

# CREATING A WORLD WHERE EACH CHILD CAN THRIVE

*SOS Children's Villages vision for the  
POST-2015 Development Agenda*



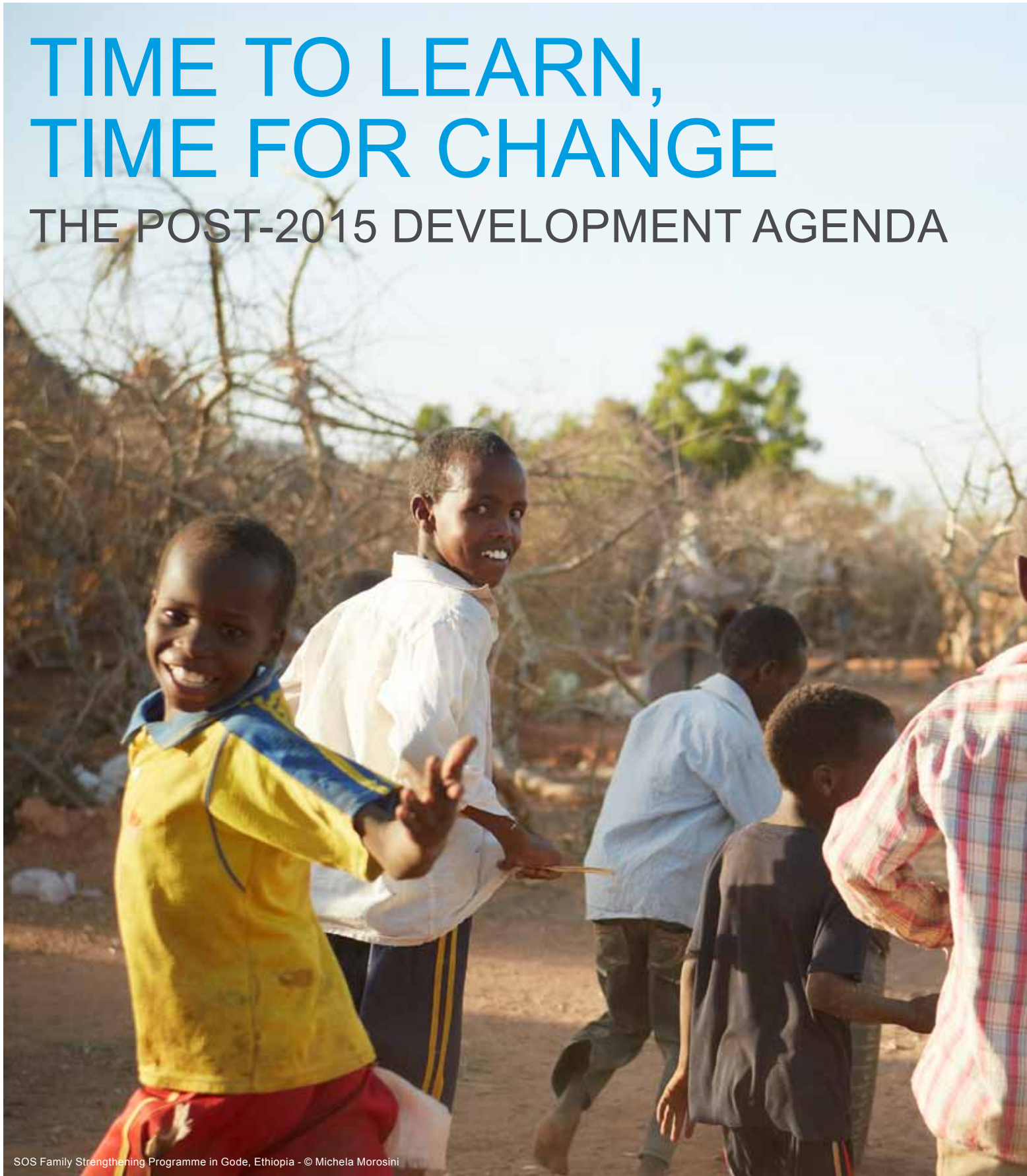
SOS CHILDREN'S  
VILLAGES  
INTERNATIONAL

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# TIME TO LEARN, TIME FOR CHANGE

THE POST-2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA







**As we approach 2015 and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), one of the most significant and unifying global agreements of our times, come to an end, now is the time for change. It is the time to evaluate and learn from our flaws, while looking towards the future, building on our successes.**

Now is the time to coordinate efforts to achieve a clean environment and an equitable society, where no child is born condemned to a lifetime of poverty, discrimination and exclusion. It is the time to work together to build a world where each and every child is provided the care and protection they are entitled to, so that they can thrive.

SOS Children's Villages, the largest non-governmental organisation focused on children without parental care and families at risk, is convinced that the Post-2015 Development Agenda should be firmly rooted in the basic principles of human rights and place children at its core. It must address the needs and rights of children, especially of those most disadvantaged and marginalised such as children without parental care. This will secure the healthy personal development of all children, thus creating an equitable society that can achieve sustainable social, economic, and environmental development.

This paper defines SOS Children's Villages position on the new Post-2015 Development Agenda and outlines a set of recommendations on how children, especially those most disadvantaged and marginalised, can be mainstreamed throughout the framework. These recommendations are based on over 60 years of experience working with the disadvantaged children, young people and families, as well as on the work the organisation has done on the MDGs<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> For details on SOS Children's Villages' efforts to achieve the MDGs, please see the paper: *Working to Achieve Sustainable Development: SOS Children's Villages Contribution to the Implementation of the Millennium Development Goals*.

## CHILDREN, ESPECIALLY THE MOST MARGINALISED, AT THE CORE

SOS Children's Villages firmly believes that children and young people should be at the core of the new development agenda. Children are highly vulnerable and disproportionately affected by the problems afflicting society; therefore, not only will they be the most influenced by the agenda today, but they will ultimately benefit from or pay the consequences of resulting policies in the future.

Moreover, when the needs of the children are met – including access to health care, education, and nutrition – and their families are able to provide care and protection, children grow into confident adults and contributing members of society, breaking the cycle of poverty and inequity and avoiding its social and financial burden. By investing in the wellbeing of children and establishing policies and measures that support them to develop to their full potential, society as a whole will benefit.

The new development agenda has the potential to be a game changer, not only by reversing the problems the world faces today, but by preventing them all together. To do this, however, it must correct one of the MDGs greatest flaws: it must reach the most vulnerable and the marginalised. The MDGs failed to reach the most marginalised sectors of society and focused on the more visible, easily reachable; the new development agenda must, therefore, pro-actively address the needs of those traditionally left out, such as children and young people without parental care or whose families are at risk of separation.

These children and young people are especially vulnerable, as they often lack even very basic social support systems. Without parents or families to adequately protect them, they are at increased risk of marginalisation, stigmatisation, violence, maltreatment and abuse. All children, whether in the care of their biological families or in alternative care, such as foster care or residential care, are entitled to quality care. This implies not only that children's basic needs are met, but that each and every child experiences the stable and loving relationships that he or she needs for healthy personal development. Lacking protection and quality care, children are more likely to be marginalised, which carries consequences that endure into adulthood.

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*Education is first and foremost a human right and one of the main tools to end poverty, marginalisation, stigma and violence.*

SOS Hermann Gmeiner School in Dhaka, Bangladesh - © Conor Ashleigh

Therefore, children and young people without parental care require special attention in the new development framework if it is to truly eradicate poverty and create a more equitable society.

The framework must also include measures benefitting families and supporting them to meet their responsibilities towards their children. This will not only prevent family breakdown and child abandonment, but ensure that all children receive quality care, growing up nurtured by a protective family structure. If families are empowered to provide quality care to their children, many other problems that contribute to poverty and inequity – such as abuse, abandonment, and exclusion from services – can effectively be solved.

## CHILDREN ARE CENTRAL TO THE DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

Children and young people, especially those most vulnerable and marginalised such as children without parental care, should be a central element of the framework. This can be done effectively, by including children and young people in a cross-cutting way, mainstreaming measures into all areas of it. Each goal or area must include indicators to measure how

policies derived from the framework explicitly benefit children and youth. Additionally, each goal should include a target that reflects improvements in the lives of children, especially those more vulnerable and marginalised.

Specifically, SOS Children's Villages stresses the importance of addressing the needs of children and young people without parental care or whose families are at risk of breaking down and including quality care and family support measures, in the areas of:

- Education
- Health
- Employment
- Social Protection

### → Education is a human right that must be guaranteed

Education is first and foremost a human right and one of the main tools to end poverty, marginalisation, stigma and violence. It is a means for people to develop dignity, self-reliance, and participation in society. Therefore, the new development agenda must include measures on education that are comprehensive, inclusive and empowering. It must detail actions that at least: ensure access to quality education for all children, especially the most marginalised; remove financial and social barriers that prevent universal access to education; and support initiatives in the non-formal education sector. Additionally, it is crucial to ensure



access to vocational training and tertiary education as a means to tackle youth unemployment. The new framework must strive to go beyond the provision of universal education, but rather aim to ensure that all children and young people, especially those most vulnerable and marginalised, receive the quality education that they are entitled to. This is a major flaw of the MDGs that the new development agenda can now correct.

### → Health is more than mere survival

Within the new development agenda, measures on health should focus on the achievement of a healthy life, not just on survival. This entails mental and emotional stability, as well as physical health.

It is crucial that children have access to high-quality health care, as it has a decisive effect on children's ability to learn and develop. Additionally, children are often particularly affected by diseases such as HIV/AIDS, malaria and other infectious diseases, either because they have to care for sick family members, or they have lost parents or caregivers, or because they themselves are ill. Measures designed to treat and prevent disease must be complemented with plans to protect and empower those who are affected. Children and young people affected by HIV/AIDS and other diseases, especially those who have lost their parents or families, must be supported to live a full life, free of discrimination, stigma and social exclusion.

Moreover, to protect children, mothers must also be guaranteed access to quality health care. Investing in maternal health care, as a tool to prevent and reduce poverty, has a significant impact not only on the lives of women, but on entire families and communities. When mothers are healthy, they are better equipped to provide quality care to their children, so that it does not fall upon the elderly, elder siblings, or other community members. The framework must focus on removing the economic, social and cultural barriers that prevent mothers from accessing regular, high-quality health care services.

### → Employment measures to create equal opportunities

Employment measures must ensure that everyone has equal job opportunities and access to decent employment, with the main goal being to eradicate poverty and reduce inequity by guaranteeing sufficient wages to those most need it. Therefore, the new development agenda must focus measures on the most marginalised and vulnerable, such as people with little or no education, long-term unemployed and young people transitioning from alternative care to independent living. This last group is especially important, as youth unemployment can have detrimental effects that endure into adulthood and perpetuate inequity and poverty.

Finally, to reach children and young people, measures on employment must also target families, ensuring that they have a sufficient and stable household income for a decent life where they can adequately protect and care for their children.



### → Social protection structures to tackle inequity and eradicate poverty

States must be challenged to create social protection structures that tackle inequity and the inequitable distribution of wealth. Only then can poverty be truly eradicated. The new development agenda must ensure that national social protection floors include an absolute guarantee to housing, access to quality health care, education, and training, as well as social welfare benefits. It is especially important that these structures address the needs of those who are most marginalised, such as children and youth without parental care and families at risk of separation. For the latter, particular supportive services must be guaranteed, such as day care, substance abuse treatment, positive parenting counselling and financial assistance. By protecting families, the framework can create healthy environments for children to grow up in and effectively avoid problems that fuel the cycle of poverty. ■



*The framework must focus on removing all barriers that prevent mothers from accessing regular, high-quality health care services for themselves and their children.*

Medical service provided by SOS Children's Villages in Takorka, Niger- © Paul Hahn

## CROSSCUTTING PRINCIPLES

SOS Children's Villages is convinced that all governments, both in developing and developed nations, are equally responsible for creating the conditions for a sustainable development, with good governance structures and where all citizens, including children and young people, can participate and voice their concerns. Children and young people must be enabled to participate; both in the design and development of the agenda and in their national decision-making processes.

The framework must ensure that there is a sense of shared responsibility; this includes an empowering financing system that does not encourage dependency, and promotes ownership and innovation. It must also foster a sense of accountability of governments towards all their peoples, particularly the children and young people, as they are the ultimate beneficiaries of the agenda in the future.

Furthermore, we strongly support a focus on quality. It is not sufficient to target the mere availability of services. The new agenda must ensure that a minimum level of quality is ensured and that it is accessible to all; this includes removing social, economic and cultural barriers. Quality must never be sacrificed for the sake of availability. It is also imperative to clearly define quality in each area, and establish a set of parameters and criteria by which to measure it upon.

Finally, SOS Children's Villages firmly believes that the fulfilment of human rights is both the foundation and the consequence of sustainable development; therefore the new agenda must be firmly rooted in human rights, based on the principles of universality, accountability, equality, equity, non-discrimination, and participation. This is the only guarantee that people-centred goals are included ■

# A LOVING HOME FOR EVERY CHILD



**SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGES**

A loving home for every child

This paper defines SOS Children's Villages position on the new Post-2015 Development Agenda and outlines a set of recommendations on how children, especially those most disadvantaged and marginalised, can be mainstreamed throughout the framework.

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