FROM AGREEMENT TO **ACTION**

Delivering the Sustainable Development Goals

Save the Children

Save the Children works in more than 120 countries.
We save children's lives. We fight for their rights.
We help them fulfil their potential.

Cover photo: Shirleen, 15, is a secondary school student from the Kibera slum in Nairobi, Kenya. Asked what is most important to her in the post-2015 framework, she said "Education, because without education you can never achieve all the other things. But with good education we can achieve them all." Photo: Colin Crowley/Save the Children

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

KEY MESSAGES

- The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development signals a clear commitment from world leaders to set the world on track for a more just, prosperous and sustainable future in which all children can reach their full potential.

- The challenge of sustainable development is an intergenerational one; effective action now will improve children's lives today and create a better future for children tomorrow.

- Lessons should be learned from the experience of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) about how international frameworks can help drive progress at global and national levels, and about the kinds of interventions, institutions and partnerships that can support effective change.

- While national ownership and adaptation of the 2030 Agenda to local contexts are essential, four core actions underpin the agenda, cut across all goals and must be adhered to, in order to ensure success:
  - Implement the agenda holistically, with all states taking action across all goals in the long term, with a focus on fulfilling the core promises to children in the short term, as this will provide the foundation for long-term success.
  - Ensure no one is left behind by pursuing the achievement of targets for all social and economic groups, and ensuring that the rights and needs of the poorest and most marginalised are addressed first.
  - Build on the work of the MDGs by supporting those countries that are furthest behind, such as conflict-affected fragile states, and the targets or goals that have made the slowest progress.
  - End extreme poverty in all its dimensions, by raising incomes and ensuring access to quality social services such as health and education.

RECOMMENDATIONS – A TEN-POINT PLAN FOR IMPLEMENTATION

In order to implement the 2030 Agenda and build a more just and inclusive society, Save the Children presents a ten-point implementation plan, with five actions for national governments and five for international actors.

National governments must take immediate steps in five key areas:

1. **Integrate the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in national plans, sector strategies, foreign policies and budgets:** All governments, in consultation with civil society, the private sector and other stakeholders, must take immediate steps to align domestic and foreign policies, plans and budgets with the 2030 Agenda. Donor countries must set concrete timetables to meet their ODA (Official Development Assistance) commitments, with assistance primarily directed at the countries and people who are furthest behind.

2. **Strengthen national public institutions and coordination mechanisms:** Ensure that public institutions at local and national levels have the human and financial resources to deliver services with a focus on reaching those furthest behind. This should be complemented by a national coordination mechanism with a mandate to strengthen inter-agency, inter-ministerial or cross-departmental work and to monitor progress towards all goals.

3. **Place 'leave no one behind' at the heart of all strategies:** Ensure there are targeted strategies in plans to tackle exclusion and inequalities, including stepping-stone equity targets to monitor progress for all segments of society. Ensure equity in both raising revenue and allocating budgets, and implement universal coverage of essential services[i] via equitable pathways that meet the needs of marginalised groups first.

4. **Invest in and democratise data, while protecting the privacy and safety of citizens:** Assess the capacity of national statistical offices to meet the challenge of collecting and disseminating disaggregated data on the SDGs for all social and economic groups, including children. Work with civil society, the private sector, international partners and others to build capacity, harmonise existing approaches to data and harness the opportunities presented by new technologies and participatory methods.

5. **Establish inclusive, safe and people-centred systems of accountability:** Report on progress in open, inclusive and participatory ways, supporting the active engagement of all citizens, including children and marginalised groups. Encourage independent reporting on SDG progress by communities, citizen groups and other stakeholders including civil society organisations (CSOs).

International actors, including the United Nations, multilateral agencies and international financial institutions, must take immediate steps in five key areas:

6. **Provide guidance on implementation:** Agree and publish guidance on key aspects of implementation, including on how the scope and ambition of the goals and targets should be adapted to national contexts and how countries should approach goals. The UN Secretary-General should provide a road map for implementation by appointing an independent cross-sector task force or high-level panel – drawn from UN agencies and external stakeholders – with the mandate to prepare a report on implementation.

7. **Deliver political, financial and other commitments to support implementation:** Report on progress on international financing and means of implementation targets. Demonstrate political leadership at the highest levels, providing technical support to countries and engaging with multi-stakeholder partnerships to ensure that the most challenging targets receive sufficient attention.

8. **Institutionalise the commitment to 'leave no one behind':** Support the disaggregation of global indicators, provide guidance to governments on incorporating stepping-stone equity targets into national plans, and provide guidance on how to redesign existing policies to ensure that those furthest behind are reached first.

9. **Support the data revolution through financing, capacity building and collaboration:** Provide countries with the necessary support (including capacity and financing) to meet the challenge of measuring progress towards the SDGs and ensure that there is a minimum level of disaggregated data (a data floor) available in every country. Support countries in scaling up mechanisms for measuring progress across all SDGs, with priority given to first collecting disaggregated data for targets related to children.

10. **Support and participate in global accountability processes:** Support and participate in robust mechanisms for global follow-up and review that support national-level accountability, that focus on progress of the poorest, most vulnerable and those furthest behind, and that provide space for meaningful citizen and civil society participation.

ABBREVIATIONS

CRBP   Children's Rights and Business Principles

CSO   Civil society organisation

DESA   Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN)

GNI   Gross national income

GRI   Global Reporting Initiative

HLPF   High-level Political Forum

IFFs   Illicit financial flows

ILO   International Labour Organization

IMF   International Monetary Fund

MDG   Millennium Development Goal

ODA   Official Development Assistance

NGO   Non-governmental organisation

PRSP   Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper

SDG   Sustainable Development Goal

UN   United Nations

UNDP   United Nations Development Programme

Veronica with her 18-month-old son, Masudi, on the vegetable plot created by the Community Mobilisation Group in Mihogoni village, Tanzania, to improve children's diets.

❙ INTRODUCTION

In September 2015, world leaders came together at the United Nations (UN) to agree to a groundbreaking new set of commitments that aim to end poverty and secure the future of our planet within a generation. *Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*[2] includes a set of 17 ambitious Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets that together form a plan of action for people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership. The Agenda signals a firm commitment from all countries that no one will be left behind, and that those furthest behind will be reached first.

The first day of January 2016 marked the beginning of a new era of sustainable development, and the time when all countries should have sprung into action to implement the new framework. In its scope, ambition and coverage, the 2030 Agenda is a huge undertaking, but one that is achievable if we all contribute. While governments must take the lead and are accountable for delivering progress on the SDGs, other actors including international institutions, civil society and the private sector have an important role to play in monitoring, financing, building capacity, and providing the technical expertise needed to implement the new agenda.

The challenge of implementation is significant and many key questions remain. How can strategies for implementation ensure that the 2030 Agenda is as transformative in practice as it is on paper? What practical steps can be taken to ensure that change is supported at all levels, and that the prospects for achieving a more inclusive and equitable society by

2030 are maximised? Children are one of the main beneficiaries of the 2030 Agenda and its success will depend on what we are able to deliver for them and with them – how can we ensure that the promises to children within the 2030 Agenda are fulfilled?

This report draws on an international literature review and on evidence from Save the Children's work, with inputs from 12 countries.[3] It aims to guide governments and other stakeholders as they develop their implementation plans. It identifies five areas of action – national plans, governance and institutions, realising the commitment to leave no one behind, democratising data, and improving accountability – and presents ten recommendations to deliver the 2030 Agenda. In order to build a more just and inclusive society in the future, we must learn lessons from the development frameworks of the past. Lessons are drawn from the Millennium Declaration and the world's experience in implementing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). While the focus of this report is broad, it hones in on some of the core promises to children in the new agenda.

The 2030 Agenda represents a firm commitment by countries to put the rights and needs of the poorest and most marginalised people first, while at the same time pursuing economic prosperity in ways that conserve the planet's resources and uphold human rights. The challenge now is to bring the commitments made at the UN to life and to make concrete changes in policy, practice and budgets to ensure genuine, accelerated progress towards each and every SDG. It is time for all governments and stakeholders to step up and meet the challenge of sustainable development; it is time to ensure that – once and for all – no child will be left behind.

2 HOW CAN INTERNATIONAL FRAMEWORKS HELP DRIVE NATIONAL PROGRESS?

Changes in policy, practice and budgets that impact most on people's day-to-day lives generally happen at local and national levels. However, international agreements, including those agreed at the UN, have an important role to play in helping to drive forward local and national change. So what is the value of the 2030 Agenda? What impact can we realistically expect it to have on the lives of the poorest and most marginalised children? And what steps can be taken to ensure that it helps to support change at local and national levels?

THE POWER, INFLUENCE AND IMPACT OF THE MDGS

To answer these questions, it is useful to revisit the experience of the world's first development framework: the UN's Millennium Declaration. The 2030 Agenda builds directly on the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), a set of eight development goals agreed in 2001 that included quantitative targets to reduce key dimensions of poverty, among other development imperatives, by 2015.[4] The MDGs were the most specific, measurable and broadly supported poverty reduction targets the world had ever established and have been described by the UN Secretary-General as "the greatest anti-poverty push in history".[5]

Evidence suggests that the MDGs played a tangible role in achieving development progress, with the goals having three distinct kinds of influence, which helped them to reach policy-makers, advocates, bureaucrats and practitioners:

- They *helped shape global norms* on the importance of reducing many dimensions of poverty, rather than focusing merely on economic growth or monetary poverty.[6] The Millennium Declaration and Goals consolidated a shift in international development policy and practice that was already underway, from the structural adjustment, neoliberal ideologies of the 1980s and early 1990s to a period in which progress is defined by poverty reduction and human development through expanded investment in the social sectors.[7]

- They became *powerful advocacy tools*, helping to galvanise civil society attention and put pressure on governments to achieve concrete objectives. The limited number of goals and the clarity of their message helped the MDGs pick up traction among parliamentarians, the public and policy-makers.[8]

- They became a *reference point for policy*, establishing common language and measurements that could be adapted at national levels to guide policy reforms and domestic and foreign resource allocations.

While the influence of the MDGs may have been broad, their impact lay primarily in the strength of the narrative that surrounded them – the story of global collaboration to fight poverty, together with the distillation of hugely complex issues into a series of digestible, measurable and seemingly achievable targets.[9] Recent analysis by the Brookings Institution found that the MDGs had a role in stimulating public discussions, with notable media attention in many countries, including the UK, Nigeria, India and South Africa. UN summits played a big role in sparking public discussions, with the MDGs receiving the most significant coverage in the years when the UN convened major summits: 2005, 2008 and 2010.[10]

At the international level, the MDGs became an important agenda for the UN system and a normative framework for international donors. A 2008 review of 21 bilateral donors' aid policies found that all consistently mentioned the MDGs as overall objectives,[11] with environmental sustainability, education, health, global disease and income poverty as the most widely cited goals.[12]

Looking at the last 15 years of development, it is clear that we were able to achieve much for children all over the world. Within the last two decades, extreme poverty has dramatically declined, from nearly half of the population in the developing world living on less than $1.25 a day in 1990 to 14% in 2015, with the most significant progress occurring since 2000.[13] While it is difficult to isolate the impact of the MDGs from concurrent development trends,[14] evidence suggests that the goals helped to channel political commitments and investments into key social sectors, accelerating reductions in child mortality and improvements in school enrolment.[15] Globally, under-five and maternal mortality have fallen by almost half since 1990,[16] while the number of out-of-school children of primary school age fell from 100 million in 2000 to an estimated 57 million in 2015.[17]

THE 2030 AGENDA: A MISSION TO END POVERTY AND LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND

While it is important to celebrate these achievements for the world's children, we must acknowledge that there is still much work left to do. For all of the progress that has been made, inequalities persist and development outcomes among different groups have been extremely uneven. Significant numbers of people across the world remain excluded from development progress, with many children being left behind. A staggering 47% of people living on less than $1.25 a day are children[18] and one in eight children in OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) countries are living in relative poverty.[19] Those being left behind are often the hardest and most difficult to reach and are systematically excluded. A concerted effort and coordinated approaches are essential to reduce such inequalities, and the 2030 Agenda provides the framework to make this happen.

The 2030 Agenda is likely to play a similar role to the MDGs: it defines a global vision for sustainable development and provides a narrative of cooperation and coordination that should encourage and motivate governments, citizens, civil society and businesses to step up and take action. With 17 goals and 169 targets, it is a truly transformative agenda, representing a significant normative shift and reflecting the growing boundaries of traditional development (see Table 1 overleaf).[20] The goals seek to address new thematic challenges, including a stronger focus on environmental sustainability, peace and governance, economic development and, for the first time, global public goods – such as the climate and oceans. Going beyond the MDGs, the SDGs represent the integration of the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. The new framework is also transformational in its ambition, including commitments to '**get to zero**' on critical dimensions of poverty, such as ending child mortality and ensuring universal access to a variety of services.

Another distinction from the MDGs is the **universal** nature of the 2030 Agenda, with goals and targets applicable to all countries. By design or default, the MDGs focused on achieving progress only in low-income countries. The 2030 Agenda, by comparison, transcends the North/South divide, with all countries – high-, middle- and low-income countries alike – committed to implementing the goals and targets.

The cross-cutting commitment to '**leave no one behind**' is perhaps the single most transformative shift in this new global agenda, with countries endeavouring to reach the furthest behind first. All 193 governments have agreed that they 'wish to see the Goals and targets met for all nations and peoples and for all segments of society'.[21] This represents a radically new way of viewing and undertaking development – in terms of both seeking to reach everyone and also, specifically, putting the most marginalised people first. Leaving no one behind and putting the furthest behind first must be at the forefront of implementation efforts and will define the extent of progress over the next 15 years. Governments will not be able to meet their SDG commitments if they fail to tackle the obstacles faced by marginalised groups.[22]

TABLE 1: THE 17 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

1 NO POVERTY

End poverty in all its forms everywhere

2 ZERO HUNGER

End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture

3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

4 QUALITY EDUCATION

Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

5 GENDER EQUALITY

Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION

Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all

7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY

Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all

8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all

9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialisation and foster innovation

10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES

Reduce inequality within and among countries

11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES

Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION

Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns

13 CLIMATE ACTION

Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

14 LIFE BELOW WATER

Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development

15 LIFE ON LAND

Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss

16 PEACE AND JUSTICE STRONG INSTITUTIONS

Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels

17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the global partnership for sustainable development

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Source: http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/news/communications-material

CORE PROMISES TO CHILDREN IN THE 2030 AGENDA

The challenge of sustainable development is an intergenerational one, as the lives of children are profoundly affected by our action or inaction. While all of the SDGs are relevant to children, it is possible to identify a number of core promises to children within the goals, which are based on the child-focused targets.[23] These promises represent the minimum levels of well-being that children must experience to ensure that they can survive, thrive, be safe and contribute to a sustainable future.[24] Together they form an integrated strategy to secure and improve the lives of children everywhere:

1. No child should live in poverty
2. No child should die from causes we can prevent or treat
3. Every child should have the food needed to grow normally
4. Every child should be able to read and write, and should be numerate
5. Every child should be protected from violence and exploitation.

To deliver these promises we need immediate and effective action. Research from the Centre on International Cooperation has concluded that, based on current rates of progress, we are unlikely to come close to delivering on these core promises to children. Ending preventable disease, for instance, demands "a second child survival revolution that will deliver unpreceded rates of progress in improving children's health".[25]

We must also acknowledge that the implementation of all goals is essential to ensure sustainable and lasting change for children. For example, in addition to being important goals in their own right, Goal 16 on peaceful and inclusive societies and Goal 17 on the means of implementation are essential for the implementation of all other SDGs and the delivery of health, education, child protection and other services to the most marginalised children.

PHOTO: C J CLARKE/SAVE THE CHILDREN

Sanjeev holds his one-month-old son, Namit, at the Fortis Memorial Research Institute in New Delhi, India.

AN INCLUSIVE GLOBAL FRAMEWORK AND A MANDATE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Critics of the MDGs have cautioned that the exclusive, 'closed-door' nature of the negotiating process meant they were not a truly global force. Much of the literature describes how the MDGs were created by a limited number of stakeholders and without adequate involvement by developing countries.[26] One study, for instance, found that 'only 22% of the world's national parliaments formally discussed' the MDG framework.[27] In several countries, the perception that the MDGs were a 'foreign', donor-driven agenda conceived by countries in the North and imposed on countries in the South negatively impacted implementation efforts. Recent analysis supported by Save the Children in Kenya, for example, found that some stakeholders felt the MDGs were an external, donor-driven agenda imposed on Kenya and other African countries as a condition for receiving international aid.[28]

With the 2030 Agenda, this deficit in participation has been better addressed. The new framework was designed with a much broader level of ownership and awareness by governments and civil society organisations (CSOs) across the world. The process of negotiating the 2030 Agenda was much more inclusive, incorporating a series of consultations and campaigns involving citizens and CSOs. 'Beyond 2015', for instance, was a global civil society campaign that brought together more than 1,500 CSOs from 139 countries across the world to mobilise for a strong and legitimate successor to the MDGs.[30] The Action/2015 campaign – a global coalition of more than 2,000 organisations – brought millions of people around the world together to urge world leaders to seize the chance for a fairer, cleaner and prosperous planet (see Box 1).

The fact that the SDGs were shaped and agreed in one of the most participatory processes in the history of the UN provides governments with a credible and significant basis on which to implement the 2030 Agenda and set the world on track for a more equitable and prosperous future.[31] All stakeholders, including governments and CSOs, have an ongoing responsibility to ensure that people everywhere are aware of the commitments made in the Agenda.

BOX 1: ACTION/2015: MOBILISING FOR A BETTER FUTURE

Save the Children was one of 2,000 organisations that helped to inspire more than 30 million actions in over 100 countries through the Action/2015 movement.[29] The campaign was truly global, with 80% of its members located in the global South. Young people were at the forefront of the movement, leading calls for action from their leaders.

The implementation of the 2030 Agenda and realising the commitment to leave no one behind will require real political will at national levels. The Action/2015 movement showed that people around the world are determined to make sure decision-makers deliver on the promises they made. It helped to ensure that as the goals became a reality, every leader knew the world was watching.

3 HOW TO IMPLEMENT THE 2030 AGENDA: FROM GLOBAL GOALS TO NATIONAL PLANS

Integrating the goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda into national priorities, actions, plans and budgets is a critical first step towards implementation and achieving national ownership. The Means of Implementation section of the Agenda calls for "cohesive nationally owned sustainable development strategies, supported by integrated national financing frameworks".[32]

NATIONAL PLANS AND SECTOR STRATEGIES

Looking back on the experience of the MDGs, it is clear that global targets have more traction in implementation when they are incorporated into **national plans** and aligned with existing national priorities.[33] In Kenya, for instance, the first and second medium-term plans for Vision 2030 – the country's long-term development policy – mainstreamed the MDGs into national development objectives, bringing about a significant shift in financial resources to MDG-related sectors.[34] In China, aligning national development plans with the MDGs laid the foundation for creating, mobilising and allocating the political, economic and other resources needed to achieve the goals.[35] The Chinese government – with the support of civil society actors – formulated and implemented medium- and long-term national development strategies that integrated the MDGs as "an obligatory indicator into national planning".[36]

In South Africa, the MDGs naturally aligned with the country's Freedom Charter, an important foundational document for South Africa's constitution. By aligning with the international framework, South Africa was able to achieve progress in MDG-related targets through partnerships, additional resources,

measurement and review.[37] The South African government partnered with the UN on the MDG Acceleration Framework, focusing on three of the poorest provinces with the highest levels of maternal mortality, and bringing in UN volunteer doctors to help reduce maternal mortality rates.[38]

While some countries incorporated the MDGs into national plans remarkably quickly, others opted for a more incremental or ad hoc approach. Incorporation sometimes took place normatively – reflected in general language in policy statements – and at other times, operationally, with resource allocation and policies based on MDG targets.[39] A 2010 study by the African Development Bank found that over 40 African countries had prepared or implemented MDG-based national development plans and strategies, some of which were more ambitious and with shorter time frames than the MDGs themselves.[40]

Where the MDGs were not incorporated formally, there was often some natural alignment with existing priorities. For example, while planning processes in India did not necessarily take the MDGs into account, several government development programmes resonated with them.[41]

For some countries, **Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs)** – introduced by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) as a condition for financial support – provided a useful entry point for integrating the MDGs.[42] An analysis of 22 countries' PRSPs found that all but four included statements of commitment to the MDGs and used them as evaluative and planning frameworks by integrating them into planning and monitoring targets.[43] PRSPs were often positioned as a bridge between the long-term vision of the MDGs and the localisation of the goals, with countries

themselves taking the lead.[44] In Tanzania, the goals, targets and indicators of the MDGs were adopted in the country's 2005–2010 National Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty and used as the basis for costing specific goals and identifying gaps in financing.[45]

The MDGs were also successfully integrated into **sector strategies**, with positive impacts for children and other groups. In Ethiopia, for instance, health targets were achieved when government and other partners worked together under a common vision and financing framework (see Box 2).

Although strong consensus at the global level can help to promote action at the national level, it must not undermine **national ownership**. With the MDGs, the adaptation of targets to the national context helped to reflect national priorities, realities and capacities. A United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) study sampling 30 countries found that 90% adapted one or more of the goals,

targets or indicators in order to reflect national conditions and priorities.[50] In some cases, countries added additional targets for goals that were nationally significant – such as the reduction of HIV and AIDS in Colombia and Botswana – or revised indicators depending on their relevance to the national context. In India, MDG indicators were selectively chosen or modified to reflect both national circumstances and the availability of reliable data;[51] for instance, Indicator 1.8 under Goal 1, 'the prevalence of underweight children under five years of age', was changed to 'the prevalence of underweight children under three years of age', to reflect available statistics.[52]

The processes of integrating the 2030 Agenda into national plans and strategies will not always be straightforward, and governments must take immediate action to assess how their existing plans align with or differ from the new framework. A recent stakeholder analysis supported by Save the Children identified the challenges of

BOX 2: DELIVERING ON THE CORE PROMISES TO CHILDREN – LESSONS FROM IMPLEMENTING HEALTH GOALS IN ETHIOPIA

Ethiopia made remarkable progress in achieving reductions in child mortality and met its MDG 4 target ahead of schedule. In less than 15 years, the national child mortality rate fell from 204 deaths per 1,000 live births in 1990 to 64 in 2013.[46]

Integrating goals into sector plans was a core component of Ethiopia's implementation efforts, with the national Health Sector Development Programme aligned with the MDGs. A sector-wide approach to improve aid effectiveness was also introduced to facilitate links between health priorities and plans and enable available resources to be used strategically under a common agenda.[47] The government-managed MDG Performance Fund combined all government and donor funds for health activities, and a national Joint Consultative Forum, led by the Minister of Health and heads of agencies, decided how best to allocate resources.[48]

Other key factors that contributed to success included: political leadership and the commitment to equity and universal coverage; mechanisms to enhance coordination between development partners and across sectors; mobilisation of adequate resources; and local ownership through local recruitment of workers. The Health Extension Programme was launched in 2003 as a strategy to improve coverage of health services in underserved areas. Under the programme, health extension workers (HEWs) are recruited from the local community, trained and paid government salaries. Their role is to deliver a basic package of preventive and curative interventions and promote healthy behaviour. Under the programme, human resources for health doubled in five years, with 15,000 health posts built and 38,000 HEWs deployed. Sanitation facilities, vaccinations and maternal health services improved at a faster rate in villages with HEWs than in those without.[49]

reconciling the ambitions of the 2030 Agenda with existing national strategies in some countries. Guatemala, for example, recently launched its first national plan, based on a five-pillared vision of sustainable development (urban and rural development, well-being, prosperity, natural resources and governance). While stakeholders believe there is some 'overlap and national alignment' between this strategy and the 2030 Agenda, the analysis cautions that 'considerable work' will be needed to reconcile Guatemala's 36 priorities and 80 goals with the 17 SDGs and 169 targets.[53] In Bangladesh, a recent analysis of the 7th Five Year Plan (FYP) (2016–2020) found that there is no relevant target for 20% of the 169 SDG targets in either the core or sector specific targets of the 7th FYP.[54] While there is some overlap in child survival and education targets, there is still some work to do to meet the ambitions of the new agenda.[55] Similar findings emerged in an analysis from Mexico, which identified that only 27% of SDG targets are reflected in indicators in national plans, with national planning processes found to have limited alignment with the SDGs.[56] Of particular concern is the lack of indicators related to Goals 5, 6 and 16.[57]

Experience from the MDGs demonstrates that civil society and other stakeholders can play a positive role in helping governments align national plans with global goals. In China, for instance, the Working Committee on Women and Children worked alongside UNICEF and civil society experts during the drafting of the China Program of Action for Children 2011–2020 and included

MDG measurements in the goals and objectives of the programme.[58]

The international community – including the UN, the World Bank and other multilateral bodies – should assist governments in meeting the challenge of integrating the SDGs into national plans, budgets and sector strategies, including by supporting assessments of what is needed to achieve the SDGs. The UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) is already taking steps to support implementation at a national level by assisting up to nine pilot countries (Belize, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ethiopia, Honduras, Jordan, Togo, Uganda and Vietnam) to align their national plans with the new agenda.[59]

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

The 2030 Agenda is a much more integrated framework than the MDGs, and requires more effective policy integration across different sectors. Sustainable development strategies and plans can provide useful guidance on how to identify and action the synergies between the social, environmental and economic pillars of development (see Box 3). All governments should work to develop a sustainable development strategy as part of their implementation of the new agenda. Strategies should be drafted through an inclusive and transparent process, with the active involvement of citizens, including children and local civil society.

BOX 3: NATIONAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES – LESSONS FROM DENMARK

In 2014, Denmark launched its national strategy for sustainable development, A Sustainable Denmark – Balanced Development. The strategy, which consists of 23 targets and indicators, sets out a single framework to monitor domestic progress on the three dimensions of sustainable development: social sustainability, economic sustainability and green sustainability. While the theory behind the framework was positive, its

impact has been less clear. In practice, it became a catalogue of policies that were established prior to its development. For the 2030 Agenda to be effectively implemented, it is important that the Danish Sustainable Development strategy is revised to refer to the 2030 Agenda. Policies should be analysed and altered where appropriate to align with the new global framework.[60]

PRIORITISATION AS A FIRST STEP TO HOLISTIC IMPLEMENTATION

Save the Children supports the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The Sustainable Development Goals and targets are integrated and indivisible and should be implemented in their entirety in all countries. While we do not support selectively choosing targets, we do acknowledge that the process of implementation may require some initial prioritisation of targets. In many contexts, immediate areas of action are likely to be those that align with existing national development plans and priorities.

As the achievement of all goals in the mid to long term will depend on investment in children now, it is essential that governments prioritise child-focused targets and fulfil their core promises to children, including creating effective, accountable and transparent institutions without which investment in children will not be possible.[61] To ensure effective and inclusive implementation, short-term prioritisation must support medium- and long-term development plans, geared towards the implementation of the entire agenda. If there is any prioritisation, it should be viewed as a short-term strategy – an opportunity for governments to take stock and consider how their development plans can integrate the SDGs – but always be geared towards the holistic implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the medium to long term. Governments should develop national implementation strategies in 2016, with the understanding that they can be revised and adapted as implementation progresses.

It is equally important that the international community does not focus on narrow issues to the detriment of more systemic or structural issues. The MDGs on health, for instance, focused attention and funding on particular diseases rather than on overall health system strengthening. While much has been achieved, some experts caution that elevating particular health issues created non-priorities and unintentionally damaged other vital health programmes.[62] All members of the international community have a shared responsibility to drive forward enduring and transformational change, tackling the structures, norms and behaviours that lie at the root of development challenges.

FOREIGN POLICY, DONOR APPROACHES AND EXISTING FRAMEWORKS

Alongside national plans and strategies, governments must ensure that their foreign policies, including donor approaches, support and do not harm the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. A recent Save the Children analysis found that although USAID (the US government aid agency) is in the early stages of conceptualising how the SDGs will be integrated into its global work, it appears that the SDGs will be a 'key priority', with areas of action likely to be those that align with existing priorities, particularly SDGs 1, 2, 3 and 16.[63] The USAID Policy, Planning and Learning (PPL) bureau has been helping to lead the analysis and planning on how the SDGs will be incorporated into US foreign policy.[64]

In some areas, regional frameworks have been developed that will be implemented in synergy with the 2030 Agenda. **Agenda 2063**, for instance, is a vision and action plan for all African countries that sets out seven aspirations, including the aspirations of a "prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development".[65] Agenda 2063 includes a set of goals and targets for national, regional and continental stakeholders which, in some cases, are more specific than the SDGs.[66] At the African Union level, Save the Children has been advocating for the need to integrate the two agendas into national implementation strategies to ensure policy coherence and budget allocation. Particularly with regard to the adoption of Agenda 2063's first ten-year implementation plan, alignment with the SDGs and national plans is critical in creating a holistic implementation framework.

International human rights treaties provide a strong legal basis for implementation, with many of the SDGs corresponding to legal obligations to which countries have already committed. Where national laws and constitutions include limitations on particular segments of society to enjoy their rights, discriminatory barriers need to be removed so that the commitment to leave no one behind can be realised and the SDGs delivered for all. Laws and constitutions can also play an important role in helping to address discriminatory norms.

PHOTO: GENNA NACCACHE/SAVE THE CHILDREN

Children at a nursery in Petrolina, Brazil, where many parents are supported by the government's family allowance (*Bolsa Familia*) programme. Teachers have seen an increase in attendance which they believe is due to the cash-transfer programme.

FINANCING FOR THE FUTURE

The mobilisation of sufficient resources and the ways in which they are allocated and spent are critical for the successful implementation of the new agenda. Disparities in health, education and living standards will continue to grow unless steps are taken to increase the volume of resources available and ensure that they are allocated to reach the poorest and most marginalised people. Experience with the MDGs demonstrates that a lack of financial resources and financial planning were key factors in some goals not being achieved in some countries.[67] Without sufficient financing in place, governments will not be able to deliver effective change – and without ensuring that resources are allocated equitably, the 'leave no one behind' principle will remain a mere promise on paper, with little to no progress achieved for the people who are the furthest behind.

Domestic resource mobilisation, particularly through taxation, will continue to be one of the most significant and sustainable sources of revenue for governments. Effective taxation policies that are equitable, broad-based and do no harm to children are essential. A Save the Children study of 32 countries found that a child in the richest 10% of households has 35 times the available resources of a child in the poorest 10% of households.[68] Progressive taxation systems are therefore essential to help address inequalities and redistribute wealth from the richest in society to the poorest. Governments must ensure that taxation policies are progressive, do not harm the poor and are designed and implemented in a transparent and accountable manner.

To deliver on the ambition of the 2030 Agenda, **children should be prioritised in all budget and fiscal decision-making**. Where resources are limited, children's rights should be given precedence, with special funds directed towards the most marginalised groups of children. Countries must make spending on children and other marginalised groups visible in budget allocation, with budget classifications designed in such a way that it is possible to track direct and indirect budget allocation and spending on children.

Promoting greater **international tax cooperation and tackling illicit financial flows (IFFs)** can also help low- and middle-income countries increase their tax revenue. Using conservative estimates, as much as US$947 billion was thought to have left developing countries through IFFs in 2011.[69] To address this challenge effectively, the world needs a global forum with a credible mandate to further discussions on global tax cooperation and with opportunities for developing countries to participate on an equal footing. Save the Children supports the development of an intergovernmental body on tax matters with the resources and mandate it needs to take action, and a high-level global summit to advance fiscal self-reliance and strengthen the international tax system by 2017.

The international community has a responsibility to assist countries in their efforts to improve investment in sustainable development. While domestic resource mobilisation is critical, international public finance will also be required to invest in global public goods, poverty eradication and humanitarian emergencies, and to reduce inequality. For many of the world's least developed countries, limited access to other sources of finance means that **Official Development Assistance (ODA)** comprises a significant proportion of national budgets. Aid will continue to play a critical role in reducing inequality among countries and can provide much-needed public revenue to invest in vital services. To eradicate poverty and enable sustainable development, donor countries must set concrete timetables to fulfil their ODA commitments and ensure that they represent genuine transfers to developing countries (see Box 4). This should include channelling funds to where they are needed most (including to the least developed countries), ending aid tying, removing in-donor costs and debt relief, providing most ODA in the form of grants, and reforming concessional lending by reflecting the real cost of loans to partner countries.

The 2030 Agenda provides a framework for tackling not only the world's most pressing social challenges, but also the drivers of change, including job creation, economic growth, inequality and the use of natural resources.[71] The **private sector** – which incorporates all economic activity that occurs outside of the state, ranging from smallholder farmers to multinational corporations – touches on virtually all of the issues covered by the SDGs. As such, it can play a key role in realising the vision of the 2030 Agenda and securing children's

BOX 4: MATCHING DOMESTIC POLICIES WITH INTERNATIONAL ACTION

All governments have a responsibility to ensure that their actions support the achievement of the SDGs and their targets both domestically and internationally. However, in some contexts, it may be challenging to reconcile international commitments in the 2030 Agenda with declining political and public support for ODA.

In 2016, Australia's ODA commitment will reach its lowest share of gross national income (GNI) at 0.22%, down from a peak of 0.44% GNI in 1984.[70] As recently as 2013, there was support from both of the major political parties to progressively increase ODA to 0.5% of GNI. However, in recent years this political consensus has dissolved and there has been a dramatic decline in public support for Australia's foreign aid spending.

This dramatic reduction will have consequences for the world's poorest children. The proposed reduction of AU$1 billion for the 2015/16 financial year is the equivalent of:
- 170,000 fewer mothers and babies being assisted by a skilled birth attendant
- 460,000 fewer children being vaccinated
- 2,000 fewer classrooms built and
- 270,000 fewer children being enrolled in school.

The downward trajectory of Australia's ODA commitment sits in direct tension with its support for the success of the SDGs. Australia is a wealthy nation with the resources to contribute more than 0.22% of its GNI to achieving the ambitions set by the SDGs, and to do so would enhance its contribution towards giving the world's children a better future.

rights. The contribution the private sector can make to sustainable development is significant, including stimulating inclusive economic growth, creating decent jobs, paying fair taxes, reducing its environmental footprint and producing products that are sustainable and ethical. However, as the private sector is profit-driven, it is important that governments and other stakeholders work with the sector to ensure that its actions support a sustainable future (see Box 5).[72]

SUMMARY: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SDG CONSISTENT NATIONAL PLANNING

- All governments should analyse their national plans, sector strategies and budgets – alongside laws and policies – to identify areas of alignment with and divergence from the 2030 Agenda and to make amendments accordingly. National and sector strategies and budgets need to clearly

BOX 5: WORKING WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR TO DELIVER THE SDGS

Various initiatives aim to support private sector actors to understand their social impact and align their business practices with sustainable development and human rights:

- Developed jointly by Save the Children, UNICEF and the UN Global Compact, the *Children's Rights and Business Principles (CRBP)* are a set of comprehensive principles to guide companies on the range of actions they can take in the workplace, marketplace and community to respect and support children's rights.[73] These are based on existing standards, initiatives and best practices, and cover a range of issues including child labour and marketing and advertising practices.
- The *Global Reporting Initiative (GRI)* promotes the use of sustainability reporting to help businesses and other organisations understand and communicate the impact of their actions on critical sustainability issues such as climate change, human rights and corruption.[74]
- Formed by the governments of Brazil, Denmark, France and South Africa, the *Group of Friends of Paragraph 47* aims to increase understanding of corporate transparency and accountability, bringing together governments and other stakeholders to develop best practice in promoting corporate sustainability reporting.[75]
- The *SDG Compass* is a tool developed by the GRI, the UN Global Compact, and the World Business Council for Sustainable Development to help companies understand and align with the SDGs.[76]

To support successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda:

- All companies should capture and measure non-financial information on their environmental, social and governance impacts. National governments should introduce legislation for mandatory corporate reporting for large companies on their non-financial performance, drawing from existing guidance such as the GRI guidelines.[77]
- All companies should protect and promote children's rights in every aspect of their business. Governments must ensure effective implementation of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights[78] and the Children's Rights and Business Principles.[79]
- All companies must ensure that their workers are paid a decent living wage so that they can afford to provide for the basic needs of their children and ensure that their rights to survive, learn and be safe are realised.
- Governments must adhere to the core conventions of the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the four strategic objectives of the ILO's Decent Work Agenda, and must ensure that legislation protects core labour rights and guarantees a living wage for all workers, including young workers.

Wube with her 11-month-old son, Haile, at a health centre in Sayint, Ethiopia, where she is being given advice about the importance of breastfeeding by health extension worker, Serke Admasu. Serke's role is part of a government scheme to provide basic healthcare and health education in remote rural communities.

outline how they will incorporate targets and operationalise the commitment to leave no one behind. Strategies should be developed through an inclusive and transparent process, with the active involvement of citizens, including children, and local civil society.

- All governments must link short-term action with long-term implementation plans. If there is to be any prioritisation, it is essential that child-focused targets are retained, including those on just, peaceful and inclusive societies. The achievement of all goals in the mid to long term will depend on investing in children now.

- All governments must fulfil their human rights obligations and uphold the commitments they have already signed up to in international human rights treaties. Where regional development agendas have already been developed, governments must make a concerted effort to implement the different agendas in a way that ensures policy coherence.

- All governments must ensure that resource mobilisation, allocation and spending for the 2030 Agenda is sufficient, stable and sustainable, with financial flows and policies aligned with economic, social and environmental priorities, and with funding for the SDGs raised and spent equitably. Domestic resource mobilisation policies must be designed and implemented through a transparent and accountable framework. Governments must strengthen taxation systems to ensure that taxation is progressive and that taxation policies address income inequality and poverty.

- All governments should fulfil their ODA commitments, setting out concrete timetables and directing assistance to where it is needed most. A global forum on tax matters should be established with a credible mandate to further discussions on global tax cooperation and opportunities for developing countries to participate on an equal footing.

4 FROM PLANNING TO PROGRESS: INSTITUTIONAL INNOVATIONS TO DRIVE CHANGE

Incorporating international goals into national plans is an important first step towards implementation. However, the success and credibility of the 2030 Agenda demands that these plans translate into actual progress. Institutions[80] have a critical role to play in delivering public services and realising the ambition of the SDGs. Without effective public institutions to implement the Agenda, we will not be able to build the world envisaged by it – a world in which each and every child has an equal chance to survive, thrive and be safe.

The MDG experience provides insights into the role institutions can play in implementation. In some contexts, implementation was hampered by pre-existing institutional weaknesses, low capacity and a lack of coordination mechanisms.[81] In others, countries were spurred by the MDGs, and introduced coordinating mechanisms and partnerships that aided effective implementation and aimed to drive progress forward. Some institutions were extrinsic to the MDGs, rather than established to implement them; others were given impetus by the MDG targets and helped to foster progress towards them.

Drawing from the experience of the MDGs, what specific local, national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms helped to drive change? What forms did these institutions take? And what lessons can we learn for implementing the 2030 Agenda?

POLITICAL LEADERSHIP TO DRIVE PROGRESS

A critical starting point for effective implementation is the demonstration of strong political will. Strong **leadership from central government** was important for implementing the MDGs and will be a pivotal component in the implementation of the SDGs. Designating a high-level political official – typically in the Office of the President or Prime Minister – has been proven to help increase political ownership and support a government-wide approach to implementation.

A recent stakeholder analysis supported by Save the Children in Kenya found that a **cabinet directive** – requiring government ministries to integrate MDGs into their policies, plans, budgets and operations – added weight to implementation efforts and led to increased budgetary allocations to MDG-related sectors and programmes.[82] In Indonesia, President Yudhoyono appointed the **President's Special Envoy** on MDGs to strengthen and sustain the efforts of ministries to integrate the MDGs into their programmes.[83]

Political leadership also played an important role in driving progress in specific sectors. Brazil's ability to achieve progress on hunger and nutrition goals has been largely attributed to former President Luiz Inacio making 'Zero hunger' his flagship policy.[84] In Kenya, the First Lady's 'Beyond Zero' campaign and the Strategic Framework for Engagement of the First Lady in HIV Control and Promotion of Maternal, Newborn and Child Health in Kenya' were important initiatives to help catalyse action, mobilise stakeholders and accelerate progress in achieving MDG healthcare targets.[85]

For the 2030 Agenda to have both political and public traction, a strong demonstration of political will is critical. Many governments have already begun to appoint leads at the highest political level and have made firm commitments to advance implementation through the Office of the President or Prime Minister. Colombia, for instance, introduced a **Presidential decree** in early 2015 that stipulates that national development plans will be aligned to the SDGs and that the three pillars of sustainable development will be advanced.[86] In Mexico, a specialised technical committee that reports to the President's Office to monitor and follow-up on the MDGs will continue its role under the new agenda.[87]

STRONG, PARTICIPATORY AND RESPONSIVE PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

By adopting the 2030 Agenda, member states have made explicit commitments to strengthen public institutions. Targets 16.6 and 16.7 are commitments to developing effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels, complemented by responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making.[88] To effectively deliver the public services that will help to realise the SDGs, public institutions will need sufficient **human and financial resources** to fulfil their functions, especially the capacity to reach all segments of society.

COORDINATION MECHANISMS TO OVERCOME SILOS

One of the unintended effects of the MDGs was the development of programme silos; goals and targets encouraged implementation that was conceptually narrow and vertically structured, and neglected the need for social change and strengthened national institutions.[89] The 2030 Agenda is a much more integrated global framework, where success on any one goal will depend upon progress in others. Children's health, for example, is dependent not only on strong healthcare systems but also on decent work for caregivers and young workers, reductions in indoor and outdoor air pollution and reduced vulnerability to disasters, including extreme weather events driven by climate change. Goals must therefore be pursued through holistic and integrated approaches that recognise the interconnections between sectors and deliver effective coordination between ministries, departments and stakeholders.

Coordination mechanisms were important in MDG implementation, helping to build consensus, set priorities and monitor progress across government departments. Vertical regulation mechanisms – those that link national implementation efforts to local efforts – added clarity to tiers of government, ensuring that different layers fulfilled their functions. They also played an important role in monitoring and accountability,[90] and helped national strategies that were consistent with MDGs to be translated into sub-national planning and budgeting, and supported consensus on new and emerging issues.[91]

Some countries introduced **MDG desks or units** in critical ministries and departments (such as the Office of the President) to coordinate activities both horizontally across ministries and vertically between tiers of government.[92] In Kenya, for instance, an MDGs Project Implementation Unit was established in the Ministry of State for Planning, National Development and Vision 2030, as a full department within the Ministry. The Unit was tasked with mainstreaming the MDGs in government policy, planning and budgetary processes, and coordinating and harmonising MDG-related initiatives across the country.[93] A recent analysis of stakeholder perspectives on the MDG Unit found that it played a beneficial role in supporting coordination and planning, particularly through integrating MDG planning into the national framework and working closely with an inter-ministerial MDG team that included MDG focal persons from relevant ministries, departments and agencies.[94] Although some stakeholders raised concerns that the Unit's activities were hampered by inadequate funding and staffing, there was some optimism that it could play an important role in guiding departments as they move from the MDGs to the SDGs.[95]

National coordination committees were introduced in some countries, including Sierra Leone and Kyrgyzstan, to provide an impetus for implementation and to oversee progress towards the MDGs across all government bodies.[96] In other countries, **national planning commissions** played this coordination role. In South Africa, for example, the National Planning Commission coordinated MDG activities across ministries, departments and lead agencies to develop a long-term strategic vision and plan.[97]

Many countries have already begun to establish institutions to coordinate SDG implementation. In Indonesia, the National Development Planning Agency has been designated the central coordinating body to implement the 2030 Agenda across government departments and bodies.[98] The Ministry of Health has formed a National Secretariat for health sector development post-2015; membership is comprised of representatives from working units within the Ministry and is likely to draw on the expertise of various stakeholders from across the sector.[99] The Ministry of National Development Planning (BAPPENAS) and the Committee for Inter-Parliamentary Cooperation of the House of Representatives (BKSAP-DPR-RI) have agreed to collaborate more closely to support the successful implementation of the SDGs.[100] This has been made possible by the President's endorsement in late December 2015 of CSOs' recommendation for a joint committee on the Sustainable Development Goals, which consists of representatives from BAPPENAS, other relevant ministries and civil society groups.[101]

Parliamentary mechanisms can provide a useful oversight role in monitoring implementation efforts. In Nigeria, a **Standing Committee** was established to oversee both the achievement of the MDGs and the allocation of funds to goals.[102] The committee enjoyed the same institutional rights and powers as other standing committees in the parliament and had some positive impacts, particularly in identifying financial inefficiencies and sanctioning regions that failed to implement MDG projects.[103]

Informal parliamentary mechanisms can also play a role in raising awareness of global frameworks among parliamentarians and helping to coordinate and uphold parliament's role in achieving development outcomes. In 2009, the Kenyan parliament established the **Parliamentary Caucus on Poverty and the MDGs** to build MPs' understanding of the goals and to oversee implementation efforts.[104] As an informal group, the caucus did not enjoy the same status as a standing committee but it had some success in bringing together MPs from portfolio committees related to the MDGs and in providing a platform for engaging civil society on issues around development and the MDGs.

SUB-NATIONAL IMPLEMENTATION

Local governments have an important role to play in achieving the ambition of the new global framework. To achieve success, it is necessary to change outcomes for individuals, households and communities at the local level. The Chief Executive of the UN Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) notes that "societies and economies cannot undergo transformation – and cannot meet the SDGs – without utilising the comparative advantage of local governments".[105] In many countries, local governments and municipalities are tasked with the delivery of services that will be key to realising the ambition of the 2030 Agenda, are key drivers of local economic development and play a critical role in building resilient and inclusive societies.[106]

A report by the Global Forum on Local Development found that local actors (including governments, communities, the private sector and non-governmental organisations) were crucial to the achievement of the MDGs.[107] Citing evidence from Egypt, Niger and Peru, among others, the report found that when investments were made at the local level, progress towards the MDGs happened more quickly and was more sustainable.[108]

In some cases, central government played a supportive role in delivering local change. In Brazil, the central government supported and encouraged local governments to identify and adopt commitments that would help to achieve MDG targets.[109] This was complemented by the MDG prize, awarded by the General Secretary of the Presidency of Brazil, alongside UNDP, which acknowledged good practice by municipalities and civil society organisations in improving the lives of marginalised communities.[110]

Public sector decentralisation has been a key component of institutional reforms in African countries and other regions, and aims to improve accountability, responsiveness and the use of local resources.[111] Although there is some evidence that decentralisation has helped achieve progress towards the MDGs,[112] it has also presented a number of challenges, particularly the need to foster effective coordination (see Box 6 overleaf).

In order for local governments and decentralised bodies to play an effective role in SDG implementation, it is essential that they are given the necessary funding, capacity and resources to

BOX 6: DECENTRALISATION IN INDONESIA

In Indonesia, decentralisation was used as a strategy to tackle the geographic challenges of MDG implementation.[113] Central government provided resources for local expenditure, with each region able to formulate specific development policies and programmes in accordance with local needs. This promoted local ownership of service delivery, but also meant that progress in some areas was less consistent with national policy; development outcomes varied, with some regions lagging behind others.[114]

meet local needs. Local development policies should be based on a robust analysis of local needs and trends, drawing on disaggregated data to identify those left behind and most in need.

INTERNATIONAL MECHANISMS AND PARTNERSHIPS

Global partnerships are key to achieving the SDGs. One lesson learned from the MDGs was that MDG 8 on global partnerships was formulated in general terms and was poorly implemented. Partly in response to this, the SDGs include a 17th Goal, which calls for inclusive partnerships built on shared principles and values, and which place people and the planet at their centre.[115]

As we pursue the 2030 Agenda, it is essential that the synergies between different goals are harnessed through cross-sector coordination and collaboration. **Multi-stakeholder partnerships** will play a central role, facilitating the mobilisation and sharing of expertise, financial resources, technologies and knowledge.[116] The last 15 years provide us with rich examples of how multi-stakeholder partnerships,

movements and alliances have been able to bring together key actors and support positive change for children.

In health and nutrition, a broad range of initiatives, funds and movements has mobilised resources and expertise to improve health outcomes and contribute to the MDGs (see Box 7). From the Global Fund Partnership[117] to GAVI, the Vaccine Alliance,[118] multi-stakeholder partnerships in health have had a notable impact. The **Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health**, for instance, was launched in 2005 with the aim of accelerating action by donors and states to achieve MDGs 4 and 5. Bringing together 680 organisations, the partnership played a critical role in maintaining progress towards improved maternal, newborn and child health, including hosting the Countdown Initiative, which produced regular reports and detailed profiles on country progress towards achieving the health MDGs. The partnership has also acted as a platform for the Global Strategy for Women's and Children's Health and has become a key mobiliser of more than 400 policy, financial and service delivery commitments under the *Every Woman, Every Child* movement.

BOX 7: SCALING UP NUTRITION MOVEMENT

Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) is a unique movement founded on the principle that all people have the right to food and good nutrition. The movement brings together key stakeholders, including government, civil society, business and UN agencies, in a collective effort to improve nutrition and eliminate all forms of malnutrition.[119]

There are 56 countries participating in the SUN movement, working together to advance nutrition action and nutrition-sensitive strategies.[120] SUN has a particular focus on strengthening political commitments and accountability for those commitments.

While the impact of health partnerships has been positive, the multiplicity of initiatives presents certain challenges. It is important that health funding does not elevate one select group of health issues at the expense of others. The renewed commitment to universal health coverage presents an opportunity to bring together many initiatives under the overarching goal of strengthening healthcare systems.

The **Global Partnership for Education** has played an influential role by providing 60 developing countries with the incentives, resources and technical support needed to ensure that every child receives a quality, basic education. Bringing together a broad range of stakeholders, the partnership provided US$2.2 billion in financial aid between 2004 and 2010, which helped an estimated 19 million children attend school.[121] In order to deliver the SDGs and targets related to education, there will need to be a significant increase in financing for education, with recent estimates finding an annual financing gap of $39 billion a year.[122] Save the Children recommends that the Global Partnership for Education be scaled up and reinforced, building on existing partnerships and strengthening national education systems and capacity. It is also crucial that governments fulfil the promises made in the Incheon Declaration to efficiently and equitably increase domestic public spending on education to at least 4–6% of gross domestic product (GDP) and/or 15–20% of total public expenditure to education.[123]

Recent innovations demonstrate that multi-stakeholder partnerships will continue to play an important role in accelerating progress towards the SDGs (see Box 8 overleaf).

SUMMARY: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BUILDING STRONG AND INCLUSIVE SDG-RELEVANT INSTITUTIONS

- All governments must demonstrate strong political will to implement the 2030 Agenda both nationally and internationally. Specific people within key ministries or departments should be designated as champions of, or responsible for, SDG implementation.
- All public institutions must have the necessary human and financial resources in place to deliver services and implement the SDGs, ensuring that they reach the furthest behind first.
- All governments should ensure that there are committees, institutions, parliamentary mechanisms or SDG desks to coordinate implementation efforts and drive multi-sectoral, multi-ministerial and multi-stakeholder approaches. Coordination mechanisms must be provided with the necessary resources and capacity to fulfil their functions.
- All governments, international actors and stakeholders should work with and support multi-stakeholder partnerships to mobilise expertise, knowledge and resources to deliver effective change.
- All governments should analyse the role that local government can play in implementing the 2030 Agenda and ensure that it is provided with the necessary funding, capacity and resources to deliver change in areas of high need. Local development policies must be based on a robust analysis of local needs and trends, drawing on disaggregated data to identify those furthest behind.

BOX 8: DELIVERING THE CORE PROMISES TO CHILDREN: FAST TRACK THE IMPLEMENTATION OF TARGET 16.2 TO END ALL VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN – THE NASCENT GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP AND ASSOCIATED FUND

The SDGs include, for the first time, a specific target to end violence against children.[124] Living a life without violence is the right of all children and is essential to their development as adults. Protecting children from violence is an explicit obligation set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and its Optional Protocols. The protection of children and the promotion of their well-being are closely linked to the development and well-being of the communities in which they live. Violence against children takes place in every country and it has devastating long-term impacts on the well-being of girls and boys.

GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP AND ASSOCIATED FUND

To deliver on the targets to end violence against children, we need to harness the combined power of governments, the private sector, civil society, faith communities and academia. We need to build on their efforts, provide leadership and demonstrate results for children and families. Governments must make the necessary resources available to prevent and address violence against children in a manner that is sustainable and which supports progress across sectors. A number of actors have come together to form a global partnership to end violence against children.[125] The primary purpose of the partnership is to deliver Target 16.2 (End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children) and other relevant SDG targets (including 5.2, 5.3, 8.7).

The partnership is expected to be launched in 2016 and to operate:
- at **global level** – building the political will to invest in policies, institutions, standards and programmes that will most effectively prevent and address violence against children
- **nationally** – enabling countries of all income levels to prevent and address violence more effectively
- as a **movement**, with children playing a central role – changing the attitudes and social norms that tolerate violence.

A Fund to End Violence Against Children will be associated with the partnership, but will have separate governance arrangements. The Fund has been set up on the basis that:
- There is an urgent need to make the case that child victims of violence are the most likely to be **left behind** by the 2030 Agenda, due to the immediate consequences of the violence they suffer and its lasting impact on their health, education, well-being and prosperity.
- Policy-makers must know that a failure to tackle violence against children will lead to substantial economic losses, and at the same time reduce the effectiveness of expenditure on child survival and development. There is a strong **economic case** for investment in violence prevention.
- It can have a **catalytic role** in demonstrating how violence against children can most effectively be reduced, leveraging new sources of investment and helping to build a global, national and local movement to end violence.

5 LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND AND REACHING THOSE FURTHEST BEHIND FIRST

Even with the necessary planning, financing and institutional arrangements in place, there is no guarantee that all children will benefit from development progress. The MDGs were criticised by some as failing to sufficiently address exclusion and inequality, with the High-Level Panel report on the post-MDG framework noting that the MDGs 'did not focus enough on reaching the very poorest and most excluded people'.[126] The cross-cutting pledges to leave no one behind, to see targets and goals met for all segments of society, and to endeavour to reach the furthest behind first, are some of the most important and potentially transformative commitments in the new global framework.

MEETING THE CHALLENGE IN ALL CONTEXTS

There are inequalities in all countries that need to be tackled if we are to build a more just, inclusive and prosperous society envisioned by the new global framework (see Box 9).

For many low-income countries, accelerating rates of economic growth have masked growing disparities in human development outcomes. Research by Save the Children shows that in Indonesia, for instance, between 2002 and 2012 GNI per capita grew by 6.5% a year on average, while the ratio of child mortality between the bottom 40% compared to the top 10% more than doubled.[128] Inequalities can often intersect, with some individuals and

BOX 9: UNDERSTANDING EDUCATION IN ENGLAND THROUGH A 'LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND' LENS

Achieving SDG targets in education may appear simple in high-income countries like England. However, by applying a 'leave no one behind' lens, we can see that significant work needs to be done to reduce gaps in learning outcomes between different groups of children. In England, the majority of children leave primary school with strong foundations in basic skills like reading, writing and mathematics. However, a minority of children do not achieve these skills – with poorer outcomes more likely among children living in poverty. One in five children (22%) leave primary school unable to read well but this rises to one in three (36%) among those living in poverty. Save the Children research also shows that the attainment gap in crucial language skills in England

at age five is also large. A quarter of five-year-olds do not have the language and communication skills expected for their age, but this rises to a third among children living in poverty.

Read On. Get On is a campaign designed to bring together parents, teachers and nursery staff, alongside the media, business and government, to work towards the ambitious goal of ensuring that all children have good language skills at age five, and are able to read well by age 11. This will only be achieved if we have the highest expectations for all children and focus on those who need the most support, especially children living in poverty.[127]

groups facing discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, religion, caste, language, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability, income, migratory status and/or geographic location. Recent evidence from the ODI (Overseas Development Institute) finds that over two-thirds of health and education poverty is found among households where the head is a member of a minority ethnic group,[129] while evidence from the Education for All Global Monitoring Report finds that the poorest young women are most likely to be illiterate.[130]

Individual and group characteristics can also affect access to essential services such as healthcare. Research from Save the Children, the Rockefeller Foundation, UNICEF and the World Health Organization has found that in Nigeria a child from a wealthy family is more than eight times more likely to receive three doses of the diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis vaccine than a child from a poorer family.[131] In Bangladesh, a woman from a wealthy household is ten times more likely to have a skilled attendant present when she gives birth than a woman from a poor family.[132] In India, the incidence of poverty in rural areas is twice that of urban areas, and higher among excluded groups – Scheduled Tribes, Scheduled Castes, female-headed households and religious minorities such as Muslims.[133]

The challenge of leaving no one behind is particularly pronounced in **conflict-affected fragile states**, where a legacy of violence, weak governance and erosion of the economic base have hampered poverty reduction efforts and achievement of the MDGs.[134] Of the world's 7 billion people, 1.5 billion live in situations of conflict and fragility, with many of those most negatively affected being children.[135] Effective interventions offer huge potential for a dramatic acceleration in rates of progress in conflict-affected fragile states.[136] Liberia, for instance, was able to achieve a reduction in child mortality rates from 241 per 1,000 live births in 1990 to 78 per 1,000 in 2010.[137] In Nepal, the number of people living in poverty was halved between 2003 and 2011, and MDG targets on reducing maternal mortality and ensuring access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation were met.[138]

Recent evidence from Save the Children and others suggests that fragile states should be supported to implement the 2030 Agenda through different types of partnerships and approaches, with a focus on meeting short-term needs while attempting to address the root causes of fragility.[139] This will require further investment in conflict prevention and mitigation, and in development programmes designed to minimise the risk of conflict, strengthen equity and support strong public services and good governance. The silos between humanitarian and development work should be addressed so that people affected by conflict or crisis – particularly those in protracted situations – benefit from guaranteed funding to ensure their protection and development. In line with the principles of the G7+ New Deal for Fragile States,[140] the international community should work with fragile states to provide assistance on how they should approach goals and targets and provide guidance on how they will be supported to achieve them. The World Humanitarian Summit in 2016 will present an opportune moment for the international community to make firm commitments to ensure the realisation of the SDGs in the world's toughest contexts.

For **children**, the promise to leave no one behind is critical. Evidence from UNICEF shows that if the most deprived young children are not given basic opportunities, they can fall further behind, widening the gaps in outcomes between advantaged and disadvantaged groups.[141] Inequities in childhood can manifest themselves in poorer health and learning outcomes and lower productivity and employment rates as adults – factors that can hinder a country's overall economic growth and prosperity.[142] A business-as-usual approach is not enough. Save the Children analysis has found that although many countries could meet under-five child mortality targets, some social and economic groups will be left behind. In Ethiopia, under an optimistic business-as-usual scenario, targets could be met at a national level, with important progress across all social and economic groups. However, for poor groups, rural areas and some sub-national regions, child mortality rates will still be above 25 per 1,000 by 2030.[143]

Ensuring that no one is left behind is not only the right thing to do, it also has practical advantages. Recent analysis by Save the Children shows that pursuing an equitable pathway to reducing child mortality is associated with 6% faster progress on average over the course of ten years.[144]

IDENTIFYING AND PRIORITISING MARGINALISED GROUPS

To fulfil the pledge to leave no one behind, countries need clear strategies, complemented by equitable financing and international support channelled to the people who need it the most. The first step towards reducing inequality is identifying which groups are the furthest behind – ie, those which suffer the worst deprivations, such as high mortality rates, malnutrition, lack of or poor access to basic services, exposure to violence, and/or intergenerational poverty. It is essential to analyse the immediate, underlying, structural and cultural factors that contribute to these deprivations and to overall exclusion, including economic, political, social and cultural forms of discrimination.

Governments and other stakeholders should support open and participatory processes that provide safe spaces for marginalised groups to participate and to articulate their experiences, priorities and needs.

SHAPING POLICIES TO ENSURE EQUAL LIFE CHANCES

The policies required to provide equal chances in life for all children will be specific to particular contexts and sectors, and will depend on both the drivers of inequality and the experiences of marginalised groups. In all countries, it is essential that marginalised groups have access to and use of high-quality public services and social protection systems that meet their needs.

Strategies for closing gaps in inequality must be included as a core part of national development plans, with a focus on pursuing universal coverage of essential services that meet the needs of disadvantaged groups first (see Box 10 overleaf). In many countries, this will require additional financing and increased public investment in essential services, as well as financial risk protection for service users. In some contexts there is scope to raise the necessary resources through strengthened and more progressive taxation systems; in others, international support for government budgets will continue to play an important role.[145]

PHOTO: ELENA HEATHERWICK/SAVE THE CHILDREN

Sisters Carliece, 9, and Jaydal, 10, help their 5-year-old brother, Carlito, to read at their school in Greater Manchester, England. It is estimated that by 2025, 1.5 million children in Britain will reach the age of 11 unable to read well unless urgent action is taken.

BOX 10: DELIVERING ON THE CORE PROMISES TO CHILDREN: TACKLING INEQUITY THROUGH UNIVERSAL HEALTH COVERAGE

Despite falling rates of child mortality, inequities in life expectancy between and within countries remain vast, with many countries experiencing widening gaps in survival rates between the richest and poorest populations.[146] Group and individual characteristics, including age, gender, education, urban/rural location, ethnicity and wealth, systematically influence health outcomes and access to health services. The resulting inequalities need to be tackled in order to meet national and global development targets.[147]

Experience from the MDGs demonstrates that some countries, including Mexico, Thailand and Turkey, were able to achieve rapid changes in child health outcomes by improving the coverage and quality of essential cost-effective services and the provision of social protection for the poorest people.[148] Universal health coverage (UHC) aims to increase access to quality services for all, without financial hardship. More than 100 low- and middle-income countries, home to almost three-quarters of the world's population, have

taken steps to move towards UHC, which is now a target in the SDGs (Target 3.8). Moving towards UHC not only achieves positive health outcomes, but is also the right thing to do. Denial of access and impoverishment as a result of seeking costly health services are unjust. To support the achievement of UHC, governments should:

- demonstrate the political will to address inequities and realise the right to health by committing to implement Target 3.8 on UHC
- move away from relying on out-of-pocket payments and voluntary insurance contributions to widely pooled, compulsory pre-payment mechanisms
- increase public resource allocation to health to meet the Abuja target of 15% of total government spending
- invest in equitable pathways toward UHC
- ensure equity in decision-making on which services are prioritised on the path to UHC, to ensure that gaps close between groups, and that financing for health is raised through fair means and spent equitably.

Targeted approaches can have positive impacts on reducing group-based inequalities. In Ecuador, for instance, the terms of the *Bono de Desarrollo Humano* conditional cash transfer programme were modified to reflect the experience and needs of indigenous families.[149] Children were required to reach a school attendance rate of 70%, rather than the standard 80%, to take account of the patterns of seasonal migration of indigenous families and the practice of children helping their families during the harvest season.[150]

Strong public institutions are essential for reaching those furthest behind. Institutions must have the human and financial resources needed to deliver high-quality services within the rule of law. An enabling environment where all citizens, including children, have opportunities to participate in governance and hold governments to account and where illicit financial flows and corruption are eliminated, is also indispensable.

'EARLY IMPLEMENTERS', PEER-TO-PEER PLATFORMS AND INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT

Efforts to ensure that no one will be left behind can be enhanced by identifying and applying lessons from the best-performing countries in particular income groups and regions. This evidence can emerge from **early implementers** from across all country income groups – low-, middle- and high-income countries – who take active steps toward implementation, demonstrate what can be done, and encourage other countries to follow suit.

Peer-to-peer and South–South platforms can also be useful forums for sharing knowledge and best practice. Initiatives such as pairing well-performing countries and regions with those that are struggling can accelerate progress towards goals. In China, pairing more prosperous regions with those less prosperous has had some positive impacts in tackling geographic

disparities in service delivery and supporting post-disaster recovery and redevelopment (see Box 11).[151]

The UN Secretary-General recently emphasised the important role that cooperation among developing countries will play in achieving the 2030 Agenda, stating that "all developing countries, regardless of size or level of development, have accumulated capacities and experiences that can be shared".[152] Replicating and adapting existing mechanisms of **South–South and triangular cooperation** can be an effective way of supporting countries to share experience and meet the challenges of the new agenda. The Secretary-General outlined three areas where strengthened South–South and triangular cooperation could contribute to the 2030 Agenda:[153]

* scaling up global support through a sustainable South–South support architecture
* supporting science, technology and innovation through a Multilateral South–South Innovation Fund for the SDGs
* committing to hold an annual high-level South–South cooperation meeting.

The pledge to leave no one behind should be a clear focus of the **international community**. The principle must underpin the strategies and approaches of donors, practitioners and foreign

offices, with strategies and plans adapted appropriately. All international stakeholders, including donors, UN agencies and the business community, need to step up and fill gaps in resources and capacity, prioritising countries and groups that are the furthest behind. The replenishment of the Global Partnership for Education provides a good example of how linking national policy processes to international accountability mechanisms can help spur equitable progress. At the Second Replenishment Pledging Conference in June 2014, 30 governments committed to addressing equity issues and ensuring that their budgets are spent in ways that better meet the educational needs of the poorest and most marginalised children.[154]

STEPPING-STONE TARGETS TO SPUR EQUITABLE PROGRESS

To achieve the ambitions of the 2030 Agenda, we need concrete mechanisms to incentivise shifts in policy and practice to ensure that the needs of those furthest behind are met first, and that gaps between advantaged and disadvantaged groups are reduced. National interim equity (or 'stepping-stone') targets are examples of mechanisms that aim to ensure that disadvantaged groups are not being left behind by

BOX 11: TWINNING TO TACKLE REGIONAL DEPRIVATION AND POST-DISASTER RECOVERY IN CHINA

Research supported by Save the Children finds that twinning arrangements have been used to support development in some of China's poorest regions. Twinning is a process of linking markets, human resources and business development, and includes the provision of cash transfers and sector-specific training programmes. Schools and hospitals have been twinned, for instance, in an attempt to tackle human resource shortages in less-developed areas, while earmarked funds have been allocated to specific development needs in health, education, labour market programmes and social protection from the most prosperous regions to the least prosperous.[155]

Twinning has played a notable role in post-disaster recovery and redevelopment.[156] Following the 2008 earthquake in Sichuan province, the Chinese government set up a 'twin assistance'

mechanism whereby affected areas are paired with other provinces and municipalities. These partnerships aim to provide affected areas with financial and other resources, personnel and the moral support needed for recovery.[157] Teams of health professionals were dispatched, alongside sanitation and disease control experts. Some sponsor areas additionally pledged 1% of their annual GDP towards long-term recovery efforts in the affected province for at least three years.[158]

The viability of the twinning scheme has been attributed to the highly-organised and systematic coordinating processes, which include the establishment of coordination offices at different levels of government. On 30 July 2014, the Chinese government signalled the continuation of the scheme by issuing the 'National Twinning Cooperation and Collaboration Plan 2014–2020'.

progress. These targets set interim dates between 2015 and 2030 to monitor the progress of different groups, with the aim of reducing systematic gaps between advantaged and disadvantaged groups, while at the same time ensuring that all social and economic groups are on track to meet 2030 targets.[159] Recently, equity stepping-stone targets have been integrated into a key document for the implementation of SDG 4, the Education 2030 Framework for Action.

Save the Children has produced practical guidance for defining and implementing stepping-stone targets, and includes the following recommended steps:[160]

- Countries must set stepping-stone targets carefully, according to local context and taking into account the cultural, historical and social factors that have contributed to exclusion.
- Poor-quality data and a lack of disaggregation will make it difficult to identify the groups lagging behind, particularly those experiencing intersecting and structural inequalities. Governments must invest in high-quality, reliable and disaggregated data to ensure that progress for all groups can be monitored and reported as soon as possible.
- In many contexts, particularly where inequalities stem from entrenched social norms, reporting on marginalised groups can be highly political. Processes to define and monitor targets should therefore be open, inclusive and participatory, and should include representation from a broad cross-section of civil society.
- Work will be required to identify the necessary baselines, metrics and benchmarks for defining stepping-stone targets at the national level and for exploring potential options for global stepping-stone targets and monitoring.

SUMMARY: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTING THE COMMITMENT THAT NO ONE IS LEFT BEHIND

- Strategies for closing gaps for excluded groups must be included as a core part of national development and action plans. National governments should take immediate steps to implement the 'leave no one behind' commitment, including prioritising data disaggregation and making firm fiscal commitments to tackle inequalities.
- All governments must implement universal coverage of essential services via equitable pathways that meet the needs of disadvantaged groups first.
- Development policies in conflict-affected and fragile states must be designed in ways that minimise the risk of conflict, strengthen equity and support strong public services and good governance. The silos between humanitarian and development work should be broken down, with guaranteed funding for those living in conflict-affected fragile states and firm commitments from the international community at the World Humanitarian Summit.
- Early-implementer countries should be identified and peer-to-peer and South–South platforms established to support and accelerate progress in least-developed countries and conflict-affected fragile states.
- National interim equity (stepping-stone) targets should be established through open, participatory and inclusive processes to monitor the progress of different groups and reduce systematic gaps.

6 A WORLD THAT COUNTS – MEETING THE CHALLENGE OF THE DATA REVOLUTION

Ending extreme poverty and achieving the ambition of the SDGs will only be possible if we know who the people living in poverty are, where they live, what forms of poverty they experience, and what they value and aspire to.

WHY IS DATA IMPORTANT?

Data is an essential building block for understanding people's lives and provides crucial evidence for designing policies and approaches that aim to eradicate poverty in all its forms. We need good data for adequate planning and implementation as well as for monitoring progress and accountability. Data can also play a pivotal role in supporting transformative change by generating debate, igniting action and mobilising the hesitant.[161]

Both quantitative and qualitative data have an important role to play and should be used complementarily. For example, quantitative data may help to identify who the disadvantaged groups are and where they live, while qualitative data help us better understand what people value and aspire to. Qualitative evidence provides the human stories behind the numbers.

We need an appropriate level of data disaggregation **to match the ambition of leaving no one behind**. It is important to have accurate granular data for planning purposes to support decision-makers – for example, by identifying excluded groups, the different types of barriers they face and how policies can better reach them. Disaggregated data is also important to monitor achievements and progress toward goals. It is essential that we have reliable information on all relevant social and economic groups in society to raise timely alarms when policies are not working or to identify successful policies that should be scaled up. Without

data disaggregation, it is impossible to know whether progress and achievements have been inclusive.

At the global level, there needs to be a **minimum level of data disaggregation** across the board – a **data floor** – to allow for international reporting and comparison. Data should be disaggregated, at a minimum, by income, sex, age, race, ethnicity, migration status, disability and geographic location. At the national level, countries can further disaggregate data to meet their planning and monitoring needs.

MEETING THE CHALLENGE OF THE DATA REVOLUTION

The challenge of generating the evidence necessary to monitor progress toward the 2030 Agenda is significant. As the new framework is much more comprehensive than the MDGs, we require more and better data to fill existing data gaps in order to support effective planning, facilitate monitoring and ensure that no one is left behind.

In many **conflict-affected fragile states** official data was lacking on the MDGs. The UN official MDG database recorded two or more data points for only 19 of 55 fragile countries studied in recent Save the Children research.[162] Of the remaining 36, half had only a single poverty data point between 2000 and 2013, and the remaining had no data or were not included in the database. A recent Save the Children stakeholder analysis in Liberia found that insufficient data collection systems were contributing factors in the underachievement of some goals.[163]

Yet it is not only fragile states that face data challenges. Assessments in Bangladesh and Denmark have found that existing statistical systems are unable to meet the challenge of monitoring the SDGs (see Box 12 overleaf).

BOX 12: THE CHALLENGE OF COLLECTING DATA TO ENSURE NO CHILD IS LEFT BEHIND

In **Bangladesh**, a data mapping exercise of the proposed SDG indicators found that data is only available for half of the indicators. While there is some data available on key child indicators – including poverty, education and health – data disaggregation is a key challenge.[164]

Denmark has examined its capacity to measure progress on the SDGs using existing data. It determined that currently one-third of the targets could be measured, one-third could be measured with slight adjustments to existing data sets, and one-third would require new measurement systems. Efforts are now underway to establish those systems.[165]

Ensuring that data is available for all goals and targets, and disaggregated at the right level, requires a **real data revolution** that takes advantage of new technologies and scales up successful experiences. Strong political commitments to improve data systems need to be backed up by the necessary financial support. A study by the Sustainable Development Solutions Network estimates that a total of $1 billion a year will be required to enable 77 of the world's lowest income countries to put statistical systems in place that are capable of supporting and measuring the SDGs.[166]

With adequate financing in place, there are three key areas for action: strengthening national statistical systems and democratising information; supporting local and participatory data collection and monitoring; and engaging in multi-stakeholder partnerships.

STRENGTHENING NATIONAL STATISTICAL SYSTEMS AND DEMOCRATISING INFORMATION

National-level reporting is the most significant level of reporting and will rely, to a large extent, on the direct work or coordination role of national statistical offices. There is a critical need to support countries in setting up mechanisms for measuring progress across all SDGs, particularly in collecting disaggregated data for core child outcomes and public spending. Improved data disaggregation can be facilitated by a strong steer from the Inter Agency and Expert Group for SDG indicators (IAEG-SDGs), technical advice by the UN Statistical Commission and other agencies, South–South exchange of technologies and innovation, and more funding provision.

Lessons from innovative approaches can help countries in setting up mechanisms to fill data gaps and provide crucial **evidence for effective policy-making**. In Colombia and Mexico, cross-cutting initiatives and monitoring approaches, which include disaggregated data, have supported some policy innovations and offer huge potential for SDG implementation (see Box 13 opposite). Another example from Mexico involves the successful merging of the statistical office and geographic offices.[167]

Various actors have been involved in strengthening the capacity of national statistical agencies. UN agencies, for instance – particularly UNICEF and UNDP – have encouraged and supported countries to adopt and develop national variations of DevInfo, a software designed to organise, store and present development data in a uniform way to facilitate data sharing at country level across government departments, UN agencies, CSOs and other development partners.[168] While the main purpose of DevInfo has been tracking progress towards MDGs, many countries have also used it for monitoring progress against other national targets and milestones.[169] For example, the government of Serbia incorporated DevInfo into the regular programme of its national statistical office and uses it to monitor several national action plans and international commitments, including the poverty reduction strategy. In Tanzania, the adapted version of DevInfo, Tanzania Socio-Economic Database, is a primary tool for monitoring the National Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty, as well as several other frameworks, including Education for All.[170]

The High Level Group for the Modernisation of Official Statistics (HLG-MOS) was established by the Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians in 2010 to oversee and coordinate international work on statistical modernisation.[171] It provides

BOX 13: DELIVERING ON THE CORE PROMISES TO CHILDREN: ACCELERATING PROGRESS TOWARD GOAL 1 – MULTIDIMENSIONAL POVERTY INDICES FOR POLICY INNOVATION

Targets and indicators can be harnessed to support inter-departmental collaboration, monitor progress and coordinate action. The Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) in Colombia helped to tackle silos between different departments and ministries by breaking down the contribution of each indicator to poverty levels and analysing poverty among specific groups of people or regions. This provided the government with a clear map for coordinating the design and implementation of poverty reduction programmes and policies.[172] An inter-ministerial cabinet commission, comprised of ministers and heads of department responsible for MPI-Colombia indicators, was also established to ensure that targets in the National Development Plan were on track.[173]

In Mexico, the MPI was the first national poverty measure to reflect the full breadth of poverty at household level, including social factors such as health, housing, education and access to food. The MPI has helped policy-makers to design new interventions to support the poor, and has been pivotal in the creation of two major social protection initiatives: the National Crusade against Hunger (NCAH) and the Universal Pension System. Between 2008 and 2010, the MPI identified limited access to food as the only indicator that was deteriorating in Mexico. In response, the government launched the NCAH as a strategy to eradicate extreme poverty and provide over 7 million people with access to food. While the NCAH has had some positive impacts,[174] there are administrative and political challenges that need to be addressed to ensure that it effectively reaches those living in greater food poverty. In 2010 and 2012, the MPI played a similar role in driving policy change through identifying an increase in the percentage of people considered to be lacking access to social security. The government responded by creating the Universal Pension System, which guarantees a minimum income for all Mexicans over 65 years of age.

common standards, tools, models and methods to support the modernisation of official statistics. The HLG-MOS has overseen the development of a number of global standards to support statistical modernisation, including the Generic Statistical Business Process Model. Similarly, the Statistical Conference of the Americas of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (SCA-ECLAC) supports the development and improvement of national statistics through regional and international cooperation activities.[175]

Democratising information, **access to data** and **accountability** are intrinsically linked. With access to better-quality and more accessible data, citizens can monitor progress toward goals and targets, make decisions and hold government to account for their commitments. It is essential that data is timely and freely available, broadly disseminated and converted into formats that are easy to understand and use by practitioners, policy-makers and citizens, while also protecting citizens' privacy and safety. The Nigeria MDG Information System (NMIS) is a web-based scheme that allows users to access and analyse real-time information on critical services, including health, education and water sanitation, for policy planning.[176] Using smart phones, NMIS survey teams administered surveys at 30,000 schools, clinics and water points on a wide range of issues such as levels of staffing at health clinics.[177] The NMIS enables users to examine facilities by state and local government area and download raw data for analysis.[178] Similarly, in Tanzania a local non-governmental organisation (NGO), Twaweza, has introduced the *Sauti za Wananchi* (Voices of Citizens) initiative, which uses mobile phones to collect data from citizens on a comprehensive range of topics while also providing them with useful information on public policy.[179] *Sauti za Wananchi* provides policy-makers with up-to-date information so that they can be more responsive to the needs and wants of citizens.

SUPPORTING LOCAL AND PARTICIPATORY DATA COLLECTION, MONITORING AND PLANNING

Traditional data collection methods often fail to capture the voices of the most excluded and hardest-to-reach people in society, for example, children, people in institutions (such as refugee camps), and mobile or landless communities. While the availability of some disaggregated data is improving, evidence on many social and economic groups is absent or inconsistent. According to recent estimates, as many as 350 million people worldwide are thought to fall through the gaps that conventional household surveys and censuses cannot capture.[180] To tackle this data deficit, governments and other stakeholders should increase investment in data collection methods and consider ways of complementing conventional data collection mechanisms with innovative approaches (such as data obtained through GPS and mobile phones). Qualitative data can complement, enhance and triangulate statistical data and surveys. In Uganda, the third National Household Survey (2005/2006) included, for the first time, a fully integrated qualitative module based on participatory research methodologies.[181] The qualitative results were found to have 'enormous value' as a crosscheck on survey findings.[182]

Both children and adults can play a key role in generating data to monitor progress toward the 2030 Agenda. **Community data collection** initiatives can help fill data gaps, while at the same time foster accountability, participation and active citizenship. Civil society can help generate population data, assisting citizens to use it to hold their governments to account and providing crucial evidence for the design of development interventions.

The *Community-Based Monitoring System (CBMS)* project, developed in the Philippines, has been implemented in 22 countries across Africa, Asia and Latin America and supports community members and local officials to track multidimensional poverty and development issues at the household level.[183] The system has proved to be successful in helping to target social protection programmes for the poorest and for monitoring the MDGs at the local level. In the Philippines, household-by-household identification of those most in need of conditional cash transfers has resulted in improved school participation, and access to water and sanitation, among other benefits. The

CBMS has proved to be a cheap way of gathering data (at around $0.70 per household in the Philippines) and is now used in more than 50% of all 'bangarays' (villages) across the country.[184] In Uganda, a randomised field experiment on community-based monitoring found that score cards contributed to better quality and more frequently utilised health services and ultimately improved health outcomes for patients.[185]

Government and other stakeholders should support open and participatory data collection processes that provide safe spaces for excluded groups to participate and articulate their experiences, priorities and needs.

ENGAGING IN MULTI-STAKEHOLDER PARTNERSHIPS

There are a number of multi-stakeholder partnerships that complement national and local efforts and mobilise all stakeholders to meet the data challenge.

- The *Global Partnership for Sustainable Data* is a multi-stakeholder initiative that brings together governments, NGOs and businesses to strengthen the way data is used to support sustainable development efforts.[186] The partnership seeks to improve the effective use of data, fill key data gaps, expand data literacy and capacity, increase openness and leverage of existing data, and mobilise political will and resources.[187]
- The *Open Data Partnership for Development (ODP4D)* is a partnership between the World Bank, the Open Data Institute and the Open Knowledge Foundation that aims to help policy-makers and citizens to understand and exploit the benefits of open data.[188] The project has three objectives: to support countries to plan, implement and run open data initiatives; to increase the use of open data in developing countries; and to enhance the evidence base on the impact of open data for development.[189]
- The *Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century (Paris21)* was established in 1999 to facilitate statistical capacity development, advocate for the integration of data in decision-making, and coordinate donor support to data systems. Paris21 provides technical support to national statistics offices, including on data management and national policy support and development.[190]

It is important that the various data partnerships coordinate their efforts in order to achieve greater and more effective change.

SUMMARY: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MEETING THE CHALLENGE OF THE DATA REVOLUTION

- Meeting the challenge of the data revolution will be costly, and support from the international donor community will be critical for many low- and middle-income countries. All governments and international actors should ensure that the necessary political and financial support is in place to achieve a data revolution.
- All governments should invest in human resource capacity, harness the benefits of new technologies, and improve the quality of data collection. Governments should consider complementing traditional data collection approaches with innovative methods, such as those using new technologies or qualitative and participatory methods.
- The international community, civil society and other stakeholders should provide technical expertise at international and national levels to ensure that all countries have adequate data collection systems in place and that global minimum standards for data are met in every country.
- To ensure that all groups in society are captured in the data, governments and other stakeholders should support open and participatory data collection processes that provide safe spaces for excluded groups to participate and articulate their experiences, priorities and needs.
- All governments must make comprehensive and disaggregated data and information publicly available in accessible and user-friendly formats and in a timely manner, while at the same time protecting the privacy of citizens.

Children listen to a radio programme (designed and made by children) in Hodeida, Yemen. The radio series is part of Save the Children's GLOBAL TO LOCAL – EVERY ONE campaign, which enables children – especially those displaced by conflict – to share their experiences and express their feelings about the situation in their country.

7 IMPLEMENTING A NEW ACCOUNTABILITY PARADIGM

The successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda depends on governments being held to account for progress on goals and targets and on participation in which citizens, including children, have an active role and opportunities to meaningfully engage in accountability processes. An effective accountability framework must focus, first and foremost, on ensuring accountability for sustainable development outcomes to all citizens.

LEARNING FROM THE MDGS

The MDGs were not accompanied by a sufficiently robust system of people-centred accountability, with the UN Secretary-General identifying this as one of the key reasons for shortfalls to achieve goals.[191] At the national level, national statistics offices primarily carried out monitoring for the MDGs, with UN agencies providing support on data disaggregation. While experiences vary by country, in the main, national review and monitoring processes were not used systematically to ensure national dialogue and engagement with citizens. In some cases, the MDGs provided a platform for civil society participation but, in general, civil society struggled to play an active role in monitoring processes. MDG implementation and monitoring also paid little attention to analysing trends within countries and at sub-national level, with intra-country inequalities and differential rates of progress among groups and gaps between them largely ignored.[192]

KEY PRINCIPLES FOR AN SDG ACCOUNTABILITY FRAMEWORK

An effective accountability framework for the 2030 Agenda must go beyond follow-up and review; it must ensure robust, systematic, open and inclusive accountability. It must be people-centred and allow for the effective engagement of all citizens, including children and disadvantaged and marginalised groups. Save the Children's experience in supporting the post-2015 process has shown us that an effective accountability framework for the 2030 Agenda should be based on the following principles:

- **Universality:** It should be monitored in its entirety in all countries, high-, middle- and low-income alike.
- **Transparency:** It should provide open, participatory and transparent channels through which progress can be meaningfully evaluated, gaps in implementation identified and action to address gaps incentivised. Information should be made public in a timely manner and in accessible formats.
- **Equity:** It should ensure that those most disadvantaged and marginalised are placed at the centre.
- **Participation:** It should allow all citizens, including children, to engage effectively and safely in accountability processes at all levels, including through submitting independent supplementary information in formal review processes.

Open, inclusive and accountable governance at all levels will also be crucial to delivering a 2030 Agenda accountability framework that provides meaningful opportunities for adults and children to engage. This includes the right to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly being guaranteed in law and practice.

NATIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY FRAMEWORKS

At the national level, governments and other stakeholders need to begin by **raising awareness of the 2030 Agenda** and ensuring that all citizens, including children and disadvantaged and marginalised groups, are aware of the commitments made under the new framework. The goals and targets of the new agenda are hugely ambitious and will require ample scientific and public debate, as well as citizen awareness, in their implementation. A recent stakeholder analysis supported by Save the Children in Liberia found that raising awareness of the SDGs would be a key challenge in implementation.[193]

Governments, supported by stakeholders, should conduct **regular reviews of progress** that are inclusive, consultative and participatory. Such reviews should be published in a timely manner and disseminated in accessible formats, providing the rationale for why progress has or has not been made and outlining the steps that will be taken to ensure the successful implementation of and accountability for the SDGs. Formal and inclusive spaces should be provided to ensure that all citizens – including children – have an opportunity to engage in accountability processes at national and local levels. Domestic institutions and processes could be amended to include monitoring for the SDGs to help alleviate unnecessary reporting burdens. Recent innovations, such as those harnessing the power of the internet (see Box 14), can provide useful forums for citizen feedback and holding government to account.

It is important that processes of accountability and **lines of responsibility** are clear. In South Africa, one of the key challenges of accountability is the shifting institutional responsibility for monitoring and reporting on child-related policies.[195] South Africa's institutional set-up on the rights and well-being of children has been in flux over the past six years (2009–15), oscillating from a centralised and special-purpose coordinating structure, to the decentralisation of these functions to government departments charged with implementation. A case in point is a shift from the Office on the Rights of the Child (ORC), to a Department of Women, Children and People with Disabilities (DWCPD) in 2009, to the disbandment of the DWCPD in 2014 and then the transfer of its children's functions to the Department of Social Development.[196]

A recent analysis of stakeholder perspectives by Save the Children found that this instability has created some confusion about the government's strategic focus for advocating and monitoring improvements in children's overall rights and welfare.[197] The changes not only represented an institutional change, but signalled a shift in children's policy, advocacy, monitoring and oversight away from the 'executive authority' and influence of the Presidency, where the ORC resided, to mainstream cabinet departments that have more limited intra-governmental authority to exercise accountability. Some stakeholders have raised concerns that as responsibility for children's rights is now the indirect responsibility of the one department, it has become the direct responsibility of none.

BOX 14: INNOVATIONS FOR ACCOUNTABILITY

The government of Indonesia has introduced an online public complaints system – LAPOR – which allows citizens everywhere to register their grievances regarding service delivery through text messages. While the initiative is a positive development, a major challenge remains to increase citizens' awareness of its existence. To push the SDGs forward, broader dissemination of LAPOR is essential, including local government adoption of the mechanism.[194]

ACCOUNTABILITY TO CHILDREN

As key stakeholders in the 2030 Agenda, children have the right to engage in implementation, monitoring, follow-up and review – a right enshrined in Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Involving children is not only beneficial for their development, but can enable governments to design interventions more accurately and enhance accountability. Save the Children's work across the world demonstrates that when children are given space and support, they can be effective agents of change. In Tanzania, for instance, Save the Children has supported children's councils as an avenue to promote children's participation in local governance. This has had some positive impacts on service delivery to children, including in increasing resource allocation to activities directly related to them.[198] The dialogue between children and local government officials also contributed to establishing mechanisms for children to influence local governance in the future.

Recently, Save the Children, UNICEF and World Vision have joined forces to create the 'World's Largest Lesson' – to teach children in over 100 countries about the new sustainable development goals.[199] Through specially created lesson materials, including an animated film, the initiative informs all children that they are important actors in sustainable development and supports them as they learn how to be global citizens and how to take positive action in their communities.

REGIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY MECHANISMS

Regional dialogue and monitoring can complement national accountability processes and play an important role in encouraging the sharing of knowledge, learning from good practice and generating solutions and mutual support. In coordination with UN Regional Commissions and regional bodies such as the African Union, regional dialogues should, where possible, be upgraded to regional accountability mechanisms that are open and inclusive and which involve a wide range of state and non-state actors. Strengthening existing regional accountability frameworks will be a key factor in creating a robust monitoring process and an efficient impact assessment mechanism. Regional accountability mechanisms should build on national processes as well as on regional human rights mechanisms, and feed into reviews at the international level.

INTERNATIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY MECHANISMS

International mechanisms can provide a useful check on national implementation and can facilitate the sharing of experiences, including challenges, successes and lessons. The global **High-level Political Forum (HLPF)** is the UN platform for the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda. The forum has been mandated by member states to: provide political leadership, guidance and recommendations on the Agenda's implementation and follow-up; keep track of progress and provide a platform for partnerships; and to address new and emerging issues.[200]

Global progress towards the SDGs should be reviewed annually, with findings published in an annual accountability and progress report, as well as embedded into existing thematic reports, such as the Global Nutrition Report. The annual accountability report should be prepared through coordinated inputs from multilateral institutions, international agencies and civil society. Global progress for the most disadvantaged groups should be a core component of the global review process and the annual report. Specific sessions under the HLPF should focus on disadvantaged groups and consider progress on interim 'stepping-stone' equity targets to ensure that those furthest behind are making sufficient progress towards 2030 targets. All international reviews should be open, inclusive and interactive, with clear avenues for participation by civil society, including children.

To strengthen implementation of goals and targets, and to ensure alignment with existing international human rights obligations, regional and international accountability processes should work in synergy with international and regional **human rights mechanisms**, ensuring two-way systematic flow of data, analysis and recommendations (see Box 15 opposite). The conclusions and recommendations issued by UN human rights mechanisms, such as UN human rights treaty bodies (including the Committee on the Rights of the Child), should help inform global and national reviews conducted under the HLPF. UN human rights mechanisms should also, where appropriate, include a focus on sustainable development goals and targets in their review of states.

BOX 15: DELIVERING ON THE CORE PROMISES TO CHILDREN – ACCOUNTABILITY FOR SDG TARGETS ON VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

Many children around the world experience violence in their lives. It is estimated that between 500 million and 1.5 billion children experience violence annually, with around 120 million girls under the age of 20 subject to forced sexual intercourse or other forced sexual acts at some point in their lives.[201] Given the importance of these issues, it is imperative that progress toward SDG targets on violence against children is properly tracked so that adjustments can be made where necessary to move implementation forward.

The targets on ending violence against children (Target 16.2) closely align with existing human rights treaties and standards. Such targets are not voluntary – they correspond to existing human rights obligations that are legally binding for almost all states and have corresponding accountability mechanisms. An effective accountability framework for the 2030 Agenda should work in close cooperation with existing international and regional human rights treaties and mechanisms.

OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

While the lines of accountability primarily lie between governments and their citizens, the global nature of the 2030 Agenda means that other actors working toward sustainable development, including civil society and the private sector, can also play a role in delivering and monitoring the SDGs.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS, MULTILATERAL AGENCIES AND DONORS

Intergovernmental organisations, multilateral agencies – including UN agencies and international financial institutions – and donors should be held to account for commitments made to support or finance the 2030 Agenda. Donors are accountable not only to their national citizens but also to the people and communities they work with. In conflict-affected fragile contexts, international organisations must be accountable to the communities they work with, particularly where the sovereign government does not have the capacity to do so nor the will to fulfil this function.

PRIVATE SECTOR

The private sector has a critical role to play in implementing the 2030 Agenda; however, its role should be carefully managed. The annual global accountability report should include a dedicated section on the private sector's contribution to the SDGs, including the implementation of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, and adherence to the Children's Rights and Business

Principles. This would complement the monitoring of specific targets and commitments relating to private sector responsibility in the 2030 Agenda and Financing for Development agreements. All companies should capture and measure non-financial information on their environmental, social and governance impacts. National governments should introduce mandatory reporting for large companies on their non-financial performance, drawing from existing initiatives, such as the Global Reporting Initiative guidelines, as a starting point.[202]

CIVIL SOCIETY

Civil society, including NGOs, can play a key role in holding government to account and supporting citizens to take an active role in accountability processes. Experience from the MDGs shows us that civil society actors have engaged in various approaches and initiatives. 'Shadow reports', for instance, were produced by some civil society organisations as alternatives to MDG performance reports and to assess achievements through a general public and civil society lens. In India, Malawi and Mozambique, shadow reports helped challenge inequalities and highlight disparities in rates of progress for all social and economic groups. In Ghana, the 2008 shadow report was presented to the National Development Planning Commission and used to develop sectoral planning interventions.[203]

Civil society can also play a key role in tracking progress toward targets and commitments. 'Countdown to 2015', for instance, was a civil society initiative that used country-specific data to stimulate

and support country progress towards achieving the health-related MDGs. The Countdown initiative promoted accountability from governments and development partners, identified knowledge gaps and proposed new actions to reduce child mortality and improve maternal health.[204]

Civil society can also help ensure that the voices of some of the most marginalised and disadvantaged groups are heard in local and national review processes, including through organising platforms such as Citizen's Hearings on key issues.[205]

Other sector-based accountability mechanisms can provide useful insights into how to report on progress towards the SDGs, and can be adapted or amended to reflect the ambition of the new commitments. The Education for All (EFA) Global Monitoring Report (GMR), for instance, is an analytical, evidence-based report that monitored progress towards the EFA and the two education MDGs on an almost annual basis. The GMR has been mandated to monitor progress towards the education SDGs, providing an opportunity to harness institutional memory and learning from previous experience. The Global Nutrition Report plays a similar role, tracking stakeholders' commitments made in the Global Nutrition for Growth Compact and providing detailed tables on country, business, civil society, donor, UN and other organisations' progress towards meeting the commitments.[206]

Where civil society organisations are able to make voluntary contributions to the implementation of the SDGs, they should report on their work in a transparent manner through providing inputs into annual global accountability and thematic reports, global partnerships and independent civil society processes.

SUMMARY: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTING A NEW ACCOUNTABILITY PARADIGM

- All stakeholders must work to raise awareness of the 2030 Agenda to ensure that all citizens, including children and disadvantaged and marginalised groups, are aware of commitments that have been made under the new agenda, their rights and how they can meaningfully participate in implementation and accountability.
- All governments must conduct regular reviews that are inclusive, consultative and participatory, providing an enabling environment and opportunities for all citizens to participate. Such reviews should be published in a timely manner and disseminated in accessible formats. National-level reviews should be based, at a minimum, on a core set of global indicators that measure progress for all goals and targets in all countries.
- All governments should mandate accountability institutions, such as independent human rights institutions and parliaments, to monitor progress toward the SDGs and targets, with inputs from citizens. Governments should introduce mandatory reporting for large companies on their non-financial performance, using the Global Reporting Initiative guidelines as a starting point.[207]
- Global progress towards the SDGs should be reviewed annually, with findings published in an annual accountability and progress report. Global progress for the most disadvantaged groups should be a core component of the global review, with specific sessions under the HLPF to focus on disadvantaged groups and to consider progress on interim 'stepping-stone' equity targets.
- Accountability frameworks at national, regional and global levels should work complementarily with existing human rights treaties and mechanisms.

8 CONCLUSION

Adopting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development signalled a clear commitment from the world's leaders to set the world on a better track for a brighter, more just, prosperous and sustainable future in which all children can reach their full potential. The 2030 Agenda is a hugely ambitious framework including, for the first time, cross-cutting pledges to leave no one behind, to see targets and goals met for all segments of society, and to endeavour to reach the furthest first. Although the challenges of achieving the goals are great, the outcome they can lead us to is remarkable.

Achieving the ambition of the 2030 Agenda will only be possible if effective implementation strategies are put in place. Reflecting on the experience of the MDGs gives us a chance to evaluate, assess and tailor our implementation efforts to ensure that the most vulnerable and excluded in our society share in the gains of sustainable development.

To implement the Agenda at the national level, alignment with national plans, sector strategies and budgets is an important first step; however, this must be accompanied by strong national institutions and coordination mechanisms to translate plans into progress. Realising the commitment to leave no one behind demands targeted policies and approaches – such as stepping-stone targets – to help accelerate equitable progress across all goals. Strong, disaggregated data provides the rich evidence for designing policies and monitoring the progress of all segments in society, but it must be freely and easily accessible to all citizens. The successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda depends on governments being held to account for progress on goals and targets, which in turn relies on citizens, including children, having an active role and opportunities to meaningfully engage in accountability processes.

The MDGs were a crucial starting point in galvanising international support for poverty reduction and are a clear illustration of the role international frameworks can play in driving national policy change. The SDGs – through effective implementation efforts – will help us finish the job and go beyond, ensuring that all 17 goals are achieved and no one is left behind.

RECOMMENDATIONS – A TEN-POINT PLAN FOR IMPLEMENTATION

National governments must take immediate steps in five key areas:

1. **Integrate the Sustainable Development Goals into national plans, sector strategies, foreign policies and budgets:** All governments, in consultation with civil society, the private sector and other stakeholders, must take immediate steps to align domestic and foreign policies, plans and budgets with the 2030 Agenda. Donor countries must set concrete timetables to meet their ODA commitments, with assistance primarily directed at the countries and people who are furthest behind.

2. **Strengthen national public institutions and coordination mechanisms:** Ensure that public institutions at local and national levels have the human and financial resources to deliver services with a focus on reaching those furthest behind. This should be complemented by a national coordination mechanism with a mandate to strengthen inter-agency, inter-ministerial or cross-departmental work and to monitor progress towards all goals.

3. **Place 'leave no one behind' at the heart of all strategies:** Ensure there are targeted strategies in plans to tackle exclusion and inequalities, including stepping-stone equity targets to monitor progress for all segments of society. Ensure equity in both raising revenue and allocating budgets, and implement universal coverage of essential services[208] via equitable pathways that meet the needs of marginalised groups first.

4. **Invest in and democratise data, while protecting the privacy and safety of citizens:** Assess the capacity of national statistical offices to meet the challenge of collecting and disseminating disaggregated data on the SDGs for all social and economic groups, including children. Work with civil society, the private sector, international partners and others to build capacity, harmonise existing approaches to data and harness the opportunities presented by new technologies and participatory methods.

5. **Establish inclusive, safe and people-centred systems of accountability:** Report on progress in open, inclusive and participatory ways, supporting the active engagement of all citizens, including children and marginalised groups. Encourage independent reporting on SDG progress by communities, citizen groups and other stakeholders including civil society organisations.

International actors, including the United Nations, multilateral agencies and international financial institutions, must take immediate steps in five key areas:

6. **Provide guidance on implementation:** Agree and publish guidance on key aspects of implementation, including on how the scope and ambition of the goals and targets should be adapted to national contexts and how countries should approach goals. The UN Secretary-General should provide a road map for implementation by appointing an independent cross-sector task force or high-level panel – drawn from UN agencies and external stakeholders – with the mandate to prepare a report on implementation.

7. **Deliver political, financial and other commitments to support implementation:** Report on progress on international financing and means of implementation targets. Demonstrate political leadership at the highest levels, providing technical support to countries and engaging with multi-stakeholder partnerships to ensure that the most challenging targets receive sufficient attention.

8. **Institutionalise the commitment to 'leave no one behind':** Support the disaggregation of global indicators, provide guidance to governments on incorporating stepping-stone equity targets into national plans, and provide guidance on how to redesign existing policies to ensure that those furthest behind are reached first.

9. **Support the data revolution through financing, capacity building and collaboration:** Provide countries with the necessary support (including capacity and financing) to meet the challenge of measuring progress towards the SDGs and ensure that there is a minimum level of disaggregated data (a data floor) available in every country. Support countries in scaling up mechanisms for measuring progress across all SDGs, with priority given to first collecting disaggregated data for targets related to children.

10. **Support and participate in global accountability processes:** Support and participate in robust mechanisms for global follow-up and reviews that support national-level accountability, that focus on progress of the poorest, most vulnerable and those furthest behind, and that provide space for meaningful citizen and civil society participation.

ENDNOTES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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4 FROM PLANNING TO PROGRESS: INSTITUTIONAL INNOVATIONS TO DRIVE CHANGE

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8 CONCLUSION

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FROM AGREEMENT TO **ACTION**

Delivering the Sustainable Development Goals

In September 2015, world leaders came together to agree on a groundbreaking set of commitments to end poverty and create a more inclusive and equitable society by 2030. Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development includes a set of 17 ambitious Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets that together form a plan of action for people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership. Governments and other actors are now presented with a challenge: how to ensure that the SDGs are as transformative in practice as they are on paper.

From Agreement to Action draws on experience from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and on evidence from Save the Children's work in different countries around the world. It provides useful guidance and recommendations for governments, international actors and other stakeholders as they develop their implementation plans, and identifies five areas of action – national plans, governance and institutions, commitment to leave no one behind, democratising data, and improving accountability.

The MDGs were a crucial starting point in galvanising international support for poverty reduction and illustrate the role international frameworks can play in driving national policy change. The SDGs – if implemented enthusiastically and effectively – will help us finish the job and ensure that no one is left behind.

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