Chapter 7
Towards Child-Centred Sustainable Development Goals:
Implications on Child Welfare Policy and Practice in Zimbabwe

Tatenda Goodman Nhapi
Independent Researcher, Zimbabwe

Takudzwa Leonard Mathende
UK Local Authority, UK

ABSTRACT

This chapter is mainly based on a historiography approach and explores enhanced child protection and safeguarding mainstreaming in Zimbabwe within the milieu of sustainable development goals (SDGs). The 17 SDGs set the tone for further global development outcomes taking off from the millennium development goals. The chapter unpacks how SDGs can complement Zimbabwe's readily comprehensive legal and child protection policy framework to enrich child protection. The chapter offers recommendations on possible approaches to dovetail SDG targets with enhanced child protection and development in Zimbabwe.

INTRODUCTION

It is widely acknowledged that Zimbabwe and other African countries struggled to meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) (2000-2015). Specifically, those related to the development, protection and welfare of children. However, the United Nations MDG Report (2014) notes that the MDGs made a profound difference in people's lives. Based on the generalized view that MDGs made positive changes on the lives of citizens, it is therefore prudent to reflect on how the Sustainable Development Goals- Agenda 2030 (SDGs) can be used to obtain localized positive child development outcomes. The Government of Zimbabwe is yet to roll out the process of realigning or reviewing its domestic policies and programs

in line with the universal SDGs. Therefore, this study seeks to contribute towards policy and program development in Zimbabwe's child welfare system within the context of SDGs.

This chapter mainly bases on a historiographical approach through review of secondary sources of data like commissioned action research findings and empirical research outputs by the state and non-state actors. The objective of the study was to: a) Explore ways of enhancing the mainstreaming of child protection, child centered development and safeguarding in Zimbabwe within the milieu of SDGs; b) explore economic and social dimensions whilst applying children's best interests' lens in pursuit of sustainable development; c) catalogue different thematic needs that should be prioritized within the milieu of SDGs; d) unpack how SDGs can complement Zimbabwe's readily comprehensive legal and child protection policy framework to enrich child protection; and e) proffer recommendations on possible approaches to dovetail SDGs targets with enhanced child protection and development in Zimbabwe.

The United Nations General Assembly on September 25th 2015 adopted a set of goals to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure prosperity for all as part of a new sustainable development agenda. Each goal has specific targets to be achieved over the next 15 years. As was required in the MDGs era, the attainment of goals calls for everyone to play a part: governments, the private sector, civil society and researchers.

The 17 SDGs set the tone for further global development outcomes taking off from the MGDs. The SGDs cover the following thematic areas: poverty, food, health, education, women, water, energy, economy, infrastructure, inequality, habitation, consumption, climate, marine-ecosystems, ecosystems, institutions and sustainability. Holistically, SDGS are directly and indirectly linked to the welfare of children. Goals 1-6 directly address health disparities, primarily in developing countries. These six goals address key issues in public health, poverty, hunger and food security, health, education, gender equality and women's empowerment, and water and sanitation.

Given the above, the role of child welfare researchers in facilitating the development and sharing of knowledge on issue of sustainable development cannot be ignored or underestimated. Mainstream debates have been useful in dissecting and bringing to light the core nature of the role of children and youths in development especially within the context of rights based approaches guaranteeing best interests of the child like the United Nations Conventions on Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of Children.

When adults are making decisions that affect children, children have the right to say what they think should happen and have their opinions taken into account. However, they exclude the experiences and resilience of children in negotiating, responding to and coping with challenges in negotiating access to development interventions. This is because child and youth participation in development interventions or negotiations as the SDGs is given lip service. Using the lens of the Zimbabwean child centred development policy implementation dynamics and experience, the chapter articulates critical perspectives on the policy framework governing child rights and implementation of development agenda by the Zimbabwean government to offer alternatives for children and youth centric SDGs.

The chapter also critiques some of the prevalent socio economic and demographic trends in Zimbabwe steering child poverty to be pervasive within the SDGs dispensation. Just like MDGs which the country committed itself to implement, pathways are examined with a view to propose possible SDGs targets implementation for their desired outcomes achievement. This is for the enrichment and safeguarding of children and youths' best interests, a critical ingredient for African development and agenda 2063 achievement. The chapter further attempts to present new insights into the multidimensionality of child centred development and how SDGs are a crucial vehicle for the advancement of the child centred development

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