

Transcript: Interview with Elizabeth Gibbons

Chief of Global Policy at UNICEF

“Poverty is a main cause of excluding children from basic services. If you just take the poorest countries in the world, 1 billion children are severely deprived of basic services to health, to education. What do we mean by severely deprived? That they have never, ever been to school; they never have had a vaccination.

You take a country like Haiti: 25% of children have never been to school, and that’s the poorest country in this hemisphere. On average, the child in the poorest 20% of the population will be two to three times more likely to die before his first birthday than a child in the richest (20%).

Economic growth isn’t going to answer all of these questions. So, poverty alleviation does require economic growth, but that alone is not going to be sufficient to address deprivation. To benefit children, growth needs to be oriented to services that benefit children, and that’s not always the case.

In every country there are:

- Rich people and poor people.
- Minorities who are discriminated against.
- Those who, because of remote location, will never have the same standard of living—which produces disparities for children in terms of health, in terms of their education, in terms of their opportunities for the future and their access to schooling and many other services to which they have a right.

If you fail to take this into account, they will not be counted in the average statistics of the country. The average statistics might look very good, because those in the lowest percentage of the country are not being counted or their numbers are small; their impact on the average is not significant.

But at the same time, those are the people (which) we should be the most concerned benefit from the Millennium Development Goals.”

Source: www.unicef.org/sowc06/press/interviews.php

1. Based on the interview, what do you think Elizabeth Gibbons is referring to when she talks about “basic services” for children?

2. Can you think of examples of other basic services that she does not mention?

3. According to Gibbons, what are some factors that create disparities between children living in the same country?
