

# Building blocks for developing a child friendly city

The UNICEF CFC Secretariat has developed a CFC Framework for defining and developing a Child Friendly City. It identifies the steps to build a local system of governance committed to fulfilling children’s rights. The framework translates the process needed to implement the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child by national governments into a local government process. The concept of Child Friendly Cities is equally applicable to governance of all communities which include children – large and small, urban and rural. The framework is intended to provide a foundation for adaptation to suit all localities.

The framework document outlines what we term the “building blocks” for a Child Friendly City - structures and activities of government which are necessary to engage children’s active involvement, to ensure a children’s rights perspective in all relevant decision-making and equal rights of access to basic services. The process of building a Child Friendly City demands political commitments – which are fundamental – as well as concerted action throughout government.

This document is an excerpt of the CFC Framework in which a checklist is provided for each building block

|   |      |
|---|------|
| • 1. Children’s participation .....                           | p. 2 |
| • 2. A child friendly legal framework .....                   | p. 3 |
| • 3. A city-wide Children’s Rights Strategy .....             | p. 4 |
| • 4. A Children’s Rights Unit or coordinating mechanism ..... | p. 6 |
| • 5. Child impact assessment and evaluation .....             | p. 7 |
| • 6. A children’s budget .....                                | p. 8 |
| • 7. A regular State of the City’s Children Report .....      | p. 9 |
| • 8. Making children’s rights known .....                     | p.10 |
| • 9. Independent advocacy for children .....                  | p.11 |

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>➤ <b>1. CHILDREN’S PARTICIPATION: promoting children’s active involvement in issues that affect them; listening to their views and taking them into consideration in decision-making processes</b></p>  | <p style="text-align: center;"><b>CHECKLIST</b></p>  |
| <p>This is the very essence of the process of building a Child Friendly City: informing and involving children and respecting their views and experiences; recognising children as partners and as individual human beings, rights-holders and equal, active citizens. It is not enough, of course, to open up government information and structures and meetings to children. Engaging with children will mean substantial and ongoing change: changes in the form and dissemination of information, in the structures for debate and consultation, and in the organisation, timing and agendas of meetings.</p> <p>The almost universal global acceptance of the Convention on the Rights of the Child has already, in just over a decade, had a profound influence in many states on the way in which children are regarded. Listening to children and taking their views seriously – a legal obligation under article 12 of the Convention – is beginning to change relationships and slowly to transform institutions and services in a child-friendly direction.</p> <p>There is already a great deal happening, in many states and many cities. Laws, reflecting article 12, are challenging traditional “seen and not heard” attitudes to children and placing duties on parents, teachers, care workers and others to listen and give due consideration to children’s views. Governments are holding special consultations with children and are in some cases seeking to build consultation into their everyday practice.</p> <p>Those seeking to lead the process of building a Child Friendly City will find many examples of positive involvement – but even more room to develop new and innovative participatory practices with children.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Is the principle of article 12 of the Convention reflected throughout city government at all levels?</li> <li>❑ Is respect for the views of the child promoted to the public and in particular to parents?</li> <li>❑ Is respect for the views of the child built into initial and in-service training for all those working with and for children?</li> <li>❑ Are children meaningfully and without discrimination consulted on all matters affecting them?</li> <li>❑ Are “specialist” groups of children consulted and involved in “specialist” issues? (children in care on care issues; children in trouble on juvenile justice issues and so on)</li> <li>❑ Are there arrangements to ensure consideration of the perspective of babies and very young children?</li> <li>❑ Do children have a right to be heard in any administrative or judicial proceedings affecting them?</li> </ul> |

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>➤ <b>2. A CHILD FRIENDLY LEGAL FRAMEWORK: ensuring legislation, regulatory frameworks and procedures which consistently promote and protect the rights of all children</b></p>   | <p><b>CHECKLIST</b></p>   |
| <p>Local authorities must ensure that all aspects of the legal framework which are under their control promote and protect children’s rights. The local government needs to act as a strong advocate for children to try to ensure that legislation over which it has no direct control – national and regional legislation - does so too.</p> <p>Without a clear, principled legal framework, rooted in the principles and provisions of the Convention, positive policies and practice for children are unlikely to develop except in a very patchy and so discriminatory way. On the other hand, strong legal frameworks are not useful to children unless they are known about, and properly implemented through awareness-raising and training, and where appropriate, enforced.</p> <p>The key principles in the Convention, summarised above, must be reflected in legislation. The article 12 obligation to respect children’s views on all matters affecting them and ensure they are heard in all administrative and judicial procedures affecting them is a matter for legislation as well as policy and practice.</p> <p>Reviewing legislation to ensure that it promotes and protects children’s rights involves government, as well as independent and expert engagement and scrutiny. On some issues, children themselves are the real experts: who else can tell whether, for example, their participation rights are respected in the family, in their schools and neighbourhoods?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Has there been a rigorous national review of legislation affecting children to ensure it respects the CRC?</li> <li>❑ Has there been a rigorous local-level consideration of how national legislation affects children?</li> <li>❑ Have local authorities reviewed all legislation under their control to ensure it respects the CRC?</li> <li>❑ Have these reviews included an independent element and have children themselves been consulted and involved?</li> <li>❑ In particular, are the four general principles of the CRC appropriately reflected in legislation affecting children in the city – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ All rights to be recognised for each child without discrimination on any ground (appropriate anti-discrimination legislation and affirmative action for disadvantaged children);</li> <li>❑ The best interests of the child to be a primary consideration in all actions concerning children;</li> <li>❑ The right to life and to maximum survival and development;</li> <li>❑ Respect for the child’s views, including the right to be heard in any administrative or judicial proceedings affecting the child.</li> </ul> </li> <li>❑ Has there been a city-wide review to ensure that children – including children in difficult circumstances – have access to advice, advocacy and complaint procedures to ensure remedies for breaches of their rights?</li> </ul> |

| <p>➤ <b>3. A CITY-WIDE CHILDREN’S RIGHTS STRATEGY: developing a detailed, comprehensive strategy or agenda for building a Child Friendly City, based on the Convention</b></p>   | <p><b>CHECKLIST</b></p>  |
|--|--|
| <p>States have been encouraged to develop national plans of action for children (by the World Summit for Children in 1990 and by the 2002 UN General Assembly Special Session for Children). They have been urged to base them on the Convention. The Committee on the Rights of the Child strongly encourages States to develop unified strategies or agendas embracing the whole Convention. Local Children’s Rights Strategies need to be rationally linked to any such national processes. These local strategies or plans of action can act as a bridge between national planning and the city-level process which is seeking to make reality of the Convention for children.</p> <p><i>A World Fit for Children</i>, the Outcome Document from the 2002 Special Session on Children, highlights the importance of state governments developing partnership with, among others, local governments and authorities, helping to ensure “that children are at the centre of agendas for development. By building on ongoing initiatives, such as child-friendly communities and cities without slums, mayors and local leaders can significantly improve the lives of children” (para. 31(iii)).</p> <p>Ensuring a unified, rights-based approach to all services for children at city-level demands adoption of principles, rooted in the Convention, and development of a unified Children’s Rights Strategy, ideally with goals and targets. Because so many departments and strands of government, so many different services impact on children directly or indirectly, coordination is essential. If developing the Strategy is undertaken as a cross-government exercise, the need for coordination will reveal itself in the process. The Strategy can then provide the unifying focus, defining the purpose of coordination (a dedicated unit or coordinating mechanism close to the heart of local government may be needed as the instrument to lead coordination – see 3 below).</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Is there a state-wide children’s rights strategy, promoting full implementation of the Convention?</li> <li>❑ Is the State developing a National Plan of Action as proposed in <i>A world fit for children</i>?</li> <li>❑ Are local authorities developing a children’s rights strategy focused on creating a Child Friendly City?</li> <li>❑ In developing the Strategy, has there been widespread consultation to engage children and young people, NGOs and all those working with and for children in its preparation?</li> <li>❑ Is the Strategy based on the whole of the Convention, thus covering children’s economic, social and cultural rights as well as civil and political rights?</li> <li>❑ Does the Strategy cover all children in the city, with special attention to children who may be socially excluded or marginalised?</li> <li>❑ Is the Strategy and the process of developing it given high priority by local authorities - for example, being adopted and promoted by the Mayor and local government assembly?</li> <li>❑ Is the Strategy integrated with other local and national planning mechanisms, including any national children’s rights strategies or national plans for children, to ensure it is not marginalised?</li> <li>❑ Does the Strategy include specific priorities and</li> </ul> |

Developing a Strategy focused on building a Child Friendly City should aim to engage children and all other citizens. Local-level processes need to be linked to national planning; they also need to be reflected at local and neighbourhood levels of government. The Children's Rights Strategy requires continuous commitment at the highest political level in the local government, to give it sufficient authority to really change things for children.

Going beyond statements of policy and principle, the Strategy needs to set real and achievable targets in relation to the full range of economic, social and cultural and civil and political rights for children. More than a list of good intentions, it must include a description of the process of implementation for all children in the City. A key purpose of the Strategy is fulfilling the non-discrimination principle in the Convention.

Once drafted, if the Strategy is to be influential, it needs to be well known to all those involved in implementation at municipal, community and neighbourhood level. It needs to be made available to children, translated into appropriate and accessible languages and forms and to those working with and for children.

Developing a Strategy requires considerable effort, and it is not a one-time process. The goals and priorities set in the Strategy will need to be updated, and so it should include provisions for monitoring and review. These must be able to assess the Strategy's impact on children's real lives, which of course again highlights the importance of engaging with children directly.

time-limited goals, relevant to all aspects of city children's lives?

- ❑ Does the Strategy set out a decentralised process for implementation?
- ❑ Is the process of preparing the Strategy and the Strategy itself well-disseminated throughout all levels of the local governance system, to children, their families and communities and all those living and working with or for them?
- ❑ Is the Strategy kept under effective review?

| <p>➤ <b>4. A CHILDREN'S RIGHTS UNIT OR COORDINATING MECHANISM: developing permanent structures in local government to ensure priority consideration of children's perspective</b></p>  | <p><b>CHECKLIST</b></p>   |
|--|---|
| <p>The machinery of local government varies from country to country and from city to city. In any setting, building a Child Friendly City demands that children become very visible at the heart of government. One way of seeking to achieve this is to establish a high profile cross-cutting unit or coordinating mechanism. This will need to be given authority at the highest political level – direct links to Mayor's/Leader's office - to pursue implementation of the Children's Strategy, ensuring effective co-ordination, monitoring and evaluation. Such a Unit will not take over the functions of other government departments relating to children; its purpose is to ensure a children's perspective and appropriate priority for children right across government. Unless there are unified agreed aims rooted in the Convention – the purpose of the children's rights strategy outlined above - and effective co-ordination between the many departments which significantly affect children's lives, building a Child Friendly City will be incomplete.</p> <p>There will also need to be co-ordinating structures between the various central departments and with and between any more local levels of community or neighbourhood government. Too often, children's interests get lost between government departments, and very few of the intractable problems can be solved by the action of one government department alone.</p> <p>Additionally, it will be important to identify contact points and key officials responsible for ensuring/developing a children's perspective in each department or area of government. This is required both for internal co-ordination across government and also for those externally who need to be able to identify who is responsible for children and their rights.</p> <p>The focal point on children in local governance should become a centre of innovation and expertise on working collaboratively with children and young people themselves – putting article 12 into practice in its own structure and day-to-day activities.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Is there an identifiable department, unit or coordinating mechanism within city government responsible for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ promoting the Child Friendly City?</li> <li>❑ ensuring co-ordination of policy affecting children?</li> <li>❑ drafting and following through the Children's Strategy?</li> </ul> </li> <li>❑ Has it been given the authority of the Mayor/leader of local Government?</li> <li>❑ Does it maintain direct contact with children and ensure that children's views are respected in its work and in the work of all government across the city?</li> </ul> |

|  |   |
|--|---|
|  |   |
| <p>➤ <b>5. CHILD IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION: ensuring that there is a systematic process to assess the impact of law, policy and practice on children - in advance, during and after implementation</b></p>  | <p><b>CHECKLIST</b></p>   |
| <p>Under the Convention, governments at all levels, including city governments, are required to ensure that the best interests of the child are a primary consideration in all actions concerning children. No government can know whether this principle is being fulfilled without there being a rigorous process in place to assess the impact of law, policy and practice on children.</p> <p>The Committee on the Rights of the Child has promoted the concept of child impact assessment at a national level. There has been considerable international and national discussion of the concept, but very few states have yet implemented the process. It is, of course, not easy. The non-discrimination process means that the impact of laws and policies on all children needs to be assessed, with particular attention to groups of children who are traditionally marginalised. Some laws and policies will only impact, or impact significantly, on certain groups or ages of children. Laws or policies should be assessed for their potential impact, in advance of being implemented. This needs to happen as early as possible in the process of policy formulation to enable it to influence decision-making. As possible models, there are many good examples among governments, including city governments, of working systems of environmental impact assessment, and some of gender impact assessment.</p> <p>Once new policy or laws are implemented, there should be continuing assessment of the actual impact on children. And while city government needs to build these processes into policy development, it is also important that there should be independent child impact assessment, by NGOs and, where they exist, by independent human rights institutions for children (see 9 below). These innovative bodies, whose definition requires that they are established with legislative powers, should be empowered to act effectively as champions and watchdogs for children. Children’s direct involvement in the process of impact assessment will be essential as children are often the only people who can accurately determine the impact of law or policy on their lives.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Is there a process to ensure that the impact, on children generally and on particular groups of children, of proposals for new law, policy or practice which significantly affect children in the city is considered?</li> <li>❑ Is child impact assessment carried out early enough to influence decision-making?</li> <li>❑ Is there regular evaluation of the actual impact on children of aspects of city government?</li> <li>❑ Do these processes of assessment and evaluation take account of the situation of all children including disadvantaged and marginalised groups?</li> <li>❑ Do these processes involve children?</li> <li>❑ Are there in addition independent processes of child impact assessment and evaluation?</li> </ul> |

| <p>➤ <b>6. A CHILDREN’S BUDGET: ensuring adequate resource commitment and budget analysis for children</b></p>  | <p><b>CHECKLIST</b></p>  |
|---|--|
| <p>Budgets are one particular way in which actions by a city affect children, and so budget analysis forms an important aspect of child impact assessment. The Convention on the Rights of the Child requires States to implement economic, social and cultural rights of children “to the maximum extent of available resources”. No state or city can determine how well it is fulfilling this obligation without detailed and accurate budget analysis, including a framework for examining how budget expenditures impact upon children.</p> <p>As with all the building blocks for a Child Friendly City, a key purpose is to ensure that children are visible – in budgeting as in other government activities. Without that visibility, there is little hope of children getting the share that they have a right to.</p> <p>Just as city government needs to act as an advocate for its children in relation to national laws, so it does in relation to national budgeting, ensuring that its children – and in particular disadvantaged children – are getting their fair – indeed ‘maximum’ - share of resources. Where the financing of key services like education and health is determined nationally rather than locally, city government will need to consider whether the distribution of resources is equitable and what it can do to redress inequalities or discrimination in the application of resources.</p> <p>The budgeting process needs to be de-mystified and made accessible to children as to all citizens, and children and young people need to be consulted.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Is city government able to identify whether its children are receiving a fair share of resources, in services in which the distribution is administered nationally?</li> <li>❑ Are the overall city budget and the elements within it analysed adequately to reveal the proportion spent on children?</li> <li>❑ Is the city budget process transparent and does it involve consultation with children?</li> <li>❑ Is a Children’s Budget prepared and disseminated to indicate resources committed to children in all aspects of city government?</li> </ul> |

| ➤ <b>7. A REGULAR STATE OF THE CITY'S CHILDREN REPORT: ensuring sufficient monitoring and data collection on the state of children and their rights</b>   | <b>CHECKLIST</b>  |
|---|---|
| <p>Child Friendly Cities will keep a constant check on the state of their children. Systematically collecting a range of statistics and information on the full range of children, from birth to 18, is fundamental to child-centred policy development. Ensuring that the statistics and information are disaggregated is necessary to highlight any discrimination, for example against girls or boys, minority ethnic groups, disabled children and other groups.</p> <p>The Committee on the Rights of the Child has identified disaggregated data collection as a vital general measure for implementation of the Convention. Individual government departments and any national statistical and research bureaux hopefully will be involved in developing national “state of the children” reports. City-level processes can link into this, but at a city level it may be possible to look in more detail at the reality of children’s lives and in particular at the lives of those suffering discrimination. It is important that the exercise of preparing a report not only documents available information but clearly identifies gaps in knowledge which inhibit evidence-based policy-making in the city.</p> <p>If a “State of the City’s Children” Report is to assess the degree of respect for children’s civil and political rights, it will need to regard children as the experts and the only ones in a position to contribute an accurate assessment. The use of child researchers as well as children as objects of research, should be considered. Children should be involved in carrying out evaluations, assessing needs, proposing solutions and in preparing the report. The statistics and information that are collected will then be analysed and written up, and the report published, disseminated and used as a building block for the Child Friendly City. The report should be prepared and published in forms that make it genuinely accessible not only to key policy makers and community leaders, but also to the public and to children. Use of the internet is valuable, where it is available. Formal and regular debate should be organised among politicians and experts on the conclusions of the report.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Is sufficient statistical and other information about children in the city collected to assess progress towards building a Child Friendly City?</li> <li>❑ Is there a “State of the City’s Children Report”?</li> <li>❑ If so - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Does it document the lives of all children, birth to 18?</li> <li>○ Does it provide disaggregated information to assess discrimination against particular groups of children?</li> <li>○ Is the report published and disseminated in ways which make it accessible to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ key policy-makers?</li> <li>❑ children and those working with and for children?</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ Does the report document gaps in available statistics and information?</li> <li>○ Is the report used effectively to inform policy development?</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |

| <p>➤ <b>8. MAKING CHILDREN’S RIGHTS KNOWN: ensuring awareness of children’s rights among adults and children</b></p>  | <p><b>CHECKLIST</b></p>  |
|---|--|
| <p>Human rights, including children’s rights, must be known about to be useful. In a Child Friendly City, children’s equal status as rights-holders will be promoted by all those working with and for them. The Convention on the Rights of the Child assigns to States a specific obligation to make its principles and provisions “widely known, by appropriate and active means, to adults and children alike”.</p> <p>And article 29 of the Convention, on the aims of education, requires education to be directed at, among other things, “the development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms”. If a State or a city is committed to build a culture of human rights, it is logical in that process to have a special focus on children. Including human rights and teaching about the Convention in the curricula of schools is an important start. In addition to the content of lessons, the ethos and the organisation of schools must reflect the Convention.</p> <p>As a part of this process, initial and in-service training should be organised for all those who work with and for children – including politicians and government officials - to promote awareness of, understanding and respect for children’s human rights.</p> <p>City government will need to take advice from children themselves on the most effective means of disseminating knowledge of their rights to them and to their parents and others. Partnerships with non-governmental organisations, youth groups and with the media, as they have a crucial role to play in communication and information.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Has the city developed a strategy to ensure knowledge of and respect for children’s human rights among children and adults?</li> <li>❑ Have city leaders, politicians and key officials received training concerning children’s human rights?</li> <li>❑ Is teaching about human rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child integrated into the school curriculum at all levels?</li> <li>❑ Does initial and in-service training for all those who work with and for children include teaching about and promotion of respect for the human rights of children?</li> <li>❑ Are there regular evaluations of the state of knowledge of children’s rights among adults and children?</li> </ul> |

| <p>➤ <b>9. INDEPENDENT ADVOCACY FOR CHILDREN: supporting non-governmental organisations and developing independent human rights institutions - children’s ombudspeople or commissioners for children - to promote children’s rights</b></p>   | <p><b>CHECKLIST</b></p>   |
|---|---|
| <p>A city administration committed to building a Child Friendly City will have the courage to be held to account for its treatment of children. Non-governmental organisations have in many States played a large role in improving the lives of children. Since the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, many NGOs have been established that are committed to monitoring, promoting and protecting children’s rights. In many States there are alliances or coalitions of child-focused NGOs, which come together to promote the fullest possible implementation of the Convention. The term non-governmental organisation can encompass many different groups: those committed explicitly to promote human rights, traditional child welfare groups, professional organisations, trades unions, church and faith groups and so on. Increasingly, child- and youth-led organisations are appearing, developing self-advocacy of human rights: they need consistent but non-controlling adult support.</p> <p>NGOs can play an increasingly effective role in a formal, influential relationship with city government, as partners in building a Child Friendly City.</p> <p>Internationally, the UN system has emphasised the importance of establishing human rights institutions to monitor, promote and protect human rights at the national level. The Committee on the Rights of the Child has promoted independent human rights institutions for children. Many states now have either children’s ombudspeople or children’s rights commissioners, or a focal point for children within a national human rights institution. In a few cases, such institutions exist at regional or city level. It is</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Has the city government developed a partnership with a broad and appropriate range of non-governmental organisations?</li> <li>❑ Are NGOs given appropriate non-controlling support and access to influence decision-making?</li> <li>❑ Are child- and youth-led non-governmental organisations encouraged and supported?</li> </ul> <p>Has the city established/lobbied for the establishment of an independent human rights institution for children – a children’s ombudsman or children’s rights commissioner?</p> |

essential to ensure that these institutions are genuinely accessible to children where they are living.

The key to the effectiveness of these institutions is their independence in acting as a powerful watchdog or champion for children. Having appropriate statutory powers and duties, linking them to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, makes them complementary to NGOs with the added influence that a statutory basis provides. A city government may not have the powers to legislatively establish a children's ombudsman, but it can advocate with the central government to do so.



**International Child Friendly Cities Secretariat**  
**UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre –**  
**P.za SS. Annunziata, 12 - 50122 Florence - Italy**  
**Tel: +39 055 20330 - Fax: + 39 055 244 817**  
**E-mail: [florencecfcsecr@unicef.org](mailto:florencecfcsecr@unicef.org)**  
**Web site: <http://www.childfriendlycities.org>**

