



Recommendations issued from the International Conference: Measuring the Effectiveness of Children's Rights – Make all Children Count!

As underlined by the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights (OHCHR), the process of children's rights moving from the setting of legally binding standards to their effective implementation depends, in large measure, on the availability of appropriate tools for policy formulation and evaluation. Both quantitative and qualitative indicators are among those essential tools (OHCHR, *Human Rights Indicators - A Guide to Measurement and Implementation*). The United Nations Committee for the Rights of the Child systematically recommends data collection regarding measures taken to give effect to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and to work with indicators to evaluate implementation.

This is a topical subject and different national and international initiatives have been undertaken in this field recently. Despite, numerous questions – among others concerning methodology and approach – also remain at the forefront of this debate.

The National Commission on the Rights of the Child - Belgium wished to contribute towards offering practitioners, policy makers, researchers, and child advocates the opportunity to share (best) practices and find a common ground on how to measure the effectiveness of children's rights in the objective of their continuous improvement.

For this purpose, with the support of the Federal Public Service Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Belgium and in collaboration with ChildONEurope the Commission organized the International Conference: "Measuring the Effectiveness of Children's Rights" which took place on the 8th and 9th February 2018 in Brussels.

The conference was structured around four key questions:

1. Setting the debate: What constitutes an effective tool for measuring the effectiveness of children's rights?
2. How can synergies and links between child-rights / child wellbeing indicators and other measuring instruments be developed?
3. How can meaningful participation of children be ensured?
4. How can the most vulnerable children be reached and included by data collection systems and instruments?

Recommendations below are the product of two days of exchange among a variety of renowned experts. For more information we invite you to visit www.ncrk-cnede.be.

THE CHILDREN'S RIGHTS FRAMEWORK

- The creation and use of indicators should be valued as important instruments to further the implementation of children's rights and the improvement of the realization of children's rights should be the principal objective of such instrument;
- The children's rights international normative framework must guide the entire process of measuring the effectiveness of children's rights and monitoring how the States Parties are keeping up with their obligations under the CRC. To that effect:



- Protect the children's best interests during the entire process: keep the child in the centre of your endeavours.
- Do no harm:
 - Avoid stigmatization (in collecting and communicating data);
 - Be aware of secondary effects of data collection;
 - Respect the right to privacy of children (parents and other caregivers) involved.
- Respect the principles of non-discrimination and equality:
 - Attempt to include the most vulnerable and the most difficult to reach both in ensuring the participation of children in the development of data collection processes as in the data collection initiative itself;
 - Do not always target the same (groups of) children – avoid measuring fatigue;
 - Collect data in such a way that disaggregation to lower levels is possible.
- Ensure free and informed, meaningful participation of children (see *infra*) page 3.



RECOMMENDATIONS TO DECISION-MAKERS

- Ensure that in each country there is at least one children's rights observatory/monitoring agency/institute/statutory body, granted with a national legal mandate to collect data and monitor rights;
- Foster international cooperation between the "observatories" whilst preserving each national institution's identity;
- Foster horizontal cooperation and exchange of information between observatories and other competent institutions at the national level (avoid working in silos);
- Build a culture of participation and make sure that the evidence used for policy development are created with the involvement of and consultation with children. To that effect:
 - View participation as a process;
 - Include child participation as a *conditio sine qua non* for obtaining subsidies / bids / etc;
 - Create processes to ensure that:
 - Safe and inclusive spaces are created for children to express their views;
 - Children's views are effectively taken into account in decision-making; and
 - Children are provided feedback on the outcome and effect of their participation (creation of a feedback loop) through child-friendly documents
- Use the data collected as evidence to support shaping policies;
- Favour a long-term approach;
 - Be aware of the importance of measuring evolution through longitudinal and cross-sectional monitoring in order to build on the evidence gathered to steer policies and adjust policy-development practices to that effect;
 - Ensure the sustainability of data collection tools by:
 - Entrenching data collection by law / adopting national strategies to data and, or evidence creation;
 - Foreseeing sufficient budget allocation;
 - Setting up the institutional framework with the necessary human and financial resources to collect data; and
 - Allocate budget for an ongoing monitoring of the data collection processes.



RECOMMENDATIONS TO CHILDREN'S RIGHTS DATA COLLECTION PROFESSIONALS

DEFINE YOUR OBJECTIVES

- Set clear objectives *ab initio*:
 - Be ambitious yet realistic. (Define why measure, what you want to measure; what you need to measure; what you can measure and the time period that applies to data);
 - Check if your objectives are in line with the children's rights international normative framework (Are they in the best interests of the child? Are they meant to identify children's needs, children's rights violations and/or risks of violations? Would they contribute to giving more visibility to children's opinion? Would they explicitly explain how children benefit from the process?);
 - Keep the objectives defined in mind throughout the entire process, and be ready to adjust them in accordance with the context, so that children can benefit optimally from the outcomes;
 - Clearly communicate about the objectives / final aim of the process with partners involved / solicited.
- Favour a long-term approach:
 - Be aware of the importance of measuring evolution to be able to put forward trends and make visible whether policies have improved rights effectiveness or not;
 - Foster the creation of a culture of using data / evidence to adapt policies through think thanks / intersectoral exchange groups;
 - Create a sustainable data collection tool; and
 - Implement Q/A at different points of the operation to ensure the integrity and quality of the collected data but also that of the data collection processes.



CREATE SYNERGIES

- Avoid working in silos (initiatives should not necessarily be integrated, but should be informed of one another):
 - Favour a participative, inclusive approach involving or at least communicating with all relevant stakeholders in the process (governments, administrations, independent institutions, non-governmental organizations, academics, professional, children);
 - Ensure a diversity of expertise in the team developing the measurement instrument / initiative;
 - Be willing to share and communicate about your initiatives: strong and weaker points;
 - Foster a national, international and interdisciplinary exchange of practices (what works but also what doesn't work);



- Involve decision-makers and make sure to provide them with the due evidence/data (create bridges between evidence creation and policy agenda);
- Broker knowledge in order to make sure evidence is used to its right purpose and interpretation;
- Avoid duplication and over-proliferation of initiatives:
 - Analyse gaps of evidence, knowledge and data;
 - Develop a research agenda, parts of which may be taken up by different stakeholders involved to address the evidence gaps;
 - Avoid same or similar data being gathered by several organizations among the same target groups and, or data holders;
 - Build on / inspire yourself of ready-existing experience and initiatives.
- Be attentive to the advantages of combining quantitative and qualitative methods, gathering objective and subjective data;
- Promote transparency in the processes and assure access of the public, in particular children and youth, to the collected data.

0 0 0 0
INCLUDE ALL
STAKEHOLDERS

USE EXISTING
STANDARDS

1
NOT only
QUANTITATIVE
approach

ENSURE THE PARTICIPATION OF CHILDREN AS PARTNERS

- Take time, view participation as a process;
- Involve children from the beginning / in the development of the methodology, at every stage of the process:
 - Be attentive to measure what is of concern to children;
 - Foster inclusive participation (include the most vulnerable, most difficult to reach).
- Design a methodology adapted to children to ensure their meaningful participation:
 - Be attentive to the need for age-adapted methodologies and specific methodologies responding to specific situations children can be in;
 - Create 'safe spaces' for child participation;
 - Use creative design / tools for facilitating the expression of children's views;
 - Adapt the language used – be attentive to the fact that adults and children may have different uses / understandings of language.
- Ensure the free and informed participation of children:
 - Make sure children know they can but do not have to voice their view in participation initiatives;
 - Provide the information necessary, in a way adapted to children, for the child to form its views;
 - Inform of the objectives / purpose / outcomes of the process.

⌚
TAKE TIME

14?
12?
16?
9?
AGE

✓
✓
✓
CLEAR
EXPECTATIONS

- Create ‘children’s rights education moments’ during data collection: benefit from the data collection exercise to inform children about their rights;
- View the child as expert of his / her situation and value on an equal base adult experience as well, whilst being aware of the fact that thinking patterns are influenced by their personal situation;
- Include professionals who work directly with children, parents, care givers;
- Make sure there is a process for views collected from children to reach the decision-makers;
- Give child-friendly feedback to children as to the results of the participation process / outcome of the data collection (see *infra*).



COMMUNICATE

- Give tailored feedback to everyone whom has provided data / from whom data was collected as concerns: (i) the objective of the exercise; (ii) the use of data collected; (iii) possible decisions / impact resulting from the process;
- Contextualize: do not stop at data, look at the children beyond the data and keep the child at the centre of your efforts. Present the data on the backdrop of the context in which it has been gathered, the methodology adopted, the objectives defined and the survey sample in order to understand local realities;
- Don’t be afraid to recognize obstacles encountered, and the limits of the data collected according to methodological choices and the definition of the sample of the survey;
- Always keep the best interests of the child at heart when analysing and presenting data collected;
- Engage in a ‘balancing’ exercise:
 - Avoid undue simplification of data communicated (e.g. focusing on one key number may seem attractive but may also lead to misinterpretations);
 - Avoid undue complication: (e.g. clustering of information and output favours carrying a message).
- Tailor your communication to its recipients: be attentive to language speaking to children / decision-makers / influencers / media.
- Be attentive to the accessibility of data collected, for example by creating online directories and / or database.

