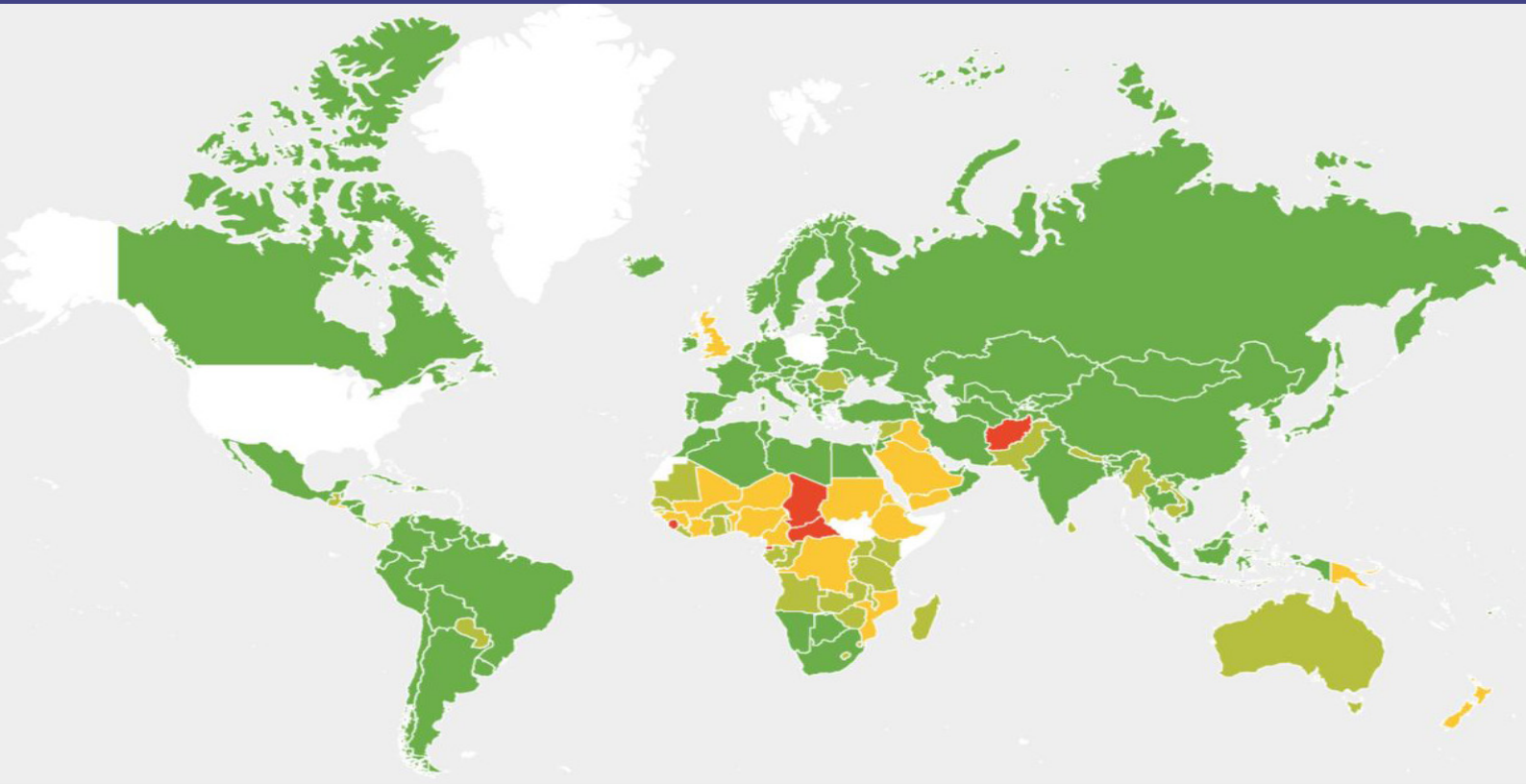


The KidsRights Index 2020

Report



KIDSRIGHTS
Index

THE KIDSRIGHTS INDEX AND INFORMATION ABOUT ITS DOMAINS, INDICATORS AND
METHODOLOGY ARE ACCESSIBLE ON [KIDSRIGHTS.ORG/KIDSRIGHTSINDEX](https://www.kidsrights.org/kidsrightsindex)

ABOUT



KIDSRIGHTS

KidsRights is an international non-governmental organization that promotes the wellbeing of very vulnerable children across the world and advocates the realisation of their rights. KidsRights strives for a world where all children have access to their rights and are empowered to realise the great potential they carry within them. KidsRights sees children as ‘*changemakers*’ who have the power to move the world, and facilitates them in voicing their opinions and taking action in order to bring about change.

KidsRights supports children by commanding global attention for the realisation of children’s rights and acting as a catalyst to ignite change, together with children and youth. This advocacy is supported with research and action. The foundation also finances local projects aimed at directly improving the rights of vulnerable children and stimulating child participation and *changemaking* by youths.

www.kidsrights.org 

Erasmus
School of
Economics



ERASMUS SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS

Erasmus School of Economics (ESE) is a leading centre for scientific research and education. As an internationally acclaimed institute, Erasmus School of Economics contributes to future economic developments and to answering issues related to government and business policy.

<https://www.eur.nl/ese/english> 

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THE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL STUDIES

The International Institute of Social Studies (ISS) is an international graduate school of critical policy-oriented social science. ISS staff conducts research and provides teaching and public service in the field of development studies and international cooperation. The ISS is part of Erasmus University Rotterdam but based in The Hague.

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The KidsRights Index is the only annual global ranking on how countries worldwide are adhering to children's rights.

182
countries

Unique: domain Child Rights Environment provides insight into the extent to which a country is equipped to carry out the UN CRC.

The goal of the KidsRights Index
To stimulate compliance with children's rights worldwide.



ONLINE: the KidsRights Index is easily accessible on kidsrights.org/kidsrightsindex



The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is the global framework for children's rights.



1989

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

196
states



The KidsRights Index pools data from three reputable sources:



- 1 Quantitative data published and regularly updated by UNICEF www.data.unicef.org
- 2 UNDP www.hdr.undp.org/data
- 3 Qualitative data from the Concluding Observations by the **UN Committee on the Rights of the Child**.

The KidsRights Index: 20 indicators: 13 quantitative and 7 qualitative indicators

1. LIFE

- Under five mortality rate
- Life expectancy at birth
- Maternal mortality ratio



2. HEALTHCARE

- % of under five year olds suffering from underweight
- Immunization of one year old children
- % of population using improved sanitation facilities (urban and rural)
- % of population using improved drinking water sources (urban and rural)



3. EDUCATION

- Expected years of schooling of girls
- Expected years of schooling of boys
- Gender inequality in expected years of schooling (absolute difference between girls and boys)



4. PROTECTION

- Child labour
- Adolescent birth rate
- Birth registration



5. CHILD RIGHTS ENVIRONMENT

- Non-discrimination
- Best interests of the child
- Enabling legislation
- Best available budget
- Respect for the views of the child/child participation
- Collection and analysis of disaggregate data
- State-civil society cooperation for child rights participation



The KidsRights Index is an initiative of the KidsRights Foundation, in cooperation with Erasmus University Rotterdam; Erasmus School of Economics and the International Institute of Social Studies.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PLEASE SAFEGUARD THE NEXT GENERATION	4
CHILDREN'S RIGHTS IN TIMES OF THE CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)	5
1. THE METHODOLOGY OF THE KIDSRIGHTS INDEX	
1.1 THE DOMAINS AND INDICATORS	9
1.2 DOMAIN 5	9
1.3 CALCULATION OF SCORE DOMAIN 1-4	10
1.4 CALCULATION OF SCORE DOMAIN 5	10
1.5 CLUSTERS	10
2. THE RESULTS OF THE KIDSRIGHTS INDEX 2020	
2.1 OVERALL RANKING	11
2.2 STRIKING RESULTS KIDSRIGHTS INDEX 2020	12
2.2.1 Striking results due to new scores in domain 5	12
2.2.2 Striking results due to new scores in domain 1-4	14
2.3 OVERALL CONCLUSIONS KIDSRIGHTS INDEX 2020	15
2.3.1 Developed countries are not necessarily performing better	15
2.3.2 Worldwide, countries allocate insufficient budget for children's rights	16
2.3.3 Discrimination of children is a global problem	17
2.3.4 The views of the child are not respected due to traditional attitudes.	18
2.3.5 Legislation has to be improved	19
2.3.6 The need for data collection remains high	20
BACKGROUND INFORMATION	21
ANNEX 1 - DOMAINS & INDICATORS	23
ANNEX 2 - REGIONS KIDSRIGHTS INDEX 2020 (182 COUNTRIES)	24

PLEASE SAFEGUARD THE NEXT GENERATION

This 8th edition of the KidsRights Index is launched amidst a worldwide Covid-19 pandemic. While there seem to be compelling indications that healthwise children tend to be less affected directly by Covid-19 than adults or the elderly are, the pandemic nevertheless has already had specific and serious negative indirect consequences for children and their parents and caretakers. There might even be devastating effects in the long run.

PREDICTIONS

Although the numbers in the KidsRights Index will not reflect the impact of the pandemic this year, in the years to come we will monitor its effects.

Selected examples of negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on children in the long run include;

- Deprivation of the right to education for hundreds of millions of children.
- Many children will drop out of school. Many boys will be forced into child labour and many girls into early marriages.
- An astonishing increase in domestic violence and abuse, with children as victims, due to the lockdowns.
- Vaccination campaigns for other diseases are being suspended possibly resulting in hundreds of thousands of additional children deaths.
- No reliable source of daily nutrition for hundreds of millions of children that normally rely on school meals.
- Due to the Covid-19 virus millions of children will fall into extreme poverty.

ACCOUNTABLE

The KidsRights Index has been published annually since 2013. It is the first and only worldwide children's rights index. It ranks countries on how good they are at realising children's rights to the best of their resources and if they adhere to children's rights. This year 182 countries are ranked in the domains of life, health, education, protection and enabling a children's rights environment.

Global pandemic or not, we still hold countries accountable to their obligation to realize the rights of children. In this pandemic children and youngsters seem to be forgotten as a high risk group.

We envision that the setback for children's rights will be enormous, not only in the short term but also in the long term. We urge countries to safeguard the future of the next generation.

We owe it to them, we owe it to ourselves,



Marc Dullaert

Founder and Chairman KidsRights Foundation

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS IN TIMES OF THE CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

We present the KidsRights Index results 2020 amidst the Coronavirus pandemic. Within only a few months the new infectious disease COVID-19 spread around the world and made many victims. The pandemic forced large numbers of people (obviously including children) to live in lockdown and/or to practice 'social distancing' as much as possible, with all its consequences.

While the KidsRights Index as such does not report results that directly relate to the Coronavirus crisis, we do find it important to draw attention to this new overall context. The main reason for this is that the challenges the Coronavirus poses to governments worldwide are likely to have a serious and long-lasting effect on the extent to which those governments will focus on actively implementing children's rights at large, and/or will be able to do so. Controlling the virus and its impact on the health of the population and on the economy, surely (and inevitably) will be top priority for quite some time. So far, in most places, the measures taken have not shown much explicit child rights awareness or sensitivity. This situation is likely to overshadow other policy concerns for a considerable period and place huge demands on the budgets that governments have available.

The ability of countries to cope with the COVID-19 crisis varies greatly. As the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) has pointed out, among other things a country's level of human development, its health care system capacity and internet access are important determining factors in this regard¹. For example, a country with a high level of human development "has on average 55 hospital beds, over 30 physicians, and 81 nurses per 10,000 people, compared to 7 hospital beds, 2.5 physicians, and 6 nurses in a least developed country"². Due to the lockdowns people are relying heavily on internet access to work, to continue their education, or to maintain social contacts, "hundreds of millions of people around the globe still don't have access to reliable broadband internet" or to a computer, laptop, mobile phone or smartphone. Likewise, the poorest in all societies (both in the North and the South) often have no possibilities to practice the advised basic hygiene measures (such as washing hands with water and soap). In addition, they often cannot afford to self-isolate or to fully practice 'social distancing' because they need to continue physical work in order to earn an income.

While there seem to be compelling indications that, health-wise, children tend to be less affected by the Coronavirus than adults (and the elderly) are³, the pandemic nevertheless has already had specific and serious negative consequences for children and their parents or caretakers as well. Depending on how the situation will develop in the short- and mid-term future, COVID-19 might even have devastating effects in the longer run. Selected examples of negative impacts on children include the following.

EDUCATION

In many countries, daycare centers, kindergartens, and primary and secondary schools were closed for extensive periods of time. According to UNESCO, this "worldwide closure of schools has no historical precedent. 188 countries have imposed countrywide closures, affecting more than 1.5 billion children and youth"⁴. At least 58 countries and territories postponed or rescheduled exams, while at least 11

1 Milorad Kovacevic and Admir Jahic, 'COVID-19 and Human Development: Exploring Global Preparedness and Vulnerability', Human Development Report Office, United Nations Development Programme, 29 April 2020.

2 *Ibid.*, p. 2.

3 United Nations, 'Policy Brief: The Impact of COVID-19 on Children', 16 April 2020, <https://un.org.au/files/2020/04/Policy-Brief-on-COVID-impact-on-Children-16-April-2020.pdf>, p. 7.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 8.

countries cancelled exams altogether.⁵ According to UNICEF, in April 2020 more than 800 million children were out of school.⁶ Many of these children were deprived of their right to education. In 143 countries this also resulted in the discontinuing of school meals, altogether for no less than 368.5 million children. This is especially impactful for children from poor families for whom this might be their only more or less nutritious meal in a day.⁷

While in various countries homeschooling with parental guidance and supervision was extensively practiced during this period, it has also become abundantly clear that this mainly works in well-educated families and is likely to reproduce inequalities for others. In the Netherlands, due to Corona-related school closures in the spring of 2020, homeschooling (often combined with a modest amount of online guidance by schoolteachers) has been practiced for primary and secondary school children since mid-March. It rapidly became clear though that, especially once parents or other caretakers lack the time, the knowledge or the language skills to effectively assist their children, or if they are unable to provide their children with a computer, laptop and/or internet connection, or to keep in contact with the school, the children will not be able to keep up with the homework to be done and will rapidly lag behind their peers who have effective parental guidance. Likewise, children with disabilities or special needs normally will also not be served well enough in these circumstances.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE OR ABUSE

In situations where families are being confined to their homes because of lockdowns or (self-) quarantine, combined with financial stress due to loss of income, the risk of violence against and abuse of children or the risk of children witnessing domestic violence against a parent (in most cases their mother) increases. Various development practitioners have already drawn insightful parallels between the situation caused by the Corona virus and the consequences of past outbreaks of other diseases, such as Ebola. For instance, “those of us who worked on the Ebola Crisis in West and Central Africa saw first-hand how quarantine can increase the risk of exploitation and abuse among poor children – and how many children, particularly adolescent girls, will struggle to return to school when the crisis ends”.⁸

MENTAL WELLBEING

The Corona pandemic brings about drastic socio-economic and health effects as well. There is a real risk of many children losing relatives or loved ones due to COVID-19. Coupled with the increased risk of domestic violence as mentioned earlier, and the fact that many children living in lockdown or (self-) quarantine have limited possibilities to play, physically exercise and/or interact with their peers, it is to be expected that in these Corona times children will be facing serious mental wellbeing and/or physical development issues.

5 Ibid., p. 7.

6 UNICEF, ‘Protecting the Most Vulnerable Children from the Impact of Coronavirus: An Agenda for Action’, 17 April 2020, <https://www.unicef.org/coronavirus/agenda-for-action>.

7 United Nations, ‘Policy Brief: The Impact of COVID-19 on Children’, 16 April 2020, <https://un.org.au/files/2020/04/Policy-Brief-on-COVID-impact-on-Children-16-April-2020.pdf>, p. 9.

8 Yolande Wright and Luke Harman, ‘Coronavirus is a Devastating Blow to Children in Poverty’, 26 March 2020, <https://www.savethechildren.net/blog/coronavirus-devastating-blow-children-poverty>. See also United Nations Population Fund, ‘COVID-19: A Gender Lens – Protecting Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights and Promoting Gender Equality’, New York, March 2020.

HEALTHCARE

Keeping up healthcare services, both for Corona and non-Corona related medical treatment for children, is essential. For example, if treatment for malaria, pneumonia and diarrhea is discontinued or no longer accessible, and if vaccination campaigns continue to be suspended for a much longer period, then the Under five mortality rates are likely to increase rapidly. According to the United Nations, “hundreds of thousands of additional child deaths could occur in 2020 compared to a pre-pandemic counterfactual scenario. This would effectively reverse the last 2 to 3 years of progress in reducing infant mortality within a single year”.⁹

ESPECIALLY VULNERABLE: CHILDREN IN DETENTION

Among the many groups of children that require special attention in times of Corona, one group has not yet been mentioned earlier yet: children in detention. They are confronted with lockdowns in their prison cells, severely restricting their physical freedom of movement and social interaction. As the Children’s Commissioner for England has pointed out, in effect and contrary to articles 37 and 40 of the CRC, this may result in a situation equaling solitary confinement.¹⁰ Due to Corona-related understaffing, basic safety and primary services such as education, rehabilitation assistance or mental support might be less available. Maintaining contact with their families might become impossible for child detainees.

Therefore, at the end of March 2020, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the World Health Organization issued an Interim Guidance on COVID-19 and Persons Deprived of Their Liberty.¹¹ According to this Guidance, especially in situations of overcrowded prisons, measures should be taken to allow detainees “to respect WHO guidance on social distancing and other health measures. Release of individuals, including children (...) should be prioritized. Release of children needs to be done in consultation and partnership with child protection actors and relevant government authorities to ensure adequate care arrangements”.¹² With reference to article 37 of the CRC, the Interagency Standing Committee also stated that “authorities have the responsibility to ensure that the best interests of each individual child is the primary consideration and it is widely argued that detention even as a last resort, is never in the best interests of a child, especially when referring to child immigration detention. Thus, non-custodial alternatives to detention, which are family based or community based, should be favored for any person under 18 years, especially in the context of COVID-19 decongestion measures and increased risks to the right to life of all detainees and personnel”.¹³

9 United Nations, ‘Policy Brief: The Impact of COVID-19 on Children’, 16 April 2020, <https://un.org.au/files/2020/04/Policy-Brief-on-COVID-impact-on-Children-16-April-2020.pdf>, p. 9. See also World Health Organization, ‘More than 117 Million Children at Risk of Missing Out on Measles Vaccines, as COVID-19 Surges’, 17 April 2020, https://www.who.int/immunization/diseases/measles/statement_missing_measles_vaccines_covid-19/en/.

10 Anne Longfield OBE, Children’s Commissioner for England, ‘Calling on the Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice to Ensure the Rights of Children in Custody are Upheld’, 25 March 2020. For a comprehensive overview, see Child Rights International Network (CRIN), ‘Coronavirus and Children in Detention’, <https://home.crin.org/latest/coronavirus-and-children-in-detention>.

11 <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/other/iasc-interim-guidance-covid-19-focus-persons-deprived-their-liberty-developed-ohchr-and-who>, circulated on 27 March 2020.

12 *Ibid.*, p. 3.

13 *Ibid.*

All in all, it is obvious that the Corona pandemic has a major impact on children and on the ability to realizing children's rights. It is also self-evident that governments all over the world will have to make extra efforts to make sure that the best interests of children and other child rights aspects will be taken into account in their Corona crisis management decisions and activities. Likewise, and as required by Article 4 of the CRC to which all states in the world except the US are state parties, they will need to do their utmost to (continue to) mobilize their maximum available resources to curb the effects of the pandemic on children and, as soon as possible, to revert back to a comprehensive structural children's rights policy.

1. THE METHODOLOGY OF THE KIDSRIGHTS INDEX

1.1 THE DOMAINS AND INDICATORS

The KidsRights Index covers five domains with a total of 20 indicators. Based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the Index synthesizes the performance records of states on the most crucial aspects of children's lives for which comparable data is available. In addition, the Index charts how states are faring in mobilizing the enabling environment for children's rights that the CRC requires them to have. The five domains that jointly make up the Index are:

1. Right to Life
2. Right to Health
3. Right to Education
4. Right to Protection
5. Enabling Environment for Child Rights

The KidsRights Index ranks countries on each of these five domains which in turn generate a comprehensive overall ranking. The content of the Index is a sound basis for making concrete recommendations on how the children's rights record of specific countries could be improved.

1.2 DOMAIN 5

Domain 5, the 'Enabling Environment for Child Rights', is an important and unique domain of the KidsRights Index. It reveals the extent to which countries have operationalized the general principles of the CRC (*non-discrimination; best interests of the child; respect for the views of the child/participation*) and the extent to which there is a basic 'infrastructure' for making and implementing child rights policy (in the form of *enabling national legislation; mobilization of the 'best available' budget; collection and analysis of disaggregated data; and state-civil society cooperation for child rights*). The scores on domain 5 are derived from the Concluding Observations adopted by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. These Concluding Observations (COs) finish off the state reporting procedure under the CRC and represent the Committee's views on the level of realization of children's rights in a particular country.



1.3 CALCULATION OF SCORE DOMAIN 1-4

The scores for each domain are calculated as the mean of the scores on the underlying indicators. The scores are standardised between a minimum of 0.01 and a maximum of 1. If scores are missing for particular indicators, then the domain score is calculated over the score of the remaining indicators.

A country is not included in the overall Index if the score on domain 5 'Child Rights Environment' is missing, or if more than half of all the domain scores are missing. The score for a domain is not calculated if for more than half of the indicators of that domain the values are missing.

The total score of the KidsRights Index is calculated as the geometric mean of the scores on the five specific domains. In general, the geometric mean is used instead of the arithmetic mean, because this makes it more difficult to compensate for low scores on specific domains. Such compensation is not desirable, because all children's rights are considered important. Therefore, an extremely low score in one area of children's rights, for example on providing an 'enabling environment for child rights', cannot be compensated by a high score for example on 'education'.

1.4 CALCULATION OF SCORE DOMAIN 5

Domain 5 - 'Child Rights Environment' - is based on the Concluding Observations adopted by the CRC Committee. The Committee's assessment of the country performance on the earlier mentioned 7 indicators that make up domain 5 is used to generate scores on a scale between 1 and 3. The actual score assigned to each sub-indicator is exclusively based on the language used by the Committee in the document. The resulting final scores are standardized.

KidsRights Index Scoring System:

Score 1 'bad'	= only negative remarks
Score 2 'average'	= negative and positive remarks
Score 3 'good'	= only positive remarks
NA	= not addressed

1.5 CLUSTERS

The Index is a ranked country list, with colour-coding indicating relevant clusters of rankings. Five different clusters each display a more or less similar performance level, as each cluster represents countries for which the scores belong to the same distribution (see figure 1). Within a cluster the scores of countries are thus more similar than across clusters. The clusters are expressed in coloured world maps on www.kidsrights.org/kidsrightsindex.

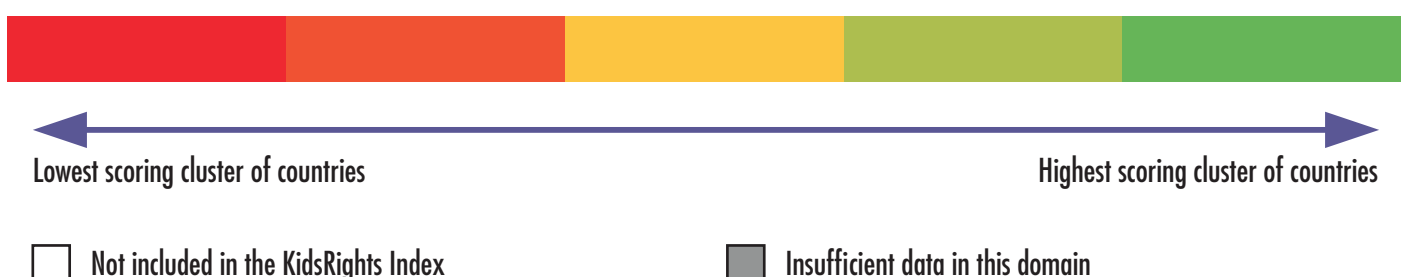


Figure 1. colour-coding indicating relevant clusters of rankings

2. THE RESULTS OF THE KIDSRIGHTS INDEX 2020

2.1 OVERALL RANKING

Overall Rank 2020	Countries/ 182	Score KRI 2020
1	Iceland	0,967
2	Switzerland	0,937
3	Finland	0,934
4	Sweden	0,915
5	Germany	0,908
6	Netherlands	0,904
7	Slovenia	0,897
8	Thailand	0,893
9	France	0,891
10	Denmark	0,890

Table: Overall Top 10 - Iceland ranks number one in the KidsRights Index 2020.

Overall Rank 2020	Countries/ 182	Score KRI 2020
182	Chad	0,129
181	Afghanistan	0,194
180	Sierra Leone	0,222
179	Equatorial Guinea	0,271
178	Central African Republic	0,273
177	Papua New Guinea	0,304
176	Democratic Republic of the Congo	0,309
175	Guinea	0,309
174	El Salvador	0,331
173	Guinea-Bissau	0,336

Table: Overall Bottom 10 - Chad is the lowest scoring country replacing Afghanistan in 2019.

The complete rankings and rankings per domain are available at:

[KIDSRIGHTS.ORG/KIDSRIGHTSINDEX](https://kidsrights.org/kidsrightsindex) 

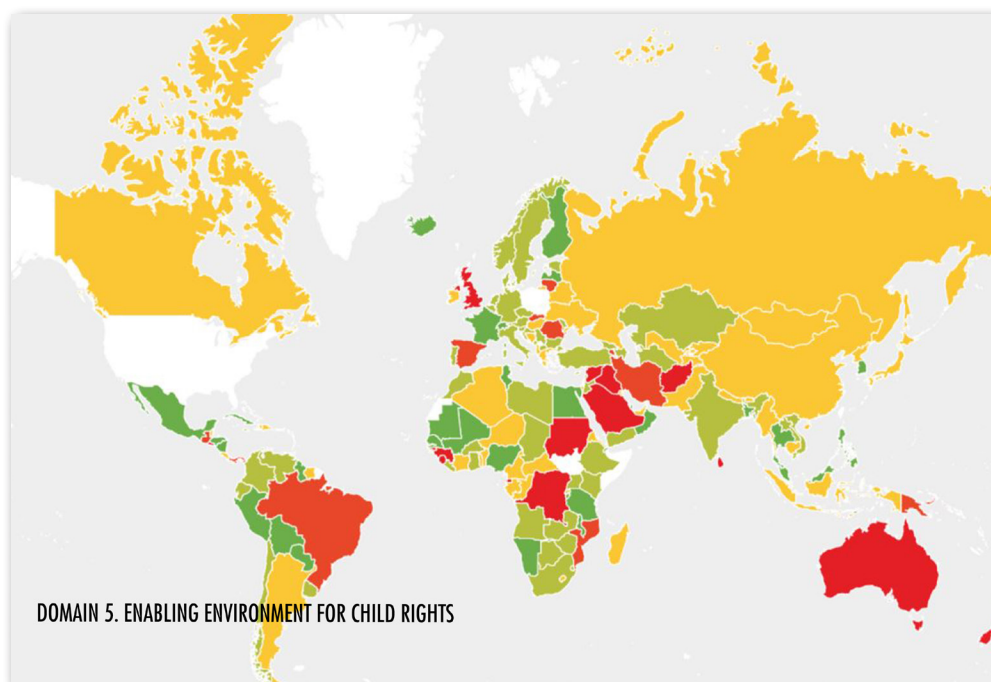
2.2 STRIKING RESULTS KIDSRIGHTS INDEX 2020

2.2.1 Striking results due to new scores in domain 5

In the KidsRights Index 2020, domain 5 ('Enabling Environment for Child Rights') has been updated to include all Concluding Observations adopted by the Committee on the Rights of the Child in 2019. The following 17 states that appear in the KidsRights Index 2020 were subject to the CRC state reporting procedure in 2019 and thus received a new score for domain 5 'Enabling Environment for Child Rights': Australia, Bahrain, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Cape Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea, Italy, Japan, Malta, Mozambique, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Singapore, Syrian Arab Republic and Tonga^{14 15}.

Of the countries that were subject to the CRC state reporting procedure in 2019 and thus received a new score for domain 5 'Enabling Environment for Child Rights', some have really improved their scores and others are performing worse than in previous years. Republic of Korea, Italy and Cape Verde deserve honourable mentions for having risen among the ranks significantly in domain 5 since their previous Index scores on this domain.

On the contrary, the 2020 scores on domain 5 of Australia, Mozambique and the Syrian Arab Republic are remarkably poor and these countries are urged to do more to foster the rights of their youngest generation.



World map domain 5.

¹⁴ In 2019 Tonga reported to the CRC Committee for the first time. Therefore, the country obtained its first ever scores on domain 5 and was newly included in the KidsRights Index.

¹⁵ In previous editions of the KidsRights Index, Paraguay's score was based on the Concluding Observations of 2001 instead of the latest available COs. This was due to the unavailability of the document on the UN CRC website for some time. This year, Paraguay's score was corrected, and it is now based on the latest available COs (of 2010).

SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC

Syria ranks 146 in the KidsRights Index 2020. This is a drop of 27 ranks compared to the KidsRights Index 2019. Because the war-torn country reported to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in 2019, a remarkable achievement in itself, it received new scores on domain 5 of the KidsRights Index. On 2 indicators in domain 5, *respect for the views of the child* and *enabling legislation*, the scores deteriorated because the Committee on the Rights of the Child made only negative remarks on these issues.

Obviously, Syria is in special circumstances because its capacity to work on children's rights issues has been seriously affected by the armed conflict persisting since 2011. The Committee on the Rights of the Child recognized this at the start of the Concluding Observations, but also emphasized "the continuity of international human rights obligations and that the rights under the Convention apply to all children at all times, and that the State party bears the primary responsibility to protect children and should therefore take immediate measures to prevent further violence against them" (Concluding Observations Syrian Arab Republic, 2019, para. 4). While noting "the difficulty in ensuring children's rights in territories where the State party does not exercise effective control", the Committee reminded Syria "that during any reconstruction efforts it has the obligation to guarantee all rights in the Convention to all children throughout the territory without discrimination, independently of where they live, and to promote a culture of tolerance, peace and reconciliation among all communities" (Concluding Observations Syrian Arab Republic, 2019, para. 4).

Although not represented in the numbers of the KidsRights Index it is concerning that the committee makes quite a few comments regarding violence against children. The committee notes with concern that corporal punishment is still legal and that violence at home is prevalent (Concluding Observations Syrian Arab Republic, 2019, para. 60). Children are also victim of sexual exploitation and abuse, including rape and forced marriage of girls, in the context of the armed conflict, both by State security forces and non-State armed groups (Concluding Observations Syrian Arab Republic, 2019, para. 29).

Developments across the KidsRights Index domains 1 to 4 also contributed to Syria's drop in the KidsRights Index 2020. These reveal a decrease in immunization, and a less than average growth on the indicators sanitation, drinking water and under-5 mortality rate.

The drop in Syria's ranking in the KidsRights Index 2020 does not mean there are no positive developments to report. The score that stands out most in this regard is the 54% decrease of the maternal mortality rate.

Contrary to the results in previous years, the newly generated scores on the indicator 'state civil society cooperation' in absolute terms show a clear improvement. Seven countries do better in this respect than in the previous CRC reporting round. While significantly less than previously, the indicator 'state-civil society cooperation' still shows most 'non-available' scores of domain 5. This means that the CRC Committee has not explicitly addressed this matter in the Concluding Observations. In turn this suggests that the subject did not come up prominently in the state reporting procedure at large.

Compared to seven in the previous round, in 2019 'only' three of the COs adopted lacked an explicit assessment of 'state civil society cooperation'. Therefore the countries involved obtained the score of 'non-available'. This indicates that the subject 'state civil society cooperation' was explicitly discussed a little more than in the past. However, in relative terms the improvement of the record on 'state civil society cooperation' is at best modest because next to seven improved scores (for Australia, Botswana, Cape Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, Italy, Malta, Syria) there are also four deteriorated scores (Bahrain, Belgium, Guinea, Singapore). In 5 cases the performance record stayed the same and in the case of Tonga comparison is not possible since the country only participated for the first time in the CRC state reporting procedure in 2019.

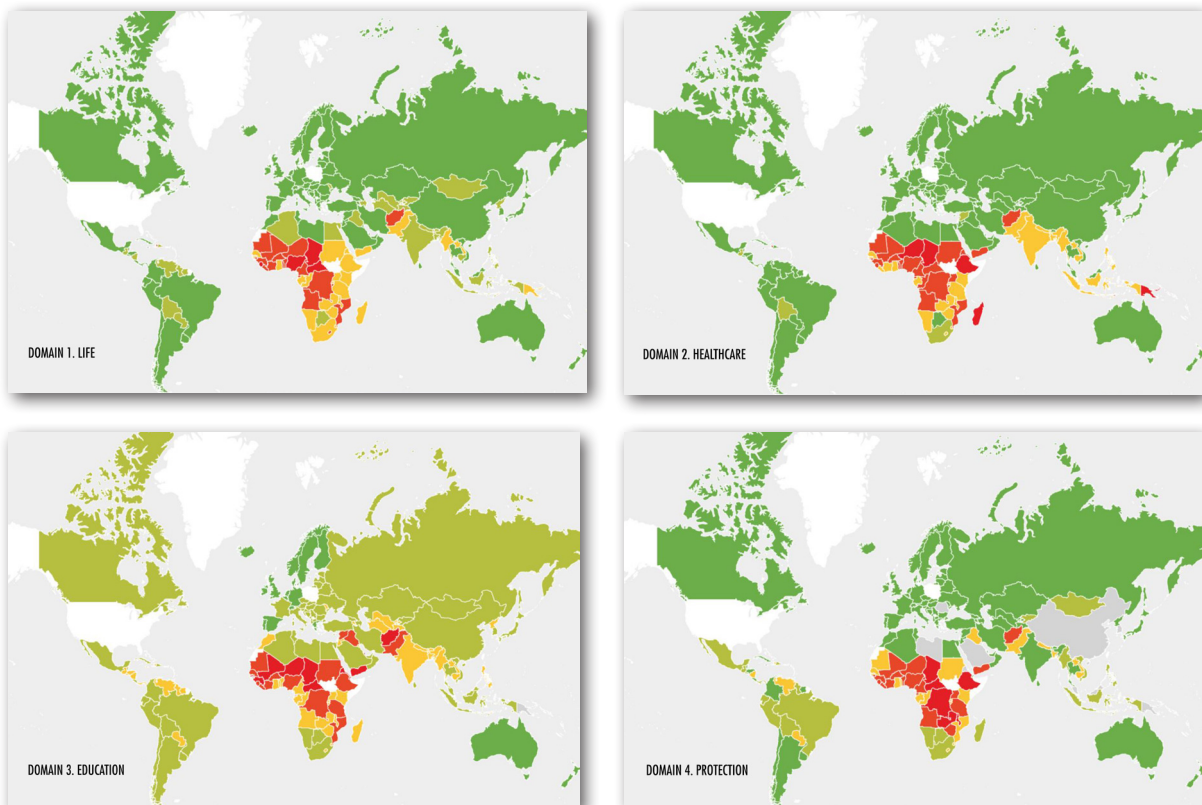
2.2.2 Striking results due to new scores in domain 1-4

There are also countries which shifted quite some places in the overall KidsRights Index ranking due to improved or deteriorated scores in domains 1 to 4. Bolivia, for example, climbed the Index by 31 places. This is thanks to several improvements, the biggest one being the maternal mortality rate (- 25%). The under five mortality rate (-23%), life expectancy (+5%), immunization rate (+7%) and birth registration rate (+21%) improved significantly as well.

VENEZUELA

An example in the reverse direction is Venezuela which in 2020 ranks 25 places lower than was the case in the 2019 KidsRights Index. The political and economic crisis in this country has a great impact on children's rights. The lower score of Venezuela is mainly caused by worse scores (-11%) in domain 3 'Education', while other countries show a general average growth in this domain. Next to this, Venezuela also scores worse on under five mortality, the maternal mortality rate and immunization. Altogether this explains the drop in Venezuela's ranking.

Changes in ranking may also occur while the scores of the country stay relatively stable. This is then due to an average improvement of other countries. An example of this is Fiji, which dropped 20 places while its scores did not change much. Contrary to the decrease in the under five mortality rate that various other countries managed to realize, the results for Fiji stayed the same. This results in a relative deterioration for Fiji when compared to the countries who improved their performance record, and thus causes a drop in Fiji's ranking. The lack of change in Fiji's scores on the indicators of life expectancy as well as maternal mortality are also contrary to the average trend of improvement.



World maps domain 1-4

2.3 OVERALL CONCLUSIONS KIDSRIGHTS INDEX 2020

2.3.1 Developed countries are not necessarily performing better

The KidsRights index is not an absolute ranking of countries in which children have the best life, the best living circumstances or the maximum level of respect for their rights. In accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the practice of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, in domain 5 of the KidsRights Index countries are scored relatively to their capacity to implement children's rights. According to article 4 of the CRC, countries need to "take measures to the maximum extent of their available resources" to realize children's rights. The Index recognizes this principle particularly in its domain 5, which is based on the Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child. This will be expressed in the scores of these countries in domain 5 and may have different actual implications for some states as compared to others. For example, a highly developed country can be expected to mobilize more resources than a least developed country and will be assessed accordingly.

This is reflected, among other examples, in high scores obtained by developing countries such as Thailand (rank 8) and Tunisia (rank 17), which both perform relatively well in cultivating an enabling environment for children's rights. At the other end, industrialized nations such as the United Kingdom (rank 169), New Zealand (rank 168) and Australia (rank 135) hold relatively very low positions in the KidsRights Index. This is the result of their very poor performances in domain 5 after critical assessments by the Committee on the Rights of the Child. For example, the UK was judged harshly because of the discrimination and stigmatization of certain groups of children (such as Roma, gypsy and traveller children, children of other ethnic minorities, children with disabilities, children in care, migrant and asylum-seeking children and LGBTI children). Also, the fiscal policies disproportionately affect children and the enjoyment of their rights.

In the Concluding Observations of these industrialized countries, the Committee was very critical of their performance on various indicators. This seems to be related to the fact that, despite the Committee's recommendations to improve in previous state reporting rounds, they did not. The fact that these developed countries should have the resources and expertise for improving their performance record is likely to have played a role in the Committee's assessment as well, and rightly so.

AUSTRALIA

An example of a developed country not performing as expected is Australia. In the 2020 KidsRights Index Australia dropped an astounding 116 ranks from rank 19 to rank 135. This is mainly due to a new score on domain 5 which came about because in 2019 Australia reported to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. On no less than four out of the seven indicators in domain 5 (non-discrimination, respect for the views of the child, enabling legislation and state-civil society cooperation) the score of Australia decreased, while on the other indicators the scores stayed the same.

One issue that stood out in the Concluding Observations is that, according to the Committee, asylum-seeking, refugee and migrant children, as well as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are often discriminated against, which affects many of their other rights, such as education and health. This resulted in a lower score on the indicator non-discrimination than was the case before.

In line with the philosophy underlying the **methodology** of the KidsRights Index, it is difficult to compensate a low score on one domain by high scores in other domains. This also applies to Australia which ranks respectively 7th, 10-14th, 1-7th, and 29th on the domains life, health, education and protection, but 174-178th in domain 5.

2.3.2 Worldwide, countries allocate insufficient budget for children's rights

None of the countries in the KidsRights Index score maximally on the indicator best available budget/resources. Especially noteworthy is that industrialized countries score on average the lowest on this indicator. Of the 33 countries that have the lowest score on the indicator, 13 are industrialized countries, including Sweden and Portugal. The fact that industrialized countries score lower than average, likely is due to the fact that they are expected to be able to allocate resources to the realization of children's rights more easily than poorer countries.

As in previous years, in the 2019 Concluding Observations the Committee again regularly called on states to introduce child rights-based budgeting procedures, including for Australia, Bahrain, Belgium, Italy, Japan, Malta, Portugal, and Singapore. The observation that austerity policies can lead to a disproportionate disadvantage for children and that this should be avoided, which the Committee previously made among others in the Concluding Observations for the Netherlands and the UK, returned in the 2019 Concluding Observations for Italy and Portugal.

THE NETHERLANDS

The Netherlands ranks 6th in the KidsRights Index 2020. This is the same rank as in the KidsRights Index 2019. The Netherlands scores very well on the domains 'life' (16th), 'education' (9th) and 'protection' (2nd). On the domain 'health' it scores somewhat lower (37th), due to a decrease in immunization. However, the good news is that currently there is a stabilization in the vaccination coverage (<https://www.rivm.nl/node/151831>).

On domain 5, The Netherlands has the lowest score of all domains (52nd-63th). Within domain 5, The Netherlands has the lowest score on the indicator 'best available budget'. The CRC expressed concern about cutbacks affecting children living in families with a minimum income and the impact of poverty on Dutch children.

As will be the case in various other countries in the world, as of 2020 a rising concern is that the Covid-19 pandemic will affect children living in poverty even more. As shared in the previous section on Children's Rights in Times of the Coronavirus (COVID-19), for example, for children living in poverty it will be harder to keep up with their education due to lack of computers and/or internet. Also, the financial stress that will be more prevalent in families that are already living with a low income, will put children more at risk of domestic violence.

During the lockdown 5200 vulnerable primary school children went missing despite the efforts of teachers and attendance officers to reach them. The Dutch government labelled this as an attendance problem and urged attendance officers to intensify their actions despite high child abuse rates and the pre-Corona waiting lists at the decentralised "Veilig huis" institutions. The government overlooked that instead of an attendance problem the alarming safety situation of these children was and is at stake.

Finally, in the 2019 Concluding Observations, the Committee again explicitly complimented some developing countries for their efforts to allocate considerable resources to children. This helped them to generate a middle score on this indicator. Examples are Botswana, Cape Verde, and Tonga.

2.3.3 Discrimination of children is a global problem

More than about one third of the countries in the KidsRights Index have the lowest possible score on the indicator 'non-discrimination'. This means that the Committee on the Rights of the Child made solely negative remarks about the state of discrimination of children in the countries involved. This issue is not particular to specific countries or continents but manifests across the world. Even in the best scoring continent (CEE/CIS), 25% of the countries score low on non-discrimination. The worst performing region in this respect is the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region with the lowest average score of all and over 50% of the countries in this region scoring low on this indicator.

The right not to be discriminated (CRC article 2) is one of the general principles of the Convention. This is because the (non-)realization of this right has an impact on all other child rights. If one group, for example girls, asylum seeking children, or children with disabilities is discriminated against, this will have an impact on all their other rights. For example, the education system or healthcare system in a country can be of high quality and overall easily accessible, but if a certain group of children lacks access or has limited access only, then this will also impact their rights to education and healthcare.

DISCRIMINATION OF GIRLS

An example of a specific group of discriminated children that is often mentioned by the CRC Committee is girls. In half (91) of the most recent Concluding Observations for the 182 countries covered in the KidsRights Index, the Committee noted that girls are discriminated. The Committee highlighted different kinds of discrimination, such as girls not having the same inheritance rights as boys (for example in Bahrain and Tonga), a lower level of access to education (for example in Côte d'Ivoire) or unequal treatment in legislation (for example in Guinea and the Syrian Arab Republic).



"We cannot achieve sustainable development without ensuring that my rights, my education, and my health is just as important as that of my brothers."

Thandiwe Chama

Winner of the International Children's Peace Prize 2007

2.3.4 The views of the child are not respected due to traditional attitudes.

Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child articulates the right of children to form and express their own views and that these views should be given due weight. Nonetheless, in most countries respect for the views of the child is still not self-evident. Not a single country scores maximally on this indicator. Traditional societal attitudes towards children are one of the major causes of this situation. In 45 of the most recent Concluding Observations available for the 182 countries covered in the KidsRights Index the Committee mentioned traditional societal attitudes as an obstacle for fulfilling the child right to have her/his views respected. These traditional societal attitudes can include the opinion that children in general do not have the right to share their opinion. However, quite often these traditional attitudes still contain the conviction that especially girls do not have this right. This is in line with the earlier conclusion that girls are often discriminated against.

Like in previous years, in 2019 the Committee issued recommendations on how countries could improve the respect for children's views. This may be done by developing and using toolkits for public consultations with children (see e.g. 2019 COs Australia, Bahrain, and Syria), or by more effectively implementing the right of the child to be heard in relevant judicial and administrative proceedings (see e.g. 2019 COs Bahrain, Botswana, Italy, Malta, Mozambique, Republic of Korea, Portugal, Singapore, and Syria). The creation of a children's or youth parliament is also one of the means that the Committee recommends in order to improve respect for the views of children (see e.g. 2019 COs Cape Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea, and Tonga). However, on many earlier occasions the Committee already noted that this will only have the desired effects if there is inclusive membership of children's parliaments, they are adequately resourced, and the opinions of children's parliaments are seriously considered in relevant decision-making.



***“Realizing children’s rights more effectively
calls for the perspective, experience and
authority of children and youth themselves.”***

Neha Gupta
Winner of the International Children’s Peace Prize 2014

2.3.5 Legislation has to be improved

The indicator *enabling legislation* assesses the extent to which a country's legislation is in harmony with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. In the 2019 Concluding Observations, the Committee on the Rights of the Child highlighted a few obstacles that are frequently mentioned in relation to enabling legislation: delay in adopting or implementing legislation (for example in Cape Verde), customary law trumping child-friendly legislation (for example in Cote d'Ivoire), and ineffective implementation of legislation (for example in Belgium).

A majority of the countries ranked in the KidsRights Index (138 out of 182) score 'average' on the indicator enabling legislation. This means that the Committee makes positive as well as negative remarks regarding the legislation. This leads to the conclusion that most countries still need to make improvements either in terms of adopting or implementing legislation that is in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

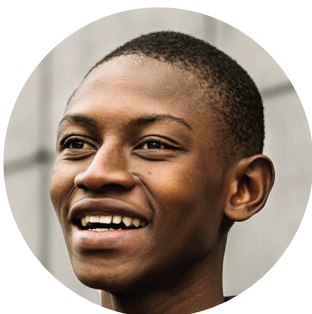
ITALY

An example of a country that improved significantly due to a new score on domain 5 is Italy. Italy climbed from rank 74 in 2019 to rank 15 in the KidsRights Index 2020. On 4 indicators in domain 5 Italy improved its score, while the scores on the other indicators did not decrease. Also, on the domain 'life' Italy increased its rank from 15 to 2.

Italy is also one of the only 16 countries that received the highest possible score on the indicator 'enabling legislation'. In the 2019 COs the Committee complimented Italy on adopting laws on preventing and countering cyberbullying, on measures to protect unaccompanied foreign children, on rules for the promotion of the inclusion of students with disabilities; and the fourth national plan of action and interventions for the protection of the rights and the development of children and adolescents.

While improving its overall score significantly, Italy still scores low on the indicators 'non-discrimination' and 'state-civil society cooperation for children's rights'. On the latter, the Committee explicitly mentioned smear campaigns against organizations that search and rescue migrants, including children, in the Mediterranean.

As one of the countries that has been hit hardest by the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, it will be relevant to see whether this pandemic will have a long-term effect on children's rights in Italy.



"Justice starts with those who make laws"

Abraham M. Keita
Winner of the International Children's Peace Prize 2015

2.3.6 The need for data collection remains high

Since the first publication of the KidsRights Index in 2013, there is a slight but noticeable decline in the number of missing indicators. Nonetheless, in the KidsRights Index 2020 still 294 indicators out of 3.640 total indicators (meaning 8%) are missing.

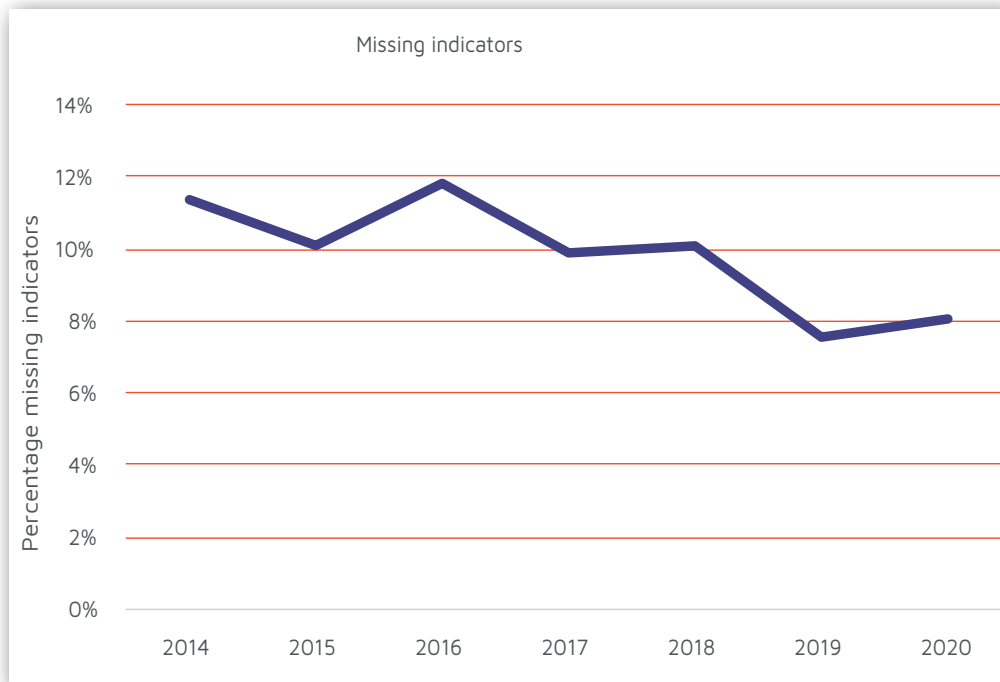


Chart Missing Indicators

Obviously, the availability of data is not only important for research such as the KidsRights Index. Better collection and analysis of data can assist countries in recognizing and prioritizing child rights problems, and in tackling them. For example, the better the information available about the specific situations and needs of particular sub-groups of children in a specific location (for example as regards income of their parents or caretakers, sex, age, race or ethnicity, disabilities) the more targeted policy interventions can be.

Almost 40% (71 out of 182) of the countries in the KidsRights Index score low on the indicator 'collection and analysis of disaggregated data'. Industrialized countries score on average the lowest on this indicator, while in principle these countries definitely have the means to collect and analyze the required disaggregated data.

In 2020, 10 states parties to the Convention on the Rights of the Child can still not be included in the KidsRights Index because of too many values are missing. These are: The Holy See, Dominica, Poland (with a very incomplete set of scores on domain 5 which hopefully will improve in the upcoming CRC state reporting procedure), Saint Kitts and Nevis, Liechtenstein, the Cook Islands, Tuvalu, Monaco, the Marshall Islands, and Andorra.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

SOURCES OF THE KIDSRIGHTS INDEX

The KidsRights Index pools data from three reputable sources: quantitative data published and regularly updated by **UNICEF** (www.data.unicef.org) and **UNDP** (www.hdr.undp.org/data)¹⁶, and qualitative data published by the **UN Committee on the Rights of the Child** (www.ohchr.org/en/hrbodies/crc/pages/crcindex.aspx) in the detailed individual country reports (the so-called Concluding Observations) that it adopts for all states that are parties to the CRC. The KidsRights Index aims to make the data more accessible to a broader audience, in an effort to stimulate dialogue about children's rights. Since the United States of America is the only state in the world that is not yet a party to the CRC, there is no material for scoring the country on domain 5 and thus it cannot be included in the KidsRights Index.

DATA BEFORE 2009

Article 44 of the CRC requires states to report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child within two years after joining the Convention, and every 5 years thereafter. However, as is the case for other UN human rights treaties as well, many countries do not fulfil this obligation. Therefore, the KidsRights Index 2020 includes 17 countries for which the data in domain 5 is older than ten years. The analysis of children's rights in these 17 countries is thus based on Concluding Observations from 2009 or before (see the table below). This is unavoidable because the countries involved have not presented more recent data to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. The ranking of these countries may therefore not reflect the current children's rights situation.

A positive note is that three out of these 17 countries are scheduled to report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in 2020 (Djibouti, Kiribati and Micronesia). The reporting round for Bolivia is on the list of forthcoming future sessions. Thus, these 4 states (making up 22% of the group with outdated data) will receive a new score on domain 5 next year or, in the case of Bolivia, reasonably soon thereafter.

#	Rank	Country	Year of Concluding Observations
1	166	Micronesia (Federated States of)	1998
2	164	Comoros	2000
3	82	Libya	2001
4	50	San Marino	2001
5	179	Equatorial Guinea	2003
6	177	Papua New Guinea	2003
7	117	Bahamas	2004
8	77	Belize	2004
9	149	Uganda	2004
10	118	Kiribati	2005
11	123	Swaziland	2005
12	91	Trinidad and Tobago	2006
13	34	Malaysia	2006
14	161	Mali	2006
15	126	Djibouti	2007
16	55	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	2007
17	182	Chad	2008

Table: 17 countries for which the data in domain 5 is older than ten years.


¹⁶ The data for the KidsRights Index 2020 was downloaded from the listed UNICEF and UNDP sources in January 2020. In addition, the latest available Concluding Observations for each country were used.

ADJUSTMENT OF THE EDUCATION DOMAIN IN THE KIDSRIGHTS INDEX 2018

Because the Index is continuously being updated, the availability and quality of data and the methodology of the KidsRights Index are reviewed every year. For the KidsRights Index 2018 and onwards, comprehensive methodological changes were made in the domain 'education', so as to generate a higher quality assessment for comparison of countries' performance records on education. The consequence of these methodological adjustments is that it is not possible to compare the 2018 KidsRights results one-on-one to the 2017 and previous results, although overall the differences in rankings caused by the methodological changes are limited. Obviously, all countries have still been compared to each other on the same footing, as was the case in previous versions of the KidsRights Index. Thus, a comparative assessment between countries remains possible.






From the 6th KidsRights Index (2018) onwards the 'education' domain is based on the indicator 'expected years of schooling'. This indicator, which is also used in the Human Development Index (HDI), is a measure of the years of schooling that a child of school entrance age can expect to receive if prevailing patterns of age-specific enrolment rates persist throughout the child's life¹⁷. As such, the new indicator shows the opportunities for learning or educational development of a child in a specific country. In order to also capture differences between girls and boys, since 2018 the 'education' domain is constructed on the basis of three indicators:

1. Expected years of schooling of girls
2. Expected years of schooling of boys
3. Gender inequality in expected years of schooling (absolute difference between girls and boys).

The data for the three indicators of the Education Domain are gathered by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and is available at www.hdr.undp.org/data.

¹⁷ The HDI also uses 'mean years of schooling'. The KidsRights Index does not use this measure as it is about the population of 25 and older and thus not about children.

ANNEX 1 - DOMAINS & INDICATORS

Domains:		Indicators:	
1		Right to Life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Under five mortality • Life expectancy at birth • Maternal mortality ratio
2		Right to Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of under five year olds suffering from underweight • Immunization of one year old children • % of population using improved sanitation facilities (urban and rural) • % of population using improved drinking water sources (urban and rural)
3		Right to Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expected years of schooling of girls • Expected years of schooling of boys • Gender inequality in expected years of schooling (absolute difference between girls and boys)
4		Right to Protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child labour • Adolescent birth rate • Birth registration
5		Enabling Environment for Child Rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-discrimination • Best interests of the child • Respect for the views of the child/child participation • Enabling legislation • Best available budget • Collection and analysis of disaggregate data • State-civil society cooperation for child rights

ANNEX 2 - REGIONS KIDSRIGHTS INDEX 2020 (182 COUNTRIES)

CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE AND THE COMMONWEALTH OF INDEPENDENT STATES (CEE/CIS) – 20 COUNTRIES

Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Macedonia (the former Yugoslav Republic of), Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan

ASIA AND THE PACIFIC – 30 COUNTRIES

Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Kiribati, Korea Democratic People's Republic of, Lao, Malaysia, Maldives, Micronesia (Federates States of), Mongolia, Myanmar, Nauru, Nepal, Pakistan, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Vanuatu, Vietnam

AFRICA – 45 COUNTRIES

Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Congo, Congo Democratic Republic of the, Cote d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe

INDUSTRIALIZED COUNTRIES – 37 COUNTRIES

Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brunei Darussalam, Canada, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Korea Republic of, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Russian Federation, San Marino, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

LATIN AMERICA AND CARIBBEAN – 31 COUNTRIES

Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Surinam, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay, Venezuela

MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA (MENA) – 19 COUNTRIES

Algeria, Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, Yemen

COUNTRIES NOT IN THE INDEX¹⁸ – 13 COUNTRIES

Asia and the Pacific: Cook Islands, Marshall Islands, Niue, Tuvalu

Africa: Somalia, South Sudan

Industrialised countries: Andorra, Poland, Liechtenstein, USA (which has not ratified the CRC)

Latin America and Caribbean: Dominica, Saint Kitts and Nevis

Middle East and North Africa (MENA): State of Palestine

¹⁸ The score for a domain is not calculated if more than half of the indicators of that domain has a missing value. A country is not included in the overall Index if the score on domain 5 'Enabling Environment for Child Rights' is missing. A country is also not included if in total more than half of the domain scores are missing.



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