CHAPTER 9

SUMMARY AND AGENDA FOR THE FUTURE

In the previous eight chapters, we have tried to convey a message, a message that measuring and monitoring children’s well-being is a feasible task. Furthermore, it is a vital task for anyone who wishes to positively affect children’s well-being.

In this chapter, we would like to reflect on our message. We have divided the chapter into four sections. After this brief preamble we turn to deal with the question of what this is all about. Discussing the international project that led to the publication of this book follows, and finally we suggest an agenda for the future.

WHAT WAS THIS ALL ABOUT?

A simple glance at the title of this book leads to the answer that it was all about measuring and monitoring children’s well-being-- yet there is more. This book is about knowledge and information. It is about the power of information and its use; it is about learning from others and learning from children; and it is about well-being and its measurement. But most of all, it is about children and how we can positively affect their lives in their communities and at large.

We have started by laying before the reader the rationale for measuring and monitoring children’s well-being. From the beginning we have argued in favor of measuring for the sake of doing. The emphasis on measuring and monitoring as tools for affecting children’s well-being is incorporated throughout the book.

We then turned to the work of others in this field. We have presented the most extensive picture we could assemble from around the world, to indicate that we have learned and will continue to learn from others, and to show that the necessary work has begun and our objectives can be achieved.

We would like to think of the book as a journey, a journey that did not take us down the easily travelled paved paths, but rather to new paths that will lead to improvements in children’s lives.

We shared our basic principles and guidelines with you, the reader, not with claims that they are the only useful ones, but rather as suggestions for your consideration. We accompanied them with a solid rationale and our research foundation. We have recommended the concept of children’s well-being as a new challenge for academic researchers, professionals, and policy makers. We have developed and explained our selection of five domains for measuring and monitoring children’s well-being and the indicators we suggest to use in each. All of them are well grounded in theory and values. We cherish the value support as much as the research.

We also suggested practical ways to carry out the tasks involved, and the need to collect data from various sources about the different characteristics and purposes of these sources. We have tried to be ambitious, but also practical; therefore, we presented our ideas and rationale as well as examples of where the task is already being undertaken.

We combined the practical tasks with our new strategies and concepts, and laid out fifty indicators for children’s well-being along with their rationale, research support, and measurement.

But, most of all our work is about children. Our focus has led us to suggest how measuring and monitoring efforts can be used to promote children’s well-being through their communities and how policies could be positively affected.

If we had to distill our work to a one-line description, it would undoubtedly be – how can we learn more about children’s lives and how do we focus attention on children in order to bring about positive change in their everyday lives?

THE INTERNATIONAL PROJECT

We have referred numerous times to one international project. We were referring to the international project “Monitoring and Measuring Children’s Well-Being” (see Chapter 2 for a full description). We have done so not only because this book is one of the project outcomes.