

## Youth Response to the High Level Panel Report

We welcome the direction set by the High Level Panel's Report on the Post-2015 Development Agenda. The transformative shifts which are proposed along with the cross-cutting issues, engagement with non-state actors and finally the illustrative goals set the tone in the right direction to achieving sustained prosperity for all in a more holistic way than previous development efforts.

A broad coalition of child and youth focused organisations wrote to the High Level Panel prior to the release of the report outlining our key demands for any future development framework. We believe that many of these issues have been sensitively addressed but in some areas the report lacks the political will and the coherence to lead what it claims as "a transformative agenda" and lacks clarity on how the framework will translate into positive actions from all stakeholders.

### **1. Eradicating Poverty must include minorities and difficult issues**

The overall aim of the framework set out in the report - to eradicate poverty by 2030 - is a useful standpoint and correctly recognises that this can only be done by bridging the gap between the environment and development. However, we would have appreciated more detail on how the framework will address the systemic problems that lead to social and income inequalities within and between nations, for example cultural prejudices against marginalised groups and economic systems that prioritize unrestricted economic growth and harmful patterns of production and consumption. Whilst we do recognise that these issues are broadly tackled by the welcome commitment to 'leave no one behind', the lack of specificity on how exactly this will be actioned suggests that work remains to be done before achieving this transformative shift necessary to ensure the long-term well-being of children and youth across the globe.

### **2. The agency of young people and children must be supported going forward**

We welcome that young people are identified as a 'cross-cutting' issue whose well-being needs to be addressed across all 12 suggested goals. We are pleased to see the specific paragraph laying out the key role they play in this changing world and the challenges they face that may prevent them from realising their full potential in the current context. We particularly welcome the recognition that '*young people must be subjects not objects of the post-2015 development agenda*' (pg.17) and the explicit reference to '*programmes led by youth, serving youth*' (pg.2) as this really does underpin the value of youth agency in development.

**Youth-led accountability:** We embrace the acknowledgement that youth want to '*hold those in charge to account*' and '*monitor where their government's money is going*' (pg.2) as this was a big ask coming out of the post-2015 youth consultations. However, we need to work on how young people will be supported through well-funded formal and non-formal education and civic participation mechanisms to make this a reality and ensure the participation of children and youth in decision-making at all levels.

**Child Agency:** We are disappointed that the Panel did not similarly recognise children as key actors in the post-2015 process and framework. Instead, in the report children are mainly represented as victims or recipients of development. Failing to recognise the active role that children can and should play in development is significant. Children, including the most marginalised and vulnerable, must be empowered to play an active role in the design, implementation and monitoring of the new framework, and should be explicitly recognised as key actors in the new global partnership and in accountability mechanisms of the new framework.

### **3. Youth issues/priorities are broadly addressed**

We are pleased to see that all priority issue areas identified in the youth letter are broadly addressed in the report and that a related goal is suggested on all of these apart from inequality as discussed above. We also support the profiling of some of the particular 'obstacles' young people in all their diversity face in this current climate set out in the youth paragraph (pg.17) and the admission that they have specific needs.

**Education:** Whilst the Education Goal is significantly improved and addresses quality education and educational outcomes, it is important to include the importance of non-formal education and lifelong learning under the goal as the suggested educational targets don't seem to reflect this.

**Gender Equality:** We very much welcome the specific Goal to Empower Girls and Women and Achieve Gender Equality, but it is important to make sure that the issues of girls and young women are properly mainstreamed through all other goals, which we hope will have an adequate and clear reflection in the disaggregated indicators.

**Transforming economies for jobs and inclusive growth:** We welcome the fact that there is a large youth focus embedded within the narrative on employment throughout the report, including a target within the Goal area on this.

Whilst not referencing 'youth' directly, the admission that steps must be taken to '*make it easier for people to invest, start up a business and to trade*' (Executive Summary) could have positive repercussions for young people looking to become entrepreneurs and gain some financial capital. However, we suggest specific measures are taken to ensure that young people are supported to access financial opportunities in this way, especially those experiencing more difficulties with transitioning into adulthood and achieving an independent life, such as young women and other marginalised groups.

**Governance:** Coming out as the top priority from the post-2015 national youth consultations, we are very pleased to see the substantial space given to good governance and public institutions that are 'accountable' and 'open'. We particularly welcome the inclusion of elements that improve people's ability to influence decisions that govern their lives; reference to the role of governments in ensuring freedom of speech, open political choice and access to justice. Equally, the call for a 'transparency revolution' (pg.9) that allows citizens to exercise '*permanent scrutiny of [government] affairs*' very much responds to the calls of young people who feel marginalised from public and political spaces.

However, in order to ensure that people do in fact feel empowered to take on a citizenship role and exercise this scrutiny, we suggest there needs to be a clear mandate and mechanisms for how civil society, children and young people in particular, can influence government at the national and international levels.

**Youth and Child indicators and targets needed:** Whilst we welcome that youth is a cross-cutting agenda item, we believe there is a need for indicators that relate to youth and children specifically. We welcome that disaggregated data is recognised as a key aspect for measuring future goals but note that this can only be achieved with clear and disaggregated targets and data sets.

**Child Protection:** We welcome the targets around eliminating all forms of violence against children. To strengthen the Panel's proposed framework and ensure that it fully supports children's rights, we recommend that the proposed targets relating to violence against children use a broad definition of violence that incorporates all forms of physical and mental violence, including sexual violence.

#### **4. Implementation and Accountability**

**Global Partnership:** We support the strong endorsement of a universal approach to achieving this vision of development with clearly defined roles and responsibilities for different stakeholders. We welcome the acknowledgement of the 'vital role' civil society organisations can play in 'giving a voice to people living in poverty' and other 'marginalised groups' and we embrace the proposed 'multi-stakeholder approach' to addressing thematic areas such as education, health and youth. We hope this will encourage the private sector and other stakeholders to better engage with the children and youth sector in supporting children and young people to overcome challenges, access opportunities and be active participants in society.

However, we are concerned that there is no clear mandate for how the quality of these partnerships will be implemented and monitored going forward.

**A space beyond civil society for marginalised groups:** It should be understood that all marginalised groups, especially children and youth, need not only engagement in the wider civil society collective, but also a clear structure for how to engage with local authorities, businesses and other institutions on these issues.

**Accountability through the High Level Political Forum:** We welcome the call for an official accountability mechanism; the suggestion of a high level space to periodically review progress against the framework should be combined with the on-going negotiations on the mandate of the HLPF. It is also positive to recognise the role of regional and thematic reviews and welcome that

stakeholders are mentioned in playing a role in this. We recommend reserving a formal mandate for civil society groups to be part of the monitoring system along the lines of the Major Group structure coming out of the original Rio process, supporting the strengthening of these and involving other stakeholders who have since emerged through the consultative post-2015 process.

**Incentives for implementation:** Given that the framework is not legally binding and there is no compulsion for member states or other stakeholders - namely the private sector - to endorse or implement the framework, we believe more direction is necessary on how to incentivise stakeholders to implement the framework in a committed, meaningful way.

**Data revolution:** We welcome the calls for a 'data revolution' with the specific mandate that this must enable us to reach the 'neediest' and find out whether they are receiving 'essential services' (pg.23). We support the suggestion that civil society should be involved in gaining 'better data and statistics' to help governments track progress.

We hope that the role of young people as data gatherers and monitors will be supported and invested in so that they will be empowered to contribute to the 'Global Partnership on Development Data' proposed in the report.

### **Call to Action**

We urge the UN Secretary General to draw on this report and related feedback in their forthcoming Annual Report so that the positive movement towards a transformative, sustainable development agenda does not get lost in the broader UN agenda.

We encourage UN Member States to take this report seriously, learn from and take forward the consultative approach the High Level Panel took to formulate the content and recommendations. We hope they commit to better aligning their development priorities around the issues laid out in the report and our recommendations to improve those.

We encourage the children and youth sectors to use this report as a lobbying tool to persuade key stakeholders that children and young people can and must be supported and given the space to contribute to society, the economy, environmental commitments and policy-making and implementation going forward.

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This response was developed by the [Beyond 2015 Children and Youth Working Group](#), comprised of a network of over 100 organisations and the [UN CSD Major Group for Children and Youth](#); a constituency of thousands of youth and child led organisations, networks and coalitions.

