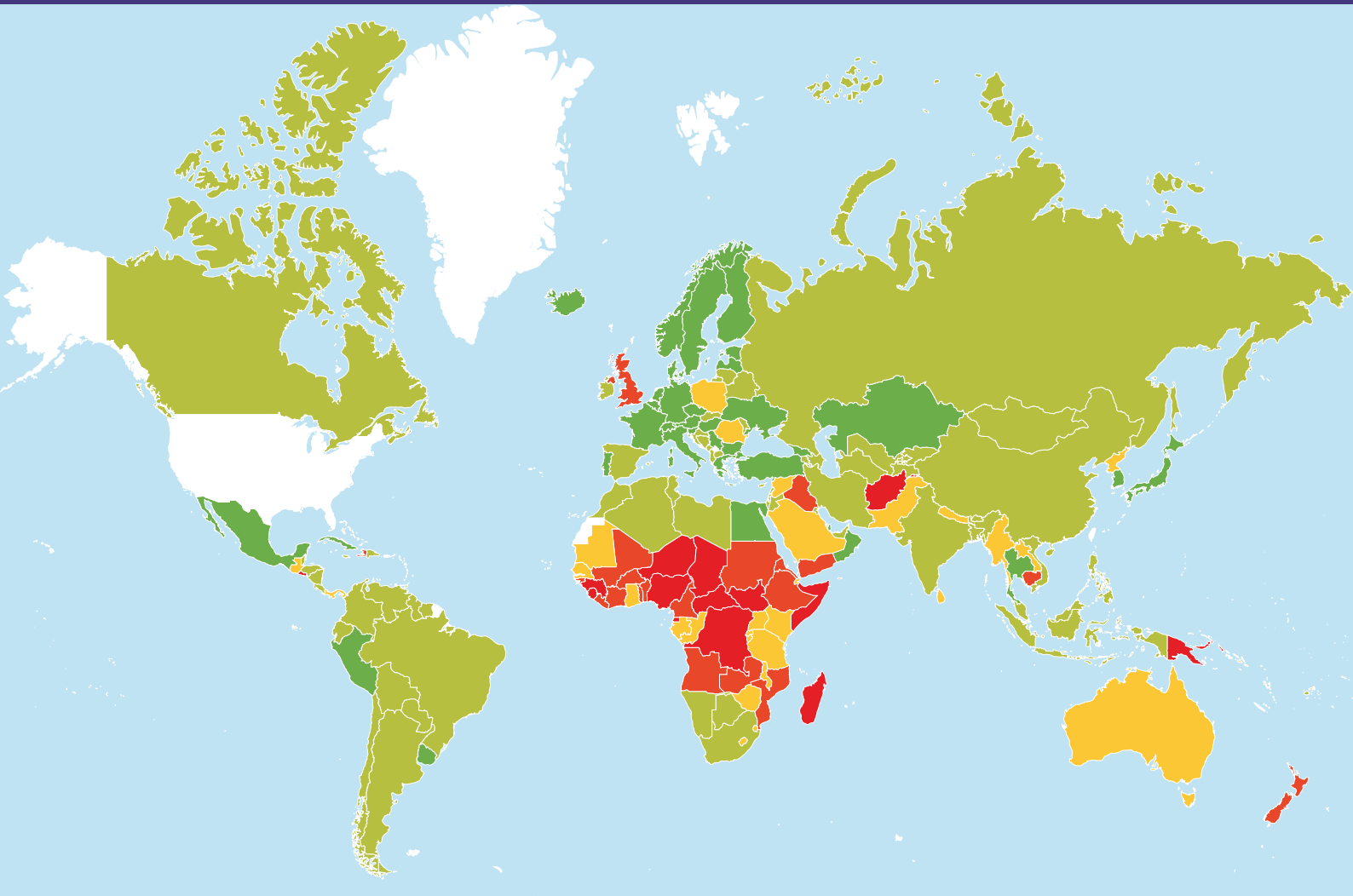




The KidsRights Index 2023

Report



THE KIDSRIGHTS INDEX AND INFORMATION ABOUT ITS DOMAINS, INDICATORS AND METHODOLOGY
ARE ACCESSIBLE ON WWW.KIDSRIGHTSINDEX.ORG

ABOUT



KidsRights

KidsRights is an international non-governmental organization that promotes the wellbeing of vulnerable children across the world and advocates for 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 in taking action to bring about change.

KidsRights supports children by commanding global attention for the realisation of children's rights and by acting as a catalyst to ignite change, together with children and youths. This advocacy is supported with research and action. The KidsRights 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 in economics and econometrics. The activities of this internationally acclaimed School of Erasmus University Rotterdam contribute to understanding current and future economic developments in the world and to answering questions related to the roles of 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 a graduate school of critical policy-oriented social science. Established in 1952, ISS focuses on research, teaching, and public service in the field of development studies, societal change, and international cooperation. Its students, staff and knowledge partners are both from the Global South and the Global North. Interdisciplinarity and co-creation are key features of its work. 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.

193
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 www.kidsrightsindex.org



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 <https://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 under-weight
- 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.

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PREFACE



This year we are welcoming the 11th edition of the KidsRights Index; the first and only annual global index on children's rights. We are very grateful for all the efforts of the Erasmus University and the KidsRights team.

This year, we are able to present results for 193 countries compared to 185 countries in 2022. In addition to Somalia and South Sudan, enough data was now available to include Andorra, Cook Islands, Dominica, Marshall Islands, Monaco and Tuvalu. This means that we now have nearly universal coverage.

Until last year, we monitored countries with a focus on 5 domains: life, health, education, protection and an enabling environment. We analyse each domain to determine how well countries adhere to children's rights. We then rank them on a yearly basis regarding their overall performance. This year, we are taking the first steps to expand the KidsRights Index by an additional sixth domain on Climate Change.

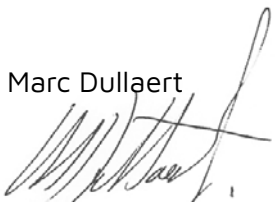
The KidsRights Index team is pleased to be able to present the results this year. This year's report shows that 2022 and the first half of 2023 were a very volatile period for children's rights. We see that the world is coming out of a post-pandemic period which presented an enormous setback for the position of children and their rights.

In combination with the worsening climate change and new crises, such as the Ukraine-Russia conflict which directly and indirectly affects children worldwide, we can say that the world is in a state of polycrisis. This polycrisis is likely to take a further toll on children in the years to come, because it seems there is no time for recovery, if crises after crises occur and reinforce each other in a negative spiral.

We do hope that governments, policymakers and members of the international press will use the facts and figures of the KidsRights Index in their decision-making or as a wakeup call.

If we, as a civilisation, cannot properly take care of our children in the long term, then we fail. We owe the generation to come a future, we owe it to ourselves.

Marc Dullaert



Founder and Chairman KidsRights Foundation

1. INTRODUCTION: THE CONTEXT OF THE KIDSRIGHTS INDEX 2023 - POLYCRISIS IMPACTING CHILDREN

By Karin Arts (ISS), Avinash Reddy Pichhili (KidsRights) and Ujjwal Dubey (KidsRights).
Based on data inputs by Mirthe Hendriks (ESE) and Philip Hans Franses (ESE).

The KidsRights Index 2023 mainly reviews the global state of play of children's rights until the end of the year 2022. In 2022, all over the world children suffered the impacts of multiple and often mutually reinforcing crises. Crises that were brought about among other things by the interplay of the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic; the war in Ukraine and the related energy, food and cost-of-living crises; and climate change. Flash floods in Pakistan, a ban on girl education beyond grade 6 (or primary school) in Afghanistan, and more recently (early 2023) the earthquake in Türkiye and Syria, and the conflict in Sudan, are all examples of different recent crises that have severely impacted the rights of children in more specific locations in different parts of the world.

Polycrisis

This phenomenon of multiple crises that cause both simultaneous and successive impacts and shocks and have strong interdependencies between them is commonly referred to as polycrisis.¹ As we reported in the 2020, 2021 and 2022 KidsRights Index reports, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating effect on the realization of a wide range of children's rights. UNICEF's *Global Outlook* report 2023 too highlighted various examples of this including, obviously, that the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in a crunch in the global healthcare system. According to the *State of the World's Children Report 2023*, this had a serious negative effect on the vaccination levels of children: "more than a decade of hard-earned gains in routine childhood immunization have been eroded".² According to the same report, "[d]isruptions caused by the pandemic interrupted childhood vaccination almost everywhere, setting back vaccination rates to levels not seen since 2008". No less than "67 million children missed out entirely or partially on routine immunization between 2019 and 2021" and "48 million of them missed out entirely".³ This is indeed already visible in the 2023 KidsRights Index results, in the form of negative developments in Domain 2 (Health).

The pandemic has also worsened the learning crisis which was already critical before. According to UNICEF: "the pandemic has exacerbated an already acute learning crisis and threatens to undermine the future of today's children and the economic prospects of many countries". And:

"[p]rior to the pandemic, 57 per cent of 10-year-olds in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) could not read and understand a simple text. This figure is estimated to have surged to nearly 70 per cent in 2022 (...), with particularly acute learning losses in South Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, where schools were closed the longest".⁴

1 See e.g. United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), 'Prospects for Children: Global Outlook 2023', UNICEF Innocenti (Global Office of Research and Foresight), January 2023, <https://www.unicef.org/globalinsight/media/3001/file/UNICEF-Innocenti-Prospects-for-Children-Global-Outlook-2023.pdf>.
2 UNICEF, 'The State of the World's Children 2023: For Every Child, Vaccination', UNICEF Innocenti (Global Office of Research and Foresight), Florence, April 2023, p. ii.
3 *Ibid.*, p. v.
4 *Ibid.*, p. 12.

In addition, “[r]ecent estimates also indicate that the number of children and youth not going to school has increased in sub-Saharan Africa”.⁵ This is likely to have significant effects on their lifetime earnings and on country’s gross domestic products.

The War on Ukraine and its Implications

Moreover, the pandemic-related inflation has led to steep increases in the costs of living for children and families, bringing the efforts and gains of reducing child poverty to a halt. Adding to the rising costs and child poverty, the Russian war on Ukraine has skyrocketed the international food prices to all-time highs. This has caused concerns about global food and nutrition security. The related energy crisis significantly added to this burden and especially impacts already disadvantaged children and families living in conditions of vulnerability. Because of this, UNICEF has projected that “one in four children will be living below the poverty line in 2023”.⁶

Ukraine’s children are paying a particularly high price. In 2022, UNHCR and UNICEF stated that they “have been killed, wounded, uprooted from their homes, separated from family members, and severely distressed by the devastating violence all around them”. The two UN organizations estimated that Ukraine’s 7.5 million children would be disproportionately affected by the war and that at least 1.6 million of these children might end up as displaced outside their country.⁷ This has come more than true since. There are also reports about the deportation of Ukrainian children from occupied territory in Ukraine to Russia. Such deportations would amount to the commission of war crimes. These reports have recently (in March 2023) led the International Criminal Court to issue arrest warrants against, respectively, President Vladimir Putin and the Commissioner for Children’s Rights in the Office of the President (Maria Alekseyevna Lvova-Belova).⁸ The harm done to Ukrainian children is not only physical. In July 2022 already, World Vision estimated that around 1.5 million Ukrainian children would require mental health and psychological support to recover from their war experiences.⁹ In this light, it is hugely problematic that the war has had such a severe impact on Ukraine’s healthcare system and that, for instance, access to trauma care is limited due to lack of medical supplies.¹⁰

Disasters in Pakistan, Syria and Türkiye

Pakistan witnessed an immense climate disaster in 2022 when deadly floods hit the Sindh and Baluchistan provinces. The United Nations (UN) estimated that these floods caused irreparable damage to around 1.6 million children in these two provinces who already were a victim of malnutrition, and to another 6 million children who were suffering from stunting.¹¹ Education took a backseat in such situations where saving lives became the top priority. The effect of the disaster on the education prospects of children is incalculable after an estimated 27,000 schools were washed away by the floods¹².

5 *Ibid.*

6 *Ibid.*, p. 18.

7 United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and UNICEF, ‘Ukraine Emergency: Children Fleeing Ukraine – The Advocacy Agenda for Action’, 25 April 2022, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/92243>.

8 International Criminal Court, ‘Situation in Ukraine’, ICC-01/22, <https://www.icc-cpi.int/situations/ukraine>.

9 World Vision International, ‘Looming Mental Health Crisis for 1.5 Million Ukrainian Children’, 5 July 2022, <https://www.wvi.org/newsroom/ukraine/looming-mental-health-crisis-15-million-ukrainian-children>.

10 World Health Organization (WHO; Regional Office for Europe), ‘Progress Report 2022: Taking Action on the Health-Related Sustainable Development Goals in the WHO European Region’, WHO/EURO 2022/5152/44915/64754, <https://www.who.int/europe/publications/i/item/WHO-EURO-2022-5152-44915-64754>; and WHO, ‘One Hundred Days of War has Put Ukraine’s Health System Under Severe Pressure’, 3 June 2022, <https://www.who.int/news/item/03-06-2022-one-hundred-days-of-war-has-put-ukraine-s-health-system-under-severe-pressure>.

11 UN News, ‘UN Chief Highlights Need for Solidarity to Tackle Global Challenges’, 1 January 2023, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/01/1132522>.

12 *Ibid.*

In early 2023 the world witnessed two catastrophic earthquakes that hit Türkiye and Syria and again severely affected millions of children, their families, and others in the two countries. UNICEF estimated that, as of March 2023, around 850,000 children remained displaced due their homes being damaged.¹³ Across Syria alone, this tragic disaster has affected more than 3.7 million children.¹⁴ As a result, the vulnerability of children in the already poverty-stricken warzone Syria has increased multiple times.

Education Ban for Girls in Afghanistan

In the neighboring region of South Asia, Afghanistan became the only country in the world to put a total ban on the secondary and higher education of girls. After having returned to power in 2021, in 2022 the Taliban prohibited the entry of girls into various educational institutions that reopened post-COVID. March 2023 marked the second year in which the teenage girls of Afghanistan were widely denied education. Education is a fundamental right of every child. Article 28 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) guarantees equal access to quality education for all children. Denying girls education opportunities raises concerns not only about their right to education, but also about their rights to holistic development, to information and participation, and to safety in all respects. UN experts have tracked down the enormous consequences of the ban on girl education combined with the extremely severe economic situation in Afghanistan.¹⁵ There are strong indications that the current ban on education for girls has already resulted in higher rates of child marriage and child labour in the country.¹⁶

Conflict in Sudan

Another recent crisis that has pushed children into a yet more severe humanitarian situation is the fighting in Sudan that erupted on 15 April 2023. The violence in Sudan has made more and more children in the country vulnerable to abuse, displacement, and to recruitment and use by armed groups.¹⁷ Moreover, about 10 days after the start of the conflict the World Health Organization (WHO) estimated that as many as one third of the healthcare facilities in Sudan were no longer functioning¹⁸ Even before this conflict, more than 8.5 million children in Sudan already were in dire need of humanitarian assistance and Sudan had the highest rate of child malnutrition in the world.¹⁹ UNICEF estimated that the recent violence has disrupted lifesaving treatment for around 50,000 children suffering from Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM).²⁰ Moreover, the education of millions of children was interrupted due to school closures. As a result, by the end of April 2023, an estimated one in four boys and one in three girls in Sudan were unable to access education.²¹

Pursuing Children's Rights in a Context of Polycrisis

The polycrisis that the world's children have faced in the past years has a grim impact on their ongoing lives and on the prospects for the realization of their development potential. This is likely to be seen for generations to come. Loss of lives, denial of basic rights, and unfulfilled needs and potential affect children globally. To facilitate these children's recovery from the shocks and crises involved, immediate actions are required on the part of states, humanitarian and other relevant agencies, and all others that

13 UNICEF, 'Thousands of Children at Risk After Devastating Earthquakes Hit South-east Türkiye and Syria', 6 February 2023, <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/thousands-children-risk-after-devastating-earthquakes-hit-south-east-t%C3%BCrkiye-and-syria>.

14 *Ibid.*

15 Human Rights Watch, 'One Year In, Taliban Still Attacking Girls' Right to Education', 24 March 2023, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/03/24/one-year-taliban-still-attacking-girls-right-education>.

16 *Ibid.*

17 UNICEF, 'Fighting in Sudan Rapidly Worsening Already Dire Humanitarian Situation for Children', 26 April 2023, <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/fighting-sudan-rapidly-worsening-already-dire-humanitarian-situation-children-warn>.

18 *Ibid.*

19 *Ibid.*

20 *Ibid.*

21 *Ibid.*

can contribute. Within this picture, children living in conditions of vulnerability (such as children with disabilities or children living in rural areas) need special attention.

It is against this complex and gloomy global as well as local context that children's rights must be pursued. In the next section of this report, we present the specific findings of the KidsRights Index 2023 (reporting developments up to the end of 2022).

2. GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO THE KIDSRIGHTS INDEX

2.1 What is the KidsRights Index?

The KidsRights Index²² is published every year. It is based on the almost universally ratified United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).²³ The Index synthesizes and ranks the children's rights performance records of states parties²⁴ to the CRC in relation to the most crucial aspects of children's lives for which global and comparable data is available. A particularly distinctive feature of the Index is its Domain 5. This Domain charts in particular how states are faring in creating the conditions that need to be in place for realizing children's rights and/or for making children's rights policies and putting them into effect. In other words, Domain 5 assesses how states are doing in providing the 'enabling environment' for children's rights required by the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Overall, the KidsRights Index presents an accessible, general, and comparative overview of state performance on selected children's rights. It also creates a basis for making concrete and evidencebased recommendations on how governments might improve on various children's rights matters.

2.2 The methodology of the KidsRights Index (Domains and Indicators)

From the start, the original intention of the creators of the KidsRights Index was to develop a fully comparable measure of state performance on children's rights, available for as many States Parties to the CRC as possible. Specific child rights issues, such as child marriage or the situation of children in armed conflict, are much more prevalent in some countries than in others. This makes it difficult to come to a fair comparison between countries when scoring such issues in an index. In addition, the insufficient or non-availability of data on certain specific issues (such as violence against children, or the treatment of refugee children) makes it hard to measure those issues and/or to come to adequately comparable results.

Therefore, the KidsRights Index focuses on more generic issues which in principle are equally relevant for all states parties to the CRC and for which, on the whole, reliable data are available. The KidsRights Index is the outcome of an integrated analysis of existing, high-quality data published by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the Committee on the Rights of the Child.²⁵

The Index covers the following five Domains:

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

Twenty indicators together cover and measure these five Domains. Thirteen indicators are quantitative

²² Hereafter also referred to as the 'Index'.

²³ UN General Assembly, *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, 20 November 1989, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 1577, p. 3, available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CRC.aspx>

²⁴ The term 'state party' refers to states that have formally bound themselves to the CRC (through ratification or accession). Since 2015, this is the case for 196 states. The USA remains the only state that did not follow up on its signature with a ratification.

²⁵ For further details please see the 'Background Information' section of this Report.

and seven are qualitative. The data collected is systematically rated for all the countries included in the Index, by applying a standard calculating method. Countries are ranked on each of the five Domains, which in turn generates a comprehensive overall ranking. Further information on the sources of the data used can be found in the background section of this Report. An overview of all indicators and their precise meaning or content is presented in Annex 3 to this Report. Further specifications on the calculation of scores are provided in the next sub-sections of this Report (2.2.1-2.2.3).

2.2.1. Calculation of scores Domain 5

Domain 5, or the 'Enabling Environment for Children's Rights', is an important and unique Domain of the KidsRights Index. Closely based on the Convention on the Rights of the Child, it reveals to what extent countries have operationalized the Convention's general principles and the state of their basic 'infrastructure' for making and implementing children's rights policies. The scores on Domain 5 are derived from the Concluding Observations (COs) adopted by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. These COs are the final product of the state reporting procedure that monitors how states are doing in implementing the Convention. They communicate the views of the CRC Committee on the level of realization of children's rights achieved in a particular country and period of time.

The specific scores on Domain 5 are generated as follows. First, the Committee's Concluding Observations are analyzed for remarks about a country's performance on the seven selected indicators that make up Domain 5:

- 1. Non-discrimination;**
- 2. Best interests of the child;**
- 3. Respect for the views of the child/child participation;**
- 4. Enabling national legislation;**
- 5. Mobilization of the 'best available' budget;**
- 6. Collection and analysis of disaggregated data; and**
- 7. State-civil society cooperation for children's rights.**

These seven selected indicators together represent what can be seen as the general enabling environment, or 'infrastructure' for children's rights that every State Party to the CRC is expected to have in place. The first three (non-discrimination, best interests, and child participation) are general principles of the Convention.²⁶ The last four (legislation, budget, data, and state civil society collaboration) represent basic elements or tools that states must mobilize to be able to make and carry out child rights policies and to trigger child rights practice. This set of requirements can be applied to all countries in the world, is equally relevant to all countries in the world, and crucial for creating capacity to implement the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Thus, they form a pertinent and fully comparable measure for children's rights performance.

For each of the above seven indicators, countries are scored on a scale between 1 and 3. The actual score assigned for each indicator is exclusively based on the language used by the Committee on the Rights of the Child in its Concluding Observations. A score of 1 (or 'bad') means that the Committee made exclusively negative remarks. A score of 2 (or 'average') implies that the Committee made both negative and positive remarks. A score of 3 (or 'good') means that the Committee presented

²⁶ These general principles were identified by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child and are supposed to be leading considerations in all CRC implementation efforts. Survival and development of children has been identified as another general principle of the Convention. However, this is of a different (including more substantive) nature than the three other general principles mentioned, and in fact only fully pursued through realizing the Convention as a whole. In that spirit, the general principle of survival and development is integrated into the KidsRights Index via Domains 1 to 4 and not addressed separately again in Domain 5.

positive remarks only. In case the Committee did not address a particular indicator in the Concluding Observations on a particular country, the score of NA (for 'not addressed') applies.

The scoring for Domain 5 is performed separately and independently by two researchers. If upon comparison of their scores it turns out that there are differences between them (which happens relatively rarely because the scoring system is simple and in most cases its application is straightforward), the final score is determined jointly, in consultation between the two researchers. The specific text in the Concluding Observations on which the scores are based is made available in an overview table publicly available at <https://www.kidsrights.org/research/kidsrights-index/reports-and-publications/>. These scores are then standardized into a mean of the scores received.

2.2.2. Calculation of score Domain 1-4

The scores for Domains 1 to 4 are also calculated as the mean of the scores on the underlying indicators. These scores are standardized 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. However, a country is not included in the overall Index if the score on Domain 5 'Enabling Environment for Child Rights' is missing, or if more than half of all the Domain scores are missing. The score for a particular Domain is not calculated if there is data missing for more than half of the indicators in that Domain.

2.2.3. Calculation of overall score, ranks and clusters

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. This is justified by the argument that such a compensation is not desirable, because all the children's rights aspects covered are considered equally important. Therefore, an extremely low score in one area of children's rights, for example on providing an 'enabling environment for children's rights', cannot be compensated by a high score, for instance, on 'education'.

The Index is a ranked list of countries, with colour-coding indicating relevant clusters of rankings. There are five different clusters (see figure 1 below). Each cluster displays a similar performance level. This means that each cluster represents countries for which the scores are in the same range, for example 0.991 to 981. Within a cluster, the scores of countries are more similar than across clusters. The clusters are expressed in coloured world maps on <https://www.kidsrights.org/research/kidsrights-index/>.



Figure 1. Colour-coding indicating relevant clusters of rankings

3. THE SPECIFIC RESULTS OF THE KIDSRIGHTS INDEX 2023

3.1 Developments in overall rankings

The overall ranking in the KidsRights Index expresses a country's children's rights performance record as evaluated across all five Index Domains: Life, Health, Education, Protection, and the Enabling Environment for Child Rights. For the twenty countries that were assessed by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in 2022 and that were included in the KidsRights Index before, only four managed to improve their ranking in the 2023 Kids Rights Index: Greece, Kuwait, Ukraine,²⁷ and Uzbekistan.²⁸ Germany stayed at the same performance level. No less than fifteen other countries (Cambodia, Canada, Chile, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Djibouti, Iceland, Kiribati, Madagascar, the Netherlands, North Macedonia, the Philippines, Vietnam and Zambia) showed poorer results than in KRI 2022. Somalia and South Sudan were reviewed by the Committee for the first time in 2022 and consequently appear for the first time in the Index in 2023 KidsRights Index.

In the 2023 KidsRights Index, Sweden has jumped up one rank, to the top. It took the place of Iceland which, after having been heading the Index for 4 consecutive years, based on its new (2022) Concluding Observations dropped to the third place this year. Table 1 (below) lists the top ten of the best scoring countries of the Index.

| COUNTRY | RANKING in KidsRights Index 11 (2023) | SCORE |
|------------|---------------------------------------|-------|
| Sweden | 1 | 0,913 |
| Finland | 2 | 0,908 |
| Iceland | 3 | 0,907 |
| Luxembourg | 4 | 0,903 |
| Germany | 5 | 0,898 |
| Greece | 6 | 0,898 |
| Denmark | 7 | 0,890 |
| Thailand | 8 | 0,885 |
| Norway | 9 | 0,881 |
| Slovenia | 10 | 0,880 |

Table 1: Overall highest scoring ten countries in the 2023 KidsRights Index

As Table 2 (next page) shows, Chad continues to be the lowest scoring country of all.

27 The state reporting procedure for Ukraine mainly assessed information preceding the war against the country. The very fact that Ukraine managed to take part in the process under the dire circumstances the country is in may have led to a milder assessment by the Committee than perhaps otherwise would have been the case. As was described briefly in the introduction to this report, obviously the war on Ukraine is affecting Ukraine's children (and the rest of the population) very seriously. Depending on how the war progresses and on the efforts of the government of Ukraine to realize the CRC when the circumstances allow, this may lead to a downfall in the KidsRights Index again in the future.

28 For Uzbekistan, no changes occurred in its own results for all five Index Domains. Therefore, its improved ranking indicates that other countries have fared relatively worse.

| COUNTRY | RANKING in KidsRights Index 11 (2023) | SCORE |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------|
| Chad | 193 | 0,197 |
| South Sudan | 192 | 0,201 |
| Afghanistan | 191 | 0,202 |
| Central African Republic | 190 | 0,264 |
| Sierra Leone | 189 | 0,270 |
| Equatorial Guinea | 188 | 0,280 |
| Madagascar | 187 | 0,303 |
| Somalia | 186 | 0,313 |
| Guinea | 185 | 0,321 |
| Niger | 184 | 0,325 |

Table 2: Overall lowest scoring ten countries in the 2023 KidsRights Index

The complete rankings and rankings per domain are available at: <https://www.kidsrightsindex.org/>

3.2 Striking results Domain 5 of the kidsrights index 2023

In this section, we start reporting the most striking specific results of the KidsRights Index 2023, starting with Domain 5 or the 'Enabling Environment for Child Rights'. As we explained in previous years, this unique Domain 5 is fully derived from the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. It charts the enabling environment or the 'infrastructure' that a state must have in place to be able to pursue and realize children's rights. This enabling environment:

consists of the combination of respect for the general principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (non-discrimination, the best interests of the child, and child participation), legislation, mobilizing the state's best available budget/resources, data, and state-civil society collaboration. The country-scores on Domain 5 are entirely based on the periodical country assessments issued by the Committee on the Rights of the Child.²⁹

Each year, Domain 5 usually contains by far the highest number and highest level of changes of all KidsRights Index domains. These are triggered by the annual new Concluding Observations (or country-level children's rights assessments) adopted by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, the global body that monitors compliance with the CRC. After having reviewed the general picture of overall scores on Domain 5, the changes for the specific 22 countries that received new Concluding Observations in 2022 will be presented (both in section 3.2). Thereafter, the changes per indicator will be examined (in section 3.3.), followed by a brief analysis of developments in Domains 1 to 4 (in section 3.4).

In the KidsRights Index 2023, Domain 5 on the Enabling Environment for Child Rights has been updated to include all Concluding Observations adopted by the CRC Committee in 2022. As the world recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic, in 2022 more and more institutions and organizations came into full operation again, including the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. In 2022, the Committee returned more or less to its usual practices in the state reporting procedure to monitor state compliance

²⁹ Karin Arts, 'A Decade of Monitoring Children's Rights: The KidsRights Index at 10', *DevISSues*, vol. 24 no. 2, pp. 17-19 at 17, <https://www.devissues.nl/decade-monitoring-childrens-rights-kidsrights-index-10>.

with the CRC. The number of Concluding Observations adopted had decreased to all-time lows in 2020 and 2021, of nine and six respectively. In 2022, the CRC Committee assessed and adopted Concluding Observations for in total 22 States again. These are: Cambodia, Canada, Chile, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Djibouti, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Kiribati, Kuwait, Madagascar, the Netherlands, North Macedonia, the Philippines, Somalia, South Sudan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Vietnam, and Zambia. Thus, these 22 countries all received new scores for Domain 5. This led to a significant deterioration of the Domain 5 scores of Croatia, Vietnam, Cambodia, Madagascar, Djibouti and Iceland. A slight negative change occurred for Chile, Kiribati, and the Netherlands. On the other hand, Greece and Kuwait saw a significant positive change in their Domain 5 scores, and Germany, Uzbekistan, Ukraine, Cuba, and Zambia a slight positive change. There was no noticeable change in the Domain 5 scores for Cyprus, North Macedonia, the Philippines, and Canada.

The KidsRights Index team very much welcomes the incorporation of South Sudan and Somalia into the Index. This became possible after these countries received their first ever Concluding Observations in 2022, which allowed for generating Domain 5 scores. Since sufficient data overall were available for Domains 1 to 4 as well, these two states could be included in our Index for the first time. Somalia obtained the overall rank of 186th and South Sudan 192nd.

NEWCOMER IN THE KIDSRIGHTS INDEX: SOUTH SUDAN

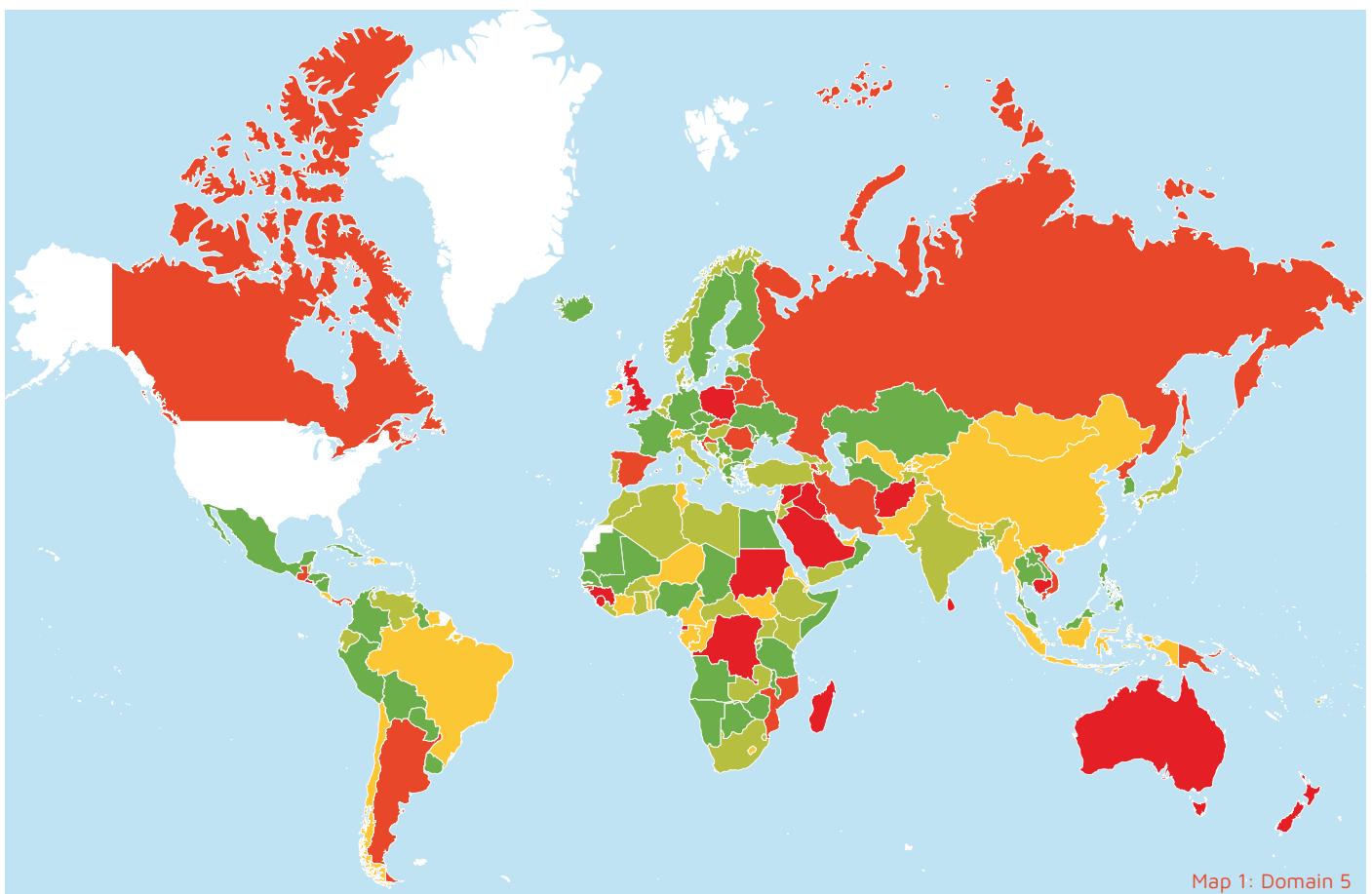
South Sudan obtained its first Concluding Observations in 2022 and for the first time found a place in the 2023 KidsRights Index. Its total rank is 192nd. It ranks among the lowest of all in the Domains of Life, Health, and Education. The expected years of schooling is the lowest among all countries, at 4.5 years for girls and 6.6 years for boys. Life expectancy is a mere 54.9 years, with only Nigeria, Lesotho, Chad, and the Central African Republic showing lower figures. Data on underweight children is not available as the latest survey was conducted way back in 2010. This impacted South Sudan's ranking in the Health Domain.

South Sudan performs relatively better in the Domain of Protection (Domain 4) where it ranks 167th. While the data on child labour is not available in the 2023 dataset for Domain 4, the Committee on the Rights of the Child expressed concerns about the prevalence of child labour in the country, especially among the nomadic and pastoralist communities. It also noted that children are engaged in worst forms of child labour, including combat, goldmining, brickmaking, and cattle herding.

Among all the domains, South Sudan performs relatively best in Domain 5 (Enabling Environment for Child Rights). Since it was assessed by the Committee on the Rights of the Child for the first time, the Concluding Observations might contain a relatively mild assessment. The Committee noted the legislative framework in place, and in particular the incorporation of CRC principles into the Child Act and the Bill of Rights in the Transitional Constitution. Especially with respect to non-discrimination, the best interests of the child, the prohibition of recruitment of children by armed forces and groups, and the right of the child to be heard. However, the Committee also expressed concerns over the lack of awareness and capacity among the relevant stakeholders to implement these laws and the continued application of customary laws and traditions which often still contradict child rights. It also noted that deep-rooted cultural barriers prevent the children from being heard even in courts and administrative proceedings.

On the allocation of resources, the Committee expressed serious concerns over the extremely low percentage of national budget allocated to the sectors most relevant to children, and the exclusive dependence on international donors even for maintaining the basic health and education services for children. The Committee also observed that data on child-focused indicators were last collected conducted in 2010.

Because significant changes in the KidsRights Index rankings are often due to Domain 5, the analysis of changes in that domain will now be presented first. Subsequently, the changes in Domains 1 to 4 will be presented and reviewed. At the level of single countries, the following results stand out in the 2023 Domain 5 results.



Cambodia overall ranks 174th in the 2023 Index (out of 193 in total) compared to 126th in 2022 (out of 185 in total). On five out of the seven indicators in Domain 5 Cambodia's performance remained the same. However, two indicators saw a decline. Firstly, the Committee called on Cambodia to establish procedures to advise professionals in assessing the best interests of the child and to further assess policies and practices that may not be in the best interests of the child.³⁰ Secondly, regarding the indicator 'respect for the views of the child', the Committee recommended that Cambodia improve measures to promote the participation of children within the family, and educational and community environments.³¹

³⁰ Committee on the Rights of the Child, 'Concluding Observations on the Combined Fourth to Sixth Periodic Reports of Cambodia', UN Doc. CRC/C/KHM/CO/4-6, 27 June 2022, para. 16.

³¹ *Ibid.*, para 18.

Canada saw a decline in its overall ranking from 48th in 2022 (out of 185 in total) to 81st in 2023 (out of 193 in total). On Domains 1 to 4 there were no significant changes so this negative change is entirely due to the change in scores on Domain 5, and more in particular to a decline in the score on 'non-discrimination'. The Committee on the Rights of the Child raised its concern about "the discrimination against children in marginalized and disadvantaged situations in the State party, such as the structural discrimination against children belonging to indigenous groups and children of African descent, especially with regard to their access to education, health and adequate standards of living".³² The Committee also expressed concern about "disparities in the treatment of children and their rights among the different regions and territories, especially with regard to children with disabilities, migrant children and children belonging to ethnic minority groups".³³

Chile fell from holding the 15th overall position in the 2022 Index (out of a total of 185) to rank 47 in 2023 (out of a total of 193). This too was as the result of developments in Domain 5 after the processing of the 2022 Concluding Observations. Chile saw its performance on one Domain 5 indicator ('non-discrimination') fall compared to the score derived from the previous (2012) Concluding Observations. The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child for instance highlighted the need for children to "effectively in practice access education and health services, particularly children with disabilities, and indigenous, asylum-seeking, migrant and LGBTI children".³⁴

Croatia fell significantly from being overall 22nd in the 2022 Index (out of 185 in total) to 96th in 2023 (out of 193 in total). This huge decrease in ranking is a result of Domain 5. Croatia saw its scores on three out of the seven indicators of Domain 5 ('non-discrimination', 'best interests', and 'respect for the views of the child') fall compared to the scores derived from the prior Concluding Observations (2014). The CRC Committee highlighted among other things its serious concern about "de facto discrimination against children of ethnic minorities, particularly children of Serbian and Roma backgrounds".³⁵ For three indicators the performance level remained the same ('legislation', 'available resources', and 'data'), while there was improvement on one indicator ('state-civil society cooperation').

Cuba dropped in ranking in the 2023 Index to 38th (out of 193 in total) compared to 19th in 2022 (out of 185 in total). While there was a drop in the Life Domain too, the significant drop was in Domain 5. Cuba improved its performance on one indicator ('bet available budget/resources'). However, the remaining six indicators saw no change in performance level ('non-discrimination', 'best interests', 'respect for the views of the child', 'legislation', 'data', and 'state-civil society cooperation'). But for instance, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child did acknowledge that "articles 42-44 of the Constitution of 2019 strengthen the right to non-discrimination".³⁶

Cyprus also shows a downfall in its overall rank, from 35 in 2022 (out of 185 in total) to 57 in 2023 (out of 193 in total) in 2023. On Domains 1 to 4, the scores of Cyprus show no significant changes. Therefore, the negative change is mainly due to changes in the scores on Domain 5 and especially due to a worse score on the indicator 'respect for the views of the child'. The Committee on the Rights of the Child expressed concerns that Cypriot children are not viewed as subjects of rights and their views

32 Committee on the Rights of the Child, 'Concluding Observations on the Combined Fifth and Sixth Periodic Reports of Canada', UN Doc. CRC/C/CAN/CO/5-6, 23 June 2022, para. 17a.

33 *Ibid.*, para. 17b.

34 Committee on the Rights of the Child, 'Concluding Observations on the Combined Sixth and Seventh Periodic Reports of Chile', UN Doc. CRC/C/CHL/CO/6-7, 22 June 2022, para. 13.

35 Committee on the Rights of the Child, 'Concluding Observations on the Combined Fifth and Sixth Periodic Reports of Croatia', UN Doc. CRC/C/HRV/CO/5-6, 22 June 2022, para. 15.

36 Committee on the Rights of the Child, 'Concluding Observations on the Combined Third to Sixth Periodic reports of Cuba', UN Doc. CRC/C/CUB/CO/3-6, 16 June 2022, para. 17.

are rarely heard.³⁷ It explicitly recommended that Cyprus abolish the age limits applicable to children expressing their views so that they can be heard and their views can be given due consideration in all legal proceedings including asylum matters. The Committee also recommended Cyprus to ensure adequate representation of children from all ethnic, religious, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds, as well as of children belonging to vulnerable groups, in all fora through which child participation is encouraged. In relation to the indicator 'state-civil society cooperation', the Committee appreciated the support provided by Cyprus to civil society, including through the grants-in-aid scheme.³⁸

Djibouti's overall rank fell from 124 in 2022 (out of 185 in total) to 155 in 2023 (out of 193 in total). This was the result of a drop in overall score level from 0,614 in 2022 to 0,519 in 2023. Since the scores for Domains 1 to 4 did not show significant changes, this is primarily due to a poorer performance on Domain 5: on five of the seven indicators of Domain 5 Djibouti's scores have gone down. The Committee on the Rights of the Child expressed concerns over the lack of public data on the budget allocations made for children.³⁹ It recommended increased allocation of resources for the social sector to benefit children. In relation to the indicator 'collection and analysis of disaggregated data', the Committee recommended Djibouti to strengthen the National Institute of Statistics, to enhance its data collection system and to ensure that disaggregated data is collected for all areas covered by the CRC and the Optional Protocols. The Committee also recommended Djibouti to use the guidelines of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (on 'Human Rights Indicators: A Guide to Measurement and Implementation') for defining, collecting, and disseminating the statistical data. Further, on 'state-civil society cooperation', the Committee emphasized that the relevant government entities must retain responsibility for the control and results of the activities undertaken when collaborating with civil society organizations.⁴⁰

Germany retains its overall 5th rank in 2023. There has been no significant change in the country's scores on Domains 1 to 5. Germany has shown notable improvement on two indicators of Domain 5 ('respect for the views of the child' and 'best available budget'), considering that previously there was no data available on these indicators. However, due to lack of attention for this aspect in the 2022 Concluding Observations, no score could be generated for the indicator 'state-civil society cooperation for child rights' (which was available previously). On the indicator 'best available budget', the Committee on the Rights of the Child recommended Germany to adopt a child rights approach during budget allocations and that those be made in a transparent and participatory manner by including children and organizations working for children, at the federal, land, and municipal levels.⁴¹ The Committee also expressed concerns over de facto discrimination of children in disadvantaged and vulnerable situations.⁴² On 'respect for the views of the child', the Committee appreciated Germany for its interdepartmental youth strategy 'Shared Responsibility: A Policy For, With and by Young people' and for having reduced the minimum age to vote in municipal elections in some areas.⁴³ However, it remained concerned about the lack of consideration for children's views in court and administrative proceedings.

37 Committee on the Rights of the Child, 'Concluding Observations on the Combined Fifth and Sixth Periodic Reports of Cyprus', UN Doc. CRC/C/CYP/CO/5-6, 24 June 2022, para. 20.

38 *Ibid.*, para. 14.

39 Committee on the Rights of the Child, 'Concluding Observations on the Combined Third to Fifth Periodic Reports of Djibouti', 23 June 2022, UN Doc. CRC/C/DJI/CO/3-5, para. 10.

40 *Ibid.*, para. 13.

41 Committee on the Rights of the Child, 'Concluding Observations on the Combined Fifth and Sixth Periodic Reports of Germany', UN Doc. CRC/C/DEU/CO/5-6, 13 October 2022, para. 9.

42 *Ibid.*, para. 15.

43 Committee on the Rights of the Child, 'Concluding Observations on the Combined Fourth to Sixth Periodic Reports of Greece', UN Doc. CRC/C/GRC/CO/4-6, 28 June 2022, para. 17.

Greece ranks 6th in 2023 compared to 32nd in 2022. This significant improvement is the result of positive changes in Domain 5. Greece's ranking on Domain 5 jumped up from the 124th position in 2022 to the 53rd in 2023. That is a remarkable improvement of 71 ranks! Greece has shown notable advancement on three indicators: 'best interests of the child', 'enabling legislation', and 'best available budget'. This is primarily due to Greece's newly enacted laws which provide for various rights covered by the CRC, including clear guidelines on determining and assessing the best interests of the child, especially in relation to international protection and unaccompanied migrant children.⁴⁴ The Committee on the Rights of the Child appreciated Greece's commitment to combating discrimination through legislative and policy developments, especially through the National Council against Racism and Intolerance, the National Action Plan against Racism and Intolerance (2020-2023), the National Strategy for Roma Inclusion (2021-2030) and the National Action Plan for Roma Inclusion (2017-2021). However, the Committee remained concerned about the "persisting discrimination and negative attitudes towards children of the Roma community, children with disabilities, children from the Muslim minority in Thrace, refugee and asylum-seeking children, children in migration situations, and children of single and/or undocumented migrant parents".⁴⁵ On 'respect for the views of the child', the Committee appreciated Greece for lowering the voting age to 17 years.⁴⁶ The Committee also welcomed "the establishment of NGO accreditation to facilitate collaboration with the State party's competent authorities".⁴⁷

Iceland, the country which was overall at the top of the last four editions of the KidsRights Index (2019 to 2022), slipped to the 3rd position in 2023. Iceland witnessed a significant reduction in its total KRI score, from 0,945 in 2022 to 0,907 in 2023. While there have been some significant changes in Domains 1 to 4 as well, in Domain 5 alone it fell by 34 ranks. Worse performance on the indicators 'enabling legislation' and 'best available budget' played a role. The Committee on the Rights of the Child recommended Iceland to "conduct a review of all its legislation to align it with the Convention, in line with the strategy and action plan on child-friendly Iceland, and develop child-rights impact assessment procedures for national and subnational legislation and policies relevant to children".⁴⁸

Kiribati dropped five places from 122nd (out of 185 in total) in 2022 down to 127th in 2023 (out of 193 in total). Until 2022, Kiribati's rank was based on Domain 5 scores stemming from the 2006 Concluding Observations. Kiribati has seen improvement on two Domain 5 indicators since: 'best interests' and 'legislation'. On the latter, the Committee for example noted the adoption of the 'Children, Young Persons and Family Welfare Act' in 2013.⁴⁹ However, on two other Domain 5 indicators Kiribati's scores worsened: 'respect for the views of the child' and 'allocation of resources'. The Committee also expressed concern about traditional attitudes in Kiribati hindering children's participation in relevant proceedings.⁵⁰ No score could be generated for 'state-civil society cooperation' as this indicator was not addressed in the new Concluding Observations. On the other two indicators ('non-discrimination' and 'data') the scores remained the same as in 2006.

Kuwait's overall Index performance has risen from the 94th position in 2022 (out of 185 in total) to 70th in 2023 (out of 193 in total). This is primarily because, on three out of the seven indicators making up Domain 5, Kuwait has improved its score compared to that reflecting the previous Concluding Observations (issued in 2013). The Committee on the Rights of the Child, among other things,

44 *Ibid.*, paras. 19 and 6.

45 *Ibid.*, para. 17.

46 *Ibid.*, para. 20.

47 *Ibid.*, para 14.

48 *Committee on the Rights of the Child, 'Concluding Observations on the Combined Fifth and Sixth Periodic Reports of Iceland', UN Doc. CRC/C/ISL/CO/5-6, 23 June 2022, para. 6.*

49 *Committee on the Rights of the Child, 'Concluding Observations on the Combined Second to Fourth Periodic Reports of Kiribati', UN Doc. CRC/C/KIR/CO/2-4, 12 September 2022, para. 6.*

50 *Ibid.*, para. 23.

welcomed the recognition of the principle of the best interests of the child in Article 3 of the Child Rights Act.⁵¹ It also appreciated the newly developed unified data gathering mechanism for children.⁵² However, the Committee expressed deep concern about the discrimination experienced by children who do not possess Kuwaiti nationality and the discrimination faced by girls in Kuwait.⁵³

Madagascar has fallen a significant 35 places, from 155th in 2022 (out of 185 in total) to 187th in 2023 (out of 193 in total). This is the result of worse performance on three out of the seven Domain 5 indicators compared to the scores derived from the previous Concluding Observations, that is on 'non-discrimination', 'best interests of the child', and 'data'. No score could be generated for 'state-civil society cooperation' as it was not expressly addressed in the 2022 Concluding Observations. While there was improvement on one indicator (legislation), the remaining two indicators (respect for the views and best available budget) stayed at the same level as was the case based on the previous Concluding Observations.

The Netherlands dropped from its 4th place in the 2022 Index (out of 185 in total) to 20th in the 2023 Index (out of a total of 193). While there was a decrease in Domain 2 (Health), the largest decline is seen in Domain 5. Since the 2015 Concluding Observations, the Netherlands has not improved performance on any of the Domain 5 indicators, while there was a downfall on one ('best interests'). On five indicators the Netherlands remained at the same performance level as in 2015 ('non-discrimination', 'respect for the views of the child', 'legislation', 'resources', and 'data'). There was insufficient information regarding 'state-civil society cooperation' to generate a score on that indicator. Issues highlighted by the Committee on the Rights of Child included its concern that "not all municipalities have an anti-discrimination service in accordance with the Municipal Anti-Discrimination Services Act" and that "regional disparities and de facto discrimination disproportionately affect children in disadvantaged situations, including in education, youth care and the justice system".⁵⁴

North Macedonia ranked 45th in the 2022 Index (out of 185 in total) and has now fallen to position 60 in 2023 (out of a total of 193). This is primarily due to a decrease in Domain 5. Two out of the seven indicators ('best interests' and 'data') have fallen since the last Concluding Observations (adopted in 2010). Three indicators have remained at the same performance level ('non-discrimination', 'respect for the views of the child', and 'state-civil society cooperation'). However, there was improvement on two indicators ('legislation' and 'best available budget/resources') with, for example the Committee "welcoming legal developments in several areas of the Convention".⁵⁵

The Philippines fell 15 places from 70th in 2022 (out of 185 in total) to 85th in 2023 (out of 193 in total). In Domain 5, one indicator went down from the (rare) highest score of three to a middle score of two ('state-civil society cooperation'). The 'best interests of the child' indicator saw an improvement because of improved availability of data: for lack of data no score for this indicator could be derived from the previous Concluding Observations while this was possible on the basis of the 2022 Concluding Observations. The remaining five indicators stayed at the same performance level ('non-discrimination', 'respect for the views of the child', 'legislation', 'available resources', and 'data').

51 Committee on the Rights of the Child, 'Concluding Observations on the Combined Third to Sixth Periodic Reports of Kuwait', UN Doc. CRC/C/KWT/CO/3-6, 19 October 2022, para. 19.

52 *Ibid.*, para. 11.

53 *Ibid.*, para. 17.

54 UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, 'Concluding Observations on the Combined Fifth and Sixth Periodic Reports of the Kingdom of the Netherlands', UN Doc. CRC/C/NLD/CO/5-6, 9 March 2022, para. 14.

55 Committee on the Rights of the Child, 'Concluding Observations on the Combined Third to Sixth Periodic Reports of North Macedonia', UN Doc. CRC/C/MKD/CO/3-6, 20 October 2022, para. 7.

As mentioned earlier in this report, despite the ongoing war in **Ukraine**, the country managed to complete the CRC state reporting procedure. In line with the submitted documentation, mainly the child rights situation preceding the war was looked into. While in 2022 Ukraine ranked 84th, in 2023 it improved to the 26th position. This improvement is due to positive changes in Domain 5. Ukraine showed improvement on the indicators 'non-discrimination' and 'best interests of the child'. In the former realm, the Committee on the Rights of the Child appreciated Ukraine's efforts to combat discrimination as well as to incorporate the principle of the best interests of the child through legislative changes in 2012 and 2016.⁵⁶ The Committee recommended that Ukraine monitor the situation of marginalized and disadvantaged children, including Roma children, and to develop a strategy to eliminate discrimination against them.⁵⁷ Obviously, the situation of Ukrainian children is certainly and critically impacted by the ongoing armed conflict which is likely to be reflected in the coming years in the data for Domains 1 to 4. The Committee firmly acknowledged this aspect and recommended Ukraine to "[e]nsure that the recovery and reconstruction allocations prioritize children and their needs now and in the post-conflict situation, including by conducting a comprehensive assessment of budget needs and establishing transparent allocations".⁵⁸

In the 2023 KidsRights Index, **Uzbekistan** shows a minor improvement, its overall rank changed from 88 to 79 (respectively out of 185 and 193 states ranked). There have been no significant changes in Domains 1 to 5, which indicates that other countries have fared relatively worse. Notably, six of the seven indicator scores for Domain 5 remain unchanged from Uzbekistan's previous Concluding Observations (published in 2013). The country showed a minor improvement on the indicator 'collection and analysis of disaggregated data'. Otherwise, the Committee on the Rights of the Child appreciated the efforts undertaken by Uzbekistan to expand social assistance to low-income families with children. This reflected positively on the indicator 'best available budget'.⁵⁹ The Committee also noted the legislative amendments to allow children to express their opinions on all matters that affect them, and other measures undertaken by Uzbekistan to facilitate participation of children. However, it remained concerned that children below 10 years old are not being heard in judicial proceedings, and about the lack of child-friendly procedures and space for children to express their views, especially in schools.⁶⁰

In its overall ranking, **Vietnam** fell from the 56th place in 2022 (out of 185) to the 117th place in 2023 (out of 193). It lost over 100 positions in Domain 5, which is the primary cause for its downfall in the overall ranking. While Vietnam improved its score on the indicator 'collection and analysis of disaggregated data', it showed a negative change on four of the remaining six indicators in Domain 5. The Committee on the Rights of the Child explicitly appreciated the adoption of the National Action Programme for Children 2021–2030 and the inclusion of new indicators in the National List of Indicators in 2021.⁶¹ The Committee also commended the 'Strategy for Ethnic Affairs for 2021–2030' for its potential to combat discrimination. However, it expressed concerns over unequal access of services for children living in poverty and/or in remote areas, children with disabilities, and children belonging to ethnic, religious, or indigenous groups, as well as LGBTQ+ and migrant children.⁶² Noting the restrictive environment for civil society organizations in Vietnam, even when they work to promote child rights,

56 Committee on the Rights of the Child, 'Concluding Observations on the Combined Fifth and Sixth Periodic Reports of Ukraine', UN Doc. CRC/C/UKR/CO/5-6, 27 October 2022, para. 15.

57 *Ibid.*, para 14.

58 Committee on the Rights of the Child, 'Concluding Observations on the Combined Fifth and Sixth Periodic Reports of Ukraine', UN Doc. CRC/C/UKR/CO/5-6, 27 October 2022, para 10.

59 Committee on the Rights of the Child, 'Concluding Observations on the Fifth Periodic Report of Uzbekistan', UN Doc. CRC/C/UZB/CO/5, 27 October 2022, para. 9.

60 *Ibid.*, para. 19.

61 Committee on the Rights of the Child, 'Concluding Observations on the Combined Fifth and Sixth Periodic Reports of Viet Nam', CRC/C/VNM/CO/5-6, 21 October 2022, paras. 7 and 10.

62 *Ibid.*, paras 16 and 17.

the Committee recommended that Vietnam undertake the necessary measures to ensure that child rights advocates, defenders and organizations are able to freely express their opinion without any fear of harassment and retaliation.⁶³ It also recommended Vietnam to carry out thorough investigations into any claims of intimidation or threats made against human rights advocates.

Zambia saw a slight drop in its overall ranking this year to position 158 (out of 193 in total) as compared to 150 (out of 185 in total) in 2022. This is the result of slight drops in performance level in every domain except education, where it improved. Zambia improved on two indicators of Domain 5 ('respect for the views of the child' and 'state-civil society cooperation'). This is due to the availability of a score on state-civil society cooperation which was previously unavailable, and appreciation for the state's efforts to ensure effective child participation. Zambia's performance on four other Domain 5 indicators ('best interests of the child', 'enabling legislation', 'best available budget/resources', and 'collection and analysis of disaggregated data') remained the same. However, on non-discrimination Zambia's record fell to the score 'low'.

3.3 Indicator level analysis of Domain 5

In addition to the comprehensive country findings that were presented in the previous section, we now share some observations on the 2023 findings per indicator of Domain 5.

3.3.1. Non discrimination

Article 2 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child enshrines the principle of non-discrimination. Children all over the world widely continue to face discrimination as is confirmed in each of the 22 new Concluding Observations that were adopted in 2022. Nine countries out of the 22 in total (Cambodia, Canada, Chile, Croatia, Djibouti, Kuwait, Madagascar, Uzbekistan, and Zambia) scored the lowest possible rank on this indicator and for seven of these countries this amounted to a poorer performance than in the previous reporting/Concluding Observation round. Thirteen countries (Cuba, Cyprus, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Kiribati, the Netherlands, North Macedonia, the Philippines, Somalia, South Sudan, Ukraine, and Vietnam) out of the twenty-two in total scored the middle score in this domain. For nine of these thirteen countries (Cuba, Cyprus, Germany, Greece, Kiribati, the Netherlands, North Macedonia, the Philippines, and Vietnam) this meant they stayed at the same performance level as previously (no deterioration occurred but also no improvement). None of the newly reviewed countries attained the highest possible score on non-discrimination. Iceland and Ukraine are the only two countries that saw their performance improve, respectively going up from a 'non-available' score to a middle score and from the lowest to the middle score. South Sudan and Somalia were assessed for the very first time by the Committee on the Rights of the Child in 2022 and both received the middle score. It is important to highlight that, overall, the performance of countries on the 'non-discrimination' indicator has worsened the most of all Domain 5 indicators, closely followed by that on 'state-civil society cooperation'. For non-discrimination there is a larger number of countries showing negative changes than the number of countries showing positive changes (seven over two).

3.3.2. Best interest of the child

The best interests of the child is another important general principle of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child that, for instance, is supposed to be a primary consideration in all legislative, administrative, and judicial processes concerning children. Eight countries (Cambodia, Croatia, Cyprus, Madagascar, the Netherlands, North Macedonia, Uzbekistan, and Vietnam) out of the twenty-two countries with new Concluding Observations in 2022 received the lowest possible score on this indicator. All remaining fourteen countries (Canada, Chile, Cuba, Djibouti, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Kiribati, Kuwait, the

⁶³ *Ibid.*, para. 13.

Philippines, Somalia, South Sudan, Ukraine, and Zambia) received a middle score. None of the countries received the highest score on the indicator of the 'best interests of the child'. Six countries (Cambodia, Croatia, Madagascar, the Netherlands, North Macedonia, and Vietnam) dropped in their score from a middle score in 2022 to a low score in 2023. Eight countries (Chile, Cuba, Cyprus, Germany, Iceland, Kuwait, Uzbekistan, and Zambia) stayed at the same performance level in this domain. The remaining six countries (Canada, Djibouti, Greece, Kiribati, Philippines, and Ukraine) improved their performance score on the 'best interests of the child' to the middle score. South Sudan and Somalia were assessed for the very first time by the Committee on the Rights of the Child in 2022 and both received the middle score. Overall, on average there has been no significant change for this indicator since an equal number of countries show negative and positive changes (both six).

3.3.3. Respect for the views of the child

Seven countries (Cambodia, Croatia, Cyprus, Kiribati, Madagascar, South Sudan, and Vietnam) have the lowest possible performance score on the indicator 'respect for the views of the child' or child participation. For five of these countries that amounts to a deterioration of their record. The other fifteen countries (Canada, Chile, Cuba, Djibouti, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Kuwait, the Netherlands, North Macedonia, the Philippines, Somalia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, and Zambia) all received a middle score. None of the countries received the highest performance score on this indicator. Only three out of the 22 countries (Germany, Kuwait, and Zambia) improved their score whereas five (Cambodia, Croatia, Cyprus, Kiribati, and Vietnam) saw a decrease in their score on this indicator. Another twelve countries (Canada, Chile, Cuba, Djibouti, Greece, Iceland, Madagascar, the Netherlands, North Macedonia, the Philippines, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan) maintained their score in this indicator. South Sudan and Somalia were assessed for the very first time by the Committee on the Rights of the Child in 2022 and received respectively the lowest possible and the middle score. Overall, on average there has been a slight negative change in the performance level on this indicator because there is a slightly larger number of countries that show negative changes than countries that show positive changes (five over three).

3.3.4. Enabling legislation

The Domain 5 indicator 'enabling legislation' assesses the efforts undertaken to ensure that the content of the Convention on the Rights of the Child is fully integrated⁶⁴ into a state party's national legislation. All the twenty-two countries (Cambodia, Canada, Chile, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Djibouti, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Kiribati, Kuwait, Madagascar, the Netherlands, North Macedonia, Philippines, Somalia, South Sudan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, and Zambia) that were newly reviewed by the Committee on the Rights of the Child in 2022 received a middle score on this indicator. None of the countries scored either the lowest or the highest performance score on 'enabling legislation'. Two countries (Djibouti and Iceland) fell from a high to a middle score as compared to their previous performance level. Four countries (Greece, Kiribati, Madagascar, and North Macedonia) improved their performance score on this indicator to the middle score. The remaining fourteen countries (all except South Sudan and Somalia) maintained their score in this indicator. South Sudan and Somalia were assessed for the very first time by the Committee on the Rights of the Child in 2022 and both received the middle score. Overall, on average there has been no significant change for this indicator as an equal number of countries show negative and positive changes.

3.3.5. Best available budget/resources

Twelve countries (Cambodia, Chile, Djibouti, Germany, Iceland, Kiribati, Madagascar, the Netherlands, Somalia, South Sudan, Ukraine, and Vietnam) received the lowest performance score on this indicator. The other ten countries assessed by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in 2022 (Canada, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Greece, Kuwait, North Macedonia, the Philippines, Uzbekistan, and Zambia)

⁶⁴ With the exception of particular provisions of the Convention for which states have registered reservations and which therefore are not applicable.

received an average score on this indicator. None of the countries involved obtained the highest performance score on the indicator 'best available budget'. Four countries (Cuba, Germany, Greece, and North Macedonia) improved their performance score on this indicator as compared to last year. Four other countries (Djibouti, Iceland, Kiribati, and Vietnam) showed a worse performance level. Twelve countries maintained their score on this indicator. South Sudan and Somalia were assessed for the very first time by the Committee on the Rights of the Child in 2022 and, as indicated above already, both received the lowest possible score.

3.3.6. Collection and analysis of disaggregated data

Eight countries (Canada, Cyprus, Djibouti, Greece, Kiribati, Madagascar, North Macedonia, and South Sudan) received the lowest possible performance score on the indicator 'collection and analysis of disaggregated data'. Fourteen countries (Cambodia, Chile, Croatia, Cuba, Germany, Iceland, Kuwait, the Netherlands, the Philippines, Somalia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Vietnam, and Zambia) received a middle score on this indicator. None of the newly reviewed countries obtained the highest possible score on the indicator 'data'. Three countries (Djibouti, Madagascar, and North Macedonia) dropped down in their performance level compared to that based on the previous Concluding Observations. Three other countries (Kuwait, Uzbekistan, and Vietnam) improved in performance score as compared to that derived from their previous Concluding Observations. Twelve countries maintained their score on this indicator. South Sudan and Somalia were assessed for the very first time by the Committee on the Rights of the Child in 2022 and, as indicated above already, received respectively the lowest possible score and the middle score on the Domain 5 indicator 'data'.

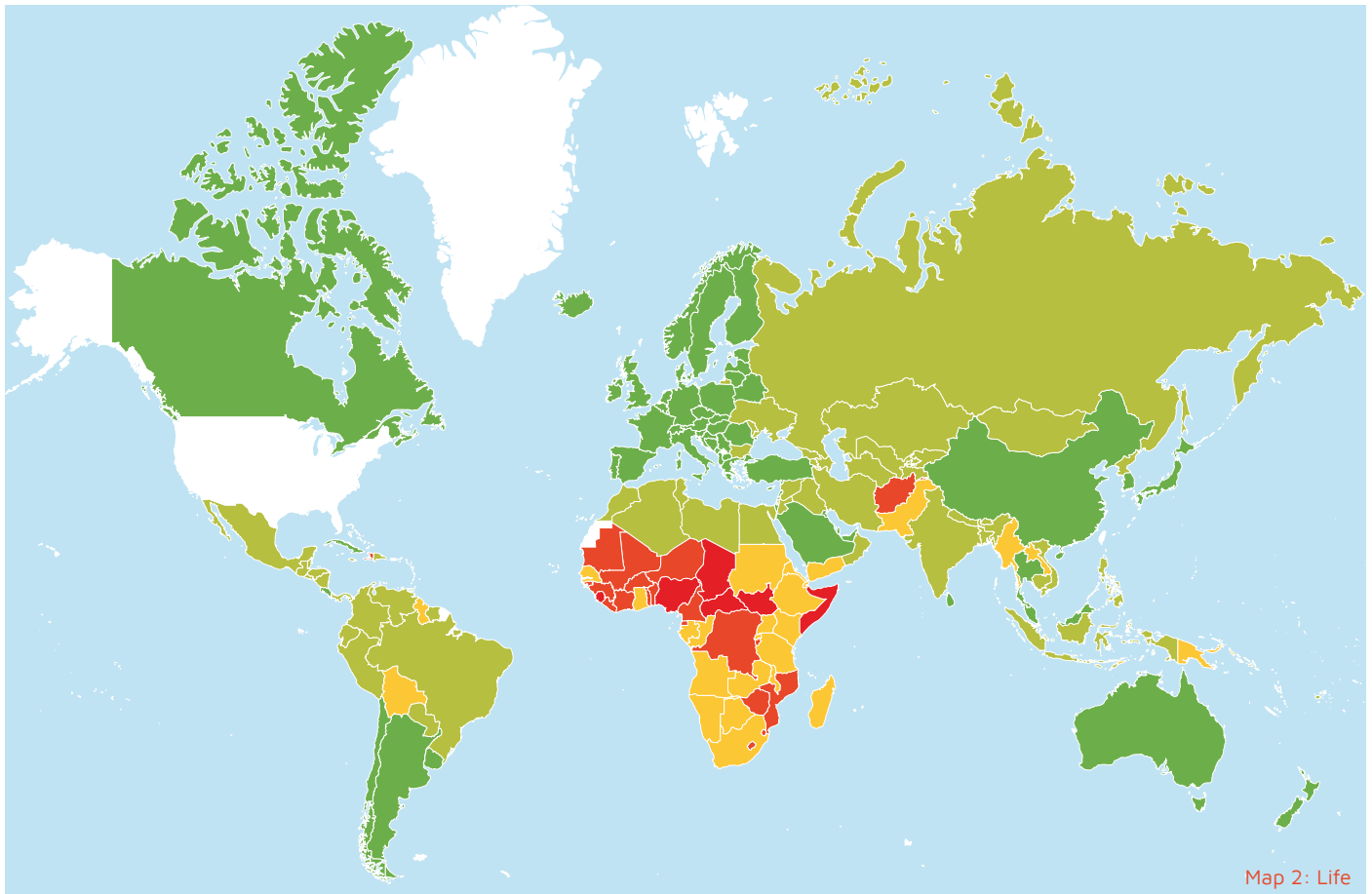
3.3.7. State-civil society cooperation for child rights

State-civil society cooperation too is an important element of an enabling environment for children's rights. This indicator encompasses a safe climate for child rights defenders of all ages. Four countries (Cambodia, Djibouti, Vietnam, and Zambia) received the lowest performance score on this indicator. Eight countries (Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Greece, Kuwait, North Macedonia, the Philippines, and Uzbekistan) received a middle score on this indicator. A striking another ten countries (Canada, Chile, Germany, Iceland, Kiribati, Madagascar, the Netherlands, Somalia, South Sudan, and Ukraine) did not have any data available and thus could not be scored on this indicator. Given the serious shortcomings on this indicator, including widespread crackdowns on child rights defenders, one would expect the Committee on the Rights of the Child to address this aspect systematically in all Concluding Observations. This is not yet the case.

None of the countries reviewed in 2022 received the highest possible score on 'state-civil society cooperation'. Six countries (Djibouti, Germany, Kiribati, the Philippines, Ukraine, and Vietnam) dropped down in their performance as compared to the score derived from their previous Concluding Observations. Four countries (Croatia, Cyprus, Kuwait, and Zambia) improved their scores as compared to the previous round of state reporting/Concluding Observations. Another ten countries maintained their score on this indicator. South Sudan and Somalia were assessed for the very first time by the Committee on the Rights of the Child in 2022. As indicated above already, for both of these countries it was not possible to generate a score on 'state-civil society cooperation' because the matter was not addressed in their Concluding Observations. Overall, the indicator 'state-civil society cooperation' shows a relatively strong deterioration in performance (with six countries performing worse and four better), coupled with the missing scores for ten countries which reveals a significant data gap.

3.4 A brief analysis of striking results due to new scores in the Domains 1 to 4 (life, health, education, and protection)

3.4.1. Domain 1: Life



The following selected specific results may be highlighted for Domain 1. Newcomer in the KidsRights Index 2023 **Monaco** is the best performer in the Domain Life. The top ten of best performers in this Domain is presented below, in Table 3.

| COUNTRY | TOTAL RANKING in KidsRights Index 11 (2023) | LIFE RANK in KidsRights Index 11 (2023) | LIFE SCORE |
|-------------------|--|--|------------|
| Monaco | 17 | 1 | 0,995 |
| Japan | 23 | 2 | 0,986 |
| Australia | 136 | 3 | 0,979 |
| Switzerland | 30 | 4 | 0,973 |
| Norway | 9 | 5 | 0,972 |
| Republic of Korea | 14 | 6 | 0,972 |
| Sweden | 1 | 7 | 0,968 |
| Italy | 19 | 8 | 0,966 |
| Spain | 76 | 9 | 0,966 |
| Malta | 29 | 10 | 0,965 |

Table 3: Top ten countries in the Domain Life in the 2023 KidsRights Index

Cuba holds the 65th position for the Domain Life. This is significantly worse than last year when Cuba ranked 36th. The cause of this 29-place drop is a decline in the figures on life expectancy at birth. This is all the more striking because over the past few decades Cuba had witnessed a gradual and consistent improvement on this aspect, with life expectancy going up from 60.1 years in 1950 to 77.6 years in 2020.⁶⁵ However, in 2021 the life expectancy in Cuba reduced to 73.7 years. This meant that it fell back to the levels of 1986. Most likely, this decline may be attributed to the stress on the health care system caused by COVID-19 which in turn had a serious negative impact on the actual healthcare received by the population.

Effects of COVID-19 on the health of the population and healthcare systems are likely also an explanatory factor for the deterioration in Peru's ranking on the Life Domain. It fell by 27 ranks. **Peru** experienced the highest number of COVID-19 deaths per capita in the world. By the end of April 2021, already more than one in hundred Peruvian children had lost a parent due to COVID. By mid-2021, at least 1000 Peruvian children had died as a result of the pandemic and the impact on children's mental health and education was very serious. The death of parents due to COVID-19 often pushed children into poverty, and severely affected their access to healthcare and education.⁶⁶

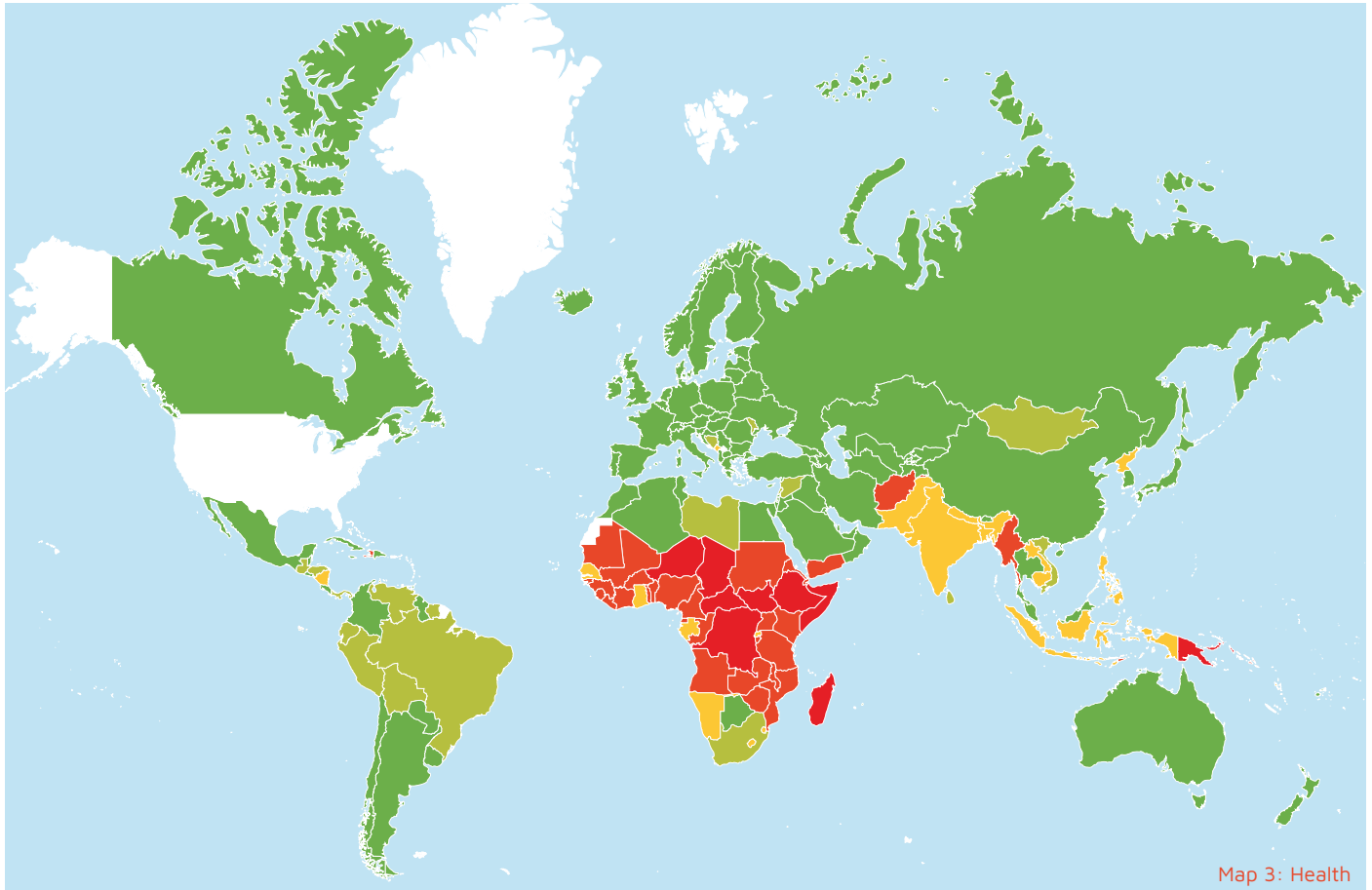
While **Iceland** saw 'only' a relatively minor fall in its ranking on the Domain Life (by 6 ranks), it is troubling that it recorded a substantial increase in the under-five mortality rate (36.27 percent). Similarly, **Madagascar** saw an increase in under-five mortality by 31%. This has contributed to its drop in the Health Domain by 20 ranks. **Niger** also recorded an increase in under-five mortality by 49 percent and became the country with the highest under-five mortality rate of all.

At the other end of the spectrum, **Mauritania** recorded a decline in under-five mortality by 43 percent. Thereby, Mauritania is among the better performing countries in reducing the under-five mortality rate in the West and Central Africa region. Only **Sao Tome and Principe** (15 percent) and **Senegal** (39 percent) recorded lower under five mortality figures in the region. This improvement of Mauritania (to 41 percent) has also placed it well below the regional average 'under five mortality' rate. However, the country is still significantly above the overall average for the indicator which is 26 percent.

65 United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs (Population Division), 'World Population Prospects 2022', File GEN/01/REV1: 'Demographic Indicators by Region, Subregion and Country, Annually for 1950-2100, Estimates, 1950 – 2021', New York, 2022, <https://population.un.org/wpp/>.

66 See e.g. UNICEF, 'Peru Migration and COVID-19 Situation Report No. 2', 30 June 2021, <https://reliefweb.int/report/peru/unicef-peru-migration-and-covid-19-situation-report-no2-30-june-2021>, and Luke Taylor, 'Hidden Pandemic: Peruvian Children in Crisis as Carers Die', *The Guardian*, 16 August 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2021/aug/16/hidden-pandemic-peruvian-children-in-crisis-as-carers-die>.

3.4.2. Domain 2: Health



Newcomer in the KidsRights Index 2023 Andorra is the best performer in the Domain Health. The top ten of best performers in this Domain is presented below, in Table 4.

| COUNTRY | TOTAL RANKING in KidsRights Index 11 (2023) | HEALTH RANK in KidsRights Index 11 (2023) | HEALTH SCORE |
|----------------------|--|--|--------------|
| Andorra | 31 | 1 | 1,000 |
| Bahrain | 32 | 2 | 1,000 |
| Cook Islands | 77 | 3 | 1,000 |
| Israel | 62 | 4 | 1,000 |
| Qatar | 22 | 5 | 1,000 |
| United Arab Emirates | 72 | 6 | 1,000 |
| Portugal | 13 | 7 | 0,997 |
| Japan | 23 | 8 | 0,996 |
| Republic of Korea | 14 | 9 | 0,996 |
| Saudi Arabia | 148 | 10 | 0,996 |

Table 4: Top ten countries in the Domain Health in the 2023 KidsRights Index

As already announced in Section 1 of this report, in the 2023 KidsRights Index numerous countries witnessed a reduction in the percentage of immunized children. Countries such as the Philippines, Papua New Guinea, Montenegro, Djibouti, and Ecuador recorded around 20 percent reduction, while Madagascar (34 percent), Vanuatu (36 percent), Myanmar (52 percent) and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (58 percent) showed yet more dramatic reductions of the percentage of immunized children.

UNICEF's *State of The World's Children 2023* report focuses on the theme "For Every Child, Vaccination". It highlights the exponential rise in zero-dose children post the COVID-19 pandemic. The latter had a huge negative impact on the availability and accessibility of non-Covid vaccination services around the world and also on the perception of vaccines and vaccination readiness. The percentage of zero-dose children is highest in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and Myanmar at around a staggering 60 percent.⁶⁷ It is reported that disruptions to imports and lengthy quarantine and disinfection process (taking up to two or three months) contributed to the stockouts of essential vaccines in the **Democratic People's Republic of Korea**.⁶⁸ Due to the stockouts, vaccinations for measles, polio and tuberculosis were not administered to any children in DPRK in 2022. This puts half a million children at risk of vaccine-preventable diseases. Similarly, one million children in **Myanmar** have missed out on routine vaccinations due to disruptions to the health services resulting from COVID-19 and the 2021 military takeover.⁶⁹ Together with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Myanmar, **Somalia, the Philippines, and Angola** form the top five countries with the highest number of zero-dose children.⁷⁰

Barbados too recorded a fall of 29 positions in its ranking on the Health Domain because the percentage of immunized children fell from 89 to 77. This amounts to a reduction by 13 percent. It is reported that, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI) witnessed a decrease of the routine immunizations of children, including for measles, mumps, and rubella.⁷¹

On the other hand, countries such as **El Salvador, Gabon and Lesotho** recorded over 20 percent increase in the percentage of immunized children. While **Suriname** recorded the highest overall increase in this category (29 percent), the overall percentage of immunized children in that country is still at a low 58 percent. Qatar recorded a nine percent increase in the percentage of immunized children, and currently has an immunization rate of 99 percent. Qatar's National Health Strategy 2018-22, Public Health Strategy 2017-22, and its Second National Development Strategy 2018-22⁷² focused on improving immunization in the country.

Due to the availability of data on underweight children (which previously was unavailable), **Kuwait** dropped 35 ranks in the Health Domain. **Tuvalu**, which ranked 10th in the Health Domain of the KidsRights Index 2022, recorded a disturbing 81 percent increase in the number of underweight children

67 UNICEF, 'The State of the World's Children 2023: For Every Child, Vaccination', UNICEF Innocenti – Global Office of Research and Foresight, Florence, April 2023, <https://www.unicef.org/media/108161/file/SOWC-2023-full-report-English.pdf>, p. 7.

68 UNICEF, 'Country Office Annual Report 2022 - Democratic People's Republic of Korea', [https://www.unicef.org/media/136731/file/Democratic-Peoples-Republic-of-Korea-\(North-Korea\)-2022-COAR.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/media/136731/file/Democratic-Peoples-Republic-of-Korea-(North-Korea)-2022-COAR.pdf), p. 1.

69 UNICEF, 'Country Office Annual Report 2021 - Myanmar', <https://www.unicef.org/media/117271/file/Myanmar-2021-COAR.pdf>, p. 1.

70 UNICEF, 'The State of the World's Children 2023: For Every Child, Vaccination', UNICEF Innocenti – Global Office of Research and Foresight, Florence, April 2023, <https://www.unicef.org/media/108161/file/SOWC-2023-full-report-English.pdf>, p. 7.

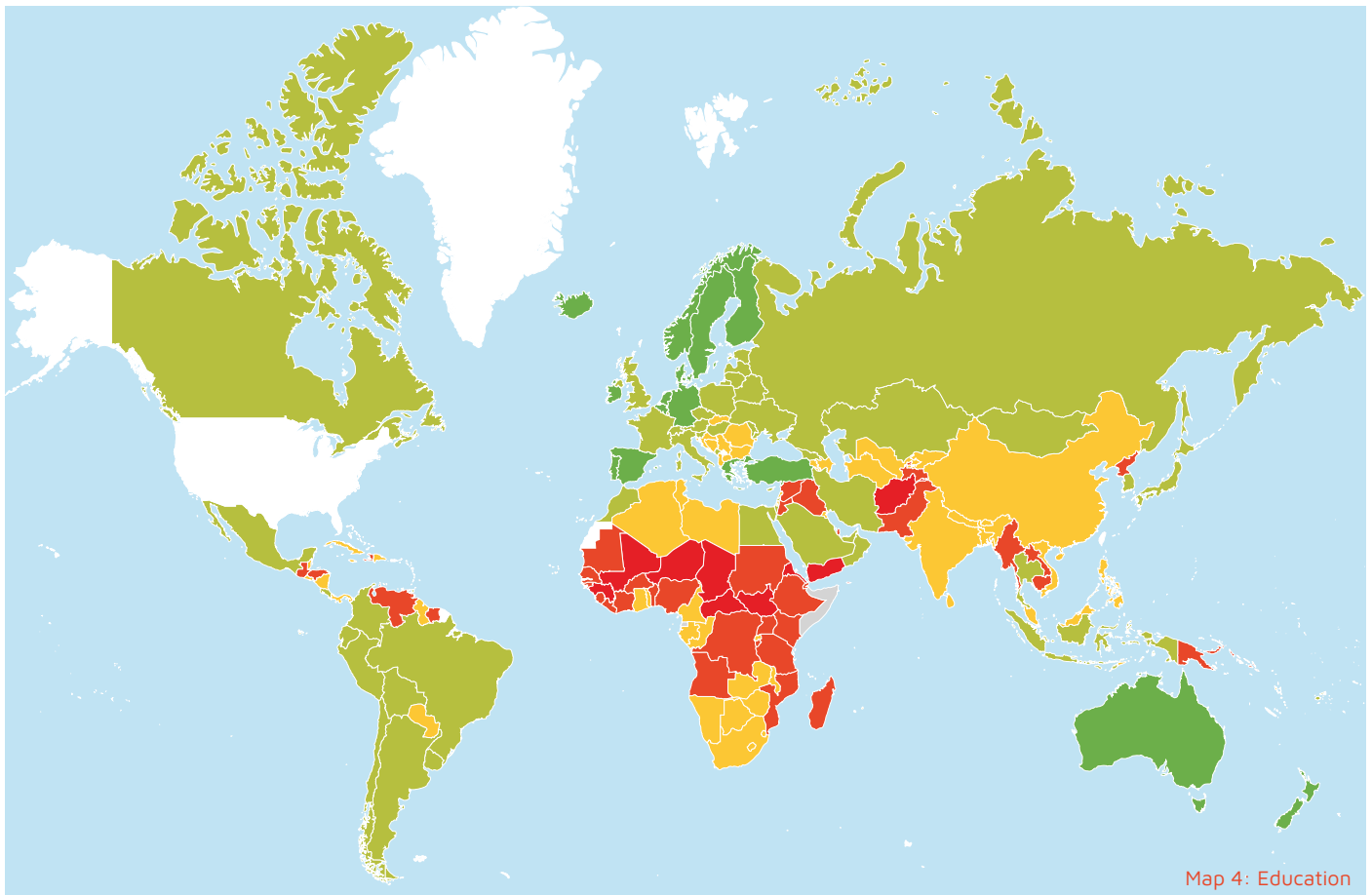
71 Melissa Rollock, 'Vaccine Coverage Hit By COVID-19', blogpost, Barbados Government Information Service, 4 May 2022, <https://gisbarbados.gov.bb/blog/vaccine-coverage-hit-by-covid-19/>.

72 'Qatar National Health Strategy 2018-2022', <https://andp.unescwa.org/sites/default/files/2020-10/National%20Health%20Strategy%202018-2022.pdf>, p. 18; 'Qatar Public Health Strategy 2017-22', https://extranet.who.int/ncdccc/Data/QAT_B3_QPHS%202017-2022.pdf, p. 55; and 'Qatar Second National Development Strategy 2018-2022', <https://www.psa.gov.qa/en/knowledge/Documents/NDS2Final.pdf>, p. 144.

in the country. Data on sanitation and drinking water facilities remains unchanged compared to last year, due to lack of new data.

The ranking of **the Netherlands** in the Domain Health dropped by fifteen ranks from the 27th position in 2022 to the 42nd position in 2023. An explanatory factor for this is that the data for the indicator 'underweight children' is missing in the 2023 dataset, although it was available in 2022 and then used for generating a score for the tenth KidsRights Index.

3.4.3. Domain 3: Education



While due to a relatively harsh assessment by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child Australia occupies the relatively low overall rank of 136th in the KidsRights Index 2023, it is the best performer in the Domain Education. The top ten of best performers in this Domain is presented below, in Table 5.

| COUNTRY | TOTAL RANKING in KidsRights Index 11 (2023) | EDUCATION RANK in KidsRights Index 11 (2023) | EDUCATION SCORE |
|-----------------|--|---|-----------------|
| Australia | 136 | 1 | 1,000 |
| Belgium | 18 | 2 | 1,000 |
| Denmark | 7 | 3 | 1,000 |
| Finland | 2 | 4 | 1,000 |
| Greece | 6 | 5 | 1,000 |
| Grenada | 53 | 6 | 1,000 |
| Iceland | 3 | 7 | 1,000 |
| Ireland | 54 | 8 | 1,000 |
| The Netherlands | 20 | 9 | 1,000 |
| New Zealand | 178 | 10 | 1,000 |

Table 5: Top ten countries in the Domain Education in the 2023 KidsRights Index

Due to the availability of new data on indicators in the Domain Education, **Fiji** has shown a significant improvement in its education rank: from 179th in 2022 to 54th this year. Fiji's improvement in Domain 3 may be fueled by the Fiji Education Program (FEP) which has been backed by an investment of 25 million Australian dollar made available by the Australian government. This program was designed to assist the Government of Fiji in improving centralized policymaking and the performance of schools and teachers, and in building stronger links with the communities to improve the literacy and numeracy skills of children.⁷³

Jamaica's education rank improved by 30 positions, from 121st in 2022 to 91st in 2023. According to a 2019 survey, gender disparity was prominent in tertiary level education in Jamaica as more than 65 percent of the students were female.⁷⁴ However, over the years there has been a significant improvement in the expected years of schooling for male children. It was 11.6 years in 2014 as compared to 13.1 years for female children at the time. The expected years of schooling in Jamaica currently is 13.7 years for females and 13.1 years for males.⁷⁵

The Republic of **Moldova** shows a significant improvement in its ranking in the Education Domain, as it rose from position 125 in 2022 to that of 66 in 2023. This is an improvement of 59 ranks! According to the UNDP's *Human Development Report 2021-22*, the expected number of years of schooling of females and males in Moldova now stands at 14.8 and 14.1 respectively.⁷⁶ The Republic of Moldova's 'Education Development Strategy 2014-2020' presenting the vision of making Moldova's education system accessible to all its citizens and of providing quality education relevant to society and economy,⁷⁷ may have contributed to this improvement in the Education Domain. Another explanatory factor might be that, in 2020 the World Bank approved a 39.4 million US dollar credit for Moldova's 'Higher Education Project' so as to support the government's efforts to address the decline in the number of tertiary level

73 Stuart Kinsella and Ana Raivoce, 'Fiji Education Program (FEP): Mid-Term Review 2021', prepared for Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Australia), IOD PARC, Sheffield, 2021, <https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/fiji-education-program-mid-term-review.pdf>, p. 2.

74 United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 'Background Paper Prepared for the 2020 GEM Report Latin America and the Caribbean', UN Doc. ED/GEMR/MRT/2020/LAC/17, Paris, 2020, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000374765/PDF/374765eng.pdf.multi>, p. 21.

75 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 'Human Development Report 2015: Work for Human Development', New York, 2015, https://hdr.undp.org/system/files/documents/2015humandevreportpdf_1.pdf, p. 221.

76 UNDP, 'Human Development Report 2021-22: Uncertain Times, Unsettled Lives: Shaping our Future in a Transforming World', New York, 2022, https://hdr.undp.org/system/files/documents/global-report-document/hdr2021-22pdf_1.pdf, p. 287.

77 Government of Moldova, 'Education Development Strategy 2014-2020: Education-2020', approved by Government Decision no. 944 of 14 November 2014, <https://www.globalpartnership.org/sites/default/files/moldova-education-strategy-2014-2020.pdf>.

students and to better prepare the students for meeting the needs of the labour market.⁷⁸

Trinidad and Tobago improved by 74 ranks in the Education Domain. This resulted in a positive jump in the country's overall KidsRights Index ranking from 83rd in 2022 to 58th this year or an improvement of 25 ranks. This change may relate to various improvements in Trinidad and Tobago's education policy. The Ministry of Education published the 'Education Policy Paper 2017-22' with the purpose of reforming the education system for improving all levels of education in the country.⁷⁹ This has been aligned with Trinidad and Tobago's 'National Development Strategy 2016-30' which includes the goal of having a "modern, relevant education and training system".⁸⁰ Overall, the government aims to ensure that all girls and boys in Trinidad and Tobago will have access to free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education by 2030.

Turkmenistan also improved considerably in the Education Domain. It now ranks 88th, an improvement by 43 ranks compared to its previous rank of 131st. The figures on the years of compulsory education in Turkmenistan increased from nine to ten in 2009 and then again from ten to twelve in 2014.⁸¹ According to UNDP's Human Development Reports, Turkmenistan has witnessed a gradual increase in the expected years of schooling for both males and females since 2015. This now stands at 13 and 13.4 years for females and males respectively.⁸² The EU-financed project 'Support to the Education Sector in Turkmenistan' implemented during the period 2016-2020 supported the government of Turkmenistan in creating a modern education system in line with international educational standards. This might have contributed to Turkmenistan's improved performance record on education.⁸³ However, still less than half of the school-age population at the pre-primary level is enrolled in schools, and less than eight percent of the school-age population at the tertiary level is enrolled.⁸⁴ Concerted efforts to enroll and retain students at the pre-primary and tertiary level by providing conducive learning environments might further improve the expected years of learning for all children in Turkmenistan.

San Marino and Suriname dropped down the rankings on education by 42 and 34 positions respectively, with Suriname only recording an improvement in the expected years of schooling for females. Similarly, the Maldives fell by 46 ranks even though it recorded a fifteen percent increase in the expected years of schooling for females, as gender inequality became ten times worse.

78 World Bank, 'Better Higher Education to Improve People's Skills in Moldova, With World Bank Support', Press Release, Washington, 5 March 2020, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2020/03/05/better-higher-education-to-improve-peoples-skills-in-moldova>.

79 Ministry of Education of Trinidad and Tobago, 'Education Policy Paper 2017-22 (hite Paper)', <https://www.moe.gov.tt/policy-documents/>, no place, no date.

80 Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, 'Vision 2030 National Development Strategy 2016-30: Many Hearts, Many Voices, One Vision', Ministry of Planning and Development, Port of Spain, no date, <https://www.planning.gov.tt/sites/default/files/Vision%202030-%20The%20National%20Development%20Strategy%20of%20Trinidad%20and%20Tobago%202016-2030.pdf>, p. 90.

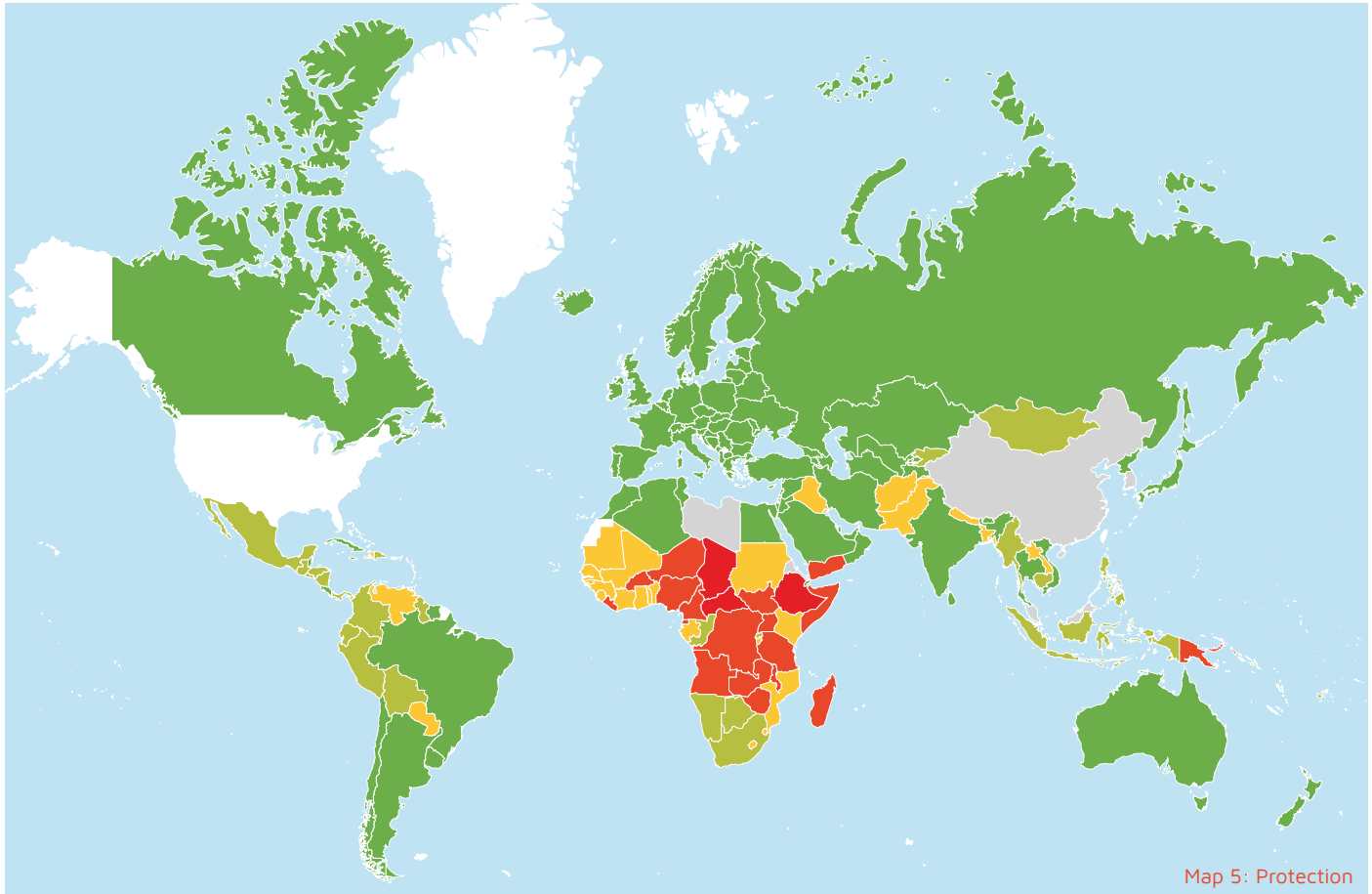
81 World Bank, 'Compulsory Education, Duration (Years) – Turkmenistan, 1998-2021', <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.COM.DURS?locations=TM>, Washington, 2022.

82 UNDP, 'Human Development Report 2021-22: Uncertain Times, Unsettled Lives: Shaping our Future in a Transforming World', New York, 2022, https://hdr.undp.org/system/files/documents/global-report-document/hdr2021-22pdf_1.pdf, p. 287.

83 European Profiles project page 'Support to the Education Sector in Turkmenistan', project period October 2016- October 2020, project value € 4.625.200, https://www.europeanprofiles.gr/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1637&catid=54, Athens, no date.

84 United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 'Global Education Monitoring Report 2020 - Inclusion and Education: All Means All, Paris, 2020, Global education monitoring report, 2020: Inclusion and education: all means all - UNESCO Digital Library, p. 348

3.4.4. Domain 4: Protection



In the 2023 KidsRights Index, Switzerland does best on the Domain Protection. The top ten of best performers in this Domain is presented below, in Table 6.

| COUNTRY | TOTAL RANKING in KidsRights Index 11 (2023) | PROTECTION RANK in KidsRights Index 11 (2023) | PROTECTION SCORE |
|-----------------|--|--|------------------|
| Switzerland | 30 | 1 | 0,997 |
| Denmark | 7 | 2 | 0,996 |
| The Netherlands | 20 | 3 | 0,996 |
| Norway | 9 | 4 | 0,996 |
| Singapore | 33 | 5 | 0,996 |
| Japan | 23 | 6 | 0,994 |
| Slovenia | 10 | 7 | 0,994 |
| Luxembourg | 4 | 8 | 0,993 |
| Sweden | 1 | 9 | 0,993 |
| Finland | 2 | 10 | 0,992 |

Table 6: Top ten countries in the Domain Protection in the 2023 KidsRights Index

In Domain 4 (Protection), **Belarus** fell by 38 ranks from the 10th position in 2022 to the 48th this year. The percentage of children engaged in child labour in Belarus tripled. That is, it changed from less than one percent to over four percent as per the 2019 MICS report published in 2021.⁸⁵ According to that report, in Belarus child labour in rural areas is three times more prevalent than in urban areas. Considering that this data originates from before the pandemic, and from before the war in Ukraine, the percentage of children engaged in child labour may witness a further increase in the near future.

Similarly, **Colombia** too dropped in the domain child protection (by twelve ranks from 83rd in 2022 to 95th in 2023) due to an increase in child labour in the country. Since the data available for Colombia is from 2020, this significant rise in child labour could be a direct consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic which led to school closures and thus the need for remote learning which reportedly had negative impacts on school attendance.⁸⁶ In addition, non-state armed groups continue to recruit children for committing crimes and for commercial sexual exploitation.⁸⁷ For the latter, children are known to be surveilled and recruited at schools.

Venezuelan children are especially vulnerable to worst forms of child labour. The lower minimum age to work (fifteen years) compared to the age for free and compulsory education (eighteen years) is understood to be one of the primary reasons for the continued prevalence of child labour.⁸⁸ As per the 'Gran Encuesta Integrada de Hogares' (Household Survey) 2021, while the rate of child labour for economic activities was at 5 percent, the rate of child labour doubled to 10 percent when household chores were also accounted for.⁸⁹

With new data being available on adolescent birth, **Belgium** recorded an improvement by 153 ranks in the protection domain – the highest of all! Similarly, new data on child labour and birth registration is available for **Fiji**, which consequently improved its ranking by 77 ranks. **Afghanistan, Algeria, Dominican Republic, Guyana** and **Sao Tome and Principe** recorded a reduction in child labour by around 40 percent which contributed to only a slight improvement of their respective ranks in Domain 4. **Viet Nam** recorded a decline in child labour by almost 50% which resulted in an increase by 18 ranks.

PROGRESS ON CHILD PROTECTION: VIET NAM

In the Protection Domain, Viet Nam improved by 18 ranks (from the 92nd to the 74th place). Child labour among children between 5 to 17 years old decreased by an incredible 47 percent (from 13.12 to 6.9 percent as reported in the MICS Report 2020-2021).⁹⁰ However, children in rural areas are twice as likely to be engaged in child labour than children in urban areas are.⁹¹ The MICS Report 2020-2021 also revealed that the percentage of children engaged in labour is

85 UNICEF, 'Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey on the Situation of Children and Women in the Republic of Belarus', Survey Findings Report 2019, <https://mics.unicef.org/surveys>.

86 US Department of Labor, 'Colombia: 2021 Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor', Bureau of International Labor Affairs, 2021, <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/resources/reports/child-labor/colombia>, p. 2.

87 *Ibid.*

88 *Ibid.*, p. 3.

89 Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística (DANE), 'Technical Bulletin: Gran Encuesta Integrada de Hogares – Módulo Trabajo Infantil Octubre - Diciembre 2021, Bogota, April 2022, http://www.dane.gov.co/files/investigaciones/boletines/ech/trabajo-infantil/bol_trab_inf_oct2021-dic2021.pdf, pp. 6 and 12.

90 General Statistics Office and UNICEF, 'Survey Measuring Viet Nam Sustainable Development Goal Indicators on Children and Women 2020-2021: Survey Findings Report, Hanoi: General Statistics Office, <https://www.unicef.org/vietnam/media/9576/file/Full%20report%20-%20MICS%206.pdf>, 366.

91 *Ibid.*, p. 368.

5.7 percent among those attending school, but significantly higher (26.2 percent) for those not attending school. This means that children not attending school are almost five times as likely to be engaged in child labour than children who do attend school.

A factor that might have contributed to Vietnam's improvement in Domain 4 is the concerted effort of the International Labour Organization (ILO), the US Department of Labour, and the government of Vietnam to implement the latter's 'National Plan of Action on the Reduction and Elimination of Child Labour (2016–2020)'. This occurred through the Project 'Enhancing National Capacity to Prevent and Reduce Child Labour in Viet Nam' (ENHANCE).⁹² This Project involved identifying and providing educational support for children engaged in child labour, or being at risk of child labour, as well as livelihood support for families in vulnerable situations. Building on the success of this project, Viet Nam is currently implementing the National Programme on the Prevention and Reduction of Child Labour for the 2021–25 period with the technical support of the ILO and UNICEF.⁹³

No significant improvements or decline has been observed in the rankings in other domains.

3.5 Missing values

As specified in Annex 1 to this Report, in 2023 the available data allowed the KidsRights Index Team to include eight more countries than before in the Index. Andorra, Cook Islands, Dominica, Marshall Islands, Monaco, Somalia, South Sudan, and Tuvalu could be added. This is an important step towards complete coverage of all states parties to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The total number of countries covered rose from 185 to 193. This means that only three states parties to the CRC are not yet part of the Index. In the case of the United States of America (USA) that is because it has not yet ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Thus, no scores can be generated for Domain 5, because the USA (not being a state party) does not participate in the CRC's state reporting procedure and thus the Committee on the Rights of the Child cannot adopt Concluding Observations that must be available for generating Domain 5 scores. Without a Domain 5 score, a country cannot be included in the Index. For the remaining three countries that have ratified the CRC but are still not included (Niue, the Holy See, and Liechtenstein) this is caused by there being too many data missing in Domains 1 to 4.

MORE DATA AVAILABLE: SOMALIA INCLUDED

Like South Sudan, Somalia too received its first Concluding Observations in 2022 and is included in the KidsRights Index for the first time this year. Its total rank is 186. It performs among the poorest in the domains of life, health, and protection. Unavailability of data on underweight children and child labour may have impacted its rank in the Health and Protection Domains respectively. It is not ranked in the Education Domain because the data on expected years of schooling, for both females and males, is not available.

Somalia performs significantly better in the domain 'Enabling Environment for Child Rights'

92 International Labour Organization (ILO), 'The ILO ENHANCE Project: Tackling Child Labour in Viet Nam Through Vocational Training and Educational Support', 23 April 2020, https://www.ilo.org/ipecc/news/WCMS_741879/lang--en/index.htm.

93 ILO, 'Viet Nam Launches Second Programme of Action Plan to Tackle Child Labour', press release, 1 December 2021, https://www.ilo.org/hanoi/Informationresources/Publicinformation/Pressreleases/WCMS_830515/lang--en/index.htm.

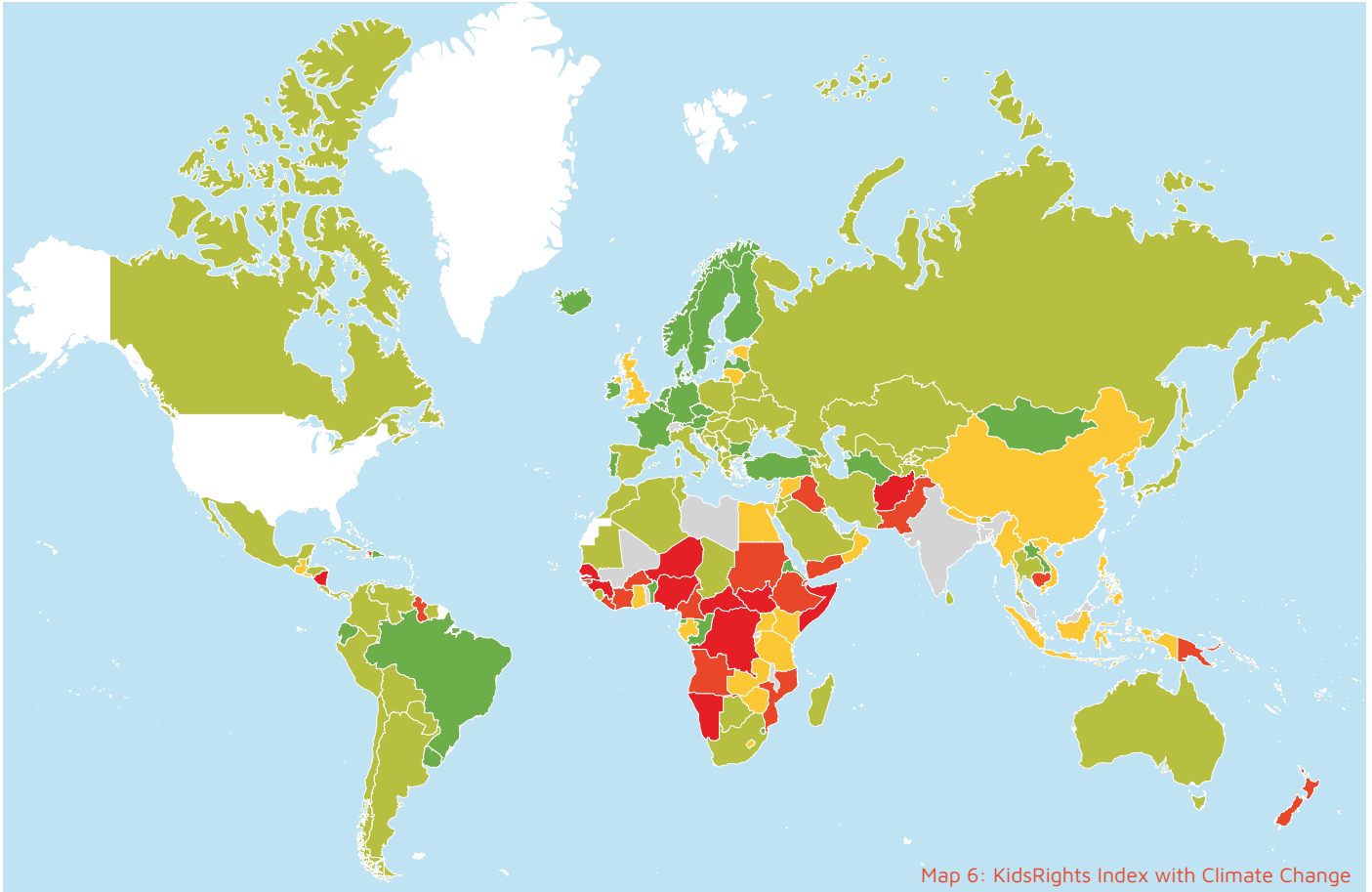
where it ranks 44th. A factor in this will be that the Provisional Constitution (adopted in 2012) incorporated numerous child rights standards including on non-discrimination, best interests of the child, and the prohibition of harmful practices. However, a serious cause of concern pointed out by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child is that there has been little progress in making the Provisional Constitution permanent.

The Committee on the Rights of the Child noted the efforts of Somalia in encouraging child participation in schools and through children's parliaments but also noted that the child right to be heard has not yet been legislated. With respect to the allocation of budget, apart from noting the low allocations to health, education, and social protection, the Committee referred to other aspects as having a negative impact on the realization of child rights in Somalia. These include: corruption, clan rivalries, lack of financial accountability and lack of a mechanism for distribution of revenue between the national government and federal member states.

Annex 1 also reveals that, except for one, on the whole there have not been major changes (either for good or for worse) in the missing values per indicator. The only striking finding is that the number of missing values on the Domain 2 (Health) indicator of the percentage of underweight children has gone up from 39 to 77, which is almost a doubling. No concrete reason for this could yet be identified other than that data recorded before 2013 were no longer included in the dataset generated by UNICEF.⁹⁴ Apparently, data collection on the number of underweight children has been too little and/or not undertaken on a sufficiently regular basis.

94 See https://data.unicef.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/JME_Country_Estimates_May_2022.xlsx.

4. INTEGRATING CLIMATE CHANGE INTO THE KIDSRIGHTS INDEX: A FIRST PROGRESS REPORT



Last year, we explained the urgency of integrating climate change concerns in the monitoring of children’s rights. We also promised to explore whether it is possible to expand the KidsRights Index by an additional Domain 6 on Climate Change.⁹⁵ Given the scarce availability of data that are fit for purpose, this is by no means an easy exercise. However, the KidsRights Index Team is pleased to be able to report first results this year. This definitely will remain work in progress in the coming years, until we will have found sufficiently solid ground for compiling a complete new Domain on Climate Change and for integrating the scores on that Domain into the original Index.

Search for Data and Challenges Encountered

In our previous report we already identified UNICEF’s Children’s Climate Risk Index (CCRI) as the best available standard in this field and thus a likely candidate for our purpose. At present, our search for data has not yet identified other data sources that meet the quality and quantity requirements of the KidsRights Index. That is, we work only with existing data, which must be of high quality, be available for many states parties to the CRC (and preferably all), be available based on exactly the same indicators and data sources for all states covered (to ensure comparability) and be updated at least every few years. While the CCRI by and large meets the first three of these criteria, it is not yet clear

⁹⁵ ‘Future Prospects: Incorporating Climate Change?’, in: Karin Arts (ISS) - with inputs from Philip Hans Franses (ESE), Dinand Webbink (ESE), and Chandrima Chattopadhyay (KidsRights), ‘The KidsRights Index 2022 Report’, section 5, <https://files.kidsrights.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/6/2022/10/18221131/KidsRights-Index-2022-Report.pdf>, pp. 24-27.

to us whether from now onwards UNICEF will indeed continue to update the CCRI regularly. In the next phase of our work on this we will check this.

Introduced in 2021,⁹⁶ according to UNICEF, the CCRI aims “to explain and measure the likelihood of climate and environmental shocks or stresses leading to the erosion of development progress, the deepening of deprivation and/or humanitarian situations affecting children or vulnerable households and groups”.⁹⁷ It is based on two indicators: ‘Climate and Environmental Factors’ (CEF) and ‘Child Vulnerability’. The CEF measures the exposure to climate and environmental shocks and stress for children in 163 countries. It does so on a scale of 1 to 10, with a higher score indicating worse conditions. The CEF includes eight specific components: water scarcity exposure, riverine flood exposure, coastal flood risk, tropical cyclone wind exposure, exposure to vector-borne diseases, heatwaves, air pollution, and soil and water pollution.⁹⁸ These are assessed on the basis of various data sources specified in the methodology statement.⁹⁹

The lowest-scoring country on the ‘Climate and Environmental Factors’ component of UNICEF’s 2021 Children’s Climate Risk Index is Bangladesh with a score of 9.1. This means that children in Bangladesh are at the highest risk of being seriously affected by climate and environmental shocks and stresses. Iceland performs best with the lowest score of all, of 1.0. The Netherlands has a score of 4.1. The mean CEF score was 5.67, and the median was 5.8.

A crucial concern with adding the climate domain to the KidsRights Index is the lack of data for numerous countries. The UNICEF report provides data for 163 countries, whereas the 2023 KidsRights Index ranks a total of 193 countries. It is perhaps especially troublesome that many of the countries for which data are lacking are the ones that are exceptionally vulnerable to climate change. Notably, the CCRI does not cover island nations which are at extreme risk of climate change. This includes the Bahamas, Dominica, Fiji, Grenada, Micronesia, Puerto Rico, and Vanuatu. It would be great if efforts could be made to expand the coverage of the CCRI by collecting the CEF (and other missing) data for all countries, with priority for those countries where children obviously seem to be at a high risk of being disproportionately impacted by climate change.

Another dilemma lies in the question whether the information assessed through the CEF is of the same nature as the information assessed in the other domains of the Index. After all, individual states are not in the position to curb climate change single-handedly and may be hit hardest by this phenomenon due to, for instance, their geographical location while they may carry least responsibility for the causes of climate change. One way of compensating at least partly for this could be, by analogy to Domain 5 (on the ‘Enabling Environment for Child Rights’), to also incorporate scores generated on the basis of the remarks made on climate change by the Committee on the Rights of the Child in the Concluding Observations. These might extend to Committee remarks on such issues as the susceptibility of particular countries to climate change damage, their efforts to counter climate change, their efforts to address the consequences of climate change for children, and/or perhaps the extent to which the country receives international support which after all is an obligation under the CRC as well.¹⁰⁰ A first quick scan of the Concluding Observations available at present¹⁰¹ for the countries covered in the KidsRights Index revealed that about 65 percent of these documents does not contain any remarks

96 UNICEF, ‘The Climate Crisis is a Child Rights Crisis: Introducing the Children’s Climate Risk Index’, New York, August 2021, <https://www.unicef.org/media/105376/file/UNICEF-climate-crisis-child-rights-crisis.pdf>.

97 *Ibid.*, p. 75.

98 *Ibid.*, p. 103-105.

99 *Ibid.*

100 Karin Arts, ‘Children’s Rights and Climate Change’, in Claire Fenton-Lynn (ed.), *Children’s Rights and Sustainable Development: Interpreting the UNCRC for Future Generations*, Cambridge University Press, 2019, chapter 10, pp. 216-235 at 222-223.

101 That is, up to and including 2022.

about climate change. However, 35 percent does and of the new Concluding Observations adopted in 2022 seventeen out of twenty-two do as well. 'Only' five of the 2022 Concluding Observations do not include any references to climate change. These relate to Chile, Cuba, Cyprus, North Macedonia, and Ukraine. Given the urgency of climate change action, the 2022 output gives hope that in the future the data gap on climate change in the Concluding Observations might be bridged relatively rapidly. This might increase the chances of the Concluding Observations becoming a second component of a new KidsRights Index Domain 6 on Climate Change. This matter will be further explored in the coming year and reported on more fully in the 2024 KidsRights Index Report.

Initial Methodology for a Climate Change Domain in the KidsRights Index

For the purposes of integrating climate change into the KidsRights Index, only the country scores on the CEF indicator are usable. The reason for this is that the second indicator used by UNICEF for generating its Children's Climate Risk Index, 'Child Vulnerability' contains various variables that currently are already included in the KidsRights Index. Double inclusion of the same data would distort the picture and thus must be avoided. To make the CEF useful for the KidsRights Index, each country's score was computed using the formula $(10-CEF)/10$ (also referred to as scaled CEF), where higher scores indicate better conditions. This transformation of the CEF was carried out to allow for associating it with the scores of the other five KidsRights Index domains. The newly generated Climate Change Domain was then integrated in the original KidsRights Index by computing the geometric average of the scores for the first five Domains ($y_1, y_2, y_3, y_4, \text{ and } y_5$) and the score for the scaled CEF (y_6). The new KRI with climate factor ranks 161 countries because two countries covered in UNICEF's Children's Climate Risk Index (USA and Liechtenstein) do not yet appear in the KidsRights Index for lack of data.¹⁰²

Changes Brought About in the KidsRights Index Results by the Inclusion of a Climate Change Domain

Because of the data gaps and dilemmas in relation to the nature of available climate change data and how they compare to data used in the other Domains of the KidsRights Index, for now it is too early to incorporate a new Climate Change Domain or Domain 6. However, if we were to include the tentative Climate Change Domain into the current version of the KidsRights Index that would result in the following picture. The lowest scoring countries on the KidsRights Index Plus Climate would be South Sudan, Afghanistan, and Chad. The highest scoring countries would be Iceland, Luxembourg, and Finland. Iceland would reclaim the top rank and thus improve on its current (third) position. Sweden, on the other hand would drop from its current first rank to the fourth position in the Index. Lithuania would improve by 54 ranks (from 101st to 47th) and Slovakia by 45 ranks (from 99th to 54th). Eswatini, New Zealand, Burundi, Solomon Islands, Djibouti, and Lesotho would each improve by nearly 50 ranks. More modest positive changes would occur for Estonia (improvement by 15 ranks from 28th to 13th), Malta (rise of 13 ranks, 29th to 16th), Switzerland (12 ranks up from 30th to 18th), and Georgia (an improvement of 19 ranks, from 39th to 20th).

However, there are also significant negative changes for certain countries once climate change is factored into the KidsRights index according to our initial methodology. The Republic of Korea would drop down 46 ranks (from 14th to 60th) in a KidsRights Index Plus Climate. Thailand's ranking would deteriorate by 62 ranks (from 8th to 70th). Egypt, Mexico, and Malaysia would fall by around 35 ranks. Smaller negative effects are seen for France (which would go down by 13 ranks, (from 12th to 25th), Italy (which would drop 12 ranks, from 19th to 31st), Japan (deteriorating by 16 ranks, from 23rd to 39th), and China (a drop of 20 ranks, from 107th to 127th).

¹⁰² See section 3.5 for a further explanation.

Given the relatively small differences between many of the countries ranked in the KidsRights Index, rather than focusing on changes in ranking, it is even more interesting to investigate the effects of the inclusion of climate change on the cluster-performance of countries. After all, countries in the same cluster broadly are at the same performance level. So, if countries change clusters rather than 'just' ranks that indicates a significant change. As Table 7 (below) shows, nineteen percent, or 31 of the countries out of the 161 that currently can be covered in a KidsRights Index Plus Climate would change clusters. Most of these, twenty countries in total, would drop to a poorer performing cluster. However, about one third, eleven countries in total, would move up to a better performing cluster. In Table 7, the latter countries are highlighted in green. No country would fall or improve by more than one cluster.

| Country | KidsRights Index Cluster 2023 | KidsRights Index Plus Climate Change Cluster | Change in Clusters |
|-------------------|-------------------------------|--|--------------------|
| Bangladesh | 2 | 3 | -1 |
| Brunei Darussalam | 2 | 1 | +1 |
| China | 2 | 3 | -1 |
| Cuba | 1 | 2 | -1 |
| Egypt | 1 | 2 | -1 |
| Eswatini | 3 | 2 | +1 |
| Gambia | 4 | 3 | +1 |
| Hungary | 1 | 2 | -1 |
| India | 2 | 3 | -1 |
| Indonesia | 2 | 3 | -1 |
| Ireland | 2 | 1 | +1 |
| Italy | 1 | 2 | -1 |
| Japan | 1 | 2 | -1 |
| Kazakhstan | 1 | 2 | -1 |
| Mexico | 1 | 2 | -1 |
| Montenegro | 2 | 1 | +1 |
| Oman | 1 | 2 | -1 |
| Pakistan | 3 | 4 | -1 |
| Panama | 3 | 2 | +1 |
| Papua New Guinea | 5 | 4 | +1 |
| Peru | 1 | 2 | -1 |
| Philippines | 2 | 3 | -1 |
| Poland | 3 | 2 | +1 |
| Republic of Korea | 1 | 2 | -1 |
| Romania | 3 | 2 | +1 |
| Rwanda | 3 | 2 | +1 |
| Serbia | 1 | 2 | -1 |
| Thailand | 1 | 2 | -1 |
| Ukraine | 1 | 2 | -1 |
| Vietnam | 2 | 3 | -1 |
| Zambia | 4 | 3 | +1 |

Table 7: Cluster Changes Due to the Inclusion of A Climate Change Domain in the KidsRights Index

Of course, on top of this quantitative analysis, a yet more interesting exercise would be one of getting grip on the underlying reasons, causes, and effects of certain measures taken. Considering that Domain 6, based as it is on UNICEF's Climate Risk Index, charts the exposure of children to various climate and environmental problems, the reason for countries changing clusters in our current initial methodology simply lies in the level of that exposure or risk thereof. Among the countries that would have changed their clusters for worse due to the inclusion of Domain 6, children living in the following countries have been reported to face extremely high exposure to climate hazards, shocks, or stresses: Bangladesh, China, Egypt, Indonesia, India, Mexico, Pakistan, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Thailand, and Viet Nam. On the other hand, children living in the following countries (which would have changed clusters for the better) have been reported as facing relatively low exposure to climate hazards, shocks, or stresses: Brunei Darussalam, Eswatini, Ireland, Montenegro, and Panama. Countries such as China, India, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Indonesia, Mexico, Italy, and Poland feature among the top twenty countries with the highest CO₂ emissions globally.¹⁰³ Of these eight countries, only Poland would move up one cluster in a KidsRights Index Plus Climate.

A comparison of regional results is also possible. The average overall KidsRights Index Plus Climate Change score is 0.605. The average regional KidsRights Index Plus Climate Change scores of Western Europe (0.785), Eastern Europe and Central Asia (0.701), the Middle East and North Africa (0.646), and Latin America and Caribbean (0.639) are higher than the overall average. The average regional KidsRights Index Plus Climate Change scores of Eastern and Southern Africa (0.490), West and Central Africa (0.401), East Asia and Pacific (0.555), and South Asia (0.434) are lower.

In the UNICEF's Children's Climate Risk Index Report, this is explained based on the following facts. Asia is the region that has recorded highest water scarcity (nearly 50 percent), and air pollution (100 percent). Soil and water pollution is around 40 percent for Africa, Asia and Latin American and Caribbean. Disease vectors is at 40 percent for Asia and nearly 50 percent for Africa. Latin America, the Caribbean and North America are the most impacted by cyclones (nearly 30 percent), while for Asia this is around 25 percent. Asia is the only region gravely impacted by coastal and riverine floodings. The effects of heatwaves are the worst in North America (80 percent), followed by Europe (50 percent), Africa (40 percent) and Asia (around 35 percent). Overall, the Asian region has been the most impacted due to climate and environmental hazards, followed by the African region, Latin America, and the Caribbean.¹⁰⁴

The content of this section 4 of this Report provides a lot of food for thought and potential for deeper future analysis and possibly, on the longer term, adjustments to the KidsRights Index. We will continue to report on this work in progress.

¹⁰³ UNICEF, 'The Climate Crisis is a Child Rights Crisis: Introducing the Children's Climate Risk Index', New York, August 2021, <https://www.unicef.org/media/105376/file/UNICEF-climate-crisis-child-rights-crisis.pdf>, p. 91.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

5. CONCLUDING REMARKS

In its introduction, this report sketched 2022 and the first part of 2023 as a volatile period for children's rights due to the world being in a post-pandemic state of polycrisis which is likely to take a further toll in the years to come.

This is already visible in the 2023 KidsRights Index results, so it seems. In any case, only four of the twenty countries that were assessed by the CRC Committee for the second time or more obtained a higher rank in the 2023 KidsRights Index. These are Greece, Kuwait, Ukraine (largely based on the situation preceding the war), and Uzbekistan.¹⁰⁵

Domains 1 and 2 (on 'Life' and 'Health' respectively) confirm the dramatic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Under-five mortality rates are on the rise in various countries. And, in many places the child vaccination rates for preventable diseases has declined drastically.¹⁰⁶

In Domain 5 (on the 'Enabling Environment for Child Rights') of the 2023 KidsRights Index, state performance on the indicators 'non-discrimination' and 'state-civil society cooperation' is particularly poor. The overall record on these indicators deteriorated rather than progressed.¹⁰⁷ For 'state-civil society cooperation', the relatively many missing values are a special concern. No less than ten of the twenty-two countries reviewed by the Committee on the Rights of the Child in 2022 could not be scored on this indicator because the latest Concluding Observations do not address this aspect. Since both non-discrimination and state-civil society relations are crucial to children's lives and children's rights efforts, urgent action is required on both.

Good news is that the coverage of the KidsRights Index 2023 has improved over previous years since we are now able to present results for 193 countries compared to 185 countries before. In addition to Somalia and South Sudan, which obtained Concluding Observations for the first time in 2022, enough data were now available to include Andorra, Cook Islands, Dominica, Marshall Islands, Monaco, and Tuvalu as well. This means that we have achieved nearly universal coverage now as only three states parties to the Convention on the Rights of Child (Niue, the Holy See, and Liechtenstein) and one non-state party (the United States of America) do not appear in our Index.

And finally, in section 4 above, we presented a first progress report on our efforts to incorporate climate change into the KidsRights Index. The usefulness of doing so is beyond doubt and is once more confirmed by the initial results of our first analysis of the possible impact of factoring climate change into our Index. Fully realizing this still requires the KidsRights Index Team to tackle various hurdles though, including in the realm of data sources to use, and other methodological issues. This is work in progress that will be continued and reported on in the years to come.

We will keep up our annual effort to compile the KidsRights Index. This implies consistently updating and gathering data for all Domains and indicators used and for as many as possible states parties to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. We see this as doing our share in contributing to the important task of holding states to account for their children's rights records.

¹⁰⁵ See footnotes 22 and 23 for additional explanations.

¹⁰⁶ See sections 3.4.1 and 3.4.2 for further details.

¹⁰⁷ See section 3.3.1 for further details.

ANNEX 1: COMPARISON OF MISSING VALUES IN KIDSRIGHTS INDEX 2022 AND 2023

| | KidsRights Index 10 (2022) | KidsRights Index 11 (2023) | Change |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|--------------|
| Number of countries covered | 185 | 193 | +8 countries |
| Missing per domain indicator | | | |
| Domain Life (1) | | | |
| Under five mortality | 1 | 0 | +1 |
| Life expectancy | 5 | 0 | +5 |
| Maternal mortality rate | 4 | 10 | -6 |
| Domain Health (2) | | | |
| % underweight children | 39 | 77 | -38 |
| Immunisation | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Sanitation | 4 | 1 | +3 |
| Drinking Water | 3 | 2 | +1 |
| Domain Education (3) | | | |
| Expected years of schooling – boys | 5 | 7 | -2 |
| Expected years of schooling – girls | 5 | 7 | -2 |
| Gender Inequality | 5 | 7 | -2 |
| Domain Protection (4) | | | |
| Child Labour | 95 | 98 | -2 |
| Adolescent birth rate | 9 | 11 | -2 |
| Birth Registration | 18 | 16 | -2 |
| Domain Environment (5) | | | |
| Non-discrimination | 4 | 3 | +1 |
| Best Interests | 21 | 19 | +2 |
| Respect | 3 | 3 | 0 |
| Enabling Legislation | 1 | 0 | +1 |
| Budget/resources | 5 | 3 | +2 |
| Collection and analysis of data | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| State-civil society cooperation | 62 | 66 | -4 |

ANNEX 2: REGIONS KIDSRIGHTS INDEX 2023 (193 COUNTRIES)

The latest list of [Regional Classifications by UNICEF](#) was published in June 2023.

According to [OHCHR Database](#), in the last decade three countries have ratified the UNCRC. These are Somalia (October, 1st 2015); South Sudan (January, 23rd 2015); and State of Palestine (April, 2nd 2014). Cook Islands, Marshall Islands, Tuvalu, Somalia, South Sudan, Andorra, Monaco and Dominica have been included in the KRI 11 (not included in KRI 10).

EASTERN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA - 21 COUNTRIES

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

WESTERN EUROPE - 30 COUNTRIES

Andorra, Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, San Marino, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom of Great Britain, Northern Ireland

EAST ASIA AND THE PACIFIC - 31 COUNTRIES

Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, China, Cook Islands, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Fiji, Indonesia, Japan, Kiribati, Korea Republic of, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federates States of), Mongolia, Myanmar, Nauru, New Zealand, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Samoa, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, Vietnam.

SOUTH ASIA - 8 COUNTRIES

Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka.

MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA - 19 COUNTRIES

Algeria; Bahrain; Egypt; Iran (Islamic Republic of); Iraq; Israel; Jordan; Kuwait; Lebanon; Libya; Morocco; Oman; Qatar; Saudi Arabia; State of Palestine; Syrian Arab Republic; Tunisia; United Arab Emirates; Yemen

EASTERN AND SOUTHERN AFRICA - 25 COUNTRIES

Angola; Botswana; Burundi; Comoros; Djibouti; Eritrea; Ethiopia; Kenya; Lesotho; Madagascar; Malawi; Mauritius; Mozambique; Namibia; Rwanda; Seychelles; South Africa; Sudan; Eswatini (Swaziland); Uganda; United Republic of Tanzania; Zambia; Zimbabwe

WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA - 24 COUNTRIES

Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo

NORTH AMERICA - 1 COUNTRY

Canada.

LATIN AMERICA AND CARIBBEAN - 34 COUNTRIES

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

9 COUNTRIES NOT (YET) IN THE INDEX






East Asia and Pacific: Niue, Tokelau.

Western Europe: Liechtenstein, Holy See.

Latin America and Caribbean: Anguilla, Montserrat, Turks and Caicos Islands, British Virgin Islands.

North America: USA (which has not ratified the CRC).

ANNEX 3: 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 |



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