

Executive Summary

**Mainstreaming Children: A Child-focused Analysis of Ethiopia's  
Sustainable Development and Poverty Reduction Program's  
Poverty Analysis, Policy Goals and Targets**



Photograph: Feleke Deneke/Young Lives

**Young Lives**   
An International Study of Childhood Poverty

## **Mainstreaming Children: A Child-focused Analysis of Ethiopia's Sustainable Development and Poverty Reduction Program's Poverty Analysis, Policy Goals and Targets**

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Children living in poverty are profoundly affected by development and poverty reduction policies. Although important, poverty reduction policies with a general focus on the poor do not automatically address childhood poverty. In order to tackle poverty in a holistic and child-sensitive manner it is important to:

- Consider the potentially differential impact of economic growth and poverty reduction policies within the household—on adults and children, males and females.
- Equally importantly, given that children constitute approximately 53% of the Ethiopian population and have distinct developmental needs and experiences of poverty, they necessitate a special policy focus.
- It is also increasingly recognized that children born into poverty are more likely to become impoverished adults and in turn pass on their poverty status to their children. Tackling childhood poverty can break long-term cycles of poverty—both life-course poverty and the inter-generational transmission of poverty.
- Ethiopia ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in December 1991 and has localized the Convention's four broad sets of rights—child survival, development, protection and participation—into the National Plan of Action for Ethiopian Children (2004-10). A rights-based approach to tackling childhood poverty recognizes children as a vulnerable social group whose rights are being violated due to poverty-induced deprivations. In addition to the satisfaction of basic needs (education, nutrition, health) as emphasized in Millennium Development Goals 1-5, a child rights framework additionally emphasizes the importance of protecting children from abuse, exploitation and discrimination, as well as providing opportunities for children to have a voice within their communities about development issues that affect them and their families.

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<sup>1</sup> This summary is based on a longer Young Lives paper by the same title written by Berhanu Guema (Save the Children UK, Ethiopia), Nicola Jones (Save the Children UK, London), Bekele Tefera (Save the Children UK, Ethiopia) and Tassew Woldehanna (Department of Economics, University of Addis Ababa). The research was generously funded by Canada's International Development Research Centre and the UK Department for International Development.

In order to effectively improve child well-being, children's rights need to be addressed through specified child-targeted programmes as well as mainstreamed into broader macro-economic and social sector development policies. The following measures are therefore important:

### Mainstreaming

- 1) The *overall financing of pro-poor sectors*—especially health and education—needs to be expanded. For example, in the longer term the Ethiopian government needs to strive to increase its per child expenditure on primary health and education to the minimum thresholds recommended by the World Health Organization and the International Education Campaign.
- 2) In order to more effectively measure progress in tackling childhood poverty, *all national poverty monitoring data needs to be disaggregated by age* to capture the differential impacts of development policies on children and adults. This should include statistics on labour force participation, usage of the justice system and health care services and targeting for social protection measures.

### Survival and development

- 3) Existing indicators on *children's educational experiences* should be complemented by including statistics on: student completion rates for primary school, pupil-teacher ratios, and per capita expenditure on education at primary, secondary and tertiary levels. In addition, given household labour demands, community-based childcare programmes need to be established to relieve older siblings from child-care responsibilities and credit made available to families for educational purposes.
- 4) Given the cross-cutting issue of *child malnutrition*, in addition to including the prevalence of stunting and underweight as performance indicators, complementary indicators should include the proportion of families with access to latrines, per capita expenditure on primary health care for children and ante/post-natal care for mothers, health service utilization rates and the percentage of lactating mothers who receive conditional cash or food transfers in accordance with the Safety Net Programme.

### Protection

- 5) International good practices suggest that the following indicators to measure progress in *protecting children from violence and exploitation* should be included in the SDPRP II:
  - a. A reduction in the percentage of *children in the labour force* (including paid and unpaid household, agricultural and off-farm activities) and the average number of hours worked as measured through the CSA Welfare Monitoring Survey and the Child Labour Survey. (Although the Agricultural Development Led Industrialization Strategy (ADLI) assumes abundant labour, at least half (52.1%) of Ethiopian children are involved in labour activities because of household labour demands).
  - b. The number of people (local authorities, school teachers, employers) who have received *training about child protection* principles and appropriate counter-measures against child abuse, exploitation and harmful traditional practices.
  - c. The *presence of expenditure items* (e.g. for legal aid centres) and the volume of funds allocated for childhood protection within the national budget.

- d. The development and maintenance of a database on *child trafficking* and the number of officials who have received awareness-raising training on the issue.
- e. The number of service providers who have received special training to work with *children with disabilities* and their care-givers.
- f. The number of judicial personnel trained to deal appropriately with *minors in conflict with the law* and the number of cases of judicial follow-up.

### Participation

- 6) In terms of *children's right to participation*, children need to be viewed not as targets of development but as participating citizens in the development process. Accordingly, building on the inclusion of children in the 2005 Participatory Poverty Assessment, children should be involved in the annual review process of the SDPRP II. Similarly, given that research shows that children perform better if they evaluate their school experience positively, effective feedback mechanisms are important for children to voice their views about education.

### Accountability

- 7) In order to coordinate the *mainstreaming of children's rights across all policy sectors*, to oversee the development of related legislation and to ensure appropriate child-sensitive budget allocations, a dedicated governmental agency is required. Accordingly, the National Plan of Action for Ethiopian Children's proposed co-ordinating mechanism needs to be backed by adequate financial and human resources. In addition, this coordinating body should be charged with coordinating research findings on the multi-dimensionality of childhood poverty in Ethiopia as monitored by the CSA Welfare Monitoring Survey, Child Labour Survey, and the longitudinal *Young Lives: International Study on Childhood Poverty* housed under the Ethiopian Development Research Institute.