

# The African Report on Child Wellbeing 2008



How child-friendly are African governments?

## ***Which African governments are the most child-friendly?***

*New index ranking 52 countries finds some of poorest African nations doing most for their children, some richer nations doing worse*

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(Nairobi, Kenya) - The first-ever ranking of African governments' child-friendliness has been compiled to encourage African governments to be "more accountable to their future citizens", according to public policy experts at The African Child Policy Forum based in Addis Ababa. The launch of the report will be held in Nairobi on Universal Day of the Child, 20<sup>th</sup> November.

The ground-breaking report, which scores and ranks 52 African countries using an index of more than 40 indicators, finds that some of the poorest nations are the most child-friendly because they have put in place appropriate laws and policies to protect child rights and effectively target their limited resources to provide basic needs for their children. Some wealthier African nations languish at the bottom of the league for failing to protect their children against exploitation and harmful traditional practices and because their minimum ages – particularly for marriage and criminal responsibility – are too low and in some cases also discriminatory.

Mauritius and Namibia are rated the most child friendly nations in Africa. The other "most child-friendly" governments on the index include both relatively rich countries – Tunisia, Libya, Morocco, South Africa and Algeria – and relatively poor countries – Kenya, Malawi

and Cape Verde. Rwanda and Burkina Faso are in 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> position despite their economic status.

The “least child-friendly” governments are Guinea Bissau, Eritrea, Central African Republic, Gambia, Sao Tome and Principe, Liberia, Chad, Swaziland, Comoros and Guinea. Many of these countries have not ratified the relevant child rights treaties, do not have adequate legal provisions to protect children against abuse and harmful traditional practices like early marriage, do not have juvenile justice systems, do not prohibit corporal punishment and do not exert the maximum effort to provide for children’s basic needs.

***The African Report on Child Wellbeing: How child-friendly are African governments*** is based on a new ‘child friendly index’ that compares 52 African governments, excluding Somalia and Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic (Western Sahara). It is compiled by The African Child Policy Forum (ACPF), an independent pan-African policy and advocacy organisation based in Addis Ababa, and is the first report by an independent Pan-African organisation on African children produced in the region.

The child-friendliness index shows how committed individual governments are to child wellbeing by assessing their performance in the protection of children through laws and policies; their budget allocation and their achievement of good outcomes for children through health, education, etc.

*“For the first time we can assess the behaviour and performance of African governments systematically and transparently using the child-friendly index and, by so doing, hold these governments more accountable for their children’s wellbeing. We will be able to monitor progress and failings more easily using this powerful instrument which is the first of its kind in Africa and, to our knowledge, the first of its kind anywhere. I am confident that our methodology will be adapted and used in other regions of the world,”* says Dr Assefa Bequele, Executive Director of ACPF.

### **Overall positions on the Index**

The ‘top 10’ most child friendly governments are Mauritius (1), Namibia (2), Tunisia (3), Libya (4), Morocco (5), Kenya (6), South Africa (7), Malawi (8), Algeria (9) and Cape Verde (10). These countries have put in place child-friendly laws and policies, use a large share of their resources to provide for the basic needs of children and have improved the use of health and education services.

*“Governments that have come out well on this index did so because they have done two things – they have put in place the relevant laws to protect children from abuse and exploitation, and they have targeted resources at the basic needs of children – above all access to health and education”* says Sir Richard Jolly, former deputy Executive Director of UNICEF and architect of the Human Development Index, who is also an advisor to The African Child Policy Forum.

The least child-friendly governments are Guinea-Bissau (52), Eritrea (51), Central African Republic (50), Gambia (49), Sao Tome and Principe (48), Liberia (47), Chad (46), Swaziland (45), Guinea (44) and Comoros (43). Immediately above are those governments ranked as “less child-friendly” namely those of Ethiopia (ranked 42), Benin (41), Sierra Leone (40), Sudan (39), Equatorial Guinea (38), Zimbabwe (37), Côte d’Ivoire (36), Angola (35), Congo (Brazzaville) (34) and Cameroon (33).

### **Comparing GDP and child-friendliness**

The report yields surprising findings when it compares countries that have done well or poorly in child-friendliness in relation to their economic status. On budget spending for example, it finds that many countries with low gross domestic product (GDP) per capita are spending greater proportions of their limited resources on sectors that most benefit children than some other countries with higher GDP per capita.

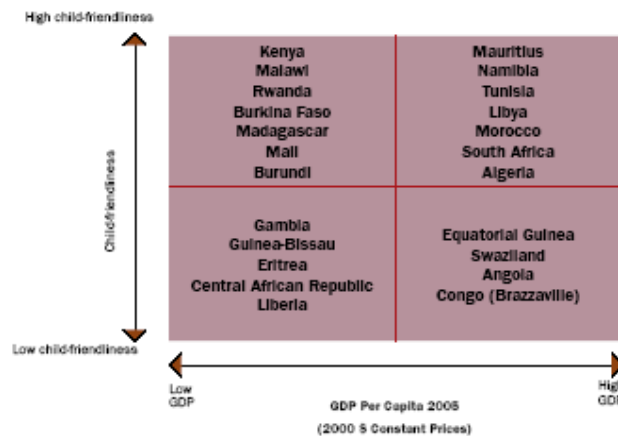
Malawi, Burkina Faso, Niger, Burundi, DRC and Mali are examples of this. Malawi ranks first in budgetary commitment but has the 45<sup>th</sup> lowest GDP per capita in Africa. Equatorial Guinea on the other hand ranks 44<sup>th</sup> (least committed) in budgetary commitment but had the highest GDP per capita in Africa in 2005. Other countries that performed poorly when their budgetary commitment and GDP status are compared are Sudan, Comoros, Angola and Libya.

On health spending, the top investors in children’s health are four low-income countries – Burkina Faso (15.3 percent), Rwanda (16.5 percent), Liberia (20.1 percent) and Malawi (28.8 percent).

*“Poorer countries should take heart from our finding that political will and enlightenment play a bigger part in determining children’s wellbeing than economic status or wealth. It is politics and not economics that accounts for differences in performance among African governments”* says Dr Assefa Bequele.

In all, sixteen countries are ten or more places **lower** in their child-friendliness ranking than their GDP ranking which indicates the potential for improvement in the use of resources and investment in programmes that target children. Sixteen countries are ten or more places **higher** in their child-friendliness ranking than their GDP ranking.

Chart 5.1 Governments' child-friendliness versus GDP per capita



The indicators used in the child-friendliness index cover **three key dimensions** - protection through law and policy, budgeting, and outcomes.

### Protecting children through law and policies

How do African governments compare on how they protect children against harm and exploitation?

Kenya is ranked top of the index on this dimension because it has developed appropriate laws to protect children from harmful traditional practices, trafficking and sexual exploitation. It is one of the few countries where corporal punishment is banned in schools and penal systems; a juvenile justice system has been set up; and there is a policy of free primary education.

Following Kenya, other governments that have done well in putting in place appropriate legal and policy foundation on child rights and policies are Madagascar, Burundi, Morocco, Namibia, Rwanda, Mali, Burkina Faso, Nigeria and Libya. They have ratified most of the international child rights treaties, and their national laws criminalise, among others, child trafficking and sexual exploitation.

The bottom three countries in the ranking for child protection are Guinea-Bissau, Swaziland and Gambia. They scored low on several grounds - ratification of child right treaties; inadequacy of their national laws to protect children against exploitation and harmful

traditional practices; lack of juvenile justice systems and low and discriminatory marriage age.

On child protection, the report finds:

- 10 out of 51 countries had not ratified the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) as of June 2007
- a third did not have legal provisions for protection against child trafficking
- a quarter had no legislation prohibiting harmful traditional practices such as female genital cutting
- some 10 countries had a minimum age of criminal responsibility of just seven years, and 8 out of 52 countries had between 8 and 10 years (lower than the recommended minimum of 12)
- More than half of the 52 countries reviewed have not yet banned corporal punishment in schools or in the penal system
- Less than half the governments had policies that provided for free primary education
- Twenty of the 52 countries have not set up specialised juvenile courts, so children's cases are dealt with in adult courts.

### **Budgeting – resource commitments**

How committed are African governments to allocate for the basic needs of children?

Five indicators are used to measure governments' budgetary commitment – their expenditure on health, education, the Expanded Programme on Immunisation (EPI), and the military as a proportion of GDP.

Overall, Malawi comes out as the most committed to using the maximum amount of available resources for children. Most importantly, its spending on health has increased four-fold over the last five years, and the country's military expenditure is one of the lowest on the continent. Following Malawi, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Seychelles and Namibia were the most committed to channelling resources to children's needs. They have dedicated greater resources to health and education over the last five years and fully self-financed their national immunisation programmes.

Eritrea is the least committed to spending on resources for children, spending a low proportion of its resources on health and education, and a high proportion on military spending.

The report's authors say public **health spending** is an important indicator of children's wellbeing. Health expenditure varies greatly between countries, according to the report. Malawi is the most committed – it spent nearly 30 percent of its total expenditure on health in 2004 – and second is Liberia which spends 20 percent of its total expenditure on health. At the bottom are Burundi and Nigeria – a relatively wealthy country – that allocated less than five percent of its budget. Nineteen of the 52 countries surveyed had decreased the proportion of expenditure on health between 2000 and 2004 including Gambia who had reduced health spending by 59 percent in 2004.

The other very important indicator is **spending on education**. The index shows that Equatorial Guinea spent only 0.6 percent of its GDP on education between 2003 and 2006 compared to Lesotho that spent 13 percent. Lesotho's high spending seems to have paid off with one of the highest enrolment ratios for primary education in Africa. Lesotho is also narrowing gender disparity in schooling to give equal opportunity to boys and girls. Abolishing user fees also has a powerful impact. When Kenya removed user fees on primary schooling in 2003, about 1.3 million children enrolled for the first time. It was also noted that expenditure on education was difficult to measure because of lack of data. ACPF calls on governments to address this by compiling data on education and making it accessible.

**Military spending** by governments reduces the amount of resources available for basic services that improve child wellbeing. The report finds that Eritrea spent nearly a fifth of its GDP on military costs. On the other hand, Burundi, Mauritius and Gambia had the lowest rate of military spending.

### **How much governments have achieved for children**

What have African governments done to improve access to services – health, education, nutrition, water and sanitation?

Libya, Mauritius, Seychelles and Tunisia score best for their child-related achievements. Each has very high rates of child survival, the lowest proportions of malnourished children, and better opportunities for access to health and education services. Gender disparity, particularly in access to both primary and secondary education, was also lower in these countries.

Bottom of this scale are Chad and Ethiopia with the lowest scores for provision of services and ensuring children's right to food and survival. Access to drinking water and sanitation facilities and quality of primary education are very low in both countries. However, Ethiopia has made positive strides in reducing infant and under-five mortality rates, increasing immunisation coverage and providing access to primary education.

When child outcomes are compared with economic status, Malawi again has achieved remarkable results despite its low GDP. Uganda and Ghana have also done well in relation to their GDP.

*“I was pleased to see that my belief was confirmed, namely that countries that are not doing well in the economic sphere can and do perform spectacularly well in protecting and providing for their children. Money or the lack of it is not an excuse,”* says Professor Sir Richard Jolly.

### **Ranking on overall provision for children**

A combined index for both budgetary commitments and outcomes for children demonstrates each government’s commitment to direct financial resources to children, and their success in bringing about changes in their life situation. Seychelles, Tunisia, Mauritius and Malawi are top of the index for making the greatest efforts to provide for the basic needs of children. Bottom of the league are Eritrea, Ethiopia, Central African Republic and Chad. Resource commitment, particularly in the case of Eritrea, and achievement of outcomes in the case of Ethiopia and Central African Republic were especially low relative to other countries.

*“Life for millions of Africa’s children remains short, poor, insecure and violent. We hope this report will ensure that children are put at the forefront of governments’ attention”* says Stefan van der Swaluw, Regional Director, Africa Regional Office, International Child Support.

### **ACPF calls to action**

The report recommends African governments do the following:

- Budgets: Develop child-friendly budgeting throughout Africa
- Health: government should dedicate as much as **20 percent** of their budgets to health, but at least nine percent as a first step for those at the lower end of the budget index
- Education: governments should dedicate **13 percent** of GDP to education, at least 4.3 as a standing measure percent for those trailing behind
- Child protection: review national laws to comply with international standards particularly the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, ratify international and regional treaties on children and strengthen government implementation, monitoring and enforcement bodies.

### **The new child-friendliness index and report**

The child-friendliness index of governments was developed by ACPF to measure how governments are living up to their responsibilities towards their commitment to the wellbeing of their children and to show how improvements can be made. It focuses on two key aspects of child wellbeing – protection and provision.

*The African Report on Child Wellbeing* will be produced by ACPF every two years to monitor how much African governments are doing to better children's lives.

Professor Jaap Doek, former chair of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child adds *“This is a meticulously researched and evidence-based report, and the first of its kind in the region. I commend those African governments that are making the future for their children look brighter and I hope that others can take concrete steps in the same direction.”*

*“This report must act as a wake up call to those African governments that need to do much better for their children. By giving such clear and achievable recommendations on every aspect of child wellbeing, there are no longer excuses for not acting,”* says Dr Salim Ahmed Salim, former Prime Minister of Tanzania and a three-term former Secretary General of the Organisation of African Union (OAU).

-Ends-

### **Notes to editors**

To arrange interviews with Dr Bequele and others contact Juliet Heller (UK) T +44 (0)1621 868083; M +44 (0)7946 616150; E [Juliet@julieheller.co.uk](mailto:Juliet@julieheller.co.uk) or Getu Shikur (Ethiopia) M +251 911 50 20 06; E [shikur@africanchildforum.org](mailto:shikur@africanchildforum.org) .

To download photos and other media materials [www.africanchildforum.org/africanreport08](http://www.africanchildforum.org/africanreport08)

Video footage is also available on request.

### **Attachments:**

Graphics from Report:

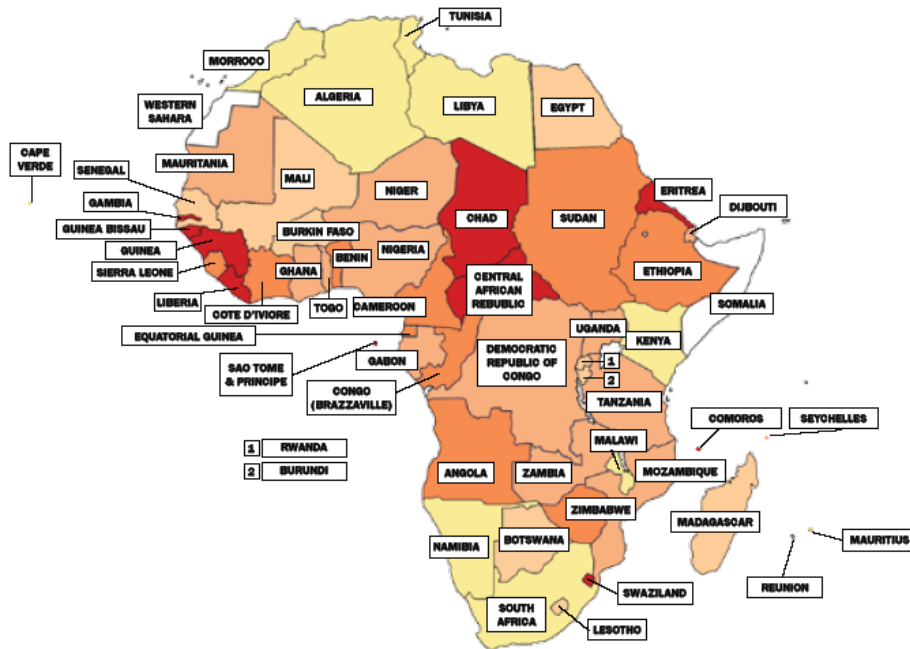
- Child friendly index Table 5.1
- Map 5.1 – Africa map of child-friendliness

**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	

*Developed by The African Child Policy Forum, 2008*

Map 5.1 Geographic presentation of child-friendliness\*



**Legend**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px; background-color: #ffff00; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Most child-friendly (ranking from 1-10)    | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px; background-color: #ff8c00; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Less child-friendly (ranking from 33-42)  |
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px; background-color: #ffcc99; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Child-friendly (ranking from 11-20)        | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px; background-color: #ff0000; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Least child-friendly (ranking from 43-52) |
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px; background-color: #ff9966; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Fairly child-friendly (ranking from 21-32) |   |

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