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Codebook of Historical Dataset of Child Benefit (HDCB)



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CODEBOOK OF HISTORICAL DATASET OF CHILD BENEFIT (HDCB)

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1. INTRODUCTION

As part of the Welfare State Information System (WeSIS),¹ the Historical Dataset of Child Benefits (HDCB) provides data on cash transfers and tax allowance programs in support of families with children for 96 countries with a population of more than half a million inhabitants, covering the period between 1926² and 2019. The purpose of this data collection is to enhance the understanding of the global diffusion of child benefits from a historical perspective. The HDCB is a longitudinal dataset containing information on the institutional design of child benefits, from the first introduction of child benefits to the latest development, in all the countries for which it was possible to retrieve reliable data.

This codebook provides the HDCB users with information regarding the content of the dataset and the data collection process. All the data included in version 1.0 of the HDCB refer to information contained in national legislative texts, thus, they describe countries' institutional settings and not *de facto* situations.

The HDCB was compiled in the context of the project "Formation and Diffusion of Family Policy in a Global Perspective" of the Collaborative Research Centre 1342 (CRC 1342) at the University of Bremen. This project is funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG, German Research Foundation) – Project number 374666841 – SFB 1342 from 2018 until 2021. If funding is extended, the dataset will be expanded regarding the generosity and effective coverage of the programs during the second (2022-2025) and third (2026-2029) phases of the CRC 1342.

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2. DATA

2.1 Sources

The information used to compile the HDCB was coded directly from the texts of national laws, decrees, and ordinances, whenever possible. These texts were retrieved mainly from the ILO Legislative Series (1919-1984) and NATLEX databases. If neither of these sources contained the relevant text, we searched for them in national legislative databases. When it was not possible to retrieve the original texts, we compiled the HDCB using information from the reports of the Social Security Policy Throughout the World (SSPTW).

2.2 Coverage

The HDCB provides longitudinal information about the institutional design of child benefits for 96 countries. At the time of writing, it is the most complete longitudinal dataset on child benefits available to the

1 WeSIS is an online database and platform for data exploration of the University of Bremen. It collects historical and longitudinal information on a global perspective of the main social policy fields (old age, labour market, health and long-term care, education, and family and gender policies), data on domestic economic, political, social, and cultural conditions as well as information on interdependencies and relations between countries. WeSIS will become publicly available at <https://www.wesis.org> during the second phase of the Collaborative Research Centre 1342 (2022-2025).

2 In 1926 New Zealand and Spain were the first countries to introduce the child benefits in their national legislation.

scientific community in terms of both geographical and temporal coverage. The HDCB includes every country that has ever had a child benefit for which it was possible to find information, from the time of the first introduction until the latest development. This is not to say that this information did not exist until now, but rather than being systematically compiled in a single publicly available longitudinal dataset, pieces of information were contained in several sparse reports or databases, which made it difficult to use for comparative research.

The time series for each country begins when child benefits were introduced for the first time, and it ends either in the year in which the latest information was retrieved (2019) or the year in which the benefit was abrogated. Most countries in the sample never terminated child benefits once introduced, only Nicaragua abolished child benefits in 2005. Eight post-socialist countries,³ however, have never legally reintroduced child benefits after their independence and thus, child benefits are considered *de facto* abrogated for these countries.

Table 1 presents an overview of the countries included in the dataset and the length of the time series. If the country introduced the child benefit not as an independent entity but as a colony or as a part of a broader federation, the table reports the year of independence and the related entity.

Table 1. Overview of the countries included in the HDCB and length of the time series.

Country name	COW code*	Length of the time series	Year of independence	Related entity
Algeria	615	1941-2019	1963	France
Angola	540	2011-2019		
Argentina	160	1957-2019		
Armenia	371	1936-2019	1991	USSR
Australia	900	1941-2019		
Austria	305	1948-2019		
Azerbaijan	373	1936-2019	1991	USSR
Belarus	370	1936-2019	1991	USSR
Belgium	211	1931-2019		
Benin	434	1955-2019	1960	France
Bolivia	145	1953-2019		
Bosnia and Herzegovina	346	1950-1992	1992	Yugoslavia
Brazil	140	1941-2019		
Bulgaria	355	1942-2019		
Burkina Faso	439	1955-2019	1960	France
Burundi	516	1971-2019		
Cameroon	471	1959-2019	1960	France
Canada	20	1944-2019		
Cape Verde	402	1979-2019		
Central African Republic	482	1956-2019	1960	France
Chad	483	1956-2019	1960	France
Chile	155	1937-2019		
Colombia	100	1961-2019		
Congo	484	1956-2019	1960	France

3 Four former Soviet republics (Georgia, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan) and four former federative socialist republics of Yugoslavia (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, and Montenegro).

Country name	COW code*	Length of the time series	Year of independence	Related entity
Costa Rica	94	2001-2019		
Croatia	344	1950-2019	1991	Yugoslavia
Cyprus	352	1991-2019		
Czech Republic	316	1941-2019		
Democratic Republic of the Congo	490	1951-2019	1960	Belgium
Denmark	390	1952-2019		
Dominican Republic	42	2005-2019		
Ecuador	130	1998-2019		
El Salvador	92	2005-2019		
Equatorial Guinea	411	1984-2019		
Estonia	366	1936-2019	1990	USSR
Finland	375	1943-2019		
France	220	1932-2019		
Gabon	481	1956-2019	1960	France
Georgia	372	1936-1991	1991	USSR
Germany	255	1936-2019		
German Democratic Republic	265	1950-1990		
Greece	350	1957-2019		
Guatemala	90	2008-2019		
Guinea	438	1960-2019		
Honduras	91	1990-2019		
Hungary	310	1938-2019		
Iran	630	1955-2019		
Ireland	205	1944-2019		
Israel	666	1959-2019		
Italy	325	1936-2019		
Ivory Coast	437	1955-2019	1960	France
Japan	740	1969-2019		
Kazakhstan	705	1936-1991	1991	USSR
Kosovo	347	1950-2008	2008	Serbia
Kyrgyzstan	703	1936-2019	1991	USSR
Latvia	367	1936-2019	1990	USSR
Lebanon	660	1943-2019	1943	France
Lithuania	368	1936-2019	1990	USSR
Luxembourg	212	1947-2019		
Macedonia	343	1950-1991	1991	Yugoslavia
Madagascar	580	1956-2019	1960	France
Mali	432	1955-2019	1960	France
Mauritania	435	1955-2019	1960	France
Mexico	70	1998-2019		
Moldova	359	1936-2019	1991	USSR

Country name	COW code*	Length of the time series	Year of independence	Related entity
Mongolia	712	2005-2019		
Montenegro	341	1950-2006	2006	Yugoslavia
Morocco	600	1959-2019		
Netherlands	210	1939-2019		
New Zealand	920	1926-2019		
Nicaragua	93	1982-2005		
Niger	436	1961-2019		
Norway	385	1946-2019		
Pakistan	770	2005-2019		
Peru	135	1989-2019		
Philippines	840	2008-2019		
Poland	290	1947-2019		
Portugal	235	1942-2019		
Romania	360	1944-2019		
Russia	365	1936-2019	1991	USSR
Senegal	433	1955-2019	1960	Mali Federation (Formerly part of France Africa)
Serbia	345	1950-2019	2006	Yugoslavia
Slovakia	317	1941-2019		
Slovenia	349	1950-2019	1991	Yugoslavia
South Africa	560	1992-2019		
South Korea	732	2018-2019		
Spain	230	1926-2019		
Sweden	380	1947-2019		
Tajikistan	702	1936-1991	1991	USSR
Thailand	800	1990-2019		
Togo	461	1956-2019	1960	France
Tunisia	616	1961-2019		
Turkmenistan	701	1936-2019	1991	USSR
Ukraine	369	1936-2019	1991	USSR
United Kingdom	200	1945-2019		
Uruguay	165	1943-2019		
Uzbekistan	704	1936-1991	1991	USSR

Note: * COW code refers to the country code from the Correlates of War Project (<https://correlatesofwar.org/data-sets/cow-country-codes>)

3. DEFINITION OF CHILD BENEFITS

UNICEF⁴ defines child benefits as cash payments or tax transfers made regularly to children. The design and implementation details of the policy can vary substantially; benefits can be either given unconditionally and independently of socioeconomic characteristics of the child or can be targeted to different elements such as age and residence/citizenship and can include several conditionalities in the form of behavioural requirements that children and their families must comply with to fulfil eligibility regulations.

For the compilation of the HDCB, we relied on an extended version of such a definition. Child benefit was defined as a sum of money given regularly to eligible parent(s) to reduce the cost of each of their dependent children. The policy must be established by a national or federal law with a nation-wide scope and the amount must be either given to the recipients in the form of a cash transfer or be deducted from taxes in the form of a tax credit. The benefits can be universal, aimed either at the residents or citizens of a country, or employment-based, aimed at people employed in specific productive sectors of the economy, such as agriculture, industry, or commerce.⁵ They can be granted irrespective of having one household income or to individuals with a household income below a given threshold, i.e., it can be means-tested, and the conditions of the benefits can vary depending on whether the children are attending school or not.

3.1 Excluded Benefits

Benefits that were not coded in the HDCB because they did not fulfil the definition of child benefits are the benefits granted to households solely on the grounds of low-income or marital relationship, minimum income schemes, child tax allowances, i.e., a sum of money deductible from an individual taxable income, child benefits either established by regional or local laws, or benefits established by national or federal laws but aimed only at specific geographical locations (e.g., capital cities, mountain regions, etc.), and benefits granted only to public servants, military personnel, and other government officials.

3.2 Cases of Multiple Parallel Child Benefits

For each country, the HDCB can accommodate information on one universal and one employment-based child benefit. It is possible, however, that at a given point in time multiple employment-based or multiple universal benefits exist in the same country. If this is the case, the benefit recorded is the *main* child benefit. A clear definition of what is a 'main benefit' is difficult to give because of the heterogeneous instances that can be found, but in principle, main child benefits have a broader scope than secondary benefits. While decisions on the broader scope necessarily involve discretionary choices on the part of the researchers, several criteria helped us decide between competing benefits with a high degree of confidence. First, the main benefit generally comes sooner. If a new main benefit is established, as a rule, it replaces the existing one. Another criterion is that 'secondary' benefits generally have a narrower scope, as they are aimed at more specific groups (e.g., low-income, single parents) and they have a shorter duration (e.g., childcare allowance given for three years). Finally, secondary benefits are often given on top of the main ones, i.e., the recipient collects both the main and secondary benefits.

4 UNICEF, 2020, "Universal Child Benefits. Policy Issues and Options", p.12, available at <https://www.unicef.org/media/72916/file/UCB-ODI-UNICEF-Report-2020.pdf>

5 For a detailed description of the occupations included in the various economic sectors, please consult p. 14 of Keonhi Son, Tobias Böger, Simone Tonelli, Petra Buhr, Sonja Drobnič, and Johannes Huinink, 2020, "Codebook of Historical Database on Maternity Leave (HDML)" available at <https://www.socialpolicydynamics.de/sfb-publikationen/sfb-1342-technical-paper-series>.

4. VARIABLES

The HDCB variables are grouped into three sets labelled with different prefixes. The prefix ‘fam_cben_emp_varname’ indicates variables that are related to employment-based programs. The prefix ‘fam_cben_uni_varname’ indicates variables that are related to universal programs. The third prefix, ‘fam_cben_varname’, indicates variables whose value is derived from a combination of the other two sets. The goal of the last set of variables is to have indicators that exist for all countries, regardless of whether they have a universal or employment-based system.

For variables that exist in both employment-based and universal sets, such as the upper age limit for which a child is eligible, the value of the variable in the third set assumes the value of the universal benefits when it exists, and the value of the employment-based system if not. Certain variables, however, are different for employment-based and universal systems. For instance, the *de jure* coverage of child benefits is coded in terms of occupational groups in employment-based systems and in terms of residence/citizenship in universal systems. In these situations, new variables had to be created to make the benefits comparable.

Thus, the sets ‘fam_cben_emp_varname’ and ‘fam_cben_uni_varname’ include raw values directly coded from the legislative sources, and for this reason, have a high level of reliability. The set of variables ‘fam_cben_varname’ involve discretionary choices made by the researchers that compiled the dataset and manipulation of the original values. Therefore, the variables must be used keeping these caveats in mind.

4.1 List of Variables

Variable name	Indicator	Operationalization
fam_cben_intro	Year of the first introduction of child benefits.	The variable assumes a value equal to the year in which the first child benefit was introduced.
fam_cben_emp_intro	Year of introduction of a law introducing or modifying employment-based child benefits.	The variable assumes a value equal to the year in which a law modifying existing child benefits was introduced.
fam_cben_emp_imp	Year of the implementation of a law introducing or modifying employment-based child benefits.	The variable assumes a value equal to the year in which a law modifying existing child benefits was implemented.
fam_cben_emp_name	Name of the law establishing or modifying the employment-based child benefits.	The variable indicates the name of the law that introduced or modified child benefits.
fam_cben_emp_fin_tax	Is the employment-based child benefit at least partly paid with contributions of the general taxation?	The variable assumes the value of 1 if the child benefits are at least partly paid with revenues of the general taxation, 0 otherwise.
fam_cben_emp_fin_emer	Is the employment-based child benefit at least partly paid with contributions of the employer?	The variable assumes the value of 1 if the child benefits are at least partly paid with contributions of the employer, 0 otherwise.
fam_cben_emp_fin_emeee	Is the employment-based child benefit at least partly paid with contributions of the employee?	The variable assumes the value of 1 if the child benefits are at least partly paid with contributions of the employee, 0 otherwise.
fam_cben_emp_minC	Minimum number of children required for a parent to be eligible for employment-based child benefits.	The variable assumes a value equal to the minimum number of children required for a parent to qualify for child benefits, as indicated in the relevant law.
fam_cben_emp_maxC	Maximum number of children for which a parent is eligible for employment-based child benefits.	The variable assumes a value equal to the maximum number of children for which the child benefits are paid, as indicated in the relevant law.

Variable name	Indicator	Operationalization
fam_cben_emp_mincont	Minimum number of contributions paid to have access to the employment-based child benefit.	The variable assumes a value equal to the minimum number of months of contributions that must be paid by a person to qualify for child benefits, as indicated in the relevant law.
fam_cben_emp_minage	Lower age limit for which the employment-based child benefits are paid.	The variable assumes a value equal to the minimum age that a child must be to qualify for child benefit, as indicated in the relevant law.
fam_cben_emp_maxage	Upper age limit for which employment-based child benefits are paid.	The variable indicates the maximum age for which a child is eligible for child benefit if the child is not attending school, as indicated in the relevant law.
fam_cben_emp_maxage_edu	Upper age limit for which employment-based child benefits are paid if the child is attending education.	The variable indicates the maximum age for which a child is eligible for child benefit if the child is attending education, as indicated in the relevant law.
fam_cben_emp_mt	Is the employment-based child benefit means-tested?	The variable assumes the value of 1 if the law prescribes that only households below a given income level are eligible for child benefits, 0 otherwise.
fam_cben_emp_sector_agr	Is the employment-based child benefit available for parents employed in the agricultural sector?	The variable assumes the value of 1 if the law prescribes that the parents employed in the agricultural sector are eligible for child benefits, 0 otherwise.
fam_cben_emp_sector_ind	Is the employment-based child benefit available for parents employed in the industrial sector?	The variable assumes the value of 1 if the law prescribes that the parents employed in the industrial sector are eligible for child benefits, 0 otherwise.
fam_cben_emp_sector_com	Is the employment-based child benefit available for parents employed in the commercial sector?	The variable assumes the value of 1 if the law prescribes that the parents employed in the commercial sector are eligible for child benefits, 0 otherwise.
fam_cben_emp_sector_self	Is the employment-based child benefit available for self-employed parents?	The variable assumes the value of 1 if the law prescribes that self-employed parents are eligible for child benefits, 0 otherwise.
fam_cben_uni_intro	Year of introduction of a law introducing or modifying universal child benefits.	The variable assumes a value equal to the year in which a law modifying existing child benefits was introduced.
fam_cben_uni_imp	Year of implementation of a law modifying existing universal child benefits.	The variable assumes a value equal to the year in which a law modifying existing child benefits was implemented.
fam_cben_uni_name	Name of the law of universal child benefits.	The variable indicates the name of the law that introduced or modified child benefits.
fam_cben_uni_fin_tax	Is the universal child benefit at least partly paid with the contribution of general taxation?	The variable assumes the value of 1 if the child benefits are at least partly paid with revenues of the general taxation, 0 otherwise.
fam_cben_uni_fin_employer	Is the universal child benefit at least partly paid with the contribution of the employer?	The variable assumes the value of 1 if the child benefits are at least partly paid with contributions of the employer, 0 otherwise.
fam_cben_uni_fin_employee	Is the universal child benefit at least partly paid with the contribution of employees?	The variable assumes the value of 1 if the child benefits are at least partly paid with contributions of the employee, 0 otherwise.
fam_cben_uni_minC	Minimum number of children required for a parent to be eligible for universal child benefits.	The variable assumes a value equal to the minimum number of children required for a parent to qualify for child benefits, as indicated in the relative law.
fam_cben_uni_maxC	Maximum number of children required for which a parent is eligible for universal child benefits.	The variable assumes a value equal to the maximum number of children for which the child benefits are paid, as indicated in the relative law.

Variable name	Indicator	Operationalization
fam_cben_uni_minage	Lower age limit for which the universal child benefits are paid.	The variable assumes a value equal to the minimum age that a child must be to qualify for child benefit, as indicated in the relative law.
fam_cben_uni_maxage	Upper age limit for which universal child benefits are paid.	The variable indicates the maximum age for which a child is eligible for child benefit if the child is not attending school, as indicated in the relative law.
fam_cben_uni_maxage_edu	Upper age limit for which universal child benefits are paid if the child is attending school.	The variable indicates the maximum age for which a child is eligible for child benefit if the child is attending school, as indicated in the relative law.
fam_cben_uni_mt	Is the universal child benefit means-tested?	The variable assumes the value of 1 if the law prescribes that only households below a given income level are eligible for child benefits, 0 otherwise.
fam_cben_uni_resid	Is the universal child benefit available for all residents of the country?	The variable assumes the value of 1 if the law prescribes that all residents of a country are eligible for child benefits, 0 if the law limits the eligibility to citizens.
fam_cben_both	There exist both an employment-based and a universal child benefit.	The variable assumes the value of 1 if both an employment-based and a universal child benefit exist in the country.
fam_cben_uni	Is the main child benefit system universal?	The variable assumes the value of 1 if the child benefits are universal, 0 otherwise.
fam_cben_maxage_edu	Upper age limit for which child benefits are paid if the child is attending education.	The variable assumes the value of <i>fam_cben_uni_maxage_edu</i> if <i>fam_cben_uni</i> = 1 and assumes the value of <i>fam_cben_emp_maxage_edu</i> if <i>fam_cben_uni</i> = 0.
fam_cben_maxage	Upper age limit for which child benefits are paid if the child is not attending school.	The variable assumes the value of <i>fam_cben_uni_maxage</i> if <i>fam_cben_uni</i> = 1 and assumes the value of <i>fam_cben_emp_maxage</i> if <i>fam_cben_uni</i> = 0.
fam_cben_minage	Lower age limit for which the child benefits are paid.	The variable assumes the value of <i>fam_cben_uni_minage</i> if <i>fam_cben_uni</i> = 1 and assumes the value of <i>fam_cben_emp_minage</i> if <i>fam_cben_uni</i> = 0.
fam_cben_age_diff	Difference of duration between the child benefits for children in school and not in school, in years.	The variable assumes a value equal to the difference between <i>fam_cben_maxage_edu</i> and <i>fam_cben_maxage</i> .
fam_cben_yr_edu	Total duration of child benefits if child is in school.	The variable assumes a value equal to the difference between <i>fam_cben_maxage_edu</i> and <i>fam_cben_minage</i> .
fam_cben_yr_noed	Total duration of child benefits if child is not in school.	The variable assumes a value equal to the difference between <i>fam_cben_maxage</i> and <i>fam_cben_minage</i> .
fam_cben_mt	Are child benefits means-tested?	The variable assumes the value of <i>fam_cben_uni_mt</i> if <i>fam_cben_uni</i> = 1 and assumes the value of <i>fam_cben_emp_mt</i> if <i>fam_cben_uni</i> = 0.
fam_cben_groups	De jure coverage of child benefit, as percentage of groups covered.	The variable assumes a value between 0 and 1 indicating the share of groups that are eligible for the child benefits. The possible groups are agriculture, industry, commerce, self-employed, and residents. If <i>fam_cben_uni_resid</i> = 1 the variable assumes the value of 1. Otherwise, the variable assumes a value equal to the proportion of sectors $\frac{agr + ind + com + self + resid}{5}$.

Variable name	Indicator	Operationalization
fam_cben_minC	Minimum number of children required for a parent to be eligible for child benefits.	The variable assumes the value of <i>fam_cben_uni_minC</i> if <i>fam_cben_uni</i> = 1 and assumes the value of <i>fam_cben_emp_minC</i> if <i>fam_cben_uni</i> = 0.
fam_cben_maxC	Maximum number of children for which a parent is eligible for child benefits.	The variable assumes the value of <i>fam_cben_uni_maxC</i> if <i>fam_cben_uni</i> = 1 and assumes the value of <i>fam_cben_emp_maxC</i> if <i>fam_cben_uni</i> = 0.
fam_cben_uplim	Is there a limit on the number of children that can be covered by the child benefits?	The variable assumes the value of 1 if <i>fam_cben_maxC</i> > 0.
fam_cben_conditional	Is the benefit conditional to school attendance if the child is school age?	The variable assumes the value of 1 if the law prescribes that the benefit for school-age children is granted only conditional on school attendance.
fam_cben_type	Type of child benefits.	The variable indicates the type of main child benefits. If <i>fam_cben_groups</i> = 1 and no conditions apply, the system is labelled as „universal“. If <i>fam_cben_groups</i> = 1 and <i>fam_cben_mt</i> = 1, the benefit is labelled as „targeted universal“. If <i>fam_cben_groups</i> = 1 and <i>fam_cben_conditional</i> = 1 the child benefits are labelled universal conditional cash transfers. If <i>fam_cben_groups</i> < 1 and no other conditions apply, the benefit is labelled as „selective“. If <i>fam_cben_groups</i> < 1 and <i>fam_cben_mt</i> = 1, the benefit is labelled „targeted selective“. If <i>fam_cben_group</i> < 1 and <i>fam_cben_conditional</i> = 1, the benefit is labelled „selective conditional cash transfer“.
fam_cben_expansion	Reform extends social rights.	The variable assumes the value of 1 if the relevant law either introduces a child benefit or increases the value of <i>fam_cben_groups</i> or increases value of <i>fam_cben_yr_edu</i> or <i>fam_cben_yr_noedu</i> or reduces the value of <i>fam_cben_minC</i> or reduces the value of <i>fam_cben_mt</i> or reduces the value of <i>fam_cben_uplim</i> .
fam_cben_retrenchment	Reform retrenches social rights.	The variable assumes the value of 1 if the relevant law reduces the value of <i>fam_cben_groups</i> or reduces the value of <i>fam_cben_yr_edu</i> or <i>fam_cben_yr_noedu</i> or increases the value of <i>fam_cben_minC</i> or increases the value of <i>fam_cben_mt</i> or <i>fam_cben_uplim</i> .

5. COMMON DATA SOURCES

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5.1 National Databases

For several countries,⁶ the texts of the laws were only found in national databases. The documents are currently privately stored, please contact the authors for a copy of the file of a specific law.

⁶ Algeria, Angola, Armenia, Australia, Azerbaijan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Congo, Czech Republic, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Guinea, Honduras, Latvia, Lithuania, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Moldova, Mongolia, Morocco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Niger, Pakistan, Poland, Romania, Russia, Senegal, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Togo, Turkmenistan, Ukraine.