

I DREAM

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MANILA CHILDREN, LIFESTREAM STUDENT CENTER PROGRAM, VIVA NETWORK

DREAMS

“FOR HIV/AIDS TO
GO AWAY SO THAT NO
MORE CHILDREN ARE
ORPHANED”

UGANDA, VIVA NETWORK (12-17YRS)

Across the world, in cities and rural areas, children and young people have been describing their dreams for themselves and their communities for 2015, the target date for the achievement of the UN's Millennium Development Goals. What is striking is that the similarities between the dreams of these diverse groups of children and young people are far more profound than the differences.

Most children's dreams are simple. For example, they all want better facilities in their schools; in Hanoi, in Vietnam, this means a library and laboratories, in Malambo village in Zambia this means a school building with an iron sheet roof, a black board and a wooden desk.

Children also dream of being part of a peaceful, happy family with enough to eat. "I like all of my family members eating every day together" (Plan consultation, Vietnam).

Everywhere children express their desire to be loved and cared for by parents and other adults within the family such as grandfathers, grandmothers, older sisters or brothers. "I wish that my parents took me to school." "I would like to have more love and care from my parents." "I want my family members to love each other always." were themes that appeared in many children's consultations, making not only the obvious point that emotional life is very important for all children but that for them it is an integral element of social and economic development.

Children's Dreams and International Frameworks

Children do not dream about the Millennium Development Goals. Nor do they naturally express themselves in the language of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The latter is more related to their wider vision and includes more of their areas of concern. Nevertheless, what they say has enormous implications for the MDGs all of which are directly or indirectly focused on their lives. We have examined the relevance of these frameworks for children and have grouped the children's dreams under a combination of the familiar headings from these two frameworks. It is interesting and refreshing to see that many of their aspirations lead us into other areas not necessarily prioritised by the MDGs or the UNCRC. This means that, as we shall illustrate, assisting children to achieve their dreams requires creative thinking.

02 1. Survival

MDG 4:

Reduce child mortality; target: reduce the under-five mortality rate by two-thirds by 2015

MDG 5:

Improve maternal health; target: reduce the maternal mortality ratio by three-quarters by 2015

MDG 6:

Combat HIV/AIDS; target: halt and begin to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS by 2015

“FIRST, GIVE EQUAL ATTENTION TO THE HEALTH OF ALL MOTHERS, PRINCIPALLY IN THE RURAL AND SUBURBAN AREAS, AND THAT THEY ARE CARED FOR WELL IRRESPECTIVE OF WHERE THEY COME FROM. IN THIS WAY, WE WILL HAVE HEALTHY CHILDREN AND NO ONE WILL HAVE AIDS”

GIRLS (12-16 YEARS) COCHABAMBA, BOLIVIA, MOSUJ YAN, TEARFUND.

“WE DREAM OF A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE FOR OUR MOTHER PHYSICALLY, EMOTIONALLY, SPIRITUALLY”

CHILDREN, LIFESTREAM STUDENT CENTER, MANILA, PHILIPPINES, VIVA NETWORK.

Children showed remarkable awareness of the health problems of their mothers and wished for adequate medical care for them.

Children in Sri Lanka spoke for many children; they want

a well-equipped medical centre, with necessary medicine, concerned staff and within an easy distance of their homes. Children from Nyamphande, Zambia added that medical centres should be open longer hours to reduce congestion.

HIV/AIDS has had a clear impact on the dreams of many of the children consulted. Ugandan children wish HIV/AIDS would go away so that no more children are orphaned. Children in Cambodia hope there will be no discrimination especially against people who are poor or people with HIV/AIDS. Children in the Philippines wish for a safe world and an environment free from dangerous diseases.

2. Development

MDG 1:

Eradicate extreme poverty; target: halve the proportion of people who suffer from hunger by 2015

“I WANT TO BE IN MY OWN HOUSE WHICH IS VERY BEAUTIFUL, HAVING MY OWN CAR AND TRAVELLING AROUND LIKE OTHER PEOPLE DO”

UGANDAN TEENAGERS, VIVA NETWORK

At its simplest the common desire of children and their families is for sufficient income throughout the year to meet their needs – including money for schooling, and the family’s food, clothing and other needs. Many communities are still dependent on basic agriculture for their livelihood and a common theme, well understood by the children, was the need for fair prices for farming families’ agricultural produce.

They wish: -

- ▶ to be free from constant debts and unemployment; *most consultations*
- ▶ to have sufficient and suitable employment opportunities on completion of vocational training and more jobs for those who need work; *most consultations*
- ▶ to have an electricity supply connected to the area, so as to attract businesses such as mills to grind maize flour;

children in Nyamphande, Zambia

- ▶ to have agricultural inputs that will enable their parents to raise enough money to feed the family and send them to school. *The girls (7-13 years) in Nyamphande*
- ▶ to have roads, bridges and electricity for people in rural areas; *children in Cambodia and Sri Lanka*
- ▶ to do less work at home and in the agricultural season, *children in Sri Lanka.*

All children dream of finding ways to secure their family livelihoods. Most of the working children want to get permanent jobs to help their parents, particularly their mothers.

A surprising number identified that a high proportion of the money that their parents (usually, but not always, their father) earned is spent on alcohol, which increases the family’s poverty. Their wish for the future is: “*Fathers will no longer waste money on alcohol.*”

MDG 2:

Achieve universal primary education; target: ensure that children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling

“OUR SCHOOL SHOULD BE A HAPPY PLACE AND SHOULD HAVE ALL THE FACILITIES”

SBMA & MOUNTAIN CHILDREN’S FORUM, UTTARKASHI, INDIA, PLAN.

In terms of education children were very clear about their dreams for the next ten years, they want;

- ▶ Kind and caring teachers who understand the problems of poor children and those with low academic performance,

and teachers who are interested in helping those who have difficulties in learning

- ▶ Sufficient money to buy necessities for schools
- ▶ Drinking water and clean toilets
- ▶ Schools within easy access to homes to enable students to reach school on time in the mornings and participate in extra curricular activities after school. This requires improvement of road and transport facilities
- ▶ Reference books, magazines, and newspapers in a library; musical instruments and sports equipment
- ▶ Politicians and local authorities who treat both rural and urban schools alike so that rural schools have adequate teachers for all the subjects and the necessary facilities
- ▶ No marginalisation of poor and 'not clever' students by other students; no labelling as 'those who can't learn'
- ▶ A wider choice in selecting the optional subjects that would enable students to develop their talents and skills
- ▶ An electricity supply and computers
- ▶ A peaceful and pleasant environment around schools with playing fields and trees

MDG 3:

Promote gender equality and empower women; target: eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005 and to all levels of education no later than 2015

“INCREASE THE NUMBER OF SCHOOL PLACES AND PROMOTE AWARENESS OF THE IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION FOR ALL, ESPECIALLY GIRLS”

YOUTH, MEN & WOMEN, WORLD VISION, NYAMPHANDE, ZAMBIA

Most groups speak of gender equity in terms of equal opportunities and treatment for girls, particularly at school; they want less housework and fewer child-caring responsibilities for both boy and girl children and vocational training that brings employment opportunities for both boys and girls.

However, for many the vision of 2015 is influenced by their current reality, specifically;

- ▶ Mothers should have the ability to stop fathers when they drink alcohol and create violent situations at home
- ▶ Fathers need to be more concerned about their family's well-being and be more responsible and caring towards their children
- ▶ Daily wages paid to mothers ought to be increased to the level of those paid to their fathers.
- ▶ Villagers should not speak ill of mothers when they protest at excessive alcohol consumption by fathers

MDG 7:

Ensure environmental sustainability; target: halve the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water

“A BEAUTIFUL ENVIRONMENT WITH TREES AND WATER SOURCES, WHERE PEOPLE CAN LIVE PEACEFULLY”

CHILDREN IN SRI LANKA, PLAN

All the children spoke of the importance of a clean and healthy environment around their homes and schools and their desire for more trees in both locations. The city children dreamed of major clean-ups, with reduced pollution and noise whilst the rural children wished to protect the forests and wild animals.

They dream of:

- ▶ a safe and free environment which is not destroyed by the illegal activities – logging for instance – of a few people who support each other's illicit activities; where people who do not like such activities are able to stand up against them and protect their villages,
- ▶ sufficient water for cultivation throughout the year.

IF YOU IMAGINE ITS 10 YEARS INTO THE FUTURE, WHAT WOULD LOOK DIFFERENT?

Children closer to each other
Families happy together
Cooperation between people
Build more schools where all children have a chance to learn
More teachers to improve education
Build more hospitals and health clinics
Lift up Cambodian traditional culture such as traditional dance
No Poverty
Peace – No war like Iraq
Economic growth
Bigger planes
More people speak English
No corruption
Protect the land from robbers
No illegal sex trade
No fighting in the home or in the country
More people involved in church and more, bigger and better churches
Better worship in churches
More women pastors
More birds
More elephants

CHILDREN, 7-14, CAMBODIA, VIVA NETWORK/TEARFUND

In spite of the fact that there is so little infrastructure in place, when asked what they hoped to be, children from villages close to the border town of Poipet were all very ambitious; the girls said Government official, policewoman, doctor, teacher, businesswomen, tourist guide, the boys said gold jeweller, engineer, doctor, teacher and singer'.
'What would it look like here if you were able to do all of these jobs?'. "There would be concrete schools and health centres, concrete houses with tiled roofs, tarred roads". "People would have a good attitude towards each and learn from each other".

CHILDREN FROM VILLAGES ON CAMBODIA/THAI BORDER, TEARFUND.

Everywhere clean
 No poverty
 Happiness
 Like heaven
 Love for everyone
 No judgments of high and low castes
 Treat people like humans
 That you can buy more things in Jaffna
 Good smelling hospitals
 Safe houses

SCHOOL CHILDREN, 6-10 YEARS PAALAM PROJECT, SRI LANKA. JAE

It was interesting to see a lot of debate between children and adults on the prioritisation of the issues. The children's priority was education, seconded by water and then shelter and then better health services and sanitation. The adults wanted water first, seconded by food security, and then education and improved sanitation.

The children, of course would like access to education as they see it as a means to their tackling poverty. They also chose easily accessible water as a lot of time was spent on fetching water at the expense of school. The interesting debate was on the choice between better communication and recreation facilities for children. The adults supported the idea of children having recreation facilities to deter them from mischievous activities but the children voted for improved communication so that the community is better informed on current affairs. The children won when they voted because they were in majority.

OBSERVATIONS ON THE IDENTIFICATION AND PRIORITISATION ACTIVITY; CHAINDA, ZAMBIA, WORLD VISION STUDY

3. Participation

UNCRC: ARTICLE 12³

States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.

“WE WANT TO BE ACTIVE PARTICIPANTS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF OUR VILLAGE”

SBMA/MOUNTAIN CHILDREN'S FORUM, UTTARKASHI, PLAN

“WE CHILDREN CAN HELP IN OUR OWN WAY. PERHAPS THE BEST THING THAT WE CAN DO IS TO FIGHT FOR OUR RIGHTS AS CHILDREN AND BE AWARE OF THE THINGS HAPPENING IN THE COMMUNITY. KNOW AND FULFIL OUR RESPONSIBILITIES AS WELL”

CHILDREN, LIFESTREAM STUDENT CENTER, MANILA, VIVA NETWORK.

Groups in rural areas feel marginalised. They dream that:

- ▶ Our countries are governed by politicians who keep their promises
- ▶ Promises to develop rural areas are on a par with urban areas
- ▶ Local authorities are willing to work closely with rural people and are willing to listen to their problems
- ▶ Our communities are able to have a say in development work and other policies that affect our lives
- ▶ Our communities are told how funds allocated for development work are used

- ▶ Rural farmers are able to understand the market mechanisms that operate outside their local markets and benefit from these
- ▶ We are not discriminated against for not understanding English and this is not a barrier for us to find employment.

4. Protection

Several UNCRC articles refer to the child's right to protection from mental and physical abuse, neglect, exploitation, discrimination, torture, and during conflict.⁴

“A GLOBAL CRUSADE FOR CHILD PROTECTION”

CHILDREN IN MANILA, THE PHILIPPINES, VIVA NETWORK

“WORKING HARD, HAND IN HAND, TO PROTECT CHILDREN FROM THE FEARS, ANXIETIES, PREDICAMENTS THAT THE WORLD IS FACING TODAY”

CHILDREN IN MANILA, THE PHILIPPINES, VIVA NETWORK

This heading covers many of the issues raised by the children in the consultations and clearly have a strong impact on their lives. However, they are not captured by the Millennium Development Goals.

At the family level children wish for parents who are caring, committed and sensitive to children's needs, views and opinions. They think parents should accept them for who they are and not place too many demands on them, for example, academic success or heavy contributions to the families' cultivation work.

³ ARTICLES 13,14, AND 15 ALSO RELATE TO A CHILD'S RIGHT TO PARTICIPATE; ARTICLE 13, FOR EXAMPLE EMBODIES THE RIGHT TO FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION; THIS RIGHT SHALL INCLUDE FREEDOM TO SEEK, RECEIVE AND IMPART INFORMATION AND IDEAS OF ALL KINDS AND ARTICLE 15 STATES THE RIGHT OF FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION.

⁴ ARTICLES 2,11,19,20,22 AND 32-40

Within their communities they thought that the more affluent families should not demand that the children of poor families work for them on paid or unpaid terms. They dream of supportive systems that prevent marginalisation of poor children and those who perform poorly in schools, or on any other grounds such as their parent's occupation or their families' involvement in illicit activities. They wish to live in a safe environment free of alcoholism, fights and illicit activities by gangs and their cronies.

At the local and national levels they want politicians and state authorities to keep their promises and ensure the enforcement of laws and policies that affect children and their families. They also want more attention from the policemen, local officials and authorities responsible for protecting children's rights.

Where the adults want to be in 2015

In most locations consultations were also carried out with adults in the same communities: parents, grandparents and religious and district and village officials. The adult focus group near Poipet in Cambodia had difficulty imagining the future so the facilitator shared the ideas of the children with them. The adults agreed with the children's aspirations but they also said that the children were more able to think hopefully of a future and that they themselves found it difficult to think beyond surviving from day to day.

The invariable wish of the adults was for jobs; in Peru, when parents and grandparents were asked how leaders could reduce poverty the most common response was by generating employment.

Many of the adult groups, such as the pastors in Cambodia, spoke in more general terms of "a good system of governance, leadership"; while the pastor's wives said "Stop corruption, child trafficking, and sexual abuse."



DICKIE HAS HIGH HOPES OF BECOMING A TEACHER ONE DAY. HE ALSO HOPES TO HAVE A BETTER LIFE, ENJOY GOOD FOOD – PREFERABLY ENGLISH FOOD, HE SAYS! HOWEVER, DICKIE WITH ALL HIS HOPES DOES NOT KNOW EXACTLY WHEN HE WAS BORN OR HIS AGE. HE CLAIMS TO BE SIX YEARS OLD, BUT LOOKS OLDER.

Dickie lost both his parents in 1996 when he was still being breast-fed and since then he and his sister and two brothers have been looked after by his uncle, on his mother's side. Regardless of his age, Dickie managed to enrol himself for grade one (1) with a Government school at Kankuta Primary School this year. Dickie, who was found in class among other 48 children had neither school uniform nor shoes on his feet, doubted whether he would manage to realise his dreams considering the environment he is in.

He said that he has dreams to have a better school with iron sheet roof, a black board and to sit on a wooden desk when having lessons. He would want to have water to drink while at school because currently there is no water nearby for them as they report at 10:00 hrs in the morning and leave school at 16:00 hrs.

KANKUTA, ZAMBIA, WORLD VISION