

# 5

## THE MOST – AND LEAST – CHILD-FRIENDLY GOVERNMENTS IN AFRICA

*“...We must put the best interests of children at the heart of all political and business decision-making, and at the centre of our day-to-day behaviour and activities... We can build a world fit for children, if each of us does our part and takes the wellbeing of children as our own responsibility.”*

**~ Kofi A. Annan, former Secretary-General of the United Nations**

The conceptual framework set out in Chapter 2 defines 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.” This effort is reflected in the laws and policies such a government adopts, as well as in its commitment to providing for the basic needs of children.

In line with this conceptual framework, the previous two chapters assessed how African governments performed in each of the dimensions stipulated as building blocks of child-friendliness of governments. Analysis was made of governments’ performances and rankings in terms of laying down the appropriate legal and policy frameworks for protection and provision for children in terms of their budgetary commitment and achievement of outcomes.

In this chapter, we look at the overall performance of African governments in realising children’s rights and ensuring their wellbeing by combining all those elements into one aggregate measure – the Child-friendliness Index.

The result of this exercise is presented in Table 5.1 below. It shows that the governments of Mauritius and Namibia are the most child-friendly governments in Africa. As evidenced in the assessment in the previous two chapters, the high scores for these governments were the results of their overall efforts in putting appropriate legal and policy frameworks in place to protect children from abuse and exploitation; their budgetary commitment to using a relatively high share of available resources to provide for the basic needs of children; and their performance in bringing about favourable outcomes on children, as reflected in the utilisation of services and the objective condition of children in these countries.

In addition to the governments of Mauritius and Namibia, the “most child-friendly governments” group consists of both countries with high economic status – Tunisia, Libya, Morocco, South Africa and Algeria and those with a low economic status - Kenya, Malawi and Cape Verde. Rwanda and Burkina Faso have also done very well, coming 11th and 12th respectively in the Child-friendliness Index ranking despite their low economic status.

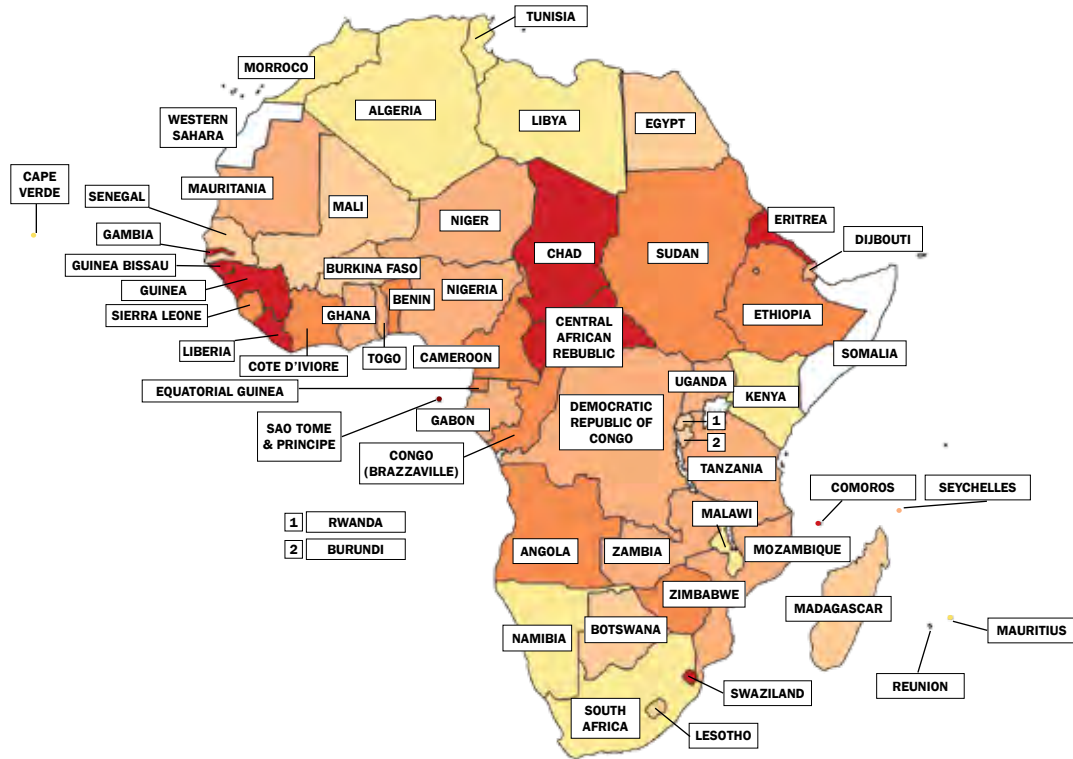
**Table 5.1** Child-friendliness Index values and ranking of African governments

Country	Index value	Rank	Category
Mauritius	0.711	1	Most child-friendly
Namibia	0.705	2	
Tunisia	0.701	3	
Libya	0.694	4	
Morocco	0.693	5	
Kenya	0.680	6	
South Africa	0.672	7	
Malawi	0.663	8	
Algeria	0.654	9	
Cape Verde	0.651	10	
Rwanda	0.649	11	Child-friendly
Burkina Faso	0.648	12	
Madagascar	0.637	13	
Botswana	0.635	14	
Senegal	0.634	15	
Seychelles	0.634	16	
Egypt	0.632	17	
Mali	0.629	18	
Lesotho	0.624	19	
Burundi	0.622	20	
Uganda	0.611	21	Fairly child-friendly
Nigeria	0.609	22	
Tanzania	0.602	23	
Gabon	0.579	24	
Mozambique	0.571	25	
Togo	0.569	26	
Zambia	0.567	27	
Mauritania	0.564	28	
Ghana	0.557	29	
Djibouti	0.552	30	
Dem. Rep. Congo	0.551	31	
Niger	0.545	32	
Cameroon	0.537	33	Less child-friendly
Congo (Brazzaville)	0.534	34	
Angola	0.530	35	
Côte d'Ivoire	0.525	36	
Zimbabwe	0.518	37	
Equatorial Guinea	0.518	38	
Sudan	0.508	39	
Sierra Leone	0.507	40	
Benin	0.506	41	
Ethiopia	0.503	42	
Comoros	0.501	43	Least child-friendly
Guinea	0.500	44	
Swaziland	0.494	45	
Chad	0.482	46	
Liberia	0.478	47	
São Tomé and Príncipe	0.476	48	
Gambia	0.461	49	
Central African Republic	0.445	50	
Eritrea	0.442	51	
Guinea-Bissau	0.366	52	

Source: Developed by The African Child Policy Forum, 2008

At the bottom end of the scale, the 10 governments that scored the lowest, constituting the “least child-friendly” group, were Guinea-Bissau, Eritrea, Central African Republic, Gambia, São Tomé and Príncipe, Liberia, Chad, Swaziland, Comoros and Guinea. Next to this category is the “less child-friendly” group, which consists of resource endowed countries like Angola and highly populous countries like Ethiopia.

**Map 5.1 Geographic presentation of child-friendliness\***



**Legend**

- Most child-friendly (ranking from 1-10)
- Child-friendly (ranking from 11-20)
- Fairly child-friendly (ranking from 21-32)
- Less child-friendly (ranking from 33-42)
- Least child-friendly (ranking from 43-52)

\* The map may show countries that are not included in the assessment

The governments that scored low or lowest did so for not ratifying relevant child rights treaties, for lack of legal provisions to protect children against harmful traditional practices, for very low and discriminatory minimum ages for marriage, for the absence of juvenile justice systems, and for poor provision of basic needs to children. Box 5.1, below, tries to explain the factors behind the scores by looking at four of the least child-friendly governments.

**Box 5.1 Why some countries scored low**

Eritrea performed relatively well in the legal and policy spheres when compared to Guinea-Bissau, Gambia and Central African Republic. However, it scored lowest for budgetary commitment, actual provision of services, and achievement of outcomes. Very high levels of malnutrition, a very high percentage of its population without adequate sanitation, relatively low participation in education (particularly among girls), and extremely high military spending were some of the factors contributing to Eritrea's poor performance in the overall Child-friendliness Index values.

The governments of Guinea-Bissau and Central African Republic also scored very low for budgetary commitment. For example, expenditure in the health sector for Guinea-Bissau in 2004 was just 3.2 per cent of total government expenditure, which is a third of the median expenditure of African governments in that sector. In addition, infant mortality in these countries is very high and children's school participation is relatively low (see Annex 3, Tables A3.8 and A3.10). All these factors have contributed to these governments' low performance scores for provision as well as poor overall Child-friendliness Index rankings.

Another illustrative example is Gambia. Progressive realisation of children's rights necessitates government commitment to increasing progressively the resources needed to fulfil children's needs; but the Government of Gambia made significant reductions in the proportion of its expenditure allocated to the health sector between 2000 and 2005. In that same period, immunisation coverage decreased by about seven per cent (see Annex 3, Table A3.8). The performance of the Government of Gambia in the education sector was also low, as a substantial proportion of school age children were not in school, and gender disparity in enrolment (both at primary and secondary levels) remained relatively high.

Once again, the question is raised: To what extent is a country's favourable score related to resources and level of development? In order to answer this question we compared Child-friendliness Index rankings with the ranking for economic status as measured by per capita GDP. An interesting finding thereby revealed was the fact that a number of governments with relatively low GDP have still managed to score high in 'child-friendliness' (see Table 5.2, below).

The child-friendliness rank is noted to be 38 and 30 places higher for the governments of Malawi and Burundi respectively than their respective GDP per capita rankings. Such significant differences were also observed in the rankings of the governments of Madagascar, Rwanda, Burkina Faso, Mali and DRC. For example, the child-friendliness rank of the governments of Madagascar and Rwanda moved 28 and 27 places up, respectively, compared to their GDP per capita ranking.

Our analysis shows that the child-friendliness of a government does not necessarily relate to its economic status. A country can be child-friendly by making effective use of its available resources and laying appropriate legal and policy foundations for the realisation of children's rights and child wellbeing.

**Table 5.2 List of countries by the difference in their ranking for Child-friendliness Index from GDP per capita rank, 2004-2005**

Countries which moved up in ranking		Countries which moved down in ranking	
Country	Number of places	Country	Number of places
Malawi	38	Guinea	-16
Burundi	30	Côte d'Ivoire	-17
Madagascar	28	Sudan	-17
Rwanda	27	Gabon	-18
Burkina Faso	25	Angola	-19
Mali	21	Congo (Brazzaville)	-19
Dem. Rep. Congo	20	Gambia	-19
Kenya	18	Swaziland	-33
Uganda	15	Equatorial Guinea	-37

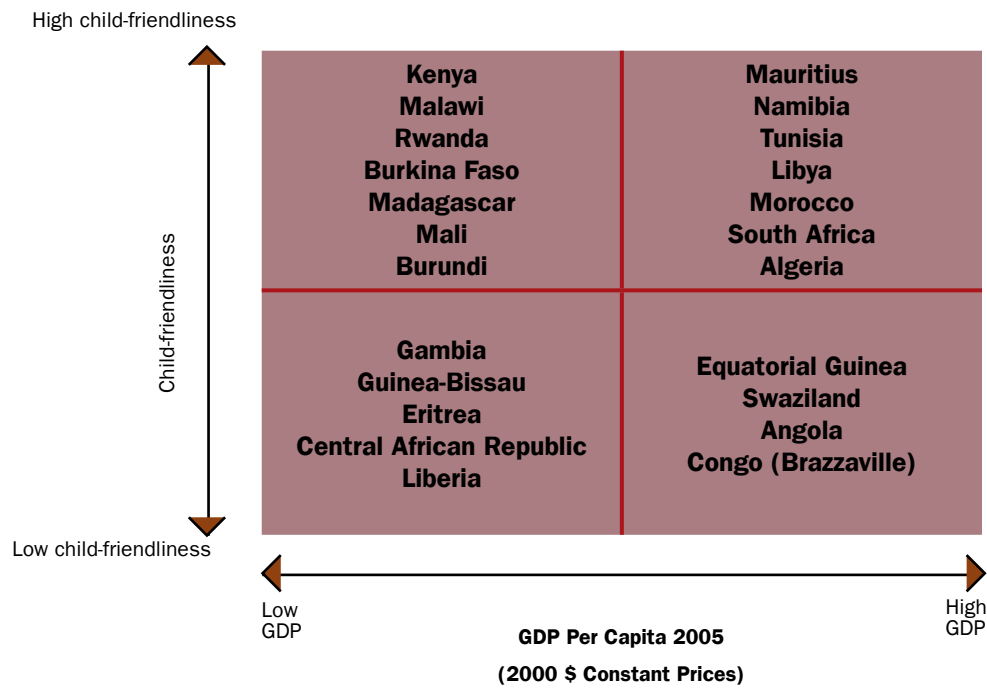
Source: *The African Child Policy Forum, 2008*

Conversely, some governments with relatively higher GDP were found to be in the least child-friendly category, as they had failed to put in place appropriate legal and policy frameworks to protect children against exploitation and to use their resources to bring about changes in the life situation of their children. Equatorial Guinea ranks first in terms of GDP per capita, but its ranking in child-friendliness is 37 places lower, indicating that its high economic performance is not benefiting children. The governments of Swaziland, Gambia, Congo (Brazzaville) and Angola could also have done better in utilising their resources for improving the wellbeing of children. The analysis showed that sixteen countries are ten or more places lower in their child-friendliness ranking than their GDP per capita ranking. This indicates the ample, unutilised potential for improvement in utilisation of resources and for investment in programmes that primarily target children.

Chart 5.1, below, summarises the comparison of child-friendliness and GDP per capita by positioning governments in accordance with their performance in these two areas. The upper left quadrant shows the governments that have performed well and are child-friendly, despite their low economic status. These serve as a good example for those who tend to justify or excuse poor performance solely on grounds of lack of resources. Governments in the upper right quadrant are those with higher economic performance that also did well in their degree of child-friendliness.

The lower right quadrant shows the worst scenario. Governments in this particular quadrant are those with high GDP per capita and poor performance in relation to the realisation of child wellbeing. The lower left includes governments with low rankings both economically and in terms of child-friendliness.

**Chart 5.1 Governments' child-friendliness versus GDP per capita**



In conclusion, the fact that some African governments have performed better than others in efforts to promote the wellbeing of their children is attributable to a number of factors, among which are the availability of legal and policy provisions, adequate resource allocation, and the meeting of children's basic needs. Those countries that have not addressed these issues have consequently scored low on the Child-friendliness Index. The index clearly shows that it is possible for relatively poor or poorer African governments to be child-friendly: a high Child-friendliness Index value necessitates political will and deliberate prioritising of issues related to and affecting children.



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