

CITIES FIT FOR CHILDREN IN A WORLD FIT FOR CHILDREN

Background paper



Making Europe and Central Asia Fit for Children

Sarajevo 13 - 15 May 2004

Second Intergovernmental Conference

This background paper has been prepared by Eliana Riggio Chaudhuri,
in collaboration with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF),
for the Intergovernmental Conference on
Making Europe and Central Asia Fit for Children.
Its contents do not necessarily reflect the policies or the views of UNICEF.

CITIES FIT FOR CHILDREN IN A WORLD FIT FOR CHILDREN

1. Introduction

Cities are home to a majority of children. Despite a growing proportion of young people living in urban areas, most cities remain unfriendly to children. Child poverty is an increasingly recognized challenge in affluent European and Central Asian cities. Various forms of child exclusion, abuse and exploitation threaten children and young people. The ability of children to socialize, share common problems, identify solutions and influence decision-making processes is still limited in the majority of democratic systems present in the region. Growing urbanization is often identified as the cause of inhuman living conditions prevailing in cities and affecting in particular weaker sections such as the elderly, the immigrants, children.

Urban areas, however, are also a hub of opportunities. Resource mobilization is easier, information is readily available and high population densities increase the rate of efficiency and economies of scale in service delivery. But this potential needs to be harnessed by an effective governance system. In a child-friendly city, good governance for and with children entails the full implementation of the Convention of the Rights of the Child involving young citizens. In the context of decentralization, local authorities have a crucial role to play in involving young people in decision-making processes taking place in the city. To respond to a growing demand for child-friendliness, city governments need to grant visibility to children on their municipal agendas, by enhancing resources for children, developing child-friendly policies, monitoring the implementation of strategies and plans for children, and giving young citizens a voice.

How can a city justify making children a priority? First, because it is a legal obligation. After ratifying the Convention on the Rights of the Child, States have an obligation under international law to ensure that the child's best interests are a primary consideration in all actions concerning children. Local government is best positioned to translate national-level commitment into practice suitable to the local level.

Beyond the legal imperative, there are other compelling reasons why putting children first is in the interests of everybody in the city:

- Children are individual people – they have equal status to adults as members of the human race – they are not possessions of parents, products of the State, not people-in-the-making;
- Children's healthy development and active participation are uniquely crucial to the healthy future of any city or society;
- Children start totally dependent. They grow towards independence only with the help of adults;
- Their dependence, and their developmental state make them particularly vulnerable – so they are more affected than adults by the conditions under which they live, by poverty, by exclusion, poor housing, environmental pollution and so on;
- Similarly, children are more affected by the actions – or inactions – of government than any other group. Almost every area of government policy affects children to some degree, either directly, or indirectly;
- Children have no vote and play no significant part in the conventional political process. Without special arrangements, they will have little influence on the huge impact government has on their lives;
- Because of their status, there are particular and serious problems for children in seeking remedies for breaches of their rights.

There is also the negative justification: the huge costs of failing children. Governments know from research and experience that what happens to children in the early years, within the family, within other forms of care, and even before birth in the womb, significantly determines their positive, or negative, growth and development. This, in turn, determines their cost or contribution to society spread over the rest of their lives.

Faced with problems of poverty, exclusion, abuse and exploitation affecting entire sections of their population – and impacting in particular on young people –, an increasing number of cities have committed to fulfilling children's rights across the entire municipal system. As the Convention addresses the child as a whole, with an indivisible body of legal provisions, child-friendly cities have started dealing with the child holistically, ensuring that all sectors converge to provide an integrated response to the indivisible needs and rights of children. In an attempt to overcome sectoral interventions for children, over the past decade cities have developed a Child-Friendly Cities Initiative, expanding the Mayors Defenders of Children programme mobilized in the early 90's. Fulfilling the rights of all children living in the city makes good political sense: it ensures returns on all categories of citizens because a city friendly to children is a city friendly to all.

2. Implementing children's rights in cities

In an inclusive, transparent, responsive system of governance, all citizens are given due consideration, regardless of age, ethnic origin, income, gender or ability. A concept of 'child-friendly cities' has been emerging to indicate a city government that consistently makes decisions in the best interests of children, and addresses children's rights to a healthy, caring, protective, educative, non-discriminating, inclusive, culturally rich and ecologically sustainable environment.

A child-friendly city is a system of good governance committed to the full implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. It falls on city governments to translate the commitments made at the national level by states ratifying the Convention into action at the city level – and thus also to form a key component of national plans of action for children. It has particular relevance to the follow-up to the UN Special Session on Children (New York, 8–10 May 2002), whose document, *A World Fit for Children*, explicitly commits member nations to develop child-friendly communities and cities, and to involve Mayors and municipal authorities as primary partners in achieving the new goals set for children.

This provides an immediate opportunity for those involved in promoting cities fit for children to contribute, from a local level, to the national process of implementing the Convention and building a world fit for children.

Cities fit for children recognize young people as citizens who have a right to express their opinions and have their views given due consideration. This requires most cities to make institutional, legal and budgetary reforms and to develop a strategy to transform the living environments of children, at the family, community and city levels. The concept of a child-friendly city is not based on an ideal end state or a standard model. It is a framework to assist any city to become more child-friendly in all aspects of its environment, governance and services.

3. Children, citizens in cities

A largely urbanized Europe and Central Asia is no exception in the context of global trends. By 2002, close to half the world's children lived in urban centres. Projections suggest that six out of ten children will live in urban areas in low- and middle-income nations by 2025. Although poverty is commonly perceived as predominantly a rural phenomenon, a large and growing proportion of the world's poorest and most deprived groups live in urban areas. In poor nations, many city children live with their whole families in slums and shanties, often without the most basic services or supports. Urban poverty is a reality in cities. Extreme forms of exploitation are increasingly recorded. Child begging, illegal migration and child trafficking are requiring more investigation and demanding urgent action by local communities and municipal governments.

In Europe and Central Asia, the situation is different, although there are exceptions. In some countries, group communities at cities outskirts may not provide basic services. Apartment complexes in the Commonwealth of Independent States may be overcrowded and not fully renovated to ensure an adequate environment. And, in many countries, minority communities may live in 'ghetto like conditions'. Young people are threatened by traffic, violence and pollution. Children often live in a world rigidly organized by adults with little opportunity for playing and socializing freely with their peers. Bullying in public places, such as schools or parks, is a growing concern. Traffic is a major reason why children do no longer walk freely around their neighbourhood. Young citizens usually lack opportunities for expressing their needs and aspirations and for proposing alternatives. Under such conditions, opportunities for children to participate in public life and be involved in decision-making processes affecting their life compete with a need expressed by parents and institutions to protect them. A culture of over-protection is threatening the natural need and right of every child to experience the world first hand and progressively become an autonomous and discerning adult.

Cities however offer also extraordinary opportunities. They have a unique capacity to harness resources for children and youth. The decentralization underway in many countries results in a transfer of institutional and legal responsibilities from central to local government. Children are the new citizens in a system of governance that no longer have national governments as sole reference. Cities increasingly have responsibility for social sector programmes and services. Children have more access to information and to educational and social facilities of quality. They are being increasingly involved in governance processes that, at the local, national and regional levels, affect their lives, presently and in the future.

4. A European and Central Asian movement of cities fit for children

A global Child-Friendly Cities Initiative has developed in Europe and Central Asia as well as in other Regions to provide an alternative to how cities have been conceived and built by and for adults.

What is a child-friendly city

As a local system of good governance committed to the full implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, a child-friendly city guarantees the right of every young citizen to:

- Influence decisions about their city
- Express their opinion on the city they want
- Participate in family, community and social life

- Receive basic services such as health care, education and shelter
- Drink safe water and have access to proper sanitation
- Be protected from exploitation, violence and abuse
- Walk safely in the streets on their own
- Meet friends and play
- Have green spaces for plants and animals
- Live in an unpolluted environment
- Participate in cultural and social events
- Be an equal citizen of their city with access to every service, regardless of ethnic origin, religion, income, gender or disability.

A city committed to child rights will ground its system of governance in the four general principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, as identified by the Committee on the Rights of the Child: non-discrimination (Art. 2), best interests of the child (Art. 3), the right to life and maximum development (Art. 6), and respecting children's views (Art. 12).

In a child-friendly governance system, all actors – children and children's groups, community and civil society organizations, NGOs, experts, practitioners and municipal authorities – are partners in addressing children's rights. As the Convention addresses the child as a whole, with an indivisible body of legal provisions, a child-friendly city deals with the child holistically, ensuring that all sectors converge to provide an integrated response to the indivisible needs and rights of children.

- *Promoting children's active participation*: informing and involving children and reflecting their views and experiences; perceiving children as partners and as individual human beings, right holders and equal, active citizens. Child participation is fundamental to the whole process of building a child-friendly city. The participation of children in decision-making processes makes them partners in the city's governance system. The unique perspective of children has to be taken into account in the decisions made by the city.
- *A child-friendly legal framework*: ensuring legislation, regulatory frameworks and procedures which consistently promote and protect the rights of all children. A principled legal framework ensures that policy and practice for children are sustained over time and benefit all children.
- *A city-wide Children's Rights Strategy*: developing a detailed, comprehensive strategy or agenda for building a child-friendly city, based on the Convention. A city-wide strategy ensures that provisions made under the law are converted into coherent policies and actions. Local plans of action for children will set goals and targets for the city.
- *A Children's Rights Unit or coordinating mechanism*: developing permanent structures in local government to ensure priority consideration of children's perspective. Special institutional arrangements are made to ensure that the plan of action is implemented and that policy and practice are rooted in the system, ideally through a special unit or coordinating mechanism for children set up to coordinate and monitor the execution of the local plan for children.
- *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. A concerted effort is made in several cities to devise quality indicators and monitoring systems within the framework of a multisectoral, city-level intervention in favour of young citizens.

- *A children's budget*: ensuring adequate resource commitment and budget analysis for children. Children's budgets, a complementary instrument to city-level plans for children, ensure that due consideration is given to children in resource allocation.
- *A regular State of the City's Children Report*: ensuring sufficient monitoring and data collection on the state of children and their rights. Regular analysis of data on the status of the city's children is a prerequisite for planning and informs decisions on setting priorities and goals.
- *Making children's rights known*: ensuring awareness of children's rights among adults and children. Appreciating and becoming aware of their rights in the local context allows children to relate ethical and philosophical principles to the reality they experience in everyday life and their surrounding environment.
- *Independent advocacy for children*: supporting non-governmental organizations and developing independent human rights institutions – children's ombudspersons or commissioners for children – to promote children's rights. A few city governments have established ombudspersons or commissioners for children, although statutory systems are still rare. There is scope for involving children in providing input to the establishment of such institutions.

5. European and Central Asian cities fit for children in practice

Good governance for and with children

Child-friendly cities evolving in different economic and social contexts are contributing in practice to the debate on the role of children in governance processes. Young people are finding a concrete opportunity to act as citizens. Several Child-Friendly Cities initiatives in Europe – developed both at the municipal and national levels – have helped revisit traditional governance and decision-making practices, opening the doors of city hall to children and youth.

We find evidence of such holistic approaches in European countries such as Germany, UK, and Croatia, for example.

In Germany, the City of Munich has mobilized the *München, Stadt für Kinder* (Munich, City for Children) programme. The key objective set by the city was to take young citizens seriously and listen to what they had to say. The effort emerged from the growing realization that the city was becoming less attractive to children: it lacked creative and innovative solutions for young people. Children and youth came forward offering to help improve their environment and assist planning, designing and building processes. The *Munich Kinderbüro* (Children's Office) was established to focus the attention on children and youth, and to promote child-friendly initiatives. The long-standing commitment made by Munich to children has resulted in permanent municipal-level mechanisms focusing on policies for children and families and, importantly, in attracting the attention of the national government to children living in urban communities. The Munich city council is the first German metropolis to undersign the Convention on the Rights of the Child and to implement it by developing an official policy framework. Making Munich a child-friendly city has had implications for all age groups. In fact, by pursuing the wellbeing of children, it has been possible to develop communities that offer a healthy, inspiring and culturally rich environment to all.

A city-wide child-friendly strategy has also been the result of a process carried out by the city of London over the past three years. The Office of the Children's Rights Commissioner for

London, a project of CRAE (Children's Rights Alliance for England), was set up in March 2000 to work with the Greater London Authority to develop London's first Children's Strategy. A vision to make London genuinely friendly to children has been matched with specific proposals for the changes that will move this vision towards realization. The Mayor's vision, developed within the framework of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, recognizes that the well-being of London's children and the quality of their present lives are key to the achievement of a more sustainable future. Children in London make a considerable contribution to the well-being of families, local communities and the city as a whole. But they have little voice in public decision-making – and they have no vote. Despite growing up in a city of enormous wealth, young Londoners experience the highest level of poverty and inequality of any region in the UK. They also breathe the worst quality air, travel the most congested streets, attain lower levels of educational achievement and suffer from a lack of safe places to play. The Mayor is committed to providing the necessary leadership to ensure real improvements in the lives of London's children. Over the next ten years the number of children in London is set to grow, with those from black and minority ethnic groups expected to increase to almost 40 per cent of the child population. Work is therefore focused on four key goals:

- Putting children and young people's best interests at the heart of policy-making in the UK's capital city
- Tackling child poverty and poverty-related inequalities
- Promoting inclusion and equality amongst London's children and young people
- Ensuring a greater voice for children and young people and improving opportunities for their systematic participation in decision-making in London.

The strategy applies to everyone aged 0-17 years in London, and is based on improving children's rights as they are described in the Convention. Children and young people have been involved in developing the Children's Strategy. The group also includes representatives from the Mayor's office and the London Assembly, social services, education, health, local government, London First, researchers, the London Children's Rights Commissioner and members of its children's Advisory Board.

In Croatia, the Towns and Districts Friends of Children Initiative has mobilized a broad coalition enlisting the Union of Societies 'Our Children, Croatia', the Croatian Society for Social and Preventive Pediatrics, the State Institute for the Protection of Family, Motherhood and Youth, UNICEF, other institutions and professionals. The goal of the programme is to promote action in towns and districts of the Republic of Croatia aimed at fulfilling the rights and needs of children. Local authorities and civil society, children's institutions, parents and children commit themselves to making their towns and districts more child friendly and to monitor achievements through a complex set of rights-based indicators. The initiative has been built on the partnerships developed by the Town Mayors Defenders of Children, launched during the war as a way to assist displaced children.

Municipal children budgets

City-wide strategies for children are testing out the establishment of children's budgets. The city of Essen in Germany has successfully experimented in putting the municipal revenue system at the service of the city strategy for children. Another example worthwhile mentioning for having set an international model for children's budgets is drawn from Brazil, an experience in the 'South' that have important lessons to teach to the 'North'.

In Germany, the *Essen – Großstadt für Kinder* (Essen – City for Children) programme was launched by the Essen town council in 1988. Government units, institutions and the local organizations gathered together with the aim of investigating the situation of young people in the city and setting the objectives of a multidisciplinary approach aimed to support the

healthy development of children. The multisectoral team reviewed all phases and aspects of a child's life, from birth to the time young people enter the work-force, and made proposals for action. In 1990, the Town Council of Essen made permanent institutional arrangements: a *Kinderbüro* (Children's Office) was established and the Action Programme for Essen – *Großstadt für Kinder* – launched. As the initiative evolved, in 1998 a Strategy Plan was developed, providing a framework for better child- and family-oriented policies in the city. The programme was finally institutionalized in the municipal system and, since 1999, a budget for child-friendly Essen has been built into the regular revenue system, becoming a component of the tax-generated incomes of the municipality.

In Ukraine, a 'Child-Friendly City' pilot project was developed in the city of Starokostyantyniv, Khmelnytskyi Oblast in cooperation with UNICEF. The main goal was to develop a model of the child-friendly environment for complete implementation of CRC in the city. In the result, City Administration established a Coordination Council of the project chaired by the Mayor. Children of Starokostyantyniv elected Youth Parliament also presented in the Coordination Council. In 2003, City Administration provided special budget allocations for the project and, starting from 2004, separate financing for this project will be provided in the city budget. Several other cities of Khmelnytskyi Oblast were interested in this experience and expressed their will to support this initiative.

The Government is now considering to scaling up the project and envisages generalization of the experience of the Starokostyantyniv project experience by conducting a number of activities (round tables, seminars, contests, brain-storming sessions, focus groups etc.) with involvement of children, youth, policy makers on national and local levels, educators, health professionals, social workers etc. And then, it is planned to develop regulations and procedures for development, assessment and certification of the Child-Friendly Communities (Cities, Raions, Oblasts) with the main goal to establish 'Ukraine Fit for Children'.

A city-wide framework for delivery of basic services and protection measures

Cities fit for children, it has been noted, provide a holistic framework to ensuring that services are provided to all children. They also rely on a systemic approach that makes it possible to regularly identify intra-urban discriminations (normally obscured in national figures) and address them with tailor-made measures. The Child-Friendly Cities approach has successfully allowed for city-wide implementation and monitoring of social sector programmes and protection measures in countries such as the Russian Federation and Ukraine, among others.

The Russian Social Mobilization for Child Rights (SMCR) programme broadly aims to ensure that children's rights are at the centre of the public and political agenda. Among the various interventions aimed at raising general awareness of children's rights there is the pilot Ombudsman for children's rights project. Running since 1998 as a joint initiative of the federal Ministry of Labour and UNICEF, it extends to several regions of the Russian Federation. One important breakthrough in 2001 was the approval by the Moscow City Duma of an Ombudsman for child rights for the city of Moscow.

With regard to child protection measures, a Street Children Programme was jointly initiated by the Moscow municipal authorities and UNICEF, focusing on a city-level database, training for outreach workers, promotion of information exchange and cooperation between various municipal agencies and organizations, and the formalization of best practices. Pilot community-based models of child-friendly spaces were also promoted where children and their parents can access counselling and necessary support and rehabilitation.

The Ukraine Young People's Health and Development project is directed towards promoting healthy lifestyles among young people and helping to develop innovative new approaches for

ensuring young people's health and development rights. The project is based on youth participation strategies. It promotes the development of a Children's Parliamentarian Movement in 15 cities of Ukraine, and the establishment of the Children's Information Radio Agency in five cities. A Ukrainian network of about 40 Youth NGOs working on the issues of prevention, reproductive health, HLS promotion has been established jointly with UNFPA. In 2000,

35 Ukrainian cities attended the Mayors of Ukraine meeting for the Youth-Friendly Cities, which gathered local authorities, representatives of youth organizations and mass media to develop local plans of action for children.

Children's participation: Children envision the city they want

A 'golden thread' runs through the multiple child-friendly models, weaving different experiences into one global goal – child participation. Whilst a growing awareness of the active role assigned to children can be traced in most of the examples described, there are cases where child participation is adopted as the core strategy for the Child-Friendly Cities Initiative. These are normally situations where there is a high level of awareness of the Convention. By participating in local decision-making processes, children learn how to grow into citizens who are aware and who can exercise their rights responsibly from a young age. Child-friendly cities thus become a laboratory for Europe's new generation of citizens.

An important recent study has been carried out by the Swiss Committee for UNICEF to reveal prevailing opportunities and demands for child participation in Swiss communities. *Giving children a voice* enquires on how article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child – which establishes that every child has the right to express his or her opinion freely in any matter affecting him or herself – has found its way among children in one of the most affluent European societies. The 12,872 children and young people interviewed have expressed high levels of expectations toward expressing their opinions and influencing decision-making processes. In families, schools and in the society at large, however, such expectations are often betrayed, according to children, and systems responsible for their development and well-being do not appear to be equipped to gather their demand for participation or to meet it.

Attempts are being made to create forums for children's voices, demands and proposals in several European (and non-European) countries. Albania and Georgia are just a case in point.

The Youth Parliament in Albania is a forum of youth elected between 14-18 years old, organized at prefecture level, nationwide. The goal is to increase youth participation in public debates through empowerment and first hand participation. Young parliamentarians learn about participation skills, democratic practices and good governance. They interact with the local and national authorities, presenting initiatives and calling for action. Youth Parliaments are represented in the district council's meetings regularly and participate in hearings with the locally elected bodies. Once a year, Youth Parliaments from all the prefectures gather in national capital for a debate in the national parliament building to present a resolution and a call for action to the government and the parliament.

The Children and Youth Parliament of Georgia has become a forum for children and young people to express their views provide opportunities for skill-building in governance, and a venue for awareness-raising on the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The young parliamentarians have established close cooperation with the legislative and executive authorities and have actively participated in high-level discussions on child-related issues. The young parliamentarians have invited the Ministers of Health, Education and Environment to identify concrete areas where young people can address problems affecting youth. Members of the parliaments have actively participated and made their views heard in various

important meetings aimed to the formulation of a youth policy in the country. The young parliamentarians also participated in discussing the draft law on 'Protecting minors from harmful influence' and proposed amendments that were considered by the National Parliament during the final deliberation. The group has worked closely with the Parliament's Committee on Human Rights in the elaboration of and deliberation on the law on children.

6. The main issues, today

National governments have made important commitments for children over the past decade. They are engaged in following up on the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and on meeting the goals set by a *World Fit for Children*. Action to fulfil such critical objectives, however, can not be confined at the central government level. There is a need to translate national policy frameworks into local level processes to bring action closer to young people, all the way down to the community where children are growing up. National level processes become more relevant when stakeholders – local authorities, civil society, experts, families, schools and, most importantly, young people – are involved. Child-friendly Mayors, local authorities and cities are critical partners in ensuring that the process of fulfilling children's rights is implemented and monitored closely. There are three main issues needing consideration in carrying forward a process leading to the development of Cities Fit for Children:

1. Municipalities and other local systems of governance need to increasingly commit to children. As part of the decentralization process taking place in most European and Central Asian countries, priority must be granted to children. In making new administrative and financial arrangements in municipal governments, accountability needs to be matched with authority. As they take over responsibilities that have been traditionally held by the central government in important sectors such as education, health, childcare, social welfare, local systems of governance must be granted adequate political and financial authority.

The process that has taken place in several countries following the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child has resulted in legal reforms and national policy frameworks for children which now need to find mechanisms for implementation at the local level. There are important examples of comprehensive policy frameworks that envisage complementary action at the national and local levels. A closer coordination between central and local government levels should be established in order to ensure that policy decisions made centrally are implemented locally with the concurrence and participation of communities, families and children.

A governance dialogue on and with children between local, national and, further, regional levels of government should be sustained. Commitments made by national governments at the international level need, on the one hand, to be translated into monitorable action at the local level and, on the other, influence new levels of governance at supranational level, such as the European Union.

In the new governance dialogue, must be ensured that children are no longer considered mere beneficiaries, but act as citizens who have the right to influence decisions having an impact on their lives.



Discussion points

- **How do we ensure that local governments complement efforts being made by the national government in achieving goals for children?**

- **What type of coordination needs to be established among different levels of government to translate national level goals into monitorable and measurable action at the local level in respect to infrastructure, access to services and decision-making?**
 - **How can child-unfriendly social and physical urban environments be transformed into enabling environments for children to combat child poverty, exclusion, abuse and exploitation?**
2. In order to become a City Fit for Children, a city must equip itself with adequate child-friendly policy, institutional and monitoring mechanisms. It must also ensure that children participate in the process of establishing and monitoring these mechanisms.

Firstly, cities need to adopt a child-friendly legal framework within which they can develop a children's rights strategy, including, for example, a plan of action defining the objectives, goals, activities and timeframes for improving the condition of young citizens living in the city, meeting their rights and contrasting all forms of abuse, violence and discrimination against children. Regular collection of data and the preparation on a report on the state of children in the city would help monitor the implementation of the strategy.

Further, a city must establish institutional mechanisms converging municipal line departments on the children's strategy. Sectors could so contribute expertise and resources to ensure that children are given visibility on the municipal agenda. Child impact assessments and evaluations would put in place a systematic process of assessing the impact of law, policy and practice on children.

Cities should also set up mechanisms aimed to provide independent advocacy for children so that young citizens gain access to ombudspople to address their rights. Cities should finally ensure that children's rights are known to all, policy-makers, implementers, staff and, importantly, families and children.



Discussion points

- **How do we ensure that municipal governments carry forward locally the process initiated by state governments to implement the Convention on the Rights of the Child, so fulfilling the goals set in *A World Fit for Children*?**
 - **How can municipal governments establish those fundamental mechanisms necessary to build a child-friendly city, such as:**
 1. **Fora for children's participation**
 2. **A child-friendly legal framework**
 3. **A city-wide Children's Rights Strategy or Plan**
 4. **A Children's Rights Unit or coordinating mechanism**
 5. **Child impact assessment and evaluation**
 6. **A children's budget**
 7. **A regular State of the City's Report**
 8. **Making children's rights known**
 9. **Independent advocacy for children through independent human rights institutions, such as children's ombudspople or commissioners for children?**
3. In performing both its governance and management functions, a child-friendly city encourages all forms of child participation, including setting up, when appropriate, municipal children's forums. In all steps of the process leading to building a child-friendly

city, local authorities should ensure that children express their opinion and have a say in processes concerning them.

Tokenistic forms of child participation should be replaced with a systematic effort to ensure that children contribute to decision-making processes concerning their own community and personal life. Experiences of young people's municipal councils, informal forums for child participation, participatory planning with children are becoming progressively a reality in cities.

Normally, such experiences do not confine themselves to addressing problems directly affecting children. Young people are consulted on all issues pertaining to the life of the city. Children are not a social group representing special problems. They are rather an age group cutting across social, economic and cultural groups living in the city. Decisions made in spheres traditionally regarded as the realm of adults – such as the economy, traffic, mobility, transport and so on – have a direct impact on the lives of children. Lacking the right to vote, children do not have an opportunity to influence vital decisions at the national level. They can feasibly do so locally if cities have the vision and the capacity to expand their democratic processes to include young people who have been at last recognized rights and a voice.



Discussion point

- **How do we ensure that young people are consulted in all matters affecting their lives and are given an opportunity to influence decision-making processes taking place in their city as equal citizens?**

Annex 1

History of the ‘child-friendly cities’ concept

In 1992, the Mayors Defenders of Children initiative was launched in Dakar, Senegal, as a way of involving municipal authorities in implementing children’s rights. In 1996, the UN Conference on Human Settlements, Habitat II, in Istanbul, stressed that the well-being of children is the ultimate indicator of a healthy society and that child-friendly cities are also cities that are better for all. In 2000, UNICEF set up the International Secretariat for Child-Friendly Cities (CFC Secretariat) at its Innocenti Research Centre, in Florence, to support a network of child-friendly cities evolving the world over. The Secretariat’s mandate is to support networks of child-friendly mayors and municipalities and to gather information, carry out research and distil lessons about child-friendly cities worldwide, making data and tools available to policy makers and other partners.

Besides UNICEF, the founding partners were the Italian Committee for UNICEF, UN HABITAT, the Italian Government and the Istituto degli Innocenti (a partner organization of the Government of Italy in the Child-Friendly Cities programme.) Since its formation the CFC Secretariat has carried out field research on innovations generated by local governance systems committed to fulfilling child rights; developed a specialized web-based CFC database; established operational links and shared know-how with local Child-Friendly Cities initiatives and regional networks and other critical players; built contacts with hundreds of interested parties; supported the development of technical and advocacy publications; and promoted child-friendly cities in local and international fora, including the UN Special Session on Children, where participating child-friendly mayors called for a strengthened CFC movement worldwide.

The CFC Secretariat maintains relationships with many Child-Friendly Cities initiatives and data are collected as these evolve. The Secretariat also helps document and publicize successful action by cities, ensuring a platform for experience sharing. More generally, the Secretariat seeks to influence the debate on governance by bringing a child’s perspective to influential regional and international fora. Website: www.childfriendlycities.org)

Annex 2

Other examples of good governance for and with children

The Spanish *Ciudades Amigas de la Infancia* (Child-Friendly Cities) programme encourages Mayors to adopt a broad variety of policies to promote the rights of children within a local context. Launched in 1994 as the 'Mayors Defenders of Children' initiative and expanded in the year 2000 into the *Ciudades Amigas de la Infancia*, the Spanish initiative has striven to set up transparent and rational municipal administrative frameworks aimed at mobilizing the entire city system on child-focused agendas. Mayors are sensitized and encouraged to involve political allies and town councils in developing child rights-based policies. Children's participation processes have been initiated and an Award for Children's Rights and Local Governance is granted to best practices on the basis of a set of eight indicators identified by a national jury. The Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces (*Federación Española de Municipios y Provincias* – FEMP), the Spanish Committee for UNICEF, the Government of Spain and local CRC-oriented NGOs are partners in an initiative that has progressively gained a national dimension.

A similar national network of Child-Friendly Cities has been built over time in Italy. The project *Città sostenibili delle bambine e dei bambini* (Sustainable Cities for Boys and Girls) was started in 1996 by the Ministry of the Environment in collaboration with the Istituto degli Innocenti, Florence, the Italian Committee for UNICEF, and the network of Italian municipalities committed to implementing *Agenda 21* and carrying out the commitments made at Habitat II. In the same year, a similar initiative, the Children's City project, was launched by Italy's National Research Council (*Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche* – CNR) and acted as a laboratory for the budding Italian CFC initiative. Converging a number of national and local programmes and funds for children, the Italian Movement of Child-Friendly Cities aims at merging environmental sustainability goals (e.g., management of the urban ecosystem) with social sector goals for children set by the law passed to implement the Convention in Italy. Child participation and inclusion of children are at the core of the Italian approach. Children are involved in participatory planning and decision-making processes taking place in schools, within municipalities or at the drawing board where the 'city we want' is envisioned and designed.

Progressively the programme has set up a number of mechanisms to support the child-friendly cities network members, such as the institution of a service agency for child-friendly cities; the definition of benchmarks to measure the degree of child-friendliness of a city; the yearly organization of an international 'Forum of Child-Friendly Cities'. Safe and stimulating spaces and free time to circulate and play outdoors, health and education services, a sustainable urban environment, opportunities for cultural exchange and self-expression are as many prerequisites to supporting an ecologically-branded child development process and encouraging participation by young people. To qualify for the child-friendly cities network, municipal governments must prove that they have made the necessary political, administrative and budgetary provisions in favour of children by devoting a quota of their planned municipal activities to the benefit of children; by reviewing services and amenities for children to ensure that they meet their needs; by expanding and devoting permanent spaces to education purposes; by building play areas that are secure, colourful and designed to encourage inclusion and participation; by planning traffic and mobility in favour of pedestrians, especially young ones; by promoting environmental education in order to improve the relationship child-environment; by upgrading physical and social spaces within residential areas and, last but not the least, by establishing youth councils or similar forms of intra- and inter-generational consultation and discussion.

The Government of Ireland has drafted a National Children's Strategy (NCS) in a pursue to implement the Convention on the Rights of the Child. An attempt has been made to draw a

wide range of issues together into a coherent plan of action for children (age group 0-18) and to give leadership at a national level for responding to the needs of children. The Strategy involves a variety of sectors and partners with the purpose of guiding all efforts in the areas of planning and managing the delivery of services to children and their families in one single coordinating framework for action. Adopting a 'whole child' perspective, three national goals have been set: 1. Children will have a voice. 2. Children's lives will be better understood. 3. Children will benefit from quality services and supports and new structural arrangements to ensure implementation.

The National Children's Strategy is the result of cooperation among several sectoral government departments and is implemented at the various levels of the government, national and local. A National Children's Office headed by a Minister for Children has been established as a central focal point for the NCS. The Strategy has been complemented with a decentralization of responsibilities and a strengthened linkage between the national and local level. The local implementation of the NCS is coordinated through the County and City Development Boards (CDB's), which have recently been set up to develop local economic, social and cultural strategies and to ensure integration of services at the local level. The Boards include representatives of governmental institutions, non-governmental and community organizations, including the voluntary sector.

Cities such as Dublin, Galway and Drogheda have mobilized municipal-level processes aimed at implementing children's rights in the framework of the NCS. Dublin is posed to become a family-friendly city: a city in which the family and the role of all family members are valued and supported. The participation of children and youth is advocated in an effort to make Dublin a Democratic and Participative City. A civic participation package has been developed called 'Young Dubliners speak out' with guidelines for youth leaders and civic teachers. The *Comhairle Na Nog*/Children's and Youth's Council act as a forum for children's voices to be heard.

The Child-Friendly Cities approach provides a mechanism for social mobilization and expanding partnerships for children. The *Ville Amie des Enfants* (Child-Friendly City) programme is mobilizing the Association of French Mayors (*Association des Maires de France* – AMF) and a variety of other partners, including the French Committee for UNICEF, around children's goals. The programme aims to support small, medium and large-size municipalities to

- Mobilize energies to defend and promote the rights of children in their constituencies
- Work to become more welcoming for children and to assure the best conditions for their growth and development
- Commit themselves to the world's children in a spirit of international solidarity.

According to the French initiative, a child-friendly city is a city that

- Encourages even the youngest to understand citizenship, for example by setting up a children's municipal council
- Facilitates access to cultural and leisure activities, leaving a day free for children to play or take part in workshops for example
- Looks after children's health and environment, for example by creating a park that is suitable for children with disabilities
- Improves security for children living in the city, making safe routes between home and schools.