Indicators for global monitoring of child rights

International meeting sponsored by UNICEF

9-12 February 1998
Geneva, Switzerland

Summary report

Background papers

Division of Evaluation, Policy and Planning
UNICEF New York
November 1998

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International meeting sponsored by UNICEF
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**Comments and suggestions
on the proposals in this report
will be most welcome.**

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Preface

The Convention on the Rights of the Child is nearing the end of its first decade as the most widely ratified human rights treaty in history. While individual nations can and do report in detail on their efforts to make child rights a reality, including through the implementation reports submitted to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, it has become increasingly clear that we also need a workable shortlist of key indicators that will illuminate progress across countries, within countries, and over time.

The task is a complex one. We already have internationally-agreed indicators for monitoring children's health, nutrition and schooling – concerns which reflect some but by no means all of the Convention's provisions. It is also relatively easy to ascertain whether nations have passed laws supporting child rights. The challenge is how to chart *practical* progress on many of the newer principles laid down in the Convention, such as children's right to play a full part in the decisions affecting their lives.

The participants at the meeting reported here – international experts in development and human rights as well as child rights and child-related statistics – presented a rich array of selection criteria and specific indicators. Some of their proposals will fall by the wayside as the work of refinement continues. Others, we hope, will prove generally relevant and generally affordable, so laying the foundation for regular international monitoring.

This is a work in progress. We therefore look forward to receiving your comments and to further collaboration with all our partners in helping to ensure that children's rights are translated into a living reality for children everywhere.

Marta Santos Pais
Director
Division of Evaluation, Policy and Planning
UNICEF New York
November 1998

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INTRODUCTION

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), ratified by 191 nations, constitutes an important framework for governments to improve the well-being of children. The CRC calls for continuous action and progress in the realization of children's rights. States Parties are required to submit periodic reports to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, two years after the entry into force of the CRC and every five years from then on, detailing their achievements and analysing the factors that are helping or hindering progress.

The CRC reporting process is a special occasion for nations to conduct a comprehensive review of the various measures they have adopted to bring the CRC into reality. It provides the opportunity to evaluate impact, identify problems, design new solutions, and set new targets. It also promotes public scrutiny since the information is openly available, allowing the public to influence decision making and enhance national capabilities. Reporting is therefore not a simple formality: it is, above all, a dynamic instrument to promote informed policy making and progress in improving the situation of children.

To simplify the evaluation and reporting process, the Committee on the Rights of the Child developed guidelines that group individual CRC articles into interconnected thematic clusters and recognize a set of general principles as cross-cutting issues which guide the implementation of the CRC – the principles of non-discrimination; best interests of the child; the child's right to survival and development; and respect for the child's views and right to participate. The meeting covered in this report was a first attempt to shortlist core indicators for six key clusters of children's rights:

> General measures of implementation
> Civil rights and freedoms
> Family environment and alternative care
> Basic health and welfare
> Education, leisure and cultural activities
> Special protection measures

The need for internationally comparable data

In order to monitor overall progress, worldwide, on a regular basis, there is also a need for a small set of core indicators on the realization of children's rights. This shortlist of key indicators would spotlight progress in all the crucial areas of children's rights. The indicators should apply in all (or most) of the world's nations and regions; they should allow comparison between countries and within countries; and they should be easy to use in all parts of the world.

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Moreover, they cannot be just a collection of unrelated or fragmentary indicators; they should follow a coherent rationale closely reflecting CRC concerns.

The work to develop such indicators is not new. Many important steps have already been taken, including the Innocenti global seminar held in Florence in 1994 (summary report by Maggie Black, *Monitoring the rights of children,* UNICEF International Child Development Centre, 1994). Over the past several years, preliminary work on indicators for child rights has been done at UNICEF headquarters, regional offices and country offices. In the specific areas of children's health, nutrition and education, helpful indicators are already in use for monitoring progress towards the goals set by the 1990 World Summit for Children. Also relevant is the recent work done for the United Nations Development Assistance Framework for their Common Country Assessment process. For practical reasons, it makes sense to build on existing indicators whenever possible.

Aims of the meeting

The meeting brought together experts in human rights and children's rights as well as measurement experts who have specialized in monitoring the situation of children. The participants were drawn from United Nations agencies, international non-governmental networks, universities, and donor agencies *(for the full list of participants, see page 113).*

The overall goals can be briefly summarized:

Review experience so far in the monitoring of child rights, flagging gaps and weaknesses
Propose a first set of core indicators for monitoring progress worldwide
Establish the rationale for selecting these indicators
Develop a plan for future activities, including action to address remaining gaps

The detailed work was organized around the six clusters of CRC articles, starting with a background paper and general discussion of the principal issues in each cluster *(for a summary of the clusters, see final page).* The participants then broke into working groups to identify indicators meeting the following criteria:

Emphasis on the situation of children
Applicable to all or most countries (for international comparability)
Use of existing indicators whenever appropriate and possible
Measurable across most countries at reasonably low cost
No more than 10 indicators for each subheading in a cluster

For issues where indicators are needed but do not yet exist, the working groups were asked to suggest potential indicators and also, if possible, how the data might best be collected for them. The groups' proposals were then presented and discussed in plenary.

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Setting the context

Before discussions started on specific clusters, the participants were welcomed and briefed by Bilge Bassani, Deputy Director of the UNICEF Regional Office for Europe, and by Marta Santos Pais, Director of Evaluation, Policy and Planning at UNICEF headquarters and a former member of the Committee on the Rights of the Child. Thomas Hammarberg, a current Committee member, gave a general overview of the Committee's experience in assessing country compliance with the CRC and stressed the importance of developing a workable system for global monitoring. Jim Himes of the UNICEF International Child Development Centre outlined some of the perceptions and issues that had emerged from the 1994 Innocenti seminar *(for full text see page 24)*.

Marta Santos Pais then reviewed the cluster of four general principles considered by the Committee to be the essential, overarching themes of the CRC, guiding the realization of all the rights of the child *(for full text see page 21)*.

The principle of non-discrimination (CRC article 2). This implies that national or similar averages are not sufficient: indicators need to monitor the rights of specific population subgroups, especially the most disadvantaged, assessing and helping to narrow disparities.

The principle of the best interests of the child (article 3). The choice of indicators should always reflect the CRC view that the interests of the child are paramount. This principle is also useful in examining how budgetary allocations give priority to children and to the safeguarding of their rights.

The principle of respect for the child's views and right to participate (articles 12-15). This principle defines children not as passive recipients, but as actors contributing actively to the decisions that affect their lives.

The principle of the child's right to survival and development (article 6). This principle encompasses the entire span of children's right to realize their fullest potential, from meeting their health, nutrition and education needs to supporting their personal and social development. Children's well-being is the responsibility not only of family and government but also of the whole world community.

WORKING GROUP SESSIONS

General measures of implementation

Presentation
(for full text see page 35)

Peter Newell, a children's rights advocate working in the United Kingdom, explained that these measures involve generating political will on children's behalf and making them more important in national, regional and local policy making. The Committee on the Rights of the Child has identified a remarkably detailed list of general measures, including permanent mechanisms for coordinating policies and actions for children, independent offices for children (such as ombudspeople) and analyses of the impact on children when formulating policies, together with wide public dissemination and awareness of the CRC.

Identifying indicators for monitoring these general measures requires establishing first, whether or not the appropriate structures or mechanisms already exist; second, whether they have the potential to be effective; and third, how effective they are at present.

Provisional core indicators suggested by the working groups

The working groups considered financial implications as well as the general measures themselves.

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1. General measures of implementation

a. Existence of a comprehensive national strategy for children

b. System for regular reporting on the implementation of the national strategy

c. Existence of a body for coordinating and monitoring the nation's strategy for children

d. Representation of non-governmental groups on this body

e. of adequate resources for this body to function effectively

f. Government reservations to specific provisions of the CRC, which would limit its scope in the country concerned _

g. Compatibility of national law with the CRC

h. Existence of systematic analysis of the impact on children of draft legislation and policy

i. Existence of a formal, independent office for children

j. Education about children's rights and inclusion of the CRC in the school curriculum

k. Existence of training activities on the CRC for professionals working with and for children, including teachers, judges, social workers and law enforcement personnel

l. Discussion in parliament of the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child

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2. Basic budgets and resource allocation for implementing the CRC

a. Existence of a children's budget *(a published analysis of government spending on children, at central, provincial, district and municipal levels)*

b. Proportion of the budget spent on primary health care

c. Proportion of the budget spent on education *(primary and other levels)*

d. Whether the 20/20 initiative has been applied as extensively as possible *(the commitment to dedicate 20% of government spending, and 20% of aid, to basic social services)*

e. Proportion of the government budget spent on defence, for comparison purposes

f. Proportion of income taxed

g. Proportions of national income going to the richest 5% of households and the poorest 40%

General discussion

Much of the discussion focused on the changing nature and role of government, given the growing influence of civil society and the private sector, and the movement towards decentralization. In the framework of the CRC, which recognizes the primary responsibility of the state, the private sector and civil society also have critical roles to play. Despite the current trends, however, the government remains ultimately responsible for implementing all the conventions it ratifies.

While the proposed indicators were all considered relevant and possibly helpful in providing benchmarks, they were seen primarily as checklists: it was not always clear how the information could best be collected and how useful it would prove.

It was acknowledged that budgetary allocations can be extremely complicated to measure and monitor; often the government itself may not know what it is spending on children. In addition, monitoring only the quantity of spending may not give much idea of quality or direct benefit to children.

Civil rights and freedoms

Presentation
(for full text see page 46)

Peter Newell highlighted the current absence of indicators in this area, but stressed their importance for increasing public debate and changing attitudes toward children. They also offer the possibility of a more positive approach to monitoring children's rights, particularly their right to participate in decisions affecting them, rather than simply monitoring violations.

The rights were considered in three principal groupings: indicators of children's active participation; indicators of their right to a name, nationality and identity; and indicators of their right to protection from torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Whether these rights are both recognized and honoured in practice should be monitored in a variety of settings, including the home, school, community, health services, and alternative care. In the area of children's active participation, recognition indicators might include whether there is a process for government to consult with children; whether parents, schools and lawcourts are legally obliged to take children's views into consideration; and whether children's associations receive official support. As regards children's actual enjoyment of these rights in practice, the best option is to ask the children themselves.

Provisional core indicators suggested by the working groups

3.   Children's active participation (CRC articles 12 to 17)

a. School system committed to ensuring student participation in school management issues such as curriculum development, discipline and recreation

b. Age at which children can express their views on matters of adoption, custody and guardianship

c. Lawcourts obliged to consider the child's view when deciding matters which affect the child

4.   Right to name, nationality and identity (CRC articles 7 and 8)

a. Existence of a free, universal, compulsory birth registration system

b. Time interval between birth and registration

c. Recording of both parents' names on the birth certificate

d. Existence of a process for establishing paternity in contested cases, including cases initiated by the child

e. National law and custom bestowing nationality regardless of birth circumstance

f. Number of births unregistered

5.   Protection from torture and other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment (CRC article 37(a))

a. Ratification by the government of the international convention against torture

b. Existence of legislation outlawing torture and other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment

c. Mechanisms for complaints and redress accessible to children in cases of torture

d. Existence of legal restrictions on taking physical measures (including physical restraint) against children in institutional settings

e. Number of cases of life imprisonment or capital punishment of children

General discussion

The monitoring of children's civil rights and freedoms sparked a lively discussion of both methodology and content. A fundamental issue raised repeatedly was that children's civil rights must be considered in their broader societal context, which in some cases may not respect the civil rights of adults. In many ways, promoting children's civil rights entails changing a society's basic attitudes toward children.

Qualitative research, opinion polls of children and young people, and children's elections were all cited as methods for assessing children's views, although it was acknowledged that these approaches tend to be adult-driven and may be manipulative or purely token. The World Health Organization's narrative research method was cited, as well as the need for a common framework when interviewing children on their experience of participation (in the family, school, neighbourhood, etc.).

The group came to no conclusion on several issues: how to monitor the degree to which government consults with children; how to reach children and adolescents (particularly those out of school) with the information and skills they need; and how to encourage active children's associations (which interconnect with their rights to recreation, culture and leisure).

The child's evolving capacity, with age and experience, is particularly important when considering children's right to be heard in legal proceedings and right of access to information. Moreover, it should always be remembered that the right to participate is not a duty, and that children must be free to choose how and when they participate. Children's genuine and active participation is closely linked to equipping them with life skills, including the skills for coping, discernment, decision making and problem solving.

The group found civil rights and freedoms to be fundamental to the healthy development of children, particularly the ways in which they view themselves and their sense of self-esteem. Honouring children's right to participate can play a key role in determining their access to all of their other rights.

Family environment and alternative care

Presentation
(for full text see page 57)

Judith Harwin, Professor of Social Welfare Studies at the University of Sussex, summarized current knowledge of global indicators for these issues. Defining indicators is difficult in this area because family life is very private, and the line between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour varies from one country to another. For children in public care, the intense lack of interest in their welfare is almost an indicator in itself.

Professor Harwin outlined four main areas for attention:-

The duty of the state to assist families financially. This could be monitored by assessing poverty in families, since poverty has such wide effects on children's well-being. Perhaps a better measure would be poverty among children, as contrasted with adults, since the comparison could be used in rich as well as poor countries. Support to poor children could also be measured by the proportion of gross domestic product spent on child support.

Child abuse and neglect, both in the family and in substitute care. Prevalence figures for abused or neglected children are unfortunately more likely to show administrative zeal than actual prevalence. The number of children removed by court order to a non-abusive setting may therefore be a better measure, albeit a proxy. It would also make sense to look into causes of child death from possible abuse, wherever possible. As an alternative, one could examine government policies, laws and services as process indicators.

Children in public care. Possible measures include the number of children in institutions, even though a fall in that number may mean a decline in services rather than a reduction in the numbers of children with problems. If we did use this indicator, it would ideally include the numbers in all forms of substitute care including foster care (which accounts in Sweden, for example, for 80% of children not in their family home). Qualitative indicators are also available, for assessing children's participation in issues that affect their lives. Lastly, we can look at standards of alternative care – for example, measuring the morbidity and mortality of children in and out of substitute care.

Adoption. The clearest measure is the size of the adopted population (including the number of orphans). For process indicators we could see whether identity rights are guaranteed (though there is much debate about the issue) and whether the child's consent is needed for adoption. Perhaps a way could also be found to measure the quality of adoption services.

The CRC requires governments to supply family support, not just income maintenance but also services for children such as guidance, counselling, and dealing with vulnerability in the home. Legislation on income maintenance and divorce is also required, for cases when parents have separated.

Research is still needed on the extent to which different family structures can or cannot support children. This is a sensitive issue, but it seems that families headed by teenaged parents (especially if not supported by the extended family), and by single parents, are most at risk.

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Provisional core indicators suggested by the working groups

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6. Care outside the home (CRC articles 20, 21 and 25)

a. Existence of mechanisms or legislation for taking children's point of view into consideration when their status changes *(indicator should cover both state-run and informal shifts in status)*

b. Existence of an independent data system for monitoring substitute care which would allow for follow-up of individual cases *(a useful indicator because it would be valid for both institutionalized children and those in alternative care)*

c. Existence of legislation providing alternatives to institutional care

d. Existence of legislation to protect children's right to access information in their files, make contact with their birth family and check on other identity issues

e. Proportion of children not living with either biological parent, or with kin, or with family *(alternatively, the number or proportion of children in institutions, including children deprived of liberty)*

f. Proportion of children orphaned by one or both biological parents *(this indicator may be most useful in specific regions)*

g. Proportion of children cared for in institutions and in alternatives to institutions *(by type of institution, age of child, sex, ethnic group, language)* (cf. articles 18 and 19)

h. Existence of legislation and mechanisms for periodic review of the placement and treatment of children in institutions

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The issues of care outside the home are complicated by the different family systems and hence different definitions of 'home' around the world (cf. the extended family system in Africa and the nuclear families of Europe and North America).

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7. Adoption and tracing (CRC article 21)

a. Numbers of adopted children, and of fostered children, in out-of-family care *(it should be noted that most adoptions in sub-Saharan Africa are within the extended family: this indicator should distinguish adoption, with its inheritance and other rights, from fostering)*

b. Proportions of adopted and fostered children (over a certain period of time) who have been adopted overseas, adopted within the country, or reunited with their families

c. Existence of a system for tracing and reuniting families, and arranging adoptions, when the separation was involuntary *(non-governmental organizations play an important role here)*

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8. Income support (CRC articles 26 and 27)

a. Proportion of children living in poor households *(breakdown by family type, especially families headed by teenagers and by single parents)*

b. Existence of a law recognizing the property rights of orphans

c. Proportion of public sector expenditure going to children *(includes family and child allowances, provision of pre-school services, and provision of alternative care)* (cf. table 2 on basic budgets and resource allocation for implementing the CRC)

d. Existence of a government system for monitoring children at risk *(in terms of family support)*

e. Proportion of the children's budget, if there is one, allocated to children at risk (cf. table 2)

Most of these issues will be very difficult to measure in developing countries.

9. Family environment (CRC articles 18 and 19)

a. Existence of legislation stating that institutionalization is a last resort, and that the child should be removed from the family only when this is in the child's best interests (cf. articles 20 and 21)

b. Existence of legislation banning assault against children *(protecting children from all forms of violence, including corporal punishment, in all settings)*

c. Rate of homicides against children *(disaggregated by age of victim)*

d. Number or proportion of unsupported teenage parents *(alternatively, the number or proportion of children in such families)*

e. Safe, supportive family environment *(an index needs to be developed)*

f. Existence of a legal definition of parental responsibilities

General discussion

Many of the issues raised in this session were considered relevant either to the developed world or to the developing world, but few apply worldwide, or even to urban and rural areas in the same country. The issues may be fundamentally the same, but they are dealt with very differently. In sub-Saharan Africa, for example, many problems will be tackled by the village, not the state. We can usefully differentiate between support *services* (from the state) and support *systems*, which include informal methods.

For the children of sub-Saharan Africa a major problem in this cluster, and hence important to measure, is AIDS orphanhood.

Household surveys are a possible data source for some of these issues. All the current surveys, or nearly all, collect at least some basic information on family structure.

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Research in the United States has found that two factors are likely to influence teenagers against drug use and early sex: family 'connectedness' and religious identity. Though these two variables can probably not be assessed by any international yardstick, we should nonetheless find some way to measure what *is* working in the family, instead of always looking at failure.

Basic health and welfare

Presentation

Gareth Jones, Senior Adviser for Information and Data Management at UNICEF headquarters, gave a short presentation to introduce this cluster. Experience in monitoring progress, including the selection of indicators, is much more extensive in this cluster than in all the others except education. However, a review of existing health indicators in the light of the CRC shows that although the indicators are plentiful, they cover only some of the child population. In particular, almost all the indicators involve younger children, under five, and there are few indicators (for any age of child) for the health services themselves. There are also no indicators for disability, social security and child care, or standards of living.

The task of the working groups was therefore to review which indicators best reflect the CRC, while keeping the number of indicators to a practical minimum.

Provisional core indicators suggested by the working groups

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10. Basic health and welfare (CRC articles 6 and 24): children under five

Survival

a. Under-five mortality

Physical health

b. Malnutrition *(most important in this group)*
c. Breastfeeding *(exclusive breastfeeding rate recommended)*
d. Vitamin A deficiency

Mental health

e. Psychosocial development *(though hard to measure)*

Health services

f. Immunization *(measles, if only one)*

g. Access to adequate health care *(hard to define, but must include preventive care)*

h. Access to water and sanitation

i. Attention to early childhood development *(some measure needed of health service performance in this area. The issue was also considered in the working group on education)*

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11. Basic health and welfare continued: older children, five and up

Survival

a. Deaths from injury *(this cause of death reflects aspects of rights over and above overall mortality: breakdown by age, ethnic group, geography and gender)*

Physical health

b. Malnutrition *(including obesity and anorexia)*

c. Sexually transmitted diseases *(captures life skills, access to condoms, and treatment: should not be limited to HIV alone)*

d. Age-specific fertility *(for all teen pregnancies, including mothers under 15)*

e. Substance abuse *(important, but hard to measure: focus on high-risk groups)*

Mental health

f. Suicide *(hard to measure, yet important: also hard to know what steps to take if the rate is high)*

Health services

g. Access to adequate care *(including information and services for sexual and reproductive health, confidential services)*

h. Access to water and sanitation *(including sanitation in schools)*

i. Existence of school health programmes (cf. article 28)

12. Children with disabilities (CRC article 23)

a. Existence of legislation, policies and services responding to the needs of children with disabilities

b. Proportion of children with disabilities receiving the services they need

c. Adequate financial support given to the families of children with disabilities

d. Proportion of children with disabilities who have access to mainstream education

e. Number or proportion of children in institutions for those with disabilities *(though it is not always clear whether a high rate should be rated good or bad)*

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13. Standards of living and social security (CRC articles 18(3), 26 and 27)

a. Existence of a national social security system

b. Proportion or number of children in special need receiving social security benefits *(orphans, children in poor or woman-headed households, etc.)*

c. Existence of a national definition for a national poverty line

d. Proportion of children living below the poverty line who receive social security benefits

e. Provision of child care assistance *(an indicator needs to be developed)*

f. Proportion of children living below the poverty line whose families receive other forms of benefit or subsidy *(tax relief, subsidized housing, food programmes)*

g. Number or proportion of children living in families with insecure conditions of household tenure

General discussion

Adolescent mortality from violent causes would be a very sensitive and strong indicator. It may, however, be impossible to measure. Deaths from injuries (firearms, knives), drugs, traffic accidents, and suicide all meet the criterion of eliciting attention, which is what a good indicator should do. World Health Organization personnel suggested that reliable cause-of-death data may be available for about 50 countries.

A useful indicator for health might be housing density, or inadequate living conditions, as these have strong impact on health.

Measuring social security for international comparison is problematic, not least because the meaning of 'social security' varies so widely in different countries.

Measuring poverty is also difficult, although some very crude measures exist. A few international surveys such as the Luxembourg Income Study, which reworks national statistics for comparability between countries, have collected more sophisticated data, but only in the developed world.

Education, leisure and cultural activities

Presentation

Gareth Jones gave a short presentation to introduce this cluster. This cluster, like the health and welfare cluster, has a long history of measurement and numerous indicators. But again, although the indicators are plentiful, they capture only some of the population covered by the CRC. Almost all the indicators refer to younger children, of primary school age, and there are no indicators for the *aims* of education or for leisure and recreation.

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Provisional core indicators suggested by the working groups

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14. Education (CRC articles 28 and 29)

All data to be broken down: urban/rural, boys/girls, etc.

a. Net primary school enrolment rate

b. Proportion of children starting school who reach grade 5

c. Learning achievement in primary school *(an international measure needs to be developed)*

d. Rate of primary school completion *(avoids the need to measure compulsory education)*

e. Net secondary school enrolment rate

f. Proportion of adolescents who are literate *(the equivalent of 'learning achievement' for primary education)*

g. Policy of school attendance for pregnant teenagers *(teenagers are excluded from school for various reasons, but pregnancy exclusion is the most sex-discriminatory)*

h. Policy on children with disabilities in schools *(includes laws specifying the right of all children to education, and the proportion of disabled children attending mainstream schools)*

i. Policy prohibiting corporal punishment in school *(the group also considered bullying)*

j. Teaching on children's rights included in the primary school curriculum

k. Teaching on children's rights included in the training curricula for teachers

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The group discussed some other indicators which are unfortunately not viable, or not yet viable, for worldwide use.

Early childhood development. This has yet to be measured in any meaningful way, since the components can range from child minding to genuine child development work.

Language of instruction. Learning in a second language is not always a bad thing, witness India. But the question is important, and might be explored regionally. It also affects identity rights.

Completion of secondary school. This has not yet been measured everywhere, but it matters both in its own right and as an indicator of the effectiveness of compulsory schooling laws.

Unemployment. In other words, does education lead to jobs. But this is difficult to analyse reliably.

Vocational training. Another important issue, but hard to monitor on an internationally comparable basis.

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15. Leisure and cultural activities (CRC article 31)

a. Safe play areas within walking distance *(does not necessarily refer to formal playgrounds: one might define safe as 'under adult supervision', though this was debated in the plenary session)*

b. Membership in organizations *(sports, cultural, etc.: the problem is whether to count membership in groups antithetical to the CRC, in which case the definition becomes very difficult to implement)*

c. Availability of social organizations *(number per 1,000 population: but since some societies do not have formal organizations yet still socialize their children well, this indicator may not be useful)*

d. Time-use studies *(to assess how much time children have for leisure, not spent in school, work or housework: a culture-bound issue, but one that cross-links to child labour issues. Measurement is not easy, but there is a history of measurement to draw on)*

This proved a difficult area to work on because the issues are culture-bound. The group also discussed freedom of choice in leisure time, but did not reach a consensus. The amount of recreation time in the school day was also considered, but since the school population is not representative of the child population as a whole, this indicator was not adopted, even though a partial indicator might be better than none.

Special protection measures

Presentation
(for full text see page 94)

Clarence Shubert, formerly of the UNICEF Unit for Children in Especially Difficult Circumstances and now an independent consultant, began the presentation by surveying the evolution of UNICEF policy on children in need of special protection. He then gave a historical overview of UNICEF's involvement in monitoring protection rights, as well as the monitoring work of other agencies both inside and outside the United Nations system.

While UNICEF and other organizations have spent many years monitoring the situation of children in need of special protection, the approach has tended to be service-oriented rather than rights-oriented. The CRC and the new UNICEF emphasis on rights are relatively recent: in fact, UNICEF's rights-based policies for children needing special protection were only adopted in 1996. The indicators developed in 1992 for children in especially difficult circumstances were not widely accepted, and need critical review to bring them into line with the new approach.

Mr. Shubert proposed a set of criteria to guide the selection of all indicators, and then reviewed specific indicators covering the right to protection against exploitation, and the right to protection from abuse in armed conflicts or if in conflict with the law. For each of these areas, the indicators were divided into three broad categories: risk indicators, indicators of exploitation and abuse, and indicators of protection and services.

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Provisional core indicators suggested by the working groups

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16. Children in armed conflict (CRC articles 22, 38 and 39)

a. Existence of armed conflict

b. Number of children affected by the conflict

c. Proportion of children receiving adequate protection and humanitarian assistance

d. Effective measures in place to prevent the recruitment and participation of children in armed forces (children under 15 and under 18)

e. Measures in place to ensure the psychological recovery and social reintegration of child victims of armed conflict

f. Index to measure the effects of armed conflict on children

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17. Exploitation (CRC articles 32, 34, 35 and 36)

a. Proportion of children working and not attending school (by gender)

b. Proportion of children working and attending school (by gender)

(These indicators should be measured separately for children and adolescents: specific age groups and definitions for work and schooling to be decided later.)

c. Existence of standards for child labour and workplace conditions

d. Existence of a policy or programme of action to uphold the standards for child labour and workplace conditions

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The working group on exploitation focused on the areas of child labour and sexual exploitation only, but the time available for discussing sexual exploitation was too short to warrant including the topic in this report.

On child labour, there was considerable debate about the issue of comparability of data between nations, and the complexities of defining child labour. The International Labour Organization is in the process of developing systems for monitoring child labour but will not be standardizing definitions for international use, so as not to impose restrictive standards on countries with widely differing circumstances. Others in the working group, though understanding the difficulties, thought it should nonetheless be possible to standardize the age groups for data collection and set minimum standards for defining *exploitative* or *hazardous* working conditions. Without comparability in definitions, it will not be possible to assess levels of child labour worldwide or in different regions.

Several other indicators were proposed (such as the existence of structures to handle child labour issues, or the number of lawsuits against employers) but were considered more

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Provisional core indicators suggested by the working groups

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16. Children in armed conflict (CRC articles 22, 38 and 39)

a. Existence of armed conflict

b. Number of children affected by the conflict

c. Proportion of children receiving adequate protection and humanitarian assistance

d. Effective measures in place to prevent the recruitment and participation of children in armed forces (children under 15 and under 18)

e. Measures in place to ensure the psychological recovery and social reintegration of child victims of armed conflict

f. Index to measure the effects of armed conflict on children

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17. Exploitation (CRC articles 32, 34, 35 and 36)

a. Proportion of children working and not attending school (by gender)

b. Proportion of children working and attending school (by gender)

(These indicators should be measured separately for children and adolescents: specific age groups and definitions for work and schooling to be decided later.)

c. Existence of standards for child labour and workplace conditions

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Several other indicators were proposed (such as the existence of structures to handle child labour issues, or the number of lawsuits against employers) but were considered more

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appropriate for each government to monitor internally. *Mapping* of indicators, including child labour statistics, was also suggested as an important advocacy tool, for use particularly at the national and subnational levels.

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18. Children involved with the system of administration of juvenile justice (CRC articles 40, 37 and 39)

a. Number (or proportion) of children deprived of liberty, including those awaiting trial or sentencing

b. Existence of an official, separate system for juvenile justice

c. Degree to which children deprived of their liberty are kept separated from adults

d. Number (or rate) of deaths of children deprived of liberty

e. Discrimination against children involved with the system of administration of justice (cf. article 2)

f. Nutritional status of children deprived of their liberty (cf. article 24)

g. Provision of schooling for children deprived of their liberty

h. Existence of an effective mechanism to allow recourse to appeal or redress

i. Children's perceptions of the justice system (cf. article 12)

The group attempted to identify *issues* for monitoring rather than specific *indicators*. A key issue is disaggregated data, to determine whether certain ethnic or social groups are disproportionately held in detention.

Pre-trial detention was considered particularly important because most abuse of children takes place during that period.

Deaths of children while incarcerated were considered a reasonable proxy for assessing the extent to which children are ill-treated in jail.

Specifying an age for criminal responsibility is fundamental to realizing the rights of children. Nevertheless, the group decided that the different ages set by different nations are not a useful indicator, since the age of criminal responsibility is only one of the many variables influencing how juveniles are treated by justice systems.

General discussion

A number of general points were made in the plenary discussion.

Child-centred statistics. If statistics are overly child-centred, child issues might end up divorced from family issues. This can be problematic when support services need to consider the needs of the entire family; for example, children's labour can be crucial to family income.

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Practical considerations in selecting indicators. It was suggested that some of the proposed indicators might not be especially realistic, desirable or practical. Many involve issues that are politically sensitive and difficult to measure. Forcing agencies to produce estimates could result in faulty numbers and affect the credibility of the data-collecting process.

Cultural sensitivity needed in selecting indicators. The criteria for selecting indicators should consider cultural context and respect cultural differences.

Need to monitor political processes. In addition to quantitative indicators, there is a need to monitor shifts in law or government policy.

Cost of data collection. Concern was expressed about the cost of data collection, both for UNICEF offices and for governments. For many of the proposed indicators, no systems exist to collect the data or to interpret them. This should be borne in mind when choosing indicators.

Identify the issues before selecting indicators. It is important to identify the most important issues for monitoring first, before deciding on indicators for international, national and subnational use.

COMMENTS AND FOLLOW-UP

While the meeting achieved its principal aims – reviewing past experiences and identifying a broad range of indicators – the quality of the indicators varied considerably, both within and between clusters. This is hardly surprising given that some clusters, such as health, have been monitored for many years, whereas we have relatively little experience with a cluster like children's civil rights and freedoms. Children's right to participate, in particular, is a new challenge.

Many of the indicators tagged by the working groups will need further refining. In some clusters, for example, most of the proposed indicators are simple yes/no questions as to whether particular laws or policies exist. Indicators of this type have limited value: they should be further developed and expanded to reflect the specifics of the laws or policies. In other cases, indicators were listed as a way to tag a particular issue needing consideration, but this does not necessarily mean that the indicator selected was the best.

In addition, some of the indicators identified by the working groups may have value for some but not all of the world's countries or regions.

Since the data collection will depend on the mechanisms and resources available for obtaining the data, the indicators need review to ensure that it is practical to measure them in most nations. Household surveys are clearly a useful tool but will not meet every need.

Finally, although the working groups mostly kept to their limit of 10 indicators per cluster subheading, the full list of indicators is still too long and will have to be shortened.

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Follow-up

This meeting was only one step of the many needed to develop a comprehensive set of global indicators for child rights.

The immediate next step will be the wide distribution of this report, not only to those persons who attended the meeting but also to the many others who are involved in monitoring child rights. It will therefore be available on the Internet as well as in hard copy.

Further development will involve many organizations and individuals, and UNICEF expects to continue to contribute extensively. In particular, a major opportunity is being provided by the upcoming end-decade assessment of nations' progress towards the goals agreed at the 1990 World Summit for Children; for the purposes of this assessment, many developing countries will be carrying out household surveys before the end of the year 2000, and the surveys can be used to collect a limited amount of additional data.

UNICEF is therefore planning the following:

By December 1998: specification of a small number of child rights indicators and measurement tools, for use in most of the countries measuring end-decade progress towards the World Summit goals;

By September 1999: specification of an additional set of indicators and measurement tools, for use in a more limited number of countries.

At the same time the longer-term goals must continue to be pursued – developing indicators, obtaining appropriate data, and promoting use of the data – with continued sharing of experiences and results. While there are a number of ways to do this, one suggestion made at this meeting, which is likely to be taken up by UNICEF, is a further meeting in two years to review progress and to plan subsequent work.

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Indicators for global monitoring of child rights
International meeting sponsored by UNICEF
9-12 February 1998: Geneva, Switzerland

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