

## 2

# CONCEPTUALISING CHILD-FRIENDLINESS OF GOVERNMENTS

## 2.1 Assessing child-friendliness of African governments: a conceptual framework

The extent to which children's rights and wellbeing are ensured is directly related to the effort made by various stakeholders. Despite its sometimes gross inefficiencies and associated woes, the state remains the critical lynchpin in ensuring wellbeing, social inclusion and basic service provision. The state also plays critically-needed regulatory and oversight roles over non-state welfare provision. More importantly, the efforts governments themselves put into fulfilling children's rights and wellbeing, in the form of laws and budgetary commitments, show how close children are to their policy agenda.

With the crucial role of the state in mind, the ACPF developed a methodology to assess African governments' performance in realising child rights and wellbeing. This tool, called the Child-friendliness Index of governments, quantitatively assesses and ascertains the extent to which African governments are living up to their responsibilities to provide for children, protect their rights and ensure their wellbeing. In other words, the measurement provides an indication of how important children are in governments' policy agenda, and highlights the extent to which they are child-friendly. The methodology and indicators utilised for measuring governments' performances and the derivation of the Child-friendliness Index from these indicators are explained in detail in Annex 1B of this report. For the busy reader, an overview of the concept and methodology may be summarised as follows.

We define a child-friendly government as one that is making the maximum effort to meet its obligations to respect, protect and fulfil child rights and ensure child wellbeing.

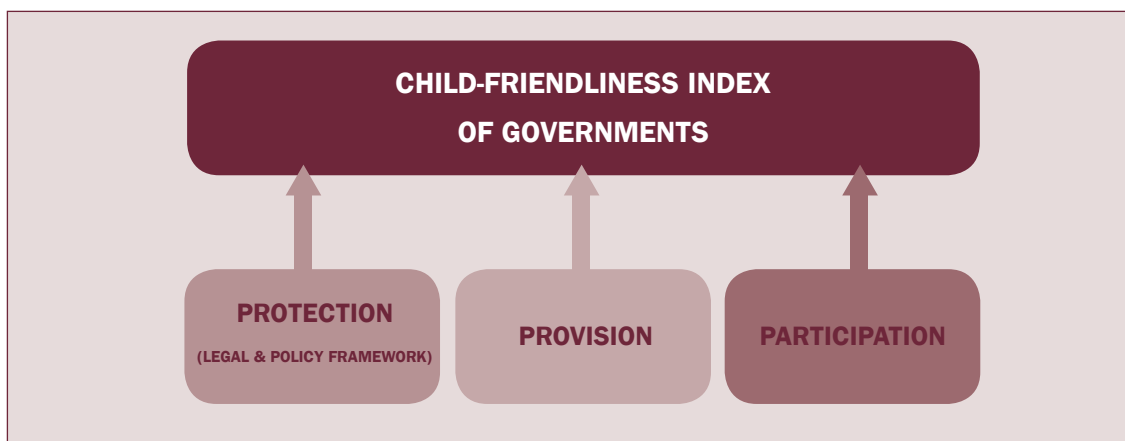
The concept of child-friendliness builds on three central pillars of child rights and wellbeing: Protection, Provision and Participation. This approach emanates from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC), and aptly summarises governments' obligations to respect, protect and fulfil children's rights. The child-friendliness of African governments is therefore measured in light of their effort and performance in realising the rights and wellbeing of children. The effort will be reflected in (a) the laws and policies governments adopt, and (b) their budgetary commitment and their achievements of child-related outcomes.

Accordingly, three dimensions of child-friendliness have been identified: the legal and policy framework governments put in place to protect children against abuse and exploitation; governments' budgetary commitment to provide for children's basic needs; and the efforts governments put into ensuring children's participation in decisions that affect their wellbeing. However, as national data on children's participation is almost non-existent, the measurement of child-friendliness of African governments in this report is based on the two dimensions: protection (legal and policy framework) and provision to meet basic needs of children. Future editions will endeavour to include child participation.

Provision is measured using two sub-dimensions: budgetary commitment and child-related outcomes. The sub-dimension on budgetary commitment measures

governments' efforts in terms of the financial inputs they have channelled to sectors most likely to benefit children. It sheds light on the extent to which governments are committing available budgetary resources to the cause of children. The other sub-dimension on child-related outcomes, on the other hand, measures governments' efforts in light of the outcomes reflected on children themselves. These two sub-dimensions of provision are deliberately categorised as 'input' and 'outcome' measures to analyse and examine separately the efforts that are made along these lines. In addition to the valuable information generated by analysing them separately, the combined measure also shows the overall effort exerted to provide for the basic needs of children and ensure their wellbeing (see Figure 2.1, below).

**Figure 2.1 The Child-friendliness Index of governments: the dimensions**



Further to the figure above, the following flow chart (Figure 2.2) illustrates how selected indicators are examined as components, sub-dimensions and dimensions, and how they are aggregated into the overall Child-friendliness Index. All the indicators are first standardised into score values that show the position of a country relative to other African countries, before being aggregated to overall scores. For detailed information on the approach and the calculations involved, refer to Annexes 1B and 1C respectively.

**Figure 2.2 Indicators, components and dimensions of the Child-friendliness Index \*\***

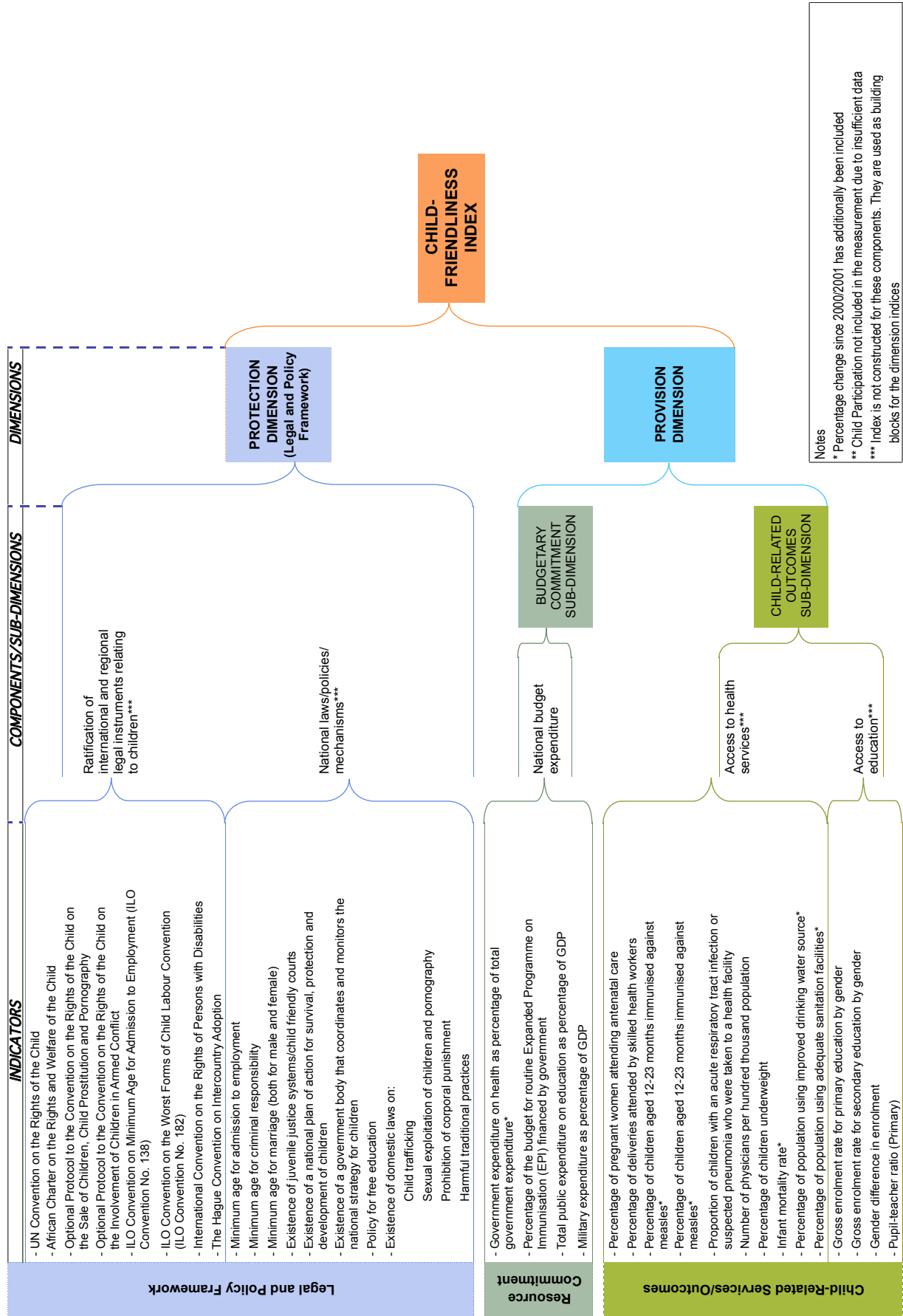






PHOTO © THOMAS S. GALE