

Memorandum

TO: United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

FROM: Roseanne L. Flores, PhD. Associate Professor, Department of Psychology
Hunter College, New York, NY 10065
American Psychological Association ECOSOC Representative to UN

RE: Protection of the Rights of the Child and 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

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As the Office of the High Commissioner begins to prepare its report for the 34th session to address the *Protection of the Rights of the Child and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* I would like to provide some input which I hope the OHCHR will find useful in ensuring that the implementation of the agenda will secure the overall well-being of all children.

To begin I would like to address some of the lessons that have been learned from implementing the Millennium Development Goals that State parties should consider as they begin the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to ensure the protection of the rights of the child. First Article 3 of the CRC calls on all State parties *“to do what is in the best interest of the child, particularly as it applies to budgets, policy and the law”*. To that end what can and should be taken away from the implementation of the MDGs is that adequate resources (political, social and economic) will be necessary if State parties are serious about implementing the SDGs. As with the MDGs public-private partnerships will need to be forged, not only to bolster economic profit but also to foster human potential and capital. If this goal is met then there will be a reduction in poverty which will ultimately lead to better outcomes for children, families and the communities.

Second, as was addressed in the *United Nations Economic Commission for Africa report* starting points and “initial conditions” matter. Given the current global unrest and climate change many children and their families have been displaced because of war, famine, and natural disasters. Many host countries, some with limited resources and struggling to take care of the needs of their own citizens, have found it difficult to care for the needs of the new migrants and refugees. To that end many have also fallen short in protecting children’s rights. Given the unprecedented changes that are occurring across the globe it will be important not only to monitor progress toward achieving the SDGs, but also to ensure that State parties adhere to the rule of law and protection of the rights of the child. In addition, the targets for individual States will have to be evaluated relative to their initial baselines.

Finally, two critical lessons that should be considered is (1) the continued investment in education for both girls and boys as well as the development of quality jobs that will not only sustain the family but also the community, and (2) the scaling up high impact interventions and best practices. Again it is important to remember that in scaling up interventions and adopting best practices it will be necessary to consider the culture and context of the intervention recognizing that one size does not fit all.

II. In the second section I would like to highlight some approaches to implementing the 2030 Agenda that will ensure the protection of the rights of all children, and that no child is left behind.

In looking forward to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda I would like to address the following areas: (1) equality and non-discrimination; (2) investing in children; (3) partnerships for implementation; and (4) accountability and monitoring.

Equality and Non-Discrimination

In light of the current state of world affairs I would like to suggest that it has never been more important that State parties address equality and non-discrimination for all children and youth. The CRC calls for children to have the right to practice their own culture and religion, it calls on State parties to protect the rights of refugees and children with disabilities, and it calls on State parties to provide environments where children can survive. Taking it one step further I would like to argue that children should not only have the right to survive but to thrive.

As State parties move forward to ensure that equality and non-discrimination are addressed I would like to suggest that they spend some time and effort on addressing the needs of boys. This does not mean that State parties should stop focusing on the women and girls, but rather understand that by addressing the many issues that boys face they will be able to address the needs of girls. Today violence against women and girls has escalated due to wars, drugs, trafficking, and terrorism and the belief on the part of many boys and men that women and girls are objects and property to be exploited. Many boys are now growing up without parents and being raised by either other boys, or by men who themselves have never had role models and view girls and women through the media and social media. For many those images are often degrading. They are being raised in the streets and often their identity comes from being a part of a gang. In order to deal with gender inequality and stereotypes and the roles of girls, boys and men need to understand themselves and women and girls. To that end in order for State parties to address gender equality it will have to not only address the needs of girls which is critical, but also the needs of boys who are currently floundering.

Investing in Children

The SDGs cannot be met and children's rights cannot be protected unless there is the political will to invest in them, and subsequently in their families and communities. Children must be provided with a quality education however, even before they enter school their mothers must be provided with quality prenatal care to ensure their healthy development. They and their parents must have access to healthcare and a place

to live. They must have access to clean drinking water and adequate sanitation. In short, State parties must make the commitment to invest directly in children, families and communities. What we have learned from disasters like the Ebola crisis, the current devastation of Haiti and the Zika virus is that when investments are not made in the overall infrastructure States spend more money on the back end, than if they had invested on the front end. In this case if we do not invest in children and youth when they are young we will eventually pay for them when they are older and may no longer be able or willing to contribute in a meaningful way to society.

Partnerships for Implementation

Given the scope of what State parties are attempting to accomplish with the 2030 agenda it is imperative that they development partnerships within and across countries. Countries have the potential to learn from each other, and the UN with the support of State parties might consider developing site where State parties could share best practices. This might go a long way in helping to scale up interventions. That said, again it is critical that State parties development partnerships that are not only good for the economic bottom line but that also support the growth and development of human and social capital. Partnerships should also be forged with communities so that they feel they have some ownership if the outcomes that effect their lives. Moreover, the voices of youth should be included in the implementation process.

Accountability and Monitoring

In order to ensure that the SDGs are implemented and children's rights are protected it is critical that disaggregated data be collected so that we know what is being done and who is being served. Moreover, in addition to quantitative data I would suggest qualitative data also be collected so that we do not miss the voices of individuals. Furthermore I would suggest that a template be created so the evaluation of the SDG targets could be evaluated against adherence to the principles of the CRC. This way all countries could be held accountable for protection of children's rights and meeting the targets of the SDGs.

In short, as State parties move forward to the implement the 2030 agenda it is crucial that they ensure the protection of the rights of the child. In 2030 the 4 year old child of today will be the young adult. State parties can either do what is their best interest now, or ignore them and fail to protect their rights – leading to the world's peril. The choice is theirs.

Resources

Society of Men and Masculinity

<http://www.apa.org/pubs/journals/men/index.aspx>

<http://division51.net/>

Books

<http://division51.net/books-videos/all-books/>

