Protect my future

The links between child protection and equity

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Addressing inequality and child protection in the post-2015 development agenda

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Summary

The lack of care and protection facing children is a global crisis with billions of children experiencing abuse, neglect or exploitation, and many millions growing up outside of families, on the streets or in harmful institutional care. This lack of adequate care and protection is commonly the result of inequalities. Gender norms make girls especially vulnerable to sexual abuse and exploitation, early marriage and domestic work, and boys to hazardous child labour and detention. Children with disabilities, from ethnic minorities or living with or affected by HIV are more likely than their peers to suffer from a loss of care and protection, and income inequalities increase exposure to child labour and institutionalisation. Children without adequate care and protection are commonly stigmatised, and have inequitable access to education, health, social protection and justice. Combined with the long lasting impacts of neglect, abuse and institutionalisation, this lack of access to basic services severely diminishes life chances, creating a spiral of disadvantage. In order to break this spiral, a three-pronged strategy is required which sees: reductions in social and economic inequalities that have a major impact on children's care and protection; increased investments in strong and equitable national child protection systems and efforts to address the stigma and discrimination faced by children without adequate care and protection.

Introduction

The lack of care and protection facing children is a global crisis. Every year up to 1.5 billion children are estimated to experience violence;[2] 150 million girls and 73 million boys are raped or subject to sexual violence;[3] more than half of the 215 million child labourers are doing hazardous work.[4] Many children experience sexual, physical and emotional abuse, violence, and neglect in their own homes, and growing numbers fend for themselves on the streets[5] or in child-headed households, or are poorly cared for in large institutions.[6]

This paper will look at the relationship between this lack of care and protection and inequality. It will explore how inadequate care and protection produces and contributes to inequalities and how inequality is itself a cause of inadequate care and protection. The paper will also examine the long-lasting impact of inadequate care and protection which greatly affects children's life chances into adulthood, suggesting that inadequate care and protection is in itself a form of inequity. Thus, a new focus on the care and protection of children is required if global development goals are to stand a chance of being met. The paper is much needed because although the effects of some forms of inequality on children have been highlighted by research,[7] the links between child protection and inequality have received scant attention.

This paper is part of an inter-agency series on the links between child protection and major development goals. Other papers in the series address subjects including health, education, population dynamics, climate change and conflict, and growth. This series is contributing to a global inter-agency campaign to raise the profile of child protection and care in development and humanitarian goals, including the framework that will replace the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) when they come to an end in 2015.

Definitions and key concepts used

For the purpose of this paper, **child protection** is defined as: `measures and structures to prevent and respond to abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence affecting children'.[8]

Child protection is closely linked to the better care of children, which involves ensuring that more children grow up in safe and caring families, or, when this is not possible, have a range of high quality, alternative care choices open to them. [9]

A **child protection system** is ` the set of laws, policies, regulations and services needed across all social sectors — especially social welfare, education, health, security and justice — to support prevention and response to protection related risks'.[10] Key components for a successful child protection system have been suggested as including: a legal framework; a national strategy and coordinating agency; local protection services; child-friendly justice; child participation; a supportive public; a trained workforce; adequate resources, standards and monitoring mechanism and data collection systems.[11]

The **inequalities** explored in this paper cover both disparities between individuals on the grounds of gender, ethnicity, HIV status, caste, disability or any other social status, and economic or income inequality, which may be defined as `variations in living standards across a whole population.'[12] Inequity concerns fairness and distributive justice:[13] in particular it is `an unfair and avoidable inequality',[14] `unjust inequalities between people'.[15] **Discrimination** is connected with inequity and inequality, defined internationally as `any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference which is based on any ground such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status and which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by all persons, on an equal footing, of all rights and freedoms'.[16]

This paper recognises the links between different forms of inequality, and the multiple and interrelated dimensions of abuse, neglect, exploitation and discrimination that children without adequate care and protection commonly face. It is based on the premise that social inequalities are not hierarchically structured, and the effects vary by region, societies and cultures. The paper examines inequalities between as well as within societies to include issues relating to child trafficking and migration across borders.

As demonstrated in more detail below, this paper is based on the premise that the relationship between inequality and child protection and care is complex and multi-directional. Inequalities can result in inadequate care and protection despite parents' best efforts; inequalities contribute to children's loss of parental care, their migration, street life, institutionalisation, and coming into conflict with the law. Cycles of inequality can develop because of the effect of inequalities causing inadequate care and protection, while failures of child protection contribute to and exacerbate inequalities and discrimination. It is recognised that not all child protection issues result from inequality but many do.

Inequalities as a cause of inadequate care and protection

Gender norms mean that girls are particularly vulnerable to neglect, exploitative domestic work, early marriage and sexual exploitation and abuse

Girls experience particular vulnerabilities and abuses of their rights to protection and care due to gender norms throughout the different stages of their childhoods. For example, in countries such as India, sex-selective abortion, infanticide and infant neglect affect more girls than boys as girls are seen as less valuable than boys.[17] The preference and differential care may extend through childhood because it is believed that boys should remain with their families and care for parents in old age, while girls marry out.[18] In India, there is evidence to suggest that girls are breast-fed for less time than boys and given less food when weaned.[19]

As girls grow older, gender norms in many regions make girls more vulnerable to domestic work.[20] Domestic workers are `among the most invisible child labourers', many paid little, restricted from school attendance, subject to physical and psychological harm and `at extreme risk of sexual

abuse'.[21] More girls under 16 are involved in domestic labour for others than any other form of work,[22] with exploitative working conditions often making it one of the worst forms of work for children.[23] In many countries, girls are also involved in more domestic work at home than boys, and less likely to go to school as a result.[24]

"I wake up at 5am, prepare the children and escort them to school. Returning home I do the housework. Later, I pick the children up from school. Usually I sleep at 9pm." (Girl domestic worker, Tanzania)

"One day, I went to fetch water. When I came back, my employer hit me on the back and pulled me on the ground because the bowl was not filled to the top with water. She continued slapping me even after I fell on the ground." (Girl domestic worker, Togo)[25]

In their teenage years, girls are especially vulnerable to early marriage, with its consequent impacts on schooling, early pregnancy with high risks of infant and child mortality, and exposure to domestic violence.[26]

"...I got married at 15 years with my consent and I have one child. My husband beats me most days and at times he throws me out of the house. I would go back to my parent's home. My parents would send me back to him as they can't pay back the bride price." (Married girl in Tanzania)[27]

Inequalities intersect. For example, in some places, such as Ethiopia, poverty can be an additional cause of families deciding to marry girls early (for bride wealth), while traditionally early marriage was seen as a way of protecting a girl's reputation by protecting them from sexual activity outside marriage.[28]

Early marriage affects millions of girls around the world; around 34 percent of women in Africa and 40 percent in Asia were married or in a union before the age of 18 years.[29]

In many settings, girls may also be trafficked into commercial sexual exploitation, and may come into conflict with the law as a result.[30] For example in Mongolia girls who had been coerced into sex work, and experienced high levels of violence in their work, were often 'punished for being exploited for sex, rather than the perpetrators'.[31] Girls' particular vulnerability to sexual abuse and exploitation becomes especially apparent in emergency situations, when separation from families or communities diminishes their protection. In situations of conflict, girls are commonly coerced into joining armed forces or groups, either as fighters, or as cooks and 'wives' of commanders.[32]

Gender norms mean that boys are particularly vulnerable to hazardous child labour and to coming into conflict with the law

Whilst girls may be more vulnerable to particular forms of abuse, neglect and exploitation, expectations about masculine roles also expose boys to harm. There are 40 million more boys engaged in harmful child labour than girls, and far more boys are engaged in work defined as hazardous, especially in older age groups. For example, amongst 15-17 year-olds, there are twice as many boys involved in hazardous work than girls, and alarmingly, whilst girls' labour is declining, boys' labour is on the increase.[33] Masculine norms often make it more common for

boys than girls to be expected to take sides and fight when conflict and war occurs.[34] In many settings, boys are more likely to migrate for work than girls,[35] and the majority of children coming into conflict with the law as offenders are male, leaving boys more vulnerable to detention in often appalling conditions.[36]

"I have one elder sister, three elder brothers and two younger brothers. Only the youngest went to school. I was working on the quarry and earned Rs 30/- a day. I worked all day from morning to evening, chiseling stones, making them into rubble, carrying head loads and all other very painful tasks. I had blisters on my hands and feet all the time. There was no day when I did not get hurt and cry in pain." (14-year old boy from India)[37]

Children with disabilities are more likely to experience abuse, neglect and inadequate care than their non-disabled peers

Over 200 million children globally have a disability[38] and children with disabilities are more likely to be neglected, and experience both physical and sexual abuse than their peers without disabilities.[39] Parents and other carers of children with disabilities are often poorly supported by services or communities. Children living with disabilities may be rejected by extended family members in some parts of the world, and it is often harder to find foster care or adoption placements for such children. As a result, in some settings children with disabilities who cannot be cared for by parents are more likely to be placed in harmful institutional care than other children.[40] In Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States, as much as 60 percent of all children in institutions have disabilities, and, although the rate of institutionalisation of children in general is falling in many countries in the region, it has remained stable for those with disabilities.[41]

As shown below, care in large scale institutions is especially harmful to all children, but particularly so to those with disabilities, as neglect and a lack of interaction with carers can exacerbate disabilities. Research by the World Health Organisation suggests that low standards of care in some facilities in Europe can `aggravate intellectual disabilities or result in serious developmental delays amongst children who were not intellectually disabled at first'.[42] The state of residential care is often appalling, especially for children with disabilities: `conditions in large residential care institutions can often constitute cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. Widespread evidence testifies to examples of children permanently tied into cribs and beds; suffering or even death from intentional lack of medical treatment, food or warmth; and lack of love or care'.[43]

The vulnerability of children with disabilities to a loss of adequate care and protection is exacerbated during periods of emergency. For example, such children may be more likely to be left behind by families fleeing conflict, and may suffer particularly acutely from a loss of basic services during emergency situations.[44]

Children from some indigenous or ethnic minority groups are particularly affected by violence and disadvantage and are over-represented in the alternative care system

Young members of some ethnic minority groups face high risks of violence in the community;[45] a

study in the US found that `being male, a member of a racial or ethnic minority, and from an urban area' were the salient risk factors for violent death'.[46] Bullying in schools also often targets ethnic minority students.[47]

Children from ethnic minorities and indigenous groups are over-represented in the care system in a number of countries. For example, in Romania Roma people constitute under 10 per cent of the population but 40 per cent of institutionalised children, patterns repeated elsewhere in Eastern Europe.[48] In the United States the children of Latino families are over-represented in the care system.[49] In Brazil, whilst 46 percent of the population are black or *mulatto*,[50] around 58 per cent of children in residential care are black and *mulatto*, with similar rates in foster care programmes.[51] In Australia, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are amongst the most disadvantaged children, and eight times more likely than their peers to experience neglect and ten times more likely to be in out-of-home care.[52]

Living with or being affected by HIV can increase children's workload and reduce care options

In 2010 some 2.2 million children aged 10-19 years were living with HIV,[53] and many more are affected by the pandemic. Children affected by HIV having to work to support themselves and their family has been reported as common in some settings: `children end up looking after [their parents], making sure they have taken their medicine, doing housework and even working for money'.[54] The International Labour Organisation has identified a need for a plan of action on `HIV-induced child labour' for the most affected countries, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa.[55]

> *"You can imagine for a ten year old boy to do all the cooking, looking after the four people in his family and collect garbage he finds around, he is in such a difficult situation."* (Child researcher talking about interviews with a 10-year old boy who lives with his sick grandmother and sisters in China; his father died of an AIDS-related illness and his mother has left.) [56]

Children living with HIV and children affected by HIV `have fewer care choices than most other children'.[57] Stigma and discrimination associated with having HIV-positive parents, being orphaned, or living with HIV, restricts care options. Although many of these children go into family networks, in some settings kin are less likely to look after children living with HIV, and opportunities for foster care or adoption are limited.[58] The consequent placement of many children categorised as 'AIDS orphans' into institutional care further diminishes their social integration, reinforcing discrimination and increasing exclusion and disadvantage.[59]

Income inequalities increases exposure to exploitation, coming into conflict with the law, and separation from families

Inequalities of income and wealth, including income differences between the poorer segments of society, have an impact on children not attending school because of costs, and choosing or being sent to work for their family. Research has found that proportions of children working for pay are higher among poorer than less poor children, for example, in Peru, Ethiopia, Vietnam and India.[60] In addition, poorer children are more at risk of getting injured at work than their less poor peers (both in paid employment and unpaid work for the household).[61] Household income shocks can increase children's working time, for example, by two hours, especially that of girls in rural areas.[62]

Family poverty separates children from parents in various ways, for example through children being sent into institutions so that parents have one less mouth to feed, or in order to access education and other services that parents cannot afford to provide at home.[63] `Experience has shown that thousands of families have tried to have their babies and young children accepted into orphanages because they could not properly care for them on their own.'[64] Inequalities of income/ wealth and the lure of employment underpin much trafficking, where children find themselves trapped in commercial sexual exploitation or other work. It is the need to work that brings many children into conflict with the law and into the justice system, while `the majority of children who end up in the criminal justice system are from particularly deprived communities and families, often from discriminated minorities.'[65] Adult migration for work, often due to rural poverty, leads to an increased risk of short-term and long-term family breakdown, for example when one or both parents move away, and children end up in kinship or institutional care. Up to a quarter of adults migrate for work in communities in Bolivia and Moldova, while 28 percent of children in rural China are left behind by migrating parents.[66]

The links between income inequalities and inadequate care and protection may be exacerbated by emergency situations, when conflict or disasters reduce household income and increase the chances of children being placed in institutional care or sent out to work. For example, the need for food and shelter is a common motivation for girls and boys joining armed forces or groups.[67]

The discrimination and inequity faced by children without adequate care and protection

A loss of parental care, street life, and sexual abuse is often stigmatised by communities

Many children who have lost or been separated from parents face the additional challenge of stigma and discrimination associated with being an orphan, in the care of the state, or living on the streets. Orphanhood constitutes a loss of status for children in many countries, and this is especially likely to be the case in settings where it is common for children to lose their parents as a result of AIDS-related illnesses. Stigma and discrimination, linked to stereotypical views of `street children' as passive victims or delinquents, have helped obscure the very varied reasons underlying their street-connectedness, any family links, and the complexities of their lives, networks, abilities, and agency.[68] The discrimination faced by street-connected children is experienced by many other children who are also `on the move'; migrating for work, escaping violence or abuse, or moving as refugees. Such children face discrimination because of their status at destination, often connected with their means of livelihood.

"I am always asking myself about the things that happened to me, did I do something wrong to pay for it every day? …. all the abuse that I faced on a daily basis must be punishment for a thing that I didn't do. […] I hope to return to school and learn how to change my life and learn how to make people respect me instead of insulting and abusing me." (A 15-year old boy living on the streets in Egypt)[69]

Children are commonly isolated by sexual abuse: `the stigma and shame surrounding child sexual abuse in all countries usually leaves the child dealing with the harm in solitude'.[70] This shame, stigma and consequent discrimination extends particularly to street-connected children, with the `exceptionally high level of sexual violence against street girls' that occurs within, as well as outside, of the justice system.[71] The `veil of disbelief, fear and shame' under which sexual violence is hidden does not encourage children to come forward for support: `data suggests that only 10 to 20 percent of child sexual abuse cases are reported to official authorities'.[72] Discriminatory attitudes, in particular against girls, have meant that `in many countries victims of commercial sexual exploitation are the ones arrested while their abusers go free'.[73]

The `prejudices and discrimination attached to unwanted or family-less children'[74] stigmatise children in any form of alternative care. In particular, there is often a `profound degree of discrimination against children who end up in institutions'[75] or in detention.[76] Children who have been associated with armed forces or groups, either as fighters or in other roles such as cooks and porters, often face a high degree of discrimination when attempting to return to their home communities. For girls, discrimination may be exacerbated if they have also experienced sexual abuse and consequent pregnancy during their time away.[77]

Children without parental care may be treated differently from other children in households

Children who have lost parental care are most commonly cared for by kin, and, whilst such children often experience a high quality of care, they may also be treated differently to other children in the household. In some settings, girls and boys, especially those living with more distantly related kin, are expected to do more work; are punished more frequently; are given less food, and receive less support in education than other children in the household, though there is some evidence to suggest that in some settings the disparities between children in kinship care and other children in the household are reducing.[78] Discrimination against children outside of parental care in the household is even more marked when children are employed as domestic staff:

> *"On the way back from the market with my employer, we decided to take a taxi. But the taxi was full and we had to sit together on the front seat. But my employer refused and said she cannot sit together with her domestic, in front of everyone else. So I had to take another taxi. I was very shocked."* (Girl, child domestic worker, Togo)[79]

Children without adequate care and protection have inequitable access to education, health and social protection

Children without adequate care and protection are frequently unable to benefit from education, health care and social protection services in the same way as their peers. Their varied circumstances include, for example, being orphaned, being street-connected, working, being detained or being married. Overall, children who have lost both parents are 12 per cent less likely to attend school than other children.[80] A large majority of street-connected children do not go to school, because they are too busy working or because schools are not made accessible to them; a study in Egypt found that 70 per cent of street-connected children had dropped out of school and 30 per cent had never been to school.[81] Children in detention often have no access

to formal school during their sentences.[82] A child's marriage usually puts an end to education[83]: in the Amhara region of Ethiopia, 30 per cent of girls who are not in school said that the primary reason is marriage.[84] Some 13.6 per cent of children are child labourers, including a quarter of children in sub-Saharan Africa,[85] but combining work with school often has a negative impact on learning achievements with long working hours preventing children from attending school at all.[86] Discrimination against children on the move often means that they cannot gain access to services, including education and health provision. [87]

Although `there is a growing body of evidence from a range of developing countries that social protection programmes can effectively increase the nutritional, health and educational status of children and reduce their risk of abuse and exploitation, with long-term developmental benefits,'[88] the lack of child sensitive approaches means that programmes do not meet the needs of all children. Social protection schemes often fail to reach the most disadvantaged households, and children not in conventional households, such as those connected to the streets, in migrant families, in child-only households, are often excluded from such schemes. This is often linked to a lack of birth registration, illegal residence or other factors which prevent families and children from being officially recognised.[89] Research in Peru found that social protection programmes address some child vulnerabilities, but do not consider protection problems, including violence and exclusion; and suggested that conditional cash transfer programmes need to be more child-sensitive, going beyond gathering information on health and education to a consideration of child abuse and exploitation.[90] A need for `children's participation as partners in the design, implementation or evaluation of conditional cash transfer programmes,'[91] has been identified as a means of ensuring that social protection schemes better meet the needs of all children in need.

Children without adequate care and protection are commonly treated unfairly by the justice system

Many children outside of parental care have not been treated fairly or properly within the justice system.[92] For example, children who have been trafficked and detained while awaiting deportation are treated as criminals rather than victims.[93] Street-connected children are often detained in forced round-ups, and have repeatedly raised the issue of violence against them by police.[94] UNICEF estimates more than one million children are detained through justice systems worldwide at any one time, and that more than half the children in detention have not been tried and sentenced.[95]

"Fifteen street children were arrested and taken into police custody. After one night in detention in an adult facility, the children reported being beaten by police officers with a 'caning stick', and were forced to clean the police station and carry large stones on their heads as a means of punishment. Before the children were released back to the streets, they were forced to sweep the court room and cut the court compound lawn" (Reports of mistreatment against children living and working on the streets in Tanzania, taken from interviews with children)[96]

Diminished life chances as a consequence of inadequate care and protection

The inequalities faced by children without adequate care and protection not only affect them as children but are likely to leave boys and girls disadvantaged into adulthood. In addition to the long term impacts of inequitable access to health care and education, inadequate care and protection can also have a negative impact on children's life chances in a number of other ways.

The long term consequences of abuse and neglect

The impact of abuse has individual consequences for children and broader social effects that promote inequity. In summary, findings from higher-income countries find that `child maltreatment substantially contributes to child mortality and morbidity and has long-lasting effects on mental health, drug and alcohol misuse (especially in girls), risky sexual behaviour, obesity, and criminal behaviour, which persist into adulthood. Neglect is at least as damaging as physical or sexual abuse in the long term but has received the least scientific and public attention'.[97] Also, `child maltreatment is associated with long-term deficits in educational achievement' and `increases the risk of behaviour problems' including anxiety, depression, aggression[98] and associations are noted with attempted suicide, and possible links with eating disorders.

A range of health consequences of child abuse are listed by the World Health Organisation, including physical health - brain injuries, central nervous system injuries, fractures, disability, burns; sexual and reproductive health problems; psychological and behavioural problems such as - alcohol and drug abuse, cognitive impairment, delinquent, violent and other risk-taking behaviours, developmental delays, poor relationships, school performance, self-esteem, post-traumatic stress disorder, suicidal behaviour and self-harm. Other longer-term health consequences listed include: cancer, chronic lung disease, ischaemic heart disease, liver disease, reproductive health problems such as infertility.[99] Research found that ` the more adverse childhood experiences reported, the more likely the person was to have heart disease, cancer, stroke, diabetes, skeletal fractures, liver disease and poor health as an adult.'[100]

The consequences for health risks and also the influence on individual behaviour persist into adulthood. `Studies have indicated that exposure to maltreatment and other forms of violence during childhood is associated with risk factors and risk-taking behaviours later in life.'[101] Thus, `in addition to feeling considerable pain and suffering themselves, abused and neglected children are at increased risk of becoming aggressive and inflicting pain and suffering on others, often perpetrating crime and violence'[102], highlighting the need for adequate services for prevention as well as support to mitigate these effects. Research in the United States `reported that being physically abused or neglected as a child increased the likelihood of arrest as a juvenile (31% arrested *vs* 19% of community-matched controls) and as an adult (48% *vs* 36%).'[103]

These findings show not only the effect of abuse and neglect on children and adults and communities, but also how the lack of care and protection, including prevention and responsive services for children, has an impact on health and educational inequalities and broader social inequalities because of the effect on children's development and relationships.

The long term consequences of institutionalisation

The number of children in institutional care is substantial and growing in many parts of the world.[104] The problems for children's development of living in institutional care have long been known. The lack of opportunities for attachment with a consistent carer has been shown to affect children's ability to form relationships, and impact on their brain development, leading to problems with physical development, language and intelligence. Whilst some problems can be reversed with appropriate care and support, others remain with children long term.[105]

> *"In the orphanages, the substitute mothers could not give us the love of a true mother. We didn't have our parents' care and that is something terrible. We would have really wanted to have it, even if they were starving poor, we would have wanted to have the care that each child deserves."*
> (Young people in residential care in El Salvador)[106]

Research has also shown the detrimental impact of institutionalisation due to a lack of support for care leavers. Research in Kenya found that `most [care leavers] felt stigmatised by the public. A majority of young people would not tell anyone that they are from care', and most (67 percent) lacked support after leaving care; they experienced social exclusion, having not known people outside the institution, lacked skills and found it difficult to get jobs, while many (45 percent) lacked a birth certificate and over a fifth (22 percent) lacked a form of identity.[107] Assessments in Cambodia and Ethiopia also found that children from care are unprepared for adult life: `Most often, they lack critical life skills and a secure place to live when they leave care. They are extremely vulnerable to human trafficking, sexual and labour exploitation, and recruitment by gangs, organised crime and militant groups'.[108]

Conclusions and recommendations

The findings presented above clearly demonstrate a self-perpetuating spiral: social and economic inequalities increase exposure to inadequate care and protection, this inadequate care and protection exacerbates inequity and diminishes children's life chances, further increasing social and economic inequalities. This spiral cannot be broken without a three-pronged strategy which, in addition to reducing general social and economic inequalities, ensures a stronger and more equitable child protection system, and action against discrimination for children who are not adequately cared for and protected. Specific recommendations include:

1. Reduce the inequalities that lead to inadequate care and protection, particularly through efforts relating to gender, disability, ethnicity, HIV and poverty reduction, all of which have a major impact on children's care and protection.[109]

2. Invest in stronger and more equitable child protection systems, including for post conflict states and contexts:
- Donors and UN agencies to establish a new global fund for child protection to help resource strong national child protection systems and track spending through a new budget line on child protection within global development and humanitarian financial assistance.
- National governments and UN agencies to ensure that strengthening child protection systems is a key part of development agendas and national plans of action, through, for example, ensuring that goals and indicators in the post-MDG framework include specific references to child protection and care.
- National governments, with the support of UN agencies, donors and civil society, to develop coordination and accountability mechanisms between child protection and other services (including health, education, justice and social protection) at national and local levels.
- National governments, with the support of UN agencies, donors and civil society, to prioritise family-strengthening programmes within child protection systems, to prevent a loss of parental care, coordinated with other relevant systems including social protection.
- National governments, UN agencies and civil society, to develop mechanisms to involve children and young people and community-based organisations in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of child protection and relevant services.

3. Reduce the inequalities faced by children without adequate care and protection:
- National governments, with the support of UN agencies, donors and civil society, to monitor child protection systems to ensure that children are not discriminated against on the grounds of gender, disability, HIV, ethnicity or any other status.
- National governments, UN agencies and civil society, to develop anti-discrimination campaigns to reduce the stigma faced by children without adequate care and protection, including those connected to the streets, in residential or foster care, who have been associated with armed forces or groups, and who have experienced sexual abuse and exploitation.
- Ensure that children without adequate care and protection have equitable access to health, education and social protection, and carefully monitor such systems.
- Reform justice systems to ensure fairer treatment for children without adequate care and protection, especially those that are connected to the streets, have been trafficked or have migrated for work.

Notes and references

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