Children's Rights Indicators: International Approaches

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Landscape

- A plethora of tools, measures and indicators supporting *data* collection and analysis re. children and young people;

- Developed in the drive for:
    - Measuring **performance**;
    - Assessing **compliance** with treaty obligations – State accountability;
    - **Comparing** between states, or years (trends and progress over time);
    - Projecting **neutrality** through audit-like tools, avoiding the charges of anecdotal evidence (Kirkebø and Langford, 2019);
    - Informing/guiding **improvement**;
    - Guiding **research** and informing **evidence-based opinions** (FRA, 2010);
    - Informing and strengthening **advocacy** (Rosga and Satterthwaithe, 2009).

Some examples…

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data = quantitative and qualitative

Re. aims and rationales for developing indicators – bold, complex, varied => It is important to look carefully at the rationales that underpin the development of any such tool/set of indicators, in order to understand what their main aims are, and what they can and cannot offer.

Save the Children:
End of Childhood Index

- Comparison across 186 countries
- Data on "factors that rob children of their childhoods"
- Groups countries into five categories:
  few/some/many/most/nearly all children missing out on childhood

END OF CHILDHOOD INDEX RANKING 2021

TOP 10 WHERE CHILDHOOD IS MOST PROTECTED		BOTTOM 10 WHERE CHILDHOOD IS MOST THREATENED	
RANK	COUNTRY	RANK	COUNTRY
1	Singapore	177	Madagascar
1	Slovenia	178	Guinea
3	Ireland	179	Burkina Faso
3	Norway	180	Nigeria
5	Cyprus	181	Mali
5	Sweden	182	South Sudan
7	Netherlands	183	Somalia
7	South Korea	184	Chad
9	Belgium	185	Central African Republic
9	Iceland	186	Niger

CHILDHOOD ENDER	CHILD DIES	CHILD IS SEVERELY MALNOURISHED	CHILD IS OUT OF SCHOOL	CHILD BEGINS WORK LIFE	CHILD MARRIES	CHILD HAS A CHILD	CHILD IS A VICTIM OF EXTREME VIOLENCE		END OF CHILDHOOD INDEX 2021
INDICATOR	Under-5 mortality rate (deaths per 1,000 live births)	Child stunting (% children aged 0-59 months)	Out-of-school children of primary and secondary school age (%)	Children engaged in child labor (% ages 5-17)	Adolescents currently married or in union (% girls aged 15-19)	Adolescent birth rate (births per 1,000 girls aged 15-19)	Population forcibly displaced by conflict (% of total)†	Child homicide rate (deaths per 100,000 population aged 0-19)	
	2019	2015-2020+	2015-2019+	2015-2020+	2018	2018	2020	2016	Score (out of 1,000) Rank (out of 186)

(Save the Children, 2021, pp. 1, 4)

"Factors that rob children of their childhoods", such as malnutrition, being out of school, forced into adult roles of work, marriage and motherhood etc.

Scores are calculated on a scale of 1 to 1,000 (higher scores indicating protected childhood) and countries are grouped into five categories (few/some/many/most/nearly all children missing out on childhood). Cut points: above 940 points for 'few'; 760 for 'some'; 600 for many; 380 for 'most', and under 379 for 'nearly all'.

In 2021, UK is ranked 28, and placed in the top category (few children missing out on childhood), with 972 points. No countries in the bottom category (score under 379)

Challenges and queries:
- Accuracy of data; issue re. comparison between countries; definition of terms (e.g. informal/formal marriage); 'hidden children' (not in official statistics). This example illustrates one of the limitations of this type of comparison (involving a large number of states for which little contextual information is provided), and a limitation of quantitative data without further qualitative and in-depth understanding.
- Theodor Porter (1995) referred to quantification as 'a technology of distance' (p. ix), describing numbers and graphs 'first of all as strategies of communication' (p. viii) that minimise the need for in-depth knowledge of local context. **Our understanding of what quantification communicates is 'poor indeed if we do not relate it to the forms of community in which it flourishes'** (p. x).

Examples…

UNICEF: Family-friendly policies

- 'League Table' across 41 OECD and EU countries (high- and middle-income countries)
- Data on policies about:
  - the **duration of parental leave**
  - the percentage of young children (under 3, and 3-6 y.o.) **enrolled in formal childcare services or preschool education**

UNICEF, 2019

the Guardian
Opinion Sport Culture Lifestyle

UK among least family-friendly countries in OECD, survey finds
League table compiled based on parental leave and childcare levels puts UK in bottom third

Are the world's richest countries family friendly?
Policy in the OECD and EU

FIGURE 1: League Table – Indicators of national family-friendly policies, 2016

Rank	Country	Paid leave available to mothers (weeks, full-rate equivalent)		Paid leave reserved for fathers (weeks, full-rate equivalent)		Childcare enrolment, under 3 (%)		Childcare enrolment, between age 3 and school age (%)		Average rank
		Weeks	(Rank)	Weeks	(Rank)	%	(Rank)	%	(Rank)	
1	Sweden	35	(17)	10.9	(4)	51	(5)	97	(3)	7.25
2	Norway	45	(11)	9.8	(6)	52	(4)	90	(14)	8.75
3	Iceland	16	(30)	7.8	(7)	65	(2)	99	(1)	10.00
4	Estonia	85	(1)	2.0	(18)	30	(16)	93	(10)	10.75
5	Portugal	20	(25)	12.5	(3)	50	(7)	92	(11)	11.50
6	Germany	43	(12)	5.7	(10)	33	(13)	92	(12)	11.75
6	Denmark	27	(20)	1.1	(22)	70	(1)	96	(4)	11.75
8	Slovenia	48	(9)	2.6	(16)	40	(10)	90	(13)	12.00
9	Luxembourg	26	(21)	10.4	(5)	51	(6)	87	(17)	12.25
10	France	19	(26)	5.6	(11)	49	(8)	94	(6)	12.75
11	Austria	51	(8)	6.9	(8)	21	(22)	89	(15)	13.25
12	Finland	41	(14)	5.7	(9)	33	(13)	84	(19)	13.75
13	Belgium	13	(33)	5.0	(12)	44	(9)	99	(2)	14.00
14	Spain	16	(27)	2.1	(17)	39	(11)	95	(5)	15.00
15	Netherlands	16	(27)	0.4	(29)	53	(3)	94	(7)	16.50
16	Lithuania	62	(4)	4.0	(14)	15	(26)	78	(23)	16.75
16	Hungary	72	(2)	1.0	(23)	16	(24)	87	(18)	16.75
16	Latvia	53	(6)	1.1	(21)	28	(20)	82	(20)	16.75
19	Italy	25	(22)	0.4	(29)	34	(12)	93	(10)	18.25
20	Bulgaria	65	(3)	1.7	(20)	13	(27)	75	(25)	18.75
20	Romania	48	(10)	4.7	(13)	17	(23)	61	(29)	18.75
22	Croatia	39	(15)	2.9	(15)	16	(24)	51	(31)	21.25
23	Poland	42	(13)	2.0	(18)	8	(29)	61	(28)	22.00
24	Czech Republic	53	(7)	0.0	(33)	5	(30)	81	(21)	22.75
25	Malta	16	(29)	0.2	(32)	31	(15)	88	(16)	23.00
26	Slovakia	54	(5)	0.0	(33)	1	(31)	77	(24)	23.25
27	Ireland	9	(37)	0.0	(33)	29	(18)	93	(8)	24.00
28	United Kingdom	12	(34)	0.4	(28)	29	(19)	73	(26)	26.75
29	Cyprus	14	(32)	0.0	(33)	25	(21)	79	(22)	27.00
30	Greece	23	(24)	0.4	(29)	9	(28)	56	(30)	27.75
31	Switzerland	8	(38)	0.0	(33)	30	(17)	66	(27)	28.75

Data as communication – see news title (e.g. Sweden, Norway, Iceland, Estonia and Portugal were found to offer the best family-friendly policies)

Challenges and queries:
- relevance of data on formal child care <u>enrolment</u> (especially for under 3), in the absence of further info on average number of hours/week or type and quality of care; or factors for low/high enrolment (cultural norms, informal help by extended family and support network vs. affordability and accessibility).
- disjointed picture – what could these data show re. the alignment between the (end) of parental leave and enrolment into childcare services; the report acknowledges this limitation ("in some countries, the end of paid childcare leave does not coincide with the start of entitlements to affordable childcare in centres, leaving many families with young children struggling to fill this gap", p.15).
- rather narrow selection of the key dimensions of family-friendly policies (what about paid leave to care for sick young children; flexible work hours; provision of support and guidance to new parents/health visiting services)

Strengths:
- Aims to link 'policy' and 'outcomes', element of novelty (for this type of tool)
- Opens avenues for more qualitative work, and the report that comes with the League Table does a good job at acknowledging *some* of the gaps in evidence/knowledge.

- Relevant child-specific indicators can also be found in broader initiatives:
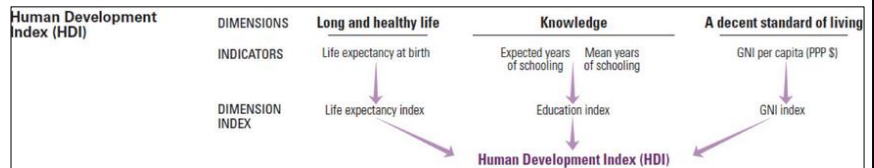
Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Index and Dashboards

- across all UN member states;
- SDG2 (undernourishment);
- SDG3 (maternal and neonatal mortality, under-5 mortality, vaccination, births attended by skilled health professionals, adolescent birth rate);
- SDG4 (most indicators on education);
- SDG16 (child labour).

UNDP Human Development Index (HDI) and Dashboard

- data for 189+ countries and territories;
- includes data on education and child's health;
- cross-walk/alignment with several SDG indicators.

HDI is a summary measure of average achievement in key dimensions of human development – a long and healthy life, being knowledgeable and have a decent standard of living. It is focused on assessing the development of a country, not the economic growth alone.

Education sub-indicators (enrolment and drop out, results – PISA scores, government expenditure on education, pupils per teacher ratio, schools with access to internet, primary teachers qualified to teach),

Gender (child marriage, under 18, adolescent birth rate, antenatal care)

Health, including pre-birth (infant mortality rates, immunisation, malnutrition, life expectancy at birth).

Landscape: Children's <u>rights</u> indicators

There is no single definition or approach on what a children's rights indicator is (or expected to show) <=> Various approaches:

- Some fit under the more **'classic' pattern** (mainly socio-economic)
    - **KidsRights Index**, KidsRights Foundation and Erasmus University Rotterdamthe: Scorecard across 182 countries; 20 indicators: 13 quantitative (based on data from UNICEF and UNDP), which are linked to child's rights (life, health, education, protection); with the novelty of including 7 'qualitative' indicators (based on assessment of tone and information in the Concluding Observations of UN Committee on the Rights of the Child).
    - **Belgian National Child Rights Indicators**, National Commission on the Rights of the Child: 40 quantitative indicators (mix of objective and subjective), based on mapping of existing data and on meeting a set of standards of quality and specificity.
- Others follow the **'Structures – Process – Outcomes' (S.P.O.) pattern**

KidsRights Index, mirrors the examples mentioned in the previous slides; the methodology for scoring the 'qualitative' indicators is not convincing (significantly different reference points, time lag issue given that Concluding observations are formulated years apart, possible subjective scoring, qualitative translated into and treated as quantitative).
The 7 qualitative indicators are clustered as 'Enabling Environment for Child Rights' and refer to:
- Non-discrimination
    - Best interests of the child
    - Enabling legislation
    - Best available budget
    - Respect for the views of the child/child participation
    - Collection and analysis of disaggregate data
    - State-civil society cooperation for child rights participation

Belgian child rights indicators are available in French at: https://ncrk-cnde.be/IMG/pdf/indicateurs_nationaux_fr_20160203.pdf
Important to highlight here the consideration given to the standards of quality to be met by selected indicators (check-list, see pp. 21-24); valuable questions in the methodology section (pp. 19-21).

The UN Committee welcomed the Belgian set of indicators but highlighted that there is a need for improvement in terms of meeting the non-discrimination principle (to allow for disaggregated data on vulnerable children to be collected) and coverage (to address all rights and the provisions of the Optional Protocols). See:

"While welcoming the establishment of 40 national indicators on children's rights, the Committee regrets that data collection remains fragmented and that children in the most vulnerable situations, such as children in poverty, children with disabilities and children separated from parents, have not been included in such indicators. With reference to its general comment No. 5 (2003) on general measures of implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Committee encourages the State party:
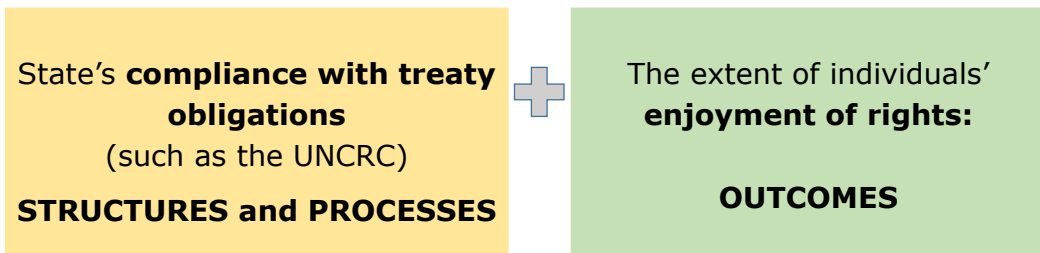
(a) To improve its centralized data-collection system, including by reviewing the national indicators on the rights of the child that should cover all areas of the Convention and be disaggregated by age, sex, ethnic and national origin, urban or rural area, geographic location, disability, migration and socioeconomic status, in order to facilitate analysis of the situation of all children;

(b) To ensure that the data and indicators are shared among the ministries concerned and used for the formulation, monitoring and evaluation of laws, policies and programmes for the effective implementation of the Convention and the Optional Protocols thereto. " Source:

http://docstore.ohchr.org/SelfServices/FilesHandler.ashx?enc=6QkG1d%2FPPRiCAqhKb7yhsk8r1vpHio%2Fg7Mp83cTcS1cUBTPal6pQqSnnKAt9zXb2Uv8VuBfYxEYQYjA%2Fz79vUKAIWS%2FklvSy5rZHWCgoGOIQOqVsDyB%2BuVUGyTsbSJVM

Structures – Process – Outcomes (S.P.O.) pattern

- Derived from **human rights standards**;

- A human rights indicator can be understood as having the **twofold aim** of measuring:

State's **compliance with treaty obligations** (such as the UNCRC) **STRUCTURES and PROCESSES**	➕	The extent of individuals' **enjoyment of rights:** **OUTCOMES**

(Lundy, 2014)

The SPO approach can be seen as tackling the insufficiency of the socio-economic indicators in capturing the specificity of child rights implementation.

Example of SPO tools: **Early Childhood Rights Indicators** (ECRI)

- developed under the auspices of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, in collaboration with an extended network of international agencies and partners
- operationalises the General Comment no. 7 (focus on children aged 0-8), through 17 indicators; data presented as a heatmap;
- piloted in Tanzania, Chile and British Columbia – Canada (2009-2017);
- tool available online https://ecri.globalchildnetwork.com/index.php/content/gettingready

Structure	Process	Outcomes
• Commitments to action • Legal provisions • Institutions in place • Policies aligned with the CRC	• Efforts made and actions taken • Following from commitment: • Specific activities (action plans and programmes) • Resources and/or initiatives that help to realise children's rights	• A resulting, measurable change in either: • "Rights Environment" • Early childhood development, a direct measurement such as an increase in the number of children registered at birth since the previous state report

Piloted - in full in Tanzania and Chile, in part in British Columbia (Canada).

Example of SPO tools: **EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), Indicators for the protection, respect and promotion of the rights of the child in EU**

- Qualitative and quantitative indicators under four areas, in line with existing EU provisions of direct relevance to children
  - o Family Environment and Alternative Care
  - o Protection from Exploitation and Violence
  - o Education, Citizenship and Cultural Activities
  - o Adequate Standard of Living

Indicator Sub-group	Protection of victims
Indicator type	Structural/Outcome
Indicators	➤ Existence of legal provisions banning all forms of violence as a means of discipline for children at all settings (including at home, in schools, in care and justice institutions). ➤ Availability and accessibility to children of information and confidential counselling services in day care institutions, primary and secondary education (for example through specially trained teachers), disaggregated. ➤ Availability of child-focused, easily accessible (anonymous, free of charge, confidential) reporting and complaint mechanisms (such as Ombudspersons for Children, internal specialised child protection officers within institutions) to children. ➤ Existence of legal provisions/public funding granting a child victim of violence and exploitation the right to psychosocial assistance and therapeutic services. ➤ Evidence of decrease in the proportion of adults and of children who accept violence against children as a means of education at home/school, disaggregated.

Limitations re. the FRA's indicators:

- Contextual – reflect the EU policy in place at the moment when the indicators were developed; policy changes (moving goal post) – are the indicators revised to reflect changes? Limitations re. looking at progress over time.

- Not truly 'tested' and used as a full set of indicators (by collecting and analysing data); but for informing further research and data collection activities (see the 2010 conference report).

Challenges re. the SPO approach:

- issues with proving the interconnectivity between rights;

- issues with probing the correlations between the different types of indicators (are structures-processes-outcomes truly linked?)

- "Policy monitoring indicators are subject to procedural and administrative choices as well as to authority/jurisdiction limits. Therefore, referring to these indicators as 'children's rights indicators' may entail the risk of limiting children's rights to a specific policy of a certain region" (Op de Beeck, 2015)

Looking ahead

**Lundy and McEvoy –
Core aspects of children's rights indicators**
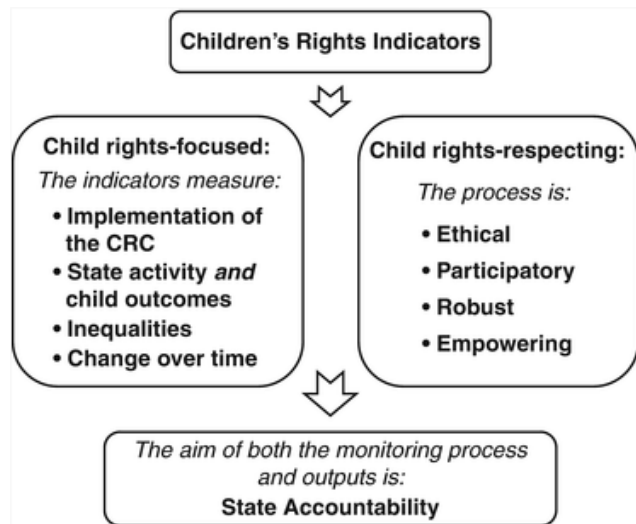
(Lundy, 2014)

Lundy and McEvoy suggest a theoretical framework that enhances the SPO approach, by highlighting the core aspects of children's rights indicators, including: Child-rights focused – measure the implementation, recognise the indivisibility and interdependency of rights

Inequalities! – allow for disaggregated data that sheds lights on non-discrimination
The process of developing and using the indicators (incl. data collection) should in itself be respectful of CR

Looking ahead

- **Starting small** (then expand)
- **Fit for purpose**
  - ○ **clear context and use** (tailored to an area of expertise)
  - ○ **driven by what needs to be known**, rather than available data (but do use what is available, where it suits)
- **Meaningful and relevant**
- **Comprehensive** picture (quantitative and qualitative data)
- **Collaborative** approach, which **includes children and young people**

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Complexity vs. something which is usable in practice => starting small
Numbers without context mean very little (as Porter highlighted)

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Vaghri, Z., Krappmann, L., & Doek, J. (2019). From the Indicators of General Comment No. 7 to GlobalChild. *The International Journal of Children's Rights*, *27*(4), 821-851. doi: https://doi.org/10.1163/15718182-02704009

References and resources (cont.)

Online resources:

Belgian National Child Rights Indicators
https://ncrk-cnde.be/en/projects/belgian-national-child-rights-indicators/

Early Childhood Rights Indicators (ECRI): https://ecri.globalchildnetwork.com/index.php/content/gettingready
and the Global Child website: www.unb.ca/globalchild/projects/ecri/index.html

Human Development Index:
http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/human-development-index-hdi
and Dashboard: http://hdr.undp.org/en/data

KidsRights Index:
https://kidsrights.org/research/kidsrights-index/

Sustainable Development Goals Index and Dashboard:
www.sdgindex.org

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Thank you!

Questions, comments and reflections?
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