

Commentary and Points for Discussion (Child wellbeing session)

**Yehualashet Mekonen
Coordinator, Information and Statistics
The African Child Policy Forum (ACPF)**

**3rd OECD World Forum
“Statistics, Knowledge and Policy”
Charting Progress, Building Visions, Improving Life
27-30 October 2009
Busan, Korea**



Outline

- **Children and public policy**
- **Child wellbeing measurement: Concept, approaches and data sources**
- **Indicators versus pointers**
- **Putting things together: Towards a global child wellbeing observatory**
- **Points for discussion**

Children and public policy

Where do they stand in public policy prioritization?

- Every society is concerned about its children
- Improvement in evidence-based public policy formulation and implementation
- The UNCRC - a major stimulus in bringing children's issues in public policy agenda
- International development framework (such as MDGs) contributed to drawing attention to children.
- Still a long way to go towards this end

Children and public policy . . . (cont'd)

- Budgets are true reflections of priority
- The theme for our second report: *Budgeting for Children*
- It will examine how the budget process affects child wellbeing
- Intends to come up with policy recommendations for increased allocation and child sensitive budget processes

Child wellbeing measurement: Concepts, approaches and data sources

→ Difference in conceptualizing child wellbeing

→ Conceptual difference has pros and cons

Pros

- ✓ *spurs more research, discussion and thinking*
- ✓ *Leads to more clarity and better understanding*
- ✓ *Results a conceptually coherent and exhaustive definition*
- ✓ *Leads to refinement of the measurement of child wellbeing that we are aspiring for.*

Cons

- ✓ **Confusion**
- ✓ **Barrier for comparison**
- ✓ **Lack of a unified framework (we have different "OECD", UNICEF or any others framework).**

Child wellbeing measurement: Concepts, approaches and data sources . . .

- Child wellbeing is a multidimensional construct
- The word 'multi' shows that we are not and could not be sure of how many dimensions would adequately capture it
- It expands with the body of knowledge
- More research to identify new components and dimensions that have bearing on the wellbeing of children

Indicators versus Pointers

- We need **“Pointers”** of child wellbeing and not **“Indicators”**
- Implied in the word **“Indicator”** is an element of giving in for imprecision
- **“Pointers”** directly and precisely point where we are and where we heading to
- At least conceptually, we need to aspire for a more direct and relevant **“pointers”**
- We have to avoid, as much as possible, use of proxy measures

Indicators versus Pointers . . .(cont'd)

This, ideally, means that:

- We have to select/identify a more direct “pointers” and develop a method/protocol for data collection
- We also need to come up with an exhaustive model of child wellbeing that captures every dimension of wellness, life circumstances, including all subjective components
- Incorporate measures of environment, context and other aspects that have bearings on wellbeing
- Maintain timeliness

Indicators versus Pointers . . . (cont'd)

→ What should be the criteria of selection?

- ✓ *The principle of non-discrimination*
- ✓ *The best interests of the child, and*
- ✓ *Child participation*

→ What other considerations?

- ✓ *Relevance and directness to the phenomenon/ dimension they are referring to*
- ✓ *Consistency in order to be able to track progress over time*
- ✓ *Reliability*
- ✓ *Involving children in their development*

Indicators versus pointers. . .(cont'd)

Regarding the taxonomy

- An indication of the growing numbers of indicators for measuring child wellbeing
- Need for a detail rules/procedures for classification within each context
- Developing a guideline on the definitions, rationale, concepts, techniques of measurement and sources for each indicator
- Child participation (how the indicator was developed)

Putting pieces together: Towards a global child wellbeing observatory

Why do we need a global child wellbeing observatory?

- Enhances monitoring and evaluation to track progress in child wellbeing
- Helps harmonises concepts, definitions, indicators, techniques of measurement, etc.
- Avoids duplication of efforts
- Improves accessibility
- Encourages and fosters collaboration

Putting pieces together: Towards a global child wellbeing observatory . . .

- Serves as a one-stop-shop for everything on child wellbeing
- Serves as a model and serves technical guidance for national and regional observatories
- Facilitates comparison at regional and international levels

The initiatives are there:

- ✓ *Multi-National Project for Monitoring and Measuring Children's Wellbeing*
- ✓ *UNICEF's initiative, Wiki, Africanchild.Info, Childinfo, etc..*

What is lacking...

- ✓ *Putting the pieces together and organising*
- ✓ *Creating a comprehensive collection including documents referring to legal and policy framework*

Points for discussion

- Do we have a comprehensive and well defined definition for child wellbeing?**
- How do we harmonise conceptual differences?**
- Are the indicators sharp and pointing?**
- What can we do to improve precision?**
- How effectively have we communicated results of wellbeing measurement to policy-makers?**

Thank you for your attention!