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Public Policies in Health: a child rights-based approach



“Each child that is born is a surprise to
humanity.”

Veia Vecchi,
Reggio Emilia
In O Começo da Vida,
The beginning of life

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child



How about happiness?



The vision

The aim of the Convention is the holistic development of the child, namely their physical, mental, spiritual, moral, and social well-being.



Article 12

“(all children have) the right to express (their) views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.”



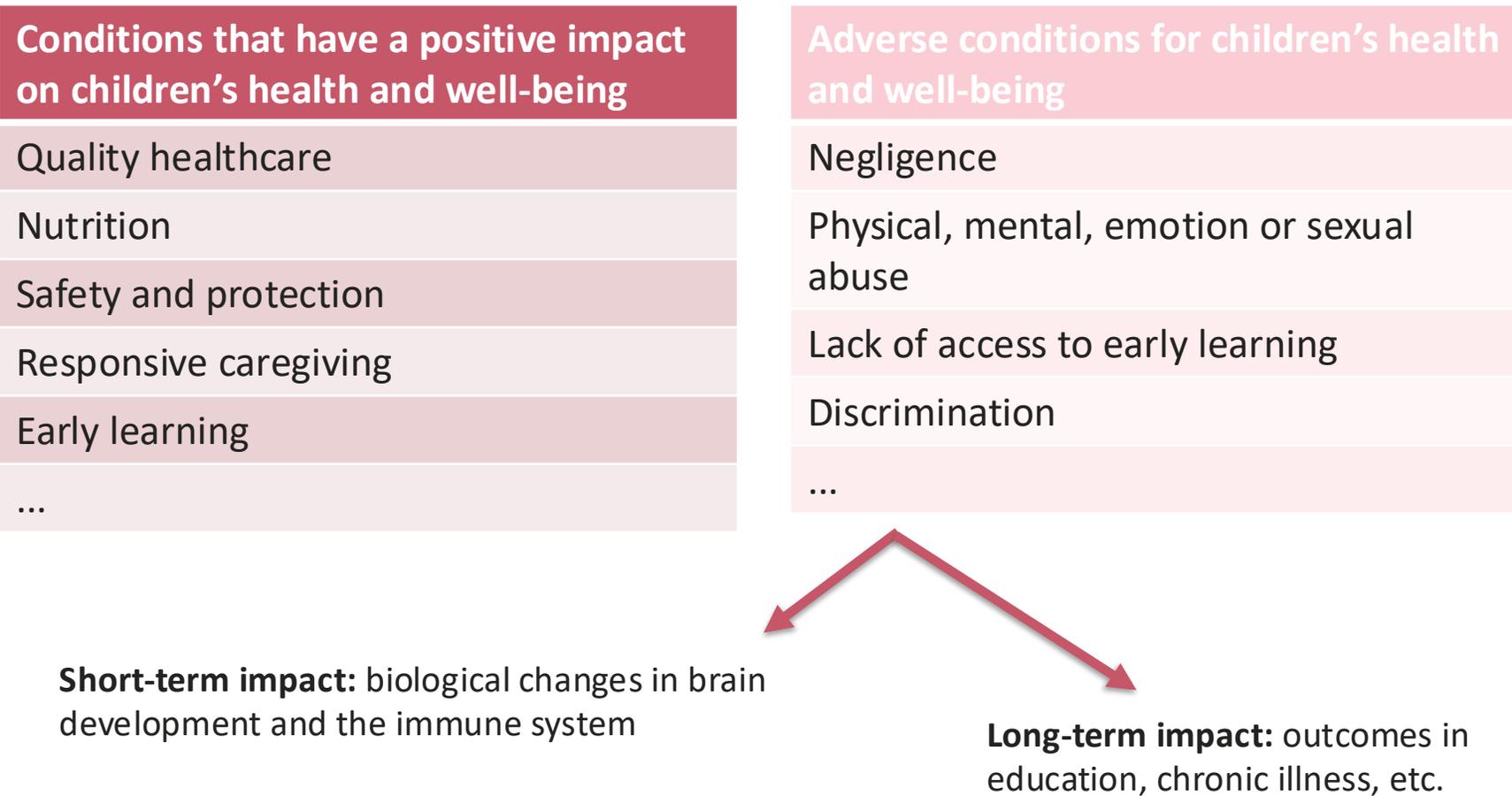
Article 29 (1)

“States Parties agree that the education of the child shall be directed to:

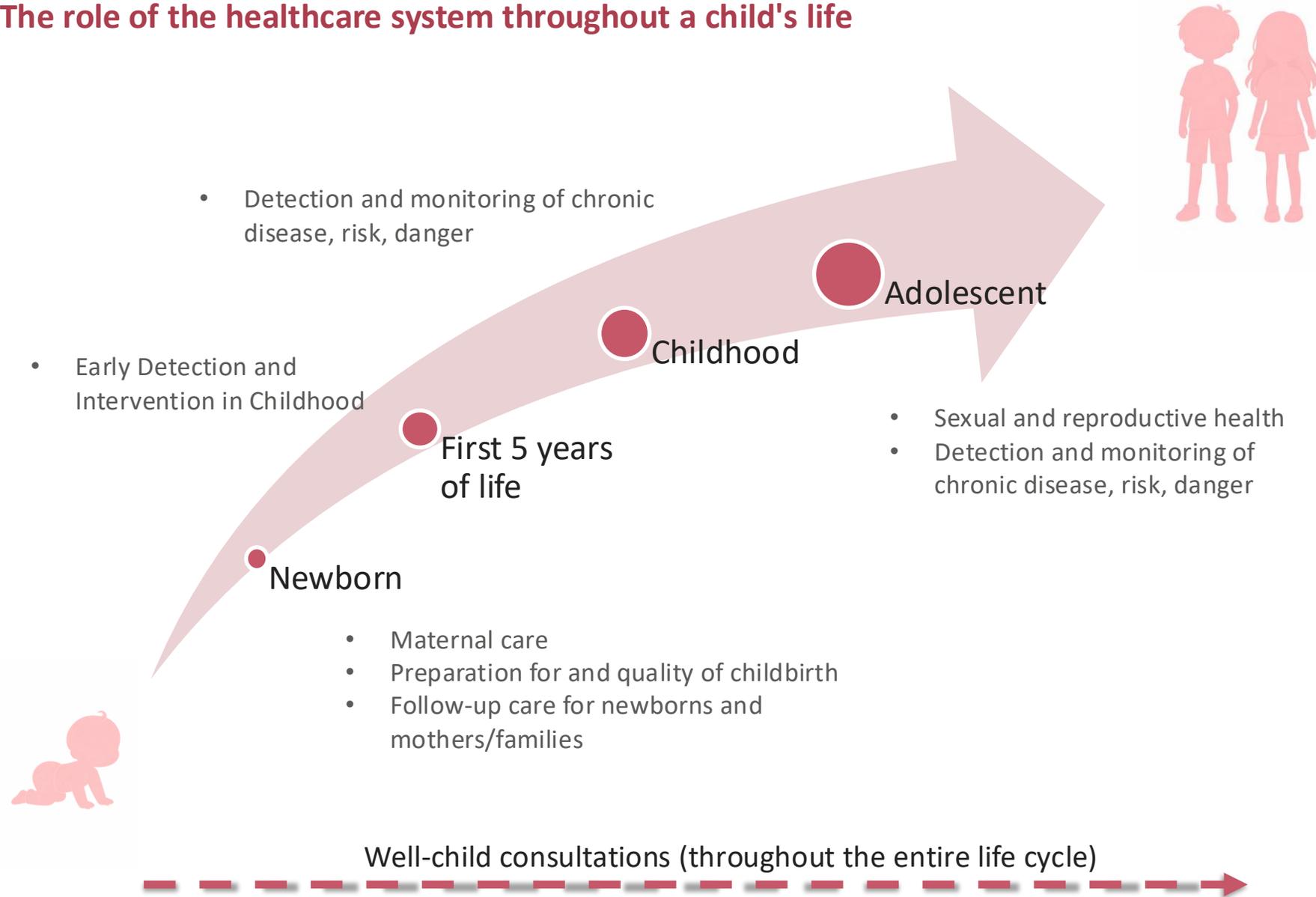
(a) The development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential.”



The Convention: a premise for the design, implementation and evaluation of the impact of public health policies?



The role of the healthcare system throughout a child's life



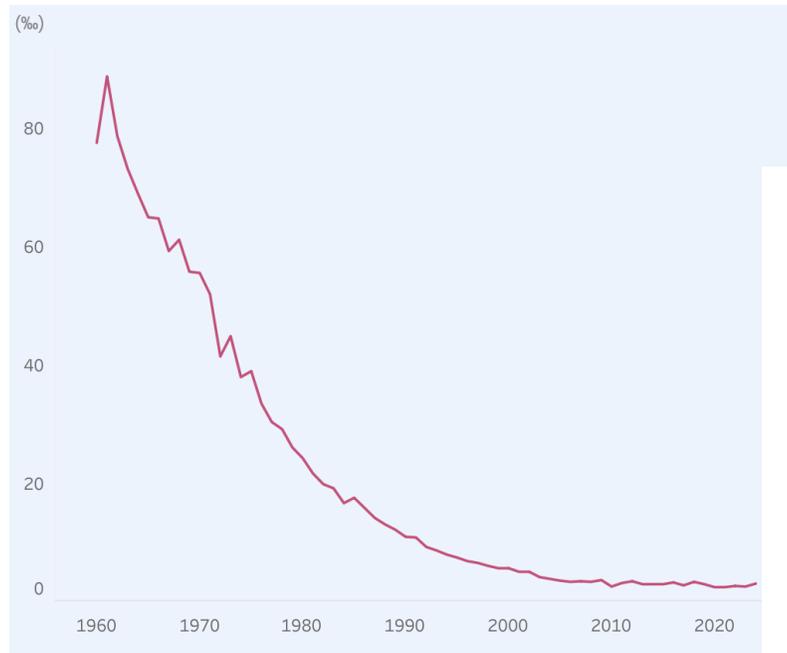
“The healthcare system is itself a social determinant of health, influenced by and influencing the effect of other social determinants.”

Commission on Social Determinants of Health

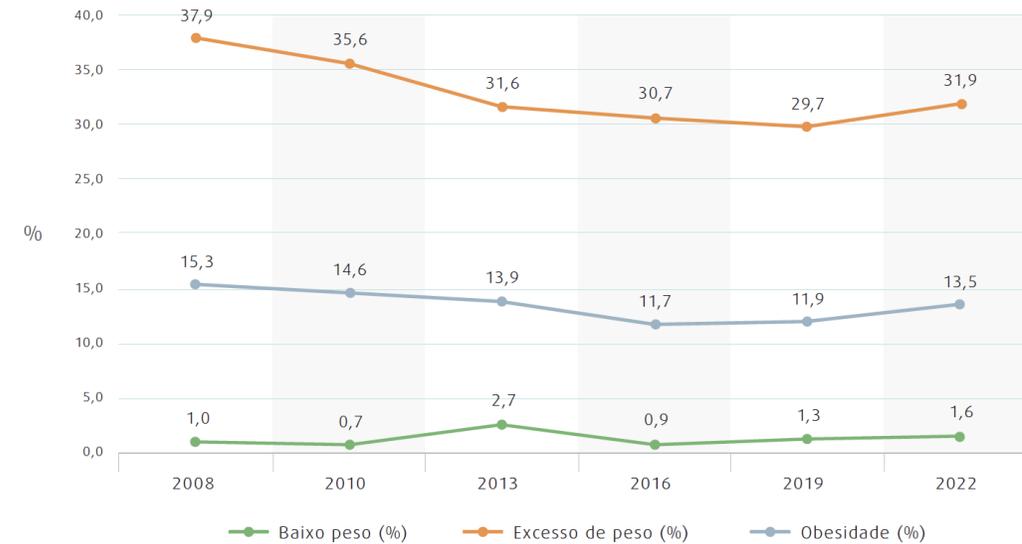
What is the impact of public policies in child health?



Child mortality rate, Portugal (Pordata)



Underweight, overweight and obesity in children, Portugal, Estudo COSI (2008-2022)



Resilience and anticipation of new challenges

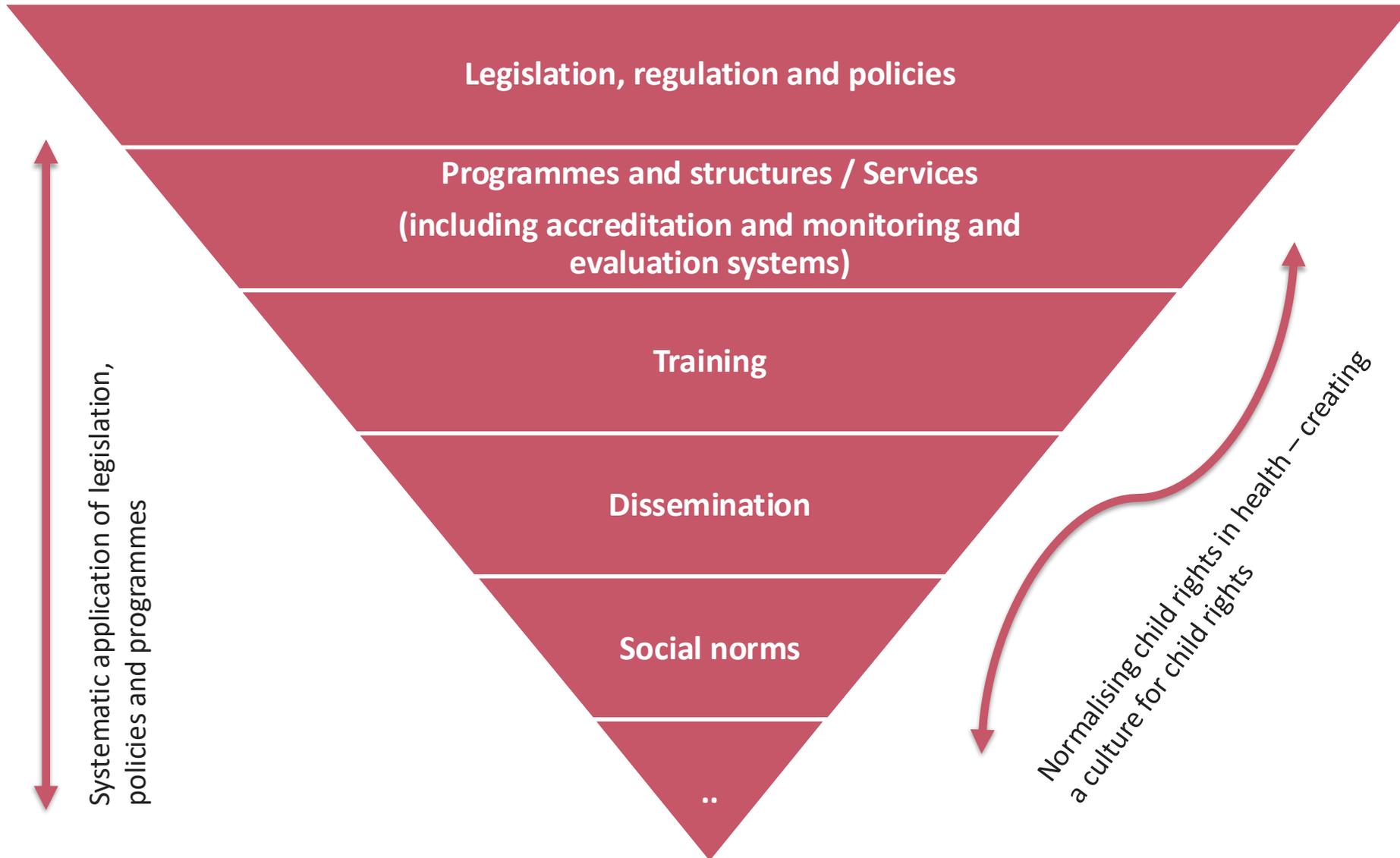
- Increasing inequalities
- Adverse childhood experiences
- Rising cost of living/ global economic instability
- The impact of digital technology (benefits vs. risks)
- Impact of the climate crisis (fires, floods)
- Anxiety about climate change
- Poor mental health

The importance of good public policies and the responsibility of the healthcare system

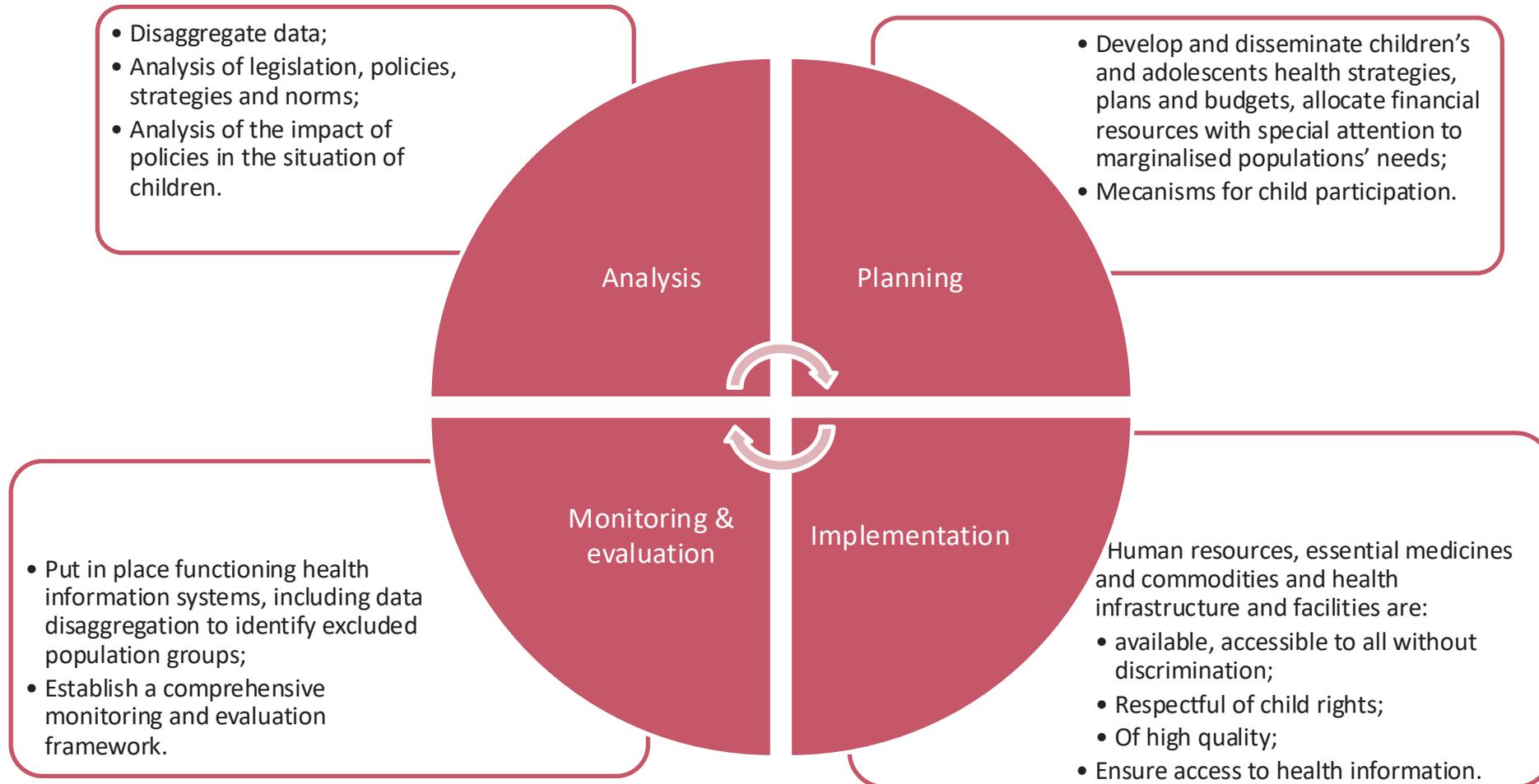
- Good public health policies can improve the situation of children and young people (e.g. between 2008 and 2010, some countries managed to limit — or even reduce — child poverty despite the economic crisis and recession);
- Evidence shows the economic and human capital returns on investment in child health;
- Investment in children by States ‘to the maximum extent of their available resources’ is a fundamental right (Article 4, CRC).



Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child



How to apply a child rights-based approach to public health policies?



In WHO (2015) Operationalizing human rights in efforts to improve health. Knowledge summary: women's, children's and adolescents' health N. 34. World Health Organization





In conclusion...

- ✓ Public policies can have a significant impact, both positive and negative, on children's lives throughout their childhood and into adulthood.
- ✓ Public policies must create a culture for children's rights.
- ✓ Public policies are a matter of law.
- ✓ A child rights-based approach to public policies can reduce inequalities and improve the situation of children.

Referências

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- (3) Black, Maureen M et al. *Early childhood development coming of age: science through the life course*. The Lancet, Volume 389, Issue 10064, 77 – 90
- (4) WHO (2023) Tackling Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) State of the Art and Options for Action. World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe
- (5) CSDH (2008). Closing the gap in a generation: health equity through action on the social determinants of health. Final Report of the Commission on Social Determinants of Health. Geneva, World Health Organization.
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THANK YOU

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