



Assessing and Monitoring Child Friendly Communities and Cities

Supporting advocacy and capacity building in local governance

Overview, update and Summary of the Workshop report on the Child Friendly Cities Research

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December 2009

This is an overview and summary of the report of the Child Friendly Cities research workshop that took place in Rome on November 25-27, 2009. The workshop was organised jointly by the Innocenti Research Centre (IRC), the Children's Environment Research Group (CERG) and UNICEF Italy within the framework of the CFC research led by IRC, in partnership with Childwatch, CERG and the Bernard Van Leer Foundation.

I. Introduction

Child Friendly Cities (CFC) are cities of different sizes that are committed both at the community level and within and the municipal administration to become a place “fit” for children by fulfilling their rights. In the last two decades, cities and communities have experimented different ways of meeting the CRC obligations by promoting a wide variety of initiatives addressing children’s rights. The CFC Initiative was launched in 1996 at the UN Conference of Human Settlements (Habitat II) in Istanbul, to orient and strengthen a common voice advocating for the role of local authorities in the implementation of children’s rights and for ensuring that children are heard in decision making processes. Throughout the years, there has been a continuously increasing interest in Child Friendly Cities, which is rooted in several factors such as the high pace of urbanization, a world-wide trend of governmental decentralization, a recognition of the effectiveness of community initiatives toward the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the need for a rights-based, integrated approach that stimulates participatory civic engagement in the enhancement and realization of children’s rights at the local level. Gradually, there has been recognition that communities should be explicitly acknowledged under the CFC label.

In the year 2000, a Secretariat of the Initiative was established at the Innocenti Research Centre in Florence to provide a reference point and hub for knowledge management within the CFC Movement. Based on the documentation of a wide variety of experiences, in 2004, the Secretariat produced the “Framework of Action” which highlights nine key components that feature the process toward becoming “child friendly”.

After more than a decade, there is a renewed interest in CFC to accelerate the implementation of the UN CRC at the local level, including through community and children’s involvement, to build on and promote decentralisation efforts. Within UNICEF, the Medium Term Strategic Plan (MTSP 2006-2011, now extended to 2013) acknowledges the role of local authorities in providing a systematic response to the need of children in deprived urban contexts and recommends strengthening partnership with them to promote Child Friendly Cities.

In 2008, in a Consultation held in Geneva, and organized by UNICEF, researchers and practitioners recognized an increased need of communities and cities for evidence- based assessment including tools/instruments that allow them to comprehensively and systematically assess their situation through a participatory approach and to subsequently monitor their improvement on this basis.

To help bridge this gap a Child Friendly Cities research initiative was undertaken by the Innocenti Research Centre, in partnership with Childwatch International, a network of research institutions involved with children's rights, and with other offices of UNICEF, including the Adolescent Development and Participation Section in UNICEF headquarters. The research is being coordinated jointly by IRC and the Children's Environments Research Group (CERG) based at the City University of New York. The Bernard Van Leer Foundation is helping support the initiative.

II. Update on the CFC research initiative

The Child Friendly Cities and Communities Research Initiative aims to improve the conditions of children living in urban settings by enabling communities and cities to **better assess the degree to which they are fulfilling children's rights** and to **look self-critically at the governance structures and processes that are designed to support families and their children**. Concretely, the research is intended to yield a package of participatory tools which, through a comprehensive set of rights-based indicators, will contribute to expanding the breadth and quality of data on children's conditions and will improve the cities' and communities' assessment and monitoring capacities. The tools are universal templates designed to be adapted to the specificity of different local contexts. There are two main components, for assessing: a) the nature and degree of cities' and communities' child-friendliness (community tools); b) the appropriateness of local government structures and processes to the fulfilment of children's rights (governance tools).

The tools will enable action research at both the community and municipal level. The community assessment and monitoring tools will enable residents of all ages, including children, together with community service providers, to engage in an informed reflective process, leading to local planning and advocacy for children. The governance tools will support local government officials in the review of municipal policies, structures and processes for children and families. A key component of the work is the strengthening of CFC networks to collect, analyze and disseminate the knowledge generated and for the joint development of the tools.

So far, the research has completed a number of steps:

- Formation of a **consultative group of researchers** and practitioners which serves as an advisory group for the research initiative by providing guidance to the methodology and tools and exchanging good practices and lessons learned. The network has been consulted and will continue being involved in providing input on the tools and the process itself.
- **Critical review of existing approaches, tools and instruments** for assessing and monitoring the fulfilment of children's rights at the local. The review was analyzed at the experts' consultation held in The Hague in November 2008.
- **Design of the research methodology and of innovative tools**, based on the critical review. CERG with IRC's collaboration and the involvement of the consultative group produces a modular set of tools to be adapted locally.

- **Pilot testing in two select countries and modification of core tools:** piloting in two countries (The Philippines and Brazil) has allowed for refinement of the tools before applying them in all countries. The lessons learnt have enriched the tools to best fit the target groups. A preparatory workshop for piloting was held in Brazil on March 19-21, 2009.
- **Collaboration with DevInfo,** a database system established by the UN to monitor progress on MDGs, to enable mapping of child friendly data. This collaboration will be on going through the process.

Based on the pilot tests they have been refined as needed and will now be put to use in a wider range of cities and communities in 10 countries. These reflect a variety of contexts in terms of location, setting and size: Brazil, The Philippines, the Dominican Republic, Russia, Jordan, Sudan, South Africa, France, Italy and Spain.

UNICEF Country Offices and National Committees will coordinate with selected municipalities and support a local research teams to carry out the assessment from January to July 2010. To support the research process locally, the workshop “*Assessing child friendly cities and communities – Supporting advocacy and capacity building in local governance*” was organized and included teams from the countries participating in the research. Its main objective was to ensure a common understanding of the assessment toolkit and of the research protocol, in addition enriching the research process and to facilitating the exchange of experiences with regard to practices, including in monitoring and assessment. The main outcomes, conclusions and recommendations of the workshop are summarised in this report.

During the implementation of the research, technical assistance will be provided by IRC and CERG to ensure the effective conduct of the process. An interactive website will be launched in the month of December to encourage learning and exchange of experiences, as well as monitoring, among all the countries and cities involved. The wiki will also be a tool to channel requests of assistance regarding the research or other CFC-related issues.

Once the research is completed in loco and local reports have been completed (July 2010), findings will be analysed by the IRC and CERG team and will be compiled to be disseminated. The findings include: a) a research protocol, including a set of indicators, for community and cities to self-assess their degree of child friendliness; b) description of mechanisms used by local governance structures in the self-assessment process, including a critical analysis of the ways of working at both the community and local government levels; and c) data on the situation of children in participating cities.

The toolkit

The toolkit currently includes the following items:

- Community tools addressed to:
 - Children (aged 8-12)
 - Adolescents (13-18)
 - Pre-school parents

- Primary School parents
- Community Providers
- Comprehensive tool (for use with mixed age groups and to summarise findings)
- A Facilitator's guide for the administration of the community tool
- Governance tools:
 - Core tool for municipal stakeholders (discussion guide and answer sheet) and related instructions.

Based on the outcomes of the workshop, a community tool for parents of adolescents and a tool for mapping institutional roles vis-à-vis child rights violations will be developed together with a governance tool guide. Through the implementation of the research, the tools and guides will be further revised.

III. Summary of the key outcomes and recommendations of the CFC workshop

The workshop met the objectives that had been set and led to the following **results**:

- Exchange of on-going activities on child friendly cities and communities in the participating countries. Most countries have developed a plan and have already built the research process in the current and future actions in relation to CFC.
- Understanding of existing assessment and monitoring mechanisms in place to assess child friendliness at the local level, including current efforts in countries participating in the research. To some extent, many of the countries involved have developed some tools and mechanisms and have reflected on how to combine the newly developed assessment tools with current methods.
- Full recognition of the action component of the CFC research initiative. In addition to improving the breadth and quality of data collection on children in cities and communities, the research protocol and process allow for the identification and strengthening of priorities for programme actions, such as the development of new local plans of actions and tailoring of existing policies for children, the changes in structures and processes responding to children's needs and rights, an increased awareness of children's rights among local government and community stakeholders and the mobilisation of communities.
- The establishment of a network of countries and cities participating in the effort has been established and will be strengthened by the research initiative. The interactive webpage (*wiki*) hosted by the CFC website (www.childfriendlycities.org) will allow for interactive dialogue, exchange of updates and lessons learnt regarding the research as well other CFC-related issues and experiences. UNICEF offices connected with CFC research effort and other external researchers will also be included. The *wiki* will become be a hub for exchange of information and technical assistance in relation to the research.

- Learning from the countries that have piloted the community assessment tools has contributed to sharing recommendations as well as to addressing questions regarding the administration of the tools.
- Both the piloting country delegations and the participants in general acknowledged that the tool for community assessment with children and parents is a powerful instrument to raise awareness on children's rights and to mobilize communities in identifying their priorities and in engaging in a dialogue with local authorities to advocate for change. As far as the governance tool is concerned, the value of the process of bringing representatives of the different sectors and agencies of the local government was emphasized, as it may lead to a new culture of mainstreaming children's rights in policy making as well as of coordination among agencies to fulfil children's rights.
- The finessing of the components of the toolkit was enabled by the contributions of participants.

The following **key recommendations** were agreed upon:

- It was recommended that the research initiative is made visible through a communication strategy that suggests: a) Child Friendly Cities are placed high on UNICEF's agenda as an effective contribution to the MTSP and an entry point for work in urban contexts; b) the assessment toolkit and methods is a useful instrument to strengthen Child Friendly Cities.
- It was suggested considering the possibility of having a minimum set of indicators on CFC to compare cities in the future. This will be only possible in the long-term, as the main feature of the research protocol is to ensure a participatory approach and is not based on rigorous sampling. Nevertheless, the final research report will allow for some comparison among the participating cities. It was also recommended allowing for flexibility throughout the process to combine methodologies based on rigorous sampling with participatory methods and to supplement the data collected with hard core data.
- Specific suggestions were made to further refine the community tools. Recommendations regarding the governance tool were also made; in particular, it was suggested a comprehensive governance toolkit be developed. Furthermore, it was stressed this should remain as a discussion guide to be adjusted and used in a flexible manner in different contexts.

The **participants** to the workshop included: UNICEF focal points, researchers and some municipal government representatives from the countries involved in the research (India attended as observers); members of the research consultative groups; representatives of UNICEF Geneva; and a faculty member of the University of Colorado and consultant to UN-Habitat (see list of participants in appendix 2). UNICEF NY was not represented due other compelling commitments.

A constraint of the workshop was the absence of the Sudanese delegation and of two members of the Jordanian delegation, due to visa constraints. A separate workshop will be held during the month of January 2010.

