



The Paris Peace Forum's Child Priority Framework

Building Consensus to Put Children First around a Renewed Cooperation Agenda

*In a contentious geopolitical landscape with reduced resources and willpower, global cooperation for international development is at risk. To foster a platform for a new uniting narrative, the Paris Peace Forum, with partners, is championing holistic child wellbeing through a **Child Priority Framework**, placing child health, education, nutrition, protection, and psychosocial wellbeing at the heart of international development strategies. In an environment of difficult choices and weighing tradeoffs, investing in children becomes a powerful, unifying lever to foster human development and resilience in the most vulnerable populations. By advancing a shared narrative around protecting and promoting the next generation, this initiative elevates children as a cross-cutting, multidisciplinary priority of the highest order to anchor international cooperation and drive progress that benefits all.*

RATIONALE: A CHILD PRIORITY FRAMEWORK AS PART OF A UNIFYING AGENDA

International development cooperation is under threat, putting children at the greatest risk. Global coalitions, political will, and funding pathways for international development are deteriorating while, at the same time, millions of children across the world are still not set up to reach their full potential. Many national governments are feeling increased pressure to reduce their public debt and increase investments within their borders that their citizens can see the direct results of, reducing the amount of discretionary funding that could go towards international development initiatives. Not only do we risk losing the progress and momentum that have been building since 2000, but the rise of additional impeding factors like increasing conflict, climate stressors, and migration places women and children, already at the highest risk in any society, at greater harm of increased malnutrition, disrupted learning, and unequal access to essential services.

Achieving meaningful progress on child wellbeing requires a “coalition of the willing”. With so many competing demands, it is important to focus our attentions on the challenges that have the most devastating impacts on the largest number of people and to create a broad framework that everyone can get behind, regardless of their background or affiliation: our children. In this context, the Paris Peace Forum, alongside its partners, is advancing a **Child Priority Framework (CPF)** as part of a renewed, unifying agenda. This Framework recognizes that child wellbeing challenges differ in each country, with unique issues and contexts to address, and seeks to become a platform where actors from across the globe can share their experiences and successes to promote and scale the most effective investments to promote the wellbeing of our children centralized around a few key themes. Based on consultations

and expert input to date, the following **five key pillars** have emerged as essential to an integrated, holistic vision of child wellbeing:

1. **Child and Maternal Health:** Ensuring survival, access to essential healthcare, safe births, immunization, quality sleep, and maternal health services;
2. **Child Education and Learning:** Access to quality early childhood education and foundational learning through the primary years, including cognitive development and socio-emotional skills;
3. **Nutrition and Food Security:** Addressing undernutrition, stunting/wasting, anemia, obesity, and food insecurity, including during the antenatal period, the first 1,000 days, and beyond;
4. **Physical Protection:** Protecting children from abuse, neglect, child labor, and exploitation, including eliminating female genital mutilation and forced marriage; and
5. **Psychosocial Wellbeing:** Ensuring responsive socio-emotional development, mental healthcare, responsive caregiving including play, and online and digital protection, including related to screen time and artificial intelligence.

Investing in children’s wellbeing across these five key pillars stands out not just as a moral imperative but as the most effective route to long-term stability and shared prosperity. This Framework seeks to promote successful examples of child wellbeing interventions, across the five key pillars, and understand what makes them so impactful so they can be effectively scaled in different contexts. This will also provide an opportunity for improved alignment and coordination between actors already working on child wellbeing and the opportunity to build public and political will around the importance of investing in our children.

Despite the progress achieved in the past decades, recent data highlight persistent challenges in child development across the world.

Mortality: In 2024, 4.9 million children died before reaching their fifth birthday, nearly half of them in fragile and conflict-affected settings. While child mortality had been declining, 2024 saw roughly 13,300 under-five deaths occur on average every day, an intolerably high number of largely preventable child deaths (Source: [UNICEF](#)).

Poverty: As of 2025, children account for 51% of people in multidimensional poverty (586 million out of 1.1 billion people). The youngest children, aged 0 to 9, are most affected, representing a staggering 33% of all people in multidimensional poverty (Source: [UNDP](#)). More than 1 in 5 children in low- and middle-income countries – or 417 million – are severely deprived in at least two of life’s essentials: education, health, housing, nutrition, sanitation and clean water, with the highest rates concentrated in in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia (Source: [UNICEF](#)).

Malnutrition and Food Insecurity: Data released in 2025 reveal insufficient progress to reach the global nutrition targets of the World Health Assembly, with 150.2 million children under age 5 affected by stunting, 42.8 million by wasting and 35.5 million by overweight (Source: [UNICEF, WHO & the World Bank](#)). Around 181 million children worldwide under 5 years of age – or 1 in 4 – were experiencing severe child food poverty in 2024, making them up to 50% more likely to experience wasting (Source: [UNICEF](#)). In 2025, global acute food insecurity reached its second-highest level on record, with extreme hunger remaining at its most critical point in two decades. This crisis is largely driven by a combination of armed conflict, climate change, and economic instability, severely impacting children in regions like sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia (Source: [FAO, WFP & GNAFC](#))

Educational Challenges: The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated "learning poverty" leading to educational setbacks. An estimated 70% of 10-year-olds globally were unable to read and understand simple text in 2022, up from 50% pre-pandemic (Source: [The World Bank et al.](#)). Additionally, as of 2024, an estimated 79 million children of primary school age were out of school (Source: [UNESCO](#)).

Physical Protection: As of 2024, over 520 million children, meaning more than 1 in 5 children, were living within a conflict zone (Source: [Save The Children & PRIO](#)). One in five girls worldwide were married before their 18th birthday, with the highest levels in sub-Saharan Africa (Source: [Child Marriage Monitoring Mechanism](#)), and in 2023 an estimated 13% of girls globally gave birth while underage (Source: [UNICEF](#)), leading to life-long consequences on their health, education, and economic independence.

Developmental Milestones: Only 54% children under the age of 5 in the least developed countries are considered to be developmentally on track in their health, learning, and psychosocial wellbeing as of 2026 (Source: [UNICEF](#)). This is aggravated by poverty, malnutrition, and lack of cognitive stimulation. Approximately, 64% of children aged 2-5 exceed the WHO 1-hour/day guideline on the recommended amount of daily screen time (Source: [JAMA Pediatrics](#)).

Maternal Health: Maternal mortality also remains high, with approximately 92% of all maternal deaths occurring in low- and lower-middle-income countries in 2023, predominantly in Sub-Saharan Africa and from preventable causes (Source: [WHO et al.](#)). Over 35% of pregnant women globally are anemic (Source: [WHO](#)), leading to low birth weights and increased neonatal mortality. Limited access to skilled care before, during and after birth compounds these issues. In conflict zones, 37% of births take place without skilled birth attendants, and 44% (almost half of all births) take place outside of a health facility, increasing the risk of complications and mortality (Source: [Save The Children](#)).

OBJECTIVES OF THE FRAMEWORK

The current moment represents a pivotal time to recalibrate global efforts beyond the Sustainable Development Goals in this shifting geopolitical landscape. While it is well understood that investing in children is the right thing to do, that argument alone won't unlock the support needed in today's complex environment. The key message is clear: **children represent the most effective and most unifying investment for long-term global stability and prosperity.**

The CPF goes well beyond standard pledging platforms, by aiming to refocus our efforts on promoting financial and non-budgetary instruments, such as public policy and private-sector commitments, and new innovations and regulations promoted by established and emerging development actors to address the foundational issues that shape the next generation's prospects. Specifically, the CPF aims to:

- **Reaffirm Child Wellbeing as a Global Imperative:** Ensure child health, education, nutrition, protection, and psychosocial wellbeing remain at the forefront of international development efforts, in all countries, despite shifting geopolitical priorities and pressures on concessional financing.
- **Forge a Resilient Global Coalition:** Mobilize a diverse network of leaders, governments, NGOs, private sector actors, civil society, researchers, and global experts to champion child wellbeing, recognizing the need for innovative partnerships adapting to the new realities.
- **Adapt Policy and Resource Mobilization:** Develop a strategic framework that guides policy and financial priorities ensuring effective allocation of scarce resources, and advocate for prioritizing investment in child-focused interventions, leveraging technological innovations to maximize impact.

APPROACH AND NEXT STEPS

To further develop the CPF, the Paris Peace Forum is building:

- A **coalition of international organizations and interested parties across the child wellbeing ecosystem**, including governments, international organizations, development banks, researchers, and civil society organizations working on child and maternal health, education, nutrition, protection and psychosocial wellbeing. These stakeholders are engaged through a series of events and conversations. The aim is twofold: to emphasize the importance of developing and promoting a diverse CPF for implementation across the Global North and Global South, and to share experiences and expertise on what child-centered investments in the areas outlined above lead to the highest impact and most efficient investments to accelerate learnings and investment gains in other contexts.
- An **evidence-based investment rationale** will underpin the CPF. Current efforts focus on consolidating data and research from partners, including the Gates Foundation, the World Bank and UNICEF, to demonstrate the multiplier effect of child-centered interventions. This includes drawing lessons from successful initiatives, such as GAVI and Nutrition for Growth, and integrating key child well-being indicators across the five pillars (health, nutrition, education protection, and psychosocial wellbeing).
- A **Working Group** comprising of experts in child and maternal health, education, nutrition, protection, and psychosocial wellbeing has been established to support the development of the CPF. This working group is conducting regular consultations to develop a declaration on the importance of child-focused investments and validate a Measurement Framework of key child wellbeing metrics and Priority Interventions that support an evidence-based case for prioritizing children. Together, these tools will articulate a compelling, data-driven narrative for policymakers and investors. Presenting clear, quantifiable returns on child-focused investments is intended to inspire greater political will and financial commitment, positioning child well-being as a strategic priority in global development agendas, and guide implementation of highest-return priority interventions across the five CPF pillars.
- An **Action Hub for Children** will be launched later in 2026. The Action Hub is a multi-actor platform that brings together governments, multilateral institutions, philanthropies, and businesses to mobilize expertise, innovation, and investment in support of concrete and coordinated initiatives for child wellbeing.

In November 2026, the **9th edition of the Paris Peace Forum**, under the umbrella of the French Presidency of the G7, will also host the **Child Summit**, a flagship event dedicated to prioritizing a holistic, multisectoral approach to child wellbeing, which is the central tenet of the CPF. This summit will include a high-level event to promote the endorsement of the political declaration on prioritizing investments in children, a formal launch of the Measurement Framework and the initial set of Priority Interventions for child wellbeing, and the first cohort of founding partners of the Action Hub for Children and their initiatives.

ANNEX – SUMMARY OF PAST ENGAGEMENTS AND DISCUSSIONS

- In 2026, the Child Priority Framework (CPF) convened a **high-level panel in Nairobi on May 10, 2026**, as part of the **Social Innovation Pavilion**, on "[Democratizing Maternal and Child Health in Africa: A Strategic Investment for the Future](#)". This panel drew on Chapter 6 of the white paper "[Bringing Society Back In](#)," developed with inputs from UNICEF, the Gates Foundation, Aga Khan Health Services, Amref Health Africa, and the Institut de Recherche pour le Développement and presented to Presidents Macron and Ruto during the **Africa Forward Summit**. Panelists warned that after decades of progress, child mortality rose globally in 2024 for the first time in 25 years, with Sub-Saharan Africa still accounting for 58% of under-five deaths and 70% of maternal deaths worldwide, a crisis compounded by aid cuts. Speakers called for governments to move from aid dependence toward domestic financing and costed national health plans, to integrate fragmented health systems around community health workers, and to build African-led data, innovation, and pharmaceutical manufacturing capacity. Participants included Helga Fogstad (UNICEF), Dr. Paulin Basinga (Gates Foundation), Dr. Zeenat Sulaiman (Aga Khan Health Services), and Dr. Githinji Gitahi (Amref Health Africa), moderated by Zohreen Badruddin (Policy Manager, CPF, PPF), with closing remarks from H.E. Mokgweetsi Masisi, former President of Botswana, who framed maternal and child health as a global public good and a strategic investment rather than a charitable one.
- **During the One Health Summit in Lyon, France, the Forum convened a [two-part panel](#) on April 6, 2026**, opened by Éléonore Caroit, France's Minister Delegate for Francophonie, International Partnerships, and French Citizens Abroad, who tied France's G7 presidency to placing children at the center of international diplomacy. The first section, "**Philanthropies for One Health**," moderated by Fondation Mérieux, examined philanthropy's distinctive role alongside public development finance, with speakers from the Rockefeller Foundation, Foundation S, and AFD highlighting philanthropies' ability to take long-term risks, pilot new approaches, and convene across sectors, and the OECD presenting data showing health philanthropy at \$27 billion against just \$392 million in co-financing with development banks. The second part, "**One Health for Children**," moderated by Justin Vaïsse (Director General, Paris Peace Forum), positioned maternal, newborn, and child health as a practical entry point for the One Health agenda, with speakers from the Aga Khan Development Network, Save the Children, Unitaïd, and the Gates Foundation emphasizing integrated, rights-based, and market-shaping approaches to close persistent gaps in care and supply. The session closed with a One Health Declaration of Philanthropic Organizations open for signature, with the Paris Peace Forum's November event identified as the next milestone.
- **The 8th Edition of the Paris Peace Forum (October 29-30, 2025)** marked a critical milestone in advancing the CPF. The Forum hosted two dedicated sessions that helped consolidate both the political and technical foundations of the initiative. A high-level panel discussion titled "[The Case for Putting Children First](#)" brought together ministerial representatives, donors and multilateral leaders to argue for prioritizing child wellbeing at the center of the international development agenda, especially as resources shrink. Panelists emphasized that investing in children is not only a moral imperative but also the most economical and strategic investment that countries can make to strengthen human capital and invest in their long-term prosperity. Discussions also highlighted the importance of strong political leadership, integrated approaches across health, nutrition, education, and innovative country-led financing models that integrate child wellbeing into national systems and public budgets rather than fragmented projects. The panel emphasized the need to adapt the discourse around child-focused investments to better mobilize public and political will by presenting children as drivers of social and economic development. Participants in this panel included Chernor Bah (Minister of information and Civic Education, Sierra Leone), Nesmy Manigat (High-level Envoy for the Global Partnership

for Education and former Minister of National Education and Vocational Training, Haiti), Valerie Ngamkang Bemo (Deputy Director of Global Development and Emergency Response, Gates Foundation), Bertrand Bainvel (Director of Public Partnerships, UNICEF), Jean-Sébastien Conty (Deputy Director for Global Affairs, French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs). The session was moderated by Rosalind McKenna (Senior Associate, Children's Investment Fund Foundation).

The technical roundtable titled ["What Does Successful Holistic Child Wellbeing Look Like?"](#), gathered experts from the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Spanish Agency for International Development (AECID), Aga Khan Foundation, Gates Foundation, Global Partnership for Education, Hellen Keller International, Karmayog Foundation, Rockefeller Foundation, Save the Children, Stronger Foundation for Nutrition, UNESCO, UNICEF and WorldVision International. The session was moderated by Zohreen Badruddin (Policy Manager for the CPF, Paris Peace Forum) and Béatrice Néré (Director for France and Southern Europe, Gates Foundation). This roundtable focused on refining and aligning the scope of the CPF and exploring how child wellbeing can be measured in a way that is actionable, comparable, inclusive, holistic, and clearly communicable to enable decision making. Participants broadly endorsed the five pillars of the Framework, while calling for a holistic, life-cycle approach, attention to cross-cutting issues such as poverty, gender equality, or climate resilience, and a balance between minimum essential interventions and rights-based ambitions. The roundtable emphasized the importance of combining outcome and impact indicators to enable real-time learning, accountability, and course correction.

- Additional opportunities to increase collaboration and traction around the CPF came in **September 2025 in New York** with side events planned alongside the United Nations General Assembly and the Gates Foundation's Goalkeepers Event focused on reducing child mortality. This included a public discussion on **"Early Childhood Education: Foundations for Flourishing"**, which discussed what it means for children to flourish in different contexts and the conditions required to support this and a closed working session hosted at the Permanent Mission of France to the United Nations on **"Putting Children First: Building Consensus around A Child Priority Framework"**. This session explored the potential for greater alignment, integration, and political traction between different actors on child wellbeing and the importance of constructing a new narrative on investing in this critical sector that goes beyond the traditional moral arguments, which are no longer sufficient. The CPF was also raised as a "framework to connect frameworks", reinforcing and amplifying existing tools and agreements on child wellbeing. Participants in this working session included the Permanent Mission of France to the United Nations, the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, Ambition Loop, CIFF, ECDAN, FHI 360, Global Affaires Canada, Helen Keller International, Qatar Foundation, Save the Children, Stronger Foundations for Nutrition, UNICEF, and WorldVision International.
- **The Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD4)** served as another pivotal platform to position a new coalition backing the CPF as an actionable step in resetting global efforts towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. The side event entitled **"A Child Priority Framework: Putting Children First to Build Consensus around a Renewed Cooperation Agenda"** took place on June 30th, 2025 and included opening remarks from Mark Suzman (CEO, Gates Foundation) and Mónica García (Minister of Health, Spain) and a panel discussion with Carla Haddad Mardini (Director of Private Fundraising and Partnerships Division, UNICEF), Marcos Neto (UN Assistant Secretary-General, Assistant Administrator and Director of the Bureau for Policy and Program Support, UNDP), Kate Hampton (CEO, Children's Investment Fund Foundation), Kalpana Kochhar (Director of Development Policy and Finance, Gates Foundation), and Dr. Lesley Bamford (Director of Maternal, Child, and Women's Health, National Health Department, South Africa) with Raj Kumar (President and Editor-in-Chief, Devex) moderating.

This session discussed the need for cross-sectoral collaboration to advance children's wellbeing and for governments, the private sector, and philanthropies to complement each other's work instead of trying to fill the funding gap by taking over for each other. The case was made to find innovative ways to raise additional funding and to de-risk underutilized or untapped funds. Panelists also discussed the need to move beyond the numbers which already demonstrate the value in investing in children towards more evocative storytelling to encourage multi-year, holistic funding to make progress on children's wellbeing.

- **The 7th Edition of the Paris Peace Forum (November 11, 2024)** provided the first platform to present the CPF, with a high-level panel titled **"Reshaping Finance and Investing in Children for Sustainable Development."** The session brought together a distinguished panel, including Antón Leis García (Director of AECID, the Spanish development agency), Anneliese Dodds (UK Minister for Development), Mai Lu (Vice Chairman, China Development Research Foundation), Patrick Achi (Special Envoy for the Bretton Woods Anniversary), Jutta Urpilainen (European Union Commissioner for International Partnerships), and Rosalie Adjuayi Diop (Director at the Institute of Population, Development, and Reproductive Health, Cheikh Anta Diop University), with Matt Reed (CEO, Aga Khan Foundation UK) moderating. This session underscored the importance of child- focused investments in global development and issued a call to action to prioritize these investments amid shrinking ODA budgets, thus laying the groundwork for the CPF.