

CHILD FRIENDLY CITIES
promoted by UNICEF National Committees and Country Offices –
Fact sheet, September 2009



Context

Within the next 30 years the urban population of developing countries is set to double from 2 to 4 billion and more than 50% of this number will be under the age of 24. Overall, in the year 2020, 56% of the world population will live in urban areas.¹

The 7th Millennium Development Goal (MDG) - ensuring environmental sustainability by 2015 - has as one of its objectives to improve the lives of one hundred million slum-dwellers by the year 2020. This means addressing the situation of at least 50 million adolescents and young people.

The outcome document of the UN Special Session on Children (May 2002) stresses that "Local governments and authorities can ensure that children are at the centre of agendas for development. By building on ongoing initiatives, such as child-friendly communities and cities without slums, mayors and local leaders can significantly improve the lives of children."²

The Child Friendly Cities Initiative

The Child Friendly Cities Initiative (CFCI) was launched in 1996 to act on the resolution passed during the second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) to make cities liveable places for all; in UNICEF terms, aiming to put "children first." The UN Conference declared that *the well-being of children is the ultimate indicator of a healthy habitat, a democratic society and of good governance*. Child friendly cities are a platform to take forward the child rights agenda in both the developing world and the industrialized world. The CFCI, a movement gathering together a wide range of partners, advocates for governance approaches and participatory urban management promoting the realization of the rights of the youngest citizens.

In 2000, the International Secretariat of CFCI was established at the UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre (IRC) in Florence, Italy. The CFC Secretariat supports the sharing of knowledge and experiences, and promotes research and analysis of the strategies and practices to implement children's rights at the local level.

What is a child friendly city?

A child friendly city is a city or any local system of governance that is committed to fulfilling children's rights, including their right to

- Influence decisions about their city
- Express their opinion on the city they want
- Participate in family, community and social life
- Receive basic services such as health care, education and shelter
- Drink safe water and have access to proper sanitation
- Be protected from exploitation, violence and abuse
- Walk safely in the streets on their own
- Meet friends and play

¹ State of World Population 2007: Unleashing the Potential of Urban Growth, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), New York, 2007.

² A World Fit for Children, United Nations General Assembly, S-27/2, 11 October 2002

- Have green spaces for plants and animals
- Live in an unpolluted environment
- Participate in cultural and social events
- Be an equal citizen of their city with access to every service, regardless of ethnic origin, religion, income, gender or disability

A child friendly city is the embodiment of the Convention on the Rights of the Child at the local level: this means in practice that children's rights are reflected in policies, laws, programmes and budgets. In a child friendly city, children are active agents; their voices and opinions are taken into consideration and influence decision making processes.

Becoming child friendly is a process that entails a number of steps, defined in the CFC Framework as 9 components -"building blocks" -:

1. Ensure children's participation
2. Have a child friendly legal framework
3. Develop a city-wide children's rights strategy
4. Create a children's rights unit or have a coordinating mechanism
5. Ensure a child impact assessment and evaluation
6. Have an appropriate children's budget
7. Ensure a regular state of the city's children report
8. Make children's rights known among adults and children
9. Support independent advocacy for children

The child participation element is cross-cutting and should be taken into account into each step of the process.

Child friendly communities

As the CFC approach emerged in response to a rapid rate of urbanization, the concept was initially developed for cities, referring to municipalities of different sizes. However, it is now clear that the concept may also include other communities of different types which are promoting a CFC approach. It is therefore more accurate to speak of "child friendly cities and communities".

UNICEF's involvement in the Child Friendly Cities initiative (CFCI)

The promotion and safeguarding of children's rights are at the centre of UNICEF's mandate. Addressing the rights of children at sub-national levels, particularly in urban areas, is a means to improve their situation where they live and ensure that children have a say in all issues and decision-making processes affecting them

UNICEF's Medium Term Strategic Plan (MTSP), now extended to 2013, envisions the strengthening of partnerships with local authorities and municipalities to ensure a systematic response to the needs of children in underserved urban areas.

Increasing numbers of UNICEF National Committees in industrialized countries and UNICEF country offices in programme countries are promoting the CFC approach, in a variety of ways. Some have established national accreditation systems through which cities and municipalities are designated "child friendly" if they meet pre-defined goals in accordance with core challenges faced by children in their national context as framed by the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Examples of initiatives in which CFCI has been and is being implemented can be found on the CFCI website (www.childfriendlycities.org).

Examples of CFC initiatives from the South

- **Brazil**

The *Municipal Seal of Approval*, promoted by UNICEF Brazil, is an example of certification of child friendly municipalities. The strategy, based on the key components of communication, partnership and monitoring and evaluation, aims to trigger positive competition among public administrations, by granting them visibility for their achievements with regard to the fulfilment of children's rights and MDGs and to ensure they do not lag behind in improving child well-being. Performance is assessed bi-annually through quantitative and qualitative methods and is measured through goals and indicators within three areas: social impact, public policy management and civic participation. The prestigious certificate is awarded through a major public event.

- **Philippines**

In the Philippines, the CFC approach has been promoted by the Child Friendly Movement, a multi-sector nation-wide partnership, with the support of UNICEF. A certification system, the *Presidential Award*, has been established. To be recognized as child friendly, cities and communities should attain 24 goals and indicators on survival, development, protection and participation, developed within the national plan of action for children. In addition, cities should present four "gifts" to children: a local development plan for children, a local investment plan for children, a local code on children and a state of the children report. A growing number of cities have promoted the four gifts, encouraged by the Award prize.

- **The Greater Amman Municipality, Jordan**

The Greater Amman Municipality began implementing the CFC approach in 2004 by establishing an Executive Agency for a Child Friendly City which oversees the implementation of programmes for children and ensures inter-sectorial coordination at the local level. Later the document "Policy and Priorities for Children" was developed through a participatory approach. It provides a holistic strategy to improve children's life with a focus on the areas of health, protection and safety of children, culture, informal education/school drop outs, and child built environments. Awareness raising, capacity building and child participation have been strong elements all throughout. To ensure child participation, 4 municipal councils of children were established through elections.

Examples of CFC initiatives from the North

- **Spain**

The CFC initiative in Spain ("Ciudades Amigas de la Infancia") is promoted by the Spanish Committee for UNICEF in coordination with the Ministry of Employment and Social Affairs, the Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces and the Local Network for the Rights of Children and Young People (Red Local). To obtain the CFC recognition, the city/town needs to have met the following requirements: existence of a city-wide children's strategy, action plan or coordinated action; the creation of a council for children and youths or similar mechanisms; and an official adhesion of the full city/town council meeting, expressing acceptance of bearing the costs of processing the application. The CFC designation is awarded for four years by an intersectorial jury, which assesses the documentation. Useful tools have been developed to support cities in the process, including a website for the initiative and a questionnaire containing a wide-range of indicators.

- **France**

Launched by the French Mayors Association and by the French National Committee for UNICEF in 2002, the initiative "Ville amie des enfants" (Child-Friendly City) represents a network of approximately 170 cities of all sizes. Towns committed to becoming child friendly apply to be awarded the recognition. The completed application form is reviewed and assessed by an evaluation committee with regard to 5 areas/goals: everyday life of children; child participation programmes; promotion of international solidarity; knowledge of children's rights and partnership with UNICEF. Once appointed as child friendly, a city or town commits to enhancing activities to further meet the goals embedded in the 5

areas of work. Several tools have been developed to support cities in the process such as a website, a questionnaire and scoreboard. Yearly meetings are organised to ensure the exchange of lessons learnt.

- **Switzerland**

The CFCI in Switzerland is promoted by the Swiss Committee for UNICEF together with governmental and non-governmental bodies. The process to become child friendly includes seven steps: development of a situation analysis based on self-assessment; feedback from the National Committee and the ad hoc working group; formal decision by the municipality to apply for the process; organization of a workshop with children and young people for them to express their views; development of an action plan; evaluation of the self-assessment report and of the action plan by the external committee; and awarding the certificate. A mid-term report is submitted and after four years, the city should prove progress has been attained and should develop a new situation analysis and action plan.

Further information

- Resources and materials, including a virtual database, are available on the website of the CFCI Secretariat which is hosted by the UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre: www.childfriendlycities.org.
- UNICEF Spain and France have special websites for the child friendly cities initiatives: respectively www.ciudadesamigas.org , www.villesamiesdesenfants.com
- Information about the Brazilian initiative may be found at www.selounicef.org.br
- The Framework for action "Building child friendly cities" was published by the UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre in 2004 and is available on the CFCI website.

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