

**MULTIDIMENSIONAL
CHILD VULNERABILITY IN
THE MIDDLE EAST AND
EASTERN EUROPE**

FOREWORD

Around the world, and acutely across the Middle East and Eastern Europe, children are growing up amid complex and intersecting risks that undermine their safety, well-being, and long-term development. As a child-focused organisation committed to ensuring every girl and boy can experience life in all its fullness, it is essential that we deepen our understanding of the factors that shape children's vulnerability. Without a clear, evidence-driven understanding of these multidimensional vulnerabilities, collective efforts to protect and support children risk being unsustainable, fragmented, or misaligned with their most urgent needs.

This report deepens that understanding by presenting findings from the **Multidimensional Child Vulnerability Index (MCVI)**. Developed in partnership with the Institute for Economics and Peace, the MCVI assesses child vulnerability across five domains: extreme deprivation, violence and abuse, discrimination, environmental threats, and resilience. By combining global datasets, it helps reveal patterns otherwise obscured,

providing the opportunity for more targeted and effective responses in the communities where World Vision operates.

At a time when global crises increasingly intersect, we call on the international community to amplify attention to child vulnerability as a policy and programming priority. The rising levels of deprivation, exposure to violence, and discrimination across parts of the region since 2021 underscore an urgent need for sustained investment, strengthened protection systems, and reinforced resilience at household, community, and institutional levels. Children cannot wait for stability to emerge, they need systems that protect them today, regardless of the context they are born into.

We hope that this report will serve not only as an analytic resource but as a catalyst for deeper collaboration, informed decision-making, and bold action. By centring our strategies on children, we can reverse the current trends and ensure that every child, in every context, has the opportunity to thrive.

1. ABOUT THE MULTIDIMENSIONAL CHILD VULNERABILITY INDEX

World Vision International and the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP) have developed the Multidimensional Child Vulnerability Index (MCVI), a unique tool to help better track and compare measures of child vulnerability worldwide. Developed through a collaborative process, the Index combines World Vision's programmatic priorities with established international research on child well-being, reputable data sources (including from UNICEF, the World Bank, OPHI, UN Habitat, WHO, DQ Institute, Pew Research, and more), and analytics expertise from IEP.

For Middle East and Eastern Europe Region, the MCVI covers 14 countries, leveraging 36 Indicators for the period of 2021 to 2024¹ to measure vulnerability across 5 core domains:

- **Exposure to Violence and Abuse** measured by: Children Exposed to Conflict and violence, Child Labour, Forcibly Displaced Children, Homicide Rate, Child Marriage, Adolescent Fertility Rate, Children in Detention, Online Safety, and Physical Punishment by Caregivers.
- **Extreme Deprivation** measured by: Severely Wasted Children, Overweight Children, Food Insecurity, Child Mortality, Drinking Water, Nutrition, Sanitation, Poverty, Expected Years of Schooling, Housing, and Immunization.
- **Extreme Discrimination** measured by: Female Birth Registration, Girls Out of School, Child Development, Abuse of Disabled Children, and Religious Restrictions.

- **Environmental Exposure** measured by: Climate and Environmental Hazards and Shocks, Natural Disasters, and Children in Slums.
- **Resilience of the Social Fabric** measured by: Well-Functioning Government, Sound Business Environment, Equitable Distribution of Resources, Acceptance of the Rights of Others, Good Relations with Neighbours, Free Flow of Information, High Levels of Human Capital, and Low Levels of Corruption.

A key feature of the Index is its ability to provide a holistic and comparable measure of child vulnerability across different countries and contexts. All MCVI indicator and **domain scores are calculated using a scale from 0 to 1, with 0 representing the highest level of vulnerability and 1 the lowest.** Based on these scores, countries are classified into five categories ranging from Very High to Very Low vulnerability.

MCVI scores are best used to identify broad vulnerability patterns rather than to develop precise country rankings. A more detailed description of the MCVI's methodology can be found in the Appendix. This includes a complete list of all sources used, information on the years of available data, and detailed methods related to the imputation, harmonization, banding and weighting of MCVI scores.

¹ Most data points were measured between 2021 and 2023/2024 and therefore do not reflect current events in the Middle East region, which have further exacerbated levels of child vulnerability.

ABOUT THIS REPORT: This regional summary outlines child vulnerability trends across the countries where World Vision works in the Middle East and East Europe. These include **Afghanistan, Albania, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Moldova, OPT², Romania, Syria, Türkiye and Ukraine**. The summary outlines current vulnerability as well as changes in vulnerability since 2021.

Where relevant, **World Vision's Annual Impact Measurement (AIM) and Reach data**, complemented by information on specific interventions, have been included to contextualize programmatic results and to illustrate pathways through which World Vision contributes to addressing child vulnerability. AIM is part of World Vision's global impact measurement initiative tracking 164 outcome, output and Meta indicators aligned with World Vision's Child Well-Being Outcomes and the Sustainable Development Goals. While AIM data is only collected in World Vision project areas to detect impact and is not nationally representative, it provides valuable community-level insight into child outcomes across health, nutrition, education, protection, and economic dimensions.

Some of the notable limitations for the report include:

- **Data availability and consistency across countries and indicators.** For several contexts, up to date data did not exist, requiring reliance on older datasets or national level estimates. Therefore, some indicators relied on **proxy measures**, particularly when child-specific data were unavailable. These constraints can lead to scores that reflect data gaps rather than true conditions, especially in countries with limited survey coverage or fast-changing dynamics.
- **Interpretation and comparability of results across countries and over time.** While the MCVI is designed to identify broad patterns, the use of a relative (quantile-based) classification system means that countries' vulnerability levels reflect global ranking positions rather than absolute thresholds. Differences in indicator years, uneven temporal coverage, and varying quality of underlying datasets can influence trajectories, making year-to-year comparisons less definitive.

Mentioned limitations underscore the need to view MCVI results as directional insights rather than precise rankings, and to pair them with contextual knowledge and field level evidence when informing programming or policy decisions. More details on limitations can be found in Appendix section.



² The index looks at the data for entire OPT, although World Vision only operates in the West Bank.

2. KEY FINDINGS

- 1 The Middle East and Eastern Europe region has an average **MCVI score of 0.61, making it slightly more vulnerable than the global average of 0.62**, reflecting combination of conflict, displacement, economic instability, discrimination and weakening institutional resilience across the region.
- 2 **Extreme Discrimination domain score experienced the biggest decrease**, reaching 0.61, driven mainly by the combined impact of food insecurity, household economic pressures, and unequal access to essential services in Albania, Armenia, Georgia, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Türkiye and Ukraine.
- 3 **Exposure to Violence and Abuse also deteriorated**, reaching 0.66, driven mainly by conflict, displacement, and social instability in Armenia, Jordan, Lebanon, the West Bank, Türkiye and Ukraine.
- 4 **Extreme Deprivation has worsened** with a domain score of 0.73, as food insecurity, economic pressures and worsening living conditions continued to affect children's well-being, particularly in Albania, Lebanon and the West Bank.
- 5 **Resilience fell** to 0.40, reflecting pressures on governance, information systems and social cohesion across several contexts, particularly Afghanistan, Lebanon, Romania, Syria, Ukraine and the West Bank.
- 6 Only **Environmental Exposure increased slightly**, reaching 0.58, with improvements in disaster preparedness and urban living conditions in countries such as Albania, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Romania.



3. REGIONAL OVERVIEW

The Middle East and Eastern Europe region presents a highly diverse child vulnerability landscape. While countries such as Romania and Georgia demonstrate relatively low levels of vulnerability, children in conflict-affected and economically fragile contexts continue to face overlapping risks linked to violence, displacement, deprivation, discrimination, and weakened institutional resilience.

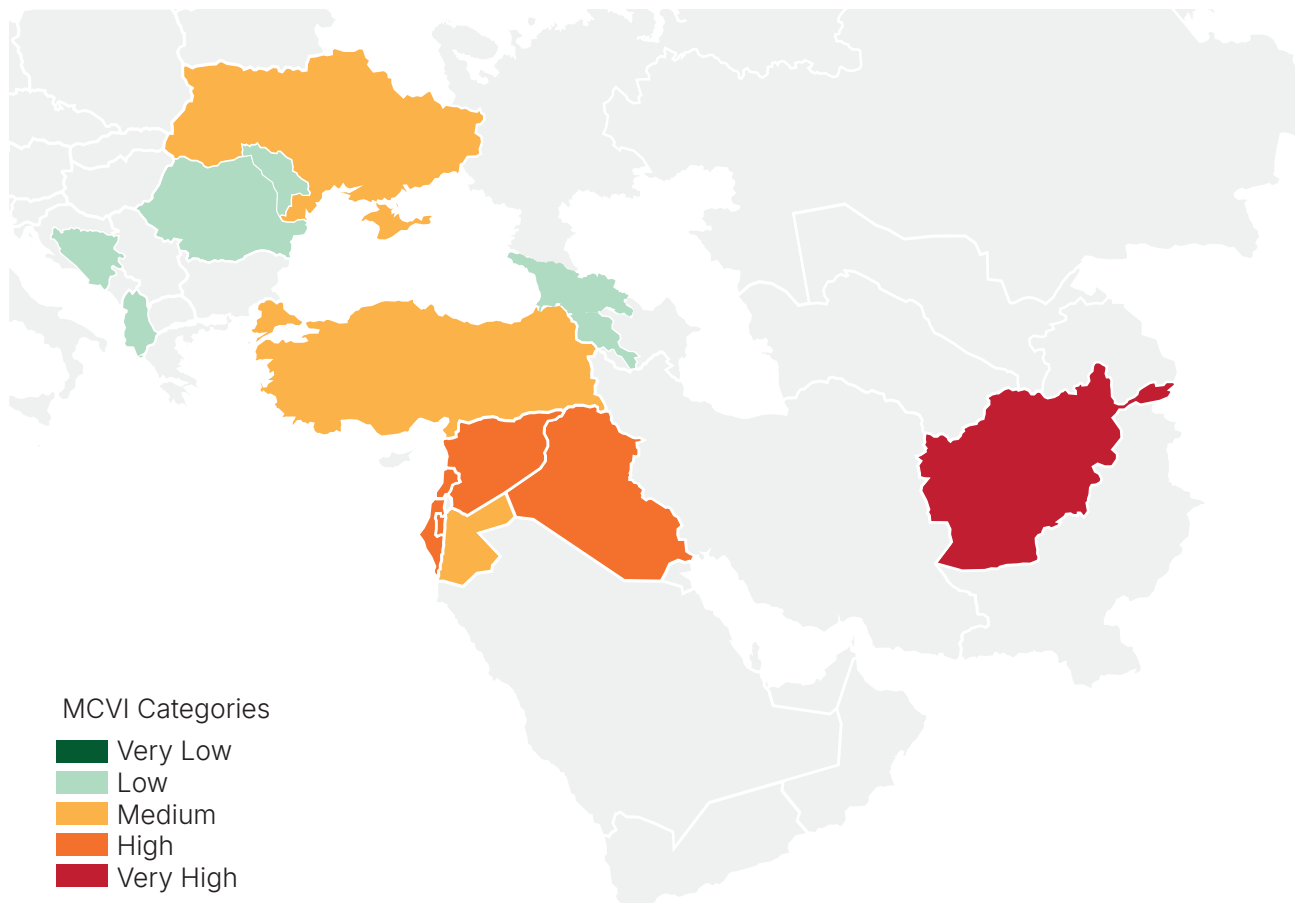
The region's overall vulnerability profile reflects the combined effects of protracted conflict, economic instability, governance challenges, and increasing social pressures affecting children's safety, well-being, and long-term development.

Across the region, conflict and displacement remain major drivers of vulnerability. Ongoing insecurity in Ukraine and the West Bank continues to expose children to protection risks and service disruptions, while Lebanon's economic crisis has compounded pressures on households, institutions, and social protection systems.

Afghanistan continues to experience multiple overlapping vulnerabilities linked to governance constraints, restrictions on information, and persistent humanitarian needs.

At the same time, several countries have demonstrated progress in disaster risk management and environmental preparedness, highlighting opportunities for building resilience even in fragile contexts.

Figure 1. Multidimensional Child Vulnerability in Middle East and Eastern Europe, 2025



4. VULNERABILITY DOMAIN OVERVIEW

4.1 Exposure to Violence and Abuse

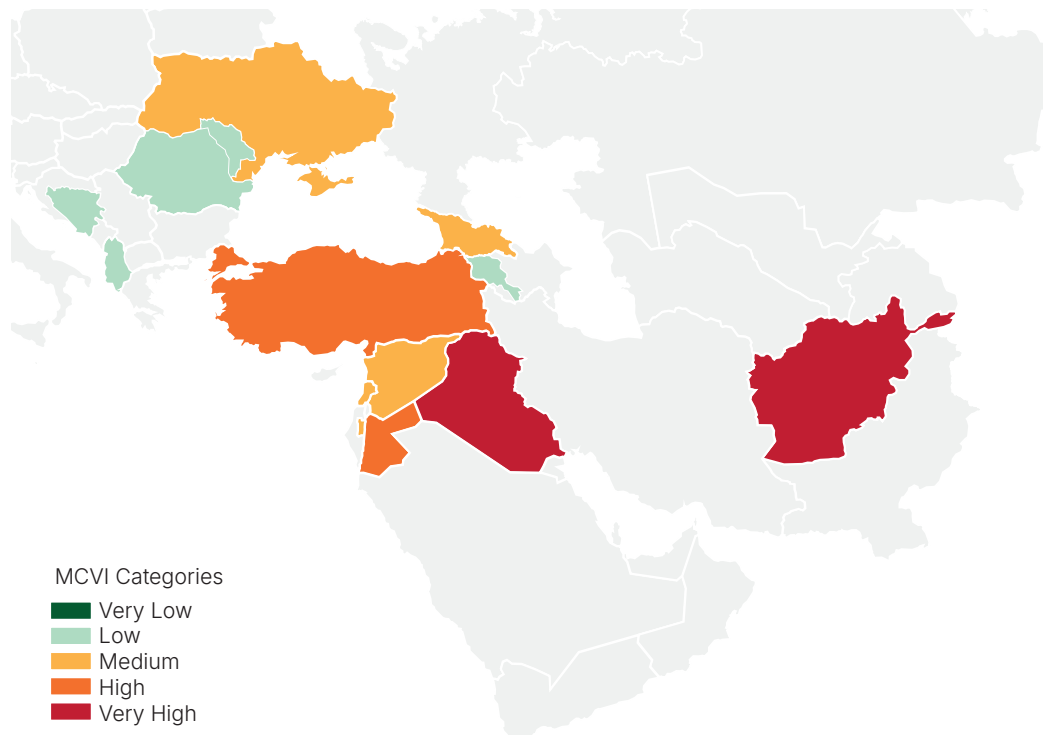
Domain Score: 0.66

Worsening: Armenia, Jordan, Lebanon, West Bank, Romania, Türkiye, Ukraine

The region's average Exposure to Violence and Abuse score is 0.66, placing it below the global average of 0.68.

Children's exposure to violence and abuse across the region continues to be shaped primarily by conflict, displacement, and social instability. The most significant pressures are evident in Ukraine, Lebanon, the West Bank, Türkiye, and Jordan, where insecurity, population movements, and economic stress have significantly increased risks for children. While Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria show signs of reduced exposure to active conflict compared to previous years, humanitarian needs remain substantial and children continue to face significant protection concerns. The region's vulnerability profile reflects the reality that even where conflict intensity decreases, displacement, trauma, and weakened protection systems often persist long after active hostilities subside.

Figure 2. Exposure to Violence and Abuse domain in Middle East and Eastern Europe, 2025



³ Comparisons between WV project-area AIM data and referenced studies are illustrative and do not establish causal attribution, as differences may reflect contextual factors beyond programme effects.

WORLD VISION'S RESPONSE

Despite a slight regional deterioration in Exposure to Violence and Abuse (−0.2%), World Vision's programme evidence demonstrates that targeted, community-based child protection and resilience interventions can contribute reducing violence risks for children and caregivers, even in fragile and conflict-affected settings.

AIM data, collected annually across WV programme areas, shows World Vision's targeted interventions in Iraq, Jordan, and Syria demonstrate measurable progress in reducing violence against children and women in project areas.

IRAQ

4.1%

of adolescents experienced physical or psychological aggression from caregivers in WV project areas
vs. 39% nationally
(WV prevalence study
"Empowered Women,
Empowered Children", (2022))

JORDAN

7.9%

of female caregivers experienced intimate partner violence in WV project areas
vs. 62% in non-WV areas
(WV prevalence study
"Empowered Women,
Empowered Children", (2022))

SYRIA

18%

of female caregivers experienced intimate partner violence in WV project areas
vs. 80% in non-WV areas
(WV prevalence study
"Empowered Women,
Empowered Children", (2022))

PROJECTS OVERVIEW DRIVING THESE RESULTS

Iraq | Education and Child Protection in West Mosul

Donor: Japan Platform (JPF)

From October 2022 to June 2025, the Japan Platform-funded *Education and Child Protection in West Mosul* project strengthened both learning outcomes and child protection systems for vulnerable children, affected by prolonged disruption to education. The project restored foundational literacy and numeracy skills for out of school and at-risk children aged 7–12 through Catch Up Programs delivered across six target schools, as well as reinforced school-based and community-level child protection mechanisms, by building the capacity of stakeholders within school system. At the community level, Community-based Child Protection Committees were established and strengthened for collective response to child protection risks, contributing to more resilient, protective environments for children in West Mosul.

Jordan | Road to Resilience (RtR) – Azraq Refugee Camp

Donor: Korea

Since 2016, the Korea-funded Road to Resilience project in Azraq Refugee Camp has focused on young children through Early Childhood and Education Development programming, supporting children and caregivers experiencing the psychological effects of displacement and conflict to access mental health and psychosocial support services, as well as at risk individuals to receive individualized case management and parents to develop more positive and nurturing caregiving practices through structured parenting sessions, contributing to safer and more supportive home environments. The project also focused on refugee adolescents and built their practical life skills that strengthen their ability to navigate challenges and pursue opportunities within and beyond the camp.

Syria | EMPOWER Project –IDP Camps, Azaz**Donor:** Irish Government

Since 2017, the Irish Government-funded EMPOWER project has delivered continuous protection and empowerment program for vulnerable women, girls, and children living in two IDP camps in Azaz, Aleppo Governorate. Through Women and Girls Safe Spaces (WGSS), women and girls have developed vocational skills and received start-up kits, translating training into tangible economic opportunities. They have also accessed psychosocial support and participated in awareness sessions on child protection and gender-based violence, strengthening their knowledge of rights, risks, and available services, which completed the protective ecosystem within the camps.

TO COMBAT CHILDREN'S EXPOSURE TO VIOLENCE IN FY25, WV MEER REACHED THOUSANDS OF THE MOST VULNERABLE CHILDREN WITH ESSENTIAL CHILD PROTECTION AND MENTAL HEALTH AND PSYCHOSOCIAL SERVICES, SUPPORTING CHILDREN, FAMILIES, AND COMMUNITIES AFFECTED BY CONFLICT, DISASTER, POVERTY, AND OTHER STRESSORS.

CHILD PROTECTION (CP)**348,853**

children reached in FY25

92% were the Most Vulnerable Children**MENTAL HEALTH & PSS (MHPSS)****57,841**

children reached in FY25

95% were the Most Vulnerable Children

Source: World Vision AIM FY25 Data | WV prevalence study "Empowered Women, Empowered Children", (2022) | Project reports

4.2 Extreme Deprivation

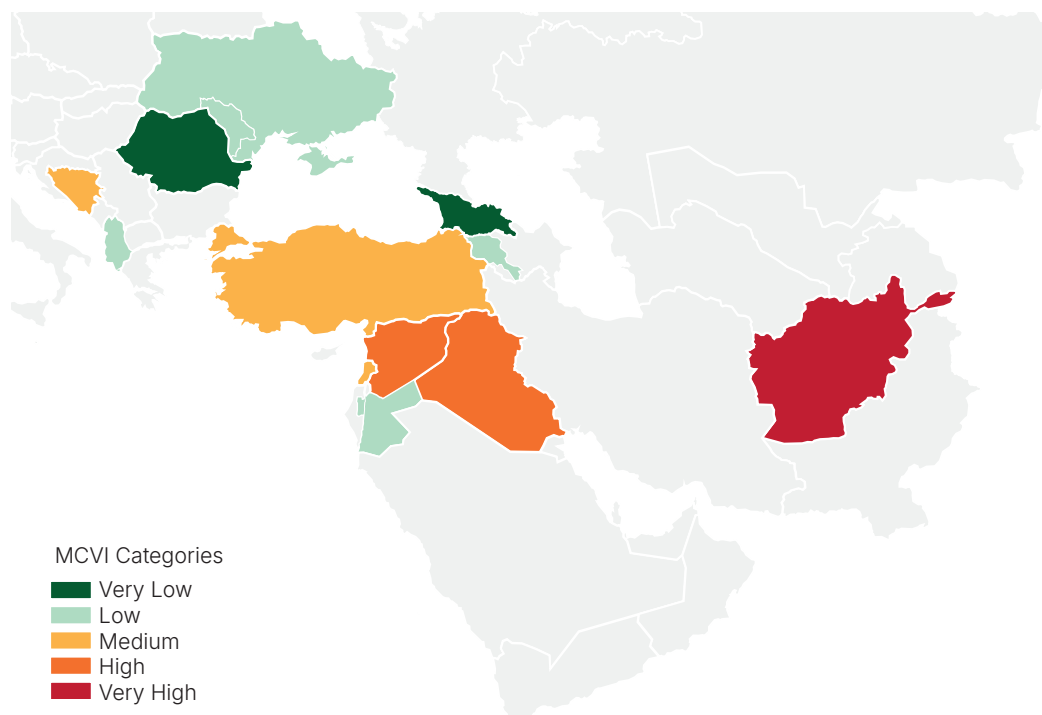
Domain Score: 0.73

Worsening: Albania, Lebanon, West Bank, Romania

Extreme deprivation remains driven by the combined impact of food insecurity, household economic pressures, and unequal access to essential services. Ukraine experienced the most significant deterioration in food security conditions, reflecting the ongoing impacts of conflict on markets, livelihoods, and service delivery. Lebanon continues to face economic challenges that affect household purchasing power and access to basic needs, while Albania recorded increasing concerns related to childhood overweight prevalence. Improvements in immunisation coverage across several countries demonstrate that progress remains possible when health systems receive sustained investment and support.



Figure 3. Extreme Deprivation domain in Middle East and Eastern Europe, 2025



WORLD VISION'S RESPONSE

While the index points to a worsening trend in Extreme Deprivation across region driven largely by rising food insecurity. World Vision's livelihoods and resilience programming in Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, and Türkiye demonstrates strong progress in improving household access to economic support services in WV project areas. While impact data below indicates promising results, overall situation in highlighted contexts remains challenging due to protracted and recurring crises, especially in countries such as Syria and Lebanon.

Türkiye
100%

of households have improved access to livelihood support services in WV project areas (AIM FY25)

Jordan
97%

of households have improved access to livelihood support services in WV project areas (AIM FY25)

Syria
82%

of households have improved access to livelihood support services in WV project areas (AIM FY25)

Lebanon
69%

of households have improved access to livelihood support services in WV project areas (AIM FY25)

PROJECTS OVERVIEW DRIVING THESE RESULTS

Jordan | Solid Waste Management (SWM) Project – Azraq Refugee Camp

Donor: GIZ

Since 2019, the GIZ-funded Solid Waste Management project in Azraq Refugee Camp has supported its residents to improve knowledge and practices around waste management and environmental health. Through structured community awareness campaigns, the project contributed to cleaner and safer living conditions within the camp. Refugees, particularly those with limited access to formal employment, have gained stable income and work experience through Cash-for-Work opportunities linked to waste collection and sorting operations, addressing immediate livelihood needs while building transferable skills.

Syria | Ultra Poor Graduation (UPG) Project – Azaz District, Aleppo**Donor:** WV Taiwan

Since 2024, WV Taiwan supported Ultra Poor Graduation project, directly implemented by WV Syria Response across three sub-districts in Azaz District, to move the most economically marginalised households onto a sustainable pathway out of extreme poverty. Participating households have formed and managed self-selected savings groups, gaining the financial discipline, collective support structures, and access to pooled resources, essential to longer-term economic stability. Participants have also developed practical livelihoods skills spanning core capacity building, market-driven vocational training, and entrepreneurship. Conditional cash grants through the business support scheme have translated these skills into tangible economic assets, enabling households to launch or consolidate their livelihoods.

Lebanon | AgriForward – Resilient Livelihoods & Social Cohesion (Akkar, Baalbek El Hermel, Bekaa)**Donor:** BMZ

Since 2023, the BMZ-funded AgriForward project has worked to strengthen livelihood resilience and social cohesion across Akkar, Baalbek El Hermel, and Bekaa, supporting both, host communities and displaced populations navigating compounding economic and social crises. Agricultural workers and farmers have developed stronger technical and soft skills, enabling them to adopt more sustainable farming practices and manage productive assets more effectively. Producer groups have been strengthened and better connected to markets, with participants benefiting from improved access to market information, value chain development support, and business advisory services that increase the competitiveness and sustainability of their livelihoods. Newly established and strengthened community groups and business councils have created durable platforms for local coordination, advocacy, and shared problem-solving. Awareness sessions on gender, GBV, PSEA, and safe referral pathways have contributed to safer community environments, particularly for women and girls.

TO STRENGTHEN CHILDREN'S WELL-BEING AND RESILIENCE IN FY25, WV MEER SUPPORTED THOUSANDS OF THE MOST VULNERABLE CHILDREN THROUGH NUTRITION, HEALTH, LIVELIHOODS, AND CASH ASSISTANCE PROGRAMMING - ENSURING FAMILIES HAVE ACCESS TO ESSENTIAL SERVICES, LIFE-SAVING SUPPORT, AND OPPORTUNITIES TO MEET THEIR BASIC NEEDS AND BUILD A MORE SECURE FUTURE

LIVELIHOODS**301,916**

children reached in FY25

100% were the Most Vulnerable Children**NUTRITION****578,425**

children reached in FY25

98% were the Most Vulnerable Children**CASH TRANSFERS (CASH)****259,803**

children reached in FY25

96% were the Most Vulnerable Children**HEALTH****514,152**

children reached in FY25

99% were the Most Vulnerable Children

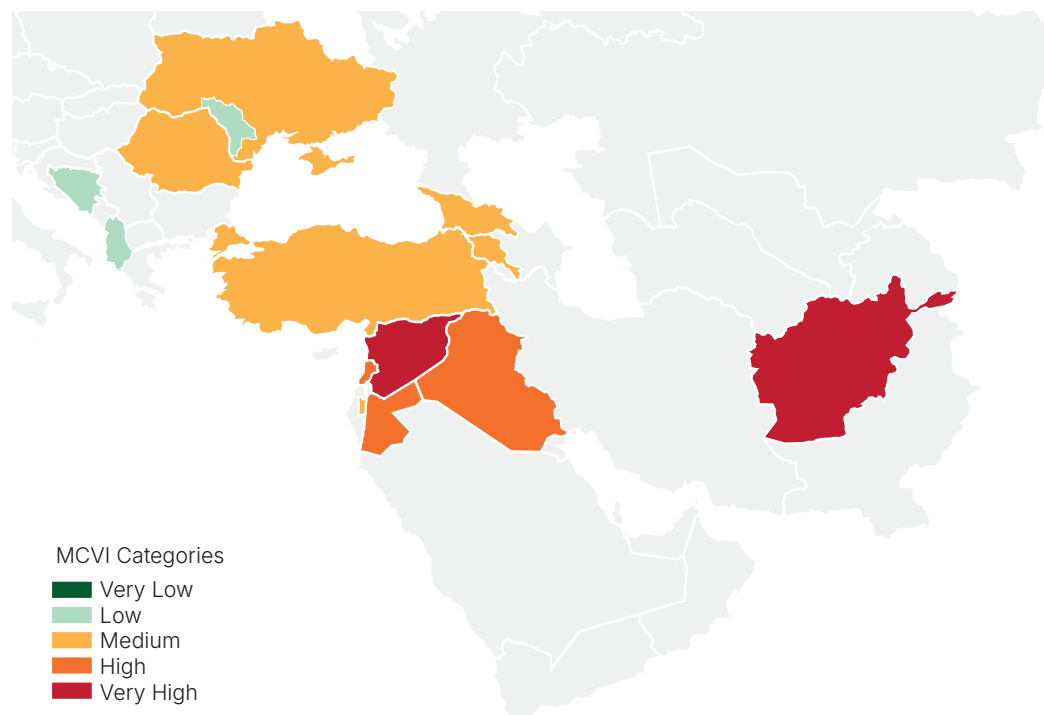
4.3 Extreme Discrimination

Domain Score: 0.61

Worsening: Albania, Armenia, Georgia, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Türkiye, Ukraine

The region's average Extreme Discrimination score is 0.61, placing it below the global average of 0.65. The region's discrimination challenges are increasingly influenced by restrictions that limit inclusion, participation, and equality of opportunity. Rising harmful social norms emerged as one of the most important drivers of vulnerability across several countries, with particularly pronounced deterioration observed in Iraq. These trends have implications beyond freedom of belief alone, as they often intersect with social exclusion, marginalisation, and reduced access to opportunities for vulnerable populations. Encouragingly, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Moldova, and Syria demonstrated more positive trajectories, suggesting that progress remains possible where inclusive policies and community cohesion are strengthened.

Figure 4. Extreme Discrimination domain in Middle East and Eastern Europe, 2025



WORLD VISION'S RESPONSE

While the index points to a 1.3% deterioration in Extreme Discrimination since 2021, largely driven by increasing religious restrictions and with Iraq showing the sharpest decline, programme-level evidence highlights that targeted interventions can counter these trends at the community level.

Evidence from World Vision's AIM data in Iraq and Albania shows measurable progress in reducing gender-based discrimination and fostering more inclusive attitudes among children, caregivers, and communities.

IRAQ**68.5%**

of households report women actively engaged in decision-making in WV project areas (AIM FY25)

vs. 29% nationally (WV prevalence study "Empowered Women, Empowered Children", 2022)

ALBANIA**75%**

of community members support gender-equitable attitudes in WV project areas (AIM FY25)

vs. 12% in non-WV areas (WV prevalence study "Empowered Women, Empowered Children", 2022)

PROJECTS OVERVIEW DRIVING THESE RESULTS**Iraq** | Safe Returns Project – Ninewa**Donor:** DFAT (ANCP)

From July 2020 to June 2025, the ANCP-funded Safe Returns project supported conflict-affected returnees in Ninewa Governorate to rebuild their lives through an integrated Nexus programming, addressing psychosocial recovery, economic reintegration, and social cohesion. Micro, small, and medium enterprises — including those led by women, people with disabilities, and other marginalised groups — have been supported to grow more viable and sustainable through business development training and mentorship, while smallholder farmers have been supported to adopt improved agricultural practices through the Farmer Field School approach, enhancing food security and income. Gender Transformative Dialogue Sessions have contributed to shifts in attitudes and social norms, while faith and community leaders and teachers have been equipped to promote conflict prevention, peacebuilding, and social cohesion within their spheres of influence, with peace programming delivered directly in three schools to reach children and youth at a formative stage. Drought-resistant trees planted across schools, municipal, and community areas contributing to environmental resilience and climate adaptation.

Albania | RISE Her (Revitalize Independence and Solid Empowerment for Her) – Elbasan Region**Donor:** EU

Through the EU-funded RISE Her project, grassroots Civil Society Organisations across seven municipalities in the Elbasan Region have been supported to develop stronger institutional capacities through targeted capacity building and mentoring. A sub-granting scheme has channelled resources directly to CSO-led initiatives. Awareness campaigns and advocacy efforts have broadened public understanding of women's rights and available services. Women affected by or at risk of gender-based violence have accessed psychosocial support services, strengthening their resilience and recovery, while financial support and economic empowerment activities have improved their material independence and reduced vulnerability to exploitation and abuse.

TO ADVANCE INCLUSION, WELL-BEING, AND SPIRITUAL RESILIENCE IN FY25, WV MEER REACHED HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF THE MOST VULNERABLE CHILDREN THROUGH GENDER EQUALITY, DISABILITY, AND SOCIAL INCLUSION (GEDSI) AND FAITH & DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMING - EMPOWERING CHILDREN AND FAMILIES TO OVERCOME BARRIERS, HEAL FROM STRESSORS, AND STRENGTHEN THEIR SENSE OF BELONGING AND HOPE.

GEDSI

317,694

children reached in FY25

99% were the Most Vulnerable Children

FAITH & DEVELOPMENT (F&D)

46,085

children reached in FY25

82% were the Most Vulnerable Children

Source: World Vision AIM FY25 Data / WV prevalence study "Empowered Women, Empowered Children", (2022) / Project reports

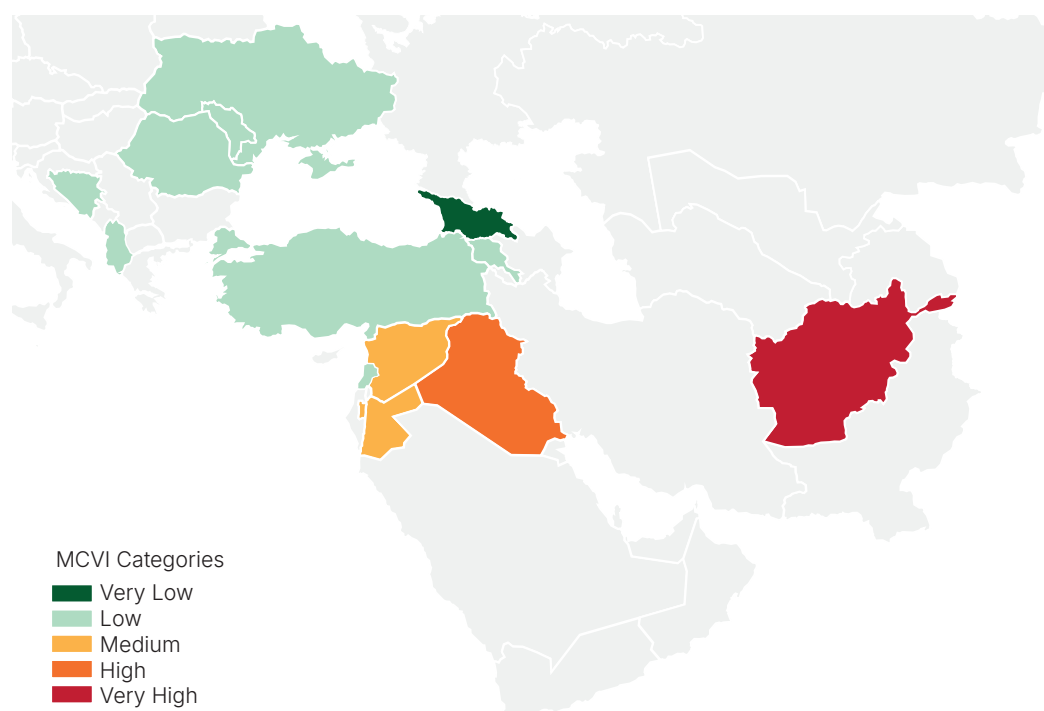
4.4 Environmental Exposure

Domain Score: 0.58

■ **Worsening:** Afghanistan, Moldova

Environmental vulnerability presents a more mixed picture than other domains. Several countries have made progress in strengthening preparedness for natural disasters and reducing environmental risks, particularly Albania and Romania. These improvements suggest that targeted investments in preparedness, early warning systems, and risk reduction measures can deliver meaningful gains even within resource-constrained environments. However, Afghanistan and Moldova continue to face substantial environmental and climate-related pressures, highlighting the need for continued investment in adaptation and resilience-building measures for vulnerable children and communities.

Figure 5. Environmental Exposure domain in Middle East and Eastern Europe, 2025



WORLD VISION'S RESPONSE

World Vision MEER is committed to integrating **Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)** and community resilience into its programming to address environmental and climate degradation and related vulnerabilities across the region. WV is investing significantly in helping communities reduce vulnerabilities in their water, energy, and food systems, while also working to strengthen response systems through the development of **Anticipatory Action (AA) plans** and community, municipal, and national **Early Warning Systems (EWS)**, specifically within fragile contexts — where the need is greatest and conventional humanitarian response alone is insufficient. WV MEER is deepening its commitment across five strategic priorities:

- **Programming excellence** is being advanced through the evolution of climate-smart agriculture, climate-resilient WASH, risk-informed health and social infrastructure, Early Warning Systems, and Community-Based Disaster Risk Management.
- **Partnerships** with international donors, local organisations, technical agencies, and government institutions are being strengthened to improve both, the scale and quality of climate adaptation programming.
- **Dedicated capacity development** investments are equipping staff, partners, and communities with skills in DRR, anticipatory action, climate and environmental vulnerability assessments, and Early Warning Systems.
- **Evidence** on the effectiveness of DRR and anticipatory action interventions is being systematically gathered and analysed to drive continuous programmatic improvement.
- **Connections with green and climate adaptation funders** are being prioritized and deepened.

SYRIA

Anticipatory Action in fragile contexts

in partnership with a local organisations WV Syria, codeveloped forecast based anticipatory action systems to mitigate the worst effects of droughts and floods for the most vulnerable in communities in Northeast Syria to address service provision gaps arising from fragile governance structures.

JERUSALEM WEST BANK

Community driven climate resilient food systems & livelihood

WV JWB has been supporting the most vulnerable Palestinian communities to mitigate climate vulnerabilities in their communities. Green Palestine project has enabled communities to build climate resilient livelihoods in food production, including interventions in climate smart agriculture and water resource management.

LEBANON

Early Warning System development

Lebanon winters brings heavy rain, and recurrent flooding, WV Lebanon has invested in EWS integrating new remote catchment river monitoring devices into EWS for and therefore building a window for vulnerable downstream communities to undertake forecast based early actions.

TO PROTECT CHILDREN'S HEALTH, SAFETY, AND DIGNITY IN FY25, WV MEER PROVIDED LIFE-SAVING WASH AND CLIMATE ADAPTATION SUPPORT TO HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF THE MOST VULNERABLE CHILDREN -ENSURING ACCESS TO CLEAN WATER, SAFE SANITATION, AND CLIMATE ADAPTATION ASSISTANCE FOR FAMILIES AFFECTED BY CONFLICT, DISASTER, AND HUMANITARIAN CRISES

WASH

1,781,795

children reached in FY25

99% were the Most Vulnerable Children

ENVIRONMENTAL, STEWARDSHIP AND CLIMATE ADAPTATION (ESCA)

396,333

children reached in FY25

99% were the Most Vulnerable Children

Source: World Vision MEER — Anticipatory Action Regional Summary (2024) | AA Pilot funded by Aktion Deutschland Hilft (ADH), October 2023 – December 2024 | Project reports

4.5 Resilience

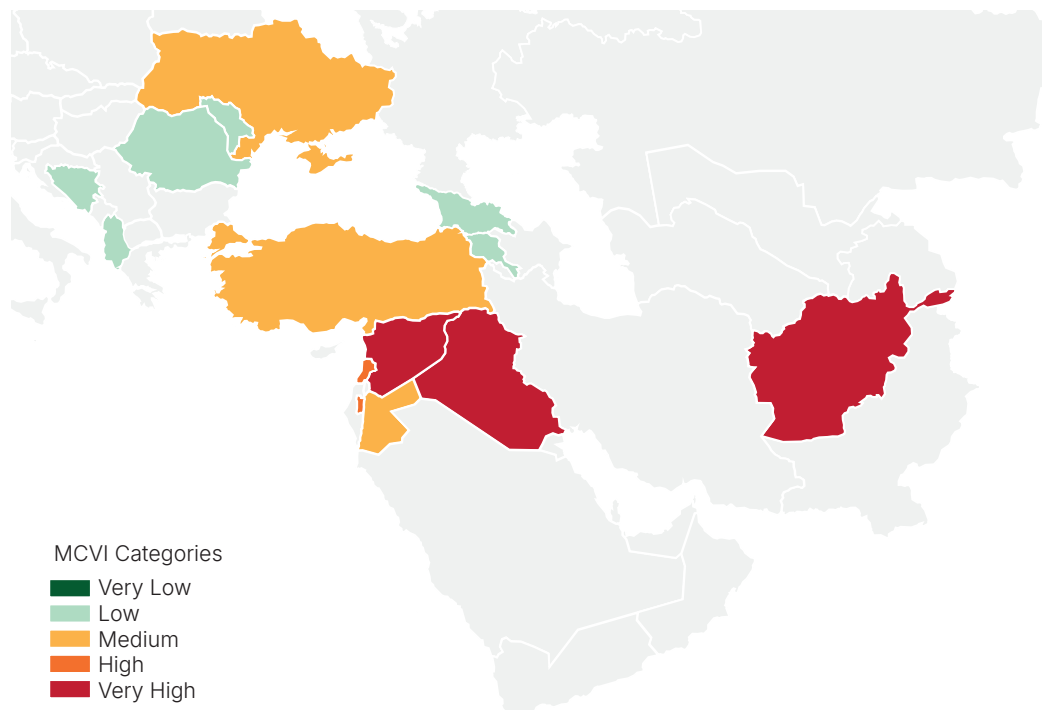
Domain Score: 0.40

Worsening: Afghanistan, Georgia, Lebanon, West Bank, Romania, Syria, Ukraine

Resilience remains one of the region's most significant areas of concern, with reported score of 0.40, which is below global average of 0.47. Challenges are driven not only by household-level vulnerabilities but also by broader pressures on governance systems, civic space, and access to information. Afghanistan experienced particularly severe deterioration in information-related indicators, contributing to broader concerns about institutional resilience and social stability. While several countries recorded improvements in human capital, these gains were not sufficient to offset wider pressures affecting governance, transparency, and information ecosystems. The findings highlight that strengthening resilience requires investment not only in communities and households, but also in the systems and institutions that support children's well-being over the long term.



Figure 6. Resilience domain in Middle East and Eastern Europe, 2025



WORLD VISION'S RESPONSE

It is important to highlight that resilience is shaped by the capacities of households and communities, as well as by the governance structures, institutional environments, and information ecosystems within which they operate. World Vision's programming, however, operates primarily at the household and community level - strengthening the relational and social foundations that enable children and families to withstand and recover from adversity. While programme-level results do not directly address macro-level governance or media freedom indicators, they represent an essential building block of broader systemic resilience: communities with stronger social cohesion, higher self-efficacy, and more positive family relationships are better positioned to engage with - and hold accountable - the systems around them.

Household & Community Resilience

GEORGIA

77%

of households report good self-efficacy in WV project areas (AIM FY25)

ALBANIA

38%

of households report good community cohesion in WV project areas (AIM FY25)

Adolescent-Caregiver Relations

IRAQ

85%

of adolescents report positive & peaceful relations with caregivers in WV project areas (AIM FY25)

UKRAINE

84%

of adolescents report positive & peaceful relations with caregivers — Ukraine Crisis Response participants (AIM FY25)

ALBANIA

75%

of adolescents report positive & peaceful relations with caregivers in WV project areas (AIM FY25)

PROJECTS OVERVIEW DRIVING THESE RESULTS

Georgia | ERTAD - Supporting Poverty Alleviation through Ultra Poor Graduation (UPG)
Donor: SIDA

From January 2023, the SIDA-funded ERTAD project has supported the most economically marginalised households to build sustainable pathways out of extreme poverty across five regions in Georgia. Participating households have strengthened their resilience through improved access to social services, consumption support, and psychological counselling, reducing the immediate vulnerabilities that trap families in cycles of deprivation. Women in particular have gained greater economic agency through asset transfers and livelihood and entrepreneurship training. Participants have supported to develop stronger financial management capabilities through savings groups and financial literacy coaching and have been linked to formal financial services, improving their ability to manage risk, accumulate assets and withstand future shocks.

Albania | Empowering Lives through Livestock & Child Protection – Durrës & Tirana
Donor: WV US

Through the WV US-supported Livestock project and Child Protection programming in Durrës and Tirana, World Vision Albania has Supported vulnerable households to develop more stable and diversified livelihoods through the provision of dairy animals, livestock feed, and barn infrastructure, supported by training in animal care, dairy production, business skills, and market linkages. Family relationships have been strengthened through the Celebrating Families curriculum, which focuses on positive and nurturing caregiving practices, creating safer and more supportive home environments for children. At the community level, social cohesion has improved as households engage collectively in shared activities, while grassroots partner organisations have been empowered to sustain and expand community-based support beyond direct project implementation.

Iraq | Faith & Social Cohesion (F&SC) Integration Project**Donor:** WV US

The WV US-funded Faith and Social Cohesion Integration project strengthened protective environments and family wellbeing in communities affected by fragility across Hamdaniya, Tooz, and Erbil, engaging multi-faith leaders, churches, and community actors as central agents of change. Multi-faith leaders have been trained to actively promote positive peace, social cohesion, and child protection within their congregations and communities. Inter-faith dialogue sessions have fostered mutual understanding and collaborative problem-solving across faith communities, contributing to more cohesive social environments in areas where division and distrust have historically undermined community resilience. Child protection systems have been strengthened through the establishment and capacity building of Child Protection Committees to equip members with improved skills to identify at-risk children, navigate referral pathways, and mobilise community-level responses to protection risks.

Ukraine | Child Protection & MHPSS Programming**Donor:** Multiple Donors

Since 2022, World Vision Ukraine Crisis Response and local partners have supported conflict-affected children and caregivers through integrated Child Protection and Mental Health and Psychosocial Support programming across Ukraine. Through Child Friendly Spaces, positive parenting sessions, psychosocial support services, safe learning environments, and community-based child protection interventions, children and caregivers affected by displacement and conflict have strengthened emotional wellbeing, resilience, and protective family relationships. These combined interventions strengthened supportive caregiving practices, improved communication within families, and helped adolescents and caregivers rebuild trust and emotional connection despite displacement, stress, and prolonged uncertainty caused by war. Safe and inclusive spaces also enabled vulnerable and displaced children - including children with special needs - to safely engage with peers, restore confidence, and strengthen positive social and family connections, contributing to more protective and supportive environments for children across the response.

Source: World Vision AIM FY25 Data | Project reports



5. STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES

The region's MCVI score is below the global average and has deteriorated since 2021. Relative progress is evident in countries where governance reforms have taken hold and the opposite is true where they have not. Programming should, therefore, capitalise on deepening partnerships with government institutions, supporting civil society accountability mechanisms, and scaling evidence-based service delivery models. In governance-weak contexts like Afghanistan, adaptive programming approaches are essential, working through community structures, maintaining service continuity despite institutional challenges, and building local capacity for resilience.

Environmental Exposure has improved by 1.5% since 2021, led by better preparedness for Natural Disasters, including in Albania and Romania. Yet Afghanistan continues to face pronounced environmental and climate-related risks, underscoring the need for integrated adaptation strategies, particularly in agriculture.

In climate-vulnerable contexts, programming must integrate disaster risk reduction across all sectors. Priority actions include establishing community-based early warning systems, promoting climate-resilient livelihoods (drought-resistant crops, water harvesting), pre-positioning emergency supplies in disaster-prone areas, and supporting household-level adaptation (improved housing, diversified income). Advocacy for climate finance directed to fragile states, with child-centered adaptation priorities, can unlock critical resources.

Conflict and displacement remain a principal driver of vulnerability across the region which comes with access constraints, market

disruption, damage to infrastructure and interrupted services. Exposure to Violence and Abuse has worsened in parts of the region, notably Ukraine, JWB and Türkiye, despite recent improvements in displacement dynamics in Syria.

Conflict-affected programming must prioritize child protection across humanitarian response. This includes expanding psychosocial support for trauma-affected children, strengthening community-based protection in displacement settings, integrating education into emergencies to prevent learning loss, and supporting family tracing and reunification where children are separated. In protracted displacement contexts like Syrian refugee populations in neighbouring countries, shifting from emergency to development approaches, livelihoods support, quality education, child-friendly spaces, can reduce vulnerability.

Overall, results indicate that reversing current trends requires more than sector-specific responses. The domains assessed are deeply interconnected: poverty amplifies protection risks; climate shocks compound food insecurity and displacement; and weak governance undermines the systems that children depend on. Targeted governance reform, climate adaptation, and strengthened protection systems are therefore most effective when pursued as part of integrated NEXUS programming, with cross-sector approaches that address the structural and relational drivers of vulnerability simultaneously — ensuring that the most vulnerable children are reached through programming that reflects the complexity of the challenges they face.

6. APPENDIX: MCVI METHODOLOGY

6.1 Background

The primary goal of the Multidimensional Child Vulnerability Index (MCVI) is to track, compare and visualize a variety of child vulnerability measures across the world. This initiative forms part of World Vision's ongoing effort to enhance the scope, targeting and impact of its humanitarian, development, advocacy and peacebuilding programming.

The Index is designed to measure child vulnerability at a subnational level based on five domains:

- Extreme Deprivation
- Extreme Discrimination
- Exposure to Violence and Abuse
- Environmental Exposure
- Resilience

The Index was developed through a collaborative process that combined World Vision's programmatic priorities with established international research on child well-being and data availability at the subnational level. The Index represents the first iteration of this global initiative.

6.2 Data Sources and Imputation

The aim of the MCVI has been to collate as much subnational data on child vulnerability as possible globally. While this has been possible in some cases, in others there *does not exist a subnational dataset on the indicators*. As such a combination of imputations techniques have been used as suggested by the **OECD Handbook on Constructing Composite Indicators** (OECD and European Union 2008).

This Handbook outlines standard imputation techniques, which form the basis of this

analysis. The MCVI uses the following techniques:

- **Cold deck imputation.** Replacing the missing value with a value from an external source, e.g. from a previous realization of the same survey.
- **Hot deck imputation.** Filling in blank cells with individual data, drawn from "similar" responding units. For example, missing values for individual income may be replaced with the income of another respondent with similar characteristics, e.g. age, sex, race, place of residence, family relationships, job, etc.
- **Unconditional imputation:** The sample mean (median, mode) of the recorded values for the given individual indicator replaces the missing values.

IEP's approach has been to use a preferential series of imputation techniques that set the existing subnational data in primacy. The imputation techniques to fill in missing data have been, in order of preference:

1. **Cold Deck Imputation:** Supplement missing subnational data with national level statistics where possible. For additional data gaps, use **hot deck imputation** using a machine learning technique called xgboost to complete the dataset.
2. **Hot Deck Imputation:** Give missing areas the regional average.
3. **Unconditional:** Manual assign missing values a set number.

In terms of existing datasets that have been used in the MCVI, Table 1 presents the indicators selected to capture these domains and includes information on their source and year of their most recent update.

Table 1: The following indicators and sources have been used to construct the MCVI.

Indicator	Subnational Source	National Source	Latest Year
Extreme Deprivation			
Severely Wasted Children	GDL	UNICEF	2023
Overweight Children	GDL	UNICEF	2023
Food Insecurity	IEP	-	2024
Child Mortality	OPHI	-	2023
Drinking Water	OPHI	-	2023
Nutrition	OPHI	World Bank	2023
Sanitation	OPHI	-	2023
Poverty	OPHI	-	2023
Expected Years of Schooling	GDL	UNDP	2023
Housing	OPHI	-	2023
Immunization	-	WHO, UNICEF	2024
Extreme Discrimination			
Female Birth Registration	-	World Bank	2023
Girls Out of School	-	World Bank	2023
Child Development	-	UNICEF	2024
Abuse of Disabled Children	-	UNICEF	2023
Religious Restrictions	-	Pew	2021
Environmental Exposure			
Climate and Environmental Shocks	-	UNICEF	2023
Natural Disasters	IEP	-	2024
Children Living in Slums	-	UN Habitat	2024
Resilience			
Well-Functioning Government	-	IEP	2024
Sound Business Environment	-	IEP	2024
Equitable Distribution of Resources	-	IEP	2024
Acceptance of the Rights of Others	-	IEP	2024
Good Relations with Neighbours	-	IEP	2024
Free Flow of Information	-	IEP	2024
High Levels of Human Capital	-	IEP	2024
Low Levels of Corruption	-	IEP	2024

Indicator	Subnational Source	National Source	Latest Year
Exposure to Violence and Abuse			
Children Exposed to Conflict and Terrorism	ACLED, Terrorism Tracker	-	2024
Child Labour	-	UNICEF	2023
Forcibly Displaced Children	-	UNHCR	2024
Homicide Rate	-	WHO	2021
Child Marriage	-	UNICEF	2023
Adolescent Fertility Rate	-	World Bank	2023
Children in Detention	-	UNICEF	2024
Child Online Safety	-	DQ Institute	2023

6.3 Country Inclusion

Countries have been selected for inclusion in the MCVI using the following three criteria:

- **(1)** The country has a World Vision office OR **(2)** the country is in IEP's Global Peace Index AND **(3)** there is available country data for most of the indicators in the MCVI.

6.4 The Banding Process

To aggregate the incommensurable indicators, all indicators have been banded (normalized). This means each indicator is scaled to a score ranging between 0 and 1, relative to the initial global range. Appropriate minimum and maximum values are, therefore, chosen for each indicator so that any values below the minimum are assigned 0 and values above the maximum are assigned 1. All other values are scaled between 0 and 1, equivalent to their position in the original minimum-maximum range.

For example, for the *literacy rate* indicator, a higher score reflects a more desirable situation. Therefore, in this case, the banding process has assigned the largest data point a

value of 1. Conversely, the lowest data point in the indicator has been assigned a value of 0, while all other data are scaled relative to these two points. This process is referred to as forward banding. On the other hand, a lower score in the *mortality* indicator reflects a less desirable situation. In this case, the data are reverse banded, so the lowest value is assigned 1 while the highest is assigned 0.

An integral part of the banding process is to set appropriate minimum and maximum cut-off values for the banded scores. Some data have a normal distribution and, therefore, outliers can be easily defined as those greater than three standard deviations from the mean. However, other datasets do not follow the bell-curved distribution trend. Several considerations are, therefore, essential in choosing the appropriate technique: the nature of the data, the distribution, the purpose of the index, the information to be conveyed and so on. When investigating global datasets, very few can be classified as having a normal distribution. The presence of outliers defines the variance, skewing both the minimum and maximum values. To account for this, IEP has set artificial minimum and maximum values to safeguard that results are not too heavily influenced by outliers.

Therefore, for year y , a forward banded score is calculated for indicator i by Equation 1. A reverse banded score is calculated using Equation 2.

$$Banded_i = 1 + 4 \times \frac{V_{gy} - MinT\ hresh_g}{MaxT\ hresh_g - MinT\ hresh_g} \quad (1)$$

$$Banded_i = 1 + 4 \times \left(1 - \frac{V_{gy} - MinT\ hresh_i}{MaxT\ hresh_g - MinT\ hresh_g}\right) \quad (2)$$

Where V is the value of is the transformed indicator at area g in year y .

6.5 Weighting Indicators and Domains

Within each domain, all indicators are weighted equally, indicating that they together comprise the core features of the respective domain and are equally essential. Equal weighting was selected to avoid imposing normative judgements about indicator importance and to maintain transparency. Similarly, each domain is equally weighted towards the overall score. **The resulting Index scores are banded on a 0–1 scale.**

weighted averages of their component indicators. All scores remain on the 0–1 scale.

Countries are then grouped into five vulnerability categories based on how they rank globally

- Very High Vulnerability (bottom 25%)
- High Vulnerability (25th–45th percentile)
- Moderate Vulnerability (45th–65th percentile)
- Low Vulnerability (65th–85th percentile)
- Very Low Vulnerability (top 15%)

6.6 MCVI Levels of Vulnerability

Stage 1: Indicator Normalization

All indicators are converted to a 0–1 scale, where:

0 = highest vulnerability

1 = lowest vulnerability

This conversion happens at the subnational level as explained in the Banding Process section. Each country's indicator score is then calculated as the average of all subnational scores within that country.

Stage 2: Creating Overall Scores and Vulnerability Classification

Country scores for each domain and the overall MCVI are calculated as equally

This quantile-based approach ensures meaningful differentiation across countries while acknowledging that child vulnerability remains widespread globally. The method maintains consistency with international development practice, where relative performance often matters as much as absolute thresholds for policy prioritization and resource allocation.

6.7 Identified Issues and Limitations

During the construction of the Index, several data-related challenges were identified that may affect the interpretation of results.

Data Availability

Every effort was made to source the most recent and reliable data for each indicator. However, for some countries or indicators, up-to-date data were not available. In such cases, the most recent datasets were used, which may not fully capture subsequent changes in child vulnerability. For certain indicators, particularly those with subnational detail, such as those from the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI), data availability varied by year and coverage. This reflects a necessary trade-off between achieving greater spatial granularity and maintaining consistent temporal coverage across the Index. As a result, the performance of some countries may appear higher or lower than expected, particularly where data do not span the full reference period.

Country Coverage

While the Index aims for comprehensive geographic coverage, certain indicators were not collected or made publicly available for all countries. To address these gaps, imputation techniques were applied to generate the most accurate and representative estimates possible. These methods were selected to maintain internal consistency while minimizing potential bias in cross-country comparisons.

Limited Subnational Data and use of National Estimates

The MCVI is designed to provide a subnational perspective on child vulnerability, capturing variation within countries wherever data permit. Every effort was made to include subnational data sources to ensure spatial depth and policy relevance. However, subnational information

is not available for all indicators or domains. In such cases, national-level data were used to fill gaps, which may limit the ability to capture local disparities in vulnerability. This approach balances the need for comparability across countries with the objective of providing the most granular analysis possible given existing data constraints.

Limited Child-Specific Data and Use of Proxy Indicators

Because the Index focuses specifically on children, proxy measures were required for some indicators where child-specific data were unavailable. For example, where data on children living in slums were not updated, the overall population living in slum conditions was used as a proxy. As a result, some indicators combine structural measures with those that directly reflect children's lived experiences. This approach ensures that each domain of the MCVI remains comprehensive while recognising current limitations in the global availability of child-focused data.

These limitations should be considered when interpreting cross-country comparisons. MCVI scores are best used to identify broad vulnerability patterns rather than precise country rankings.

6.9 References

OECD, and European Union. 2008. Hand-book on Constructing Composite Indicators: Methodology and User Guide. OECD. <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264043466-en>.

6.10 Indicator Description

INDICATOR	DESCRIPTION FROM THE SOURCE.
Extreme Deprivation	
Severely Wasted Children	Percentage of children aged 0–59 months who are wasted (weight-for-height below –3 SD of WHO Child Growth Standards).
Overweight Children	Percentage of children aged 0–59 months who are above three standard deviations from median weight-for-height of the WHO Child Growth Standards.
Food Insecurity	A composite indicator of food security that measures availability, accessibility, affordability, and supply chain risks. It combines national indices (EIU Global Food Security Index, WFP Proteus Index) with subnational inequality and conflict measures, weighted to produce a population-adjusted score.
Child Mortality	A child under 18 has died in the household in the five-year period preceding the survey.
Drinking Water	Children under 18 living in households where the source of drinking water is not safe or requires a 30+ minute roundtrip.
Nutrition	Any person under 18 years of age for whom nutritional information is available is undernourished.
Sanitation	Children living in a household that has unimproved or no sanitation facility, or where sanitation is improved but shared with other households.
Poverty	Aggregated score of the three dimensions of poverty (Health, Education, Living Standards) at the subnational level for children under 18.
Expected Years of Schooling	Number of expected years of schooling for girls and boys at age 6.
Housing	Children living in a household with inadequate housing materials in any of the three components: floor, roof, or walls.
Immunization	Share of One-Year-Olds Fully Immunized Against Diphtheria, Pertussis, Tetanus, Measles, Hepatitis B, Polio, Hib, Rubella, Rotavirus, Pneumococcal.
Extreme Discrimination	
Female Birth Registration	Completeness of birth registration among children under age 5.
Girls Out of School	Percentage of primary-school-age girls not enrolled in primary or secondary school.
Child Development	Proportion of children under 5 who are developmentally on track in health, learning, and psychosocial well-being (% of 36–59-month-olds on track in $\geq 3/4$ domains: literacy-numeracy, physical, socio-emotional, learning).

INDICATOR	DESCRIPTION FROM THE SOURCE.
Abuse of Disabled Children	Percentage of children aged 2–14 with one or more functional difficulties who experienced severe physical punishment in the past month.
Religious Restrictions	Restrictions on religion imposed by governments and individuals (Government Restrictions and Social Hostilities).
Environmental Exposure	
Climate and Environmental Hazards	Exposure of children, young people, and their communities to climate and environmental hazards, shocks and stresses, including natural, anthropogenic, and socio-natural hazards.
Natural Disasters	A composite indicator measuring subnational climate disaster risk, combining the frequency and intensity of climate hazards (e.g., floods, storms, heatwaves) with population density and poverty levels.
Children in Slums	Percentage of children under 18 living in slum households; if unavailable, overall slum population used.
Resilience	
Well-Functioning Government	Composite: Government Openness & Transparency, Effectiveness, Rule of Law.
Sound Business Environment	Composite: Regulatory Quality, Financial Institutions Index, GDP per capita.
Equitable Distribution of Resources	Composite: Inequality-adjusted life expectancy, access to public services, equality of opportunity.
Acceptance of Rights of Others	Composite: Gender inequality, group grievance, socio-economic exclusion.
Good Relations with Neighbours	Composite: Equal treatment laws, international tourism, external intervention.
Free Flow of Information	Composite: Press freedom, quality of information, internet penetration.
High Levels of Human Capital	Composite: NEET youth %, researchers in R&D, healthy life expectancy.
Low Levels of Corruption	Composite: Control of corruption, factionalized elites, public sector theft.
Exposure to Violence and Abuse	
Children Exposed to Conflict and Terrorism	Composite indicator of children under 18 exposed to violence and terrorism, measured as the number of conflict/terrorism related deaths per 100,000 children.
Child Labour	Percentage of children 5–17 involved in child labour, using age-specific thresholds for work and household services.

INDICATOR	DESCRIPTION FROM THE SOURCE.
Forcibly Displaced Children	Number of forcibly displaced children (0–17).
Homicide Rate	Rate per 100k of children (0–14) whose cause of death was interpersonal violence, collective violence, or legal intervention. When data was not available, the homicide rate was used instead.
Child Marriage	Percentage of women aged 20–24 first married or in union before ages 15 or 18.
Adolescent Fertility Rate	Number of births per 1,000 women aged 15–19.
Children in Detention	Subset of children in conflict with the law who are deprived of liberty in the administration of justice.
Child Online Safety Index	Composite measure of Children's Safe Use of Technology, Family Support, School Digital Citizenship Education, ICT Company Responsibility, Government Policies and Regulation, and Technology Infrastructure.
Physical Punishment by Caregivers	Percentage of children 1–14 years old who experienced violent discipline (psychological aggression and/or physical punishment) in the past month.

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World Vision Middle East and Eastern Europe (WV MEER) is a regional office of World Vision International, a global humanitarian organisation dedicated to improving the lives of the world's most vulnerable children. WV MEER works across **more than 15 fragile and crisis-affected contexts** to protect children, strengthen families, and build resilient communities through humanitarian response, development programmes, child participation, and advocacy.



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