

ChildFund Alliance World Index on the Rights of Women and Children

Focus. *Children's Voices on Their Right to The Future*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



About
ChildFund Alliance

ChildFund Alliance (childfundalliance.org) is a global network of 11 child-focused development and humanitarian organizations reaching **nearly 30 million children and family members in more than 70 countries**. Members work to end violence and exploitation against children; provide expertise in emergencies and disasters to ease the harmful impact on children and their communities; and engage children, families and communities to create lasting change. With more than 80 years of collective experience, our commitment, resources, innovation, and expertise serve as a powerful force to help children and families around the world transform their lives.

What is the
ChildFund Alliance
World Index?

The World Index is a flagship report of ChildFund Alliance. Formerly known as the WeWorld Index and published annually since 2015 by WeWorld – the Italian member of ChildFund Alliance – **the Index measures the living conditions of women and children worldwide by assessing the implementation of their rights**.

The report comprises four sections:

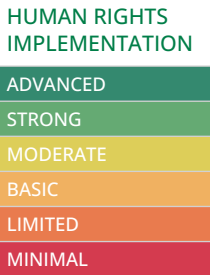
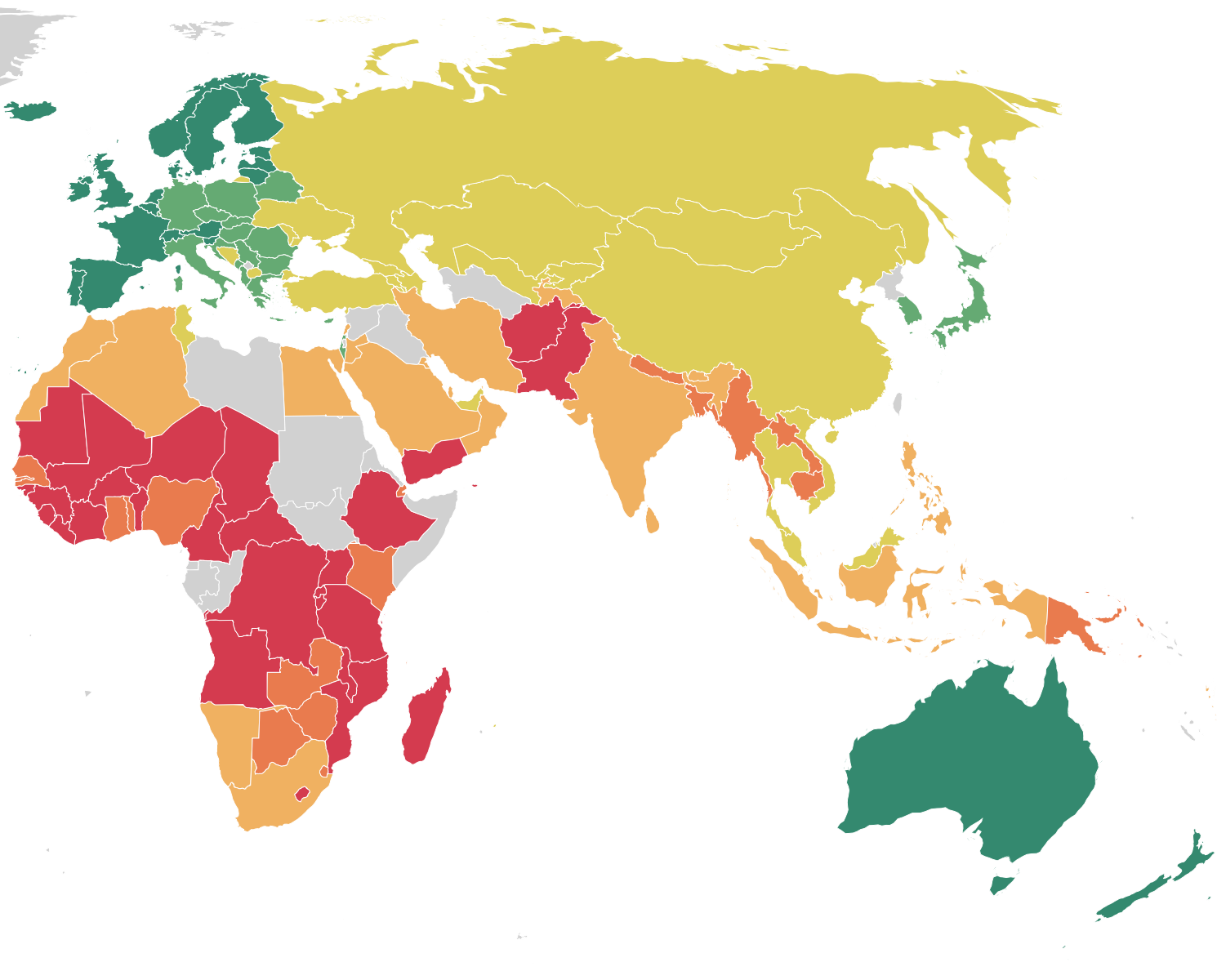
- **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK:** This chapter outlines the theoretical framework, referencing the Human Rights-Based Approach and the concept of capabilities as the building blocks of the entire report.
- **INDEX RESULTS AND GLOBAL RANKING:** This chapter presents the Index results and the global ranking of countries based on the implementation of women's and children's human rights. It includes data, global maps, infographics, and tables.

- **THEMATIC FOCUS:** The 2024 edition focuses on the right of children, youth, and the younger generation to have a future. ChildFund Alliance has developed and articulated its understanding of the **“right to the future”** as a lens for analyzing and addressing the complex landscape young and new generations must navigate. **This section of the report includes original data and reflects the voices of 10,000 children and adolescents from 41 countries.** It also contains examples of best practices of actions implemented by the 11 ChildFund Alliance members to safeguard children's rights.
- **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION:** The final section of the World Index 2024 provides recommendations for action, with a focus on child participation.

Purpose
of the World Index

The World Index combines the diverse and extensive expertise of the 11 members comprising the Alliance. It is a comprehensive tool for analyzing the implementation of the rights of women and children across wide ranging areas of their lives, as shared from various perspectives. The World Index can be considered:

- **A KNOWLEDGE TOOL:** Through mixed-method research, the report identifies the root causes of rights violations and highlights factors crucial for improving the well-being of women and children worldwide. It adopts a holistic perspective that considers the complexity of individuals' needs, aspirations, and rights. Additionally, global consultations enable a



level of disaggregation that captures intersectional discrimination.

- **AN ADVOCACY AND POLICY TOOL:** Based on an evidence- and data-driven approach, the report identifies areas most urgently in need of intervention. Alongside specific final recommendations, the tool provides a snapshot of individual countries' statuses.
- **AN AWARENESS-RAISING TOOL:** The report serves as an informational means among the public, media, and policymakers regarding the status of the rights of women and children at both national and global levels. It is designed not just for specialists, but also to communicate with a broader audience, including civil society.

The Global Ranking
on Women's and
Children's Rights in
2024

The World Index is a synthetic index comprising 30 indicators relevant to evaluating the implementation of women's and children's rights globally. It provides a comprehensive global ranking of countries, sorted in descending order, based on the level of implementation of their rights. The original methodology, first developed by WeWorld and introduced in the WeWorld Index 2015, was perfected in the WeWorld Index 2022. Such methodology allows for further processing: the overall Index is the result of the aggregation of the three sub-indexes (Context, Children, and Women),

which in turn comprise 5 dimensions each, for a total of 15 dimensions. Each dimension comprises 2 indicators, for a total of 30.

Such methodology allows us to obtain 4 global rankings (Overall Index, Context Sub-Index, Children's Sub-Index and Women's Index), elaborations by geographic areas, and rankings for the 15 dimensions and individual country profiles.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE WORLD INDEX 2024



- ▶ The World Index 2024 evaluates 157 countries on their implementation of women's and children's human rights.
- ▶ As of 2023, **1 in 3 children and more than 1 in 4 women were living in countries with limited or minimal human rights implementation.**
- ▶ At the current pace, **it will take 113 years for women and children to witness the full implementation of rights** assessed by the World Index across all countries.
- ▶ The contexts where women and children live today are less democratic and safe compared to when we started calculating the Index in 2015, although there are improvements in access to information and WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene) services.
- ▶ There has been significant progress in children's health, but their educational rights have stagnated since 2020, probably due to disruptions caused by the global COVID-19 pandemic.
- ▶ Women's levels of education and participation in decision-making are on the rise. However, women remain the most vulnerable and marginalized social group globally, experiencing the highest likelihood of human rights violations.

Focus. Children's Voices on their Right to the Future

Our understanding of the "right to the future" serves as an interpretative framework. It can be defined as **the inherent entitlement of individuals and communities—both present and future, especially children and youth—to live in and contribute to a world that ensures sustainable and equitable opportunities for growth, well-being, and development.** This concept invites a holistic examination of the complex and intersecting challenges that young and future generations face.

The right to the future does not necessarily imply recognizing it as a fully-fledged right, but rather aims to stimulate a new reflection. **It means looking at the present and future with fresh perspectives, empowering children and young people to actively shape their future.** It also involves acknowledging the complexity and multifaceted nature of their needs and aspirations.

This concept is not intended as a provocation but as a call to focus on crucial aspects of human rights fulfillment and social responsibility. Addressing the right to the future requires thinking in terms of legacy and establishing a new social pact.

To develop our understanding of the right to the future, we researched international literature and law on development policy, human rights, and children's rights. From this research, we identified five key elements from a human rights and children's rights-based

approach: 1) sustainable development; 2) intergenerational justice; 3) capabilities; 4) capacity to aspire; and 5) child participation.

ChildFund Alliance is committed to promoting and protecting the human rights of children and young people, empowering them to actively participate in creating positive change. **By recognizing children as rights holders, ChildFund involves them in identifying their needs and aspirations, which is essential for building a better future.** In the World Index 2024, ChildFund Alliance conducted a child participation exercise to make interventions more responsive to children's needs. This global consultation gathered input from 10,000 children and adolescents across 41 countries on issues such as poverty, conflict, climate change, violence, and their dreams for the future.

This report presents these consultation results, showcases successful initiatives by ChildFund Alliance members, and offers recommendations to ensure a brighter future for young people.

General Methodology

- ▶ The consultation did not aim to engage a statistically representative sample of the child population, rather it engaged over 10,000 children and adolescents aged 10 to 18 in 41 countries (out of 70+ where the Alliance operates), reached through projects implemented by its member organizations and local partners.
- ▶ The selected countries were chosen based on their status as operational areas for ChildFund Alliance. The data should not be regarded as representative of entire nations.
- ▶ The global consultation encompassed a diverse range of countries and a broad age demographic. Therefore, questions were formulated generically rather than tailored to specific age groups or cultural contexts. While this approach does not delve into the nuances of individual country situations, it allows for comparable insights across the broader sample.



THE MAIN RESULTS

Getting to know the sample

The sample comprised 10,000 boys and girls aged 10 to 18 from 41 countries. We first asked several questions to better identify their social profile with the aim of analyzing the responses considering different backgrounds, life experiences, and conditions. From this we know:

- ▶ More than 1 in 7 children with disabilities report not attending school regularly.
- ▶ **In Central and West Africa, almost 1 in 3 children say they do not go to school regularly.**
- ▶ **Almost 1 in 10 children say they are currently working.**
- ▶ Food insecurity increases dramatically among children with disabilities, affecting nearly 1 in 4 (23%) compared to 14% of those who do not have a disability.
- ▶ **More than 1 in 10 children do not usually feel happy.** In Central and West Africa this figure rises to more than 1 in 3 children.
- ▶ The level of happiness correlates positively with both school attendance and food security, indicating that children who attend school regularly and feel full after each meal tend to be happier.

Children's and adolescents' rights at present

This second part of the consultation focused on the current status of children, their rights, the challenges they face, and instances of rights violations, as well as the role of adults in safeguarding their rights. Findings include:

- ▶ More than 1 in 5 children have a weak perception of their rights.
- ▶ Boys tend to have weaker perceptions of their rights compared to girls.
- ▶ Almost 3 out of 10 children with low socioeconomic status have a weak perception of their rights, in contrast to almost 2 out of 10 among those from higher socioeconomic backgrounds. **Vulnerability and marginalization adversely impact children's recognition of themselves as rights holders.**
- ▶ **4 children out of 10 report feeling unsafe due to wars and crime.**
- ▶ **Almost 1 in 3 children say that adults do not ask for their opinion.**
- ▶ 1 child out of 4 report that adults say or do things that make them feel bad.
- ▶ Children whose social identities are subjected to multiple forms of discrimination, or those from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds, face more difficulties in seeing their rights respected and fulfilled.
- ▶ **More than 1 in 4 children believe that adults do not fully promote their rights.**

- ▶ A positive correlation emerges between children's perception of their rights and the actual promotion of these rights by adults. Living in environments where rights are effectively recognized and upheld by duty-bearers significantly influences children's self-perception as rights holders.

Imagining the future

The third part of the consultation focused on children's perceptions of their future, particularly their ability to envision it. The questions delved into their fears, anxieties, uncertainties, as well as their hopes, expectations, and dreams.

- ▶ Three primary concerns children have about their future are unemployment, poverty, and health epidemics.
- ▶ Children who perceive high levels of rights promotion by adults in their lives are generally less anxious about future threats. This correlation suggests that children who have confidence in responsible adults—such as parents, teachers, and other authority figures—feel more safeguarded and secure.
- ▶ Children who do not regularly experience happiness tend to express higher levels of fear about their future compared to their peers.
- ▶ Children with migrant backgrounds, those identified as having disabilities, and particularly those from low socioeconomic backgrounds express significantly higher levels of uncertainty and negativity about their future compared to their peers. This suggests that their current circumstances, compounded by experiences of cumulative discrimination, profoundly impact their capacity to

envision and aspire to improve their future conditions.

- ▶ 3 children out of 10 believe they will not be able to freely decide whether to marry or have children.
- ▶ Children belonging to minorities hold less optimistic expectations regarding non-discrimination, with only 67.3% expecting to not be treated differently from others in the future, compared to 80.4% of non-minority children.

Shaping the future

In the final stage of the consultation, children were asked to identify priorities for intervention and specify actions adults should take to ensure a better future for them. This phase concluded by directly giving voice to the children, allowing them to share their testimonies, propose solutions, and express their dreams, fears, and expectations for the future.

- ▶ The highest priority issues adults should intervene on include education, health and access to care, meeting basic needs, combating all forms of violence, and the climate crisis.
- ▶ In Central and West Africa, more children perceive it as a priority that no child is forced to abandon their home or community.
- ▶ In East and South Africa, a higher percentage of children identify not having to live in war or conflict as a priority.
- ▶ In East Asia and the Pacific, there is a significant increase in the priority placed on children being able to surf the Internet safely and on the importance of safeguarding the environment.

- ▶ In Latin America, there is an overall increase in the percentage of children identifying most of the listed interventions as priorities. Notably, children in Latin America identify that preventing violence or maltreatment of children is a top priority.
- ▶ Such differences in identifying priorities underscore the importance of recognizing and addressing the unique context and needs of children in different regions. Tailoring interventions to fit these regional priorities is crucial for effectively improving the well-being and future prospects of children globally.

From the analysis of over 8,500 open-ended testimonies, five priority requests from children and adolescents have emerged:

- ▶ **IMPROVE ACCESS AND QUALITY OF EDUCATION TO ACHIEVE OUR GOALS**
- ▶ **PROTECT US FROM VIOLENCE AND DISCRIMINATION**
- ▶ **ASK AND LISTEN TO OUR OPINIONS**
- ▶ **UNDERSTAND AND RESPECT US**
- ▶ **ENCOURAGE, GUIDE AND SUPPORT US**

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RECOMMENDATIONS

We need more structured and meaningful child and youth participation

Informed by our global consultation with children regarding the challenges they face and the hopes they have for their future, **ChildFund Alliance developed a series of recommendations aimed at national governments and the international community to ensure that children's voices are genuinely heard and considered.** The goal is to strengthen mechanisms for consulting and involving children and youth and to promote an open and inclusive dialogue that takes into account their unique perspectives and specific needs. **These include calling for mechanisms for**

institutionalizing child participation; special efforts focused on vulnerable and marginalized groups; the provision of child-friendly information and mandatory safeguarding principles; and investing in capacity strengthening by empowering children as rights-holders, among other recommendations.

This section also relaunches our role in **Joining Forces' Call to Action on children's participation.** Since 2017, ChildFund Alliance has partnered with the other five largest child-focused agencies:

Plan International, Save the Children International, SOS Children's Villages International, Terre des Hommes International Federation, and World Vision International. **Together, we advocate for children and youth to have a seat at the table and to actively and meaningfully participate in all matters and decisions affecting their lives as rights holders.** This entails providing them with friendly spaces within the chambers of power and empowering them to be part of the entire decision-making process, rather than merely seeking their views before or after decisions are made.

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