



International conference:
“Measuring the Effectiveness of Children’s Rights – Make all Children Count!”
Opening the debate

Introduction

In order to stimulate dynamic exchanges and the production of concrete outputs, this international conference will be structured around four research questions which will structure the debates, organized in two days. On February, 8, selected experts will discuss each of the four questions in working groups, aimed at the production of concrete ideas to be discussed in the plenary session of February, 9. (cfr. [Methodological note](#)).

Instead of providing an extensive scientific background note as backbone of the conference, the approach chosen was to open the debates by introducing possible research questions and sub-questions in an open fashion to foster out-of-the-box ideas and suggestions.

Expected Accomplishments

Working groups held during the closed sessions of the conference will result in concrete suggestions as to the development of guidelines. In doing so, attention should be paid that the products of these discussion are:

- **Relevant:** main ambit of proposed action should always be aligned with the central objective of improving the effectiveness of children’s rights (child-centred approach);
- **Specific:** target a specific area for improvement and focus on the "who" (institutional components - necessary support basis for implementation), "what" and "how" (process components).
- **Attainable, yet ambitious:** suggested measure should be realistic, taking into account different realities and recognizing necessary prerequisites for implementation, yet nurture effective improvement.

Products of the closed working groups will serve as a basis for the discussions during the plenary session during which they will be further developed and adapted according to inputs provided. In doing so, continuous attention will be paid at above-mentioned criteria.

However discussed in separate working groups, the four research questions are intrinsically interlinked and interrelated. Above-mentioned criteria thus apply to suggestions made as to the four of them. Moreover, transversally applicable actions can also be uttered.

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Research Question 1

Setting the debate - What constitutes an effective tool for measuring the effectiveness of children's rights?

Context

CRC/GC/2003/5 para. 48: “Collection of sufficient and reliable data on children, **disaggregated** to enable identification of discrimination and/or disparities in the realization of rights, is an essential part of implementation. The Committee reminds States parties that data collection needs to extend over the **whole period of childhood**, up to the age of 18 years. It also needs to be coordinated throughout the jurisdiction, ensuring **nationally applicable indicators**. States should collaborate with appropriate research institutes and aim to build up a complete picture of progress towards implementation, with qualitative as well as quantitative studies. The reporting guidelines for periodic reports call for detailed disaggregated statistical and other information covering all areas of the Convention. It is essential not merely to establish **effective systems for data collection**, but to ensure that the data collected are **evaluated** and used to **assess progress in implementation**, to identify problems and **to inform all policy development for children**. Evaluation requires the development of **indicators related to all rights** guaranteed by the Convention” (emphasis added).

Attention points

- What are the prerequisites for indicators and/or other tools to contribute to an improved implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child?
 - Who takes the lead in developing indicators: civil society, the governments, joint action?
 - How to avoid “measuring” in function of reporting deadlines (to the CRC or other) How to ensure indicators measure the evolution in the implementation of rights?
 - How to strike a balance between measuring the implementation of all the Convention rights with a comprehensive set of indicators (how many?) and the practical feasibility of using a larger vs. smaller set of indicators measuring the implementation of selected rights? And if so, how to select which rights’ implementation is being measured?
 - How? How do we grasp the effectivity of rights? Is there something as an ideal set of indicators to do so? How to avoid instrumentalization of the use of indicators (referring to data being used for personal / institutional goals)?
- Should international comparability be sought for or is an instrument adapted to local realities to be preferred?
 - Advantages and disadvantages of the two systems;
 - Balance between international comparability and contextualization: top-down or bottom-up approach.

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Research Question 2

How can synergies and links between child-rights / child wellbeing indicators and other measuring instruments be developed?

Context

A great diversity of monitoring tools already exists in the field of human and children's rights, human wellbeing and development. The recent adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals and the reporting requirements with regards to their targets adds to that. With the proliferation of reporting on implementation obligations, comes the risk of duplication and reporting fatigue. This comes at the risk of spending more time on data itself rather than on the child behind it. The existence of these multiple parallel systems also brings up the question of the cost-efficiency of having multiple parallel systems running.

Attention points:

- Should a coordinated and / or integrated process be developed for measuring implementation of children's rights and other related issues (thinking of among others: the Sustainable Development Goals, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Universal Periodic Review, ...)?
 - Advantages and disadvantages?
 - In the affirmative, what would be the prerequisites of such a mechanism?
- How can the specificity of children's rights be preserved when and if integrating systems/instruments are in place?

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Research Question 3

How can meaningful participation of children be ensured?

Context

CRC/GC/2003/5 para.50: « The Committee emphasizes that, in many cases, **only children themselves are in a position to indicate whether their rights are being fully recognized and realized.** Interviewing children and using children as researchers (with appropriate safeguards) is likely to be an important way of finding out, for example, to what extent their civil rights, including the crucial right set out in article 12, to have their views heard and given due consideration, are respected within the family, in schools and so on” (emphasis added).

Based on Article 12 Convention on the Rights of the Child: “1. States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.”

The participation of children in the process of measuring the effectiveness of their rights should be ensured at different levels: at the outset of the development of objectives and methodology of the ‘measuring’ instrument; during its implementation (data collection and analysis); in the communication of the results of the monitoring; and in the use of these results in adapting policies.

Attention points

- How to ensure meaningful participation of children within the process of developing data collection methods and in their application?
 - What safeguards do we need to put in place when interviewing children and, or involving children as researchers? How to ensure an adequate environment for their participation?
 - Who are the children involved and how do we identify them?
 - How to strike a balance between free and informed participation and making sure the most vulnerable children are able to participate?
 - Age and maturity of the child: how to take into account the need for adapted participation methodologies as to the age of the child and make sure children representing the entire spectrum of childhood can participate?
- How do we develop adequate strategies to communicate to children the results of their participation?

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Research Question 4

How can the most vulnerable children be reached / included by data collection systems and instruments?

Context

CRC/GC/2003/5 para. 48: “Collection of sufficient and reliable data on children, **disaggregated** to enable identification of discrimination and/or disparities in the realization of rights, is an essential part of implementation [...]”

Whilst one of the cornerstones of the work with indicators can be and often is to bring the most vulnerable groups of children in focus, these children all too often escape each form of data collection: because no survey reaches them, because the existing surveys do not address the specificities of their situation, because the ‘research sample’ is too small.

Attention points:

- How to avoid leaving children behind in collecting data and measuring the implementation of their rights?
 - Should specific indicators address their specific situation or is a more inclusive, general approach to be preferred?
 - How to detect the children escaping data collection?
 - How can children belonging to most vulnerable groups directly be involved in the process of developing data collection?

- How to focus on the implementation of the rights of the most vulnerable groups of children without stigmatizing them?
 - How to contextualize the use of indicators?
 - Which questions can be asked about their situation?
 - How can the analysis of data in this regard avoid singling out / stigmatizing?

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