Background Note

Improving the prominence of child rights in poverty reduction strategy processes

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Why do children figure so little in poverty planning? Why is there such a fragmented approach to addressing their needs and rights? How does the poor alignment of child poverty and child rights discourses contribute to this lack of coordination in poverty planning, and what are the implications for addressing these concerns in terms of influencing the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) agenda? These questions belie some important advances in the articulation of child rights within poverty processes, but represent the reality for many countries and for child rights advocates.

ODI has been working with UNICEF to respond to these questions and advance the thinking beyond binary appreciations of the child rights and child-poverty alleviation agenda. This thinking is presented here, along with discussions on how the combination of inadequate participatory engagements, insufficient understanding of child rights and weak implementation mechanisms, including for child rights commitments, impact on the visibility of child rights in PRSs and National Development Plans (NDPs) and in the operationalisation of child rights related policies and programming. We present recommendations for the better integration of child rights and highlight a conceptual framework for the PRS/NDP cycle that we have used to develop tools and guidance for those involved in the PRS/NDP process who wish to improve the visibility and realisation of child rights. This information will be presented in more detail in a forthcoming EC/UNICEF 'toolkit' on PRS/NDP processes (UNICEF 2010, forthcoming), whilst analysis on the visibility of child rights in these processes can be found in Harper et al. (2010a).

Alignment between poverty and rights discourses

The 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is not a poverty alleviation strategy, but a set of principles for policy and programming that focuses on children's rights to life, survival and development. It recognises the specific requirements of children (as distinct from adults), backed by such essentials as child participation and the right to be heard. The alignment between poverty reduction paradigms and rights principles remains a contested area of debate.

The evolution of child rights. The notion of children as rights-bearers emerged in response to the vulnerability of children seen so starkly during the First World War World War. Eglantyne Jebb, Founder of Save the Children, drafted a Declaration of the Rights of the Child in 1923, which was adopted by the League of Nations in 1924. For decades, the rights of children were linked to welfare considerations (Alston et al., 2005) and incorporated within a human rights regime that was overarching rather than focused on differentiated responses (ibid). The rights of children are encapsulated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which applies to everyone irrespective of age. However, the individual rights of children are only explicit in two of its articles (relating to education and social protection during childhood), and declarations are statements of intent but are not legally binding instruments. Subsequent international legislation for children was piecemeal, with articles on children scattered across a plethora of rights instruments. In 1989 the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) was adopted by the UN General Assembly to address specific child vulnerabilities and child rights principles, including children's protection and the right to be heard.

Whilst it is the most ratified of all conventions, the CRC has attracted criticism. Some suggest it is based

on Western conceptions of human development and childhood, raising issues of cultural clauses such as a universally defined age for childhood as being under 18 (suggesting a universal, immature child who is on one developmental trajectory and in need of protection). Critics also contest the implication of Western behavioural norms on such issues as child work, now known to vary widely across contexts and be linked closely to education – or the lack of it.

Many proponents of the CRC, however, argue that it is groundbreaking and has actually challenged the assumptions of conventional child development theory cited by its critics (Lansdown, 2005). The CRC rights-based framework, which consists of three 'Ps' (protection, provision and participation), can be seen as a dramatic improvement, moving away from the 'essentialising' of childhood (Morrow, 2006). It does so by highlighting the concept of the evolving capacities of the child (Art. 5) and the right to participation (Art. 12). Recognising a child's right to participate in all decisions affecting their wellbeing may also reflect an altered construction of childhood (Harper et al., 2010b).

These divergent views reflect an active debate within the rights camp. They also, however, reveal the need for more meaningful collaboration between those advocating for children's rights and other key policy stakeholders, such as those working on poverty. Communicating and explaining now reasoned positions, for example on cultural relativity, issues of universality and the indivisibility of rights, would enable a more nuanced understanding among those focused on poverty but questioning rights-based approaches.

Evolving poverty paradigm. The integration of rights paradigms within poverty reduction planning modalities has been limited. The PRS/NDP approach to poverty reduction has been primarily through the promotion of economic growth – the main goals of the PRS/NDP process being development and poverty reduction. Economic growth is a means, rather than the end (OHCHR, 2006).

Evidence suggests that 'poverty eradication has been most pronounced in the regions where growth has been the largest' (Barro and Sala-i-Martin, 2003: 10). However, when growth is measured in terms of average increase in income per capita, we often miss the fact that large parts of the population – those from certain geographic areas, or socio-economic groups – may not share its benefits. Despite India's rapid growth, for example, the poorest 40% of rural households have not benefited significantly (Svedberg, 2006). Moreover, higher aggregate incomes do not equate directly to better quality of life (e.g., World Bank, 2006): analysis by Save the Children and the Institute of Development Studies shows that other factors are equally or more important, especially

in poorer countries (Gottschalk et al., 2008). This is shown by the variation in under-five mortality rates among countries with similar per capita incomes: a relatively low infant mortality rate can be achieved with low income, and further GDP per capita increases may not result in further improvements (Minjuin et al., 2002). There is no visible pattern between GDP growth per capita and reduction of under-five mortality rates, which have declined in countries with high, low or even negative growth (ibid).

There is growing evidence, much of it based on cross-country studies, of the importance of rights fulfilments for growth, as well as for preventing or more effectively managing downturns. A study by Barro (1996) confirms the importance of higher schooling levels, higher life expectancy, better maintenance of the rule of law and lower fertility rates (related to female empowerment) as key determinants of economic growth, and each of these findings has been confirmed by other empirical studies (e.g., McKay and Vizard, 2005). There is also significant evidence that gender inequality, particularly in relation to education, has a negative impact on growth (World Bank, 2001).

PRSP practitioners and advisers have become increasingly aware of more complex conceptualisations of poverty that examine not only monetary poverty and corresponding livelihood opportunities but also look at other deprivations. These can be seen in the work of academics (e.g., Anand and Sen, 1997; Sen, 1985) as well as international agencies (e.g., UNDP, 1997). These conceptualisations suggest that poverty is not only a question of basic needs, but also about compromises in potential and capability, such as losses in human capital, social capital, general health and wellbeing, potential ingenuity and innovative economic behaviour. Poverty is also related to exclusion, violence and neglect. In short, its causes and manifestations are multidimensional.

A multidimensional understanding of poverty means that PRSPs/NDPs cannot focus only on an individual's income and employment, but also their ability to access opportunities. With these dimensions, PRS/NDP processes can target particularly vulnerable people who may lack access to the formal economy, to provide creative development solutions within non-market spheres, and to strategically tackle socio-cultural dynamics that can prevent certain people from moving out of poverty (see the policy recommendations in the *Human Development Report 1997* – UNDP, 1997). This shift towards more detailed and targeted poverty reduction interventions has realised Ravallion's claim (1998) that 'a credible measure of poverty can be a powerful instrument for focusing the attention of policy-makers on the living conditions of the poor'. A more detailed knowledge of what causes

and perpetuates poverty also highlighted those who remain most vulnerable and whose interests and experiences of poverty are least represented in PRSPs/NDPs, such as children.

The relevance of the CRC. Like adult poverty, child poverty is multidimensional: 'it evolves over the course of childhood, depends on the care of others, and is subject to a particular depth of voicelessness' (Harper and Jones, 2009). According to UNICEF's *State of the World's Children Report* (2005), 'children living in poverty experience deprivation of the material, spiritual, and emotional resources needed to survive, develop and thrive, leaving them unable to enjoy their rights, achieve their full potential and participate as full and equal members of society'.

The multidimensionality of child poverty is intensified by vulnerabilities according to age. Infants or young children are dependent on care-givers, such as parents, not only for sustenance and shelter but also for protection, legal representation and care and nurture; older children may be less dependent but may be subject to other dimensions of poverty such as social exclusion and more vulnerable to abuse or exploitation given their weak bargaining power and authority.

Child poverty is also characterised by the interdependence of each of its elements; food and shelter do not guarantee well-being. There must also be systems for care, nurture and development, health and survival and protection, as well as spaces where children can express their opinions and perspectives. So efforts to tackle child poverty and improve child wellbeing need to be comprehensive and multi-faceted. Yet this complexity means that a range of children's concerns are often overlooked in national policy documents such as PRSPs, which have tended to focus only on some dimensions of child wellbeing such as access to education and health, and perhaps limited safety nets for vulnerable children, without looking more comprehensively at how to integrate different dimensions of child development, wellbeing and poverty reduction.

The CRC uses a comprehensive and indivisible approach to attaining child wellbeing that should be integrated into PRSPs/NDPs to protect against child poverty and deprivation. It ascribes four pillars of intrinsic rights to children, each one necessary for the adequate fulfilment of the others: development, protection, survival and participation. Poverty can stem from any and all of these dimensions and can be considered a fundamental denial of human rights (UNDP, 2003).

As highlighted, the CRC is not a strategy to specifically alleviate poverty, and the language of child rights is distinct from that of poverty reduction discourses, but growing attention to the multidimensionality of poverty has shown that using a human rights-based approach has the potential to effectively reduce poverty and deprivation for all people, lower vulnerabilities and facilitate long-term productivity (e.g. UNDP, 2003 and O'Neil, 2006).

The Poverty Reduction Strategy Process

Modalities. PRSPs and NDPs outline a country's development objectives and communicate the government agenda. As such, they stipulate what should be financed. Ensuring strong visibility of child rights in these documents is essential if policies and programmes on the rights and wellbeing of children are to have political support and sufficient resources. At the same time, (particularly in the relatively more standardised generation of PRSPs) the importance of these documents has varied significantly; some express a programme with genuine national political resonance, while others have functioned as 'theatre' for donors while the real political agenda is pursued elsewhere (De Barra, 2004). It is necessary to bear in mind the potential differences in importance of these documents and other contextual factors that may have implications for the translation of PRSP commitments to advance a child rights agenda.

PRSPs emerged in 1999 as a new method to manage debt relief to heavily indebted poor countries. The resulting PRS framework was based on the idea that recipient countries would work with donors and civil society to design a single strategy paper that would provide the country framework for macroeconomic, structural and social policies (Piron and Evans, 2004; Zuckerman, 2002). The PRSP was based on six principles for poverty reduction; results-orientated with monitorable targets; comprehensive (covering economic, structural and social elements); country driven; participatory; based on government and non-governmental partnerships; and long-term or sustainable (Piron and Evans, 2004).

Although PRSP methods and strategies have differed, the process has, in general, followed five stages: i) poverty situational analysis; ii) policy framework; iii) costing and budgeting; iv) arrangements for implementation and v) monitoring and evaluation (UNICEF/OPM, 2009).

NDPs also aim to provide a long-term strategy for socioeconomic development, but the targets are focused less exclusively on poverty reduction and aim to change different aspects of human, social and economic development. The methods and strategies for formulating NDPs are similar to that of a PRSP, with evidence gathering or situational analysis according to different sectors, the development of a policy framework, etc. (see Harper et al., 2010a).

Their objective – to be results oriented, participatory and long term – highlights the need for a com-

prehensive and sustainable approach to poverty reduction. Focusing on the attainment of child rights and safeguarding children's long-term development and human capital will ensure sustainability as it is an investment, both economically and socially in the next generation. Using a human rights approach also ensures that the PRS/NDP document is formulated in a participatory manner, and then delivered through partnerships between various government actors, development partners and civil society.

   Actors. PRS processes encompass the wide and divergent interests of many stakeholders and their interrelated power dynamics. This can hinder the effective integration of child rights discourses within both document and process. The dominant role of many finance or planning ministries in the conduct of PRSs has meant, for example, that complex social issues unrelated to growth have been downplayed. This has also occurred as and when child rights have been deemed a cross-cutting issue (like gender), resulting in a 'dilution' of the issue and 'policy evaporation' (Harper and Jones, 2009).

   Similarly, while legislators are seen as critical for checks and balances between the different state organs, they are often relatively weak (Jones and Tembo, 2008). The ability, for example, of parliamentary committees in Tanzania to determine their collective position before attending legislative sessions is constrained by financial resources that are disbursed by a separate ruling party (Almagro, 2003).

   Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), for their part, are limited to inputting on process, rather than content – although some positive examples of content influencing have been seen in Bolivia and Tanzania (Curran, 2005). Meanwhile, supra-national bodies such as UNICEF or the Inter-American Children's Institute have more ability to promote discussion on child rights issues as they have greater access to resources, political influence, technical knowledge and operational experience. Donors however, recognising the imperative for national ownership, often appear 'hands-off' while continuing to direct expectations through consultative processes and via their technical experts (Piron and Evans, 2004).

   These varying levels of influence and engagement have had implications for the functionality of the PRS process. Partly as a result of competing voices, for example, corresponding Medium-Term Expenditure Frameworks (MTEFs) have tended to allow inappropriate costing and prioritisation of policies (Misch and Wolff, 2006). Sector working groups and Sector Wide Approaches (SWAps) may have been used by many actors to influence what goes into the PRS/NDP. Sector Working Groups give actors an opportunity to influence SWAp processes by providing a collective space that

traverses ministerial boundaries (Brown et al., 2001), but have had only limited success. For example both NGOs and bilateral institutions have had little opportunity to influence SWAp design on such issues as neonatal care, maternal health and broader child health concerns (WHO, 2005). Strengthening the participatory nature of these mechanisms is therefore vital for broader participation, consensual approaches and the integration of marginalised social issues like child rights.

Visibility of child rights within PRSP/NDP documents

The visibility of child rights within PRS/NDP documents can have a marked influence on the capacity of ministries, sectors and development actors to cater for the needs and rights of children, as it can determine both targets and budgets. However, as shown by a range of PRSP evaluations and a recent ODI study (Harper and Jones, 2009) on child visibility in donor activities, governments and donors overlook the distinct needs and rights of children (Heidel, 2005). Narrow basic-service approaches to child wellbeing often stem from limited understanding of the relevance of child rights for PRS and subsequent poor appreciation of how child rights are conceptualised, e.g. the four pillars of child rights encapsulated by the overarching principle of indivisibility enshrined in the 1993 Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action.

   The general consensus in academic literature, in child rights monitoring assessments and in ODI's own preliminary analysis of four national PRSPs (see Harper et al., 2010a), is that although certain child-related policies are well addressed in PRS content, comprehensive child rights approaches receive low visibility in poverty reduction strategy documentation. A review of child content in ten PRSPs (Jones et al., 2005), found that child development and survival are comparatively well addressed in PRSPs, but the visibility of protection issues and child participation is comparatively poor. Child development, for instance, is communicated most commonly through education policies and tied explicitly to economic productivity, with investments in education presented as an economic good. The increased visibility of this rights dimension reflects the emphasis on progress in education indicators in the Millennium Development Agenda, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). A recent content analysis also finds child survival discussed relatively well in PRSPs, although to a lesser extent than child development (Harper et al., 2010a). A strong focus on maternal health in particular may again be due to the influence of the MDG agenda, although actual realisation of improved maternal health varies across different contexts. Other

reflections of child survival, such as child health and nutrition, were also mentioned consistently across the PRSs reviewed, although less discussed topics include the prevalence of HIV and AIDS and/or incidences of other fatal diseases.

Child protection issues (such as child labour, exploitation and abuse) receive little attention in PRSPs. Indeed, gender-based violence, trafficking, care, parental neglect, the particular vulnerabilities of children in post-conflict contexts etc. tend to be largely absent. There is little consistency across PRSPs in the way in which child protection issues are addressed or in discussion of the specific vulnerable groups that are identified, although the Niger PRSP provides a welcome exception. A promising trend is the increased reflection of children's rights to survival and development in PRSP documents through provisions for child-sensitive social protection measures.

Finally, discussions on child participation in PRS processes remain nascent and subject to the readiness of decision-makers to consider child and youth perspectives. This is one of the weakest dimensions of child rights visibility in PRSPs reviewed for this project. Key informant interviews for the development of the aforementioned toolkit suggested that poor participation from children and the broader public stemmed from inadequate resources for participatory processes at local level, lack of skills to engage with children and poor appreciation for the potential returns of doing so (UNICEF, 2010 forthcoming).

PRS actors should note that employing limited approaches towards children within national policy has repercussions both for the sustainability of poverty reduction and for long-term economic growth. Children born into poverty and subject to deprivations such as limited education, are more likely to experience poverty through life and are less likely and able to contribute to economic development (e.g. Mankiw et al., 1992; Murrugara, 1998; Schultz, 2003).

Translation of commitments into programmes

Four factors have influenced the extent to which commitments to child rights within the PRSP/NDP have been translated into effective policy and programme outcomes. The first concerns changes in child rights visibility between the PRS rounds, based on the emergence of a very different set of PRS priorities in many countries. The rise of the MDG agenda, the Paris Declaration, greater demand for representative CSO participation and approaching 'deadlines' have all enabled corresponding positive shifts in the prioritisation of child rights. For instance, there is greater emphasis on the need to report on infant and maternal mortality,

Box 1: Aligning development goals (The MDGs) to rights goals

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are eight goals to be achieved by 2015. They respond to key development challenges (e.g., poverty reduction, achieving universal primary education and combating specific diseases). They have been a double-edged sword for children. On the one hand, most MDGs have promoted fundamental childhood wellbeing (including child nutrition, maternal and child health, education, water and sanitation services) in order to enable the realisation of children's human rights. On the other hand, the way they have been conceptualised overlooks the intersection of different clusters of rights (e.g., the ways in which deprivation of children's right to protection from violence and abuse can also deprive them of their right to education). 'Achieving' the MDG targets will still leave substantial numbers behind, compromising the universal principle of human rights (e.g. O'Neil, 2006).

The MDGs must not be used in isolation from, or at the expense of, broader rights frameworks when it comes to national planning. They are a complementary initiative that can promote dimensions of child survival and development, and reinforce other human rights principles, such as gender equality. But commitments need to be considered holistically – across services and sectors focusing on child development, survival, protection and participation – in order to respect the indivisibility of all human rights, including those of children.

'Human rights and the Millennium Development Goals are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. The Goals are underpinned by international law, and should be seen as part of a broader integrated framework of international human rights entitlements and obligations. The Millennium Development Goals and human rights both aim to monitor the progressive realization of certain human rights … The Millennium Development Goals are important milestones for the realization of the often neglected economic and social rights' (OHCHR, 2006).

child nutrition, education and HIV and AIDS to demonstrate progress towards the MDGs in the run-up to 2015 (Driscoll and Evans, 2005). In some countries, however, sensitivity to child rights has also been negatively affected by changing priorities between PRSP rounds (e.g. Ghana, UNICEF and OPM, 2009).

Secondly, although there have been some successes in the sub-national roll-out of PRSPs/NDPs, sector line ministries and sub-national levels of government have not, in general, been actively engaged in PRS processes (Driscoll and Evans, 2004; UNICEF, 2009). There is a lack of National Action Plans for children, inadequate cooperation between local government and sectors on budgeting and costing, and limited two-way consultation between levels and sectors. Case studies from both Vietnam and Rwanda show that where these factors are addressed in combination, there can be considerable improvements in the effective roll-out of PRSPs (Nguyen et al., 2005; UNICEF, 2009).

Thirdly, programmes must have adequate resources and consistent funding flows to deliver and improve child rights outcomes (Jones et al., 2005). In practice, findings show that a preferential focus of flows towards highly visible and tangible outcomes, such as growth or basic healthcare, ignores the investments needed for equitable access to quality services. Such narrow results-orientated agendas also ignore critical rights dimensions in more qualitative areas such as participation. This is reflected in funding 'slips' for local government and CSO consultations (Bonnel et al., 2004). Even when comprehensive approaches for realising child rights are laid out in the PRS/NDP documentation, there is the additional problem of budgetary alignment; services for children are often funded through annual incremental gains in specific relevant sectors, such as education and health, providing poor budgetary allocations for cross-cutting or multi-sectoral issues (Harper and Jones, 2009). Naturally, ineffective public management systems themselves contribute to inadequate funding flows by, for example, poor consideration of local-level requirement and a corresponding unrealistic assessment of costs (e.g. Misch and Wolff, 2006).

The fourth factor is a lack of monitoring and evaluation, specifically the lack of child rights indicators that have been integrated into PRSP and NDP processes. Many of those PRSPs examined suggested improved incorporation of child rights in the situation analysis sections of most second generation PRSPs, but improvements in rights-sensitive indicators did not correspond (Harper et al., 2010a). This suggests the risk of policy evaporation, with the lack of clear and transparent linkages to budgets, outcomes and objectives allowing those responsible for policy and programme implementation to ignore their commitments, with little accountability. Furthermore, an examination of child rights indicators suggests that, in general, only issues relating to particular dimensions of child survival and development are included (such as school enrolment, malnutrition rates, vaccination coverage), largely because of their direct link to MDG targets or because they are more easily quantified than multidimensional issues. Finally, there are seldom baseline statistics to monitor process or implementation issues – crucial for improved child-focused policy planning.

Tools for child rights integration

To ensure traction for child rights in the PRS process, appropriate entry points in the PRS cycle need to be identified, and tools and techniques developed, to improve child rights visibility. UNICEF and ODI have developed guidance and tools to improve the visibility of child rights throughout these processes that are included in a toolkit to be published by UNICEF and the European Commission on children's rights in development cooperation and government programming (see UNICEF, 2010 forthcoming).

A PRSP or NDP process or 'cycle' often consists of five core elements (although policy cycles are far from linear): agenda setting and development of a policy framework; consultation and participation; budgeting; implementation (strategies and rollout plans) at national, sector and sub-national level; and finally monitoring and evaluation. The information gathered through monitoring and evaluation is then, ideally, fed into the following PRSP/NDP process to ensure constant policy and programme improvement, thereby turning the process into a cycle.

Using this five stage conceptual framework, one can identify appropriate tools at each intervention stage to overcome or tackle the blockages that hinder effective integration and realisation of child rights (see UNICEF, 2010 forthcoming for more detail on each of the stages and associated tools).

Two main concerns within the initial agenda setting and policy development process are poor understanding of the specific needs of children and poor prioritisation of children's rights. More sensitive and comprehensive child rights situation analysis that provides a strong evidence base for investment in children and using this evidence for effective advocacy with policy-makers by highlighting the economic benefits, can help child rights advocates improve the consideration of children's rights from the outset.

Once the PRS/NDP document is drafted and the consultation process is underway (ideally alongside participatory engagement) children's concerns and rights are often lost in the mêlée of competing voices. Ensuring that rights holders, duty bearers and stakeholders in child rights are consulted in an equitable manner can improve the consideration of rights, as well as other social concerns. Recognising that children have a right to participate in all decisions affecting their wellbeing and, therefore, engaging them in the PRS/NDP consultation process in a meaningful way has had some success in some countries. Honduras is one example, where Save the Children and its local partners have facilitated five consultations with children and young people that have shaped advocacy on the PRSP. In the largest, 3,000 children from across the country shared their experiences and viewpoints on child labour. The results convinced government officials to prioritise child poverty in the PRSP and include targets to reduce child labour. A commitment was also secured to use funds released by fulfilment of the PRSP to fund education initiatives for child workers. Children and young people's views contributed to more joined-up policy-making, with child labour policies linked to PRSs (Save the Children, 2004).

Once the PRS/NDP has been defined, through a mix of technical, political and consultative inputs, the next phase is its roll out. The first step is the inclusion of child rights policies and programmes, through clear child rights-related budget indicators, in the PRS's financing plan. This enables the visibility of child rights in the PRS/NDP to be linked to its implementation over the medium term but must be supported by budget allocations for child rights-related policies and programmes on an annual and multi-annual basis for the duration of the PRS/NDP. Ensuring appropriate allocations first requires child rights budgeting analysis, reviewing allocations to children and fiscal space for child rights related priorities and, importantly, seeing budget allocations in terms of rights outcomes rather than outputs. This analysis also seeks to ensure that policies pledged in the PRSP/NDP are realistic, given the national budget or resource envelope. This stage is essential to make the PRS/NDP document a realisable plan for action.

Policy implementation is vital, as the most cited problems throughout the PRS process are those related to the poor implementation of policy commitments. This requires more focus on institutional variables such as the need for coordination and capacity-building of weak social sector ministries; integrating informal institutions into programme delivery and design; and developing coordination mechanisms to ensure complementarities across sectors. The opportunity generated by the development of a National Plan of Action (NPA) for children is one way through which existing planning mechanisms for child rights can be linked to PRS/NDP planning. Ideally, the NPA should support the implementation of child rights-related PRS/NDP policies by providing more evidence on the situation of children, and developing concrete strategies and programmes to improve the realisation of those rights in a crosscutting/cross-sectoral manner.

The final entry-point in the PRS/NDP cycle is monitoring and evaluation. The cyclical nature of this entry-point must be emphasised at the outset as the information generated can be used to inform new agenda setting and policy development processes. M&E is also a mechanism to monitor implementation. It is essential to ensure adequate indicators and mechanisms to monitor policies and programmes impacting on children, as well as child rights outcomes. To ensure that impacts and outcomes for children are captured adequately, a mixed methods approach is required, measuring not only quantitative indicators but also qualitative and participatory aspects. Impact indicators should also be used to measure changes in the lives of children, while additional indicators should assess the adequacy of inputs, processes, outputs and outcomes to realise child rights related policies and programmes. Importantly, indicators are needed to address different dimensions of child-rights related problems, from the cause to the consequence (see UNICEF, 2010 forthcoming).

Conclusion

Filling the gaps between poverty and child rights discourses is a wide agenda, but it is a popular one with child rights stakeholders and many government policymakers. The struggle lies in convincing core actors that children's wellbeing is dependent on enacting all – not just some – of their rights, so that children can be enabled, in turn, to fulfil their responsibilities. Sensitising these central stakeholders on the validity and compatibility of rights approaches alongside the poverty alleviation agenda is a useful standpoint for those speaking on behalf of children. But they must also provide policymakers with context-relevant and accessible tools and guidance to help bridge the gap between rhetorical commitments to child wellbeing and the integration of a child-rights sensitive lens into key national PRS/NDP processes and implementation plans.

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