African Governments' Child-Friendliness

The Scorecard

Companion to the African Report on Child Wellbeing 2023

African Child Policy Forum
ACPF

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AFRICAN CHILD POLICY FORUM (ACPF)

ACPF is an independent, Pan-African organisation that promotes policy change to advance child wellbeing in Africa. We are guided by the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Our work is inspired by African values and perspectives and informed by African reality and global knowledge. We adopt a child rights approach to the promotion and realisation of child wellbeing.

ACPF undertakes law and policy research and advocacy on the African child. We document children's life experiences to build knowledge on the African child. By identifying policy solutions and creating space for dialogue and learning, we catalyse linkages between policy and practice. We foster a common voice through alliances and movements for children. Creating opportunities for children to advocate for themselves is important to us.

We work with partners across governments, inter-governmental institutions, multilateral organisations, international and national NGOs, civil society, academics and development partners across diverse sectors.

VISION AND MISSION

Vision: An Africa where every child enjoys all rights and attains their full human potential

Mission: To be a leading advocate for policies that are inclusive of all children

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1. Introduction

This Brief is a companion to the seventh report of the African Report on Child Wellbeing series, which focuses on child poverty, and is entitled ***Justice Not Charity: African governments must end child poverty.*** It examines African governments' overall performance in realising all children's rights, including their attempts to address child poverty,[1] using the Child-Friendliness Index (CFI). The Brief provides rich analysis of the state of children in Africa. It assesses the current child-friendliness of African governments and the progress made over the five years since the last CFI was published in 2018. It highlights areas of strength and weakness in advancing child rights in Africa and draws lessons from the experience of countries that performed relatively well and those that did not do so well. It also shows the relationship of the CFI to other indices measuring and ranking governance and human development in Africa and presents the main conclusions of these analyses.

The CFI is a rights-based statistical framework developed by the African Child Policy Forum (ACPF) for measuring and monitoring governments' performance in realising the rights and wellbeing of children. ACPF uses this tool to advance its Pan-African advocacy and to promote State accountability to children. The CFI was first introduced to the wider public on 20 November 2008, with the launch of the first edition of the African Report on Child Wellbeing. It went through a number of validation processes involving renowned experts in child rights and the construction of composite indices. Major revisions were made in 2018 to enhance the robustness of the statistical tools used to aggregate indicators and dimensions and further improve the overall reliability of the Index.[2] The conceptual and methodology paper has also undergone a scholarly appraisal and was peer-reviewed and published in 2010 in *Child Indicators Research*.[3]

The concept of the CFI is anchored in the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). A child-friendly government is defined in the CFI as one which is making the maximum effort to meet its obligations to respect, protect and fulfil children's rights and ensure their wellbeing. Accordingly, three dimensions summarising the obligations of States, as outlined in the CRC and the ACRWC, have been established referring to the following: protection of children against violence and exploitation, provision of basic services to children to fulfil their basic needs, and ensuring children's participation in decisions affecting them (see Figure 1 below). In other words, the CFI measures and monitors three specific areas of government action:

1. Protection: the legal and policy framework governments put in place to protect children from abuse and exploitation.
2. Provision: government spending on children's basic needs and achievement of better child wellbeing outcomes.
3. Participation:[4] government efforts to ensure children's participation in decisions that affect them.

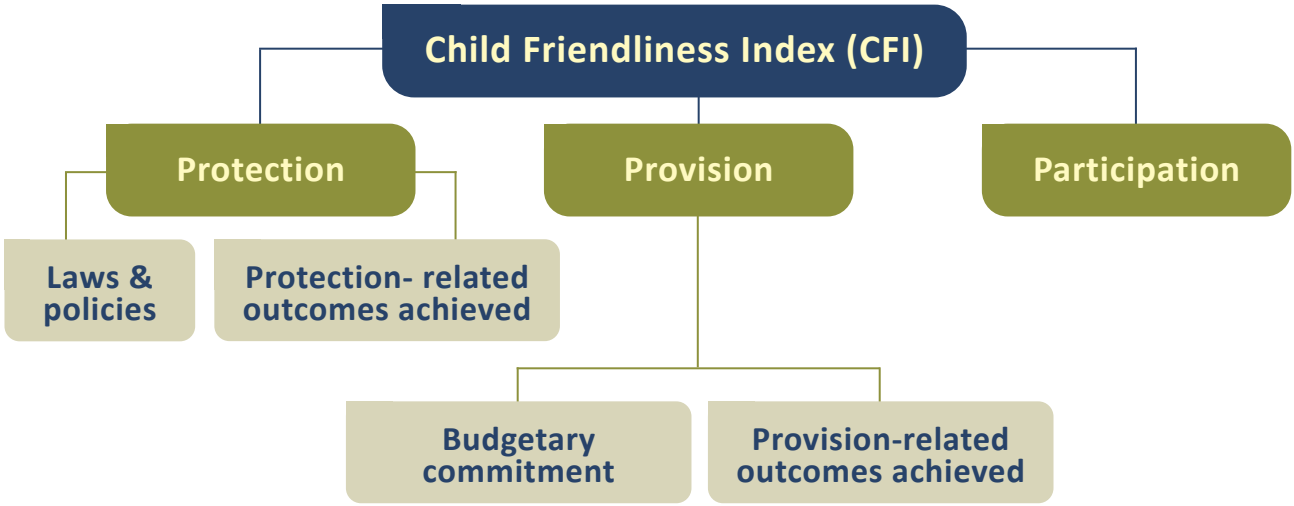
[1] *Governments' performance in addressing child poverty has been elaborated extensively in the main report using one of the three components of the CFI – The Provision Index. For further details about how the Index is compiled, see more in Annex 1.*

[2] *ACPF (2018). Child-Friendliness Index Revisited. Addis Ababa: African Child Policy Forum. Available at: https://africanchildforum.org/index.php/en/sobipro?sid=209.*

[3] *Y. Mekonen (2010). Measuring Government Performance in Realising Child Rights and Child Wellbeing: The approach and indicators. Child Indicators Research. Vol. 3, pp. 205–241. Available at: http://rd.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12187-009-9047-5.*

[4] *The computation of the CFI in this Brief is based only on protection and provision owing to the lack of data on child participation.*

FIGURE 1
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE CHILD-FRIENDLINESS INDEX



2. Child-friendliness of African governments – The 2023 Child-Friendliness Index

The 2023 CFI assesses 52 countries[5] on the basis of the most recent data used for the various indicators across its dimensions. A detailed methodological note is presented in Annex 1.

The CFI score for each country is based on the Protection and Provision Indices (these indices are set out in Annex 2). Box 1, below, provides highlights on performance specifically in the protection of children, as the other dimension of the CFI, provision, has been discussed in greater depth at the main report – ***The African Report on Child Wellbeing 2023: Justice Not Charity: African governments must end child poverty***. In that report, the Provision Index measures the efforts made by States to fulfil their obligations to provide basic services to children and fulfil their basic needs. The strong negative statistical correlation between the Provision Index and the proportion of children living in multidimensional poverty indicates that the Provision Index, in effect, assesses the performance of governments in addressing child poverty.

Based on the 2023 CFI scores, countries are grouped into five categories (most child-friendly, child-friendly, fairly child-friendly, less child-friendly and least child-friendly) using statistical cluster analysis. Of the 52 countries included in the analysis, 11 countries are categorised as most child-friendly, nine countries as child-friendly, 12 countries as fairly child-friendly, 11 countries as less child-friendly, and the remaining nine countries are the least child-friendly (see Table 1).

According to the overall score, Mauritius came at the top of the 2023 CFI Index, a position it has held for the last 15 years. Following Mauritius, the other ten top-performing countries are Tunisia, South Africa, Cabo Verde, the Seychelles, Namibia, Algeria, Morocco, Lesotho, Egypt and Botswana. These countries emerged as the most child-friendly in 2023 because they have performed remarkably well in many aspects of children's lives compared to other African countries.

[5] *Libya and Somalia are excluded from the analysis because there is not enough data available on the indicators that comprise the CFI.*

TABLE 1 CHILD-FRIENDLINESS INDEX SCORES AND RANKINGS OF AFRICAN COUNTRIES, 2023

COUNTRY	SCORE	RANK	CATEGORY
Mauritius	0.8486	1	MOST CHILD-FRIENDLY
Tunisia	0.8261	2	
South Africa	0.8235	3	
Cabo Verde	0.8207	4	
Seychelles	0.8187	5	
Namibia	0.7691	6	
Algeria	0.7576	7	
Morocco	0.7206	8	
Lesotho	0.7110	9	
Egypt	0.6989	10	
Botswana	0.6838	11	
eSwatini	0.6326	12	CHILD-FRIENDLY
Gabon	0.6007	13	
São Tomé and Principe	0.5939	14	
Rwanda	0.5932	15	
Ghana	0.5887	16	
Kenya	0.5878	17	
Sierra Leone	0.5767	18	
Zimbabwe	0.5705	19	
Malawi	0.5649	20	
Benin	0.5392	21	FAIRLY CHILD-FRIENDLY
Angola	0.5369	22	
Senegal	0.5362	23	
Burkina Faso	0.5248	24	
Mozambique	0.5154	25	
Congo	0.5091	26	
Togo	0.5076	27	
Côte d'Ivoire	0.5041	28	
Mali	0.5022	29	
Burundi	0.4851	30	
Mauritania	0.4831	31	
Djibouti	0.4826	32	
Madagascar	0.4752	33	LESS CHILD-FRIENDLY
Guinea	0.4587	34	
Nigeria	0.4500	35	
Zambia	0.4474	36	
Comoros	0.4459	37	
Liberia	0.4432	38	
Guinea-Bissau	0.4416	39	
Niger	0.4347	40	
Equatorial Guinea	0.4335	41	
Gambia	0.4311	42	
Tanzania	0.4165	43	
Uganda	0.4084	44	LEAST CHILD-FRIENDLY
Ethiopia	0.4055	45	
Democratic Republic of Congo	0.3997	46	
Chad	0.3856	47	
Central African Republic	0.3655	48	
Sudan	0.3471	49	
Cameroon	0.3203	50	
Eritrea	0.3009	51	
South Sudan	0.1864	52	

Source: Compiled and computed by ACPF based on data from UNICEF (2023); UNESCO, World Bank and WHO

Mauritius ranked top for the following reasons:

- Almost all births are attended by skilled birth attendants in Mauritius along with Botswana and Tunisia. It has the third-lowest stunting rate, at 8.7 per cent.
- It has the third-lowest under-5 mortality rate in Africa, at 17 deaths per 1,000 live births.
- It has achieved universal access to both basic sanitation facilities and safe drinking water.
- It has the fourth-highest pre-primary school enrolment ratio, at 91 per cent. It has achieved universal primary education, with a net enrolment rate of 99.8 per cent, and reached 84.3 per cent in secondary enrolment, the highest in Africa. The pupil–teacher ratio at the primary level in Mauritius is 14 to 1, much higher than in the rest of Africa.
- It is among the ten top-spending countries in health and public social protection (10.2 per cent of total government expenditure and 9.3 per cent of GDP).
- It has robust laws and policies to protect children from abuse and exploitation. It has the lowest child labour prevalence rate in Africa, at 1 per cent.

Despite this progress, it is concerning that Mauritius has yet to prohibit corporal punishment in all settings. It has not ratified the optional protocol to the CRC on communications procedure or the Protocol to the Forced Labour Convention (P029).

Other countries that performed moderately well and fell into the second category (the child-friendly group) are eSwatini, Gabon, São Tomé and Principe, Rwanda, Ghana, Kenya, Sierra Leone, Zimbabwe and Malawi.

In the bottom group are the poor performers, categorised as least child-friendly. With South Sudan regrettably remaining at the bottom of the table (52nd), other worst-performing countries are Eritrea, Cameroon, Sudan, Central African Republic, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia and Uganda.

In the 2023 ranking South Sudan remains the worst-performing country in meeting its obligations to children for several reasons:

- Spending is low on public social protection, education and health (only 0.8 per cent of GDP, 1.5 per cent of GDP, and 2.1 per cent of total government expenditure, respectively).
- With the fifth-highest under-5 mortality rate, at 98 deaths per 1,000 live births, nearly 1 out of every 10 South Sudanese children dies before their 5th birthday.
- Only 15 per cent and 41 per cent of the population in South Sudan have access to basic sanitation facilities and safe drinking water, respectively.
- School enrolment is low across all levels. At secondary level it is only 5.5 per cent. Pre-primary and primary enrolment ratios are also among the lowest, with only 20.5 per cent and 37.6 per cent of children enrolled respectively.

BOX 1: How well have African governments performed in protecting children from violence and exploitation?

The Protection Index, which objectively measures government efforts to protect children against harm and exploitation, is the other important component of the CFI. It examines both the legal and the policy framework that governments have put in place to protect children from abuse and exploitation, as well as the concrete outcomes they achieved in relation to child protection. It scores and ranks them on the basis of their performance in these things. The 2023 Protection Index results are presented in Annex 2 of this Brief.

The scores and rankings based on the Protection Index show that the top five performers in protecting children from abuse and exploitation are Mauritius, South Africa, Benin, the Seychelles and Cabo Verde (see Annex 2 for the scores for all the 52 countries). These countries have put in place comprehensive legal and policy framework to protect children from violence and exploitation. As demonstrated by the better child protection outcomes in higher birth registration coverage, and the lower prevalence of child labour and child marriage, these countries have effective implementation mechanisms compared to other countries.

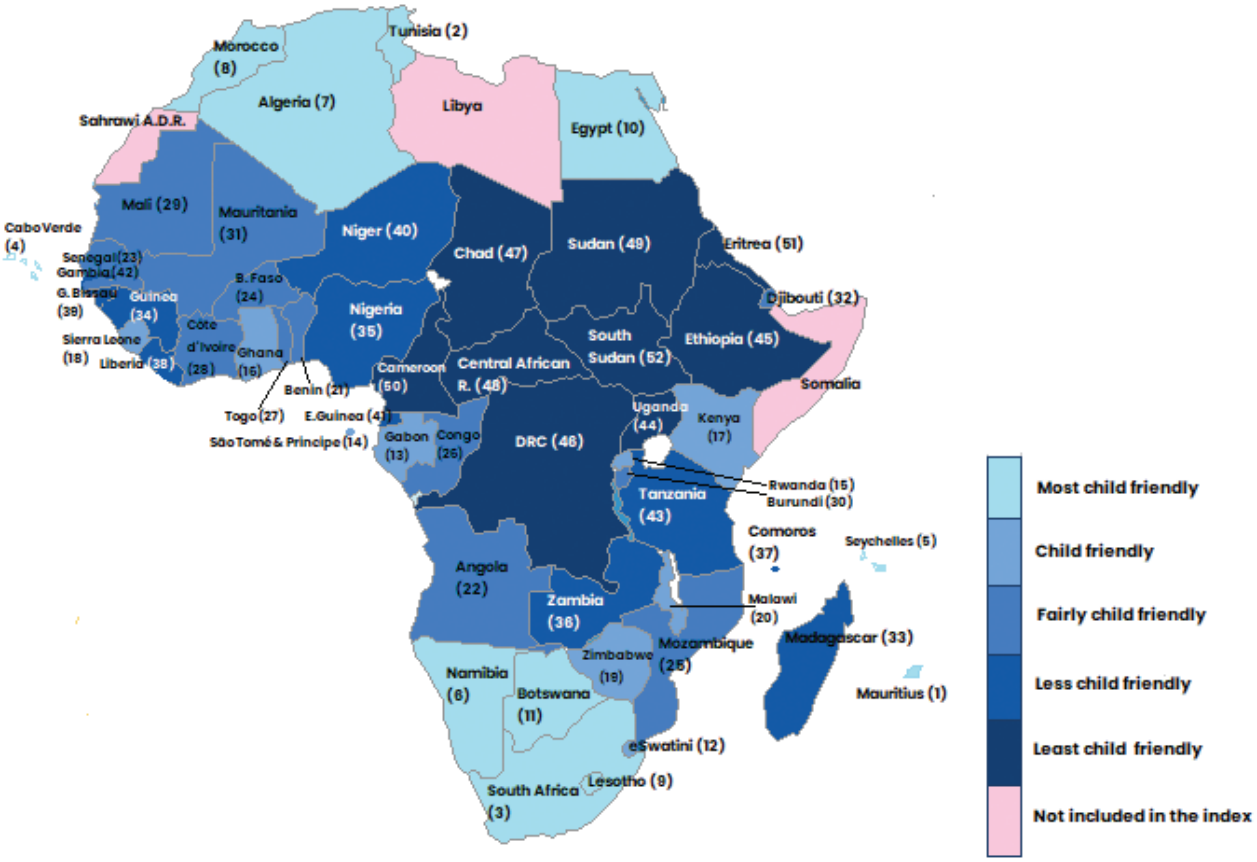
The five worst performers in child protection are South Sudan, Cameroon, Tanzania, Sudan and Eritrea. In contrast to the top performers, these countries have low birth registration coverage and a high prevalence of child labour and child marriage, and their national laws do not provide adequate legal protection to children from violence, trafficking and other forms of child abuse and exploitation. These findings show the long way ahead to ensure adequate protection to children, both in terms of putting in place comprehensive legal and policy frameworks and in terms of enhancing the effectiveness of implementation mechanisms to achieve concrete results in addressing violence against children.

Figure 2, below, presents the geographical distribution of child-friendly governments across Africa. As can be seen from the Figure, northern Africa remains the most child-friendly region in Africa, with four of the eleven most child-friendly countries. It boasts a better average score (0.7508) in the Index. The Southern Africa region also has four of the eleven most child-friendly countries in Africa, but with a lower ranking and a lower average score (0.7469) than northern African countries. The bottom category – the least child friendly group – is dominated by countries from Central Africa, namely Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Overall, countries that performed well in the CFI are those that achieved better results in reducing child malnutrition and mortality and improving access to education at all levels, as well as access to improved sanitation and safe drinking water. These are also the countries that invested more in social protection, education and health.

By contrast, in low-performing countries, significant proportions of children suffer from undernutrition, face high mortality, and have poor access to pre-primary and secondary education, improved sanitation and safe drinking water. This widespread deprivation is the result of governments' failures to invest adequately in these sectors.

FIGURE 2
GEOGRAPHY OF CHILD-FRIENDLINESS IN AFRICA, 2023



Note: 2023 rankings in brackets after country names.
Source: Compiled and prepared by ACPF.

3. Progress in child-friendliness over the past five years

Overall, child friendliness in Africa has shown marginal improvement over the last five years, with an increase in the index score of 3.5 percent (from 0.5187 in 2018 to 0.5368 in 2023) (see Table 2). Table 2 presents the score and rank changes in the CFI between 2018 and 2023. Out of the 52 countries, 33 have shown an improvement, while the remaining 19 countries saw a reduction in their scores. In terms of rankings, however, only 24 countries have improved their positions. The other 22 countries have declined in rank, while the remaining six have remained in their positions.

Sierra Leone's improvement is particularly remarkable. Its score increased by 32 per cent from 2018, and its position in the rankings improved by 20 places, from 38th to 18th. There are several reasons for this:

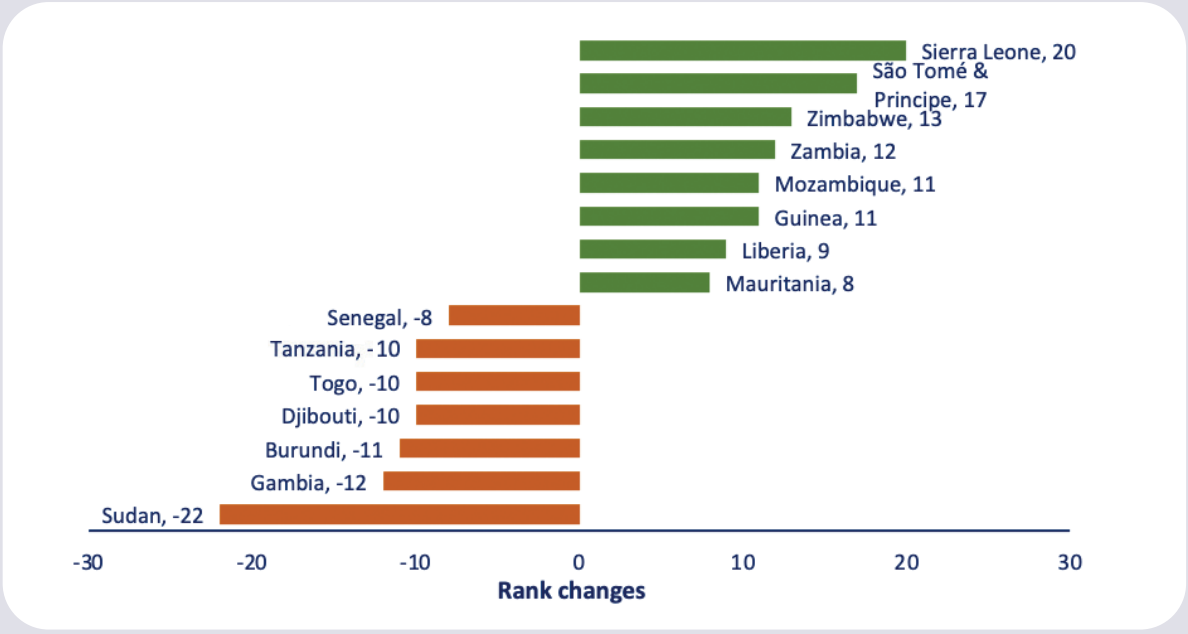
- Sierra Leone's education spending as a percentage of GDP increased threefold, from 3 per cent to 9 per cent between 2016 and 2021.
- The government's contribution to the Expanded Programme for Immunisation (EPI) increased from 2 per cent to 6.1 per cent.
- Birth registration expanded by 18 per cent, from 76.7 to 90.4 per cent
- Child labour declined from 37.4 to 25.2 per cent.

- Child marriage dropped from 39 to 29.6 per cent.
- Under-5 stunting declined markedly, from 37.8 to 26.8 per cent
- Access to clean drinking water improved from 58.1 to 63.8 per cent.

São Tomé and Principe's progress is also commendable. Its score increased by 23.6 per cent (from 0.4683 to 0.5939), resulting in a huge leap of 17 places, from 31st to 14th over the five-year period. The improvement is due to a number of factors:

- Birth registration became almost universal (98.6 per cent).
- Prevalence of child labour dropped by 60 per cent (from 26 to 10.5 per cent), child marriage declined by 20 per cent (from 35 to 27 per cent).
- Under-5 stunting declined by 45 per cent (from 17.1 to 11.8 per cent) and under-5 mortality dropped by more than 50 per cent (from 33.8 to 16 deaths per 1,000 live births).
- Government financial contributions to the EPI increased more than twofold, from 8 per cent to 20.5 per cent.

CHART 1
COUNTRIES WITH SIGNIFICANT CFI RANK CHANGES, 2018 VS. 2023



Source: Compiled and computed by ACPF.

As some countries rose in the CFI ranking, others dropped. Sudan dropped significantly, falling 22 places from 27th in 2018 to 49th in 2023. The sharp decline in performance is mainly due to the following:

- Significant reduction in health expenditure, from 18.1 per cent of total government expenditure in 2015 to only 5.6 per cent in 2019.
- Education expenditure decreased from 2.2 to 1.3 per cent of GDP.
- Social protection expenditure declined from 2.3 to 1.8 per cent of GDP.
- Measles immunisation coverage dropped from 86 per cent to 81 per cent.

TABLE 2 CHANGE IN CFI SCORES AND RANKINGS, 2018-2023

COUNTRY	2023		2018		% CHANGE IN SCORE	CHANGE IN RANK
	CFI SCORE	RANK	CFI SCORE	RANK		
Mauritius	0.8486	1	0.8424	1	0.7	0
Tunisia	0.8261	2	0.7823	3	5.6	1
South Africa	0.8235	3	0.7794	4	5.7	1
Cabo Verde	0.8207	4	0.744	5	10.3	1
Seychelles	0.8187	5	0.7156	8	14.4	3
Namibia	0.7691	6	0.7301	7	5.3	1
Algeria	0.7576	7	0.7846	2	-3.4	-5
Morocco	0.7206	8	0.6995	10	3	2
Lesotho	0.7110	9	0.6774	11	5	2
Egypt	0.6989	10	0.7416	6	-5.8	-4
Botswana	0.6838	11	0.6176	13	10.7	2
eSwatini	0.6326	12	0.7057	9	-10.4	-3
Gabon	0.6007	13	0.6311	12	-4.8	-1
São Tomé and Principe	0.5939	14	0.4683	31	26.8	17
Rwanda	0.5932	15	0.5383	20	10.2	5
Ghana	0.5887	16	0.5911	14	-0.4	-2
Kenya	0.5878	17	0.5539	16	6.1	-1
Sierra Leone	0.5767	18	0.4313	38	33.7	20
Zimbabwe	0.5705	19	0.4659	32	22.4	13
Malawi	0.5649	20	0.5300	21	6.6	1
Benin	0.5392	21	0.5127	23	5.2	2
Angola	0.5369	22	0.5508	18	-2.5	-4
Senegal	0.5362	23	0.5648	15	-5.1	-8
Burkina Faso	0.5248	24	0.5099	24	2.9	0
Mozambique	0.5154	25	0.4399	36	17.2	11
Congo	0.5091	26	0.5070	25	0.4	-1
Togo	0.5076	27	0.5532	17	-8.2	-10
Côte d'Ivoire	0.5041	28	0.4821	28	4.6	0
Mali	0.5022	29	0.4500	35	11.6	6
Burundi	0.4851	30	0.5453	19	-11	-11
Mauritania	0.4831	31	0.4263	39	13.3	8
Djibouti	0.4826	32	0.5261	22	-8.3	-10
Madagascar	0.4752	33	0.5022	26	-5.4	-7
Guinea	0.4587	34	0.3707	45	23.7	11
Nigeria	0.4500	35	0.4729	29	-4.8	-6
Zambia	0.4474	36	0.3515	48	27.3	12
Comoros	0.4459	37	0.4382	37	1.8	0
Liberia	0.4432	38	0.3619	47	22.5	9
Guinea-Bissau	0.4416	39	0.4072	42	8.5	3
Niger	0.4347	40	0.4175	41	4.1	1
Equatorial Guinea	0.4335	41	0.4541	34	-4.5	-7
Gambia	0.4311	42	0.4701	30	-8.3	-12
Tanzania	0.4165	43	0.4542	33	-8.3	-10
Uganda	0.4084	44	0.4245	40	-3.8	-4
Ethiopia	0.4055	45	0.4037	43	0.4	-2
Democratic R. of Congo	0.3997	46	0.3658	46	9.3	0
Chad	0.3856	47	0.3142	50	22.7	3
Central African R.	0.3655	48	0.3136	51	16.5	3
Sudan	0.3471	49	0.4930	27	-29.6	-22
Cameroon	0.3203	50	0.3420	49	-6.3	-1
Eritrea	0.3009	51	0.3726	44	-19.3	-7
South Sudan	0.1864	52	0.1429	52	30.4	0

Source: Compiled and computed by ACPF based on data from UNICEF (2023); UNESCO, World Bank and WHO

Gambia also dropped 12 places in its ranking, from 30th in 2018 to 42nd in 2023. A combination of factors contributed to the decline in performance:

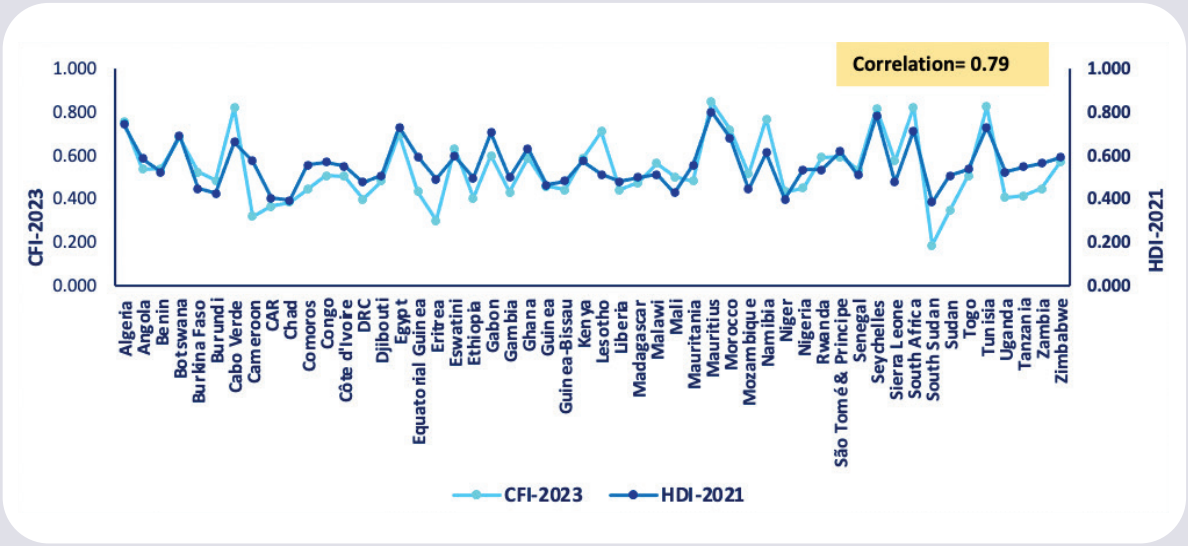
- Health spending went down by 58 per cent (from 10.5 to 4.4 per cent of total government expenditure).
- Social protection expenditure declined by 60 per cent (from 4.2 per cent of GDP to only 1.7 per cent).
- Birth registration dropped by 18 per cent (from 72 to 59 per cent).
- Measles immunisation coverage fell by 19 per cent (from 97 to 79 per cent).

4. Relationship of the CFI to other performance measures

Child-friendliness and human development

The realisation of children's rights and human development are interdependent and mutually reinforcing.[6] The correlation coefficient of 0.79 between the CFI and the Human Development Index (HDI) is a significant positive statistical association that reiterates this (see Chart 2). This correlation confirms that it is the States that have performed well in fulfilling the rights of children that have advanced in human development.

CHART 2
RELATION BETWEEN CFI AND HDI SCORES



Source: Calculated based on the CFI 2023 and UNDP 2022[7].

[6] *Resolution 41/19- adopted by the Human Rights Council on 12 July 2019*

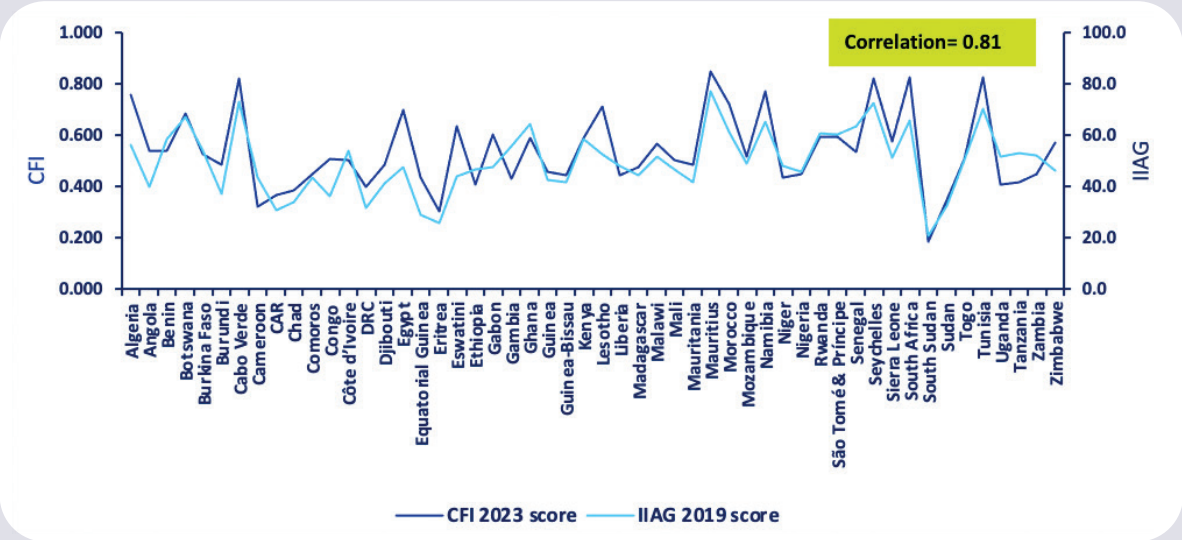
[7] *UNDP (2022). Human Development Report 2021-22: Uncertain Times, Unsettled Lives: Shaping our Future in a Transforming World. Washing. New York: United Nations Development Programme.*

Child-friendliness and governance

As elaborated in the previous chapter, good governance is a critical factor in States meeting their obligations to realise children's rights and thus in tackling child poverty. Chart 3 shows the high and positive correlation between the CFI and the Ibrahim Index of African Governance (IIAG), with a correlation coefficient of 0.81. Most countries that scored highly in the CFI have also performed well in the IIAG. The most child-friendly countries, such as Mauritius, Tunisia, South Africa, Cabo Verde, Seychelles, Namibia, Morocco and Botswana, are also among the highest-performing countries in governance.

On the other hand, countries that performed poorly in the CFI also performed poorly in governance. Six of the nine least child-friendly countries, namely South Sudan, Eritrea, Sudan, Central African Republic, Chad and the Democratic Republic of Congo, also have poor overall governance, according to the IIAG. These findings reinforce the role good governance plays in States meeting their obligations to children. They highlight the need to strengthen accountability and transparency across government.

CHART 3
RELATION BETWEEN CFI AND IIAG

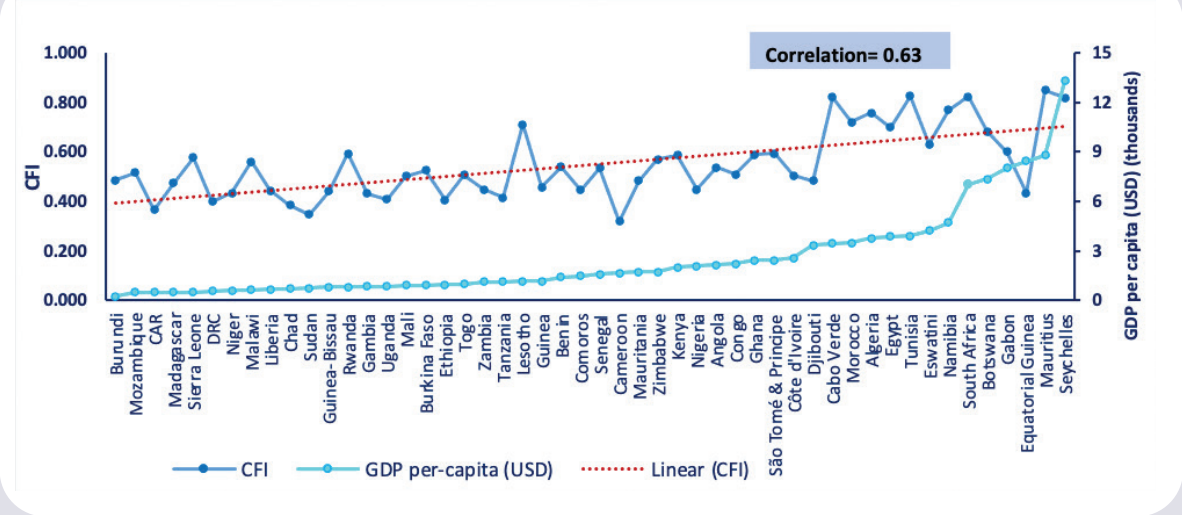


Source: Based on the CFI 2023 and 2022 data from Mo Ibrahim Foundation.

Child-friendliness and GDP per capita

Chart 4 demonstrates the relationship between child-friendliness and a country's income as measured by GDP per capita. A moderate and positive relationship is observed between the two, with a correlation coefficient of 0.63. This suggests that higher-income countries tend to achieve better results in ensuring the rights and wellbeing of children. But this is not true for all. Equatorial Guinea, with the second-highest income in Africa, gained a low score on the CFI and ranked as less child-friendly. Burundi, with the lowest GDP in Africa, performed better than Nigeria, a wealthier country. Sierra Leone outperformed much wealthier Angola. These results reaffirm the previous findings that it is not only money that is needed to improve the wellbeing of children, but equally important is the commitment to use it efficiently and effectively on sectors that benefit children in all aspects of their lives.

CHART 4
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CFI AND GDP PER CAPITA



Source: Based on the CFI 2023 and 2022 data from Mo Ibrahim Foundation.

5. Conclusions and recommended actions

It is evident from the analysis above that there has been modest but unsatisfactory progress in the child-friendliness of governments in Africa over the last five years. Most governments have yet to honour their commitments to children. The major barrier to the realisation of children's rights lies not in the legal and policy framework in place, but rather in the weak enforcement and implementation of these laws and policies. As a result, huge numbers of children are denied their basic rights and suffer from multiple derivations that are detrimental to their physical and cognitive development. Many of them also experience physical, psychological and sexual violence and exploitation, often in extreme forms.

The child-friendliness of a government does not necessarily relate to its economic status. A country can be child-friendly by making efficient use of its available resources, laying appropriate legal and policy foundations and putting in place effective implementation mechanisms for the realisation of children's rights. There are countries with relatively high GDP per capita that have gained low scores on the CFI and are grouped in the least child-friendly category. On the other hand, a number of low-income countries have gained higher scores on the CFI. These findings reaffirm the importance of political will and commitment to put children at the top of the national policy agenda and prioritise investments in their wellbeing.

Good governance is the other important characteristic of child-friendly governments. Governments with good governance promote children's rights by, among other things, facilitating the formulation of pro-child policies and strengthening accountability mechanisms at all levels to prevent corruption and resource waste. Where governance is poor, it is more likely that equitable distribution of resources will not take place and investments in programmes and sectors benefiting children will be inadequate and mismanaged.

As elaborated in the African Report on Child Wellbeing 2023, significant and sustained efforts need to be made to strengthen governance and accountability at all levels. For this, governments should build the capacity of oversight institutions, including the judiciary, national human rights institutions and the ombudsperson on child rights. These actions must be complemented by initiatives aiming at enhancing citizen and child participation in programme development, budgeting and implementation processes, and in holding implementing agencies to account.

Finally, it is important to emphasise that the CFI is a relative measure, which shows the performance of a government in comparison to others in the region. Caution should therefore be exercised in interpreting the CFI scores and rankings. A very high score in the CFI does not necessarily mean that the country has realised all aspects of children's rights and that there is no room for improvement. Likewise, the lowest CFI scores do not mean that the countries in this group have done nothing to advance children's rights. The CFI objectively reflects areas of strength and weakness and provides pointers on things that need to be improved to expedite the implementation of children's rights. Most importantly, it underscores the importance of strengthening accountability to children at all levels and under any circumstances.

Annex 1: Child-Friendliness Index: Methodology

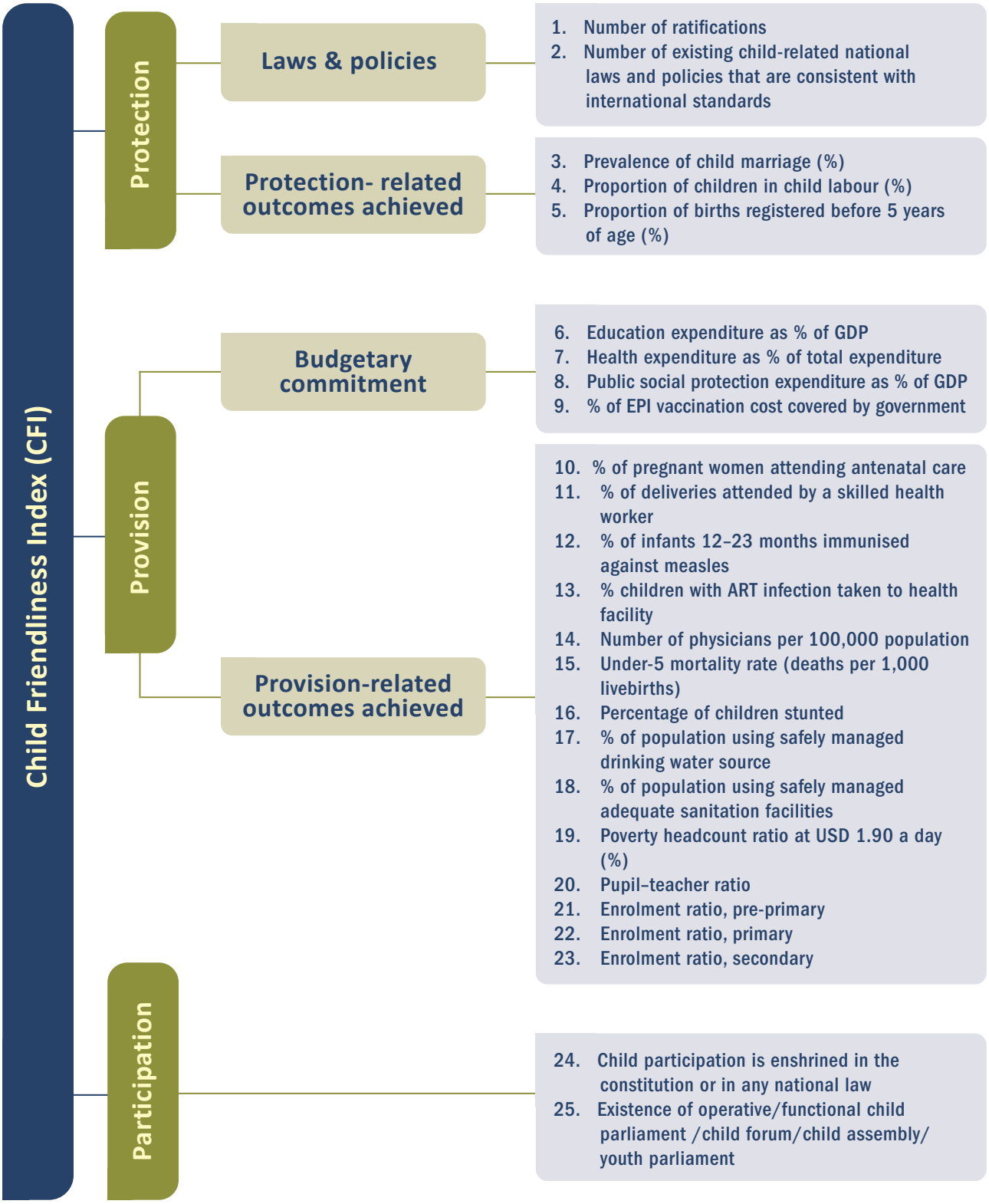
Introduction

The Child-Friendliness Index (CFI), a statistical tool developed by ACPF to measure the relative performance of African governments in relation to their obligations to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of children and to meet children's basic needs. The concept of the index originates from the CRC and ACRWC and considers almost all obligations outlined in these international and regional child rights instruments. These obligations are grouped into three broad dimensions: those related to the provision of basic services to children in order to meet their basic needs, those related to protection of children against violence and exploitation, and those related to ensuring that children participate in decisions about matters that affect them. See Figure A1.1 below for a depiction of the components of the Index.

The Provision dimension is made up of two sub-dimensions (budgetary commitment and provision-related outcomes) consisting of 18 indicators. These two sub-dimensions, in combination, form the Provision Index. Most of the indicators used in the Provision Index are related to multidimensional child poverty. In effect, the Provision Index assesses the performance of governments in addressing multidimensional child poverty and serves as the main analytical framework in this seventh edition of the African Report on Child Wellbeing, which focuses on child poverty.

The Protection dimension also has two sub-dimensions (laws and child-protection-related outcomes achieved), which, together, consist of five indicators. Child participation is intended to be measured through two indicators, but it was not included in the 2023 CFI as data on the identified indicators were not available.

FIGURE A1.1
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK UNDERLYING THE CHILD-FRIENDLINESS INDEX



Sources of data

Accurate, up-to-date and complete data on the indicators selected above are indispensable for the construction of the CFI. The reliable data sources that have been used for the calculation of the Index include the following: the most recent DHS and MICS surveys, the databases of several specialised UN agencies (e.g. UNICEF), UNESCO's Institute for Statistics, the UN Statistics Division, WHO, ILO, UNDP and the UN Population Division) and the databases of other international institutions, such as the IMF and the World Bank. The data on the legal and policy framework are generated from databases of international and regional treaty bodies. They were compiled based on a review of country reports submitted by States to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the ACRWC, as well as the Concluding Observations of these treaty bodies.

Data checks and thresholds

As a rule of thumb, each country should have data on at least two-thirds of the indicators to be included in the index construction. Also, for an indicator to be considered in the CFI, it should be available for at least two-thirds of the countries. A dimension or sub-dimension should also have data for at least two thirds of its components or indicators.

Checking and treating outliers

Outliers distort the results by obscuring the behavioural pattern of the rest of the dataset, and may affect the normality of the distributions. Boxplots, the most common method for the univariate identification of outliers, are used to check for extreme outliers. Then, any extreme outliers identified are treated using the "winsorisation" technique.

Correlation analysis

Correlation analysis is carried out to check whether a high degree of relationship (multicollinearity)[8] exists between indicators as well as for negative correlations, especially within the same sub-dimension. This will help us to avoid redundancy and undesirable properties in the construction of the index.

Missing data and imputation

Imputation – the replacement of missing data with substituted values – plays an important role in the completeness of a dataset and the robustness of the analysis. But care should be taken as too much use of imputation techniques can undermine the overall quality and relevance of the composite indicator.

[8] *In statistics, multicollinearity is a state of very high intercorrelation or inter-association among the independent variables, meaning that one can be linearly predicted from the others with a substantial degree of accuracy.*

A single imputation procedure called *hot deck imputation* (Euclidean distance)[9] is used to fill in any missing data by substituting missing values with observed units in the sample based on mathematical similarities.[10] The Euclidian distance (d_{ij}) is given by:

$$\text{Euclidean distance} = \mathrm{d_{ij}} = \sqrt{\sum_{\mathrm{k}} \left(\mathrm{k^{X_i} - k^{X_j}}\right)^2}$$

Where Index goes through all the indicators jointly observed on cases *i* and *j* and x_i and x_j are normalised and corrected values.

Then, the missing value for country *j* is replaced by the observed value for the same indicator on the most similar country (smallest Euclidean distance).

Normalisation

Normalisation serves the purpose of converting the indicators into the same unit. Among several methods, the rescaling or min-max method is applied in the development of the CFI. This approach widens the range of indicators (particularly indicators with a small range of values) and allows us to differentiate countries with similar levels of performance. It is also very much easier to communicate to a wider public. However, the approach is not appropriate in the presence of extreme values or outliers, which can distort the normalised indicator.

Observed minimum and maximum values were set to be used for the majority of the indicators. However, possible or natural minimum and maximum values (0 and 100, respectively) are used instead to normalise indicators given in the form of percentages.

When an increase in the value of an indicator corresponds to an increase in the performance, the normalised value I_{iC} for that particular indicator x_i of a country *c* is given by:

$$\mathrm{I_{ic}} = \frac{\mathrm{x_{ic}} - \mathrm{Min[x_i]}}{\mathrm{Range[\,x_i]}}$$

When an increase in the value of an indicator corresponds to a decrease in the performance, the normalised value I_{iC} for that particular indicator x_i of a country *c* is given by:

$$\mathrm{I_{ic}} = \frac{\mathrm{Max[x_i]} - \mathrm{x_{ic}}}{\mathrm{Range[\,x_i]}}$$

[9] *Several reasons can be mentioned for the choice of the popular hot deck method. Firstly, for a few missing cases in a dataset, we may not require sophisticated imputation methods. Secondly, the method does not rely on model fitting for the variable to be imputed, and thus is potentially less sensitive to model misspecification than an imputation method based on a parametric model, such as regression imputation. Another reason is for its attractive feature that only plausible values can be imputed, since values come from observed responses or records (Andridge and Little 2010).*

[10] *Note: Karpievitch et al. (2012) suggest that missing value imputations should be done following normalisation as normalisation performed after the imputation does not seem to be able to remove bias well enough.*

Weighting

Regardless of which method is used, weights are essentially value judgments (OECD 2008). For the development of the CFI, an equal weighting[11] scheme was adopted. The reason for this is that the index is conceptualised through the use of a rights-based approach and indicators related to the realisation of children's rights. And these child-right-related indicators are assumed to be of equal importance as all rights are equal, indivisible, interrelated and interdependent (UNICEF 2014).[12] Similarly, we followed this principle across sub-dimensions and dimensions: equal weight is assigned to each of the sub-dimensions and the dimensions are also equally weighted.[13]

Aggregation

Arithmetic mean at sub-dimension levels and geometric mean at dimension and index levels are applied in the CFI to aggregate results. Aggregation follows three steps.

Sub-dimension indices: j^{th} Sub-dimension score SD_{jc} in the n^{th} dimension for a given country c is a simple linear weighted function of a total of m normalized indicators I_{ikc} with weights w_{ik},

$$\mathrm{SD_{jnc}} = \sum_{\mathrm{i=1}}^{m} \mathrm{I_{ijnc} w_{ijn}}$$

Dimension indices: n^{th} dimension score D_{nc} for a given country c is a geometric mean of a total of k sub-dimensions scores SD_{jnc} with weights w_{jn},

$$\mathrm{D_{nc}} = \prod_{\mathrm{j=1}}^{k} \mathrm{SD_{jnc}^{w_{jn}}}$$

Finally, aggregating the p dimensional indices using geometric mean to obtain CFI for a country c:

$$\mathrm{CFI_c} = \prod_{\mathrm{n=1}}^{p} \mathrm{D_{nc}^{w_n}}$$

[11] *Equal weighting can be applied after a proper scaling of the sub-indicators. Equal weighting works well if all sub-indicators are uncorrelated, or they are all highly correlated (Saisana et al. 2003).*

[12] *Human rights are typically understood to be of equal value, each right is conceived of as equally important as every other. On this view, there can exist no potential for conflict between fundamental human rights. One is simply meant to attach equal moral weight to each and every human right. This prohibits arranging human rights in order of importance http://www.iep.utm.edu/hum-rts/ ; https://www.unicef.org/crc/index_30196.html*

[13] *It is worth mentioning here that if variables are grouped into sub-dimensions and those are further aggregated into dimension index and then into composite index, the sub-dimensions grouping the larger number of variables will have higher weight and could result in an unbalanced structure in the index.*

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Annex 2: The Child-Friendliness Index 2023

TABLE A2.1 CHILD-FRIENDLINESS INDEX 2023, INCLUDING DIMENSIONS, SCORES AND COUNTRY RANKINGS

COUNTRY	PROTECTION LAWS	PROTECTION OUTCOMES	PROVISION BUDGET	PROVISION OUTCOMES	PROTECTION INDEX	PROVISION INDEX	CFI	RANK
Mauritius	0.9095	0.9407	0.7054	0.8593	0.9250	0.7785	0.8486	1
Tunisia	0.6190	0.9870	0.8597	0.8868	0.7817	0.8731	0.8261	2
South Africa	0.7881	0.9380	0.8515	0.7306	0.8598	0.7887	0.8235	3
Cabo Verde	0.7881	0.9037	0.7772	0.8194	0.8439	0.7980	0.8207	4
Seychelles	0.7857	0.9080	0.7286	0.8644	0.8446	0.7936	0.8187	5
Namibia	0.7667	0.8307	0.8111	0.6772	0.7980	0.7412	0.7691	6
Algeria	0.4810	0.9777	0.8509	0.8233	0.6857	0.8370	0.7576	7
Morocco	0.5643	0.9363	0.6533	0.7812	0.7269	0.7144	0.7206	8
Lesotho	0.8143	0.7140	0.7226	0.6083	0.7625	0.6630	0.7110	9
Egypt	0.5643	0.9240	0.5835	0.7841	0.7221	0.6764	0.6989	10
Botswana	0.4524	0.8883	0.8245	0.6600	0.6339	0.7377	0.6838	11
Eswatini	0.5476	0.8013	0.5660	0.6447	0.6624	0.6041	0.6326	12
Gabon	0.4952	0.8270	0.4959	0.6410	0.6400	0.5638	0.6007	13
São Tomé and Principe	0.4976	0.8670	0.4020	0.7174	0.6568	0.5370	0.5939	14
Rwanda	0.7476	0.8703	0.3464	0.5495	0.8066	0.4363	0.5932	15
Ghana	0.6429	0.7707	0.3556	0.6819	0.7039	0.4924	0.5887	16
Kenya	0.7071	0.7570	0.3789	0.5885	0.7316	0.4722	0.5878	17
Sierra Leone	0.7333	0.7853	0.3732	0.5146	0.7589	0.4382	0.5767	18
Zimbabwe	0.7167	0.6237	0.4204	0.5637	0.6686	0.4868	0.5705	19
Malawi	0.7619	0.7177	0.3244	0.5743	0.7395	0.4316	0.5649	20
Benin	0.9571	0.7673	0.2590	0.4443	0.8570	0.3392	0.5392	21
Angola	0.7214	0.5867	0.4187	0.4688	0.6506	0.4431	0.5369	22
Senegal	0.5667	0.7513	0.3547	0.5473	0.6525	0.4406	0.5362	23
Burkina Faso	0.6595	0.6110	0.4138	0.4550	0.6348	0.4339	0.5248	24
Mozambique	0.7333	0.6003	0.3479	0.4607	0.6635	0.4003	0.5154	25
Congo	0.5333	0.8483	0.2884	0.5148	0.6726	0.3853	0.5091	26
Togo	0.7881	0.7320	0.2309	0.4984	0.7595	0.3392	0.5076	27
Côte d'Ivoire	0.6452	0.7420	0.2680	0.5034	0.6919	0.3673	0.5041	28
Mali	0.5810	0.7327	0.3380	0.4423	0.6524	0.3866	0.5022	29
Burundi	0.3929	0.7787	0.3679	0.4920	0.5531	0.4255	0.4851	30
Mauritania	0.5405	0.6473	0.3045	0.5111	0.5915	0.3945	0.4831	31
Djibouti	0.5619	0.8597	0.2067	0.5434	0.6950	0.3352	0.4826	32
Madagascar	0.5619	0.6610	0.3152	0.4355	0.6094	0.3705	0.4752	33
Guinea	0.7881	0.6377	0.2070	0.4254	0.7089	0.2967	0.4587	34
Nigeria	0.6357	0.6527	0.2241	0.4410	0.6441	0.3144	0.4500	35
Zambia	0.5000	0.5403	0.2990	0.4960	0.5198	0.3851	0.4474	36
Comoros	0.4643	0.7573	0.2002	0.5618	0.5930	0.3354	0.4459	37
Liberia	0.5000	0.6990	0.1913	0.5772	0.5912	0.3323	0.4432	38
Guinea-Bissau	0.5786	0.6770	0.2175	0.4465	0.6259	0.3116	0.4416	39
Niger	0.5429	0.5107	0.3534	0.3644	0.5265	0.3588	0.4347	40
Equatorial Guinea	0.3833	0.6700	0.2888	0.4764	0.5068	0.3709	0.4335	41
Gambia	0.3786	0.7300	0.2023	0.6176	0.5257	0.3535	0.4311	42
Tanzania	0.3000	0.5703	0.3523	0.4991	0.4136	0.4193	0.4165	43
Uganda	0.5786	0.6003	0.1591	0.5037	0.5894	0.2831	0.4084	44
Ethiopia	0.6786	0.3913	0.2355	0.4323	0.5153	0.3191	0.4055	45
Democratic Republic of Congo	0.4786	0.6543	0.1898	0.4292	0.5596	0.2854	0.3997	46
Chad	0.6762	0.4203	0.2723	0.2855	0.5331	0.2789	0.3856	47
Central African Republic	0.6381	0.5230	0.2086	0.2563	0.5777	0.2312	0.3655	48
Sudan	0.2500	0.7167	0.1594	0.5082	0.4233	0.2846	0.3471	49
Cameroon	0.2476	0.6440	0.1286	0.5133	0.3993	0.2569	0.3203	50
Eritrea	0.3833	0.5723	0.0924	0.4041	0.4684	0.1933	0.3009	51
South Sudan	0.1143	0.4830	0.0849	0.2576	0.2349	0.1479	0.1864	52

Source: Compiled and computed by ACPF.

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