



Institute of  
Development Studies

**Understanding child wellbeing in  
Sub-Saharan Africa:  
a cross-country comparison**

Keetie Roelen  
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**This study: aims and objectives**



**How do children and adults understand child wellbeing?**

- **5 countries:**  
Burundi, Ethiopia, Ghana, Rwanda and South Africa
  
- **2 levels of analysis:**
  - Children
  - Adults
  
- **2 questions:**
  - How do concepts of child wellbeing differ per country?
  - How do concepts differ between children and adults?



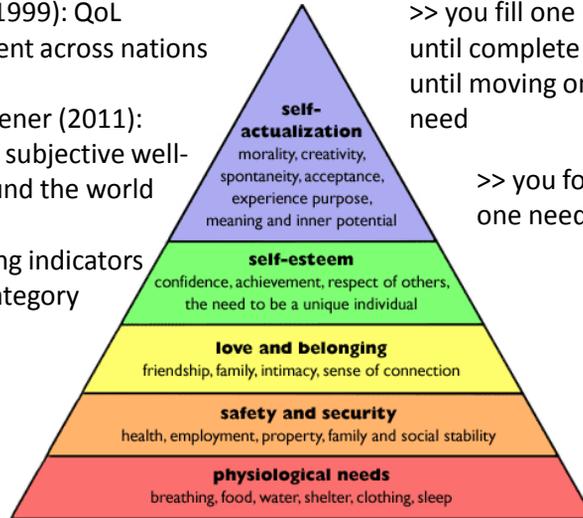
## This study: conceptual framework

### Maslow's pyramid

Hagerty (1999): QoL development across nations

Tay and Diener (2011): needs and subjective well-being around the world

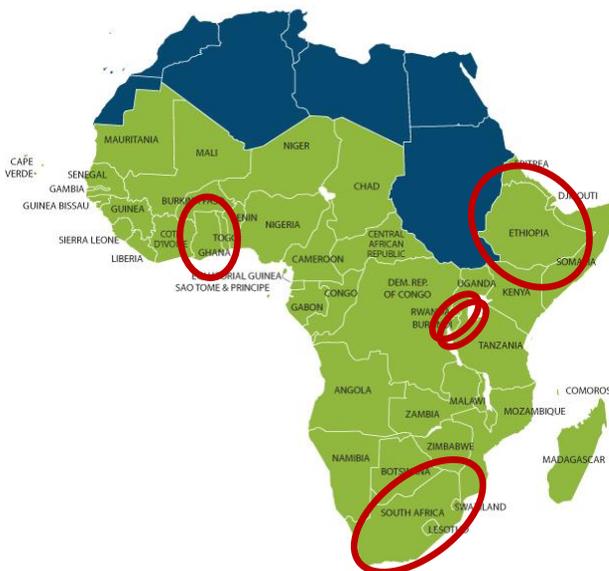
>> attaching indicators to each category



>> you fill one need almost until complete satisfaction until moving on to the next need

>> you focus effort on one need at a time

## This study: data



## This study: methods

Qualitative data collection: group exercises, focus group discussions and case studies



Reading and re-reading transcripts



>> developing coding scheme

>> coding data

>> categorising data into hierarchy of needs

## Understandings of child wellbeing

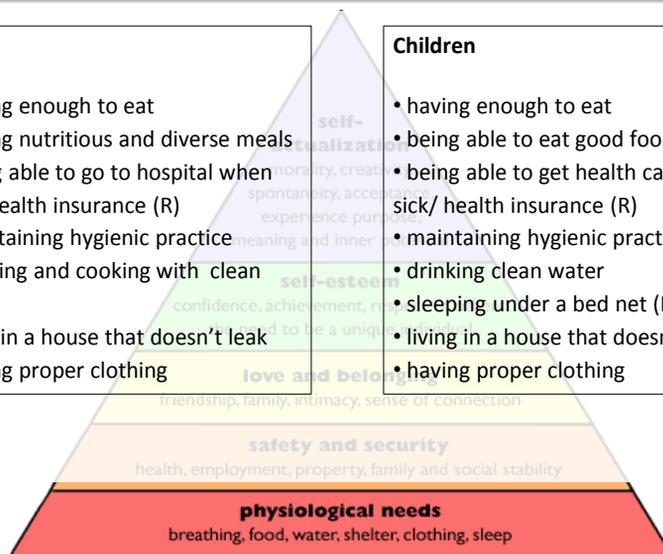
### physiological needs

#### Adults

- having enough to eat
- having nutritious and diverse meals
- being able to go to hospital when sick/ health insurance (R)
- maintaining hygienic practice
- drinking and cooking with clean water
- living in a house that doesn't leak
- having proper clothing

#### Children

- having enough to eat
- being able to eat good food
- being able to get health care when sick/ health insurance (R)
- maintaining hygienic practice
- drinking clean water
- sleeping under a bed net (B)
- living in a house that doesn't leak
- having proper clothing



## Understandings of child wellbeing

### safety and security

#### Adults

- having livestock, land, tools, income-generating activities or jobs
- receiving a grant (S)
- children gaining skills to be able to generate income themselves (B)
- children not being maltreated at home
- having good relationships with neighbours improves security
- respectful behaviour of children prevents them from harm (B)
- being able to afford transport (S)

#### Children

- having enough money to purchase all basic needs
- receiving a grant (S)
- feeling safe outside of home without fear of being bullied (B)
- not being maltreated or beaten at home
- being free from violence

#### safety and security

health, employment, property, family and social stability

#### physiological needs

breathing, food, water, shelter, clothing, sleep

## Understandings of child wellbeing

### love and belonging

#### Adults

- not being maltreated at home
- providing advice and discipline
- child receiving care and attention
- avoiding tensions between parents
- avoiding polygamy (B)
- avoiding substance abuse
- playing with other children

#### Children

- not being maltreated at home
- receiving advice from parents
- receive care and attention from parents
- harmonious relationship between parents
- going church (G)
- family size (G)
- doing domestic chores together (B)
- playing with other children

#### love and belonging

friendship, family, intimacy, sense of connection

#### safety and security

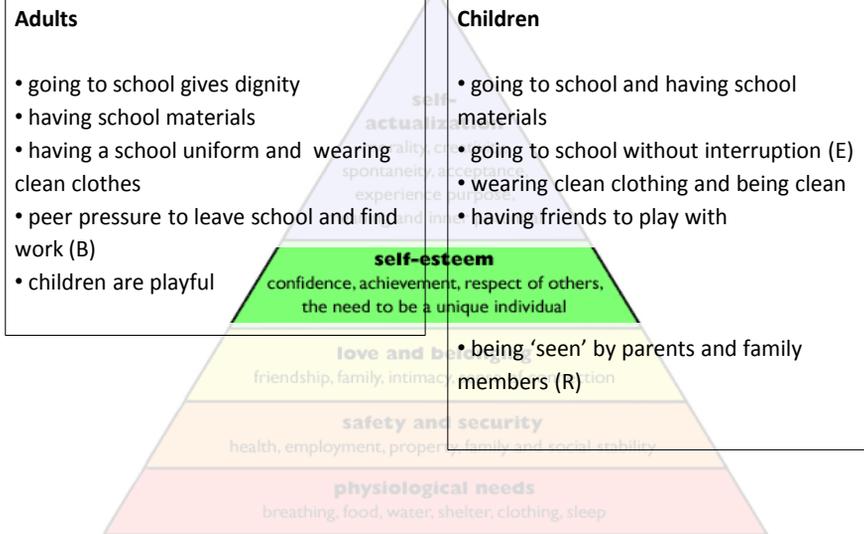
health, employment, property, family and social stability

#### physiological needs

breathing, food, water, shelter, clothing, sleep

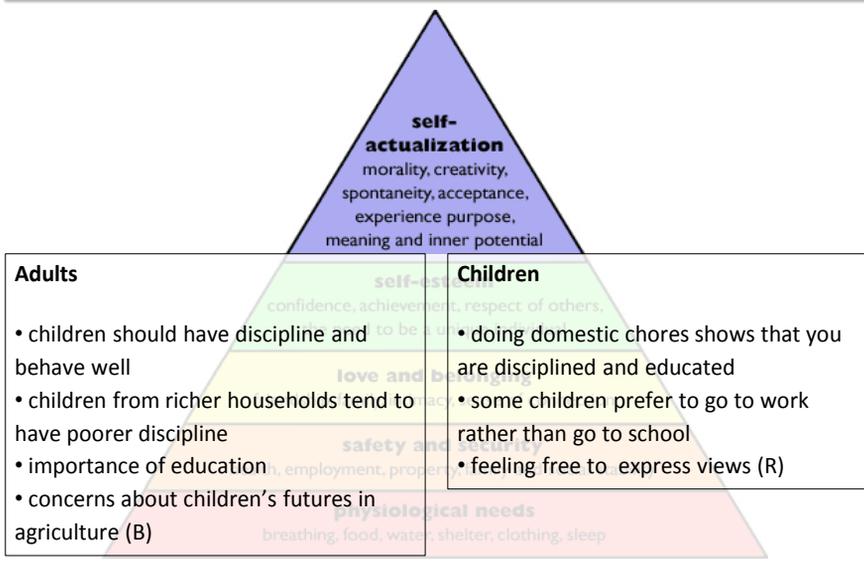
## Understandings of child wellbeing

### self-esteem



## Understandings of child wellbeing

### self-actualisation



## Understandings of child wellbeing

### the messy bits...

>> or the interesting stuff!

#### Child work: (Burundi and Ethiopia)

- Earns income for household
- Provides skills for child for income security in future
- Gives sense of belonging
- Gives sense of pride and achievement
- Feeds ambition and aspiration

## Understandings of child wellbeing

### More messy bits...

- >> Education (all): provides security now and in future, gives sense of belonging, can give self-esteem and self-actualisation
- >> Clothing (Burundi and South Africa): protects against the cold but also makes children feel like others and more secure
- >> Family size (Ghana): prevents basic needs such as shelter but also inhibits sense of belonging, feelings of belonging and self-esteem

## In conclusion

- No hierarchy of needs in terms of prioritisation beyond physiological needs
- Needs are not mutually exclusive
- Country differences?
- Children and adults?
- Child wellbeing is messy!
- 'Messiness' of child wellbeing is an opportunity

**Thank you!**

**k.roelen@ids.ac.uk**

**@KeetieRoelen**