

## Communiqué (September 2017 - draft for consultation)

### A Call to Identify Solutions and Take Action to Tackle Child Poverty and Inequality in Africa

We, the participants of the International Conference on “**Putting Children First: Identifying Solutions and Taking Action to Tackle Poverty and Inequality in Africa**” gathered in Addis Ababa, 23-25 October 2017, to deliberate on solutions for fighting child poverty and inequality in Africa drawing on numerous research and practical experiences presented at the conference.

We appreciate, from the outset, the commitment of African governments to foster an Africa fit for children, as demonstrated through the adoption of the Africa’s Agenda for Children 2040 and other regional and global development frameworks, which call, among other things, for combating child poverty. We also commend the achievements made so far in terms of enhancing the survival of children, improving access to healthcare and education services and reducing vulnerability of poor families with impacts on children.

These positive developments notwithstanding, we note, with great concern that:

- **Africa will account, over the next 15 years, for a fast-rising share of the world’s children in extreme poverty and of new entrants to the work force.** Reversing this trend requires fulfilling the promise of Africa’s children, adolescents, and young people through expanding opportunities and addressing deprivations that, in turn, unlock vast economic and social dividends.
- **Children across the world are the people most likely to be poor.** They are also those most affected and deprived – often in lifelong ways – by poverty’s many faces. Confronting child poverty should therefore be an ethical and practical necessity and a central component of national effort to realize the rights of all children, girls and boys alike. It is also essential to breaking the intergenerational cycle of poverty and to future prosperity for all in society.
- **Poverty affects girls and boys in both visible and immediately measurable ways** – death, malnutrition, poor health, lack of success in school, harmful labour and an overall poor quality of life – but also in unseen ways, through its psychosocial impacts. Children internalize the shame and stigma they are often made to feel, including among peers and members of the community within which they live, leading to depression and low self-esteem. Psychosocial aspect of child poverty, therefore, need to be well understood and addressed in policies and programmes
- **Inequalities are based on a wide range of factors** - including gender, economic status, disability, geography and lack of access to basic services and other essential resources – reinforce poverty. These inequalities deeply affect the life-chances of children in the poorest families. While awareness of ‘intersecting inequalities’ has grown, further insights are needed into how overlapping factors of marginalisation and how they can be responded to.

Effective responses and solutions are both available and affordable, increasingly rooted in Africa’s own experience. Child-sensitive approaches to social protection and the equitable provision of basic services to reach every child have now been widely tested and proven by African countries. We realise, however, that there is still much room and urgency for improvement, prioritization and scaling up of these programmes and services for universal

access among children and families. Learning about what works and innovative solutions for children in poverty are needed, most of all, in places where there is instability, conflict and weak institutional capacity to deliver.

We, therefore, recommend the six priority measures to combat child poverty and call upon African governments and development partners, to take urgent action to implement them and improve the lives of children languishing in poverty, in the spirit of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development of “leaving no one behind”:

1. Recognize child poverty as an explicit priority area in national strategies, policies and programmes, and as a distinct component of the struggle, in Africa as elsewhere, to eliminate poverty in all its dimensions. This will provide a basis for prosperous, equitable societies and sustainable national development in future generations.
2. Develop programmes specifically targeted to address poverty and deprivations among girls and boys at all stages of childhood. Proven initiatives include child-sensitive social protection that reaches the poorest children and families; securing access to basic services, particularly the most marginalised children and population groups; and support programmes aimed at secure transition of young people to adulthood with regard to education, decent work, family life and managing their aspirations.
3. Measure child poverty in its various dimensions. Routine national and local assessment and reporting on child poverty, as part of overall SDG monitoring, will be central to supporting progress. The ‘invisible’ impacts of poverty on girls and boys also need much greater assessment and understanding. In all these, it is vital to seek and listen to the voices and views of children themselves, and their caregivers, and involve them as key stakeholders.
4. Strengthen existing national statistical systems to focus on and distinguish the situation of the poorest families and children who are highly deprived and marginalized. They need to be supplemented by cost-effective, locally-led innovations that address pressing gaps in information and knowledge – including around children with disabilities, the psychosocial impacts of poverty, children affected by conflict and instability, those are living outside of family care and other children who are “invisible and uncounted”.
5. Strengthen research and analysis on the many dimensions and causes of child poverty is central to informing and motivating policy action. Every opportunity should be taken to strengthen networks of learning on the root causes of poverty among Africa’s children and young people, and how their rights can practically be realized.
6. Establish an African Child Poverty Centre in Africa led by African researchers and supported by other associated networks. Such a Centre could focus on local and national solutions and boost knowledge, monitoring efforts and the linkages of research to policy and enhance decision-making for the benefit of children.

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**Addis Ababa, 23 – 25 October 2017**

The three-day Conference will be hosted by a unique partnership of the Comparative Research Programme on Poverty (CROP), Ethiopian Centre for Child Research (ECCR) at Ethiopian Development Research Institute (EDRI), ESRC-DFID Impact Initiative for International Development Research, Ethiopia Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MoWCA), United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and the Global Coalition to End Child Poverty, including African Child Poverty Forum (ACPF), Institute of Development Studies (IDS), Partnership for Economic Policy (PEP), Save the Children, UNICEF and Young Lives.

