Global Coalition to End Child Poverty

Key Messages

2 July 2018

How and when to use this document
These key messages have been developed to provide the Global Coalition to End Child Poverty with a clear and united focus. They are intended for use in joint coalition initiatives, materials and social media, as well as by individual and agency members. The messages are primarily drawn from existing coalition publications, including joint statements and policy briefs.

Overarching key facts

- Children are more than twice as likely as adults to be living in extreme poverty. In absolute numbers there are an estimated 385 million children living on less than US$1.90 a day. Children represent half of the global extreme poor while they only represent around 32% of the global population.
- There are an estimated 689 million children worldwide living in multidimensional poverty. That is two out of every five children.
- Even in the world’s richest countries, some 75 million children are affected by relative poverty.
- Children living in poverty face a higher risk of death before age 5 and malnutrition that stunts their growth and development. They also are at greater risk of being out of school, being forced into harmful labour or child marriage, or giving birth while they are still children themselves.

Overarching messages

Child poverty needs to be routinely measured at global and national levels

Measurement of child poverty is critical - without knowing how many children are living in poverty, we cannot know how we are progressing towards the Sustainable Development Goals or understand the impacts of different policies and programmes on child poverty.

There are several options to measure and assess child poverty, including reflecting children in international and national poverty lines, as well as measuring a range of indicators to capture the complexity of multidimensional poverty. Many children who are not ‘monetary poor’ are ‘multidimensionally deprived’, just as many non-

2 Multidimensional poverty is made up of many factors that constitute poor people’s experience of deprivation – such as poor health, lack of education, inadequate living standard, lack of income, disempowerment, poor quality of work and threat from violence. OPHI, Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative.
3 OPHI briefing 46, May 2017: Children’s Multidimensional Poverty. Disaggregating the global MPI.
5 Children are explicitly included in SDG 1, target 1.2, calling for child poverty in all its forms to be reduced by at least half.
deprived children live in monetary poverty. Child poverty measurement should include both monetary and multidimensional indicators, as well as qualitative methods, to capture children’s full lived experiences of poverty: whether they go to school, whether they are nourished or have access to healthcare, whether they feel unsafe or ashamed.

**Children need to be prioritised in national strategies if the global community is going to end poverty as promised in SDG 1**

Governments should recognise child poverty as an explicit priority area in national strategies, policies and programmes to eliminate poverty in all its dimensions. Tackling child poverty is an investment that brings huge returns. It is also affordable. Investing equitably in boys and girls through better healthcare, nutrition, education, water and sanitation, and social protection is essential to allow children to fully develop and thrive. These investments have demonstrated benefits for children with high returns, especially when started when children are very young.

In addition, governments should adopt National Action Plans, with dedicated budgets and monitoring systems, which track improvements in poverty-related deprivations among girls and boys of all ages. Finally, recognising that most but not all children live in households, promoting pro-poor growth can improve welfare at the bottom of the income distribution curve and so help reduce the share of children and their families living in poverty.

**Messages of the Global Coalition to End Child Poverty**

**Social protection should be expanded to cover more children and be child-sensitive**

**Problem:** One in three children worldwide is now covered by some form of social protection, yet 1.3 billion children in need remain without social protection coverage.6

**Evidence:** Social protection is now widely recognised as one of the most effective interventions in the fight against child poverty7. Child-sensitive Social Protection (CSSP) is a well-proven approach to help realise the rights of children and help families out of poverty, and to cope with stresses and shocks - enabling families to invest on an adequate and continuing basis in their children's well-being8. There is compelling evidence that transfers which reach the poorest and most vulnerable children and their families, lead to positive impacts on child outcomes9.

**Solution:** There needs to be an expansion of coverage in policy and practice to include all children who are very poor in social protection programmes, and to

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ensure that all social protection interventions are designed to increase child well-being and avoid unintended harms.

**Improve access to quality public services, especially for the poorest children**

**Problem:** There are significant inequities in public service provision, with the poorest and most marginalised children often lacking effective access to quality services, including health, education, water and sanitation, and protection.

**Evidence:** The benefits of quality services, such as pre-school interventions, are likely to be high for the poorest children, but they generally have the least access to these quality services. Access to quality education and training, alongside improved access to sexual and reproductive health and rights, are among important interventions to reducing intergenerational transmission of poverty. Secondary education has been found to be a key driver in sustaining an escape from poverty.

**Solution:** Improve the coverage, equity and quality of public services. Ensure the poorest families have access to quality services - free at the point of use - including pre-school programmes. Address and eliminate barriers that may be rooted in both monetary poverty and deeper discrimination and exclusion. This includes an overall strategy to include the poorest and most excluded, backed by policies, programmes, standards and budgets.

**Access to ‘decent work’ for young people can be the route out of poverty**

**Problem:** There is a critical jobs challenge globally: with projections suggesting that developing countries with large adolescent and youth populations need to generate many millions of new jobs each year. Where jobs are available, the world of work is precarious and often dangerous and exploitative, locking young people into a life of poverty without the opportunity to develop skills that may provide a route out.

**Evidence:** Long hours, dangerous and exploitative work undermine development. However, not all work is harmful to young people, and work can be an important way in which youth and adolescents contribute to households and learn useful skills which can help them later.

**Solution:** Job creation, coupled with access to good-quality learning focused on life skills and apprenticeships, provide interventions to support adolescences and young people’s access to the labour market. It is not only jobs, but decent work and livelihoods that matter. Labour market rights and interventions in both formal and informal labour markets provide a foundation for reducing child poverty. Decent work involves greater access to jobs, labour rights and social protection measures. Equipping adolescents and young people with essential life skills not only helps them to secure decent work and livelihoods, but also develops their ability to invest in their own children’s well-being in the future.

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11 UNFPA, 2016, Universal Access to Reproductive Health: progress and challenges.
Concerted action to reduce child poverty and related deprivations is needed in specific geographic regions

Problem: Child monetary poverty and multidimensional deprivation rates are highest in Africa, followed by Asia. A significant increase in child poverty is expected to continue well beyond 2030 in Africa, unlike other regions of the world. The risks children face in these areas are further compounded in situations of state and subnational fragility and conflict.

Evidence: By 2030, children in Africa will account for some 43% of global poverty, almost double the current share, due to a combination of demographic changes, deep poverty and extreme inequality.

Solution: Improving the equitable provision of basic services and child-sensitive social protection measures - such as cash transfers13 - and helping parents and caregivers to improve their economic well-being can empower families and make a real and lasting change in the daily realities and futures of girls and boys living in poverty. Such measures provide a basis for prosperous, equitable societies and sustainable national development in the poorest regions.

Shame and stigma fuel poverty and warrant much more focus from policymakers and researchers

Problem: Poverty is deeply connected to experiences of shaming, stigma and exclusion. Children feel these impacts, not just adults. They can lead to low self-esteem and the stifling of ambition among children and young people. Judgements are often made of how families in poverty bring up children, with assumptions that parents who are poor do not work hard enough or do not parent well. The reality is often starkly different, with parents working hard and sacrificing their own needs to support their children, but with poverty still constraining the opportunities children face and affecting their psychological well-being.

Evidence: Children’s perceptions of poverty and inequality shape their identities, well-being and long-term prospects. A Young Lives survey on children’s feelings and perceptions showed that poor children were three times more likely than non-poor children to report a bad life, whilst non-poor children were four times more likely to report having a good life14. There is a growing understanding of the psychosocial impact of poverty and, specifically, the role of shame. Insights drawn from young people in the UK demonstrate similar experiences, across different cultural and socio-economic contexts, to children living in Uganda15.

Solution: Challenging myths and supporting children and families to move out of poverty, may be an important part of building public support for policies that tackle the barriers facing those who are poor, and tackling negative attitudes and stigma experienced by children.

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15 ESRC-DfID funded research project, Poverty, shame and social exclusion: A study in seven countries.
Measures of child poverty should include groups of ‘missing children’

**Problem:** Poverty measures are generally derived from household surveys. As a result, many children, such as those in institutional care, living on the street or otherwise outside of family care - who are often the poorest and most marginalized - are missing from the data and missing from the policy and programme response.

**Evidence:** Tens of millions of marginalised ‘missing or invisible’ children may not be captured by national statistics.\(^{16}\)

**Solution:** Exploring how ‘missing children’ can be better reflected in existing household survey data collection efforts, for example, by expanding sample frames to include informal settlement would be an important first step. In addition, expanding data collection efforts to capture and reflect the situation and lived experiences of children living outside of households is crucial.

Key information

**About the Global Coalition to End Child Poverty**

The Global Coalition to End Child Poverty is a global initiative to raise awareness about children living in poverty across the world and support global and national action to alleviate it. Our members work together as part of the Coalition, as well as individually, to achieve a world where all children grow up free from poverty, deprivation and exclusion.

Further reading


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