

I worry
he'll go hungry,
end up on the streets,
no chance of a job

I worry
she'll go hungry,
end up on the streets,
no chance of a life



Harriet Logan

Anna Karl

From Southampton to Sierra Leone

**POVERTY KILLS
CHILDHOOD**



Save the Children

WHY THE NEXT GOVERNMENT NEEDS TO ACT URGENTLY FOR CHILDREN IN POVERTY AT HOME AND ABROAD.



INTRODUCTION

Parents across the world worry their children won't succeed, or even survive, because poverty is killing childhood. Strong action – not just by politicians but by every member of society – is needed now to prevent the loss of a generation. History has shown that the poorest families are at greatest risk from economic 'shocks', whether they're due to conflict, natural disaster, or recession.

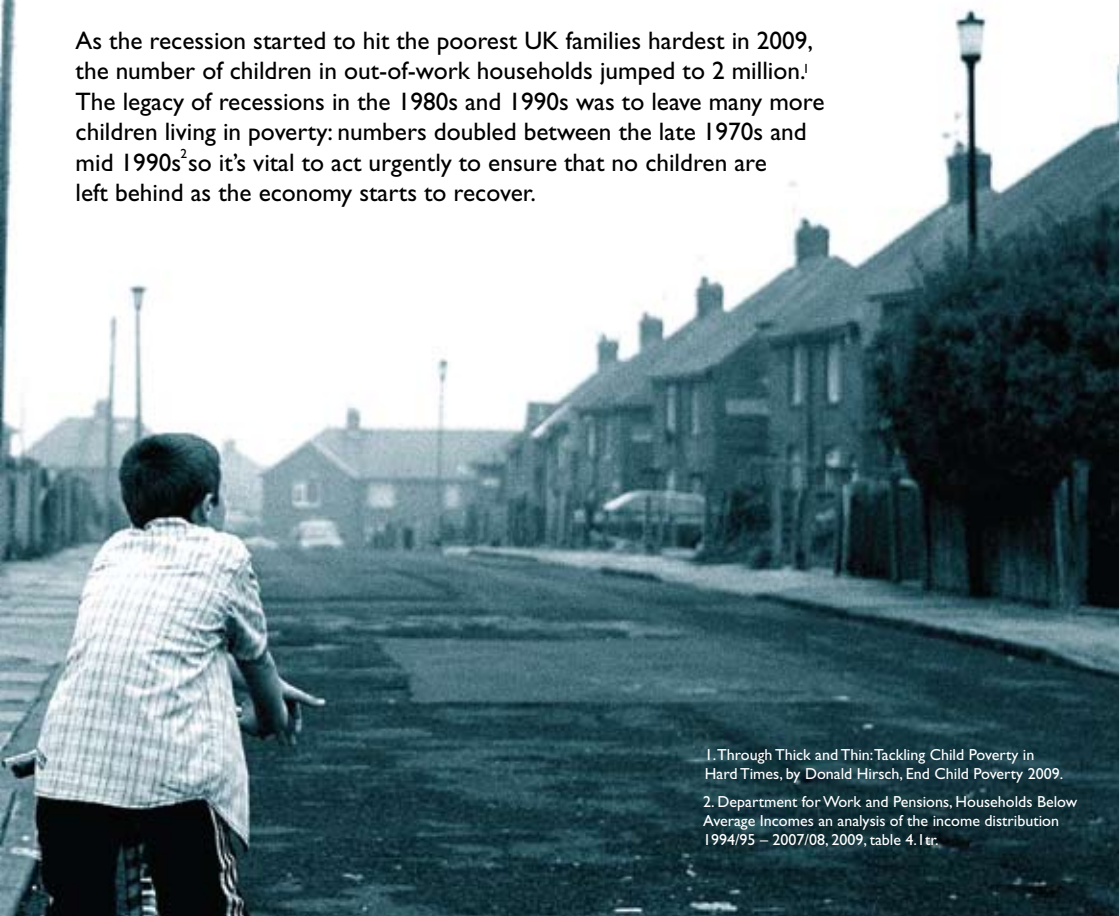
This economic crisis could reverse the progress we've made toward achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and its effects could persist long after the global economy recovers. World Bank estimates suggest that the crisis will leave 89 million more people in extreme poverty (living on less than \$1.25 a day) at the end of 2010. Health and school attendance rates are declining, and the Bank believes that, in Sub-Saharan Africa alone, as many as 50,000 more infants will have died as a result in 2009.

Child poverty is a scar on the UK. Even before the recession, progress on reducing child poverty had stalled and the number of children living in severe poverty had increased. Despite being one of the richest countries, the UK experiences some of the highest levels of child poverty in the developed world.

As the recession started to hit the poorest UK families hardest in 2009, the number of children in out-of-work households jumped to 2 million.¹ The legacy of recessions in the 1980s and 1990s was to leave many more children living in poverty: numbers doubled between the late 1970s and mid 1990s² so it's vital to act urgently to ensure that no children are left behind as the economy starts to recover.

1. Through Thick and Thin: Tackling Child Poverty in Hard Times, by Donald Hirsch, End Child Poverty 2009.

2. Department for Work and Pensions, Households Below Average Incomes an analysis of the income distribution 1994/95 – 2007/08, 2009, table 4.1 tr.



Our Calls

This manifesto sets out the key actions the British government must take for the coming parliament if it is to meet its obligations to children living in poverty at home and abroad.

We're calling on all UK parties to make five key commitments:

- **Tackle severe child poverty in the UK**
- **Break the link in the UK between poverty and educational achievement**
- **Introduce a Robin Hood Tax on financial transactions to benefit the poorest children at home and abroad**
- **Honour existing aid commitments**
- **Act as a global leader on child hunger**



Tackling severe child poverty should be the top priority of the next government

To build a society of opportunity and social mobility, we must fight inequality.

We want all political parties to commit to ending child poverty in the UK by 2020. Future governments should only judge themselves successful if, by 2020, they've met the target to eradicate child poverty in the UK.

As the majority of children in severe poverty live in workless households, removing barriers to employment for their parents must be made a priority.

THE NEXT GOVERNMENT SHOULD:

a) Remove barriers to employment for parents living in poverty.

Specifically by:

- increasing the availability of childcare, meeting 100% of the cost of childcare for parents on working tax credit (at a cost of £420 million but with a net benefit) and introducing free childcare for parents not in work who wish to train
- doing more to support parents who wish to work in part time jobs, specifically by raising the earned income level up to which parents can claim full benefits
- increasing training opportunities for parents who need to boost their skills.

b) Make the tax and benefits system work better for the poorest families.

c) Make sure our poorest families don't pay the price for the economic crisis.

The decisions the next government takes to balance the nation's books shouldn't disadvantage the poorest children.

Specifically, all parties should commit to:

- not raising the level of VAT beyond 17.5% as this would disproportionately affect families on the lowest incomes
- protecting funding and services that support the poorest children.

d) Take action so families in poverty no longer pay more for basic goods and services.

The next government should make sure families in poverty:

- can access credit without having to pay exorbitant interest rates
- are no longer penalised as customers because of how they pay their bills (e.g. because they're not able to pay by direct debit).

DIANA completed courses in childcare and maths at a college in Hackney last year with a view to supporting her two children if she separated from her partner. Now single, she has been unable to find work since she graduated, despite guarantees when she started her courses in 2007. She puts this down to the recession and rising unemployment.

She goes to the Job Centre Plus in Shoreditch and the Working Link office in Mare Street every week. She's surviving for now, but is terrified for the future if she doesn't find a job soon.





TRACY is a lone parent with three children. She can't afford her basic living expenses and has fallen into severe debt, including a £706 fuel bill which is being collected at £10 per week via her pre-payment meter. She's currently relying on her local church delivering food parcels.

Breaking the link between poverty and educational achievement should be the government's top education ambition

It should be the top priority of all political parties to stop – once and for all – deprivation being a barrier to educational achievement.

THE NEXT GOVERNMENT SHOULD:

a) Help the poorest parents to support their children's learning.

The evidence shows that engaging parents with their children's learning – particularly in the home – is key to raising their performance in school.

At key school transition stages, the most disadvantaged parents should be able to access help so they can develop the knowledge and confidence to support their children's learning at home.

The government should develop, by the end of the next parliament, an accredited list of proven schemes and techniques that schools and local authorities can implement.

b) Make sure schools are held to account for helping the poorest pupils maximise their achievements.

Measures that show and reflect the full range of achievements of the poorest children compared to the achievements of their peers should be part of the school-level accountability system. Schools should be measured against an Index of Social Selectivity to show how far admissions reflect local populations.

c) Target funding towards the poorest pupils.

The government should reform schools funding so resources allocated on the basis of disadvantage reach the right schools. There should also be greater support to help schools aim funds at the poorest children within their own budgets.

The gap between per-pupil education funding for our poorest children and the amount spent in independent day schools should be narrowed in each year of the next parliament.



All political parties should commit to the Robin Hood Tax – a tiny tax on bankers that would raise billions to help the world's poorest children

The greed, reckless risk-taking and incompetence of a small number of people in the financial sector has triggered an unprecedented global recession that's hurting millions of people at home and across the world.

Even if all donor governments honour their existing pledges on development aid – as they should – much more is still needed to meet development goals, to help developing countries adapt to the effects of climate change, pay off debts and improve the state of public finances in many countries.

At home, the government is falling far short of its commitment to halve child poverty by 2010. Revenue from this new tax could deliver much needed funds to significantly improve the lives of hundreds of thousands of children in the UK.

The Robin Hood Tax would affect speculative 'casino' trading and not high-street banking. It's an innovative and equitable way to raise substantially more money for health, nutrition, social protection, education and climate change mitigation in the developing world, and anti-poverty programmes at home – as well as to help close the gaps in public finances in the UK and other developed countries. Even at an average 0.05% (just 50p per £1,000) this could raise as much as £250 billion annually – six times foreign aid.

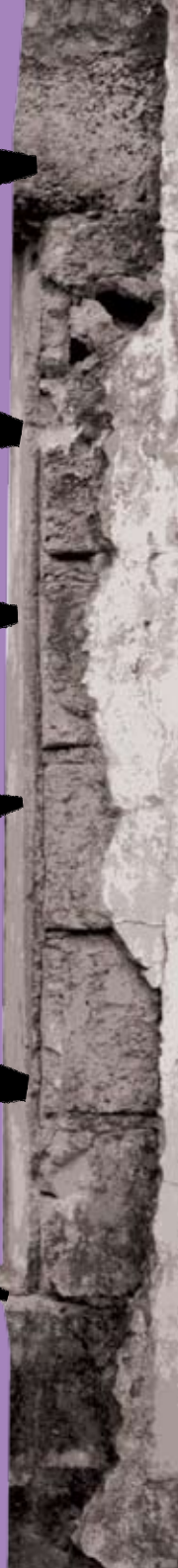
- **Our main political parties should commit to introducing a Robin Hood Tax to raise extra money to reduce child poverty at home, reach millennium development goals and tackle climate change.**
- **If global agreement on this isn't secured in the next 18 months, the next UK government should introduce a tax on financial transactions within the UK or promote its adoption within the EU.**



www.robinhoodtax.org.uk



Anna Kari

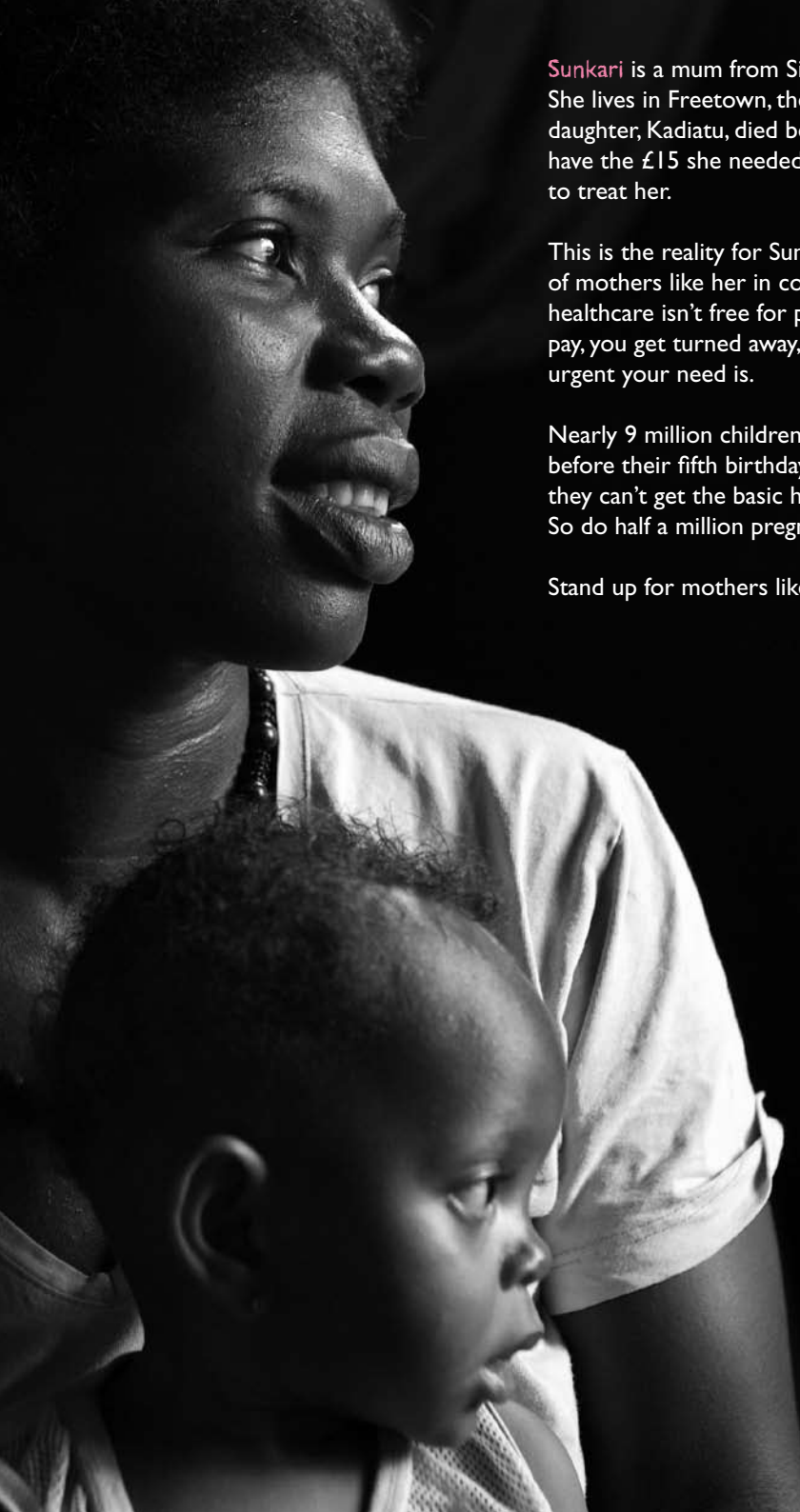


The next government should honour existing aid commitments

Aid alone won't wipe out poverty, but the world's poorest countries are unlikely to achieve the MDGs without substantially more aid from richer countries, including the UK. This aid needs to be high-quality and delivered effectively. More of it should be directed to the countries furthest from reaching the MDGs, especially fragile states, where it can help build accountable government systems that respect the rights of the poorest.

Despite progress in reducing child mortality, there's been virtually no improvement in the health of newborn babies. In 2007 8.8 million children died before their fifth birthday, around 40% of them in the first month of their lives. Millions of these deaths could be prevented by improving ante- and post-natal care. Plus, on average, a five percentage point improvement in child mortality rates raises economic growth by one percentage point per year over the following decade.

- **The next UK government should spend the promised 0.7 per cent of GDP on overseas development assistance (ODA), as currently defined, by 2013, and enshrine this target in law.**
- **Funds to tackle climate change should be additional to ODA.**
- **The success of UK aid should be judged through its contribution to maternal, newborn and child health – improving community and health and family planning, with attention to women's rights.**



Sunkari is a mum from Sierra Leone. She lives in Freetown, the capital. Sunkari's daughter, Kadiatu, died because she didn't have the £15 she needed to pay a doctor to treat her.

This is the reality for Sunkari and millions of mothers like her in countries where healthcare isn't free for patients. If you can't pay, you get turned away, no matter how urgent your need is.

Nearly 9 million children die every year before their fifth birthday, many because they can't get the basic healthcare they need. So do half a million pregnant women.

Stand up for mothers like Sunkari.

The next government should act as a global leader on child hunger


Hunger is destroying the lives and chances of millions of children across the world, and holding back the development of some of the world's poorest countries. Malnutrition in mothers and children is a major killer: over a third of all child mortality – 3.5 million deaths each year – is a result of malnutrition. One in three children in the developing world suffers from stunting (chronic malnutrition that seriously impairs their physical and mental development). That's nearly 200 million children under five.

There's a growing body of evidence to show what kind of projects and intervention really work to drastically reduce hunger. But there's not enough public attention or political leadership and priority given to this work, either within countries or globally.

There's a huge opportunity for global leadership on hunger and malnutrition, which the UK should seize. There's a strong case for the creation of a temporary **Global Council on Child Hunger**.

This council of five or six nominated individuals would be led by an international political figure and would work with the UN Special Representative on Food Security and Nutrition, representing and pursuing a hunger agenda with Prime Ministers and Presidents. It would bring together respected experts from developing country and donor governments and help develop strategies to tackle hunger and malnutrition. It would also push for more financial and policy commitments from major donors, and national governments with high levels of hunger.

- **UK political parties should champion the establishment of a Global Council on Child Hunger ahead of the summer EU, G8 and G20 leaders' summits, and the UN Millennium Review Summit in September.**
- **The UK government should then commit to finance both the secretariat to support this council and effective coordination with its partners.**



“**Biyadgilign’s** mother died when he was only six months old. Since he was only breastfeeding, we didn’t know what to give him after his mother’s death. Gradually he started to lose weight and got weaker. Then we had to bring him to the centre for treatment. They gave us the medicine [special enriched food] and he’s doing much better now compared to his situation two months ago. His mother was seriously ill right after she gave birth to him. I didn’t take her to the hospital; I didn’t have money to do that. After she died, I had to take my second daughter out of school to look after him, I had no other choice. Once he grows up well, I will send my daughter back to school.”

Ato, Biyadgilign’s father, Ethiopia.

“The economic crisis is hitting the world’s poorest children hardest of all. Progress towards the UN’s Millennium Development Goals has stalled and in some cases reversed.

“The UK needs to use its position to help get things back on track. There is success that can be built on. Recent years have seen a steady decline in child deaths and in new HIV infection rates in developing countries, and there have been notable increases in primary education enrolment.

“By renewing its commitment to the UN’s goals and showing leadership despite the challenges we all face, the UK government would be acting in all our interests.”

Richard Lambert,
Director-General,
CBI (Confederation of British Industry)



“Inequality damages the social fabric, and with it the lives of adults and the children they care for. Nothing else has such a powerful influence on the quality of parenting, family relationships and child wellbeing.

“The more unequal societies are, the more we and our children are dominated by status competition, conflict and consumerism.

“Inequality increases almost every social problem. Its effects spread throughout society.

“In contrast, more equal societies are gentler and more sociable; people trust each other more and community life is stronger. More equal societies are, quite simply, better places for everyone to bring up children.”

Richard Wilkinson,
Professor of Medical Epidemiology,
University of Nottingham



“The first thing children need is a safe birth, which means no fees for maternity or ante-natal care, and enough skilled health workers.

But I once taught children in Ghana and I know how eager they are to learn. So I'd put more effort into getting kids – especially girls – out of the workplace and into school, creating jobs for the unemployed and for teachers as well as raising the skill levels of their economies.

“Better health and education would need resources from UK taxpayers and many other developed countries – and the support and commitment not only of developing country governments but, even more, the people (especially their trade unions).

Brendan Barber,
General Secretary,
Trades Union Congress



Jess Hurd/Reportdigital.co.uk



Aubrey Wade

Health worker Bintu examines Mabinti, who's eight months pregnant, at the clinic in Kroo Bay, Freetown, Sierra Leone.

6

The number of countries where more than half all child deaths occur – India, Nigeria, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Pakistan and China.

57

The World Health Organization's assessment of the number of countries with 'critical shortages' of health workers – 36 of them in Africa.

15

The number of times less likely an infant is to die from pneumonia if she or he is exclusively breastfed for the first six months, compared to an infant who isn't.

8

The number of countries that have recently experienced conflict, violence or political insecurity out of the ten countries with highest rates of child mortality.

200,000 –
400,000

The possible additional number of children who will die each year before 2015 because of the global financial crisis, according to the World Bank.

\$36–45 billion

The additional annual funds needed by 2015 to meet the Millennium Development Goals on child and maternal mortality – less than half what consumers spend globally on bottled water each year.

8.8 million

The number of children who died before the age of five in 2008, nearly 2 million of them on the day they were born.

1.7 million¹

children in the UK are living in severe poverty. Children and their families are going without the things they need for a decent standard of living – essentials like heating and warm clothing. Many have to resort to high-interest debt to get by.

1/3

A pupil eligible for free school meals is only a third as likely to succeed at every key stage at school as their better-off peers. The gap in development emerges as early as age 22 months – before they even reach primary school.

3x

The poorest children are almost three times less likely to leave school with five good GCSEs than their richer peers.

1. Measuring Severe Child Poverty in the UK, Save the Children report, 2009.

Poverty kills childhood

All UK political parties should
commit to:

Tackling severe child poverty in the UK

Breaking the link in the UK between
poverty and educational achievement

Introducing a Robin Hood Tax on
financial transactions to benefit the
poorest children at home and abroad

Honouring existing aid commitments

Acting as a global leader on child hunger



Save the Children sometimes uses models
to represent the millions of families living
in poverty.

Photos: Harriet Logan
Anna Kari

savethechildren.org.uk/election