

Measuring and Monitoring Well-being and Inequality among Children on a Local Scale

Project Replication Manual



Measuring and Monitoring Well-being and Inequality among Children on a Local Scale:

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Introduction



Introduction

The process of designing and implementing a study of living standards among children and children's human rights, and developing programs to improve their well-being and safeguard their rights, presents significant challenges; not least because children and young people are among those most severely affected by social vulnerability. However, they also represent the section of the population with the greatest potential to bring about significant social change.

One of the main obstacles in this process is the difficulty of obtaining sound and reliable information, which is crucial for evaluating the conditions in which children live. By this we mean context-specific, up-to-date, multidimensional and disaggregated data that allows the issues affecting children to be identified and ultimately resolved.

In response to this challenge, Equidad para la Infancia is proposing a conceptual and methodological strategy for implementing a measuring and monitoring system that can be used at a local level to evaluate well-being among children and young people between the ages of 0 and 18 — and the forms of inequality that they face.

This exercise involves constructing a battery of indicators allowing living conditions to be assessed on the basis of empirical evidence. This data can then be used to inform both improvements in public policy and the development of social accountability mechanisms, with the aim of ensuring that children are able to fully exercise their rights.

The proposal is built around four components: understanding and adopting the strategy as a tool for social and political action; putting the strategy into practice in local and municipal settings; promoting well-being throughout childhood; and identifying the forms of inequality that children and young people experience in their lives.

² The proposal reflects the need for “adequate and reliable data on children, disaggregated to enable identification of discrimination and/or disparities in the realization of their rights,” in order to “assess progress in implementation, identify problems and inform all policy development for children,” based on the principle that children's rights should be given “higher political priority” and that the state has a duty and obligation to guarantee these rights “to the maximum extent of... available resources.” (UNICEF, 2003). General Comment No.5, Committee on the Rights of the Child: General Measures of Implementation for the Convention on the Rights of the Child (articles 4 and 42, and paragraph 6 of article 44), 34th Session (2003), U.N. Doc. HRI/GEN/1/Rev.7 at 377. <http://hrlibrary.umn.edu/crc/crc-generalcomment5.html>

The idea for this initiative, and its development, grew from the enthusiasm and commitment of the Corona Foundation and the Cómo Vamos city network, both of which were keen to develop population analysis tools as a way of deepening their investigations into quality of life. The proposal therefore embraces the principles of transparency, participation, monitoring and social responsibility that the network advocates. It also reflects Equidad para la Infancia's own ethos, in its coherent approach to focusing on children's rights, and its emphasis on improving equality as a means to ensuring the protection and full realization of these rights.

A Guide for Action

This document offers a practical guide to support the implementation of measuring and monitoring programs in different local contexts. It is primarily aimed at project teams from the Cómo Vamos network, with the objective of broadening their experience of the area of children's well-being — given the significance of this stage of life for human development, both in the early years and throughout adult life.

It also provides a reference resource that can be used by all those with an interest in promoting the holistic development of children and young people through participatory and transparently led initiatives.

While the content presented here is intended as a manual for implementation, it is important to stress that all of the guidelines should be read and interpreted in the context of the location in which they are to be applied. It is therefore worth pointing out that, although the overall perspective and ethos of the strategy should be adhered to in full, there is room for variation in practice, depending on the specific social, economic and political context in each location.

The manual is laid out in four sections:

- The first three chapters describe the strategy's programmatic, institutional and conceptual framework: i) Background; ii) Overall and specific objectives; and iii) Methodological design for the proposed measurement system.

- Chapter four — iv) Implementation Phases — offers a step-by-step guide that describes the necessary processes involved in implementing the strategy: viability and requirements; implementation; measurement and analysis; communication; monitoring, participation and social accountability.
- In the final chapter — v) Concluding Remarks — we describe a number of challenges that should be borne in mind when replicating this approach in the future.