

Child Friendly Cities Initiative and Sustainable Development: addressing rapid urbanization and children's rights through local and global partnerships.

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Abstract

Within a rapidly urbanizing world, many governments particularly those in developing nations will struggle over the next 30 years to support children to reach their full potential. There were many key issues and challenges for children in cities identified over a decade ago as countries embarked on the task of addressing and monitoring progress through the Millennium Development Goals (MDG's). But as the 15 year time frame of the MDG's draws near and as urbanization swells and sets to increase significantly in those countries with the least capacity to manage it, it is the post 2015 agenda that is now the key talking point for many UN agencies. This article supports and argues along with others, that the rights and needs of the most vulnerable children and their communities should be central to the post 2015 sustainable development goals (SDGs) and UNICEF through its urban programs such as child friendly cities initiative (CFCI) have a significant role to play in addressing the crisis of urbanization. This article concludes by identifying four key areas where CFCI can contribute to SDGs as leaders and global partners in tackling the challenges ahead.

Keywords: Child friendly cities initiative, sustainable development goals, children's rights, rapid urbanization, millennium development goals, slums.

Introduction

As I walk through the slums of Africa, I find it hard to witness children suffering under what can only be described as an urban penalty. I am astonished at how women manage to raise their families under such appalling circumstances, without water or a decent toilet. The promise of independence has given way to the harsh realities of urban living mainly because too many of us were ill prepared for our urban future. - Anna Tibaijuka, Executive Director, UN-HABITAT (Worldwatch Institute, 2007 xix)

As Anna Tibaijuka so aptly describes in this opening passage, the impending crisis of urbanisation on children's lives is now a harsh reality. The reality of urbanization will be many children facing significant dangers from the degradation of natural and social environments, including increases in pollutants and pathogens in the air, water, soil and food, additional roads and traffic incidents and the ongoing impacts of insecure slum housing, poor education and health provision. Already it is clear children's rights and well-being with sustainable development should remain at the centre of this post-2015 agenda. Investment in children (and woman) has shown to be a fundamental means to eradicate poverty, boost shared prosperity, and enhance inter-generational equity. Investment in children and families is also essential for strengthening children's ability to reach their potential as productive, engaged, and capable citizens, contributing fully to their societies. This is the focus of this article, to discuss the work being done in preparation by the United Nations generally and UNICEF more specifically around how to proceed after 2015 when the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) agenda has been completed. Central to this discussion will be the role of key urban programs within

UNICEF, one such program the Child Friendly Cities Initiative (CFCI). In this paper I will argue that in order to move development forward, to ensure there is a spirit of just, humane and sustainable development within cities, children's rights and needs should be located in the center not at the periphery. I will conclude by outlining the significant role and unique contribution the global CFCI has to play in this post 2015 agenda. I start the paper with a short introduction to the current and projected global situation in terms of future urbanization and its challenges for sustainable development, I will then discuss the relationship historically between child rights, CFCI and sustainable development, and the before moving on to the role of CFCI in the future I will outline the current United Nations post 2015 agenda of sustainable development goals.

Realities of rapid urbanization

Currently, for the first time in human history, more people live in urban areas than rural areas and city populations are growing by more than 200,000 new inhabitants each day. Currently over half of the world's population resides in cities and by 2050 this will rise to 7 out of 10 people. Recent figures state urban populations are growing by nearly 60 million every year with global urban population being expected to grow roughly 1.5 per cent per year, between 2015-2050 (WHO 2010). That is, by the middle of the 21st century, the urban population will almost double, an estimated 3.4 billion people in 2009 living in cities will become 6.4 billion by 2050. And while currently the countries with the largest urban populations such as Argentina 92 per cent, Chile 89 per cent, Australia 89 per cent, France 85 per cent USA 82 percent Spain 77 per cent are predominantly high or highly developed nations according to the Human Development Index (HDI)¹ (UNICEF 2012). These countries have essentially plateaued in terms of growth with the likely scenario for urbanizing being a decrease in growth, over the next 40 years. For instance Europe is projected to experience minus 6 per cent urban growth, Latin America minus 4 per cent and North America minus 2 per cent growth leading up to 2050 (UNDP 2013). In contrast the sites of the lowest current rates of urbanization, that is below 25 per cent of the countries inhabitants live in urban environments, are mostly in countries identified through the HDI as the least developed countries, they are in the lowest HDI quintile (UNDP 2013). For example, a number of African countries such as Malawi, Uganda, Rwanda and Ethiopia all have current urban growth rates below 25 per cent. But how these countries differ to the regions of Europe, Latin and North America is the projection that over the next 40 years these will be the sites of greatest increase of urban growth. Countries in Africa are anticipated to have on average an urban growth of 8 per cent - the other region of greatest growth will be Asia with an average of four percent growth. What these projected figures illustrate, even if partially true, is that almost all significant urban population growth in the next 40 years will occur in cities of least developed or developing countries (WHO 2010). Unfortunately it is these countries in Africa and Asia that have often faced significant challenges in recent decades, including low levels of education, poor health standards, poverty, scarce housing, natural resource reduction, natural disasters, wars, and economic and political domination by other countries. The consequences of these challenges has often amounted to limited or depleted infrastructure in both rural and urban environments and insecure or unstable governance systems.

Sixty million people in the developing world are leaving the countryside every year. It has been clear for some time now the locus of world poverty will and is shifting from rural to the urban environments with the most significant growth being concentrated in

¹ The Human Development Index (HDI) is a comparative measure of life expectancy, literacy, education, standards of living, and quality of life for countries worldwide.

the places with the least capacity to cope with the population rises. As people continue to migrate away from rural areas and into cities, cities that are growing to devour the land around it, the numbers of people living in slums, shantytowns and informal settlements rise steeply. According to the United Nation's Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing, currently there are 200,000 of these communities across the world, most of them in and around cities, and that number is growing exponentially. Even before the economic crisis of 2008, about one third of all city dwellers lived in slums which will grow in size by one billion more people over the next twenty years. Cities in least developed countries are expected to absorb 95 per cent of urban population growth in the next two decades, therefore increasing the slum population by nearly 500 million between now and 2020 alone. One billion people currently live in slums², 1.4 billion people will by 2020, that's one in seven persons on the planet. If that rate of slum population continues it could be over 3 billion people seeking to reside in the city slums by the middle of the century. While 90 percent of the world's informal settlements are in developing nations - such as India and Brazil - they are a worldwide phenomenon and even in European capitals and the largest American cities the impacts of high urban growth with minimal advance planning has caused slums.

The ongoing consequence of this rapid urbanization over the next 30 years for children's quality of life in developing nations particularly is grim. Children in the majority world now make up 60 per cent of the total population, 600 million of these children worldwide are living in slums in poverty. 8 million of these urban children globally died in 2010 before reaching the age of 5, largely due to pneumonia, diarrhea and birth complications (UNICEF 2012). Adequate and equitable services and resources could have easily saved many of these children's lives. Regions with the highest projected increased urbanization (Africa and then Asia) also have the most countries that have both a low HDI ranking as well a high under 5 years infant mortality rate (UNICEF 2012, UNDP 2013). Clearly, high rates of increased urbanisation, low rates of development (as registered on HDI) all add up to poverty and slums, which clearly for the children living in these areas equates to a higher likelihood of non-survival: "High urban child mortality rates tend to be seen in places where significant concentrations of extreme poverty combine with inadequate services, as in slums" (UNICEF 2012). Additionally, being mostly not registered at birth and living in transient communities, where residents are often moved on, these children from the poor neighbourhoods, slums or squatter settlements are among the least likely to have their basic rights recognized or realized. Throughout this paper, I will argue that these fundamental issues of inequality are at the core of sustainable development and human rights and child rights are still a central concern.

Urbanisation supporting sustainable development

Despite perceptions that associate sustainable development mainly with non-human environment, the broader focus of sustainable development is on the ways the global community can meet the natural, social and economic needs of humans within the planetary boundaries and resource limits - so that human and planetary development can be both sustainable, and be sustained. This means the continued advance of poverty eradication, human rights, and equity while also realizing more sustainable patterns of consumption and production, stabilizing climatic forces, and sustainably managing our common natural resource base. Urban growth and sustainable development don't seem like compatible partners but many say if human population does continue to grow at the rates predicted then cities will be the only way to create a sustainable future. That

² A slum residence in an urban area is defined as one with inadequate housing, sanitation, tenure security, and no or few basic services (UN Habitat 2003)

is, high-density urban environments will be the most cost effective and sustainable way to accommodate and provide infrastructure to the billions of new inhabitants to the planet while still trying to maintain ecological sustainability. Because cities concentrate economic activities and large numbers of people close together, the cost of providing basic infrastructure and services like piped water, roads, and sewage treatment is lower than in rural areas. And while new economies tend to become more-high polluting during early stages of development because they first adapt inexpensive technologies that are relatively inefficient, as income rises and technologies diffuse through society, consumers start to value environmental quality more highly and become more able to pay for it. Some analysts have argued that developing countries could also now skip the early stage of industrialization by 'leapfrogging' – that is by using advanced, clean technologies as soon as they are fielded in developed nations developing nations will avoid the consequences of these high polluting industries. For example, some developing countries have skipped installing telephone poles and wires and moved straight to cell phones as a primary communication system. If fast-growing nations like China and India can leapfrog to clean technologies, they can reduce the environmental impacts of their large and growing populations. But this is dependent on economics, green technologies are often more expensive than lesser technologies and for the many African nations who will bear the front of urbanization this wont be a reality.

Slum or squatter cities are in the most part unexpectedly sustainable due to their low resource use per capita. Ironically, many slum dwellers use less energy and resources and generate less waste than their up-scaled neighbors, but the poor live in degraded areas and receive fewer resources and services and therefore bear the burden generated by higher-income city consumers. For instance, in some areas of Mumbai such as Dharavi slum the maximum density of slum settlement is around 1 million people per square mile and these areas due to the lack of services have minimum energy and material use. People move around by foot, bicycle, rickshaw, or shared taxi, they share power if they have access at all, and whenever possible they not only recycle materials for their own use but recycle others waste for resale. The Dharavi slum has 400 recycling units and 30,000 rag pickers. Six thousand tons of rubbish is sorted every day. Many commentators believe squatter cities that have emerged and will continue to emerge at a rapid pace in the next thirty years can teach us much about future urban living, particularly around low consumer patterns. Because even though clearly large cities tend to consume more resources than small ones, consumption patterns and technology choices are normally more harmful and unsustainable than population size. In fact some would argue that the only way the planet will be able to sustain the level of population growth in cities in developing nations would be the mainstreaming of consumer patterns of slums.

Equally important is the need not to romanticise slums - they are far from being an unmitigated good. They concentrate crime, pollution, disease, disaster and injustice as much as they support business, innovation, low consumption and sustainable practices. In places such as India regular floods and there disastrous consequences demonstrate the vulnerability of slum and squatter settlements due to their often tentative development on 'leftover' or marginal land – land where urban development hasn't been supported because they are prone to flooding or landslides, earthquakes and so forth. These settlements are therefore mostly considered illegal by local authorities, excluded from official plans and consequently do not receive support for basic infrastructure development. Rapid urbanization and sustainable development are particularly incompatible, especially in least developed nations where development has been slow or hampered by low economic productivity, conflict, degraded environmental resources, lack of provision for adequate housing, health and other infrastructure. The next section will now explore how UNICEF through its child rights agenda and

particularly the CFCI has addressed many of the challenges of urbanization and sustainable development for children.

Child rights, child friendly cities and sustainable development working together

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (UNICEF 1992), identified a child's well-being and quality of life as the ultimate indicator of a healthy environment, good governance, and sustainable development (UNICEF 1996, UNICEF, 1997). According to UNICEF (2004), 'A Child-Friendly City is a local system of good governance committed to fulfilling children's rights'. The principles of sustainable development clearly demand that the simultaneous achievement of environmental, social and economic goals fulfill the rights of the present generation of children without compromising the future rights of children to come. The goals of sustainability also insist nation and local governments maintain the integrity of environments through processes, which are participatory and equitable. The principles of the CRC clearly reinforced these goals when it challenged governments to uphold the child's right to live in a safe, clean and healthy environment and to allow children to engage in free play, leisure and recreation in the environment. Children have a special interest in these goals, vulnerable to the detrimental impacts of urbanization, if the goals of sustainability are not achieved then children will be profoundly affected. There has clearly been a history of convergence between the principles of sustainable development and children's rights generally (Malone 2006) leading to a broader significance and purpose for child friendly cities initiative, this relationship will be explored in more detail.

Children's rights and sustainable development was formally articulated in a number of global declarations and documents including *The Plan for Action* that resulted from the World Summit for Children and the *Rio Declaration and Agenda 21* both endorsed at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. This growing focus on urbanization and children gave rise to the *Children's Rights and Habitat Report* being presented by UNICEF representatives at the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements at Istanbul in 1996. The document drew attention to the important *role* children had in sustainable development when it stated: "Children have a special interest in the creation of sustainable human settlements that will support long and fulfilling lives for themselves and future generations. They require opportunities to participate and contribute to a sustainable urban future" (UNICEF1997). It was from this meeting that CFCI emerged.

At this same time at the local level, the goals of sustainable development and children's rights were being expressed through *Local Agenda 21* - the action plan for local governments, communities and all stakeholders to promote and implement sustainable development. This allowed the CFCI to have a strong focus on encouraging Mayors and community organizations to involve children in partnerships around environmental decision-making. Building on this history the CFCI was also recognized as a critical program for supporting the outcome document of the UN General Assembly's Special Session on Children in May 2002, *A World Fit for Children*. This document identified the importance of local government and authorities in partnerships to promote and protect the rights of children and the significance of building on the child-friendly cities initiatives. It supported the important role local governments and authorities had to ensure children were at the center 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" (UNICEF 2002a).

CFCI featured widely in many documents emerging from UNICEF at this time including

Partnerships to Create Child-friendly Cities (UNICEF 2001) and *Poverty and Exclusion among Urban Children* (UNICEF 2002b). The CFCI was also advanced through its partnership with the International Union of Local Authorities (IULA). IULA was a key stakeholder in the CFCI program as many local governments carried the final responsibility in many localities for the very elements that have the greatest impact on children's well-being and quality of life. For cities wanting recognition as achieving child friendly status many countries devised over the years accreditation and monitoring programs. UNICEF in a bid to increase the rigor and global face of child friendliness has supported these initial country wide monitoring programs by revamping CFCI and designing a global child friendliness index and a set of supporting community based self-assessment tools. This revamping of CFCI will address the concerns identified in the UNICEF report on the Asia Pacific region which clearly articulates that although MDGs are helpful to make real difference in children's lives (especially the middle class children as discussed in the next section): "often, national averages conceal the adverse health conditions disproportionately experienced by the poor, and a lack of reliable statistical data disaggregated by geography and socio-economic groups makes analysis of the Asia-Pacific region difficult" (2008: 55). The recent Save the Children (2012) report reiterated this when it identified that the lack of evidence on inequality and poverty among diverse child groups is due to a lack of available and sufficiently disaggregated data, and yet the limited data that is available shows children are at all levels still disproportionately represented. So as the end of the MDG period draws near and many reviews of the MDGs impact are being assessed, CFCI has also reviewed its strategy for the future. The next section will outline the how the United Nations and UNICEF specifically, is designing the sustainable development goals (SDG) in response to MDGs coming to an end in 2015 that will then allow me to conclude with a final discussion on how the past experiences and the newly revamped CFCI can contribute to these new goals.

What is the global Post MDG 2015 Agenda?

Recent reporting on the progress of countries in achieving the MDGs revealed many mid-level countries are advancing steadily towards achieving MDG targets. Yet many sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and the least developed countries have fallen far behind other developing regions and industrialized countries on most indicators. The MDGs and targets were based on the Millennium Declaration, signed by 189 countries, including 147 heads of State and Government, in September 2000. The MDGs are composed of eight goals and eighteen time-bound targets, these are monitored using 48 indicators. The report on progress in 2010 identified five major global threats that have impeded recent progress these include the financial crisis and its impact on secure employment, harsh labor market and food insecurity, rapid urbanization and swelling slums, impacts of global environmental threats such as climate change and ecosystem degradation and natural disasters and armed conflict. Additionally, there has been an argument proposed leading up to the final 2015 review of the MDGs that they have fallen short by not integrating the economic, social, and environmental aspects of sustainable development as envisaged in the Millennium Declaration, and by not addressing the need to promote sustainable patterns of consumption and production. For instance, the proportion of the world's population using improved sanitation facilities increased from 54 per cent in 1990 to 61 per cent in 2008 – a rate of increase that is not nearly fast enough to meet the MDGs sanitation target by 2015. And although the incidence of open defecation, the riskiest sanitation practice, showed a decline from 25 per cent in 1990 to 17 per cent in 2008 – that has still left 1.1 billion people practicing open defecation around the world, the poorest communities are where least progress has been made. Changing trends in India for example illustrate the greatest improvements in improved sanitation has been in middle class, third and fourth wealth

quintile (40 per cent of population) with an increase from 17 per cent in 1995 to 75 per cent in 2008 of households having improved sanitation – so essentially middle class households. For the poorest (first wealth quintile) 20 percent of the population there was no improvements and for the next 20 percent a mere 7 per cent improvement over the thirteen year period, even though for 8 years of that time it was a key target goal for India in the MDGs. Clearly improvement can be a loaded, inequitable and discriminatory term.

To explore the challenges of a post MDGs environment and set the agenda for the next period of development the United Nations in 2012 put together a high-level panel of 27 eminent persons to make recommendations for a post-2015 development agenda. The outcome was a report released in April 2013 where five priorities were identified: leave no one behind; put sustainable development at the core; transform economies for jobs and inclusive growth; build peace and effective, open and accountable institutions for all; and forge new global partnership (United Nations 2013). Significant areas expressed in the report around these priorities include the importance of keeping the promise made by countries to the focus of the MDGs including putting an end to extreme poverty and hunger. The report also acknowledges that for the past twenty years even though sustainability has been clearly a significant global focus not one country has managed to achieve sustainable patterns of consumption and production, so putting sustainability at the core will mean developing a vision also of a global sustainable lifestyle. Long-term growth that provides economic opportunities through sustainable employment especially for your people was also core to the argument on how to overcome extreme poverty. Transparent governance and freedom from conflict was identified as a human entitlement and essentially supporting stability and adding to the possibility of creating a common principle of a just and equitable world through global partnerships.

The report also provides pointers regarding the key roles of city governments and local authorities in obtaining sustainable development (United Nations 2013). The panel identified that cities who have the specific problems of poverty, slum up-grading, solid waste management, service delivery, resource use, and planning will form a vital bridge between national governments and communities and have a critical role to play in supporting global initiatives and partnerships. With the increase of urbanization, swelling slums and the ensuing poverty that follows, all these areas of local governance will become even more important in the decades ahead. Local authorities that deliver essential public services in health, education, policing, water and sanitation and play a central role in disaster risk reduction will need to be instrumental in setting priorities, executing action plans, monitoring results and reporting on achievements, challenges and shortcomings. The panel emphasizing this point has called for a 'data revolution for sustainable development' one where quality information is available to a global community and local citizens. Finally the panel suggested that targets for the new post 2015 agenda should be bold and practical with tracking of indicators taking place at the level of community and encompassing all social groupings within cities. Finally, they encourage partners to take advantage of new technologies for information dissemination on progress to improve connectivity and to empower people.

UNICEF in May 2013 in response to the United Nations panel report released their own report focusing on addressing the challenges of sustainable development in relation to a child centred and equitable development approach. It stated that: "Sustainable Development is the core concept for the Post-2015 Development Agenda and provides an integrated response to the complex environmental, societal, economic and governance challenges that directly and disproportionately affect children" (UNICEF 2013). It also acknowledged, like the United Nations report, that sustainable

development must balance equity on all fronts and break the cycles of poverty, therefore ensuring children have “access to care, nutritious food and clean water and a safe environment in which to grow, participate and learn - free of violence, pollution and the risks of disaster” (UNICEF 2013). The UNICEF report identified three principles driving the post 2015 agenda for children: Sustainable development starts with safe, healthy and well-educated children; Safe and sustainable societies are, in turn essential for children; and Children’s voices, choices and participation are critical for the sustainable futures we want (UNICEF 2013). The main challenge it proposed for the global community was how to sustain the implementation of the many road maps and principles already proposed over recent years (Agenda 21, Rio +20, the MDGs and their reaffirmation in UN General Assembly resolutions, such as The Future We Want, The Human Right to Water and Sanitation, and a World Fit for Children). Societies, the report argued, can only claim to develop sustainably if children’s needs and rights, particularly those in the poorest and most vulnerable neighborhoods, are being addressed. This was reiterated in UNICEF SOWC report for 2012 where it stated “equity must be the guiding principle in efforts for all children in urban areas. The children of slums – born into and raised under some of the most challenging conditions of poverty and disadvantage – will require particular attention. But this must not come at the expense of children elsewhere. The larger goal must remain in focus: fairer, more nurturing cities and societies for all people – starting with children” (UNICEF 2012:75). In this final section I will outline four key areas I believe UNICEF Child Friendly Cities initiative has a contribution to make in this advancing sustainable development agenda.

Child Friendly Cities and the sustainable development agenda

There are a number of key areas the global CFCI has a significant role to play in the post 2015 sustainable development agenda. In this paper I have identified four interrelated areas that are a starting rather than an end point. The first of these key areas is in the area of equity and in particular how to support equitable development in slums with slum dwellers through processes that are aligned with policies and practices coherent with the rights of individuals and non-discrimination at a universal level. The second area is the significant contribution the CFCI can have by sharing its knowledge, experience and tools for collecting community and city level data and the means for monitoring the progress of communities when addressing identified areas of deprivation over time. The third area focuses on the role of local authorities as central to sustainable development at the micro level and in particular how supporting fair and just local governance can encourage integrated and multi-sectorial investment by children, community and other key stakeholders. The final area is authentic participation, which really is the cornerstone of the previous three. That is, how cities support and engage with children and young people (and their families) in meaningful participatory processes that acknowledge the significant role children can play as leading protagonists in the reformation of their cities. I will now look at these four areas in more details.

1. Equitable Child Friendly Cities: Identifying and addressing issues of equity and representation is identified as critical to the new sustainability agenda, (Save the Children 2012, United Nations 2013) it has also always been core to the work of CFCI globally. In special issue on urbanisation of the SOWC report (UNICEF 2012) it was highlighted that underpinning the child-friendly urban planning and programming process, evident in CFCI, is a human rights-based governance model that embodies the principles of nondiscrimination, survival and development, and participation as enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. According to the report (SOWC 2012) improved understanding of the impact of exclusion, through child and family consultation in CFCI, has led to the identification and addressing of barriers that

prevent impoverished children and their families from using services or exercising a number of their rights of citizenship. The report states: “By making neglected groups more visible and granting all children a platform to secure their needs and rights, the Child-Friendly Cities approach contributes to achieving development goals with equity”(UNICEF 2012: 56). Issues of equity are not new for many countries, but what will be new is the need for innovative participatory design methods that can operate on a grand scale with transient and slums dwellers. In Sudan for example, the CFCI was specifically designed to support services that contribute to the realization of the country program goals, including supporting efforts to ensure proper child survival, development, protection and participation in the most vulnerable states, particularly where rural-urban drift was becoming apparent. In direct response to the governments struggles to provide even the most basic support to the most disadvantaged children especially those most impacted by war, CFCI began by identifying who were the most at risk and hard to reach children within communities and villages. They then in partnership with community members created community level partnerships to target programs for children in most need. Chatterjee (2012: 23) writing on her current work evaluating the slum redevelopment programs in Dehli India states: “Children’s direct participation in local area planning and design for slum improvements would be a good step forward in creating child-friendly cities in India. Action for Children’s Environments (ACE) is currently working on a study supported by the Bernard van Leer Foundation to understand how the first phase of JNNURM-funded slum improvements have affected children, with the aim of informing these policies and improving the practice of planning and implementation of projects to make slum redevelopment more child-friendly”. To address the specific needs and rights of the 600 million rural dwellers who are moving to the cities each year in developing countries it will be essential to learn from CFCI programs like those in Sudan and India who have been exploring equitable ways to partner with communities, children and city authorities with the purpose of designing or improving slum developments.

2. Child Friendly Cities Monitoring. The new Post 2015 agenda for sustainable development calls for a focus on rigorous data collecting, reporting and monitoring. The ongoing challenge for the UN generally and UNICEF specifically is to consider how to monitor and address issues of sustainability from a nation, city and neighborhood level. Reliable data and analysis highlighting the spectrum of urban realities has always been viewed as essential to the CFCI particularly to ensure those children with the greatest needs are to be reached. Understanding that national and international surveys can be limited in their capacity to capture the reality of children and families on the urban margins, gathering accurate, disaggregated information has been a priority in CFCI. With the design, development and launching of a new city level child friendliness index and a global recognition and monitoring system based on a set of community self-assessment tools ready for the end of 2013, it is a prime position to be a strategic tool available for use by cities for their SDG reporting. The UNICEF child friendliness index assess four categories for children that reflect the key principles leading on from the MDGs and the CFCI, they include good start to life, education and knowledge, protection from harm and good standard of living. The strength of this new monitoring program is that it is based on the standardized, globally comparable city-level data developed by the Global Cities Indicators Facility (GCIF)³, an established global reporting platform for 250 cities worldwide. The data for CFCI index will be collected and maintained by city governments using these new global platforms and technologies with the recording and reporting data acting as the catalyst for constructing targeted and equitable, child-focused urban policies and strategies. As a global data monitoring platform that allows for sharing and comparison across cities and peer groupings at a city and

³ Further information on the GCIF is available on their website: <http://www.cityindicators.org>

neighbourhood level this may be the starting point for the 'data revolution' (United Nations 2103).

3. Child Friendly Local Governance. Supporting transparent, multi-sectoral, integrated systems of local governance across cities has always been a key principle of CFCI. Cities who are deemed to be child friendly or in the progress of achieving child friendly status are normally judged through country level accreditation or recognition programs using a criteria that questions the very principles through which the local authorities are operating. Integrated, multi-level approaches to local governance are an important feature of the CFCI. In Brazil, for example, the Platforms for Urban Centres promote synergy among municipal and state authorities and other stakeholders in order to reduce socio-economic inequalities affecting children in the biggest cities. Children and other community members assess children's living conditions and develop a plan of action that includes performance indicators for communities and municipalities. With a partnership between the Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development (MoFALD), the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare (MoWCSW), UNICEF Nepal, the Central Child Welfare Board (CCWB), and certain international NGOs, the concept of Child-Friendly Local Governance has been implemented in Nepal as a multi-sectoral integrated system of local governance. The goal of the initiative is to guarantee the rights of every child in Nepal by ensuring service delivery through significant improvement in the availability and quality of the services needed by children through the promotion of Child-Friendly Local Governance. To be deemed a child friendly local government the local authorities in collaboration with their communities must develop a local development and a local investment plan for children, formulate and where appropriate amend strategies and policies on the development of children and prepare and publish a status report on children. They must also provide data addressing a number of service indicators are provided evidence they have achieved at least 80 percent of these indicators.

4. Child Friendly Child and Youth participation. The final area where CFCI has a significant contribution to make in the post 2015 sustainability agenda is in the area of strategies and examples of how to engage in *authentic* and *meaningful* participation with children and young people. Children and young people should be recognized as critical and active partners and decision makers for sustainable change. As the 2012 UN Resolution, *The Future We Want*, clearly stated "We stress the importance of the active participation of young people in decision-making processes, as the issues we are addressing have a deep impact on present and future generations and as the contribution of children and youth is vital to the achievement of sustainable development". The UNICEF CFCI in Brazil, the *Municipal Seal of Approval* is an example of CFC project that has improved the lives of millions of children in the poorer municipalities of Brazil through a results-based mobilization that recognizes the importance of providing a voice and tools for change to children and young people. The introduction of the "Seal of Approval" in the arid regions of the country was introduced in order to recognize those municipalities who were seeking to improve the lives of children and youth, by engaging communities through authentic child and youth participatory projects. Over 691 community forums were used as a tool to evaluate the quality of public policies for children and adolescents (13,476 people were involved). These forums represented community participation in evaluating public policies in almost 50% of the municipalities of the Semi-Arid region. Results from the monitoring of the program over a four-year period showed there was a decrease in the malnutrition rate among children up to 2 years of age from 9.2% to 6.8%, resulting in a direct impact on the lives of 24,000 children. Access to early childhood education increased from 56 out of 100 children aged four to six years of age, enrolled in pre-school, to 63.5 out of 100 children aged four to six years of age. And to support the

initiative 1.3 million children and adolescents throughout the Semi-Arid region developed and carried out special projects involving the environment, community radios and traditional cultural expressions.

Beyond Brazil, there are numerous examples of CFCI leading theoretical and practical debates around the participation and support of children and youth in sustainable development projects in cities and communities. The children's clubs in Nepal (CCWB 2012), the children and youth involved in post-tsunami city regeneration in Sendai, Japan (Kinoshita and Mikami 2013), Dapto dreaming urban development project in Australia (Malone 2012) and the slum redevelopment in India (Chatterjee 2012). This is clearly argued succinctly by Chatterjee after her evaluation of slum improvement program's India "Children's direct participation in local area planning and design for slum improvements would be a good step forward in creating child-friendly cities in India" (2012:23). Taking this a step even further, I have argued in this section of the paper that addressing issues of equity, rigorous monitoring of social impact, transparent governance and authentic participation of young people in slum planning and redesign to be significant areas that child friendly cities movement can contribute to, in order to meet the goals of sustainable development and to create child friendly cities globally.

Conclusion

According to the most recent UNICEF (2013) report on SDGs discussed in this paper, investing in children yields high and long lasting results for children, their families and their societies. The report refers to the need to address unfinished business and fulfill the promise of the MDGs made to the invisible and most impoverished. To continue to tackle the challenge of poverty and overcome the many limitations of the MDGs every target in the sustainable development goals will need to be clearly disaggregated so that equitable progress can be monitored and to ensure the poorest and most vulnerable children, are not being left behind. The report also identified that young people should be given opportunities to participate as effective advocates, problem-solvers and agents for positive change. The well-being of children and their participation could serve as both a *maker* and a *marker* of the progress of city or country to meet the challenge of sustainable development. The UNICEF report discussed in this paper argued: "Children's needs and rights are thus interdependent with sustainable development. To achieve the greatest impact on the lives of children, the forthcoming Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) framework should include goals and targets that purposefully consider children's rights and needs within each of the dimensions of economic development, social development and environmental sustainability, whilst building on their synergies and adequately addressing the fair and inclusive application of the rule of law" (UNICEF 2013: 6).

If this bold statement is true, that at the centre of the SDG framework must be children and child's rights, then the global CFCI should be viewed as a critical and strategic partner in the global United Nations agenda for sustainable development post 2015. Building on its history of country UNICEF offices, national governments, NGOs all working closely with city and municipal governments, communities and specifically children and young people in disadvantaged city environments, it has created a network of thousands of cities around the world who have been addressing the very planetary challenges a rapidly urbanising world is likely to present. I have offered through this paper, at a seemingly opportune time in the conversations of the post 2015 agenda and the setting of the SDGs, a challenge to participants of the Child Friendly Cities Initiative to acknowledge the expertise they have and the contribution they can make to this evolving global agenda. Just as many CFCI countries worked closely with national governments on the reporting and monitoring of MDGs they now also have the

opportunity to play a significant as leaders in the development and implementation of the post 2015 SDGs.

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