UNICEF IRC / OECD / European Commission Child Well-being Expert Consultation, 25 to 27 May 2009

Summary

The purpose of this consultation is to develop a shared understanding of a set of data that countries should monitor in order to inform policies for children's well-being. The indicators derived from this data will not be restricted to traditionally measured concepts, such as youth inactivity or child income poverty. Expert participants are invited to freely contribute experience, opinion and evidence to each discussion in regard to conceptual and methodological issues of indicating levels of child well-being across countries.

The consultation will be made up of nine sessions, presented over two and a half days, and culminate in recommendations for indicators and an associated research agenda. The expert consultation will take place at the OECD conference centre in Paris, France.

Existing cross-national comparisons of child well-being are data driven. The dependence on existing data means that the conceptualisation and monitoring of child well-being relies on the independent goals of specific academic and policy fields. Using measures designed for separate interpretation of *different parts* of children's lives also means the interaction of child well-being outcomes is not clearly understood, and child well-being simply becomes an amalgam of indicators commonly defined as important. Furthermore, the post-hoc creation of child well-being measures leaves questions regarding the accuracy with which child well-being is reported, and the value of such exercises.

Following a critical review of current comparative child well-being frameworks, the meeting will address the sociological and statistical considerations for researchers and policy-makers. Dichotomies such as well-being and well-becoming, ill-being and well-being, objective and subjective measures all have their place in the literature, and in frameworks to assess the lives of children although serving different policy and advocacy objectives. The meeting will discuss issues of convergence and complementarity in approaches. Parallel discussions during the meeting will provide experts the opportunity to discuss the role for child participation in cross-country analysis, the use of large data sets for secondary analysis, and the meaningfulness of cross-country comparisons based on income or culture.

The final sessions of the meeting will address policy-orientated child well-being indicators. The relative merits of child poverty measures will be debated, so lessons can be drawn for constructing child well-being measures with equivalent impact.

Additional notes

Presenters are asked to produce a 3 to 5 page summary of their presentations, along with a short reading list for further exploration of the issues. Presentations should directly address the purpose of the section, and last approximately 15 minutes.

Participants are asked to read all of the pre-consultation material.

Rapporteur: Laura Lippman

REVISED AGENDA

<u>Day 1: Monday the 25th of May</u>

14:30 to 15:00   *Welcoming comments: convening agencies (IRC, OECD, EC)*

15:00 to 16:00   *Session 1: Assessing child well-being in multiple dimensions – why do we do it, what have we learned?*

Moderator: Monika Queisser (OECD - ELS/SPD)
Presenters: Asher Ben-Arieh / Kenneth Land

The purpose of this session is to introduce the state of the art in terms of cross-country analysis and country-level of child well-being. OECD and UNICEF child well-being frameworks will be introduced alongside discussion of underlying process, methodological constructs, as well as limitations and criticisms. Nationally (Ireland, Germany, US) – sub-national variations, will also be presented.

Participants are invited to comment on the indicators used, the operationalisation of child well-being, the validity and reliability of the indices, and the broader pros and cons of the exercises.

16:00 to 16:30   *COFFEE / TEA*

16:30 to 17:30   *Session 2: Assessing child well-being by themes – why do we do it, what have we learned?*

Moderator: Ferran Casas
Presenters: Candace Currie (HBSC) / Andreas Schleicher (OECD/PISA)

This session will include presentations from coordinators of cross-country surveys of children. The purpose is to learn from their experiences of selecting indicators for informing policy, based on the outcomes the surveys are designed to measure, and the needs of government clients.

Participants are invited to question the presenters with a view to better understanding the limitations of cross-national surveys and the expectations and involvement of government clients.

17:30   *DRINKS*

<u>Day 2: Tuesday the 26th of May</u>

09:30 to 10:45   *Session 3: A correct perspective of childhood? The role and responsibilities of indicators for child well-being*

Moderator: Rob Sinclair
Presenters: Ivar Frones / Sinead Hanafin

This session will address the nature of available data on children of all ages. Child capabilities by age often mean operationalisation of child well-being is adolescent focussed. How do we assess well-being for children of all ages across all dimensions? Is it appropriate to treat children as a single group? And what are the issues for child participation?

Participants are invited to comment on age-specific aspects of indicating child well-being for all children. Participants are also invited to debate the merits of child participation in the collection of child well-being statistics.

10:45 to 11:15   *COFFEE / TEA*

11:15 to 12:30   *Session 4: Child statistics objective and subjective, for well-being and well-becoming*

Moderator: Leonardo Menchini
Presenters: Janne Jonsson / Anna D'Áddio (OECD)

Indicators to monitor the lives of children across countries can come in many different forms. Objective measures taken from population statistics stem from interventions for family income, health and education. Subjective measures on the other hand provide personal representations of the child's state of being. What is the value of applying both well-being and well-becoming measures?

Participants are asked to contribute experience and opinion to this debate, with a view to discussing the relative merits of each approach. Where best to concentrate a focus to inform effective policy responses?

12: 30 to 14:00   *LUNCH*

14: 00 to 17:30   Session 5: "One size fits all?" A universal CRC-informed international Child Well-being framework with socio-economic, culture specific dimensions? How to reconstruct the framework for monitoring and assessing child well-being.

14:00 to 14:45   Part 1: Making the best use of available cross country data

Moderator: Donald Hernandez
Presenter: Jonathan Bradshaw / Andras Gabos

What data is already out there, and how can it be used? What can be learned from the surveys already being undertaken in terms of, a) cross-culture comparisons; b) which child indicators are already being regularly reported to governments; and c) where the gaps are (mental health, violence or neglect).

Participants are invited to comment on the availability and timeliness of cross-country reporting of child statistics and help to identify gaps in knowledge.

14:45 to 15:30   Part 2: Positive and negative perspectives of child well-being: Well-being vs. Ill-being

Moderator: Mario Biggeri
Presenter: Laura Lippman (Child Trends)

This session will return to the debate on positive and negative measures of well-being in children. Reference will be made to the methodological issues for developing positive indicators.

Participants are invited to debate on the relative merits of positive and negative measures of well-being.

15:30 to 16:00   COFFEE / TEA

16:00 to 16:45   Part 3: Indicators for high and middle income countries

Moderator: Pascal Wolff (EUROSTAT)
Presenter: Petra Hoelscher (UNICEF)

This session will assess the qualitative differences in child well-being indicators developed for high-income countries and indicators developed for middle-income countries.

Participants are invited to raise and debate the considerations for developing appropriate indicators of child well-being for less economically advanced countries.

16:45 to 17:30   Part 4: Measuring child well-being for informing policy choices

Moderator: Laura Camfield (Young Lives)
Presenter: Simon Chapple (OECD)

Understanding how directly amenable child indicators are to policy responses is central to child well-being indicators being adopted by policy makers. What interventions are available to policy makers and how does this restrict indicator selection? The use of aggregated measures, and associated methodologies, including weighting, will be discussed at this point also.

Participants are invited to comment on the value of selecting indicators for primarily policy purposes.

<u>Day 3: Wednesday the 27th of May</u>

09:30 to 10:45   Session 6: Assessing material wellbeing for children

Moderator: Hugh Frazer
Presenter: Isabelle Maquet (EC)

Child income poverty remains high on the agenda of OECD and European countries. The indicator itself provides a good example of monitorable and understandable item, notably too, child income poverty is readily affected by tax and benefit policies. But is this enough for proponents of child well-being, and how well does income poverty in families presently represent the lives lived by children in those families? What can material deprivation measures bring to the assessment of children's material living conditions?

Participants are invited to discuss the relative merits of child income poverty, and generate recommendations not only for improving the measure, but suggesting indicators with similar high amenability to government policy.

10:45 to 11:15   COFFEE / TEA

11:15 to 13:00   Session 7: Group discussions

The final morning session of day three will split the participants into two groups to revisit the discussions of the previous two days. Particular points to address include: 1) the reassessment of the well-being framework; 2) gaps in the conceptual organisation of dimension of well-being; and 3) gaps in the data.

The purpose of the discussion will be to indentify indicators which are best suited to monitoring child well-being cross-nationally, and the associated research agenda, for presentation after lunch.

13:00 to 14:30   LUNCH

14:30 to 15:30   Session 8: Feedback from the group discussions

Moderator: David Parker (UNICEF IRC)
Presenters: Karen Bloor / Willem Adema (OECD)

The first afternoon session of day three will be used to hear feedback from the morning's group discussions.

Participants will be asked to present group opinion on the topics presented before lunch, and group decision regarding a framework for indicating child well-being and an associated research agenda.

15:30 to 16:00   COFFEE / TEA

16:00 to 17:30   Session 9: Summing up: Recommendations for cross-country indicators of child well-being and research agenda

Moderator: Laura Lippman (Child Trends)
Presenters: Dominic Richardson (OECD) and Isabelle Maquet (EC)

The final session of the consultation will draw together the general consensus on the guiding issues raised above with the help of a rapportuer. A set of measurable criteria for the collection of child well-being indicators for monitoring the situation cross-nationally will be presented and agreed upon. A selection of indicators will be prioritised in the first instance, and gaps in the available data will be recorded. An agreement will also be reached on a research agenda to develop indicators and monitoring strategies for child well-being.

Participants are invited to suggest indicators for monitoring child well-being and associated research where appropriate.

17:30   END