

Measuring children’s well-being: the Child Flourishing and Futures Index

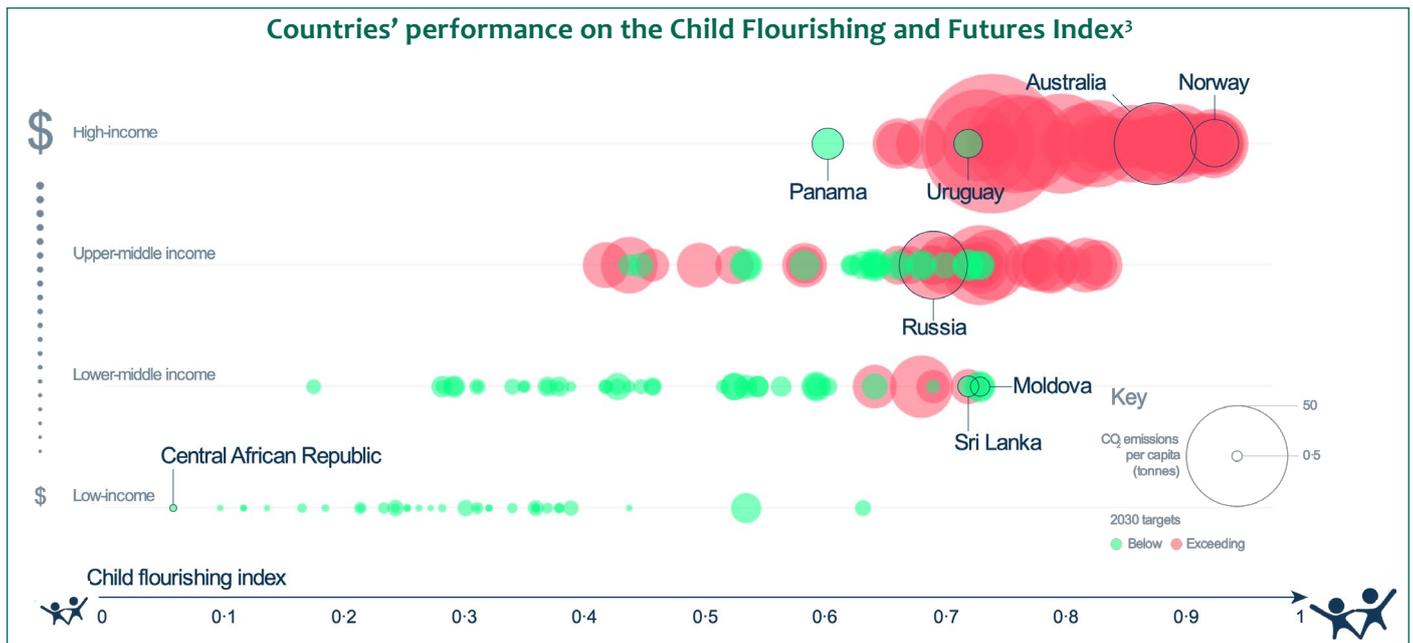
Global warming is worsening crises of conflict and migration of which children are primary victims – globally, half of refugees today are under age 18.¹ Under business-as-usual scenarios, the future of all children will be compromised by rising ocean levels, increased mortality from extreme weather, proliferation of diseases like malaria and dengue, and a crisis of malnutrition.² Children around the world are protesting to remind us, “our house is on fire.”

A global index, presented in a landmark WHO-UNICEF-Lancet Commission (2020), shows that, of 180 countries examined, **no single country provides the conditions needed for a child to live a healthy life today and tomorrow.** Wealthier countries perform better on child ‘flourishing’ indicators (combining data on survival, such as under-five mortality and adolescent suicide, with data on well-being, such as educational achievement, nutrition, and protection from violence), but threaten children’s future through excessive

carbon emissions. In contrast, the poorest countries fail to ensure that children survive and thrive today, though they contribute little to the climate crisis.

Countries including Albania, Armenia, Costa Rica, Jordan, Moldova, Sri Lanka, Tunisia, Uruguay, and Viet Nam show it is possible to prioritize child health and well-being while still remaining on track to beat CO₂ emissions targets per capita by 2030.³ Other countries should follow suit.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) indicators provide a strong foundation for monitoring progress; however there are huge gaps in data collection. Most countries do not regularly collect data for many child-related indicators.³ SDG monitoring needs a strong boost in investment, including for subnational disaggregation. Harnessing citizen accountability (e.g. using online reporting apps) and improving routine country systems is essential to act on a new agenda with children at the centre of the SDGs.



POLICY SOLUTIONS

<p>Urgently reduce CO₂ emissions to meet Paris climate agreement targets</p> <p>The leaders of all countries exceeding CO₂ targets must act urgently to ensure a future for children.</p>	<p>Improve collection of data</p> <p>Heads of state should direct national institutions to improve country information systems and citizen-led data and accountability.</p>	<p>Develop user-friendly dashboards</p> <p>U.N. agencies should issue simplified regular reports to help countries assess how to improve policies for children’s well-being.</p>
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1. UNHCR Statistical Yearbook. Geneva, 2 March 2020.
 2. Watts N et al. The 2018 report of the Lancet Countdown on health and climate change: shaping the health of nations for centuries to come. *The Lancet* 2019, 392: 2479-2514.
 3. Clark H et al. A future for the world’s children? A WHO-UNICEF-Lancet Commission. *The Lancet* 2020, 395: 613-614.

Read the WHO-UNICEF-Lancet Commission report:
<http://www.thelancet.com/futurechild>