

# MISSION REPORT

ASSESSMENT OF CHILD FRIENDLY CITY INITIATIVE (CFCI)  
DEVELOPMENT IN THE REPUBLIC OF BELARUS



*“The Child Friendly City Initiative is not a standalone intervention anymore, it is a part of the City life...”*

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Every effort has been made to ensure that the information in this report is correct. Any factual error that may appear is unintended and is the responsibility of the consultant. This report represents the views of the consultant only and does not necessarily represent the views of UNICEF.

CFCI	Child Friendly Cities Initiative
CSO	Civil Society Organization
GNI	Gross National Income
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
ICT	Information Communication Technology
ILO	International Labor Organization
KII	Key Informant Interview
LA	Local Authority
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoH	Ministry of Health
MDR-TB	Multidrug-resistant TB
NCD	Non-communicable disease
NSC	National Statistical Committee
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PPP	Purchasing Power Parity
RB	Republic of Belarus
RBM	Result Based Management
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
ToR	Terms of Reference
UKID	Urban Child Development Index
UN	United Nations
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UN Women	United Nations Women
WB	World Bank

## ACRONYMS

## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**BACKGROUND**

To address the CRC Concluding Observations on the 2nd, combined 3rd and 4th Periodic Reports of the Republic of Belarus, UNICEF and the Government agreed to introduce a Child Friendly City Initiative (CFCI) as a framework to increase the effectiveness of local governance in the best interest of children and strengthen the monitoring system of child rights realization.

CFCI was launched in Belarus in 2007 and scaled up within the 2011-2015 programme cycle to bring an explicit children's focus into traditional adult-oriented governance system, create enabling environment for child development, promote inter-sectoral collaboration and partnership to address child issues, monitoring of child rights realization and meaningful children's/youth participation in decision making process. .

By 2016, 22 cities joined CFCI implementation and with UNICEF support the normative and methodological frameworks were developed and efforts dedicated on strengthening the capacity of local authorities to effectively address local development problems in the best interest of children.

In 2013-2015, seventeen cities calculated CFC index and drew up the Reports "Status of Children in the City" with the main achievements, identified bottlenecks and future strategies of CFCI development.

Based on the reported results National Coordination Council on CFCI granted the Honourable Status of "Child Friendly City"

to Novopolotsk, Pinsk, Brest, Pruzhany, Polotsk, Soligorsk and Zhodino.

To assess the impact of CFCI on the creation of the enabling environment for the realization of child rights, effectiveness of the local governance and community initiatives towards implementation of UN CRC at the city level, meaningful children/youth participation in decision making and to continue to promote the prioritization of children's rights and interests now and within the post-2015 development agenda, the Ministry of Education and UNICEF agreed to conduct an independent CFCI assessment to be facilitated by the international consultant contracted by UNICEF.

The assessment findings, results and recommendations will be used as an evidence for policy advocacy and legislation improvement, strengthening partnership of governmental and civil society organizations, promotion of meaningful youth participation in all decisions concerning their life, growth and development and greater involvement of community members in child rights realization and monitoring and dissemination of best practices nationally and internationally.

The results of the assessment will be presented and discussed at the International

Conference of Child Friendly Cities to be held in Minsk in 2016 and used for attracting the international donors' interest for greater investment in the realization and monitoring of the rights of children and young people focusing on the most vulnerable and marginalized children in urban setting.

The study took place in December 2015 – February 2016 and aimed to assess effectiveness, relevance and sustainability of CFCI development in the best interest of children, especially the most disadvantaged in the Republic of Belarus. The study's objectives have specifically focused on assessment of sustainability of the initiative and examining the key components of the CFCI to identify the main barriers, bottlenecks and draw up recommendations on corrective actions to overcome them. The key components are identified as following:

- CFCI coordination at the National level;
- CFCI implementation at the local level;
- The work of Children's/Youth Councils/Parliaments;
- The child rights monitoring and evaluation at the local level.

## **Methodology**

The assessment has non-experimental, exploratory design and applied both, quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative part included the analysis of relevant and available administrative and secondary data obtained from public sources and UNICEF, including monitoring and evaluation reports and the City reports developed over the course of the initiative. Qualitative data were collected through

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with youth groups and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with the CFCI coordinators in each visited location. In order to improve validity of findings, data were triangulated in terms of source of information (participant cities, non participant and awarded cities, authorities, youth groups and NGOs). In total, 10 cities from different oblasts were visited during the study. The themes and questions for FGDs and KIIs were developed based on the study framework/matrix created to address the study objectives (See Annex A).

Based on the global priorities and by taking into consideration the context of the country, a Theory of Change/Result Framework of the CFCI was developed by the consultant as well.

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## **KEY FINDINGS**

The assessment applied OECD DAC evaluation criteria to examine the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the interventions.

### **Relevance**

The study found that the priorities of CFCI are highly relevant to the country's context. The objectives are consistent with the national priorities and the country's international commitments towards realization of child rights. More specifically, it is in line with the Law of the Republic of Belarus "On the Rights of the Child", the Law of the Republic of Belarus "On the Fundamentals of the State Youth Policy", the National Plan of Action on the Improvement of the Situation of Children and Protection of their Rights for 2012-2016, the National Program of Demographic Security of the Republic of Belarus for 2011-2015, the

guidelines and recommendations of international documents on the state of children issued by the UN General Assembly and the Committee on the Rights of the Child. The initiative corresponds with the SDG “Goal 11: Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable” and is part of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) for the Republic of Belarus for 2016-2020, under the thematic area “Inclusive, Responsive and Accountable Governance” as well.

### **Participation of children and youth**

Meaningful participation of children in decision-making is one of the key principles of the UN CRC. Participation has positive impact on children’s comprehensive development and on the other hand strengthens democratic values in communities. Based on the review of available reports and observations made during the field visits, it can be stated that the CFCI has reinforced creation of youth and children organizations and enhanced their capabilities to promote own rights and interests in different settings, while fostering continuous dialogue among youth and the local authorities.

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“THE PARLIAMENT BECAME LIKE A BRIDGE BETWEEN YOUTH AND THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES...”

Quote from FGD with Children’s/Youth Parliament

### **Child rights monitoring.**

Lack of disaggregated data on the status of children in urban setting and evidence-based

policy-making remain as a global issue. Development and implementation of data collection and analysis tool at local level is among the key achievements of the CFCI. Introduced “Friendliness Index” is unique in terms of collecting data in relation to participation of children in decision-making, involvement of children in social life, perspective of children on environment and other important indicators. While external validity of the Index, due to the sample size can be questioned, on the other hand it is the only multi-dimensional measure that helps to have a deeper insight into the situation of children in urban setting and most importantly, from children’s perspective.

### **Effectiveness**

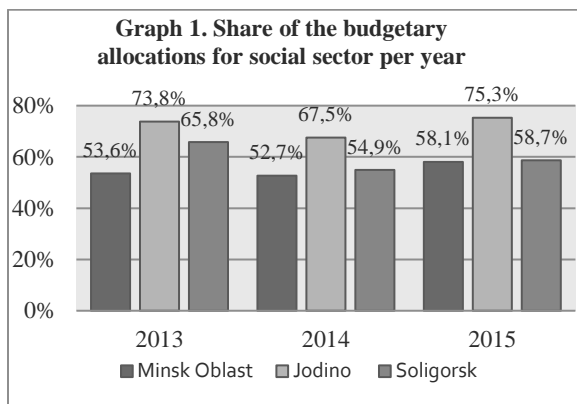
The study revealed that there is a progress against the objectives of the initiative. There were three objectives identified for the period of 2013-2015:

- I. Development and implementation of monitoring system of the situation of children at the city level;
- II. Improving the governance system at local level for the best interests of children;
- III. Advancing methods and types of participation of children and youth in decision-making.

The observation suggests that CFCI was effective in development and implementation of monitoring system of the situation of children at city level. The “Friendliness Index” serves not only as an assessment tool, but also as a mechanism to dedicate efforts of the municipality and other actors around specific themes concerning children at City level.

The tool has a complete guide, forms and a dashboard that allow seeing the result in the corresponding webpage of the CFCI in the Republic of Belarus ([www.detivgorode.by](http://www.detivgorode.by)). According to data on the CFCI webpage, 18 cities across the country expressed interest, were trained and implemented this tool. The assessment tool is part of Certification mechanism as well. The Cities with higher indices receive an honorable award of “Child Friendly City”. By December 2015, seven cities were qualified as such in the Republic of Belarus. On the other hand, the tool needs to be further improved and adopted to become a simple, practical, affordable and reliable source of information that provides up to date data for decision-making.

The improvement of governance system at local level for the best interest of children was assessed by looking at budgetary allocations for social sector across the cities and by getting the impression of stakeholders regarding changes in the governance. The findings suggest that the project contributed to the positive changes in the governance system of participating cities.



Source: National Statistics Committee.

Finally, the project was successful in addressing participation of children and youth in decision-making. There is strong evidence that Children’s/Youth Parliaments

in participating cities are more active in planning and implementation of city programs. There are a number of examples of how youth influenced the local policies in Novopolotsk, Zhodino, Polotsk and other cities. As stated by one of the Children’s/Youth Parliamentarians from Minsk Oblast:

“IT IS NOT A “CHILD PARLIAMENT”, IT IS A REAL WORK, WHERE WE ARE GOING TO REALIZE OUR OWN IDEAS, WORK HARD TO PROMOTE OUR IDEAS TO MAKE OUR CITIES AND COUNTRY A BETTER PLACE”.

At the same time, the initiative was lacking a comprehensive strategic prospect for development with clear goal and objectives as well as measures to address them (Theory of Change).

### Efficiency

Data and the observations suggest that the CFCI were highly efficient. According to UNICEF project documents, for the implementation of the CFCI in the Republic of Belarus, it was dedicated around \$171,700.00 for the period of 2013-2015, utilized in timely manner and delivery of quality results.

The efficiency of the interventions was ingrained in the nature of the CFCI; it focuses on mobilization of available resources around child rights issues. Local authorities from participating cities along with dedication of available financial, technical and administrative resources for social protection of children were successful in mobilizing financial resources from other sources, such as industrial companies and other supporters. However, it should be noted that the level of mobilization of extra funds is also related to the economic context of the city – obviously that industrial zones might have a greater



chance to raise extra funds rather than cities with agriculture oriented economies.

### **Sustainability**

According to the study findings, the sustainability of this initiative remains as its strongest part. There is a strong evidence of **local ownership** and commitment of the stakeholders, in particular at local level to continue this practice. As stated by one of the KII participant:

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“THE CHILD FRIENDLY CITY INITIATIVE IS NOT A STANDALONE INTERVENTION ANYMORE, IT IS A PART OF THE CITY LIFE...”

It can be stated that the **Children’s/Youth Parliaments** is the key achievement of the CFCI in Belarus. It serves as a platform for a productive dialogue between children and youth and the municipalities. It promotes civic education and engagement and helps children to develop social skills. It has well-established participation mechanism at school, city and oblast level. There is an institutionalized mechanism of children-adults cooperation and most importantly children were seemed very enthusiastic and proud of their work.

The monitoring mechanism (Friendliness Index) is an important achievement of the CFCI in Belarus as well. It is very comprehensive, well-designed and seems to be a reliable tool for child rights monitoring. On the other hand, it could be further improved and simplified. Ideally, the tool should be so simple that any city could apply it without additional trainings or technical support. This may ensure sustainability of the monitoring mechanism as well.

However, if cities can afford and commit to apply it on annual basis, there is no need for simplification.

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### **KEY CHALLENGES**

The following barriers and bottlenecks were identified:

#### **At national level:**

- a. The Coordination Council at central level can play a greater role in provision of technical guidance and transfer of good practices among the cities. At the same time, there is a need to enhance and expand technical, financial and human resources of the Coordination Council. ;
- b. Lack of visibility at the national level;
- c. Poor data on the status of children at the city level; some important information is missing, , or available data are not disaggregated by gender.
- d. Lack of a comprehensive theory of change of the CFCI;
- e. The CFCI may also award the cities with the highest progress over time, not only with the highest Index in the time point;
- f. Poor dedication of budget on the best interest of children and insufficient mobilization of resources for realization of social policies in the best interest of children from sources other than public
- g. Insufficient focus on equity agenda.

#### **At local level:**

- a. The understanding of stakeholders at local level about the importance of child participation for forming civic responsibility and promoting civic engagement need to be further improved;

- b. Equity agenda could be better infused into the program.
- c. The relevance of the plan of action of the cities needs to be maximized and further tailored to the findings of monitoring activities;
- d. RBM approach needs to be wider applied by stakeholders;
- e. Lack of technical capacity of Children's/Youth Parliament to effectively address their mission;
- f. Poor visibility of CFCI at local level;
- g. Insufficient participation of non-state actors in planning and realization of the city plans concerning children;
- h. Lack of inter-sectoral cooperation – the CFCI is mainly implemented within education sector;
- i. Insufficient level of engagement of children and youth in the Coordination Council's work;
- j. Poor external validity of data generated by monitoring mechanism – some findings cannot be generalized to entire population;
- k. Insufficient frequency of data collection for child rights monitoring.

purpose. UNICEF's promoted Multiple Overlapping Deprivation Analysis (MODA) tool (<http://www.unicef-irc.org/MODA/>) can serve a recourse tool to further advance child rights monitoring practices at City level and probably national level.

- b. Children's/Youth/ Parliaments can play a greater role in addressing inequalities at City level. The members of Children's/Youth Parliaments need to be further trained and mentored to be more oriented on civic engagement
- c. While the number of the Cities will increase, the technical, financial, administrative capacities and human resources of the CFCI Coordination Council need to be further advanced to enable them effectively realize their mission. In fact, the Coordination Council can play a greater role in promoting child sensitive budgeting, evidence based policy advocacy tackling inequalities, targeted awareness raising, strengthening public-private partnership and other interventions at macro level that can contribute to the CFCI sustainability and scaling up.
- d. Development of a five year program plan for the CFCI that applies RBM principles with the specific focus on marginalized groups. The five year plan should be further aligned with SDG and other national strategic plan and priorities for children and youth. The action plans at local level should be tailored to the CFCI Five Year Plan and address the gaps identified through monitoring mechanisms. The Result Framework attached to this report can help for development of such plan.

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## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. CFCI scaling up, introduction of innovations and adjustment to the needs of the most vulnerable and marginalized children

- a. Since the CFCI has proven to be as an effective, efficient and sustainable approach to promote child rights in urban setting, it would be reasonable to further develop and scale it up. In order to have a greater focus on the most marginalized, as the first step, the monitoring tool needs to be appropriately tailored for this

- e. Technical staff (mentors and others) need to be oriented in specific approaches, such as strength-based approach and/or empowering tradition of social work to effectively address social and economic vulnerabilities of children.

## **2. CFCs role in influencing the transformation of the social norms that stigmatized vulnerable groups of children.**

- a. First of all, a mini-KAP survey focusing on identification of vulnerability factors, including social norms affecting children and youth, needs to be conducted at City level. Children's/Youth Parliaments can be trained and mentored by professionals to lead the process. Participatory action research methodology would be a proper approach to improve participation of children and tailor research with specific actions.
- b. Awareness raising activities at local level need to be accompanied by KAP surveys (pre- post).
- c. The evidence needs to be further used by Children's/Youth Parliament and CFC Council at City and National level for evidence-based policy advocacy and planning.
- d. In some countries, the religious institutions/leaders play an important role in transformation of social norms to reduce stigma and discriminations, mobilizing communities and resources around various social programs. This opportunity can be further assessed and

possibly applied in the Republic of Belarus.

## **3. Advanced cooperation of state and non-state actors, alliances for child's rights realization (promotion the public dialogue, social contracting and strengthening capacity of local authorities to utilize data for evidence-informed decisions)**

- a. In some cities, there is a good model of cooperation of state and non-state actors (Novopolotsk for example). This practice, along with other best practices needs to be assessed and promoted within the framework of CFCI. The policy framework, including the Law "On the State Support for the Youth and Children Organizations in the Republic of Belarus"<sup>1</sup>, promotes social contracting with youth organizations. This can be further promoted and might have multiple effect; promote cooperation between state and non-state actors, enhance civic engagement and decentralization and, enhance participation of children and youth in decision making. At the same time, the CFCI can pilot, facilitate and advance capacity of youth organization to do so.
- b. Setting up mechanisms of consultations between the state bodies and civil society organizations, and expanding the practice of discussion of the draft local development plans and programmes that affect people's lives;
- c. Expanding practice of public social contracts that allows to outsource CSOs

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<sup>1</sup> Article 9: Realization of the state contracts by youth and children organizations. Law "On the State

Support for the Youth and Children Organizations in the Republic of Belarus. 1999.

for rendering social services and implementing social contracts;

- d. Expansion of evidence based practice and policy making requires capacity development and technical support. The Coordination Council can lead the process, however their capacity need to be strengthened.
- e. Promoting Corporate Social Responsibility practice among private sector.
- f. It seems that Children's/Youth Parliaments are lacking legal status. This opportunity needs to be further discussed with local stakeholders and particular with youth parliamentarians.

**4. Improvement of the developed child rights monitoring, analysis and assessment tool-(update with the new indicators such as social budget allocation and spending in the best interest of children, environmental protections and others)**

- a. As discussed in Section 1, the child rights monitoring tool can be further tailored to capture inequalities and also focus on child-sensitive budgeting and environmental protection. The indicators can be adopted from SDGs targets for sustainable cities and environmental protection and other targets as appropriate. The UN Habitat tool (Urban Governance Index) and other tools can be used for this purpose. On the other hand, simplicity and practicality of monitoring mechanism need to be taken into consideration. Updated mechanism can

be piloted in three Cities and assessed in terms of its reliability, validity and efficiency. Attempt can be made to adopt the UKID tool<sup>2</sup>, however the author believes that monitoring mechanism should be better tailored to the context of the Republic of Belarus. One of the important points is to ensure regularity of data collection. it would be recommended to conduct monitoring in annual basis.

- b. UNICEF and Coordination Council can further work with the National Statistical Committee and ensure that data collected via monitoring mechanism at city level becomes part of the national statistics. A kind of Yearbook on the “Socio-economic situation in the Cities of the Republic of Belarus” would be a very helpful data source for knowledge building, planning and analysis as well as for policy advocacy as well.

**5. Future strategies of meaningful children/youth participation development (Children-Youth Councils/Parliaments development, the creation of the National Children-Children's/Youth Parliament) in the local decision making process concerning children and youth matters;**

- a. The CFCI has already developed a good practice for meaningful participation of children and youth in decision making. At the same time, as recommended in previous sections, this need to be further developed to have a greater focus on

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<sup>2</sup>[http://www.cityindicators.org/Deliverables/UKID%20Overview%20and%20Preliminary%20Results\\_10-2-2013-140975.pdf](http://www.cityindicators.org/Deliverables/UKID%20Overview%20and%20Preliminary%20Results_10-2-2013-140975.pdf)

marginalized groups, so the representation of vulnerable groups in Parliament is highly recommended.

- b. Children and youth during the FGDs expressed their interests in learning research/monitoring skills. It is recommended to have a well-designed program component to introduce and expand “children as researchers” approach into the CFCI initiative.
- c. At the same time, the CFCI can also expand a wider participation of youth/citizens in decision making. From the UNICEF Innovation lab, the UReport tool that has been already expanded in 15 countries can be adopted to the context of Belarus. Youth via UReport tool, within moments, can share their opinions on various topics they concern. This information is instantly mapped and analyzed, yielding vital information and real-time insights about how young people see their world and what they think is most important<sup>3</sup>.

#### **6. Socially-oriented youth initiatives development focusing on disability matters, environmental safety, healthy life style.**

- a. In fact, the Children’s/Youth/Parliaments in their current activities have a greater focus on municipal development and environmental activities. As the next stage, their plans ideally need to tackle problems identified through child rights monitoring. So, the efforts of all actors in society will be contributing to a shared goal. The golden standard is that children and youth

themselves identify priorities and issues to be tackled. The quality and the level of participation of children is a dynamic issue, it changes over time. Appropriate training program and mentorship need to be arranged.

#### **7. Strategic partnership of UNICEF and the Government of Belarus within CFCI to ensure that child rights are fulfilled, proper monitored and the evidences are used for making decisions concerning child growth and development**

- a. In fact, local ownership and leadership are the strong part of the CFCI in Belarus. It needs to be continued in the same mode while focusing on the CFCI Coordination Council’s technical capacity, transformation or dissemination of best practices among participating cities and supporting in planning and piloting new initiatives such as U-Report and others.
- b. As mentioned in the previous section, data on the situation of children are not sufficiently disaggregated at city level. Child sensitive budgeting can be further advocated at city and national levels.
- c. One of the recommendations of youth and local authorities was focused on further opportunities for in-country and cross-country exchange of experience. While in-country exchange can be further promoted by Coordination Council, UNICEF can focus on regional collaboration to facilitate exchange of best practices among the countries.

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<sup>3</sup> [http://www.unicef.org/media/media\\_82583.html](http://www.unicef.org/media/media_82583.html)

## 2. INTRODUCTION

### 2.1. The Country Context

Belarus is a socially-oriented country. The country made significant progress in improving its Human Development Index between 2005 and 2015 – its growth was the highest among countries in Central and Eastern Europe, the Western Balkans and the Commonwealth of Independent States. Belarus remains as an upper-middle income country and was ranked 50<sup>th</sup> among 187 countries in the Human Development Report 2015. According to the Human Development Report 2015 (UNDP), the Republic of Belarus had a GNI per capita (2011 Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) USD) of \$16,671.1 in 2014<sup>4</sup>. The Belarusian economy generated impressive GDP growth rates in the period from 1996 until 2011. In particular, the average yearly GDP growth rate in 2004-2008 was 9.92%<sup>5</sup>.

At the same time, Belarus has retained a high level of income equality, which can be demonstrated by its Gini coefficient of 0.265 in 2014. According to the Human Development Report 2015 (UNDP), Belarus has high values of mean years of schooling (11.5) and one of the highest numbers of expected years of schooling (15.7) among the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the Western Balkans and the Commonwealth of Independent States<sup>6</sup>.

However, according to the same report, Belarus has a low life expectancy at birth

(71.3 years), with a gap of 10.6 years between male and female life expectancy.

This is mostly due to high prevalence of NCDs.

As stated in the UNDAF Report, Belarus has achieved most of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). It has reduced the proportion of the population with average available resources per person below USD2 and USD4 (PPP) per day, achieved universal primary education, attained progress in expanding women's participation in decision-making and promoting gender equality, and reduced the infant, under-five and maternal mortality rate. It has also reduced the tuberculosis incidence rate and the prevalence of active forms of tuberculosis, decreased carbon dioxide emissions, expanded the area of land protected to maintain biological diversity and forested land, national parks and nature reserves, and improved the availability and conditions of housing.

The same report highlights that several important challenges remain with respect to the achievement of the MDGs, including an increasing gender pay gap and an increasing prevalence of HIV and MDR-TB. Among other areas in which improvements are being sought are: the effectiveness of the health system, with a focus on primary healthcare and improving reproductive health and family planning; the educational attainments and employment of vulnerable groups; domestic violence and gender equality; and

<sup>4</sup> 2015 HDR Report. <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/BLR>

<sup>5</sup> UNDAF Report for the Republic of Belarus for 2016-2020

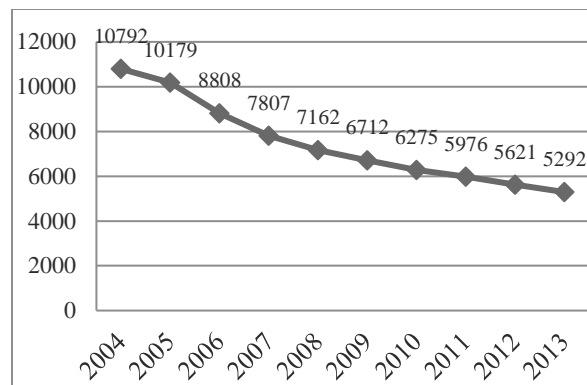
<sup>6</sup> 2015 HDR Report. <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/BLR>

ensuring life safety and combatting stigmas, discrimination and negative stereotypes in all areas of life.

In recent years, Belarus has made significant progress in improving child wellbeing. According to preliminary statistics for 2015, around 97 per cent of children between ages 3-5 years old and 100 per cent of children five years of age were enrolled in preschools in 2015. It should be noted, a positive enrollment dynamic can be observed over the last five years<sup>7</sup>.

Due to focused interventions, child disability has decreased in the country. According to data, there were 25,141 registered disabled children in the Republic of Belarus. Out of 11,538 children in residential care, children with disabilities represented around 46 per cent of all children living in institutions in 2013<sup>8</sup>. In recent years, the trend has shifted away from placing children with disabilities in special boarding schools towards providing these children with integrated education. Assistance provided to families of children with disabilities includes early intervention services, day-care centres, a network of correctional and recuperative services, and rehabilitation and vocational training programmes.

**Graph 2. Number of children with disabilities in public residential care (all types), by year.**



As of January 2014, there were 23,081 orphans and children deprived of parental care. Out of these, 4,902 children (21.2 per cent) resided in public residential care institutions, and 18,179 children (65.43 per cent) were in substitute family care, including guardianship, foster families, and family-type children's homes<sup>9</sup>. It should be noted that the course of de-institutionalization in the country shows positive results, according to TRANSMONEE 2015, the rate of children in residential care institutions shows a steady decline over the last ten years. The rate of children in residential care (per 100,000 population aged 0-17) decreased from 1082,7 in 2004 to 646.9 in 2013<sup>10</sup>. The country demonstrates a better performance comparing with Russia, Ukraine.

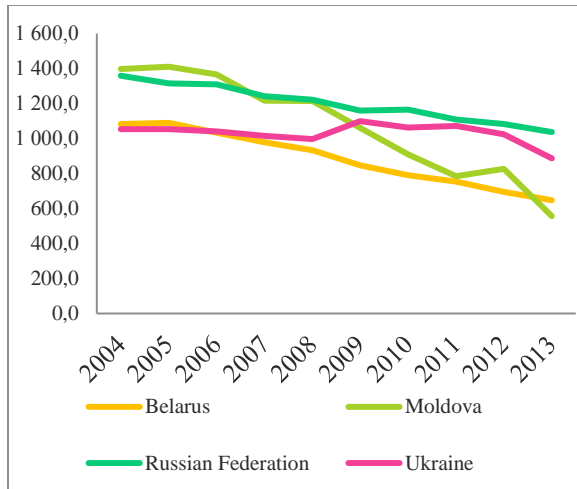
**Graph 3. Rate of children in residential care, per country between 2004-2013.**

<sup>7</sup>Retrieved from National Statistical Committee [http://www.belstat.gov.by/ofitsialnaya-statistika/solialnaya-sfera/obrazovanie/operativnye-dannye\\_15/obrazovanie-v-respublike-belarus-uchebnyy-god-2015-2016/](http://www.belstat.gov.by/ofitsialnaya-statistika/solialnaya-sfera/obrazovanie/operativnye-dannye_15/obrazovanie-v-respublike-belarus-uchebnyy-god-2015-2016/)

<sup>8</sup> TRANSMONEE 2015. Number of registered disabled among 0-17 year olds, at the end of 2013.

<sup>9</sup> Child rights situation analysis report, 2014

<sup>10</sup> TRANSMONEE 2015. Rate of children in residential care (per 100,000 population aged 0-17), at the end of 2013



Overall, analysis of available data shows that Belarus made significant progress in addressing rights and interest of vulnerable children over the last ten years.

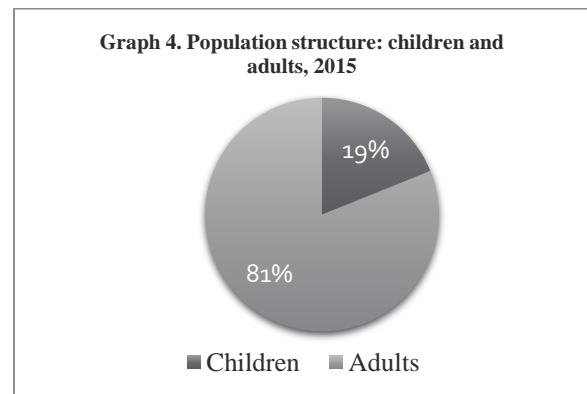
Belarus is a highly urbanized country. As of January 1<sup>st</sup> 2015, more than 3/4 of the population lived in the cities. From the regional perspective, Mogilevskaya Oblast has a highest share of urban population (79%), while in Minskaya Oblast, urban population represents only 56.9 % of the population.

**Table 1. Urban and rural population in the Republic of Belarus, 2015**

Location	Total	Urban	%	Rural	%
Republic of Belarus	9480868	7324980	77.3	2155888	22.7
<b>Oblasts and Minsk City</b>					
Brestskaya	1388931	963485	69.4	425446	30.6
Vitebskaya	1198515	915420	76.4	283095	23.6
Gomelskaya	1423964	1087105	76.3	336859	23.7
Grodnehnskaya	1052588	774616	73.6	277972	26.4
Minskaya	1407895	799771	56.8	608124	43.2
Mogilevskaya	1070695	846303	79.0	224392	21.0
Minsk City	1938280	1938280	100.0	0	0.0

Data for the last ten years shows slight increase in the share of urban population in the country. Since 2005 to 2015, the share of urban population has increased from 71,3% in 2005 to 77,3% in 2015. At the same time, data show that the share of female population is slightly higher than male population in the country. (Female population 53,5%).

Looking at age structure, it can be seen that children (0-17) represent for around 19% and youth (14-30) represent around 22,4% of total population.



## 2.2. The CFCI Context in Belarus.

To address the CRC Concluding Observations on the 2nd, combined 3rd and 4th Periodic Reports of the Republic of



Belarus, UNICEF and the Government agreed to introduce a Child Friendly City Initiative (CFCI) as a framework to increase the effectiveness of local governance in the best interest of children and strengthen the monitoring system of child rights realization.

CFCI was launched in Belarus in 2007 and scaled up within the current programme cycle to bring an explicit children's focus into traditional adult-oriented governance system, create enabling environment for child development, promote inter-sectoral collaboration and partnership to address child issues, monitoring of child rights realization and meaningful children's/youth participation in decision making process.

In 2011 the National Coordination Body (Coordination Council on CFCI) was established under the auspices of the

National Commission on the Rights of the Child composing of the officials of the

National Assembly, Ministries of Health, Education, Labour and Social Protection, Internal Affairs, Foreign Affairs, representatives of NGOs, Local Authorities and UNICEF.

As of 2015, 22 cities joined CFCI implementation and with UNICEF support the normative and methodological frameworks were developed and the capacity of local authorities to effectively address local development problems in the best interest of children was strengthened. The Working Groups were established in 22 cities and Action Plans/Programmes on CFCI development were created and approved by the decisions of the Local Executive Committees. UNICEF contributed to the mobilization of a wide range of partners:

local authorities; central state bodies; civil society organizations; national and international agencies; experts and academic institutions; the business and the media; and, most importantly, children and youth groups, to ensure the participatory and human rights based approach in addressing child rights realization at the city level.

One of the main objectives of the initiative is children's/youth engagement, empowerment and leadership skills development to ensure that their voices are heard and views are taken into account in all decision concerning their life and development. With UNICEF support the range of the national and local workshops, round table discussions, national children's forums, regional and national consultations on education and Post 2015 development agenda was conducted. Children-Youth Councils/Parliaments were created in 22 cities and children became active agents of social life changes, developed and implemented creative initiatives and introduced innovations.

To assess 22 cities' progress in creating child-friendly environment and child rights realization UNICEF provided expert support for the development of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) tool. The M&E tool is constituted of a set of objective (official statistics) and subjective (personal opinions of children, parents and professionals on such areas as youth participation, education, health, social protection, safety and living environment) indicators that allow to calculate the CFC index. The findings and recommendations of monitoring and results of CFC index calculation provide evidence that is taken into account in preparing the reports "Status of children in the city".

The information and data are publicly available on the website [www.detivgorode.by](http://www.detivgorode.by) ensuring transparency and public awareness of the child rights observance, increasing the accountability of local leaders on the child oriented social policy decision-making and allowing participating cities to exchange experience and best practices.

In 2013-2015 7 cities completed evaluation process, calculated CFC index and drew up the Reports “Status of Children in the City” with the main achievements, identified bottlenecks and future strategies of CFCI development. Based on the reported results National Coordination Council on CFCI granted the Honourable Status of “Child Friendly City” to Novopolotsk, Pinsk, Brest, Pruzhany, Polotsk, Soligorsk and Zhodino.

To assess the impact of CFCI on the creation of the enabling environment for the realization of child rights, effectiveness of the local governance and community initiatives towards implementation of UN CRC at the city level, meaningful children/youth participation in decision making and to continue to promote the prioritization of children’s rights and interests now and within the post-2015 development agenda the Ministry of Education and UNICEF agreed to conduct an independent CFCI assessment to be facilitated by the international consultant contracted by UNICEF.

The assessment findings, results and recommendations will be used as an evidence for policy advocacy and legislation improvement, strengthening partnership of governmental and civil society organizations, promotion of meaningful youth participation in all decisions concerning their life, growth

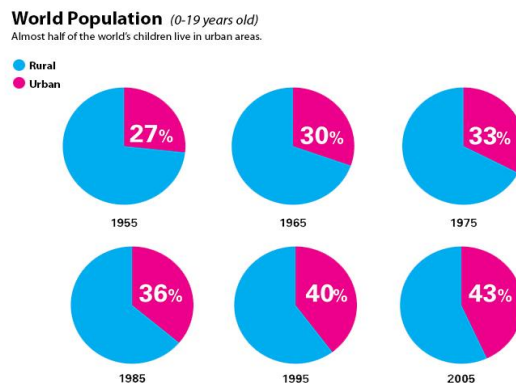
and development and greater involvement of community members in child rights realization and monitoring and dissemination of best practices nationally and internationally.

The results of the assessment will be presented and discussed at the International Conference of Child Friendly Cities to be held in Minsk in 2016 and will be used for attracting the international donors’ interest for greater investment in the realization and monitoring of the rights of children and young people focusing on the most vulnerable and marginalized children.

### 2.3. Overview of The Child Friendly Cities Initiative

According to available information, more than 50% of the world’s population now live in urban areas. In the last decades, the urbanization process has accelerated and it is estimated that 70 per cent of the world’s population will live in cities by 2050. At the same time, the share of children living in urban areas is steadily increasing and today, almost half of the world’s children – more than one billion children live in urban areas

Graph 5. World Population, rural and urban



The Child Friendly Cities Initiative (CFCI) was launched by UNICEF in 1996 as a response to the global challenges and trends, such as rapid urbanization, the growing responsibilities of local governments through decentralization processes and increased emphasis on the importance of inclusion of cities in economic and political systems at a national level. The Initiative aims to guide cities and other systems of local governance in the inclusion of children's rights as a key component of their goals, policies, programmes and structures (UNICEF, 2014).

The CFC Secretariat was created in 2000, to serve as a focal point and provide a common reference for the CFC Initiative and movement worldwide, which has developed a universal framework to guide the cities for developing a local system of governance

#### **Box 1. The Nine Building Blocks of the CFCI**

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
2. **A child friendly legal framework:** ensuring legislation, regulatory frameworks and procedures which consistently promote and protect the rights of all children
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
4. **A Children's Rights Unit or coordinating mechanism:** developing permanent structures in local government to ensure priority consideration of children's perspective
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
6. **A children's budget:** ensuring adequate resource commitment and budget analysis for children
7. **A regular State of the City's Children Report:** ensuring sufficient monitoring and data collection on the state of children and their rights
8. **Making children's rights known:** ensuring awareness of children's rights among adults and children
9. **Independent advocacy for children:** supporting non-governmental organizations and developing independent human rights institutions – children's ombudsperson or commissioners for children – to promote children's rights.

committed to fulfilling children's rights. The framework outlines nine "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. It should be noted that the success of the initiative is strongly related to the level of commitment of local authorities, as stated in the document, "the process of building a Child Friendly City demands political commitments – which are fundamental – as well as concerted action throughout government" (UNICEF, 2014).

The Framework is developed in way to facilitate the process of implementation of the UN CRC, while applies holistic approach and the components complement each other.

### 2.3.1. The UKID Index

Data collection and analysis is one of the important components of the CFCI. As stated above, there are various tools for data collection accessible in the CFCI website ([www.childfriendlycities.org](http://www.childfriendlycities.org)), collected from different countries, and organizations

to support practitioners and cities' administrations, as well interested organizations, communities and individuals, in the process of building, strengthening and assessing child friendly cities and communities.

The UKID Index of Urban Child Development is a joint collaboration between UNICEF and the Global City Indicators Facility (GCIF), created to address the complex challenges for children and young people in a rapidly urbanizing world. As a metric for evaluating cities' progress in

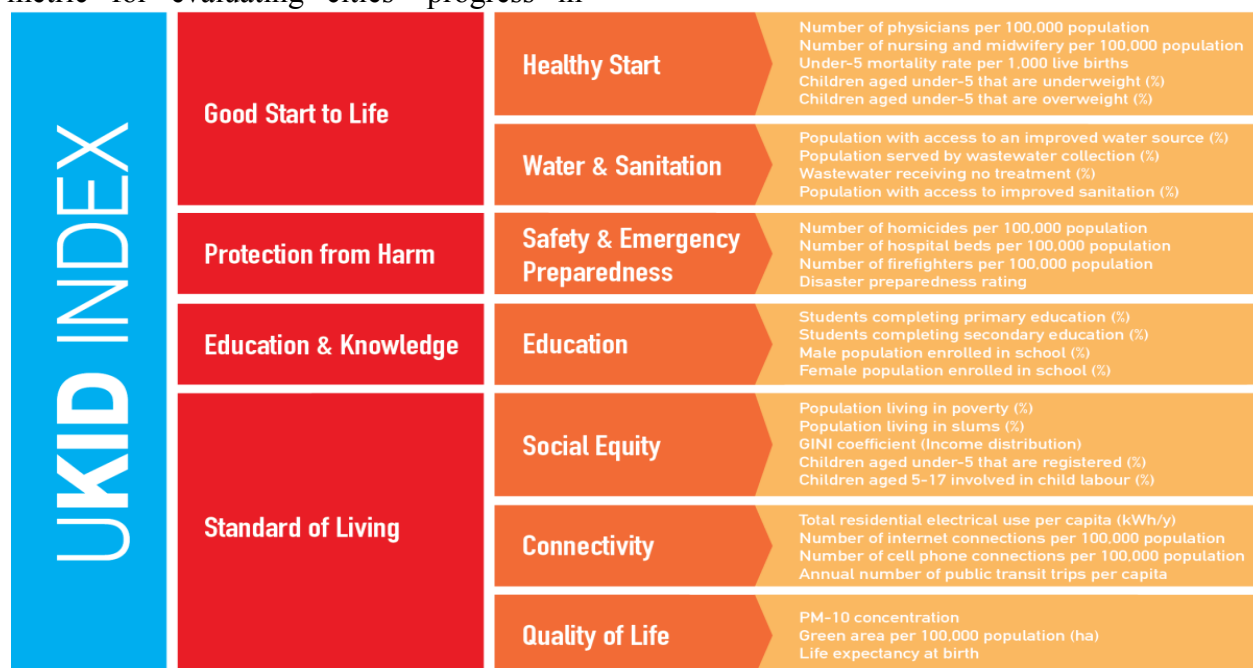
creating a child-friendly environment, the UKID Index is developed under the guidance of UNICEF's Child Friendly Cities Initiative and embodies the Convention on the Rights of the Child at the local level (UNICEF, 2013).

As described by authors, the UKID Index is composed of standardized disaggregated data from a number of indicators that assess the following four key categories for children:

1. A good start to life;
2. Protection from harm;
3. Education and knowledge; and
4. Standard of living

#### Box2. The UKID Index Framework

For more information please visit the webpage: <http://www.cityindicators.org/>  
The application of UKID Index in the Republic of Belarus is further discussed in Section IV.



Source: <http://www.cityindicators.org>

### 3. STUDY PURPOSE, OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1. Goal and Objective of the Assessment

The goal of the assignment is to assess effectiveness, relevance and sustainability of CFCI development in the best interest of children, especially the most disadvantaged, in the Republic of Belarus.

#### Objectives:

Based on MORES determinant framework (enabling environment, supply, demand and quality) to assess the main components of CFCI development, to identify the main barriers, bottlenecks and draw up recommendation on corrective actions to overcome them.

#### To assess:

##### CFCI coordination at the National level

- the effectiveness, relevance and sustainability of the National CFC Coordination Council work;
- the commitment of the National decision makers for prioritization of child issues and CFCI scaling up;
- the sustainability and visibility of CFCI at the national level.

##### CFCI implementation at the local level

- the effectiveness of the local governance in the best interest of the child (CFCI

working groups, annual work plans development and implementation);

- the compliance of CFCI work plans with the needs and demands of the most vulnerable and marginalized children and adolescents;
- inter-sectoral cooperation and networking on child rights realization at the city level;
- state and non-state actors collaboration and involvement of civil society organizations and community members in planning, implementation and monitoring of CFCI;
- the sustainability and visibility of CFCI at the local level.

##### The work of Children's-Youth Councils/Parliaments

- the models of establishment and functioning including strengths, weaknesses, best practices and sustainability of work;
- the participation of the most vulnerable and marginalized children and young people in the work of Children-Youth Councils/Parliaments;
- the engagement of Children-Youth Councils/Parliaments (the role and influence) in decision making process concerning children and youth social life, growth and development;

- the implemented creative initiative (its results, added-value);
- the networking of Children-Youth Councils/Parliaments in Belarus and outside;

### **The child rights monitoring and evaluation at the local level**

- The effectiveness, appropriateness and usefulness of the developed child rights monitoring and assessment tool for child rights monitoring and evaluation at the city level in middle income countries;
- The relevance and sustainability of the introduced mechanism of CFC City Status award;
- The involvement of community members, civil society organizations, children and youth in child rights monitoring.

### **The sustainability of CFCI development**

- the national ownership;
- community engagement (CSOs, children and youth mobilization);
- availability of financial resources for the social sector programmes in best interest of children;
- accountability of the local authorities;
- child rights monitoring for informed decision making;
- CFC initiative components sustainability.

### **To draw up recommendations on:**

- CFCI scaling up, introduction of innovations and adjustment to the needs of the most vulnerable and marginalized children;
- CFCs role in influencing the transformation of the social norms that stigmatized vulnerable groups of children;

- Advanced cooperation of state and non-state actors, alliances for child's rights realization (promotion the public dialogue, social contracting and strengthening capacity of local authorities to utilize data for evidence-informed decisions).
- improvement of the developed child rights monitoring, analysis and assessment tool—(update with the new indicators such as social budget allocation and spending in the best interest of children, environmental protections, etc.);
- future strategies of meaningful children/youth participation development (Children-Youth Councils/Parliaments development, the creation of the National Children-Children's/Youth Parliament) in the local decision making process concerning children and youth matters;
- socially-oriented youth initiatives development focusing on disability matters, environmental safety, healthy life style;
- strategic partnership of UNICEF and the Government of Belarus within CFCI to ensure that child rights are fulfilled, proper monitored and the evidences are used for making decisions concerning child growth and development;
- horizontal cooperation (experience exchange/ dissemination of best practices) development.

### **3.2. Methodology**

The assessment has non-experimental, exploratory design and applied both, quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative part included the analysis of relevant and available administrative and

secondary data obtained from public sources and UNICEF, including monitoring and evaluation reports and the City reports over the course of the initiative. Qualitative data were collected through Focus Group Discussions with youth groups and Key Informant Interviews with the CFCI coordinators in each visited location. In order to improve validity of findings, data were triangulated in terms of source of information (participant cities, non participant and awarded cities, authorities, youth groups and NGOs). In total, 10 cities from different provinces were covered during the study. The themes and questions for FGDs and KIIs were developed based on the study framework/matrix created in response to the study objectives (Annex A).

Based on the global priorities and by taking into consideration the context of the country, a Theory of Change of the CFCI was developed by consultant as well.

### **3.2.1. Secondary data**

Secondary data were used to determine the overall situation in the country and specifically in the cities in relation to child rights and for development of recommendations. Information about the situation of children in the country will be obtained from the latest SitAn Belarus Report (2015) provided by UNICEF. The UNDAF Report 2015-2020, the National Strategy for Sustainable Development for the period of 2020 and other relevant sectoral strategy documents were used to draw the recommendations in line with the long-term national priorities.

The National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus maintains a user-friendly website ([www.belstat.gov.by](http://www.belstat.gov.by)) that contains

updated information on the key socio-economic indicators at national and regional levels.

There is a user-friendly website for CFCI in Belarus ([www.detivgorode.by](http://www.detivgorode.by)) that contains information about the initiative and most importantly, the reports of the Cities engaged. The website has also the page that shows the progress of each city according to the pre-identified indicators and there is a possibility to get numerical data and graphs for each indicator and cities, although some information need updates.

The experience of other countries with CFCI, in particular in Eastern Europe and CIS, was analyzed and taken into consideration for developing recommendations. Other sources of information were used as per recommendation of UNICEF team as well.

### **3.2.2. Primary Data**

Along with analysis of secondary data, the primary information was collected through Focus Group Discussions and the Key Informant Interviews.

#### **3.2.2.1. Focus Group Discussions with Youth/Child groups**

The FGD methodology is a participatory method that remains appropriate for use with children groups. It is a purposeful, facilitated discussion between a group of respondents with similar characteristics, within a fixed timeframe, focusing on a limited number of topics. The discussions, with the permission of participants, were audio-recorded to further synthesis, the research ethics with children were applied.

Based on the consultation with the UNICEF team, it has been decided to conduct FGDs

with children/youth group who are the members of the Children's/Youth Parliaments. The Parliament members in each locality were informed by local coordinators about the content, location and time of FGD and interested members (up to 6-8 of both genders) were invited to participate. However, in some location there were a bigger number of participants willing to participate in the FGD, so in those locations the time allocated for FGDs could not be respected.

Two types of FGD guides were developed – for children and youth from CFCI-participated cities and for children groups from non-participants cities.

The FGD Guides consist of two sections: the introductory section and the section with the key questions for discussions. The discussion starts with a broader theme and flows to more specific questions and ends with question to get any recommendation from children group on how to further advance CFCI in their City. See Annex II. FGD Protocol for more details.

### **3.2.2.2. Key Informant Interviews**

Semi-structured interviews are particularly useful for collecting information on people's ideas, opinions, or experiences. They are often used during needs assessment, program design or evaluation. It has been agreed with UNICEF team to conduct KII interviews with the local authorities representatives responsible for the CFCI in their locations and the representatives of NGOs. As for the FGDs the KIIs designed in a way to cover corresponding themes described in the Annex A.

The KIIs consist of 8 to 10 open-ended questions and have a flexible flow to get more

details on the subject of concern. The KII, as the FGDs were audio recorded, transcribed and analyzed. See Annex III. KII Guide for further details.

### **The KIIs have specific focus on the following areas:**

1. The effectiveness, relevance and sustainability of the National CFC Coordination Council work;
2. The commitment of the National decision makers for prioritization of child issues and CFCI scaling up;
3. The sustainability and visibility of CFCI at the national/local levels;
4. The effectiveness of the local governance in the best interest of the child (CFCI working groups, annual work plans development and implementation);
5. The areas related to Monitoring of Child Rights;
6. Local Ownership;
7. Availability of resources, and
8. Involvement of community members in CFCI.

### **3.3. Sample Design**

The study applied non-probability sampling design. Purposive sampling method allows recruiting the subject with the most suitable characteristics corresponding with the study aim. In order to address the sampling limitations and improve validity, triangulation of data sources was applied.

Taking into account the specific focus of the study/CFCI in Belarus on the role of Children/Youth Councils and the time constraints, it has been decided to limit the FGDs with the above mentioned groups.



- Children ages 13-17 both genders and the members of the Councils/Parliament

In coordination with UNICEF team, the following cities were identified for conducting FGDs and the KIIs.

**Box 2. Selected localities and schedule of visit**

Location	Date	Target group	Activity
Minsk	14 Dec 2015	CFCI Coordinator. Meeting with NCC members	KII
Jhodino	14 Dec 2015	CFCI Coordinator YC (mixed group)	KII FGD
Brest oblast	15 Dec 2015	Participation at the Meeting of the National Committee on the Rights of the Child	
Soligorsk	15 Dec 2015	CFCI Coordinator YC (mixed group)	KII FGD
Cherven	16 Dec 2015	CFCI Coordinator YC (mixed group)	KII FGD
Berezino	16 Dec 2015	CFCI Coordinator YC (mixed group)	KII FGD
Polotsk	17 Dec 2015	CFCI Coordinator YC (mixed group)	KII FGD
Novopolotsk	17 Dec 2015	CFCI Coordinator YC (mixed group)	KII FGD
Borisov	18 Dec 2015	CFCI Coordinator YC (mixed group)	KII FGD
Minsk	18 Dec 2015	NGO Representatives	FGD
Slutsk	19 Dec 2015	CFCI Coordinator YC (mixed group)	KII FGD
Lida (Skype call)	29 Jan 2016	CFCI Coordinator YC (mixed group)	KII FGD

It should be noted that in Minsk and each locality, there were meetings with local authorities as well as the parliamentarians and the Ministry of Education representatives and other officials, which let to get a general feedback on CFCI and the overall perception of the program by authorities.

**3.4. Data Management and Analysis**

As mentioned in previous section, the FGDs and the KII were audio recorded. The audio files were transcribed and then analyzed. The Framework approach were applied for data analysis<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> The method was developed by the National Center for Social Research (NatCen) UK

As the first step, the key ideas were identified from the transcribed information, then the key concepts and themes were clarified and the description provided. The relevant quotes are used in the current report.

The numerical information from secondary sources were analyzed, summarized and presented in the form of tables, graphs and charts. A cross sectional comparison among the Cities qualified as “Child Friendly” and other cities were conducted.

#### **4. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

All ethical consideration for conducting studies with children, including child protection policy was ensured by the researcher. Consent forms were developed and signed prior to session (Annex IV) and all study participants were clearly informed about the purpose and the implication of this activity. Confidentiality were ensured, all audio files will be destroyed after submission of final report, names or other identifier for children are not used in the report.

## 5. STUDY FINDINGS

### 5.1. Relevance

The study found that the priorities of CFCI are highly relevant to the context. The objectives are consistent with the national priorities and the country's international commitments towards realization of child rights. More specifically, it is in line with the Law of the Republic of Belarus "On the Rights of the Child", the Law of the Republic of Belarus "On the State Youth Policy", the National Action Plan on Improving the State of Children and Protection of their Rights for 2012-2016, the National Program of Demographic Security of the Republic of Belarus for 2011-2015, the guidelines and recommendations of international documents on the state of children issued by the UN General Assembly and the Committee on the Rights of the Child. The initiative corresponds with the SDG "Goal 11: Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable" and is part of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) strategy for the Republic of Belarus for 2016-2020 under the thematic area "Inclusive, Responsive and Accountable Governance" as well.

#### Participation of children and youth

Meaningful participation of children in decision making is one of the key principles of the UN CRC. Participation has positive impact on children's comprehensive development and on the other hand

strengthens democratic values in communities. As Roger Hart states "Participation is the process of sharing decisions which affect one's life and the life of the community in which one lives. It is the means by which democracy is built and it is a standard against which democracies should be measured".

The CFCI is in line with the:

*Article 19 Facilitation of Young People's Right to Form Associations;*

*Article 20 Fostering Development and Implementation of Socially Significant Youth Initiatives, and*

*Article 25 Youth Participation in Building and Implementation of State Youth Policy*

of the Law of the Republic of Belarus "On the State Youth Policy". The CFCI is also in line and contributes to realization of the Law of the Republic of Belarus "On the State Support to the Children and Youth Public Organizations in the Republic of Belarus" that guarantees state support for children and youth organizations in realization of social programs (Article 5) and their right to participation in planning and discussion of policies affecting children and youth in Belarus (Article 6).

Based on the review of available reports and observations made during the field visits, it can be stated that the CFCI has reinforced

creation of youth and children organizations and enhanced their capabilities to promote own rights and interests in different settings, while fostering continuous dialogue among youth and the local authorities.

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"THE PARLIAMENT BECAME LIKE A BRIDGE BETWEEN YOUTH AND THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES..."

Quote from FGD with Children's/Youth Parliament

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"THANKS TO PARLIAMENT OUR VOICES ARE HEARD...ADULTS MAY NOT SEE THE PROBLEMS THAT WE FACE WITH AND THESE PROBLEMS MAY AFFECT ALL SOCIETY, BUT WE CAN SEE THESE ISSUES AND CAN ADDRESS THEM AND MAKE OUR CITY AND THE COUNTRY BETTER."

Quote from FGD with Children's/Youth Parliament.

### **Child rights monitoring**

Accountable and effective local governance sensitive to children issues can be hardly achieved without appropriate data collection and knowledge management systems. Focus on development and implementation of child rights monitoring system at local level is well-justified as lack of information about the status of children in urban setting is a global issue.

The CFCI in Belarus made significant progress in development and implementation of such tool. According to data on the CFCI webpage ([www.detivgorode.by](http://www.detivgorode.by)), 18 cities across the country expressed interest, were trained and implemented this tool.

Development and implementation of data collection and analysis tool at local level is

among the key achievements of the CFCI, however this important development needs to be further improved and adopted to become a simple, practical, affordable and reliable source of information that provides up to date data for decision making. The "Friendliness Index" is unique in terms of collecting data in relation to participation of children in decision making. While external validity of these indicators is due to sample size, on the other hand it is the only indicator that helps to better understand perception of children about their role in local governance.

The majority of study participants was positive about the tool and claim reliability of data.

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"WE WERE VERY ENTHUSIASTIC TO COLLECT DATA AND SEE WHAT WOULD BE THE "FRIENDLINESS INDEX" FOR OUR CITY."

Quote from KII Interview

Among the key concerns of monitoring mechanism are its frequency (3 years interval seems to be too long), its cost, which is relatively high due to survey part and its difference from the global index – the UKID tool developed and promoted by UNICEF. However, the comparison of these tools shows that "Friendliness Index" may provide a deeper insight, is relevant to the context and locally accepted. A deeper insight and specific recommendations and thoughts are highlighted in Section VI.

Another observation is that the CFCI priorities could be better linked and reflected in the local development plans and strategic documents. It has been found that some participated in the program cities in their local development plans have poorly

reflected the CFCI priorities, while in reality they have a greater commitment to CFCI.

It should be mentioned that the focus on the most vulnerable and marginalized groups of children and equity agenda of UNICEF could be better addressed over the course of the program in the Republic of Belarus. Voices and choices of vulnerable children could be more effectively addressed through applying empowering and strength based approaches in addressing social and economic vulnerabilities of children.

## 5.2. Effectiveness

The study revealed that there is a progress against objectives of the intervention. There were three objectives identified for the period of 2013-2015:

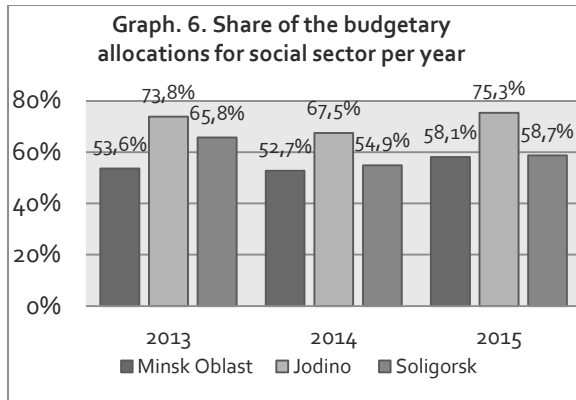
1. Development and implementation of monitoring system of the situation of children at the city level.
2. Improving the governance system at local level for the best interests of children
3. Advancing methods and types of participation of children and youth in decision making.

Based on analysis of quantitative and qualitative data, it can be stated the project has developed and implemented a comprehensive tool for data collection. The “Friendliness Index” serves not only as an assessment tool, but also as a mechanism to dedicate efforts of the municipality and other actors around specific themes concerning children at City level. The tool has a complete guide, forms and a dashboard that allow seeing the result in the corresponding webpage of the CFCI in the Republic of

Belarus. An interactive page allows selecting specific parameters and creating table and graphs, comparing specific indicators or a set of them among the Cities. The assessment tool is part of Certification mechanism as well. The Cities with higher indices receive a honorable award of “Child Friendly City”. By December 2015, seven cities were qualified as such in the Republic of Belarus. It should be noted that Certification mechanism and award became a prestigious status for the Cities and as stated by study participants “stimulated competition among the cities” to get this award.

As mentioned in previous section, the only concern is the frequency of data collection. According to information provided by study participants, it is intended to collect data ones in three years, which seems to be too long for timely decision-making.

Based on the interviews with authorities and children group in different locations, the changes in participation of children and youth in decision making processes can be realized. The improvement of governance system at local level for the best interest of children was assessed by looking at budgetary allocations for social sector across the cities and by getting the impression of stakeholders regarding changes in the governance. The findings suggest that the project contributed to the positive changes in the governance system in participating cities.



As can be seen in the Graph 2. in Jodino and Soligorsk the budgetary allocations for social sector are higher than in Minsk Oblast.

The positive implication of the CFCI on governance systems were also supported individual opinion of the representatives of local authorities and children groups.

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"THE MOST IMPORTANT ACHIEVEMENT OF THIS INITIATIVE IS THAT PEOPLE NOW UNDERSTAND THAT ISSUES RELATED TO CHILDREN ARE NOT ONLY THE PROBLEM WITHIN EDUCATION SYSTEM, THE PROBLEM OF CHILDREN CONCERNS ALL AROUND AND REQUIRES ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT OF LOCAL ADMINISTRATION, BUSINESSES, COMMUNITY MEMBERS AND CHILDREN THEMSELVES"

**Quote from KII participant**

It should be noted that the Cities with a greater Friendliness Index show a better performance in relation to mobilization of additional financial resources for social sector, which show positive dynamic over the last three years. The local authorities associate it with the CFCI as the contributors know about initiative and willing to support programs oriented for children in the City.

Finally, the project achieved its priority in addressing participation of children and youth in decision making. There is strong

evidence that Children's/Youth Parliaments in participating cities are more active in planning and implementation of city programs. There are a number of examples of how youth influenced the local policies in Novopolock, Jodino, Polock and other cities. As stated by one of the Children's/Youth Parliamentarians from Minsk Oblast.

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"IT IS NOT A "CHILD PARLIAMENT", IT IS A REAL WORK, WHERE WE ARE GOING TO REALIZE OUR OWN IDEAS, WORK HARD TO PROMOTE OUR IDEAS TO MAKE OUR CITIES AND COUNTRY A BETTER PLACE".

The Parliaments are functional in all participating cities, the members and the local authorities have regular meetings, however the frequency varies by city, in awarded cities it is more frequent. All parliaments are functioning in accordance to the Children's/Youth Parliament Charter that outlines the mission, functions, election process and eligibility.

One of the concerns that raised by Parliamentarians during the FGDs was the fact of age limit for participating in the work of the Children's/Youth Parliaments. The opinion of children varies in relation to removal of the "aged based eligibility criteria", however the majority believe that it should be an "open space" for all children.

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"...PARLIAMENT SHOULD BE OPEN FOR ALL CHILDREN, NOT ONLY FOR THOSE OVER THE AGE OF 13".

Another observation is that the members of the Children's/Youth Parliaments are usually the most active and successful school children from upper grades, which is quite logical, however the CFCI initiative could do more to create a space and empower the most disadvantage groups through this platform.

Few Parliaments engaged vulnerable children in their activities and the interactions are usually project based or charity oriented (in the case of children with disabilities). It should be noted that Parliamentarians acknowledge this fact and committed to address it in future.

Lack of a SMART, country specific Result framework / Theory of Change for the CFCI is among the challenges that may reduce the effectiveness of the interventions. An indicative result framework is developed within the scope of this study that can be

further discussed, improved and validated by local actors, in particular children and youth groups (See Annex B).

### 5.3. Efficiency

Data and the observations suggest that the CFCI were highly efficient. According to project documents, for the implementation of the CFCI in the Republic of Belarus, it

was dedicated around \$171,700 for the period of 2013-2015. The following outputs produced over the mentioned period:

**Box3. Summary of deliverables per specific objective for 2013-2015**

Goal: Promoting a full realization of child rights, as per the criteria of CFCI	# of participants in Trainings, Meetings & Conferences	# of produced publications
SO1: Development and implementation of monitoring system of the situation of children at the City level	547	1250
SO2: Improving the governance system at local level for the best interests of children	158	-
SO3: Advancing methods and types of participation of children and youth in decision making.	1064	330
Total	1,769	1,580

The high efficiency of the interventions were also related to the nature of the CFCI, which focuses on mobilization of available resources around child rights issues. Local authorities from participating cities along with dedication of available financial, technical and administrative resources for social protection of children, were successful in mobilizing financial resources from other local counterparts. However, it should be noted that the level of mobilization of extra funds is also related to the economic context of the city – obviously that industrial zones

might have a greater chance to raise extra funds rather than the municipalities in agricultural setting.

Along with quantitative outputs, there are reported qualitative results as well. According to the project reports and

meetings with children and local authorities, the knowledge and attitude of policy makers

and other stakeholders are changing. Local, authorities, teachers, community members and children themselves are more positive about the role of children in decision making.

Children's/Youth Parliaments are reside in the building of the Centers for Children's and Youth Arts, their Mentors are staff of the Centers that make the initiative highly efficient.

According to Children's/Youth Parliaments, the City and other supporters of their activities are usually willing to support.

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"DURING TWO YEARS OF OUR COLLABORATION, WE HAVE NEVER HEARD "NO" FROM OUR MUNICIPALITY...THEY MAY SAID "LET'S DO IT LATER ON" OR FIND A COST EFFECTIVE ALTERNATIVE TO OUR REQUESTS AND IDEAS FOR THE CITY"

Quote from FGD with Children's/Youth Parliament

#### 5.4. Sustainability

According to the study findings, the sustainability of this initiative remains as its strongest part. There is a strong evidence of **local ownership** and commitment of the stakeholders, in particular at local level to continue this practice. As stated by one of the KII participants:

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"THE CHILD FRIENDLY CITY INITIATIVE IS NOT A STANDALONE INTERVENTION ANYMORE, IT IS A PART OF THE CITY LIFE..."

It also seems that awarding/certification mechanism contributes to sustainability of CFCI in Belarus. Awarded Cities are interested in conducting another round of monitoring and see to what extent the situation is changed in their cities after the years of joint efforts.

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"NEXT YEAR WE ARE GOING TO CONDUCT THE ASSESSMENT AND FOR US IT WILL BE VERY CHALLENGING AS OUR INDEX WAS HIGH LAST TIME. WE NEED TO WORK HARD NOT TO FAIL DOWN..."

"THE MONITORING SHOWED THE STRONG AND WEAK SIDES OF OUR PERFORMANCE, NOW WE ARE WORKING TO ADDRESS THE GAPS AND BELIEVE THAT NEXT TIME CAN GET AWARDED..."

#### Quotes from KII Interviews

There is an interest from Cities that were not part of the initiative as well. The Cities have very positive impression about Youth Committees and their collaboration with local authorities in their Cities. Periodic meeting and conferences organized within and beyond the program helped to expand the idea and the messages of the CFCI in the Republic of Belarus.

It can be actually claimed that the CFCI is nationally owned. Strong commitment of the central Government was observed during the meeting of the National Commission on the Rights of the Child, where was a separate session about the CFCI.

It can be stated that the **Children's/Youth Parliaments** is the key achievement of the CFCI in Belarus. It serves as a platform for a productive dialogue between children and youth and the municipalities. It promotes civic education and helps children to develop social skills. It has well-established participation mechanism at school, city and province level. There is a favorable policy environment to support this initiative and most importantly children were seemed very enthusiastic and proud of their work.

The monitoring mechanism (Friendliness Index) is an important achievement of the



CFCI in Belarus. It is very comprehensive, well-designed and seem to be a reliable tool for child rights monitoring. On the other hand, it could be further improved and simplified. Ideally, the tool should be so simple that any City could apply it without additional trainings or technical support.

However, If cities can afford and commit to apply it in annual basis, there is no need for simplification.

According to observations and comments of study participants, the CFCI Coordination Council is a crucial element of the CFCI in Belarus. In fact, the council played an important role in addressing CFCI priorities in the country, however need further financial and technical support to further promote, expand and sustain CFCI in Belarus.

## 5.5 Findings by Specific Areas

### CFCI coordination at the National level

As stated in the previous section, the role of the Coordination Council was crucial in advocating CFCI priorities at national level. The leadership of the National Centre of Children and Youth Art is justified and well thought as this institution has institutional experience on promoting child rights and technical capacity to support the initiative at local level. The role of the secretariat was played by the Centre staff.

According to the National Coordinator of CFCI in Belarus Ms. Vasilchenko, the Council role is very important for overall coordination of CFCI and for policy advocacy. The feedback from monitoring and the CFCI experience may have been further advocated by Council members as well.

On the other hand, the Council needs technical and financial support to further expand or at least provide ongoing support to the Cities.

According to the Councils at local level and local coordinators of the CFCI, the National Council provided ongoing technical support and guidance, training and national leadership over the course of the program.

As Ms Vasilchenko stated the Cities and Children's/Youth Parliament received a series of tailor made trainings, starting from Strategic planning to data collection and analysis. The Council developed guiding tools and other regulatory or guiding documents to systematize the processes and procedures. So, the CFCI got a stronger institutional framework.

The National Coordination Council also maintains the CFCI webpage. However, they need further assistance to maintain the site.

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"WE MADE SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS AND REALIZED ALL THE OBJECTIVE OF OUR PROJECT, HOWEVER IT IS STILL A HALF WAY AND THE CITIES STILL NEED SUPPORT, WHILE THERE IS A GREAT DEMAND TO EXPAND THE INITIATIVE IN OTHER COUNTRIES..."

States the National Coordinator, Ms Vasilchenko.

There is an impression that the visibility of the program at national level is limited among the civil servants and those who part of the initiative. There were periodic TV programs and articles and other media activities at national level, but as stated by one of the KII Interviewers "Everyone knows about Hospice in Belarus, but few about CFCI..."

The same concerns about the visibility were raised by representatives of NGOs during the meeting and Children's/Youth Parliaments.

### **CFCI implementation at the local level**

The interest, enthusiasm and commitment of local authorities from visited cities remain as a fact and discussed in previous section, however the practices vary among the cities. Awarded Cities were seemed more organized for the realization of CFCI priorities. The city level Coordination Councils were established in each city engaged into CFCI and each City develop its program for realization of CFCI. At the same time, the Cities apply different approaches to reflect the CFCI priorities in their City level development plans. There is a need to further explore this issue and identify the most effective way for program planning (having a separate plan or to incorporate CFCI priorities into other development plans). It should be noted that UNICEF experience from other countries and recommended methodological approach for realization of CFCI, suggest development of a comprehensive Children's Rights Strategy or agenda for building a Child Friendly City. All Cities claim about the positive impact of the CFCI on the situation of children in their cities, specific examples were given during the interviews and the reports of the Cities. Among the key achievements is the level of participation of children in decision making and realization of various activities initiated and implemented by children groups with the support of the City administration or other local stakeholders.

According to information provided by local actors, the main vulnerable groups of children are children with disabilities,

children without parental care, children with deviant behaviour (in conflict with the law) and children from vulnerable families (substance abuse etc). The level of awareness of local authorities, the City Mayor's and/or the Deputies in Awarded Cities was very high. The Mayor of Jodino even recalled by name all vulnerable children who got support from the City over the year and were aware about their current situation.

The Cities also claim that the CFCI was very instrumental in improving inter-agency cooperation at local level in response to children issues.

Overall, there are few NGOs working for children at national level. According to SitAn Report 2015, only 18 youth and children organization have been registered and have national status. Among them, UNESCO clubs seem very active. These clubs closely collaborate with Children's/Youth Parliaments and actually they are members of the Parliaments.

There are agencies working with children in Belarus. In the Councils the CSOs are usually represented by BRSM (youth movement) and few NGOs working mainly with disability related issues.

As stated by NGO representative during the FGD

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"THERE ARE FEW NGOS IN THE SMALLER CITIES, THEY CAN BE FOUND IN MINKS OR OTHER BIGGER CITIES, IN GENERAL CIVIL SOCIETY IS WEAK IN BELARUS"

On the other hand, According to SitAn report, in recent years, there is significant growth in the number of children and youth organization across the country, this is partly

associated with realization of CFCI in 22 cities as well.

Visibility remains as an issue at local level too. The majority of children stated that not all children aware about the CFCI, however in awarded cities the situation is better. According to children, tradition ways of awareness raising are not effective, mass media and TV is not popular among children and youth these days. Social media and ICT could be better used to raise awareness and engage people into the program, believe children and NGO representatives.

Another issue that has been realized is the lack of information about the city budget and their plans in the City websites. Few cities have a separate webpage on CFCI.

The key socio-economic data are amiable in the Belstat website, however it is not sufficiently disaggregated and not possible to get information about the state of children in all cities.

## **Work of Children's-Youth Councils/Parliaments**

As stated above, the work of Children's/Youth Parliaments is the strongest part of the CFCI in Belarus. Children and youth are trained and being mentored to effectively realize their ideas on how to improve the City. The members are mainly secondary school children. They usually meet once a month, have their plans and minutes of their meetings. There is one representative from each school/educational facility who is elected by students in the school. There are councils at provincial level as well.

Eligibility of children to become a member of the Parliament is the main concern of children. They want to expand it, include younger children and university students as well. Another observation is that children from boarding schools and other residential care facilities are not represented in the Parliament.

Among the key interventions, it has been found that "environmental" activities are the most common. Somehow children are interested in municipal improvement and environmental activities. Children also do some charity-oriented activities to support children with disabilities, only in one City it has been found that the Parliament actively interact with children in conflict with the law/deviant behavior by engaging them into their regular activities.

On the other hand, there are a lot of examples when children influenced the local government in prioritization of projects. In particular, in Awarded Cities the stronger "Lobby" of Children's/Youth Parliament was supported by evidence. Development of bikeways, pools, children coffee and other leisure and sport related projects were advocated by children and received support.

Children groups were active during the monitoring of child rights as well. They received orientation and conducted survey among their peers. Children are presented in the meetings and conferences, where the City Mayors presented the results of monitoring.

The existence of UNICESO Clubs and Parliaments in one school seem to be reinforcing each other performance.

As stated by Ms Vasilchenko:

"THE CHILDREN'S/YOUTH PARLIAMENTS BECOME A SELF SUFFICIENT INSTITUTIONS, WE SET IT UP AND IT MOVES FORWARD BY ITSELF"

She has also found the high mobility of children within and outside of the country. There is frequent meeting with other Parliaments, in particular with neighbouring cities. However, a more structured meetings and information exchange among the cities and within the region (EU/CIS) were recommended by children.

### Child rights monitoring and evaluation at the local level

It should be stated that the monitoring tool developed within CFCI Initiative is a great tool, tailored to the context and covering a range of important indicators. The launch and expansion of UKID Index create some important questions and dilemmas: Use a global and simple tool that allows comparability across the countries or keep using tailored but more complex tool that can help to get a deeper insight into the status of children?

This issue need to be further discussed with local actors.

If compare the tools, it can be seen that the UKID Index is lacking "Participation" dimension which is very important one.

Among the key concerns related to "Friendliness Index" is it cost and complexity. It seems without comprehensive training and ongoing support, it can hardly be replicated by other cities.

Another concern is external validity and reliability of subjective indicators. The sample size (200 subjects) is too small to generalize finding to entire population. In

addition, data were collected by children and it is not clear whether all ethical considerations and methodological requirements were applied.

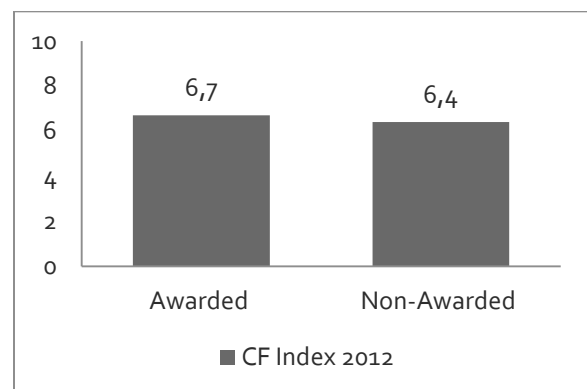
Finally, the most important gap is the frequency of data collection. Three years period is too long for the tool, which is intended for regular monitoring of child rights at city level.

The "Friendly City" Award is based on the results of the monitoring. According to information on the CFCI webpage ([www.detivgorode.by](http://www.detivgorode.by)) 18 cities out of 22 participating cities were collected data and seven reports are available on the website.

On the other hand, from the presented data. it seems that some "non-awarded" cities have a greater Friendliness Index comparing to some awarded cities. For instance, the City Dobrush has the highest Index (8.9), but probably did not submitted the report and not awarded. One of the key principles of awarding mechanism is the high interest of municipality.

In general, if compare the medians of Indices among awarded and non-awarded cities, the Awarded cities have a greater value, but not significant. See the graph below.

Graph 7. The Comparison of awarded and non-awarded City Indices



So, the selection criteria need to be further improved. It is also important to remember that the awarding mechanism need to consider not only the results, but also the efforts of the City to realize the right of the child in their municipalities.

## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. CFCI scaling up, introduction of innovations and adjustment to the needs of the most vulnerable and marginalized children

- a. Since the CFCI has proven to be as an effective, efficient and sustainable approach to promote child rights in urban setting, it would be reasonable to further develop and scale it up. In order to have a greater focus on the most marginalized, as the first step, the monitoring tool needs to be appropriately tailored for this purpose. UNICEF's promoted Multiple Overlapping Deprivation Analysis (MODA) tool (<http://www.unicef-irc.org/MODA/>) can serve a recourse tool to further advance child rights monitoring practices at City level and probably national level.
- b. Children's/Youth/ Parliaments can play a greater role in addressing inequalities at City level. The members of Children's/Youth Parliaments need to be further trained and mentored to be more oriented on civic engagement
- c. While the number of the Cities will increase, the technical, financial, administrative capacities and human resources of the CFCI Coordination Council need to be further advanced to enable them effectively realize their

mission. In fact, the Coordination Council can play a greater role in promoting child sensitive budgeting, evidence based policy advocacy tackling inequalities, targeted awareness raising,

d.

strengthening public-private partnership and other interventions at macro level

that can contribute to the CFCI sustainability and scaling up.

- e. Development of a five year program plan for the CFCI that applies RBM principles with the specific focus on marginalized groups. The five year plan should be further aligned with SDG and other national strategic plan and priorities for children and youth. The action plans at local level should be tailored to the CFCI Five Year Plan and address the gaps identified through monitoring mechanisms. The Result Framework attached to this report can help for development of such plan.
- f. Technical staff (mentors and others) need to be oriented in specific approaches, such as strength-based approach and/or empowering tradition of social work to effectively address social and economic vulnerabilities of children.

### 2. CFCs role in influencing the transformation of the social norms that

**stigmatized vulnerable groups of children.**

- a. First of all, a mini-KAP survey focusing on identification of vulnerability factors, including social norms affecting children and youth, needs to be conducted at City level. Children's/Youth Parliaments can be trained and mentored by professionals to lead the process. Participatory action research methodology would be a proper approach to improve participation of children and tailor research with specific actions.
- b. Awareness raising activities at local level need to be accompanied by KAP surveys (pre- post).
- c. The evidence needs to be further used by Children's/Youth Parliament and CFC Council at City and National level for evidence-based policy advocacy and planning.
- d. In some countries, the religious institutions/leaders play an important role in transformation of social norms to reduce stigma and discriminations, mobilizing communities and resources around various social programs. This opportunity can be further assessed and possibly applied in the Republic of Belarus.

**3. Advanced cooperation of state and non-state actors, alliances for child's rights realization (promotion the public dialogue, social contracting and strengthening capacity of local authorities to utilize data for evidence-informed decisions)**

- a. In some cities, there is a good model of cooperation of state and non-state actors (Novopolotsk for example). This practice, along with other best practices needs to be assessed and promoted within the framework of CFCI. The policy framework, including the Law "On the State Support for the Youth and Children Organizations in the Republic of Belarus"<sup>12</sup>, promotes social contracting with youth organizations. This can be further promoted and might have multiple effect; promote cooperation between state and non-state actors, enhance civic engagement and decentralization and, enhance participation of children and youth in decision making. At the same time, the CFCI can pilot, facilitate and advance capacity of youth organization to do so.
- b. Setting up mechanisms of consultations between the government and civil society organizations, and expanding the practice of discussion of the draft local development plans and programmes that affect people's lives;
- c. Expanding practice of public social contracts that allows to outsource CSOs for rendering social services and implementing social contracts;
- d. Expansion of evidence based practice and policy making requires capacity development and technical support. The Coordination Council can lead the process, however their capacity need to be strengthened.

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<sup>12</sup> Article 9: Realization of the state contracts by youth and children organizations. Law "On the State

Support for the Youth and Children Organizations in the Republic of Belarus. 1999.

- e. Promoting Corporate Social Responsibility practice among private sector.
- f. It seems that Children's/Youth Parliaments are lacking legal status. This opportunity needs to be further discussed with local stakeholders and particular with youth parliamentarians.

**4. Improvement of the developed child rights monitoring, analysis and assessment tool–(update with the new indicators such as social budget allocation and spending in the best interest of children, environmental protections, etc.)**

- a. As discussed in Section 1, the child rights monitoring tool can be further tailored to capture inequalities and also focus on child-sensitive budgeting and environmental protection. The indicators can be adopted from SDGs targets for sustainable cities and environmental protection and other targets as appropriate. The UN Habitat tool (Urban Governance Index) and other tools can be used for this purpose. On the other hand, simplicity and practicality of monitoring mechanism need to be taken into consideration. Updated mechanism can be piloted in three Cities and assessed in terms of its reliability, validity and efficiency. Attempt can be made to adopt the UKID tool<sup>13</sup>, however the author believes that monitoring mechanism should be better tailored to the context of the Republic of Belarus. One of the important points is to ensure regularity of

data collection. it would be recommended to conduct monitoring in annual basis.

- b. Development of a Yearbook on the “Socio-economic situation in the Cities of the Republic of Belarus” would be a very helpful data source for knowledge building, planning and analysis as well as for policy advocacy as well.

**5. Future strategies of meaningful children/youth participation development (Children-Youth Councils/Parliaments development, the creation of the National Children-Children's/Youth Parliament) in the local decision making process concerning children and youth matters;**

- a. The CFCI has already developed a good practice for meaningful participation of children and youth in decision making. At the same time, as recommended in previous sections, this need to be further developed to have a greater focus on marginalized groups, so the representation of vulnerable groups in Parliament is highly recommended.
- b. Children and youth during the FGDs expressed their interests in learning research/monitoring skills. It is recommended to have a well-designed program component to introduce and expand “children as researchers” approach into the CFCI initiative.
- c. At the same time, the CFCI can also expand a wider participation of youth/citizens in decision making. From

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<sup>13</sup>[http://www.cityindicators.org/Deliverables/UKID%20Overview%20and%20Preliminary%20Results\\_10-2-2013-140975.pdf](http://www.cityindicators.org/Deliverables/UKID%20Overview%20and%20Preliminary%20Results_10-2-2013-140975.pdf)

the UNICEF Innovation lab, the UReport tool that has been already expanded in 15 countries can be adopted to the context of Belarus. Youth via UReport tool, within moments, can share their opinions on various topics they concern. This information is instantly mapped and analyzed, yielding vital information and real-time insights about how young people see their world and what they think is most important<sup>14</sup>.

**6. Socially-oriented youth initiatives development focusing on disability matters, environmental safety, healthy life style.**

a. In fact, the Children's/Youth/Parliaments in their current activities have a greater focus on municipal development and environmental activities. As the next stage, their plans ideally need to tackle problems identified through child rights monitoring. So, the efforts of all actors in society will be contributing to a shared goal. The golden standard is that children and youth themselves identify priorities and issues to be tackled. The quality and the level of participation of children is a dynamic issue, it changes over time. Appropriate training program and mentorship need to be arranged.

**7. Strategic partnership of UNICEF and the Government of Belarus within CFCI to ensure that child rights are fulfilled, proper monitored and the evidences are used for making**

**decisions concerning child growth and development**

- a. In fact, local ownership and leadership are the strong part of the CFCI in Belarus. It needs to be continued in the same mode while focusing on the CFCI Coordination Council's technical capacity, transformation or dissemination of best practices among participating cities and supporting in planning and piloting new initiatives such as U-Report and others.
- b. As mentioned in the previous section, data on the situation of children are not sufficiently disaggregated at city level. Child sensitive budgeting can be further advocated at city and national levels.
- c. One of the recommendations of youth and local authorities was focused on further opportunities for in-country and cross-country exchange of experience. While in-country exchange can be further promoted by Coordination Council, UNICEF can focus on regional collaboration to facilitate exchange of best practices among the countries.

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<sup>14</sup> [http://www.unicef.org/media/media\\_82583.html](http://www.unicef.org/media/media_82583.html)



## 7. ANNEXES

### **Annex 1: TERMS of REFERENCE**

for the International Individual Consultant for the assessment of the Child Friendly City Initiative (CFCI) development in the Republic of Belarus

Background:

To address the CRC Concluding Observations on the 2nd[1], combined 3rd and 4th[2] Periodic Reports of the Republic of Belarus, UNICEF and the Government agreed to introduce a Child Friendly City Initiative (CFCI) as a framework to increase the effectiveness of local governance in the best interest of children and strengthen the monitoring system of child rights realization.

CFCI was launched in Belarus in 2007 and scaled up within the current programme cycle to bring an explicit children's focus into traditional adult-oriented governance system, create enabling environment for child development, promote inter-sectoral collaboration and partnership to address child issues, monitoring of child rights realization and meaningful children's/youth participation in decision making process.

In 2011 the National Coordination Body (Coordination Council on CFCI) was established under the auspices of the National Commission on the Rights of the Child composing of the officials of the National Assembly, Ministries of Health, Education, Labour and Social Protection, Internal Affairs, Foreign Affairs, representatives of NGOs, Local Authorities and UNICEF.

As of the beginning 2015, 22 cities joined CFCI implementation and with UNICEF support the normative and methodological frameworks were developed and the capacity of local authorities to effectively address local development problems in the best interest of children

was strengthened. The Working Groups were established in 22 cities and Action Plans/Programmes on CFCI development were created and approved by the decisions of the Local Executive Committees. UNICEF contributed to the mobilization of a wide range of partners: local authorities; central government bodies; civil society organizations; national and international agencies; experts and academic institutions; the business and the media; and, most importantly, children and youth groups, to ensure the participatory and human rights based approach in addressing child rights realization at the city level.

One of the main objectives of the initiative is children's/youth engagement, empowerment and leadership skills development to ensure that their voices are heard and views are taken into account in all decision concerning their life and development. With UNICEF support the range of the national and local workshops, round table discussions, national children's forums, regional and national consultations on education and Post 2015 development agenda was conducted. Children-Youth Councils/Parliaments were created in 22 cities and children became active agents of social life changes, developed and implemented creative initiatives and introduced innovations.

To assess 22 cities' progress in creating child-friendly environment and child rights realization UNICEF provided expert support for the development of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) tool. The M&E tool is constituted of a set of objective (official statistics) and subjective (personal opinions of children, parents and professionals on such areas as youth participation, education, health, social protection, safety and living environment) indicators that allow to calculate the CFC index. The findings and recommendations of monitoring and results of CFC index calculation provide evidence that is taken into account in preparing the reports "Status of children in the city".

The information and data are publicly available on the website [www.detivgorode.by](http://www.detivgorode.by) ensuring transparency and public awareness of the child rights observance, increasing the accountability of local leaders on the child oriented social policy decision-making and allowing participating cities to exchange experience and best practices.

In 2013-2015 7 cities completed evaluation process, calculated CFC index and drew up the Reports "Status of Children in the City" with the main achievements, identified bottlenecks and future strategies of CFCI development. Based on the reported results National Coordination Council on CFCI granted the Honourable Status of "Child Friendly City" to Novopolotsk, Pinsk, Brest, Pruzhany, Polotsk, Soligorsk and Zhodino.

To assess the impact of CFCI on the creation of the enabling environment for the realization of child rights, effectiveness of the local governance and community initiatives towards implementation of UN CRC at the city level, meaningful children/youth participation in decision making and to continue to promote the prioritization of children's rights and interests now and within the post-2015 development agenda the Ministry of Education and UNICEF agreed to conduct an independent CFCI assessment to be facilitated by the international consultant contracted by UNICEF.

The assessment findings, results and recommendations will be used as an evidence for policy advocacy and legislation improvement, strengthening partnership of governmental and civil society organizations, promotion of meaningful youth participation in all decisions concerning their life, growth and development and greater involvement of community members in child rights realization and monitoring and dissemination of best practices nationally and internationally.

The results of the assessment will be presented and discussed at the International Conference of Child Friendly Cities to be held in Minsk in 2016 and will be used for attracting the international donors' interest for greater investment in the realization and monitoring of the rights of children and young people focusing on the most vulnerable and marginalized children.

Goal of the assessment:

The goal of the assignment is to assess effectiveness, relevance and sustainability of CFCI development in the best interest of children, especially the most disadvantaged, in the Republic of Belarus.

Objectives:

Based on MORES determinant framework (enabling environment, supply, demand and quality)[3] to assess the main components of CFCI development, to identify the main barriers, bottlenecks and draw up recommendation on corrective actions to overcome them.

To assess:

CFCI coordination at the National level

- the effectiveness, relevance and sustainability of the National CFC Coordination Council work;
- the commitment of the National decision makers for prioritization of child issues and CFCI scaling up;
- the sustainability and visibility of CFCI at the national level.

CFCI implementation at the local level

- the effectiveness of the local governance in the best interest of the child (CFCI working groups, annual work plans development and implementation);

- the compliance of CFCI work plans with the needs and demands of the most vulnerable and marginalized children and adolescents;
- inter-sectoral cooperation and networking on child rights realization at the city level;
- state and non-state actors collaboration and involvement of civil society organizations and community members in planning, implementation and monitoring of CFCI;
- the sustainability and visibility of CFCI at the local level.
- The work of Children's-Youth Councils/Parliaments
- the models of establishment and functioning including strengths, weaknesses, best practices and sustainability of work;
- the participation of the most vulnerable and marginalized children and young people in the work of Children-Youth Councils/Parliaments;
- the engagement of Children-Youth Councils/Parliaments (the role and influence) in decision making process concerning children and youth social life, growth and development;
- the implemented creative initiative (its results, added-value);
- the networking of Children-Youth Councils/Parliaments in Belarus and outside;

#### The child rights monitoring and evaluation at the local level

- the effectiveness, appropriateness and usefulness of the developed child rights monitoring and assessment tool for child rights monitoring and evaluation at the city level in middle income countries;
- the relevance and sustainability of the introduced mechanism of CFC City Status award;
- the involvement of community members, civil society organizations, children and youth in child rights monitoring.

#### The sustainability of CFCI development

- the national ownership;
- community engagement (CSOs, children and youth mobilization);
- availability of financial resources for the social sector programmes in best interest of children;
- accountability of the local authorities;

- child rights monitoring for informed decision making;
- CFC initiative components sustainability.

To draw up recommendations on:

- CFCI scaling up, introduction of innovations and adjustment to the needs of the most vulnerable and marginalized children;
- CFCs role in influencing the transformation of the social norms that stigmatized vulnerable groups of children;
- advanced cooperation of state and non-state actors, alliances for child's rights realization (promotion the public dialogue, social contracting and strengthening capacity of local authorities to utilize data for evidence-informed decisions).
- improvement of the developed child rights monitoring, analysis and assessment tool (update with the new indicators such as social budget allocation and spending in the best interest of children, environmental protections, etc.);
- future strategies of meaningful children/youth participation development (Children-Youth Councils/Parliaments development, the creation of the National Children-Youth Parliament) in the local decision making process concerning children and youth matters;
- socially-oriented youth initiatives development focusing on disability matters, environmental safety, healthy life style;
- strategic partnership of UNICEF and the Government of Belarus within CFCI to ensure that child rights are fulfilled, proper monitored and the evidences are used for making decisions concerning child growth and development;
- horizontal cooperation (experience exchange/ dissemination of best practices) development.

Target audience:

- National CFC Coordination Council;
- Local authorities in CFC and cities joined CFCI;
- Children's/Youth Councils/Parliaments and vulnerable groups of children and young people in CFC and cities joined CFCI;
- NGOs and community members.

Methodology of the assessment [4] :

- Desk review and analysis of the documents, data and information on CFCI development (2007 – 2015) (orders, regulations, guided documents, reports, monitoring tool);
- Interviews with the representatives of the National CFC Coordination Council, Ministry of Education;
- Interviews with the representatives of the local authorities, NGOs, specialists working with children in CFC and cities joined CFCI;
- Focus groups with the members of the Children's/Youth Councils/Parliaments, children (paying special attention to the vulnerable groups of children and young people) and community members in CFC and cities joined CFCI.

#### Deliverables:

1. Concept note of the assessment and the assessment tools;
2. Interim report after desk review phase;
3. Draft and final versions of the narrative report in English;
4. Executive Summary of the report in English;
5. Summary of the goal, objectives, methodology, findings, conclusions and recommendations in PowerPoint (PPP);
6. Primary documentation (interviews reports, focus groups minutes, etc.)

All deliverables should be submitted to UNICEF in electronic version. All reports of interviews and focus groups discussions to be submitted in hard copies to UNICEF.

#### Quality requirements for the report:

- The Report should give answers to all ToR requirements and should recommend solutions to the determined gaps and bottlenecks;
- The Report should be brief, concise and systemic as much as possible;
- The Report should be well-grounded i.e. it should contain sufficient facts and evidence (presented in the form of graphs, tables and diagrams);
- The report language should be appropriate without unknown terminology complicated the perception of the information;

- Conclusions and recommendations should be well-grounded and applicable to the National context;
- Interim reports and data obtained in the process of assessment should be discussed with the UNICEF supervisor.

The final report should have the following structure:

- Executive summary;
- Trends in changing situation of children in the last five years in Belarus;
- Overview of the CFCI development and best practices in the European region;
- Description of the CFCI development in Belarus;
- Description of the assessment goal, objectives, strategies and methodology;
- Description of the main findings in relation to the assessment objectives and structured in accordance with the determinant framework;
- Conclusions, recommendations, and lessons learned;
- Annexes (assessment tool, focus groups and interview results, etc.).

The duration of the assignment: The assignment is performed in August-October 2015 including 7-10 day field-visit to Belarus [5]\*\*.\*\*

Supervision:

The consultant will perform the assignment under the direct supervision of Victoria Lozuyk, CYPHD and HIV/AIDS Specialist.

Qualifications/knowledge and experience required from the consultant:

- University degree in the field of Social Science, Political Science, International Relations, Public Relations, Statistics, Sociology or other relevant disciplines;
- Not less than 8 years of experience in the qualitative and operational research, monitoring and evaluation;
- Previous work experience in conducting international assessments and evaluations;
- Knowledge and skills in the child rights monitoring and evaluation is an asset;
- Previous work experience in conducting monitoring and evaluations for UN agencies is an asset;
- Excellent report writing and presentation skills;

- Strong communication skills (written and verbal);
- Ability to meet deadline and work in the limited timeframe;
- Fluency in English (knowledge of Russian is an asset).

Remuneration:

The consultant's fee will be paid through the wire transfer to the consultant's account within 10 days after the submission and approval of the final report by UNICEF Belarus. The DSA to the consultant during his field visit to Belarus will be paid in accordance with UNICEF rules.

**How to apply:**

Qualified international individual consultants are requested to send their applications to [nlukina@unicef.org](mailto:nlukina@unicef.org) or by post at 220030, Belarus, Minsk, Krasnoarmeiskaya str., 22A, 6 floor, office 77-78, with the subject line: "Tender proposal for N. Lukina" by 17 August, 2015, 17:00 Minsk time. Applications submitted after the deadline will not be considered.

Only short-listed candidates will be contacted. Candidates under serious consideration for selection will be subject to a reference-checking process to verify the information provided in the application.

Candidates should provide:

- A cover letter;
- A maximum 3-page CV;
- A signed P11 form (<http://www.unicef.org/about/employ/files/P11.doc>);
- Fee proposal (expected honorarium including taxes and other charges). Proposals with 100% prepayment will not be taken into consideration. The maximum allowable sum of the advance payment is 30% of the fee.

Contact person on the content, goals and objectives of the assessment is Victoria Lozuyk, tel. (+375 17) 210-26-50, 210-55-89, email: [vlozuyk@unicef.org](mailto:vlozuyk@unicef.org)

Contact person on the issues of submission procedure is Nadzeya Lukina, Programme Assistant tel. (+375 17) 210-26-50, 210-55-89, email: [nlukina@unicef.org](mailto:nlukina@unicef.org)



## Annex II. Focus Group Discussion Protocol

### Focus Group Discussion Protocol (Children's Youth/Parliament)

Name of moderator:	
City:	
Neighborhood	
Date of the FGD:	
Total number of participants	

#### Introduction

##### 1. **Welcome** and **Facilitator** **Introduction**

"Good morning/afternoon/evening and welcome to our discussion. Thanks for taking the time to join us to talk about the Child Friendly City Initiative in your City. My name is Jovid and I am a research consultant...

##### 2. **Background**

As you may know, the Child Friendly Cities Initiative, is being implemented in 22 Cities in Belarus and UNICEF supports this initiative. The CFCI aims to guide cities and other stakeholders in the inclusion of children's rights as a key component of their goals, policies, programmes and structures. Participation of children in the life of their cities is one of the key components of this initiative too. If you have never heard about the CFCI initiative or want to know more, you can get information from the website/ this leaflet and/or contact the manager/project coordinator of SFCI in your City. While this initiative has brought many positive changes in the cities, it is an important time to look at what works well and what doesn't, to talk to various people and in particular with children and youth to get their opinion about the initiative. So, I am here for that purpose, together with you to explore more about its impact on the life of children in your City. Your opinion is very important,

as at the end of this study we will develop a set of recommendations on how to further improve the program.

Our focus group discussion is going to last about an hour and half. Focus groups are different from workshops or classes at school. Once we get started, I am going to ask you questions and you are going to share your thoughts and opinions. You will do most of the talking. I will be doing a lot of listening. Remember we want to learn from you. We are not going to necessarily "teach" you anything today."

3. **Appreciation (it can be coffee break)**  
To show our appreciation for your time and attention, we have small gifts (hygiene set, stationary, etc) for you that will be shared at the end of the session.

### **How Today's Focus Group will Work**

1. **No "Right" or "Wrong" Answers and Participation**  
"I'll be asking you several questions and I want you to know that there are no "right" or "wrong" answers, and it's okay to have a different opinion from other people in the group. It's really important for us to hear all the different points of view in the room. I want you to share your point of view, even if it is different from what others are saying, and I want you all to respect each others' opinions. Please don't make fun of what other people say or argue with them. Agreed?"

I also don't want you to feel like you have to respond to me all the time. Feel free to talk to each other when discussing my questions. If you want to respond to something someone said, or if you want to agree or disagree, or give an example, you can do that, just be respectful. We want all people to have a chance to share ideas. We may need to interrupt or call on people to make sure this happens. Please do not feel offended if we do this.

2. **Tape Recording and Confidentiality**  
"Before we get started, I want to remind you that we will be audio recording the session, because we don't want to miss any of your comments. People often say things in these sessions, and we can't write fast enough to write them all down.

"Although will use each other's first names today, we will not use any names in our report. You can be assured of complete confidentiality. No one will be able to link your name back to what you said and only project staff like myself and ...will listen this record. I am also going to ask all of you to keep what is said here confidential, so that everybody feels comfortable talking and knows what they say will not be repeated. Can you all do that?" (eye contact with each person in the group and wait for him/her to nod affirmatively.)

And also, you do not have to answer any question that makes you feel uncomfortable.

## **Icebreaker**

(5 minutes)

1. Let's begin. We have asked you to wear a name tag to help us remember each others' names. Let's go around the room and introduce ourselves. Please give us your first name and age, explain who lives with you in your home, and just for fun, tell us where have you been except your City. I'll start ...

## **Focus Group Questions**

### **Introduction Question**

1. Since we are going to talk about CFCI, can you tell me please what do you know about this initiative?

### **Main questions**

1. You are members of YC, can you tell me please how it has been established, your main activities? What is the goal?
2. It seems very interesting what you do, how many member your Council has? And how to become a member?
  - Probes who cannot become a member? Why?
3. So, you have active members and you do ,,,,, , how do you identify priorities? How do you decide what to do?
  - Who participate in the process of planning?
  - Who participate in implementation?
4. Thank you for sharing it, very interesting. It seems you have gained a solid experience already and probably have some experience that other Councils can learn from you, can you give some examples of experience that you would like to share with others?
  - Do you have a practice documenting things you did?

5. Thank you for sharing it. What you have mentioned is decently your strong sides, but nothing ideal in this world, can you please tell me about the weaknesses of your Council... by the way, knowing the weakness is already a plus...
  
6. Thank you, so you have some plans, members, activities and you did a good job, from the given example. One question comes to my mind, all these things require some resources, whether financial, administrative or technological and others. How you manage all these?
  - Probes: what about your future activities, how you are going to address the costs?
  - Who providing support? What are you going to do when support will finish?
  
7. Lets talk about participation a little bit more. What kind of impact had your engagement in Council activities, on your personal life? Positive? Negative? Or nothing changed?
  - what about your life in school, community, Society?
  - can you give some examples where you or the Council have influenced a decision made by local authorities or any other authority body in your city?
  - What about participation in CFCI activities? what type of activities are you engaged in?
  
8. Thanks, what are key factors that prevent you/ Council to be more active in decision making processes?
  - What should be done to address them?
  - What about those who are vulnerable? How to engage them?
9. As far as I know, there are a number of such Councils in the country, are you in touch with them? If yes, can you describe your relationships?
  - what about other countries?
  
10. What do you think, what are the key achievements of the CFCI and what you would change in this program in the future?

Thank you very much for your participation, I also want to let you know that when the study will be completed, you will definitely receive a copy of the report.

So now your turn, if you have any question please ask if not, I appreciate your active engagement and wish you all the best,

(Coffee break can be served)

End of Interview

Annex III. Key Informant Interview Guide

**Key Informant Interview Guide (LA)**

Name of Interviewer:	
City:	
Date of the Interview:	

**Introduction**

**4. Facilitator**

**Introduction**

Good morning/afternoon/evening and thank you very much for accepting our request for the interview. My name is Jovid and I am a research consultant...

**5. Background**

As you now, the Child Friendly Cities Initiative was launched in Belarus in 2007 to bring an explicit children’s focus into governance system, create enabling environment for child development, promote inter-sectoral collaboration and partnership to address child issues, monitoring of child rights realization and meaningful children’s/youth participation in decision making process. Since 2007, there are 22 Cities engaged this initiative and seven of them have been recognized as “Child Friendly”. There is definitely some progress to be captured and shared with other and probably some gaps to be revealed and taken into consideration in the future interventions. So, I am here for that purpose, together with you to explore more about its impact on the life of children in your City and help with your support to draw outline some practical recommendation to further expand the impact of the program.

Your opinion is very important, therefore if you don’t mind I will record our conversation, so any of your comments will not be missed. Our conversation will be kept confidential and in the report will not make any references to individuals or we will ask your permission to put your name under your messages.

If you have any question, feel free to ask and we can start...

**Introduction Question**

2. Could you please introduce yourself and tell about your role in this initiative?
  - What make this program different from other joint initiatives in your City/this Country;

### **Main questions**

3. So, you are engaged in the CFC for xx years, how you would describe the role of CFC CC in this initiative.
4. Thank you, could you please describe the key achievements of the CFCI initiative in the country?
  - What was the role of CFC CC in the mentioned achievements?
5. Thank you, it seems the CFC CC plays an important role, could you let me know how the national priorities for CFCI were identified?
  - Who/which agencies/groups were engaged into the process?
  - What about the city level priorities?
6. Thank you, very interesting. What are the strength and weaknesses of the CFC CC?
  - What would you change in the roles and responsibilities of the CFC CC?
  - How to make sure long term sustainability of the CFC CC?
  - Do you think there is a need for improving technical capacity of CFC CC, if yes, what kind of technical support is needed.
7. Thank you, from your observation, is there any changes in the budgeting for purposes related to children? If yes Can you give some examples?
  - What are the plans for the future in relation to child centered budgeting?
  - What are the main obstacles to make it happen?
8. What about city level strategies to address children right?
  - Which agencies are involved into the process?
  - Is there a council, special commission or body that broadly debates and creates, or advises, on policies that concern children?

9. Thank you, it is well known that social issues are very complex, in particular when it comes to children. So can you please share youth thought about the coordination and cooperation among state bodies at national level?
- What about local level? How it evolves over time? -
  - What about the role of private sector and SCO?
  - is there any official body that facilitates coordination among agencies working for children at local level?
10. What about data collection on child right? How often and which agency conduct it?
- What about the level disaggregation of the data? Is it possible to compare neighborhoods?
  - Is there any periodic report accessible for public?
  - How data used for planning?
11. Thank you, what about resource availability?
- How the initiative will be financed in the coming three years
12. What about availability and accessibility of services for children at local level? What kind of services are still not available?
- Which group of children and youth have limited access to services?
  - What about referral mechanisms?
  - Is there sufficient number of trained social work workforce at local level?
13. Is there any systematic training/professional development opportunity for LA staff dealing with children?
14. Thanks, Can you tell me please about how people get information about this initiative?
- What would you recommend to improve the visibility of this initiative?
  -
15. How would you describe the role of children organizations in this initiative ?
- What about vulnerable children? Who are they and how to engage them?

16. Thank you very much, the last question. What would you recommend to improve effectiveness, relevance and sustainability of this initiative?

Many thanks, if you have any question I would be happy to answer it.

End of interview

Annex IV. Consent Forms

**Consent Form for children**

I have been told that this session is concerning Child Friendly Cities Initiative, that my participation in this session means that I will be asked to share my own views. I have been told that I will not be forced to share my opinion and that if I refuse to participate in this session, it will not in any manner negatively affect me. I have also been told that if I agree to participate, I will not be forced during the session to share something that I feel uncomfortable discussing. I also know that I have the absolute right to walk out of this session for whatever reason at any point of time, without having to seek permission or provide an explanation. I understand that the information I reveal in this session will be kept highly confidential by those conducting this session. I hereby agree to participate in this session of my own will and interest. I submit that I have not been coerced or forced (emotionally or physically) to take part in this session, and that my consent to this is wholly my decision.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**(Name of the child)**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**(Signature)**

We hereby state that we have explained to this child the details about this session and the terms of his/her participation. We have in a language understood by this child, explained that consent to participate in this session is totally voluntary and that he/she can resign or withdraw consent at any point of time or opt out of the session without need for an approval or an explanation. We have made it clear that the child is free to reveal or share as much information as he/she is comfortable with and that there will be no pressure or force for him/her to share or reveal more than he/she wants to. We hereby understand that whatever is revealed by the child during the session has to be handled with utmost confidentiality and cannot at any cost be revealed to any other person (adult/ child), except with the consent of the child, and we promise to honour this requirement.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**(Name of the Facilitator)**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**(Signature of the Facilitator)**



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**(Name of the Note Taker)**

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**(Signature of the Note Taker)**

**Consent Form for parents**

I/we have been told that this session is concerning Child Friendly Cities Initiative, that my son/daughter/ ward/s or children is/are interested in participating in this session. I/we have been told that his/her/their participation means that he/she/they will be asked to share his/her/their own opinion. I/we have been told that he/she/they will not be forced to share his/her/their opinion and that if he/she/they refuse to participate in this session, it will not in any manner negatively affect him/her/them. I/we have also been told that if he/she/they agree to participate, he/she/they will not be forced during the session to share something that he/she/they feel uncomfortable discussing. I/we also know that he/she/they have the absolute right to walk out of this session for whatever reason at any point of time, without having to seek permission or provide an explanation. I/we understand that the information he/she/they reveal in this session will be kept highly confidential by those conducting this session. I/we hereby agree to allow my/our son/daughter/children to participate in this session subject to his/her/their own will and interest. I/we submit that I/we have not been coerced or forced (emotionally or physically) to provide this consent for our child/children to take part in this session, and that my/our consent to this is wholly my/our decision.

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**(Name of the mother)**

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**(Signature)**

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**(Name of the father)**

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**(Signature)**

We hereby state that the parents have read and understood and in case of their inability to do so, we have explained to them the details about this session and the terms of the child/children's participation. We have made it clear to the parent in a language understood by him/her that consent to participate in this session is totally voluntary and that the child/ children can resign or withdraw consent at any point of time or opt out of the session without need for an approval or an explanation. We have made it clear that the child is free to reveal or share as much information as he/she is comfortable with and that there will be no pressure or force for him/her to share or reveal more than he/she wants to. We hereby understand that whatever is revealed by the child during the session has to be handled with utmost confidentiality and cannot at any cost be revealed to any other person (adult/ child), except with the consent of the child, and we promise to honour this requirement.

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**(Name of the Facilitator)**

**(Signature of the Facilitator)**

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**(Name of the Note Taker)**

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**(Signature of the Note Taker)**