



## Our Children Our Choice: Priorities for Policy Auckland Launch

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Tena koutou katoa

In New Zealand, more children have ill-health than in other comparable countries.

Their sicknesses are mainly due to **poverty**.

In New Zealand 1 in 4 children live in **poverty** about 260,000 children.

1 in 5 children live in severe **poverty**, about 200,000 children.

3 out of 5 children in **poverty** will stay in **poverty** for many years.

Most New Zealanders **do not know** or believe these figures, because these children and their diseases are not readily visible.

But they ARE real.

I see these sick children because I am a paediatrician and I work in hospitals.

In New Zealand around 60 babies die each year of **poverty**-related illnesses.

Each year at least 45,000 children are admitted to our hospitals for **poverty** -related illnesses, such as pneumonia, asthma, serious skin infections, gastroenteritis, rheumatic fever, chronic lung disease and so on.

The bad effects of **poverty** on the physical and mental health of our children is made worse when they

- live in unhealthy housing
- have inadequate basic health care
- have poor nutrition
- have stressful home lives
- are hungry and can't learn.

All of these issues need our attention.

As a country we have GOT USED to the poor physical and mental health experienced by our disadvantaged children.

The worsening of their health has NOT caused headlines.

NOW is the time to change our expectations.

As New Zealanders

- Let us expect ALL our children to have enough INCOME to be healthy
- Let us expect ALL our children to be free from preventable diseases
- Let us MAKE the changes required to meet these expectations

In CPAG's report being launched today we have given a summary of the issues, and given specific solutions. All of them are achievable.

We just have to agree to implement them.

- If we choose we can lift children out of **poverty**
- If we choose we can provide enough healthy housing for them all
- If we choose we can ensure they all have access to basic health care
- If we choose we can ensure they get enough nutritious food
- If we choose we can ensure they are able to learn and participate fully in education.

Over the last 4 years we have lifted the immunisation rates of our children to international standards, and our best ever.

We can lift ALL aspects of the health and well-being of our children, if we choose to.

Reducing **child poverty** is the key.