

## CHILD POLICY DATA: Changing Children's Chances - new research launched



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### Summary:

New report highlights global governments' failure to support family-friendly policies and calls for new measures to enable the world's children to thrive, not merely survive.



[12 February 2013] – A new report, launched today by the World Policy Analysis Centre, contains never-before-available comparative data on laws and public policies in 191 countries covering poverty, discrimination, education, health, child labour, child marriage and parental care. *Changing Children's Chances* reveals how millions of children across the world face conditions that limit their opportunities to thrive and reach their full potential.

Governments, in both developed and developing countries, are not taking widely agreed-upon steps in critical areas known to make a difference to children's opportunities. This new research aims to focus global attention on these issues to ensure that existing policies governing child welfare are fully implemented and new measures introduced which will enable children's full and healthy development.

The report includes unique full colour world maps and tables offering insights into global policies on a range of topics including: how long girls are protected from marrying compared to boys; which countries charge tuition fees for secondary education; which countries guarantee paid leave for new mothers and fathers; and which countries offer inclusive education to children with disabilities.

*Changing Children's Chances* reveals that:

- Whilst 167 countries (out of 189 from which data were available) have established a national minimum wage, in 40 of these a working adult with one dependent child may be expected to subsist on \$2 or less per person per day
- Whilst the vast majority of countries provide maternity pay for new mothers (just eight do not, including the USA), far fewer make similar arrangements for fathers – just 81 countries provide paid leave that can be taken by men through paternity leave (67 countries) or leave available to either parent
- Whilst universal free primary education has become a reality for most of the world's children (in 166 of the 174 countries from which data were available), some 61 countries still charge tuition for all or some secondary education
- Six countries have no legislated minimum age for employment; in five countries, children may be put to work as young as 12 or 13 years old; at 14 in 29 countries; and at 15 in 63 countries
- Girls are particularly vulnerable to early marriage – in 54 countries they are permitted to marry between one and three years before boys – which can often result in them being taken out of school
- Just 58 countries worldwide provide specific cash benefits or supplements to cover the needs of children with disabilities
- Despite global recognition that inclusive education benefits children with special needs in achieving their full potential, only 73 countries include children with disabilities in the same classrooms as nondisabled children, 62 include them in the same schools, but not necessarily in the same classes, and 28 educate them separately.

"Progress over the past few decades demonstrates that where there is a will, there is a way to make dramatic changes in children's lives, from survival to basic education," said Dr Jody Heymann, Dean of the Fielding School of Public Health, University of California (UCLA), and Founding Director of the World Policy Analysis Centre, who co-authored the report .

"However, our findings show how far nations still have to go to realize a world where all children have a chance to thrive, not just survive. National laws and policies in areas ranging from labour to education to poverty reduction fall far short of what countries have committed to in international agreements. At the same time, there are resource-constrained countries that are ahead of the curve, showing the feasibility of action and giving hope that dramatic change is possible."

Commenting on the *Changing Children's Chances* report, Professor Sir Michael Marmot, Director of the Institute of Health Equity, University College London (UCL) added:

"The findings of this new report confirm that children the world over are being denied opportunities to live to their potential. What happens in a child's early life – regardless of where they are in the world – very much determines their chances to lead healthy and productive lives in their adulthood.

"The inequalities children face in their early years lead to continued inequalities in later life. We simply cannot afford to let this continue to happen and we have to use the growing body of evidence to address the social determinants of children's health and the conditions in which they are born, grow, live, work and age."

Representatives from governments all over the world will shortly be gathering to set global goals for what all the world's nations should strive for – the so-called "post-2015" agenda. This agenda is being formulated right now and recommendations from the High Level Panel of Eminent Persons will be made to the UN Secretary General this coming May.

*Changing Children's Chances* calls on world leaders to consider the following in shaping the post-2015 agenda:

- Making education – especially secondary education – free, as quality secondary education and the employment opportunities it provides is key to lifting young people out of poverty
- Protecting children and youth from working long hours, which interfere with success at school
- Establishing a minimum age for marriage which is equal for both sexes and is high enough to enable children and youth to complete secondary education
- Increase educational attainment requirements for teachers, accompanied by improved salaries and training to ensure that enough qualified teachers are available
- Ensuring that minimum wages are high enough to lift families out of poverty without reliance on child labor to supplement family income, and providing financial assistance to low-income families supporting children
- Ensuring that workplace policies are in place which enable working parents to care for their children; especially critical in the context of changing global labour market conditions
- Countries that have not yet done so should guarantee paid maternity, paternity, and parental leave, as well as leave to care for children's health needs
- Ensuring that legal and constitutional protections create a strong foundation of protection against discrimination for all children and adults across gender, ethnicity, employment, religion and sexuality
- Addressing the specific needs of children with disabilities, including their access to inclusive education and the provision of supplementary income to meet their special needs

Baroness Massey, Chairperson of the UK All Party Parliamentary Group on Children welcomed the report's publication and recommendations, adding:

"This report highlights yet again that supportive policies frame what caring families are able to provide for their children. The steps taken by governments do make the difference for children's chances, whether ensuring access to quality education, protection from child labour and early marriage, good health care, providing working conditions that enable parents to care for their children and freedom from discrimination. We must continue to strive to hold countries publically and visibly accountable for the policies that are central to the lives of all children."

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#### **Editor's Notes**

- The World Policy Analysis Centre is the largest data centre examining social and economic policy globally, covering hundreds of aspects of policy and national outcomes in 193 countries. Findings related to children's chances will also be available as of February 13, 2013 at [www.childreuschances.org](http://www.childreuschances.org).
- With an international team and nearly a decade of work carried out at Harvard, McGill, and UCLA, the World Policy Analysis Centre has brought together for the first time quantitatively comparable findings on laws and policies in all 193 UN countries. The *Changing Children's Chances* report presents these ground-breaking findings for children.
- Tweet about *Changing Children's Chances* at hash tag: **#kidsrights**
- **Dr Jody Heymann will be in London from 7-14 February, 2013 and is available for interview.**

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