including, children with disabilities, be explicitly included therein. We strongly recommend that an explicit provision is made in the next development framework to ensure that all children live in a life free from all forms of violence. As a possible goal we suggest *all children live in a life free from all forms of violence, are protected in conflicts and disasters and thrive in a safe family environment*. The post-2015 development agenda should address inequalities that heighten the risks for certain children to experience violence, while also addressing the root causes of violence and not just its effects and manifestations.

- 2. Health Services:** Despite improvements in child mortality rates, Uganda needs to do more to combat child death. These deaths are due to preventable diseases such as malaria, pneumonia and diarrhea. Inadequate access to clean water and sanitation also remain a significant barrier to further improving mortality rates. Malnutrition is another critical challenge faced by Ugandan Children; one of every three children under five years is stunted as a result of under-nourishment. Also, 54% of adults get stunted during their infancy<sup>1</sup>. Access of anti-retroviral drugs for children is a major challenge with less than 50% of children able to access treatment, while young adolescents are ill equipped to protect themselves from reproductive health risks such as HIV and AIDS. The post 2015 development agenda must therefore address child death, access to water and sanitation, the high levels of malnutrition, as well as access to anti-retroviral treatment and adolescent empowerment programs to enable them protect themselves from reproductive health risks such as HIV and AIDS.
- 3. Education:** The improvement in access to primary school education has been impressive, but much more still has to be done to ensure that even children from the poorest socio-economic groups can access education. Not just education, but quality education must be given priority. Schools must be transformed into safe environments conducive for learning and development by all children. Focus and emphasis should be given to children with disabilities and the girl child who are the highest victims of school dropout in Uganda. It's also extremely important that Uganda flags out the importance and need for investment in universal Early Childhood Development (ECD) programs in the Post 2015 era. ECD project research has proven that children who participate in well-conceived ECD programs tend to be more successful in later school, are more competent socially and emotionally, and show higher verbal and intellectual development during early childhood than children who are not enrolled in high quality programs. Ensuring healthy child development, therefore, is an investment in a country's future workforce and capacity to thrive economically and as a society.
- 4. Child Vulnerability:** The post 2015 development agenda must also confront the persistent inequalities and new challenges facing children and their families. These inequalities affect poor children, girls, women, children of marginalized ethnic groups, children with disabilities and children in rural populations. It's

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Cost of hunger in Uganda Study, 2014.



these unaddressed vulnerabilities that have perpetuated risk conditions that have pushed a number of children to the streets and forced many out of families into institutional care. Progress has been made in social development outcomes, but the structural causes of inequalities and social exclusion, including poverty, gender inequality, harmful traditional practices among others, need to be addressed in the Post 2015 agenda.

## Conclusion:

As civil society organizations working to promote and protect the rights and well-being of all children; it's our appeal that the Post 2015 development agenda is reflective of the following commitments:

1. Ensuring the progressive realization of the rights of every child without any discrimination, on the basis of age, gender, disability or any other basis as guaranteed by African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the Convention on the Rights of the Child;
2. Prohibiting and eliminating all forms of abuse and violence through effective, comprehensive and integrated child protection systems including juvenile justice systems;
3. Ensuring that inclusive social protection measures are put in place to protect, the most vulnerable children and families from economic, political, social and climatic shocks including in those countries affected by conflict;
4. Eliminating the preventable infant and child deaths that continue to persist;
5. Eliminating child malnutrition, specifically stunting;
6. Equipping adolescents with adequate knowledge and skills to enable them protect themselves from reproductive health risks such as HIV and AIDS and to prepare them for decent employment opportunities;
7. Achieving universal access to quality early childhood development programs, primary and secondary education for all children;
8. Ensuring that children have decent living conditions and are not at risk of unnecessary separation from their families;
9. Achieving universal birth registration for all children;
10. Generating and allocating, to the maximum extent possible, domestic resources for investing in children, particularly in health, education, early childhood development and social protection;
11. Ensuring that the best interest of the child is the primary consideration in any action taken for, or on behalf of children and that children's perspectives and contributions are considered and reflected upon in decisions that affect their lives; and,
12. Ensuring the implementation of the global and regional commitment of the rights of the child.

## Undersigned Child Actors:

