

Reimagine the future

Innovation for **every** child



How are innovators creating a better world?

Will rapid change accentuate or diminish the extremes that separate children who want for almost nothing and those who are deprived of almost everything?

In an increasingly connected world, problems cross borders – and solutions must do the same, linking global and local problem solvers to push the boundaries of the possible, try out unconventional approaches in new places, and accelerate progress towards a future in which all children can enjoy their rights.

As the global development community plots its course for the post-2015 era beyond the Millennium Development Goals, the choice is ours to make.

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The *State of the World’s Children 2015: Reimagine the Future: Innovation for Every Child* digital report is available at <<http://sowc2015.unicef.org>>. The ‘Stories’ essays included in the report and summarized in the present Executive Summary represent the personal views of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the position of the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF).

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ABOUT THE REPORT

As the world marks 25 years of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, *The State of the World's Children* calls for brave and fresh thinking to address age-old problems that still affect the most disadvantaged children. In particular, the report calls for innovation – and for the best and brightest solutions coming from communities to be taken to scale to benefit every child.

The Convention itself was an innovation that recognized children as people with rights that must be respected equally to the rights of adults. It has helped drive remarkable progress for millions of children, but far too many are still being left behind.

The report highlights how new ways of solving problems – often emerging from local communities and young people themselves – can help us overcome age-old inequities that prevent millions of children from surviving, thriving and making the most of their potential.

To finish unfinished business, we need to innovate. This means creating interconnected systems and new networks of problem-solvers that cross sectors, generations and geographies. It means scaling up local solutions to solve global challenges – and adapting them in new contexts. It means shaping new markets and spurring the private sector to design for development. It means creating solutions together with communities, and with a view to including all their members – preventing innovation from widening gaps. It means doing things differently, to drive change for children.

In that spirit, this year's *State of the World's Children* is different. It is inspired by the remarkable work unfolding in countries and communities around the world. It is guided by the principles for inclusive innovation that UNICEF is helping to develop. And much of its content is crowdsourced – emerging out of the experiences and insights of people who are actively working to make the world better for every child.

Over the past year, UNICEF has convened a continuing series of Activate Talks, global symposia that are bringing together young inventors, innovators, business people, artists and others to talk about the innovation they see, need and are helping to drive. Many of their stories are included in the essays and ideas presented here. In fact, this year's report includes the greatest number of essays – by the greatest number of young people – since UNICEF published the first *State of the World's Children* in 1980.

This is also the first fully digital *State of the World's Children*, with interactive, multimedia and traditional content. Users are invited to personalize their experience by browsing through categories or by tailoring the content with a series of tags, allowing them to engage with the ideas that mean the most to them. The digital platform also connects them to an innovation community and a constellation of open-source ideas through an interactive world map.

We invite you to join this conversation, share your own ideas and experience, and create connections that might just bring about exponential change for the most disadvantaged children. Who knows what ideas you might inspire, what actions you might inform, what collaborators you might find, what change you might make.

Don't think of this as UNICEF's report. Think of it as yours.

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PART 1

Shaping change to benefit all children

The world is changing rapidly. Where there were around 5 billion people in 1990, by 2050 there will nearly 10 billion – more than 2.6 billion of them younger than 18. Many children born today will enjoy vast opportunities unavailable 25 years ago. But not all will have an equal chance to grow up healthy, educated and able to fulfil their potential and become fully participating citizens, as envisioned in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The magnitude of change and the scope of new ideas we witness today are remarkable – but they also often represent extreme disparity.

Consider this: today, Internet giants can instantly identify you, predict your likes and dislikes, and build a detailed profile of who you are by using sophisticated algorithms. Yet, one child in three doesn't have a

legal identity – because the simple process of registering her or his birth did not occur.

In some places, cars operate on electricity alone – or even without a human being behind the wheel. Yet, elsewhere, critical medical forms must be filled out by hand – and a lack of infrastructure means the forms can take 30 days to travel from a rural clinic to a laboratory in the capital.

As the global development community plots its course for the post-2015 era beyond the Millennium Development Goals, it must ask: will rapid change accentuate or diminish the extremes that separate children who want for almost nothing and those who are deprived of almost everything?

The answer to this question is not predetermined; there is a choice to be made. Will governments, the development and humanitarian communities, and partners in civil society, business and academia continue on the same path, recording incremental improvements in the situations of children but not closing the gaps? Or can we be bolder, trying out unconventional approaches and looking for solutions in new places to accelerate progress towards a future in which all children can enjoy their rights?

Children are being born into an increasingly connected world where lines between local and global problems are blurred. Global warming brings flooding to coastal towns even as it afflicts inland farms with drought. Disease and conflict spill over international borders. Curbs on migration or remittances rob migrant workers' children in faraway countries of the means to eat well and go to school.

Solutions, too, are increasingly interwoven. In our hyper-connected, globalized world, people, technologies and ideas move more fluidly than ever before, generating unprecedented opportunities for collaboration to create large-scale change. Indeed, a global infrastructure of exploration is beginning to emerge – with innovators sharing ideas across borders and among groups of

To expand the impact of these innovations, we need to unleash systems that can help bring the most promising new ideas to scale. Greater interconnectivity is already facilitating broader collaboration between the private sector, with its speed, agility and drive to reinvent, and the development world, with its ability to convene partnerships, inform policies and implement solutions on the ground. The same connectivity needs to be accessible to grass roots problem-solvers – helping create a truly global collaborative workspace capable of forging solutions that bring more equal access to goods, services and opportunities to millions of people.

To minimize the risks of change and maximize its benefits for the most disadvantaged children, we need new products and processes, new partners and new models of partnership. These must be accessible to and influenced by disadvantaged and vulnerable people, and grounded in a better understanding of their realities and needs. For innovation alone is not enough; we need innovation that both embodies and advances inclusion and opportunity for all children.

The good news – as shown in this year's *State of the World's Children* – is that innovation is already happening, in places you might not always imagine, delivering solutions today that

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