Regional Analysis:
South East Europe & South Caucasus
2016

Measuring government efforts to protect girls and boys

Created by a consortium of local, national, regional and international members of civil society

www.childprotectionindex.org
ChildPact is a regional coalition of 650 civil society organisations that advocates for greater child protection reform in the Southeast Europe and South Caucasus sub-regions. Established in 2011, ChildPact is a coalition of coalitions: its members are national networks of child-focused civil society organisations from 10 countries within the European Union’s Enlargement and Neighbourhood zones. www.childpact.org

The member organisations of ChildPact include:

- Alliance of Active NGOs in the Field of Social Protection of Family and Children [Moldova]
- Child Protection Network [Armenia]
- Coalition for Child and Youth Welfare [Georgia]
- Coalition of NGOs for Child Protection [Kosovo*]
- Federation of NGOs for the Child [Romania]
- National Network for Children [Bulgaria]
- Network of Organisations for Children of Serbia - MODS [Serbia]
- NGO Alliance for Children's Rights [Azerbaijan]
- Stronger Voice for Children [Bosnia and Herzegovina]
- All Together for Holistic Care of Children [Albania]

*This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.

World Vision International is a Christian relief, development and advocacy organisation dedicated to working with children, families and communities to overcome poverty and injustice. World Vision International’s Middle East and Eastern Europe Office is the official partner for the Child Protection Index. www.wvi.org/meero

September 2016

Series I of the Child Protection Index includes review of nine countries: Albania, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Georgia, Kosovo*, Moldova, Romania and Serbia.

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This document is dedicated to Rob Taylor. He was an extraordinarily good friend to World Vision.
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## Abbreviations

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<th>Full Form</th>
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<tr>
<td>GDP</td>
<td>Gross Domestic Product</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organisation</td>
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<td>UNCRC</td>
<td>United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child</td>
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Introductions
A Message from World Vision International’s Regional Leader, Middle East and Eastern Europe

The Child Protection Index is the product of a strong team of believers. This team believes that every girl and boy in the South Caucasus and Balkans regions today and in the future should enjoy a life free of violence, a chance to grow and develop without limit, and a place of protection and love. The Index offers governments, donors and other partners a chance to take part on this team of believers. With detailed recommendations and analysis of government systems and child-relevant issues, we know how to take the next steps together.

As civil society, we want to take part in this change; to offer all governments a partnership built upon the belief that all children matter. As this Index shows, we are ready to make strong investments to understand the problems and find solutions.

We are eager to start a new round of partnership with donors and governments to take action on Index recommendations. The Index recommendations align perfectly with Target 16.2 of the Sustainable Development Goals: End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children. Now is the time to take action.
A Message from ChildPact’s President

Today, the Child Protection Index completes one step toward a ChildPact ambition: enabling regional cooperation for better child protection. Reviewing successes and challenges in all countries, we can use comparison to exchange lessons and innovations to overcome the barriers that often stop progress.

We believe that knowledge sharing and confidence-building actions across borders offers a two-fold benefit. It challenges our own work product and understanding of the reform process and gives countries in the region tangible confidence-building engagement to build stronger ties and diplomatic relations going forward. In this region, such engagement is needed.

The Index empowers all actors to cooperate for the wellbeing of children. Together, using the same indicators, measurements and timeline, we can build a unified approach to monitor government policy and action, with an eye towards strategic cooperation.

We look forward to regional conversations about the Index conclusions and ask donors to encourage and support this action for our children.
How to Read the Index

Framework

The Index consists of 626 indicators that together measure a state's policy and actions to protect and care for girls and boys under its jurisdiction. The Index framework of indicators heavily relies on the Implementation Handbook for the Convention on the Rights of the Child, published by UNICEF. The Handbook provides a series of yes, no and partially-implemented checklists to create an understanding of the significance of each UNCRC article. The Index uses these checklists as core indicators to measure state performance.

Framework Sections

The Index framework consists of four sections of indicators: child vulnerability, governance environment, UNCRC child protection issues and social work.

The first set of indicators draws from quantitative data about child vulnerability in each country. The indicators review the rates of children living outside of their biological families; the rate of public sector personnel available to advocate on behalf of vulnerable children; and finally, the amount of state social protection expenditure as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Vulnerability increases for children in the absence of family-based care; the prevalence of child-advocates and state funding can mitigate vulnerability.

The second set of indicators affirms Article 4 of the UNCRC that requires States Parties to apply all appropriate measures to achieve child protection. Indicators review a country's governance environment to measure whether regulations and protocols exist to encourage a systematic approach to child protection. Good governance elements such as transparency, consistent decision making rights and citizen participation create an environment for stronger child protection.

The third set of indicators uses specific child protection articles from the UNCRC and principles from a systems approach to child protection to review government efforts to protect girls and boys. For example, the Index reviews a country's efforts to end and prevent violence against children within the following dimensions:

- Creation of laws and policy
- Availability of services at the local level
- Capacity of the public sector to deliver services (resources, expertise)
- Coordination protocols that link various government actors and services
- Accountability mechanisms to verify government's good actions

The fourth set of indicators reviews government support for social work. The Index places a high value on the status of social work due to the key role it plays within the public sector to administer child protection mechanisms and services.

Data Collection and Validation

A team of local child protection and legal experts in each country answered "Yes," "No" or "Partial Implementation" to each indicator, using reports, studies, interviews and data to validate each response.
Scoring

Scores range from 0 to 1 (strongest action) and measure the five dimensions of government action for child protection: law and policy, services, capacity, coordination and accountability.

To score the results, "yes" = 1, "no" = 0, "partial implementation" = 0.5. Where several sub-indicators contributed to one main indicator, an average of the sub-indicators scores was taken.

The 2016 Index series is a pilot. Therefore, the Index scoring is based upon data available as of December 2013. This date ensured that all information was available across all nine countries and could be standardised over the last two years. However, to validate new efforts since 2014, the analysis and recommendations take these new actions into account to every extent possible.
Q&As on Child Protection and the Index

What is child protection?
Child protection cannot be entirely owned by government, although governments play an essential role. To protect children, all sectors of society must contribute: children themselves, families, government, civil society, faith communities and corporations/businesses small and large. Child protection is any act to prevent violence against children, protect children from encountering violence and to provide care for children in adverse circumstances.

Why do we talk about government responsibility?
From a practical point of view, some actions are exclusively reserved for government actors, given their unique status to govern, control territory and provide law and order. The Index reviews a government’s essential role in child protection.

From a legal point of view each of the nine Index countries, as States Parties, has committed to the fulfilment of the UNCRC. The Index measures their compliance with this treaty.

What is so difficult about achieving child protection?
Unlike other social sectors, such as health or education, child protection requires extensive collaboration. It takes the combined efforts of health, education, social protection and legal and justice actors to protect children. This calls for a direct and efficient coordinating structure between various government ministries and actors, where different priorities and perspectives are anticipated and some kind of balance is achieved.

Citizen advocacy for children is a two-step process that often requires representation. Because children do not have the same democratic voice and access to governance actors as adults, there is a need to enlist advocates to take up issues on behalf of children, whose voices are even more limited in situations of adversity. Advocacy is most powerful when the citizens most affected by a government decision can be heard.

What do we want to achieve with the Index?
We see the Index as a tool to unify civil society actors for advocacy efforts. Without a clear diagnosis of system-wide challenges and when key players represent such a diversity of political and personal investments, it is difficult for civil society to find a common ground from which to influence and apply pressure on government. When voices and suggestions are various and disorganised, government is much less likely to implement changes. When issues are presented in a coherent and objective manner, in one voice, governments are more responsive.

We see the Index as a monitoring tool to hold government actors accountable. In the coming years this tool will provide valuable data to track progress and
The Child Protection Index is currently in a pilot phase. Efforts to create the index framework, develop a methodology of data collection and aggregate results has demanded constant review and feedback from the Index authors, child protection experts and internal and external actors. The seriousness of our efforts, however, must be understood within the context of the pilot: this is the first generation of the Index. We will continue to refine the methods and the framework of the Index with each future release.

The data used in the pilot has been fact checked by experts from each country. However, government progress made during and after the time of Index data collection has not been added to the scores. The next publication and scoring of the Index will incorporate any new efforts made by government to address child protection issues.

**Are there any doubts about the Index results?**

We also see the index as an organising tool for next step reform. Government gaps can be filled by donor and civil society efforts to pilot potential actions and ideas. Civil society can take risks and test ideas in ways that would prove difficult for government. The Index can identify areas where partnerships would be beneficial.

**What is the future of the Index?**

For future instalments of the Index, data collection will be ongoing and organised by way of an online data entry tool accessible to all ChildPact member coalitions and their organisations. In time, we hope that statistical regression tools will be available to offer predictions on the effect of certain reforms and reform gaps.
Too many children across the region remain institutionalised in large residential care facilities. This is a serious matter of concern as institutionalisation has proven to be extremely harmful for children, especially the very young. Efforts to close all large residential care institutions must be enhanced across the region, starting with a full ban on residential care placements for children aged 0-3. Moreover, efforts to reduce the length of time children spend in institutions instead of a family must be intensified.

In order to deinstitutionalise effectively, governments must also prioritise alternative family-based care, such as kinship and foster care, and work harder to prevent the separation of parent and child. Although many Index countries have made strides in both respects, these services often lack the necessary scale to reach all children in need of care. For example, foster and kinship care services exist in many urban areas where donors and civil society have made targeted efforts, but rural areas are often neglected as a result.

On this note, we applaud Armenia’s very recent efforts to establish a new deinstitutionalisation strategy.

1. Deinstitutionalisation is still a pressing issue.

2. Implementation lags behind policy commitments, everywhere.
All Index countries show significant gaps between policy commitment and policy implementation. To strengthen implementation efforts and increase successful actions, countries must commit more resources and staff, scale needed services and coordinate between government levels and the public sector. The following recommendations apply:

**Develop quality and financial standards for specific kinds of services.** Many Index countries have established quality standards that apply generally to all services, and some countries have created specific quality standards for some of their services. No country, however, has created specific quality standards for every kind of child protection service in operation.

Specific standards are essential in order to scale, standardise and professionalise all kinds of child protection services. Clear benchmarks for quality services help public sector actors and beneficiaries know their rights and manage expectations for service provision. The absence of adequate procedures and standards also reduces the ability of government, civil society and citizens alike to effectively monitor service delivery. Without quality standards it is also very difficult to scale services nationwide because different people with different skill sets and experiences will implement actions differently. Standards provide a consistent bar for service delivery, no matter the context or actor.

Quality standards include certain essential elements: the scope of service and the target group of beneficiaries; staff structure and staff qualifications; acceptable workloads (e.g. the number of hours in a single shift); service functions (activities provided) and service hours of operation; minimum infrastructure and equipment needs; standards for necessary amounts of supervision and training; and the availability of complaint mechanisms.

Specific financial standards must also link to quality standards to ensure that there are sufficient budgets to achieve quality standards. They are a precursor to nationwide implementation of services. Because many child protection services are defined as local level actions, counties and municipalities often assume the role of implementing bodies. Without financial standards, local budgeting choices may not align with needed resources. As a result, the quality of implementation between local level providers can vary significantly. Financial standards can help to align local level and national level budgeting processes to adequately fund services nationwide; when there are disparities between local level resources, national level resources may be required.

Financial standards should define salary ranges, equipment costs, depreciation rates and resource needs to meet quality standards.

**Strengthen capacity at the local level.** The act of child protection is always local. Even though national level actors function as coordinating and rule-making bodies, local actors engage in the actual response to children in need of assistance. Capacity scores across all Index countries remain low in comparison to other dimensions of government action. Capacity is the essence of policy implementation because it explains the “who” and “how” of actions to protect children. Capacity concerns the distribution of human resources, financial resources, and the infrastructure and equipment necessary to protect children.

Translated into simple terms, all Index countries require new efforts to scale...
Of the five dimensions of government action (law and policy, services, capacity, coordination and accountability), capacity is the most difficult to achieve because it concerns resourcing. Without unlimited budgets governments are forced to make choices on services and resources that best respond to the needs of their children. Budget decisions should take into account a country’s most vulnerable children, regardless of their lack of voice or visibility to the large mass of voting constituents. To successfully take choices that correspond to the need and prevalence of vulnerability, it is necessary to rely on data collection and permanent measures that review policy implementation and budgetary allocations in light of vulnerability data. Most Index countries have yet to create such mechanisms. Accordingly, it is recommended that all Index countries:

- Establish permanent measures for budgetary analysis at all relevant levels of governance to ascertain: (i) the proportion of overall budget and expenditure devoted to children, (ii) disparities between regions or particular groups of children, and (iii) the percentage of budget allocated for the most disadvantaged groups of children.

- Create and implement new data collection targets on child protection issues based on urgency, need and gaps. It is necessary to build data sources that track the prevalence of need and various child vulnerabilities, disaggregated by region, age group, gender, ethnicity, disability and other key factors. Without a clear understanding of the scope and prevalence of key child protection issues, it may be difficult to determine how to expend limited resources and capacity for the greatest impact. In general, data collection and management as a core activity for improved monitoring and accountability is lacking.

As a corollary recommendation, data-sets for understanding the prevalence and type of vulnerabilities that children face should be based on real-time data from mechanisms created specifically to identify and report abuses against children. Most countries have already developed mechanisms that allow children to self-report and peer-report situations of violence and exploitation. Services also exist to ensure that those working with children report alleged abuses.
4. Efforts to include and protect children with disability are limited, everywhere.

However, mechanisms meant to identify and report abuse must be strengthened in all Index countries. In many countries hotlines are operated by civil society and organised and sponsored in part by governments. Some hotlines or other mechanisms are available to all ages, but lack targeted support and counselling specifically for children. In other countries a variety of mechanisms exist to identify and report abuse around specific issues (e.g. trafficking), but other issues lack these same mechanisms. Overall, there is a need to standardise these reporting mechanisms, expand their access (e.g. by mobile phone), publicise their availability and ensure adequate response staff. Increasing access will facilitate identification of children in need of assistance and contribute toward better data collection methods.

Across all nine Index countries special attention must be paid to the condition of children with disability. Specialised services for children with disability are intermittent, especially in rural areas. Inclusive education is still a goal yet to be achieved outside of pilot projects. Accessibility of public spaces remains in question; schools, social services and civic venues require accessibility ramps and handicap infrastructure that facilitate use by people with disability.

Prioritise accessibility in schools, social services and civic venues so that children with disability can enter into mainstream environments.

Minimise the gap between government policy and government service delivery for services targeted at children with disability and their families. Limited availability of rehabilitation and care facilities for those most in need is often closely linked to inadequate public transportation arrangements in rural areas. Again, the gap between government commitments for children with disability and government implementation of these commitments is significant.

Additional resources, staff and training are needed to boost the status of inclusive education from pilot initiative to national priority. Incentives must be created for schools and municipalities to take serious steps towards inclusion. Accessibility to schools is a first step. Classrooms need additional resources, teacher’s aides and trainings that provide new methodologies for inclusive learning.
5. Actions that foster government accountability are extremely limited.

Accountability mechanisms allow citizens and beneficiaries to address complaints to their governments about public sector services, decisions and systems. Accountability is often an afterthought in the building of services; when so much effort is needed to start and operationalise the services themselves, citizen complaints might seem like unwarranted criticism. However, outlets to seek citizen and beneficiary feedback and complaints will not only make services more responsive in the long run, but also help to avoid possible abuse and corruption within government systems. Child protection actions should protect children who need extra assistance outside of their family units; these kinds of actions must also protect children inside of the child protection system itself. With this in mind, the following recommendations apply to all Index countries:

Child participation is essential for child protection. Some countries have developed child-friendly mechanisms for identifying and reporting violence and exploitation, yet none of the Index countries have developed these mechanisms with the direct consultation and input of children themselves.

Encourage the participation and voice of children in the development, design and monitor of services. Children need to voice their complaints and be involved in a system meant to secure their care and protection, especially as citizens without the right to vote. In addition, only a few Index countries have established permanent mechanisms to allow for meaningful child consultation and participation in policy development relating to children. Ensuring adequate child participation will open the way to developing child protection services and mechanisms that are truly child-friendly and responsive to the needs of actual children. When children are not allowed adequate participation their civic space is significantly reduced.

Accountability Score

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<th>Country</th>
<th>Score</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Albania</td>
<td>.49</td>
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<tr>
<td>Armenia</td>
<td>.52</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bosnia and Herzegovina</td>
<td>.57</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>.57</td>
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<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>.33</td>
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<td>Kosovo</td>
<td>.39</td>
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<td>Moldova</td>
<td>.36</td>
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<tr>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>.70</td>
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<td>Serbia</td>
<td>.42</td>
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Regional Cooperation and Learning

Index results demonstrate that there are many opportunities to learn and share across countries and sub-regions. The following section highlights areas of progress and interest that could encourage regional learning.

Deinstitutionalisation

Both Romania and Georgia have made significant strides to deinstitutionalise children from large, classical residential institutions. Both countries have placed a strong emphasis on gatekeeping efforts, which involve strengthening families as a means to prevent institutionalisation. These countries have also created a series of alternative care services geared specifically toward making residential institution placements “last resort”: foster care (emergency, long-term and for children with disability), kinship and guardianship care, adoption, small group homes and mother-baby shelters.

A Permanent Parliamentary Body on Child Rights

Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Romania and Armenia have created permanent parliamentary bodies on child rights. These bodies are meant to host child rights expertise, produce analysis and suggestions on further child protection reforms and monitor the implementation of current legislation for child protection. Other Index countries could strengthen their child protection efforts by organising similar parliamentary committees.

Responding to the Exploitation of Children Online

Both Bulgaria and Albania have worked to prevent the sexual exploitation of girls and boys in online environments. These countries have created special teams equipped to identify, report and remove sexually exploitative content from the web. Outreach to technology and communication companies for partnership and assistance would be beneficial for all Index countries, along with initiatives that build awareness of the safe habits and potential risks of online activity, which could be replicated across borders.

Local to Local Cooperation

Because child protection succeeds or fails locally, municipal-level actors have the strongest incentive to learn from each other and replicate actions proven to be impactful and efficient. All countries show strong pilot efforts in a variety of services. Ownership of these pilots is usually multi-actor and shared between municipalities, civil society and donors.

Case Management Practices

Kosovo and Romania have developed a system of services and case management protocols that deserve review and replication by other countries in pursuit of adequate social work capacity.
Recovery and Rehabilitation Services

Moldova operates recovery and rehabilitation services created specifically for children who are victims of exploitation and violence. Often, recovery and rehabilitation services are designed to offer assistance to both adult and child victims without taking into account the unique needs of children. Services tailored to respond to children as victims are an essential component of effective child protection systems.

Filling Gaps through Partnership

Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia and Serbia all contract with civil society organisations to fill existing service and capacity gaps in the public sector. From hotlines to anti-trafficking shelters, countries have found a way to fulfil their UNCRC commitments through partnership. This practice should be analysed, refined and shared regionally. There are lessons of partnership, transfer of capacity, risk, innovation and accountability that should be assessed. This conversation has started in civil society circles, but needs to be expanded to the government level as well.
Credits

Donors

ChildPact, its national coalition members and World Vision International wish to thank their donors for moral and financial support during this process. We are so grateful for the support and confidence.

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