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Child Rights Monitoring Framework for Europe and Central Asia

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Abstract

The Europe and Central Asia Child Rights Monitoring Framework (ECA CRM Framework) has been developed to monitor the situation and rights of children in a comprehensive and coherent way. It is based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and covers five child rights domains, each with specific sub-domains that correspond to the relevant provisions of the CRC and SDGs. In addition, the framework also includes governance issues related to CRC General Measures of Implementation, as well as cross-cutting themes relevant to different domains. UNICEF has undertaken an initial mapping of available and potential indicators that can be used to measure the progress of countries in each of these domains. The national partners confirmed the initiative's relevance at the 2022 TransMonEE network meeting.
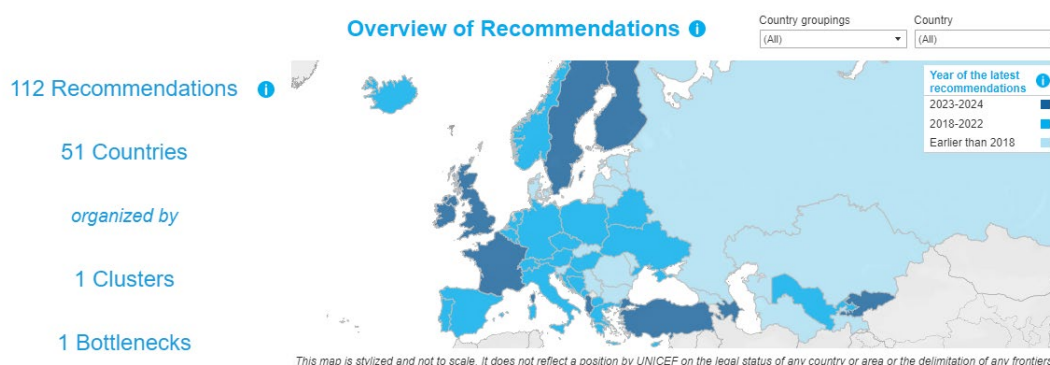
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I.   Introduction

1. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is the leading international treaty on the child's rights, ratified by almost all members of the United Nations. It is comprehensive and covers many areas of children's lives, from family and health care to education and leisure, with provisions for particularly vulnerable children, like those in alternative care, children in situations of migration, and children in contact with the law. Given the indivisible and interdependent nature of its provisions, States Parties are obligated to implement the CRC comprehensively, ensuring the realization and monitoring of all rights for every child within their jurisdiction.

2. In this context, one of the common recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child is developing a comprehensive data, analysis, and monitoring system on children covering all areas of the Convention, in line with its General Comment No. 5 (2003)[1]. 51 countries out of 54 in the Europe and Central Asia region of UNICEF have received such a recommendation from the Committee to adopt a holistic approach to data and statistics on children (Figure 1).

Figure 1
CRC Recommendations dashboard

Source: UNICEF Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia, *CRC recommendations dashboard*

3. While various initiatives, frameworks, and tools have been proposed and used globally, regionally, and nationally to monitor child rights, very often, they have not consistently addressed all aspects of the CRC or established direct linkages with the broader 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The proposed regional Child Rights Monitoring Framework[2] can help systematise the data, monitoring and analysis related to child rights in the region, within and across countries. It strives to promote a holistic and coherent approach to child rights monitoring, having its conceptual roots in the CRC.

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[1] OHCHR, *Committee on the Rights of the Child General Comment No 5.*
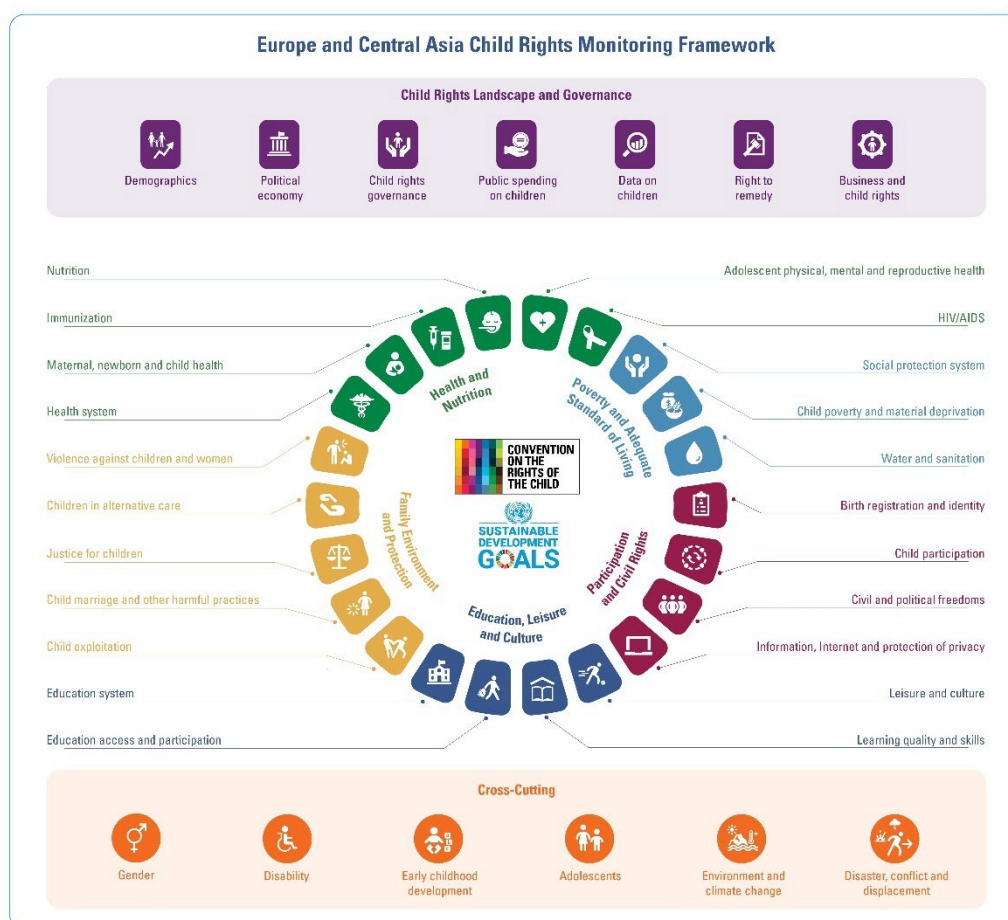[2] UNICEF Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia, *Child Rights Monitoring Framework*

II. The structure of the Regional Child Rights Monitoring Framework

4. The framework focuses on five critical domains of child rights.

- Health and Nutrition

- Education, Leisure, and Culture

- Family Environment and Protection from Violence and Harmful Practices

- Participation and Civil Rights

- Poverty and an Adequate Standard of Living

5. They broadly correspond to the clusters of the CRC State Party Reporting guidelines,[3] although there are some subtle differences and adaptations for practical reasons.

Europe and Central Asia Child Rights Monitoring Framework

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[3] OHCHR, *Committee on the Rights of the Child: Treaty-specific Guidelines*

6. The framework also includes a domain of Child Rights Landscape and Governance (primarily covering the General Measures of Implementation of CRC, such as budgetary allocations to children, child rights coordination bodies or data systems on children) and six cross-cutting dimensions or groups that should be mainstreamed across all domains but also require additional attention when monitoring CRC. These are:

- Gender

- Disability

- Early childhood development

- Adolescents

- Environment and climate change

- Disaster, conflict and displacement

7. Each domain comprises multiple sub-domains. Domains and sub-domains have all been linked to corresponding CRC articles (and SDG targets and Priorities of the European Union Child Rights Strategy in the case of domains).[4]

8. Suggested as a regional indicative framework, the ECA Child Rights Monitoring Framework may have multiple applications and implications at the country level, particularly to inform country discussions on what indicators to use to measure progress for children, including for the implementation of the CRC and the 2030 agenda.

III. Indicators of the ECA CRM Framework

9. A comprehensive and complex system of quantitative and qualitative indicators, insights, processes, and consultations, including with the rightsholders and duty-bearers, is required to fully understand the level of realisation of child rights and the implementation of the CRC in any given country. That said, quantitative indicators, particularly internationally or regionally comparable indicators, play a critical role in monitoring the progress of nations and the implementation of human rights treaties.

10. In this regard, the ECA CRM framework aspires to:

- Map key impact- and outcome-level indicators for each sub-domain with some type of international and regional recognition and relevance for CRC monitoring, starting first with child-related SDG indicators.

- Foster a regional dialogue among the statistics and data communities on the one hand and among the child rights practitioners and rights-holders on the other about the completeness of the existing indicators and data systems, including relevance, quality, frequency, disaggregation and recency.

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[4] UNICEF Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia, *Child Rights Monitoring Framework.*

- Gradually move towards a regional list of core indicators on children and child rights, serving as an inspiration for country-level indicator mapping, which would require much more granularity and disaggregation than regional-level mapping.

- Identify child rights sub-domains with limited or no comparable measures and discuss future statistical and methodological work along with investments needed at the global, regional and national levels to be able to propose and monitor relevant indicators and data collection methods.

11. To date, following the initial consultations with the TransMonEE network (a regional initiative that brings together National Statistical Offices (NSOs) and other members of national statistical systems to improve data availability on children and use in policymaking)[5],

- The descriptions of domains, sub-domains, and linkages with CRC articles and SDG targets have been refined and finalised. That said, these refinements are expected to continue in the coming years.

- The first version of the indicator mapping has been completed and will be available on the TransMonEE website by March 2024.

- Available data for the indicators have been identified and brought into the TransMonEE database for all 54 countries in the region.

- The global list of child-related SDG indicators has been further adapted to the region, and data availability was reviewed based on the global SDG database. The results have been included in a separate dashboard on SDG data availability.

12. The global and regional frameworks used in the mapping of indicators included but were not limited to:

- SDG indicators, as relevant to children and with adaptations to the region;

- Headline and secondary indicators of the European Pillar of Social Rights scoreboard, as relevant to children.[6]

- EU Child Guarantee monitoring framework[7], although this particular framework focuses more on children at risk of poverty and social exclusion.

- OECD Child-wellbeing Index indicators.[8]

13. Another consideration will be the OHCHR Human Rights Indicators[9], which include many SDG indicators. All this information, including links to existing meta-data, usual type (e.g., survey, administrative, census or combination) and source of data, desired disaggregation, as well as current data availability for the countries in the region since 2018, will be made available.

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[5] UNICEF Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia, *Transformative Monitoring for Enhanced Equity Initiative*.

[6] Eurostat, *European Pillar of Social Rights Scoreboard*.

[7] The European Commission, *the European Child Guarantee Monitoring Framework*

[8] OECD, *Child-wellbeing dashboard and indicators*

[9] OHCHR, *Human Rights Indicators tables updated with SDG indicators*

14. These types of details help further reflect on and plan the data sources accordingly. Particularly for indicators based on surveys, different considerations come into play, such as coverage (household-based vs. school/facility-based), frequency, respondents from whom to obtain data (e.g., mother, any household member, child herself), level and type of disaggregation (e.g., specific groups, sub-regions, indicators based on narrow age groups of children), decision to have a comprehensive survey on children vs integrating certain modules/indicators in other surveys and many other methodological issues.

15. For data obtained from administrative sources, frequency is less of an issue than coverage, quality, reliability and, eventually, interoperability. More analysis and observations will need to be conducted as the indicator review continues.

16. The next steps in this ambitious undertaking will entail:

    - Consultations with NSOs, other members of national statistical systems, and regional stakeholders about the mapped indicators, including the assessment of relevance to the national policy context.

    - Revisions to the indicator framework and the development of the subsequent version.

    - Discussions with all the relevant stakeholders about the common work to improve the availability of comparable statistics and data in sub-domains with weak or no indicators to measure progress.

    - Supporting country-level adaptations to national contexts, policies and international/regional commitments as well as subsequent cross-country learning and exchanges.

17. The TransMonEE network and the Conference of European Statisticians will provide the platform for shaping and furthering these discussions.

IV.   Conclusion

18. The ECA Child Rights Monitoring Framework is a promising and ambitious initiative to universally monitor and advance child rights. With its comprehensive structure, the framework offers a holistic approach to statistics, data and analysis on children and can inform national discussions on selecting indicators to measure the country's progress for children with important policy implications. The ongoing efforts, including indicator mapping and planned consultations with NSOs, national statistical systems, and regional stakeholders, will help solidify progress toward a regionally coherent and impactful tool. The TransMonEE network and the Conference of European Statisticians will serve as crucial platforms for fostering dialogue and driving meaningful discussions on improving the availability of comparable statistics and data, particularly in sub-domains with limited indicators.

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