



Georgette Mulheir, Contributor

Georgette Mulheir is CEO of the Lumos Foundation, founded by J.K. Rowling in 2005 to end the institutionalization of the world's children by 2050.

Why do millions of the world's most vulnerable children keep getting left behind?



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by Georgette Mulheir, CEO, Lumos, Janet Scardino, CEO, Comic Relief/Red Nose Day USA, and Kathleen Strottman, Executive Director, Global Alliance for Children

If you are not counted, you don't count - but together WE can change this! Join us and add your voice to the campaign to #leavenoonebehind via the link in our bio. #ChildrenCount17 #WeAreLumos #Lumos #SDGs #Data #datagap Two years ago, world leaders signed up to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), setting ambitious targets to reduce violence against children, improve health, nutrition and access to education – promising to “*leave no one behind*”.

But in 2017, as world leaders gather at UN Headquarters in July for the annual High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, it is evident that children living outside families are being left on the margins.

All too often, these children are not captured by the data collection methods used by governments to gather national statistics. If children are not included in the data gathered, they become invisible and even more marginalized. In order to ensure that programs, support and services reach the most vulnerable populations, they must be identified, counted, listened to, supported and monitored.

The world's forgotten children

Some of the world's most vulnerable children grow up without the care of a family. Separated from them by poverty, conflict and discrimination, they live on the streets, in institutions, or are on the move – and as a result are much more likely to be trafficked or forced into domestic servitude. No one knows exactly how many live outside the care of a family, but some estimates suggest that over 200 million children may be unaccounted for worldwide because international surveys tend to only count children who live in households.

Without accurate data, the international community cannot connect with children most in need of support and have to rely on estimates to deliver — often critical — support. As such, it's easy for certain groups of children to fall through the cracks, get missed and placed at risk, simply because traditional data collection methods are not flexible enough to include them.

The “*leave no one behind*” promise could mean so much for the many millions of vulnerable children around the world and should be within our reach to solve.

#ChildrenCount17

At the same time that world leaders are meeting at the UN for the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, leading minds will be coming together at ***Children Count: Closing the Data Gap*** to develop recommendations for how governments can be supported to include children living outside families in the data that they collect.

Hosted by the UAE Permanent Mission to the UN and organized by Lumos, the Global Alliance for Children and Comic Relief/Red Nose Day USA, and supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Atlantic Philanthropies, #*ChildrenCount17* will convene experts across a diverse range of disciplines, from child development to technological innovation.



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Participants will work together to explore how data collection methods can be expanded, the role of new technology, and how better to involve children in decision making processes. The Summit will create a roadmap to find, document, and measure the development of children outside families and, most importantly, identify ways to ensure that these data are used by governments and others to improve all children's lives.

Making the “leave no one behind” rhetoric a reality

Data is important because it starts to make people accountable to the populations they serve. Once we have identified and understood the size and needs of vulnerable groups of children, they can't be ignored and they can't be left behind.

Counting children alone will not automatically improve their lives, but it is a key step in the right direction. Methodological advancement needs to go hand in hand with targeted work to influence decision makers and the public. Good data provides legitimacy and ammunition for local and international bodies to encourage, incentivise, or enforce governments to include and account for vulnerable children in their countries' development programs.

In this day and age, with the technological advances we have, it's not good enough to plan on estimated rather than actual need - the consequences of underestimation can be fatal.

Join us

Many of us take it for granted that we are 'counted' because we get taxed, are able to vote and aren't too surprised when our city council fixes the swings in our local park... But for a child growing up in an institution, or who lives on the street, no one knows when they go hungry, no one hears when they are abused, exploited or simply disappear. No one cares if they have no joy or laughter.

Finding the data is an important step in making sure that all children count, and once we have the evidence of who, how many and where vulnerable children are – we can work together to deliver the promises and commitments made by world leaders in the Sustainable Development Goals ensuring no child is left behind.

Ahead of #ChildrenCount17 we are asking people to get involved on social media to share why we must leave no one behind, especially children. Find out how to get involved here:

<http://bit.ly/childrencount17>

[Georgette Mulheir is Chief Executive Officer for Lumos, the international children's rights organization founded by J.K.Rowling.](#)

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