EGRI for Children:
Foundations for an Egypt Child Rights Index as instrument for evidence-based child-friendly public policies

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Abstract: This purpose of this paper is to develop the foundation of an instrument that that facilitates tracking progress and reporting against international development frameworks and human rights instruments to which Egypt is signatory. Building on previous work done on human development and child well-being indicators globally and in Egypt as well as initiatives supported by UNICEF in various countries in Latin America, it proposes a conceptual framework for an Egypt Child Rights Index. The Index is tool that can be used both as a technical monitoring instrument and a policy instrument that contributes to child-friendly and evidence-based public policies as well as more transparent and direct access to information.

After an introduction of the purpose of the paper and the questions it aims to answer, section 2 describe the major international development frameworks and importance to monitor these commitments. Then section 3 describes the characteristics and potential of composite indices as technical monitoring tools as well as policy instrument. Section 4 sets the foundation for a human rights-centred Egypt Child Rights Index (EGRI). The dimensions, indicators and mathematical formula for the EGRI will be discussed in sections 5 through 8. Requirements and options for each of these characteristics will be presented and advantages and disadvantages discussed. At the end of each section, a proposal for the EGRI will be made. The last section 9 will conclude with a summary of the proposal for the Egypt Child Rights Index and will indicate further work required to apply the concept and make it a genuine monitoring and policy tool.

1. Introduction

During the last 15 years, evidence-based policy making has been gaining currency in social and human development. It is widely accepted that monitoring progress has an important strategic contribution to make to such evidence-based policies. Since policymakers require information to monitor progress towards the expected results associated with these policies, and their programmes and projects.[1]

National public policies are in part determined by commitments governments have made to international Conventions and Declarations. Two important international commitments pertinent for children are the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Millennium Declaration. Once they have subscribed to such international commitments, governments are held accountable for achieving the results to which they are committed and are required to periodically report on progress made.

Monitoring progress on social and human development therefore has at least two functions: 1) it helps monitor progress against set national policies and their development

[1] Segone, ed. (2008).

goals; and 2) it contributes to fulfilling the accountability governments have before the international community. One useful summary monitoring instrument that can play the dual role of technical monitoring instrument and policy tool is the composite index. The aim of this paper is to propose a conceptual framework for an index especially relevant for measuring progress with regards to survival, development and protection of children; a Child Rights Index.

To be true to its role in evidence-based policy making and reporting on international commitments, a Child Rights Index should be build on a solid theoretical and conceptual foundation. This includes due reflection of the notion of human and child rights—rather than well-being—as well as mathematical soundness. Without such solid conceptual framework, it is unclear what the index intends to measure and its outcomes may be unconvincing and disputed. Or worse; it could lead to inaccurate and misleading information that will harm rather than help monitoring progress against policies and commitments.

This paper attempts to answer those questions relevant for each of the main elements of a composite index based on human rights; the domains, indicators and mathematical formula. We present the inevitable requirements inherent to the nature of a composite index and discuss the options available, their advantages and disadvantages, before making a proposal.

Questions related to the domains include: how many domains do we include? Which domains, or sectors do we include? What is the basis for their grouping? Is one more important than the other and what is thus the relative weight of each of these domains? With regards to the indicators we also need to address these questions on numbers and weights. Additional questions include: should all domains have the same number of indicators? Does the level of the indicator matter? And if so, why? And once we know the number and type of indicators: what criteria do we use to select a manageable number among the many indicators possible?

Also for the mathematical formula there are many questions to be answered. One of the important functions of the Child Rights Index is to allow for comparison at the sub national level, and to be able to highlight possible disparities that are hidden in national averages. Therefore we need to discuss the basis for ranking at the sub national level. Once we have agreed on the ranking, how do we make sure we can compare indicators with different denominators and avoid implicit weights? Or are these weights actually no problem? Since progress over time requires a base year we need to decide what will be the basis for deciding this base year.

And finally we need to decide whether we only want one Child Rights Index for all boys and girls under 18 years old. Or do we want separate indices for boys and girls? For different age groups? And will the monitoring of the CRC require a different composition of the Index than for the tracking of progress against the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)?

The paper will address these conceptual questions, always bearing in mind its human rights foundation as well as a more practical consideration; the Index should be easy to interpret. After all, it is intended to be both a technical and a policy tool.

Finally, this paper is strictly a conceptual note. It *will* discuss the crucial questions related to the selection of indicators, but we will not attempt to propose the actual final indicators or compute the various possible indices. To ensure an evidence-based and sound consensus respecting the principles of human rights, this requires a comprehensive reiterative process that is beyond the scope of this paper. In other words, the paper will provide the design to build a solid school, but it will not name students and analyse their individual performance or the performance of the school as a whole.

2. Egypt's commitment to international frameworks

The 1990s saw a series of United Nations international Conferences and Summits. They helped to generate an unprecedented global consensus on a shared vision of development; a vision that democracy, human rights, sustainability and social development are interdependent and interrelated. All these aspects of development were recurrent in each of the summits, and some were dedicated specifically to these topics.

Many of these Conferences and Summits were pertinent for children in Egypt. In fact, a few months after the World Conference on Education for All in March 1990, the first Summit of the decade was dedicated to children; the World Summit for Children held from 29-30 September 1990. In addition to the World Summit for Children (1990), these are most notably the World Conference on Education for All (1990), the World Conference on Human Rights (1993), the World Summit for Social Development (1995), and the Fourth World Conference on Women (1995).

The World Summit for Children called for a concerted national and international co-operation to strive for the achievement of a set of major goals for the survival, protection and development of children by the year 2000. Its World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children was based on the Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted and opened for signature and ratification by the General Assembly resolution 44/25 less than a year earlier, on 20 November 1989. In accordance with article 49[2], the Convention entered into force the beginning of the very same month the World Summit was held, and to date no Convention was entered into force quicker than the CRC. Egypt was one of the very first countries to sign and ratify the Convention and thus helped make this happen. The CRC is also the most widely ratified human rights treaty, ratified by all countries except for Somalia and the United States.

[2] Article 49 reads as follows: 1. The present Convention shall enter into force on the thirtieth day following the date of deposit with the Secretary-General of the United Nations of the twentieth instrument of ratification or accession. 2. For each State ratifying or acceding to the Convention after the deposit of the twentieth instrument of ratification or accession, the Convention shall enter into force on the thirtieth day after the deposit by such State of its instrument of ratification or accession.

The milestone Conferences and Summits and their broad-based development framework based on human rights together laid the foundation for the Millennium Summit held September 2000, ten years after the World Summit for Children. Heads of State and government of 189 countries signed the Millennium Declaration and committed themselves to meet a total of eight goals by 2015, entitled the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The comprehensive nature of the goals reflects the broad based approach which had become the common understanding of development.

The Millennium Summit was another milestone for the children. Six of the eight MDGs are directly related to children, but evidently all the MDGs have a bearing on the survival, development and protection of children. In addition, while no MDG was formulated around the issue of child protection, the Millennium Declaration does explicitly address need to protect the vulnerable, with special emphasis on children[3].

By signing the Convention on the Rights of the Child governments have committed themselves to protecting and ensuring children's rights. Their signatures to the Millennium Declaration also reinforced the link between a child rights agenda and realization of full human development. They agreed to hold themselves accountable for these commitments before the international community. The CRC is a legally binding instrument ever since it came into force and State Parties are obliged to develop and undertake all actions and policies in the light of the best interest of the child.

These actions include the obligation to implement the rights enshrined in the Convention, through putting in action a set of general measures of implementation. These concern the mobilisation of financial resources to the maximum available extent; revision of national legislation in line with the provisions of the CRC; establishment and enforcing of independent monitoring mechanisms; data collection; design of social and economic policies based on the general principles of CRC as well as close cooperation with the civil society is a very important measure.

In order to account for all these commitments and to be able to report on achievements made, government need to closely track progress. It is well known that not all the goals set during the World Summit for Children were achieved, nor has any country fully achieved all rights enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Also progress to date towards the MDGs is showing a mixed picture. It is therefore crucial to closely monitor progress with sound data and methodologies to help adjust or accelerate policies, programmes and financial contributions.

The importance for close monitoring and the wide dissemination of the CRC as well as the Concluding Observations and Comments of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child is clearly stated in Article 44 of the CRC (see Box 1) and is a

[3] Section VI 26 explicitly encourages the ratification and full implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its optional protocols on the involvement of children in armed conflict and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

recurrent recommendation made by the same Committee on the Rights of the Child in its Concluding Observations and Comments to State Parties reports[4].

Box 1: Article 44 of the Convention ion the Rights of the Child on continuous monitoring

1. States Parties undertake to submit to the Committee, through the Secretary-General of the United Nations, reports on the measures they have adopted which give effect to the rights recognized herein and on the progress made on the enjoyment of those rights
(a) Within two years of the entry into force of the Convention for the State Party concerned;
(b) Thereafter every five years.
2. Reports made under the present article shall indicate factors and difficulties, if any, affecting the degree of fulfilment of the obligations under the present Convention. Reports shall also contain sufficient information to provide the Committee with a comprehensive understanding of the implementation of the Convention in the country concerned.
3. A State Party which has submitted a comprehensive initial report to the Committee need not, in its subsequent reports submitted in accordance with paragraph 1 (b) of the present article, repeat basic information previously provided.
4. The Committee may request from States Parties further information relevant to the implementation of the Convention.
5. The Committee shall submit to the General Assembly, through the Economic and Social Council, every two years, reports on its activities.
6. States Parties shall make their reports widely available to the public in their own countries.

3. Composite indices as technical and policy instruments

One commonly used instrument for monitoring and reporting on progress is the composite index. While an index of any kind can evidently not replace a full-fledged monitoring system that addresses the broad concept of child rights and human development, it is powerful technical instrument that helps to summarise progress in one single digit.

Probably the most well-known composite index is the Human Development Index (HDI)[5], which was first published with the first Human Development in 1990 with the aim to provide a summary measure of the complex notion of human development. Since then, the Human Development Report Office has been in the forefront of developing various indices, such as the Human Poverty Index, the Gender Empowerment Measure and the Gender Related Development Index[6].

[4] With regards to the second periodic report submitted by Egypt in 1999, the Committee on the Rights of the Child recommended in paragraph 16 that "the Committee recommends that the State party ensure that such data are systematically collected and regularly updated so that they can be analysed and used as a basis to assess progress and design policies for the implementation of the Convention. The Committee encourages the State party to seek technical assistance in this regard from, among others, UNICEF, if necessary." In paragraph 17 it states that "the Committee notes that in addition to inter-sectoral coordination, the NCCM is also the body responsible for monitoring progress in the implementation of the Convention, as well as for receiving complaints pertaining to violations of child rights. The Committee emphasizes the importance of establishing an independent mechanism with a mandate to monitor and evaluate progress achieved in the implementation of the Convention." UNCRC (2001).

[5] It is calculated from three social indicators: log (GDP) in purchasing power parity, life expectancy in years and education as weighted average of literacy rate and school enrolment rate.

[6] Hagerty and Land (2006) provide several other examples of social indices. Numerous other indices have also been designed to capture complex economic or governance issues into one single value, in order to

All these indices measure different aspects of development. Some of them are based on factual information, or at least scientifically-founded estimates, while others are grounded on perceptions based on experience and judgements. However, they all have at least two characteristics in common; they were designed to offer a single, comprehensive and multifaceted measure to summarise complex notions, as well as to compare situations *between* countries by providing global rankings.

More specifically related to the situation of children, quite a number of initiatives have been undertaken at both multinational and national level to measure child well-being[7]. These include the Multi-National Project for Monitoring and Measuring Children's Well-Being (Ben-Arieh at al. 2001), the US Child Well-Being Index (CWI) developed by Land (2005) and the KIDS First project.

While UNICEF at the global level has not yet developed an index similar to the Human Development Index, in various countries across the globe, most notably in Latin America, it has supported initiatives of composite indices that describe the situation of children at the country level[8]. Being national initiatives, they were purposely constructed to compare situation with regards to the fulfilment of child rights *within* the countries and highlight the disparities at the sub-national level.[9] In Egypt, the Cabinet Information and Decision Support Center has also undertaken an unpublished study to develop and compute a child development index[10].

Composite indices, such as the Human Development Index, have proven their value as technical monitoring instruments. Apart from being a technical monitoring instrument indices have also the potential to be used as a strong public policy tool (see Box 2).

As said, indices are not the solution to everything and cannot replace full-fledged monitoring systems. Due to several inherent characteristics, they do have there limitations. Even the now widely embraced and perhaps most frequently cited index, the Human Development Index, was once greeted by Amartya Sen, one of its very founders, as a "vulgar measure" because of its limitations.

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allow for easy comparison between countries. Transparency International has developed a Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI). It was first released in 1995 and has since gained wide attention in the debate on corruption and governance. Since 2004, the World Economic Forum publishes a Global Competitiveness Index (GCI) with the aim to provide a comprehensive picture of the competitiveness landscape in countries around the world.

[7] For a comprehensive overview of experience see Bradshaw et al. (2006).

[8] These include initiatives in Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador and Mexico.

[9] It may not come as a surprise that these indices emerged in these particular countries in Latin America if one considers that they are among those with the highest inequalities in the world in terms of income, assets and social development. For example, except for Ecuador, all these countries have a Gini coefficient of more than 0.5, and are among the 15 countries with the highest income inequalities.

[10] IDSC (2006).

Box 2: Reasons why indices have potential as policy instruments

1. They can be used to mobilise political will and accompanying financial resources for more effective, efficient and equitable public policies.
2. As an evidence-based tool, indices can be used for planning purposes that will help in the prioritisation of public resources to more disadvantaged groups and geographical regions.
3. By publishing the indices, they become *de facto* instruments that inform and influence public opinion. This will help the public to hold their leaders accountable and increases their opportunity to participate in the governance process.
4. Publication will also contribute to the democratisation of statistics.
5. The need for data to make the computation of the indices possible can be a stimulus for the collection of more frequent, more timely, and more accurate data.

Some of these limitations and risks are described by Spicker (2000) in his discussion of the Human Poverty Index. Since composite indices are computed on the basis of multiple indicators, they are vulnerable to defective source material. Also, indices tend to depend on indicators that are easily quantified at the outcome level; income, mortality and literacy rather than more complex causal indicators related to command over resources and policy making.

There are also some fundamental issues related to inherent characteristics of indices. The process of aggregation can be sensitive to overlaps (or covariance) between different dimensions of the index[11]. Therefore, the mathematical relationships between different indicators do not simply represent an additive relationship; they also are a statement of value. If factors are not weighted, value is implicit, i.e. two indicators outweigh one. If indicators *are* weighted, then issues of value become explicit. Another issue is the substitutability between different dimensions. It would be unrealistic to assume that all dimensions of an index can be perfectly substituted. These issues of implicit and explicit weights and other characteristics are some of the factors that this paper will discuss in the proposal for the conceptual framework for the Egypt Child Rights Index.

4. Human rights foundations for a Child Rights Index

Much has been said thus far about the Human Development Index. While it does consider a broad-based comprehensive approach to development, it does not adopt a human rights-based approach to well-being. There is therefore a need to consider a clear human rights-based foundation for the Child Rights Index, in order to ensure it is distinctly different in its understanding from other development or deprivation oriented indices[12]. In 1948, the

[11] Consider the Human Poverty Index with three dimensions, and that for each of the three categories of deprivation 30% fails to meet the minimum. This can be so because the same 30% of the population fail in all three fields. But it can also be that a different 30% fail in each category. Or one may have some combination of the extremes. In the first extreme, only 30% of the population is affected by poverty. In contrast, in the other extreme case 90% of the population is deprived altogether, but each group has inadequacy in merely one field. Even though it may not be easy to obtain information on overlaps between different categories, since often information on different categories come from different source, these distinctions can be important in interpreting the value of the index. It is thus not easy to decide (or even to know) whether 30% of people with inadequacy of all three types represent larger human poverty than 90% of people having one deficiency each. UNDP (1997).

[12] While the UNICEF supported index developed by the Child Rights Watch in Mexico does not have a strong theoretical foundation in the human rights principles, the Ìndice Municipal de Desarrollo de la

United Nations set a common standard on human rights with the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Although this Declaration is not part of binding international law, its acceptance by all countries around the world gives great moral weight to the fundamental principle that *all* human beings are to be treated equally and with respect for their natural worth as human beings.

Many legally binding international human rights instruments have been adopted since. These international treaties are used as a framework for discussing and applying human rights. Through these instruments, the principles and rights they outline become legal obligations on those States that sign and ratify them. The framework of these treaties also establishes legal and other mechanisms to hold governments accountable in the event they violate human rights. In many cases countries have decided that these international legal frameworks override national legislation. In order to stress the fundamental nature of the obligations that states have towards individuals, some human rights treaties are called 'covenants' or 'pacts' whilst others are called 'conventions'.

The instruments of the international human rights framework are the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the six core human rights treaties[13]. They all are guided by the same general principles (see Box 3). These principles of human rights apply to human beings of all ages; adults and children. However, due to particular vulnerability of children, the Convention on the Rights of the Child also stipulates several explicit general principles specific to children. These general principles define how all the Convention should be understood and implemented.

Box 3: General principles of human rights

1. Human rights are *inherent, inalienable and universal*. They are inherent, in that they are not owned by anyone and belong to everyone because of their common humanity. They are inalienable because people cannot give them up or be deprived of them by governments. They are universal, in that they are held by all people, everywhere, regardless of age, sex, race, religion, nationality, income level or any other status or condition in life.
2. Rights are also *indivisible, interrelated and interdependent*. All rights are equal and no right is superior to any other; there are no 'small' rights and rights cannot be treated separately. The improvement of one right facilitates advancement of the others. Likewise, the deprivation of one right adversely affects the others. Different rights therefore should not be considered in isolation.

Infancia (IDINA: Municipal Child Development Index) in Bolivia does; however, it does not stress its importance in the very name of the index.

[13] These Treaties are: (1) The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, adopted in 1966 and which entered into force 23 March 1976; (2) The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, adopted in 1966, entered into force 3 January 1976; (3) The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination , adopted in 1965, entered into force 4 January 4 1969; (4) The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, adopted in 1979, entered into force 3 September 1981; (5) The Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, adopted in 1984, entered into force 26 June 1987; and (6) The Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted in 1989, entered into force 2 September 1990. Additionally, these are complemented by The Convention on the Rights for Migrant Workers and Their families, The Convention on Forced Disappearance, and The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The principle of *non-discrimination* is enshrined in Article 2 , which states that children must not suffer discrimination "irrespective of the child's or his or her parent's or legal guardian's race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status. This principle is in fact closely related to the human rights principle of universality and points to the need to capture the life situations and well-being of excluded groups of children.

The general principle of the *best interest of the child* expressed in article 3 implies that that in all decisions or actions that affect the child or children as a group the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration[14]. This holds true whether decisions are made by governmental, administrative or judicial authorities, or by families themselves. It thus strengthens children's role as citizens in their own right.

A third principle is the *right to survival and development* in all aspects of their lives, including the physical, emotional, psychosocial, cognitive, social and cultural, referred to in article 6. The last general principle of the CRC of *respect for the views of the child*, spelled out in article 12, acknowledges children's right to be heard and to have their views taken into account in matters that affect them.

In the following sections, the main elements of the Egypt Child Rights Index will be discussed. These include the dimensions, or sub-indices, the indicators that constitute these dimensions, as well as the formula and its mathematical considerations. For each of these elements, the requirements and available options will be presented, and the advantages and disadvantages of different approaches discussed. Once the different elements have been proposed, the various types for child rights indices, in terms of age groups, sex and reference framework will be discussed. Throughout these discussions the general principles of child rights as enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child will be the guide for the proposed decisions.

5. Clusters of the Convention on the Rights of the Child as domains

The first question to be answered is: how many, or rather, *which* domains would the Index contain? The various indices on child well-being and child rights designed thus far have demonstrated that there is no consensus about frameworks and definitions. However, inherent to the nature of a composite index and in line with the holistic and integrated view of the child enshrined in the principle of indivisibility, interdependence and interrelatedness of human and child rights, all concepts have in common that they are multi-dimensional. One could therefore say that it is a requirement that the Child Rights Index include more than one dimension.

The multi-dimensionality of child well-being has been presented in many different ways through the selection of components of interrelated areas. The study of Bradshaw et al.

[14] In terms of the indicators to be selected for the index, this means that the unit of measurement and analysis should be the child.

(2006a) provides a comprehensive overview of the different initiatives of conceptualising the child well-being[15].

Box 4: Some of the most commonly used dimensions, or domains, of child well-being

1. Material well-being or economic status;
2. Housing and environment;
3. Health (and safety);
4. Education;
5. Subjective well-being;
6. Children's relationships or civic participation, or family, school and community context;
7. Risk and safety; and
8. Emotional/spiritual well-being or social, emotional and behavioural development

Surprisingly, however, none of the studied initiatives has adopted the approach taken by the Committee on the Rights of the Child, which in its Guidelines for Initial Reports and Periodic Reports groups the provisions of the Convention in clusters that refer to particular dimensions of the child's rights and well-being. Or perhaps it is not a surprise, since all, except for the initiative in Bolivia, have adopted the notion of child well-being rather than child rights. And except for the index developed in Mexico, all use the name Child Development or Child Well-Being Index.

There are eight clusters defined by the Committee. In line with the indivisibility and inter-relatedness principles, these cluster of rights are both intra-related (related within each cluster) and inter-related (related between the different clusters).

The first cluster is called *General Measures of Implementation*. These refer to the general context, and include the obligations to mobilise financial resources, the undertaking all appropriate legislative and administrative measures, the implementation of an independent monitoring mechanism, the implementation of a National Plan of Action, data collection and close coordination and partnership with civil society. The second cluster relates to the *Definition of the Child*. The third cluster concerns the already discussed General principles. The fourth cluster on *Civil Rights and Freedom*, considers amongst other rights, a child's right to a name, nationality and identity, freedom of expression and access to appropriate information.

The role of the family in the care of the child, and the part the state plays is considered in the fourth cluster called *Family Environment and Alternative Care*. It also relates to what must happen if a child is deprived of his or her family, for example the special measures

[15] Seldom are these domains selected with the involvement of children. The project of Ireland's Office of the Minister for Children offers an excellent example of how children's view can be elicited and their views incorporated in the selection of domains. Bradshaw et al.(2006) succinctly describe three phase process. In the first phase, more than 250 children aged 8-19 used disposable cameras to take pictures of what well-being means to them. These were developed and returned to the children so that they could write comments on the back. In the second phase other groups of children sorted the photographs into different categories. In the final phase a third sample of children and young people was asked to create a scheme representing the relationships between the categories. A group of young people then finally developed a model of child well-being based on the different categorizations, highlighting the areas children identified as most important for their well-being.

of protection afforded to children in institutional care. The sixth cluster, *Basic Health and Welfare*, deals with the health of children and the health services that are provided, and the measures of protection a state should take to assure an adequate standard of living for a child.

The particular needs and rights of disabled children are considered in this group. Articles related to *Education, Leisure and Cultural Activities* are addressed in a seventh cluster. These articles include standards related not only the educational facilities that are available, but also the quality of the education that is provided and how this prepares the child for a meaningful life in society.

The child's need for recreation is addressed as well. Finally, an eight cluster of articles on *Special Measures for Protection* considers the needs of groups of children who are at particular risk and who may require special protection. This includes refugee children and those in conflicts, children who are exploited through labour, or through sexual exploitation, and children who are subjected to violence. It also refers to children who are in conflict with the law, and the misuse of substances by children and adolescents.

Apart from the projects in Brazil and Mexico, and the study in Egypt—where only two or three domains were used—all initiatives opted for four to seven domains. While there is significant variance in the number and grouping of the domains, these all minimally include a domain on health, a domain on education and one or more domains related to child protection. Most initiatives also selected one or more domains on context or material well-being.

The aim of the Egypt Child Rights Index is to ensure the holistic and rights-based approach respecting the principles of indivisibility and the best interest of the child, i.e. the whole child. At the same time, the number of domains is proposed to be kept to a minimum to facilitate easy understanding and interpretation of the composite index. These domains and their corresponding Clusters are described in Box 5.

Box 5: Domains proposed for Egypt Child Rights Index

1. **Economic context**: referring to CRC Cluster 1 on General Measures and Implementation;
2. **Health**: referring to CRC Cluster 6 on Basic Health and Welfare;
3. **Education**: referring to Cluster 7 on Education, Leisure and Cultural Activities; and
4. **Child Protection**: referring to Clusters 4 on Civil Rights and Freedoms, Cluster 5 on Family Environment and Alternative Care, and Cluster 8 on Special Measures of Protection

Note: The economic context would include areas such as income, employment, unemployment, social security, and housing.

Once the domains have been determined, we need to answer the question: how do we weigh each of the domains in the Index? Should one of the areas be given more priority and weight than the others? And if so, why? Here the initiatives to date are unanimous; they all applied equal weights to each of the domains. The reasons provided and approach taken are however not always the same. Bradshaw et al. (2006a) adopted the negative approach and concluded that there is no theoretical or empirical justification for weighting. Land (2006) refers to Hagerty and Land (2006) who have shown that in the

absence of a set of unequal weights that achieves high consensus among the members of a society, an equal-weighting strategy for composite/summary indicators of wellbeing is privileged in the sense that it minimizes disagreement among all possible individuals' weights.

He also provides more *positive* arguments based on studies analysed by Cummins (1996). They concluded on the basis of various studies on subjective well-being that there is a fairly high degree of similarity among individuals on the relative weightings given to these domains in determining overall life satisfaction. However, there is a more rights-based argument not to apply weights; the principle of indivisibility implies that all rights are equal and that no right is superior to any other. Therefore, the Egypt Child Rights Index is proposed to apply equal weights to all four identified domains.

6. Foundation for selection of indicators

Contrary to many initiatives that have taken the selection of indicators as the starting for the Index, this paper first addressed the decision on the domains. There are several reasons for this approach. The first reason is conceptual; the human rights-based approach requires that the rights are selected first, rather than the indicators that represent these rights.

A second reason is of a more practical nature. This paper aims to provide the conceptual framework as the first step in the recently started process towards the development and application of the Egypt Child Rights Index. If done in the spirit of the child rights general principle of participation, the selection of the indicators demands a reiterative process that takes considerable time.

Such a process would ideally result in an agreed national set of indicators that would have a function beyond supplying the inputs of the Child Rights Index. Together with the summary index, these indicators would constitute the basis of a full-fledged monitoring and evaluation system that permits a regularly updated analytical statement on the status of and trends in the well-being of Egypt's children.

While this paper does not propose the final indicators, it does attempt to provide answers to some of the basic questions related to the selection of the indicators. As Hagerty and Land (2006) have stressed, all too often the selection of indicators has been arbitrary and not justified on the basis of theoretical conceptualization and/or prior research evidence through surveys with individuals.

The experience of Ireland's Office of the Minister for Children offers a good illustration of such a reiterative process involving not only experts, but also parents and children, and how the resulting set of national indicators developed in a participatory fashion forms the institutional basis for of the State of the Nation's Children report[16]. But there are also

[16] See Brooks and Hanafin (2005) for a comprehensive description of the process of narrowing down an initial list of 2,500 indicators to a final agreed national inventory of 48 indicators. Hanafin and Brooks (2005) gives a more detailed account of the Delphi technique used to reach consensus on the indicators.

other countries like the United States and the United Kingdom where the government has initiated the development of a national inventory of indicators. These experiences provide a good reference point for the design of Egypt's own set of indicators.

This leads us to the question of what should be the criteria for selecting indicators. Before deciding on the necessary features of the indicators, it seems useful to first agree on an approach for qualification. The approach proposed is that of *inclusion* rather than *exclusion*; i.e. indicators should be selected on the basis of characteristics they *have*, rather than on the basis of features they do not have.

Also, in line with the general principle of the best interest of the child it should be the child, rather than the family or the parents, which is the unit of measurement. A third general consideration is that in order to serve the purpose of advocacy and policy instrument, indicators should be easy to understand by broad audiences and easy to interpret by decision-makers.

A last consideration relates to the qualification of the rights stipulated in the CRC. The qualifications of each right represent minimum standards, whose non-observance represent a violation of the right. The identification of indicators should therefore observe the standards stipulated by the CRC and be able to measure their observance.

Literature indicates that a fair amount of consensus exists on the criteria for individual indicators (see Box 6). In addition, no study thus far has opted to apply different weights to individual indicators, for the same reasons as none has tried to determine other than equal weights to the different domains[17].

Box 6: Possible selection criteria for indicators summarised and grouped by Brooks and Hanafin (2005)

1. **Importance**: relevant, nationally significant, cultural specific reflective of social goals, objectively-based, representative of large segments of the population;
2. **Practical**: available on a regular basis, replicable, cost efficient, feasible, geographically detailed, timely; and
3. **Technical**: statistically sound, accurate, valid, consistent over time, post-dictive and predictive

Note: Post-dictive means that changes in various factors predict changes in indicator. Predictive implies that changes in values affect changes in child well-being.

However, there is clearly much less agreement on the total number of indicators that should constitute an index. The total number of indicators in studies reviewed for this paper range from five for the (Child Rights Index in Mexico Advisory Board of UNICEF Mexico and UNICEF 2005) to 28 in the United States Child Well-Being Index (Land

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The same experience also elicited children's views in three phases. Countries other than Ireland that produce State of the Nation's Children reports include Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom.

[17] Actually, Hagerty and Land (2006) propose a simple model for predicting the extent of individual's agreement on quality of life judgements with other individuals and investigates whether it is possible to create a quality of life index from real social indicators that will be endorsed by a majority of individuals. It concludes that if no survey exists on these individual judgements—and in fact it strongly argues that such surveys should be undertaken—for any quality of life index, equal weighting of indicators is the minimax estimator that minimises disagreement even among diametrically opposed individuals.

2005) and even 50 indicators for the Index of Child Well-Being in the European Union developed by Bradshaw et al. (2006a) and 52 for the Index of Child well-being in the CEE CIS developed by Richardson et al. (2007)[18]. Therefore, the questions to address are: how *many* indicators are sufficient and how many indicators is enough? And also: should each domain have an equal number of indicators?

There is no easy answer to these questions. Evidently, each domain should have at least one indicator; otherwise the domain would become irrelevant. But it is more difficult to decide on the maximum number per domain. The number of articles in each of the cluster of rights that constitute the domain could be a guide[19]. The fact that this would result in unequal numbers of indicators per domain does not have significant statistical consequences[20]. But it could open questions on the implicit different weights given to each domain.

This paper does not attempt to propose the actual final indicators for the Index, but rather prepares the ground for decisions. Therefore, it is proposed that consensus on these issues be found through the participatory process of developing a national set of indicators. It is, however, recommended that in this process due consideration be given to the merit of an index that is easy to interpret by both the general public and the policy makers.

One aspect of the indicators seems to be severely overlooked, and this is the level at which the indicators operate. None of the studied experiences have made a distinction between different levels of indicators and their inter-relation within the domain. Most rely heavily, without arguing why, on a seemingly arbitrary mix of indicators. They often refer to the hierarchy of outcome, impact, and sometimes, output levels derived from the logical framework approach to measure results of development programmes and projects (see Box 7). One implicit argument in favour of outcome and impact indicators could be that this is the level that ultimately matters, since they are most directly related with the well-being of children. However, impact and outcomes are the results of accumulative achievements at the lower level.

[18] While there are several projects that developed a set number of indicators to report on the well-being of children, these sets have not been used to actually construct a composite index.

[19] UNICEF Headquarters has developed a draft set of indicators for the monitoring of the CRC for consideration by the Geneva based Committee on the Rights of the Child, but also this list does not have a one-on-one relation with the articles of the Convention.

[20] There would be consequences in terms of implicit weights if the z score is used for standardisation of the values, which is a problem inherent in using z scores. The more dispersed the distribution of an indicator, the bigger the difference from the mean, the higher the z scores are. Hence, a more dispersed indicator combined with a less dispersed indicator gives more weight in the resultant construct (component) to the dispersed indicator, particularly at the ends of the distribution. So, for example if within the health component the indicator Low birth weight has the greatest dispersion, say a range 4.22 on z scores, compared to Infant mortality, say 3.97, then, when averaging the z scores, low birth weight would have slightly more weight in the composite index than the other indicator. This is one of the reasons why this paper argues against the use of z score for standardisation. Additional reasons are described further below.

Box 7: Logical Framework categories of indicators at different levels

i. **Input indicators** measure changes in resources (financial and physical).
ii. **Output indicators** measure changes at the level of the skills, goods, services produced by the inputs.
iii. **Outcome indicators** measure changes at the institutional level (such as legislation, quality of, or satisfaction with public services), as well as attitudinal and behavioural change.
iv. **Impact indicators** measure changes in children's lives.

We would argue that the general principles of interrelatedness and interdependence of rights (and thus indicators) provide us with sound reasons to include multiple levels for the indicators for each of the four proposed domains. However, we will not use the logical framework as reference for the selection of the various levels of indicators. Rather, here too we insist on a human rights based approach. We propose to adopt the conceptual framework and its configuration of "structural-process-outcome" indicators developed by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (United Nations-HRI), 2008).

This innovative approach allows the indicators to reflect the commitment-effort-results aspects of the realization of human rights. Or put differently, they make possible the measurement of the extent to which State Parties respect, protect and fulfil the rights of girls and boys. Still, this three level approach is not very different from the logical framework approach. For example, the input level of the logical framework approach would constitute of many of the same indicators one would define as structural indicators. Process indicators to reflect State Parties' efforts as defined by OHCHR could be compared with the output, and sometimes outcome, level indicators of the logical framework approach. Similarly, both approaches include the outcome level. In the case of the framework developed by the OHCHR this would principally include the impact indicators of the logical framework approach.

Structural indicators, measuring commitment, reflect the ratification and adoption of legal instruments and existence of basic institutional mechanisms deemed necessary for facilitating realization of a child right. They include domestic legislation, policy frameworks, strategies, and plans of action. Measuring effort, process indicators include programmes and specific interventions that a State is willing to take in order to give effect to its commitment. Indicators at this level mainly relate to quality and coverage of social services provided, but also to budget allocation and systems through which they are provided and monitored. Outcome indicators capture attainments, individual and collective, that reflect the status of realization of child rights. Indicators at this level measure the changes in children's lives.

This implies that the Egypt Child Rights Index would comprise a minimum of 12 indicators, i.e. 4 domains with 3 levels of indicators.

Box 8: OHCHR indicators at different levels

1. **Structural indicators** measure commitment through legal instruments and policy statements.
2. **Process indicators** measure effort in terms of quality and coverage of services provided, their budget allocations and monitoring systems.
3. **Outcome indicators** measure results reflected in changes in children's lives.

7. Schools of thought with regards to formula

Now that we have the ingredients of the Child Rights Index, we need to decide how we will cook them. In other words, we need to decide on the formula of accumulation of the different sets of indicators. Most importantly, a decision needs to be taken with regards to the standardization, or normalization, of the indicators.

This standardization is important for two reasons. Firstly, the Index will contain many different kinds of indicators; those that inform us about the realization of a right (literacy rate), and those that tell us how much a child is deprived of a right (e.g. mortality rate). Also, values of different indicators will be expressed against different denominators. For example, school enrolment is expressed in percentages, while infant mortality rate is calculated per 1000 life births. Therefore, in order to avoid implicit different weights for each of the indicators[21], we will have to normalize these different expressions.

Secondly, assuming we want to develop an index that allows us to compare the situations at the sub national level and to analyse figures that reveal geographical disparities hidden by national averages (e.g. Governorates)[22], we need to normalize in order to be able to compute rankings and to know the relative position of each local administration. In other words, we want to know the degree of difference between the sub national levels.

There are two schools of thought when it comes to normalization. The first school uses the normalized variation between the extremes (i.e. the goalposts). We could call this the HDI-school, after the approach adopted by the Human Development Index. The second school uses the z score, which calculates the number of standard deviations from the mean of the distribution[23]. It is important to note that the exercise of standardization will not affect the ranking of a series of values for either approach, but rather the relative position in the distribution of sub national levels. [24]

The projects initiated by UNICEF in Latin America have generally used the HDI approach. This is also true for the unpublished study on the Child Development Index undertaken by the IDSC in Egypt. Bradshaw et al. (2006a and 2006b), Land (2001, 2005 and 2006) and Richardson et al. (2007), on the other hand, are amongst those who have used the z scores.

The main advantage of the z score is that is does not only measure whether a score is higher or lower than average. By using the standard deviation to standardize it also takes

[21] For example a mortality rate of 66 per 1000 (i.e. 0.066) in the health cluster would have a different weight as an access ratio to piped water of 66 per cent (i.e. 66 per 100 or 0.66).
[22] This is in line with the general principle of universality, or the right of any sub national level to achieve the highest possible level of attainment.
[23] Typical indicators calculated using the z score are malnutrition indicators like stunting and wasting.
[24] Consider a country with only three regions. The lowest net primary enrolment rate is 20 percent and the highest is 85 percent. The third region has an enrolment rate of 66 percent. While the ranking of the third region would not change if the lowest net enrolment rate improves to 50 percent, its relative position compared to the other two regions will.

into account the degree of dispersion and not only the upper and lower bound[25]. Although the z score has the advantage to account dispersion in the different scores, it has several disadvantages compared with the goalpost approach of the HDI.

First and foremost, indices based on z scores are more difficult to interpret than HDI-like indices, which are displayed on a scale from 0-1. Z scores typically operate on a range from -3 to 3. However, the ranking for the z score are no different than those that are obtained with the approach using simple variation based goalposts. It seems reasonable to assume that it is intuitively less obvious to interpret a z score of 1 in a range of -3 to 3, than a score of 0.75 on a scale of 0 to 1. Bradshaw et al. (2006b) adjusts the z score outcomes and display them on a scale from 0 to 1, but this would of course not entirely resolve the lack of easy interpretation. Therefore, because the Child Rights Index is also meant as an advocacy and policy tool, this seems to be a serious drawback.

A second disadvantage is that while the z score allows for trend analysis—if base values of a proper reference year are calculated—the HDI approach allows for the development of different and easy to interpret indices that are reflective of different frameworks with the same data. For example, one could use 1990 as the base year and a calculated MDG target as the maximum value, if the reference framework is the Millennium Declaration and its goals. If the CRC is used as a reference, one would take the absolute *possible* value[26] as the maximum goalpost and the worst possible value as the minimum goalpost. Some of these different possible indices will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

Therefore, it is proposed to use the *goalposts* approach for reasons of flexibility and easy interpretation. The commonly used formula is adopted with only two minor adjustments, mainly to stress the human rights approach of the Egypt Child Rights Index and to further facilitate interpretation.

Firstly, we have already seen that certain indicators are expressed in terms of deprivation (e.g. mortality) and others in terms of attainment or realization. A rights-based approach would take a *positive* approach that departs from the realization of child rights and the fulfilment of the opportunity for every child to be all she or he can be. The degree to which this is achieved is measured in terms of positive outcomes, rather than negative outcomes and deprivation or denial of children's rights.

Therefore, even though there is no mathematical requirement to change the way the index is computed, for conceptual reasons it is proposed to transform *negative* indicators into *positive* values. For example, if the infant mortality rate is 33 per 1000, the value used in the calculation would be transformed into a survival rate of 967, i.e. 1000 minus 33. Likewise, malnutrition will be transformed to reflect the proportion of child that does not

[25] Of course analysis of disparities can always be done with indices based on the HDI approach after they have been computed, but this dispersion is not intrinsically part of the calculation.

[26] For example, based on globally available data and scientific estimations, the HDI has set the maximum life expectancy at birth to 85 years and the minimum to 25 years. The maximum value for the GDP per capita is deemed to be US$40,000 whereas the minimum is set at US$100.

suffer from malnutrition. An example here would be to transform the prevalence of underweight of 6.1% into children that are *not* underweight of 100% minus 6.1% equals 93.9%.

The second minor adjustment is more cosmetic and to merely facilitate understanding of the applied formula. The HDI uses the terms 'minimum' and 'maximum' value. In the HDI formula 'minimum' is always meant to be the worst value. However, depending on the type of indicator, whether it is a negative indicator of deprivation or a positive indicator of realization, 'minimum' can be the worst or the best value of the distribution. For example, the lowest mortality rate is evidently to be considered as 'best' and not 'worst'. Therefore, for the Egypt Child Rights Index the wording of the 'minimum' and 'maximum' has been changed into 'worst' and 'best' respectively, to reflect what they really are. The final formula is shown in Box 3 below.

Box 8: Formula for the Egypt Child Rights Index

$$\text{EGRI} = \frac{1}{4}\sum_{k=1}^{4}\frac{1}{n}\sum_{j=1}^{n} I_{jk}$$

Where:

I_{jk} = Standardized indicator j for cluster of rights k

j,k = Number of indicators for right k (1 to n) and Number of clusters of rights (1 to 4)

$$I_{ijk} = \left(\frac{x_{ijk} - x_{jk}^{worst}}{x_{jk}^{best} - x_{jk}^{worst}}\right)$$

Where:

I_{jk} = Standardized index of indicator *j*, Governorate *i* and cluster of rights *k*

x_{jk} = Observed value of indicator j in each of the Governorates for cluster of rights *k*

x_{jk}^{worst} = Worst value or goalpost (based on selected option for base) of indicator j for cluster of rights *k*

x_{i}^{best} = Best value or goalpost (based on selected option for base) of indicator *j* for cluster of rights *k*

x = Raw value of I, if I is a *positive* indicator, and (1-value of I), if I is a *negative* indicator

i, j, k = Number of Governorates (first sub national level below the national level), Number of indicators for right *k* (1 to n), Number of clusters of rights (1 to 4)

8. Many Child Rights Indices from one data set

We have seen that there only few requirements to address when developing a composite index. These concern the minimum number of domains and indicators, and the standardization of raw values.

Still, it is sometimes argued that composite indices are too much of a summary of real lives that are too complex to capture in one number, even if they include several domains and various levels of indicators. They are said to hide important nuances within one cluster or sector by possibly evening out significant differences through summation.

However, nothing withholds us from using the same data to produce multiple indices, and not just one single index. Just as there are many options available with regards to the composition of a child rights index, there are many different kinds of indices that can be computed with the same data set. The only provision is that the set of indicators is sufficiently comprehensive and that it has disaggregated data beyond national averages.

We will shortly discuss four different groups of indices that could be computed. The first one is the category of *sectoral* indices, or vertical indices. A second category considers the *levels* of the indicators to construct different horizontal indices. The various *dimensions* of indicators such as age, ethnicity, region etc., allow for a third category of indices. And lastly, still with the same data set and the same indicators, indices can be computed for different reference *frameworks*. Combining these different options would allow us to compute more than 100 indices with the same data set.

In principle, sub-indices can be computed for each of the sectoral clusters that comprise the overall index. However, as mentioned, most indices use a seemingly arbitrary mix of indicators of various levels. Indeed, without a clear conceptual construction of the sectoral sub-indices and its indicators one could justifiably question the validity of such summative sectoral measurements. With the current proposal of inclusion of indicators at all three levels, we consider this question answered; the composition of the sectoral sub indices is sufficiently comprehensive to use them in their own right. For example, if the indicators on education comprehensively cover pre-school, kindergarten, primary and secondary school in terms of their commitment, effort and results , it seems feasible and beneficial to compute a Child Index on the Right to Education.

The explicit decision to include indicators at three levels also allows for three horizontal indices; these are the structural index, the process index and the outcome index. Most indices to date in fact are outcome indices, because they focus on degree of human development at the results level, and to a lesser extent process level. Therefore, by extracting the indicators at one particular level within each cluster one can produce three different horizontal indices.

Apart from only two initiatives supported by UNICEF in Bolivia and Mexico, all reviewed projects have developed one single index for all children between 0 and 17 years old. These two deviant initiatives are each working with three indices for three different age groups. The reason for this distinction is that children go through different phases from birth to adolescence. Human rights are universal, indivisible, interrelated and interdependent. Still, one could argue that the right to be heard is more pertinent to an adolescent than to an infant. Likewise, the right to a name and nationality seems of more urgency immediately after birth than for a youngster in secondary school. Also, in many

cases, the same right is operationalized in a different manner. For example, a 3 year old boy would not go to secondary school, and a 15 year old girl adolescent would not benefit much attending kindergarten. But a single index for all children under 18 years would need to consider indicators for all levels of education if it is to be sensitive to all ages and thus the principle of universality.

We therefore propose to develop a Child Rights Index based on three equally weighted age specific sub indices, using a life cycle approach. The age groups are set at 0-5 years (the early childhood years), 6-11 years (the primary school going age) and 12-17 years (adolescence).

With sufficient data are available, age is but one dimension of disaggregation. Indices could be computed for all other status or condition of life referred to in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, or the Universal Declaration of Human Rights for that matter, such as sex, race, religion, nationality, and income level[27]. For Egypt and many other countries, it seems especially relevant to strive for indices that disaggregate for sex. The importance of reduction of gender disparities is also recognised by the Millennium Development Goals[28]. Disaggregating indices by sex would not only allow for disparity analysis by sex, but also by conditions that are specific to girls or boys, such as Genital Female Mutilation/Cutting.

A last option that we will shortly discuss is the reference framework for the EGRI. As shown, the HDI approach permits monitoring progress against more than one framework with the same raw data. The only requirement is to set the goalposts relevant to the referred framework. With the proper selection of the national set of indicators, using the HDI approach, the Child Rights Index would therefore offer an excellent opportunity to monitor and report on both the progress towards the progressive fulfilment of child rights and the attainment of the targets set in the Millennium Declaration. And of course any other national development framework could be monitored inn a similar manner.

9. Conclusions and further work

We have tried to argue that the Egypt Child Rights Index can be a powerful technical as well as policy instrument. In order to respond to the doubts cast about the usefulness of such summative measurement, it should have a solid and clearly justified conceptual framework based on human rights principles, with special reference to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. At the same time it should be easy to interpret.

[27] For indices at the national level, geographic location is the primary dimension of disaggregation. A nationally developed index would have little meaning if only a national value was computed that cannot be compared (with other countries) or put in context. It could only serve to display a trend over time.

[28] One entire MDG is dedicated to reducing gender disparities. MDG 3: Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women. It has the following target: Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015. This target is measured through four indicators: 1. Ratio of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education; 2. Ratio of literate women to men, 15-24 years old; 3. Share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector; and 4. Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament.

The proposed Egypt Child Rights Index consists of 4 clusters, which each have at least one indicator at all the input, output, outcome and impact levels, and which is calculated using the goalposts approach. The present conceptual paper also showed that a conceptually well-conceived Child Rights Index based on a comprehensive data set allows for more than 100 different kinds sub indices, and thus answered to the contention that indices hide possibly important differences by evening out extreme values.

As was made clear from the outset, this paper is a strictly conceptual note and does not propose actual indicators or compute the various possible indices. Therefore, the immediate next step is to determine the indicators to be included through a participatory process. In line with the human rights approach of the Index, this should involve both duty bearers (policy makers, social development practitioners) and claim holders (parents and children) to ensure broad ownership of the Index and its usefulness as technical and policy instrument.

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