

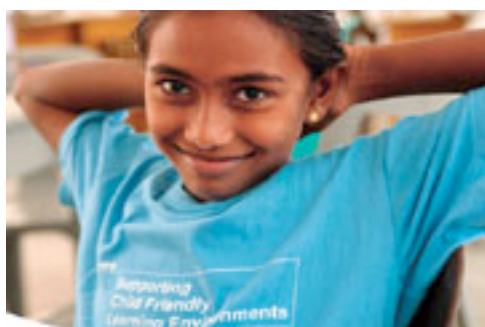


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## Focus on world's disadvantaged children can save millions of lives – UNICEF



7 September 2010 – Investing first in the world's most disadvantaged children and communities can save millions of lives and help spur progress towards achieving internationally agreed development targets, according to a new study by the United Nations Children's Fund ([UNICEF](#)).

The agency found that an equity-based approach, focusing on the needs of the most disadvantaged children, can be a cost-effective strategy to reaching the Millennium Development Goals ([MDGs](#)) – eight targets that include slashing poverty, hunger and a host of other socio-economic ills, all by 2015.

The findings were presented today in two publications: *Narrowing the Gaps to Meet the Goals* and the flagship data-based report *Progress for Children: Achieving the MDGs with Equity*.

"Our findings challenge the traditional thinking that focusing on the poorest and most disadvantaged children is not cost-effective," said Anthony Lake, UNICEF's Executive Director.

"An equity-focused strategy will yield not only a moral victory – right in principle – but an even more exciting one: right in practice," he added.

The study found that for every additional \$1 million invested in public health care for children, an equity-based approach has the potential to avert around 60 per cent more under-five deaths than the current strategies.

In addition, providing the most impoverished children with essential services can greatly accelerate progress towards the Goals, particularly MDG 4 on reducing under-five mortality by two thirds between 1990 and 2015, and reduce disparities within nations.

Since most child deaths occur in the most deprived communities, further reductions in child mortality depend on investments in those communities, according to the study. Universal primary education cannot be achieved without extending schooling to those currently excluded, the poorest and the most marginalized children.

Further, the discrimination, violence and disadvantage experienced by millions of children will only end with actions and investments that address the inequities they face, the study added.

The data shows that, despite great strides towards achieving gender parity in education over the past decade, girls and young women in developing regions remain at a considerable disadvantage in access to education, particularly at the secondary level.

Also, children from the poorest 20 per cent of households in the developing world are more than twice as likely to die before reaching their fifth birthdays as children from the richest 20 per cent of households.

Noting that achievements to date on the MDGs have been uneven, UNICEF stressed the need to refocus efforts and investment for development on tackling the urgent needs of the poorest and most marginalized children and families.

"If we continue to use the strategies that have been adopted until now in the global push to achieve the MDGs, we risk leaving millions of the world's most disadvantaged, vulnerable and marginalized children behind," stated the agency.

The UNICEF reports are being released in conjunction with a report by the non-governmental organization (NGO) Save the Children, entitled A Fair Chance at Life: Why Equity Matters for Children.

The Save the Children report examines the disparities in progress on child survival between the wealthy and less well-off in countries around the world, and asserts that reaching marginalized communities is the key to reducing inequities and achieving MDG 4.

"This study in no way cast doubt on, or calls for a reversal of, what we and our partners have accomplished over the last 10 years. It only helps us find the best way to build on what we've achieved already," Mr. Lake **told** reporters at the launch of the reports in New York. "But we should begin that work immediately..."

"So when 2015 arrives, we can say that we not only saw the growing gap between rich and poor but we narrowed it. We not only reached the most reachable but we reached the most in need. We not only saw a new opportunity but we seized it."

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