**4th Intersessional Meeting on Human Rights and the 2030 Agenda**

**18 January 2022**

“Investing in sustainable recovery, advancing gender equality and strengthening partnerships – Towards a renewed social contract anchored in human rights”

**Statement by World Vision International**

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, we are seeing a reverse in the hard won gains towards the full realisation of children's rights and implementation of the SDGs. The pandemic has not only exposed existing weaknesses in health, education, social and child protection systems, but has also significantly increased children’s risks of violence, exploitation and abuse with girls being hardest hit. Pre-existing inequalities have been exacerbated and gender-based discrimination and violence such as child marriage, which affects the daily lives of women and girls have increased**[[1]](#footnote-1)**. The rights to education and health of girls have been specifically impacted. It is feared that up to 11 million girls will not return to school following the pandemic[[2]](#footnote-2).

Cooperation and collaboration among all stakeholders at the global, regional and national level require urgent action in order to ensure that no child is left behind and to limit grave immediate and long-term consequences for children and in particular girls that are most affected by the effects of the pandemic. This even more sue to the significant financial strains on national budgets that may seriously jeopardise further investments in children.

Partnering with the private sector is key for a faster recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and to accelerate the SDGs by driving inclusive economic growth, increasing access to essential services and developing innovative solutions that meet social needs.[[3]](#footnote-3)

Countries must respond rapidly to the immediate needs of children, while building more sustainable, protective, inclusive and resilient communities, systems and social norms for the future.

In order to shape adapted responses and truly “Build back better and further”, it is fundamental for the voices of children and in particular girls and young women to be heard. We must listen to them and adequately resource their meaningful participation in key national and global decision-making processes on COVID-19 recovery.

**More concretely we would recommend the following to accelerate progress for children, in particular girls in context of the SDGs 5 and 17 towards a new social contract:**

1. Ensure that UN and its Member States to apply a **child rights-based and gender transformative** approach to the pandemic recovery and that all COVID-19-related measures are designed and implemented without discrimination and with due consideration to age, gender, and diversity;
2. Prioritise child-friendly and gender responsive **support and protection services**, along with essential health services for young children’s survival and growth as part of universal health coverage; and
3. Implement targeted and fully-funded measures to support girls’ and young women’s **right to education** and their **economic empowerment**, including through gender-responsive social protection, life skills programmes, livelihoods support and inclusive economic recovery interventions.
4. Advocate for significant **changes to the international financing mechanisms** including debt relief for low- and middle-income countries to create fiscal space for children.
5. Call on donor governments to protect and increase **flexible, multi-year ODA and UN funding targeted to fully meet the** their 0.7 per cent of GNI to ODA commitment, to devote more aid to the poorest countries, to health system strengthening, and social sectors, specifically education, child protection and social protection.
6. Implement **policy tracking mechanisms for investments in children** to guarantee policy cohesion, accountability, and aid effectiveness.

1. World Vision International,Breaking the Chain:Empowering girls and communities to end child marriages during COVID-19 and beyond, May 2021. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. https://en.unesco.org/news/girls-education-and-covid-19-new-factsheet-shows-increased-inequalities-education-adolescent [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Paper to the High-level Political Forum 2021, A child centered-view to the thematic review from child-focused agencies. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)