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# **TAXONOMY FOR CHILD WELL BEING INDICATORS**

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# Social indicators and monitoring the status of children

- Social indicators are a vital tool for planning and social reporting, especially in the present era.
- Policymakers and social services planners increasingly rely on social indicators to guide the making of social policy.
- Recent years have brought a dramatic rise in the number of efforts to measure and monitor the status of children.



# Lack of unifying taxonomy

- Despite numerous efforts and reports the field of social child indication is fragmented and lacking a unifying taxonomy.
- Often the term *indicator* simply refers to statistical measures.
- Little elaboration on the theoretical concepts or the relationship between indicators and other factors.

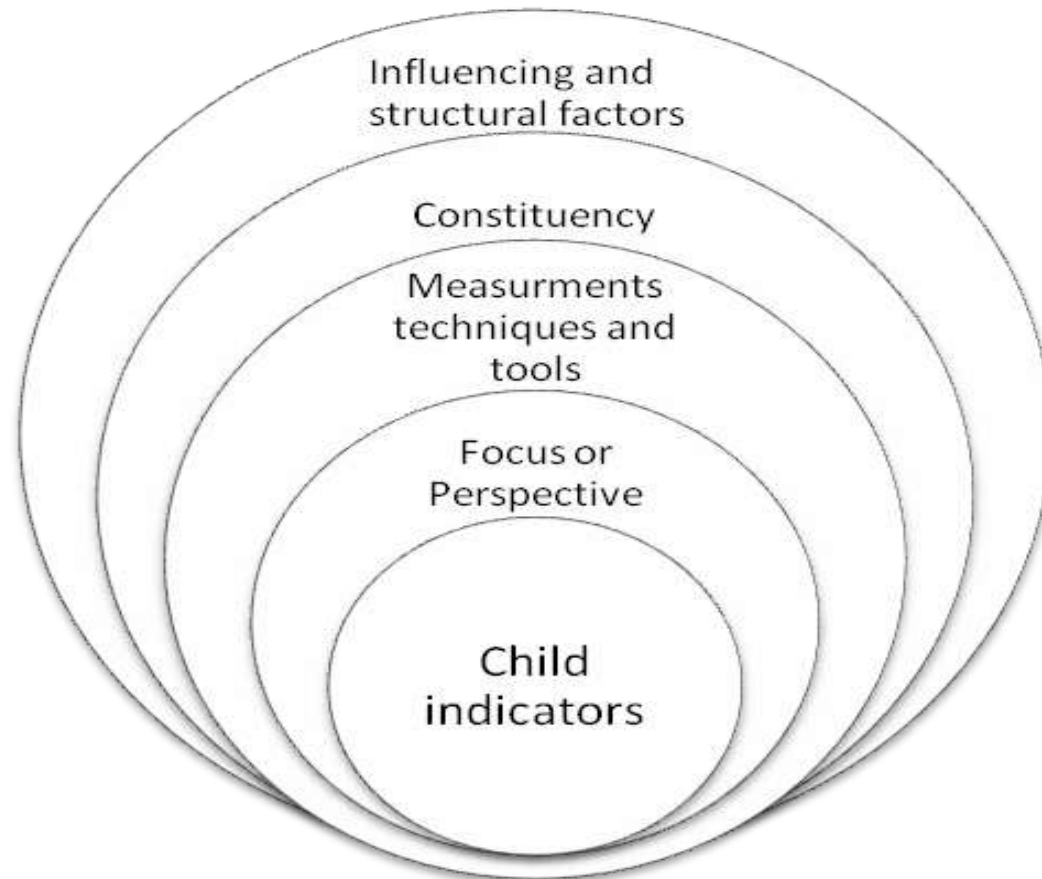
# What is an Indicator?

- Webster's dictionary: *Indicators* as - denoting something, a pointing or directing device.
- *Social indicators* - statistics and any other forms of evidence that help assess where we stand and where we are heading (Bauer, 1966).
- Like weather warning systems - childhood indicators can point to what is coming economically and socially.



# The Interactive Nature of Indicators

- In order to understand the concept of child indicators one must look at the context of five interrelated contexts:



# Influencing and Structural Factors

- An array of influencing factors is interacting with child indicators.
- Such factors include gender, age, religion and a variety of personal characteristics.
- Children's well being must be understood in both the context of their development and interactions with the environment.
- Environment – family, but also a range of other people and systems - friends, neighbours, health care, child care, school and so forth.

# Constituency

- Demand from policy makers was among the facilitating factors in the development of social indicators and child indicators in particular.
- The interaction is complex - as the constituency is not merely policy makers.
- Indicators have *two-direction* interaction with a variety of constituencies: general public, the media, professionals working with children, advocates', the academic world and children themselves.

# Measurement Techniques and Tools

- The development of a few sub-field supported the development of child indicators and effected its methodology :

## **The Unit of observation**

- The child indicator movement began incorporating child-cantered indicators separating, at least for measurement purposes, the child from family.
- Such perspective can yield a different finding with important consequences for children's lives.

# Measurement Techniques and Tools

## Source of information

- The richness of children's lives means no single source of information is complete.
- Today, more studies are moving toward using the child as their source of information instead of a proxy reports.
- Studies directly involving children have yielded just as good response rates and reliability.

# Measurement Techniques and Tools

## Direct or indirect measures

- Indicators of children's well being should include both direct and indirect measures.
- Recent years have witnessed a move toward more direct measures.

These sub-fields are interacting between themselves in a reciprocal way.

# The Perspective or Focus

Major changes have accrued in this circle:

## **From Survival and Basic Needs to Well-Being**

- In the past, much attention has been paid to children's physical survival and basic needs.
- Shift occurred when the focus moved to well-being and promotion of child development.

## **From Negative to Positive**

- The absence of problems or failures does not necessarily indicate proper growth and success.
- The challenge became developing indicators for protective factors and positive behaviours



# The Perspective or Focus

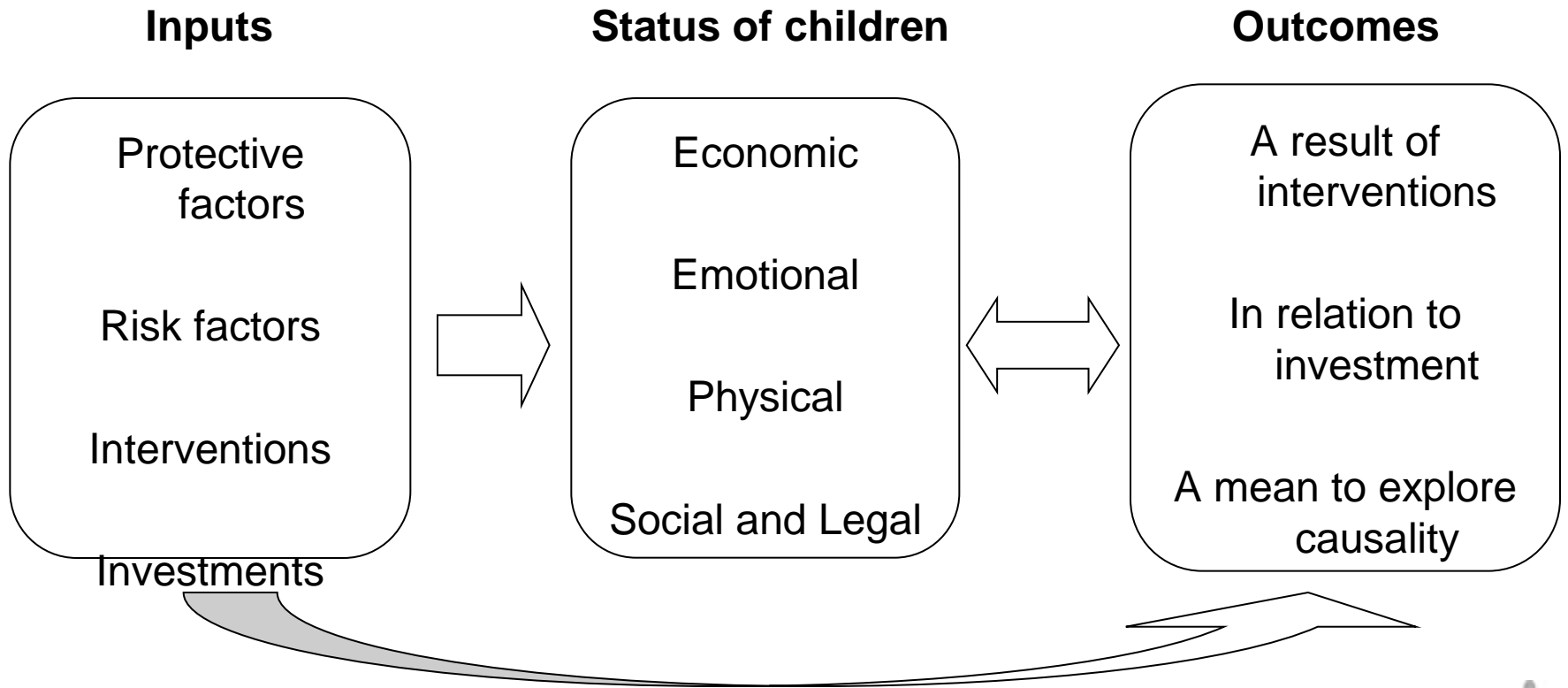
## From Well-Becoming to Well-Being.

- Children are instrumentalized by the forward-looking perspectives – as their "good life" is postponed until adulthood.
- In contrast to the future focus of *well-becoming*, *well-being* has more immediate implication.

## Objective or subjective

- As the child indicators movement grows a new role for children has emerged - one that coupled the search for objective measures with a subjective view of childhood.

# The child indicators



# The child indicators

## Indicators of Inputs

- Child indicators have long been used for monitoring investment in child services and programs.
- Such indicator include for example - expenditure on education, health and social services or allocations of social workers, teachers as well as class size.
- Monitoring the effect of an intervention or program is another example.

# The child indicators

## Outcome indicators

- Measures trying to connect a series of desired outcomes in children lives to the level of investment or to specific programs or services showing there consequences.
- In some cases these indicators might be misleading. For example, in the education system the outcome might focus on the achievements of children and not measure the general system effectiveness, as can be seen in the data from Israel -

# Percentage of Children Entitled to Matriculation Certificate in Israel (1999)

<b>The population group</b>	<b>% of children entitled to matriculation certificate</b>
All the 17 years old	41.1%
All the 12th grade students	69.1%
All the students which took the matriculation exams	79.9%

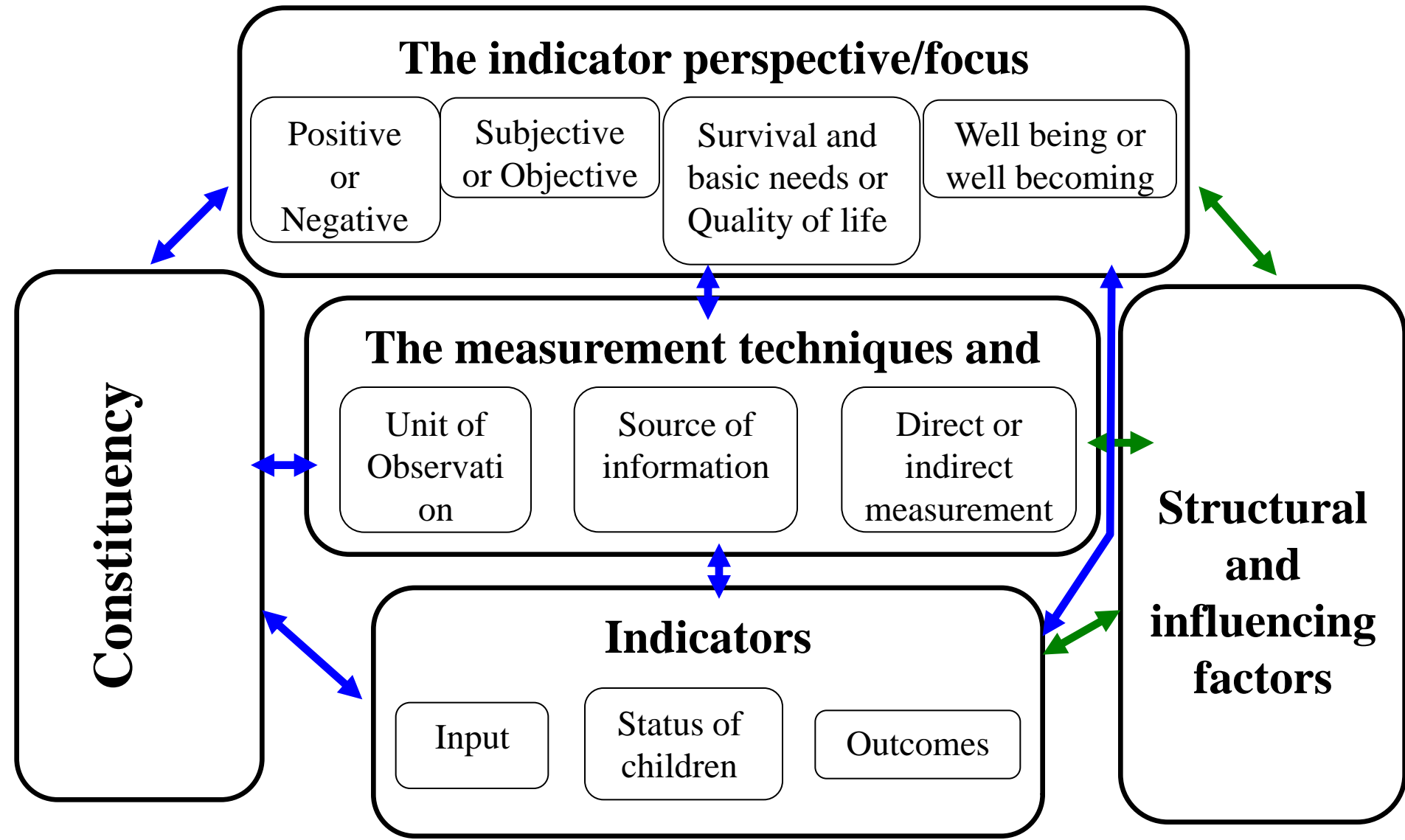
(Source: Ben-Arieh, Zionit & Bistock-Rivlin, 2000)

# The child indicators

## Indicators of Children Status

- In the above table the same measure is used in three different populations.
- Change in the evaluated population change the results.
- The results indicate not only the system efficiency but also its effectiveness.
- Indicators of children status are of importance for both the research results and its practical applications.

# The Interactions between Different Circles



# The Interactions between Different Circles

- Different contexts are interactive between themselves.
- The child indicators are both a consequence of the various context levels but also an influence on them.
- While it was argued that major shifts in the perspective have led to the rapid development of indicators and as a result advancements in measurement and methodology accrued - less attention was paid to the interactive relations between the two contexts.

# Putting the Taxonomy into Use

Short exercise: trying to identify where the field stands today -

1. Indicators are driven by the Convention for the Rights of the Child. The convention encourage measurement of children's current status and bring them as constituency.
2. Although the measurement today focus more on well-being, developing countries (appropriately) still tend to focus on survival indicators – shows the effected of the environment.

# Putting the Taxonomy into Use

3. New domains for child well-being indicators have emerged.
4. Efforts to measure and monitor children's well-being today start from the child.
5. Local and regional reports are multiplying.
6. Efforts to develop composite indices are underway at all geographic levels.
7. Policy-oriented efforts include policymakers in the process of developing indicators.

# Future Perspectives

- The field is growing  
(Between 2000 - 2005, twice as many reports published than in the entire 1980s).
- The growth is likely to continue in non–Western countries, especially more local and regional reports.
- Establishment of periodical reports.
- Continues move in the new directions – we left the station.
- **New role for children** - active actors in the effort to measure and monitor their well-being
- Maturing and organizing – **ISCI and CIR.**

