World Vision International calls for the word “children” to remain in the Sustainable Development Goals Declaration paragraphs 8 and 19

Background

Negotiations to finalize the Post 2015 outcome document have come down to their final 2 weeks in New York (July 20-31). The document includes a declaration with a “new agenda and vision” section, the goals and targets themselves and sections on the “means of implementation” and “follow-up and review”.

Together with other child-focused agencies (including UNICEF) World Vision has actively advocated throughout the process of developing this new framework that the rights of children (girls and boys) must be strongly included. While we have not achieved all of our objectives, we have been pleased that Member States have included clear goals and targets, as well as commitments in the Declaration that represent a strong global call to address children’s rights—particularly in the areas of health, violence, education, nutrition and others.

World Vision is very pleased that the proposed framework also includes a specific goal and related targets on gender equality and overall mainstreaming of gender. This is good news for everyone and needless to say, women’s organisations understandably would like to raise the bar even further.

Some emerging issues

1. We believe that commitments to address child rights and gender are mutually reinforcing, not mutually exclusive or in competition with each other. One basic principle under which we have engaged is that no agenda should be strengthened by undermining others.

2. UN Women is lobbying to replace two key references to children in the Declaration currently being negotiated by Governments at the UN. These are paragraphs 8 and 19 in Vision and New Agenda sections of the Declaration.

3. We are very concerned about this, as the references to children have been hard-fought and won so far. Some have argued that the paragraphs are related to gender equality and that is their rationale for deleting children and replacing it with girls. But these paragraphs have a broader application than gender equality.

4. We believe it is essential not to lose the reference to children because a) equality cannot be achieved without full involvement of boys and men as well as women and girls, b) the latter half of the sentence refers to “barriers to their empowerment in our society” – this is broader than gender barriers only and therefore should not be specifically limited to only girls but to children as a whole. c) the goals and targets themselves recognize the need to address violence against children (i.e. both boys and girls.)

5. We are concerned that if this new framework does not recognize a holistic approach to
gender, we will fail both girls and boys in our efforts toward equality and will have to correct this approach in our next set of global goals. We cannot afford to lose another 15 years on this.

**World Vision International proposal on the language of paragraph 8 and 19**

1. **We propose that a mutually beneficial solution would be to edit the phrase as follows:** “A world in which every women and child, both girls and boys, enjoys full gender equality and all barriers to their empowerment in our societies have been removed.”

Here are the two relevant paragraphs from the Declaration:

a. **We envisage a world of universal respect for human rights and human dignity, the rule of law, justice and equality; of respect for race, ethnicity and cultural values; and of equal opportunity permitting the full realization of human potential while promoting shared prosperity. A world in which every woman and child enjoys full gender equality and all barriers to their empowerment in our societies have been removed. A just, equitable, tolerant and socially inclusive world.**

b. **Working for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls will make a crucial contribution to progress across all the goals and targets. The achievement of full human potential and of sustainable development is not possible if one half of humanity continues to be denied its full human rights and opportunities. Women and girls must enjoy equal access to education, economic resources and political participation as well as equal opportunities with men and boys for employment and leadership. All forms of gender inequality, discrimination and violence against women and children, both boys and girls, will be combatted.**