

# UNICEF Child Friendly Cities and Communities Initiative



## The Child-Friendly City Initiative in its initial stages

*Lessons from Hungary, Poland, Portugal and the United Kingdom*

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## Methodological note

The study reviews the establishment phase of CFCI in four countries. It primarily relies on information gathered through face-to-face or phone interviews with UNICEF National Committee staff in charge of CFCI. Interviews followed methodological guidelines developed as part of the CFCI Toolkit Development project, adapted to the topic the study. Given the recent nature of the initiative in countries reviewed, staff interviewed have been involved in developing and implementing CFCI in their respective countries from the very start. The information presented here reflects their views and interrogations. The analysis also draws on documents National Committees have communicated.

Countries reviewed were selected either as part of a call for expression of interest to contribute as part of the CFCI Toolkit development process, or specially solicited in light of their recent engagement in CFCI.

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The study was developed jointly by Ana Isabel Guerreiro and Vanessa Sedletzki, International Consultants. It is part of the CFCI Toolkit Development project commissioned to Rights On, as one of five case-studies elaborated to inform the development of the toolkit. The project was led by the Advocacy and Innovative Partnership Unit in the Private Fundraising and Partnership Division of UNICEF, managed by Marta Arias and Louise Thivant with the permanent support of Andrés Franco and Sally Burnheim.

# Executive Summary

The set up phase of CFCI prompt numerous questions for National Committees. Adapting the global UNICEF CFCI framework to national realities has resulted from multiple considerations, including the national context, what already exists, insufficiencies, and the added value CFCI can offer. Initial stages are critical. They set the tone for the entire initiative and determine initial response by local entities. This study presents how National Committees in four countries have developed CFCI.

In Hungary, CFCI started in mid-2015, prompted by the availability of funding as part of an agreement between UNICEF Headquarters and the Hungarian government. Every year, three “UNICEF Child-Friendly Communities” are selected from a call for applications and receive a financial award to fund projects benefiting children and in line with the CFCI framework. Selected communities can use the CFC logo, access materials and support, and are featured on National Committee’s website.

In Poland, CFCI is at the planning stage and should take off in 2016. A pilot will be carried out in two cities, one large and one small. CFCI is seen as an opportunity to support the growth of civil society at the local level, a relatively new phenomenon. Following a situation analysis, each municipality will develop an Action Plan, hopefully to become part of the City Strategy with dedicated resources. The National Committee wants to promote a process run by the cities. Priorities include child participation and engagement of the business sector, civil society and the media.

In Portugal, CFCI had been planned in 2007, but did not develop and was recently re-launched through an open call. Municipal CFCI Action Plans must be based on a comprehensive needs assessment and incorporate the four building blocks identified for the programme, namely 1) holistic approach, 2) child participation, 3) child rights strategy and 4) child impact assessment and evaluation. The National Committee will set up an informal network among cities. It will provide support through regional workshops, to be held once or twice a year. In the future, it foresees the recognition child friendly practices from municipalities that have not been recognised as a CFC.

In the United Kingdom, the National Committee runs the Child Rights Partners programme, which aims to integrate a child rights-based approach to the delivery of public services for children and youth. It was launched at a time when austerity had significantly affected resources available, resulting in drastic diminution of service provision. By concentrating on targeted structures, the objective is to generate “pockets of good practice” demonstrating the value of the approach for replication. The programme does not focus on accreditation, but on a partnership and a process.

Lessons learnt highlight: the variety of incentives to set up CFCI for National Committees; the anticipated size of the initiative as a determinant and a result of the approach taken for CFCI; the diversity in resources for CFCI; the different nature and level of support National Committees offer to cities; and the critical importance of training as a common element of National Committees’ support to cities.

# 1. Introduction

The initial stages of setting up a Child Friendly City Initiative (CFCI) give rise to numerous questions for the National Committee. The adaptation of the guidance from the global UNICEF CFCI framework to national realities has often resulted from multiple considerations, including the national and local context, what already exists and can be built upon, possible insufficiencies, and the added value the CFCI can offer. At times, it has required making uneasy choices and compromises. Recognizing the gap between ideal implementation and the constraints imposed by limited resources within the National Committee, existing national governance structures, and the socio-political situation prevailing in the country, each National Committee has sought to resolve an often-difficult equation differently. With no hindsight as to how the initiative will ultimately shape up, National Committees have reported that they often progress in the dark. Yet they also recognize that initial stages for the establishment of the initiative are critical. They set the tone for the entire initiative and determine initial response by local entities. Experience shows however that many National Committees have also reviewed and reformed the initiative as they have identified insufficiencies. Nevertheless, modifying the scheme presents a number of risks. By reviewing the status of long-accredited municipalities, or changing conditions to be accredited, National Committees are exposed to resistance and may prompt political sensitivities.

The present case study aims to present how National Committees in different countries have approached the CFCI and made decisions in the initial stages. It also seeks to identify the knowledge and guidance National Committees would need to access to in order to develop their initiatives, with a view to informing the CFCI toolkit.

Initiatives reviewed are all at an early establishment stage. Some have been initiated in 2015, like in Hungary and Poland. Another one has been revived anew in 2015, following initial difficulties a few years before, in Portugal. Finally, in the United Kingdom, the process was initiated in 2013 and is still considered in a pilot-testing phase which is due to complete in November 2016.

The study offers a brief overview of the programmes, but does not aim to provide an in-depth analysis of each experience. Following a presentation of each individual experience, the study draws a number of lessons for consideration in the toolkit and for other National Committees wishing to develop a CFCI.

## 2. Initial implementation of CFCI in 4 countries

### Hungary

#### *Background*

The CFCI started in mid-2015 in Hungary. Rather than referring to cities, the Hungarian National Committee has decided to call the initiative “Child-Friendly Community” in order to take into the account the diverse sizes of local administrative structures existing in the country.

The impetus for developing the initiative in the country has stemmed from the availability of funding to be invested for Hungarian children as part of an agreement between UNICEF Headquarters and the Hungarian government in the context of the relocation of UNICEF services. As a consequence, the “Child-Friendly Community” recognition involves a financial award, to be used by winning communities towards projects benefiting children and in line with the CFCI framework. The model was inspired by a current governmental initiative, which consists in allocating an

award for elderly-friendly projects. It also builds on the prospects of possible financial support as a motivation to work on a long application procedure for an underfinanced local municipality.

The initiative is still considered to be at a pilot stage and is expected to be further refined in the coming years. The National Committee is in the process of reflecting on lessons learnt from the first round of applications in order to make relevant changes for the future.

## *Overview of the initiative*

The National Committee issued the first call for applications during the spring of 2015, open to all cities and communities in the country. At the end of the selection process, out of 27 applications received, 3 communities were awarded a grant of 2 million Hungarian Florins (approximately USD 7,300 and EUR 6,000). Selected communities are allowed to use the National Committee's CFC logo, have access to National Committee material and support, and are featured on UNICEF National Committee's website.

Upon receiving the accreditation and signing the contract with the National Committee, municipalities must submit to the Evaluation Committee within 30 days a plan of action detailing how they will put in place the building blocks. The plan of action must include a child participation component.

## *Accreditation process*

Accreditation is provided for one year only, as the call for applications is renewed every year. Selected communities are therefore awarded a title with a year attached to it: "UNICEF Child-Friendly Community 2015".

The accreditation process involves several steps:

1. The National Committee issues the call for applications and sends it to municipalities via various channels (e.g. National Committee website, mailing lists of alliances/associations of municipalities and newsletter for municipalities).
2. Local governments submit an application presenting its local child policy, including systems and mechanisms in place for child protection and for the promotion of child rights. The application must specifically detail how the municipality ensures children's participation in local affairs. It must explain the interventions it has implemented in order to put in place the Child-Friendly Community building blocks. In order to guide the process, the National Committee has developed a set of indicators, in the form of a questionnaire, applicants are expected to fill out and submit as part of their application.
3. An Evaluation Committee reviews applications and selects three finalists to be granted the award. The Evaluation Committee in charge of reviewing applications is composed of 10 independent experts, including the deputy Commissioner for Nationalities (deputy ombudsman), representatives from various NGOs and think tanks, professionals such as a nurse, a university professor with expertise in social policy, as well as the executive director of the Hungarian National Committee. Interestingly, a young person, who must be between 13 to 17 years old and is selected from the National Committee's Young Ambassadors programme, is also a member of the Evaluation Committee.
4. Selected communities must develop an action plan, explaining how they will keep building a child-friendly environment.
5. A contract is signed with UNICEF and the prize is awarded.

The first call prompted applications from 27 municipalities. The three communities finally selected included a small sized municipality, a middle sized municipality, and one district of Budapest. In addition to the result of the evaluation of applications, the objective was to represent various types of municipal structures.

## *Building blocks*

The National Committee has used the 9 original building blocks of the CFCI framework, to which it has added a tenth building block for child rights and businesses. The building blocks used in Hungary are therefore:

1. Ensuring active and effective participation of children.
2. Developing a legal framework for children.
3. Developing a community-based child rights strategy.
4. Establishing a children's rights department.
5. Impact assessment of decisions from the children's point of view.
6. Child-friendly budget.
7. Regular reports on the general situation of the community's children.
8. Awareness of children's rights.
9. Independent legal representation for children (ombudsman and NGOs).
10. Involving child-friendly businesses: active and sustainable involvement of business sector's individual or corporate representatives and making them interested in community empowerment to protect the children better and to enforce children's rights.

## *National Committee support*

The Hungarian National Committee relies on limited staff to manage the initiative. Thus far, one staff member has been working on the CFCI, as part of a portfolio comprising a large array of child rights advocacy issues including pressing ones such as migration, therefore with very limited time available. The National Committee has however recently approved a part-time position dedicated to the CFCI.

Upon accreditation, the National Committee provides selected municipalities with an introduction training consisting in 3 sessions of 2 hours each. The first session is devoted to child rights, the second to building a child-friendly community, and the third to child participation. Participants include municipal staff directly involved in developing the child-friendly community, as well as relevant professionals working in schools and nurseries for example.

In order to refine its approach to CFCI, the National Committee has commissioned a private company to carry out a survey of children and young people's views on:

- How they see a child-friendly community;
- How and whether they are being heard.

The survey is being rolled out in May and June 2016 and will inform the next phase of the initiative in Hungary.

The National Committee also plans to develop a network of Child-Friendly Communities in the future.

## *Lessons learnt*

- The Hungarian National Committee has placed a strong focus on child participation in its approach to the CFCI framework. The rationale is that this aspect often lags behind in relation to child rights realization in the country. The Child-Friendly Community initiative offers the opportunity to promote child participation mechanisms and make them visible.
- Correspondingly, the National Committee has paid significant attention to involving children and young people themselves in the CFCI process. A young person is a member of the Evaluation Committee. The National Committee is currently working on seeking children and young people's views of what makes a community child-friendly and whether they feel listened to. These efforts serve as a model for aspiring municipalities as they set the example. They also ensure that children's views directly influence the process. The National Committee would like to further involve children in the development of indicators for the application questionnaire for example.
- The accreditation process is largely based on an evaluation of pre-existing policies, which the National Committee has identified as a weakness it aims to address. In the first round of applications, municipalities were not required to state how they would use the prize money if awarded. As a result, UNICEF has no guarantee that it will be used towards initiatives that are in line with UNICEF's vision for child rights. The National Committee is in the process of reflecting on a process in which the Evaluation Committee would need to approve the allocation of the prize to a specific project or intervention.
- One of the objectives of the process is to identify good practices the National Committee can feature and disseminate. In many ways, the selection process helps collect data on interventions and approaches at the local level for the realization of children's rights. A difficulty is that the evaluation primarily takes place before the title is awarded, not after. Since the label is only valid for a year and only concerns a very limited number of municipalities (with a very low probability for the same municipality to be selected several years in a row), municipalities may lack incentives to keep strengthening their child-friendly approaches in the context of the initiative.
- The application questionnaire is very long – and has been assessed by the National Committee as too long. It may discourage especially smaller municipalities with limited human resources from applying. In addition to inviting children to build the set of indicators based on their own priorities, future efforts will seek to shorten the questionnaire and make it more focused.

## Poland

### *Background*

The CFCI is at the planning stage in Poland and should take off in 2016. A pilot will be carried out in two cities in the country, one large and one small city. The Advocacy Director argued that the work of civil society at local level has just started in Poland, including participation work; therefore the CFCI is seen as an opportunity to further this process. The National Committee is conscious about the limitations and possible constraints that exist in their national and local context, such as misconceptions of child participation and the reluctance of employees at municipal level to introduce new work mechanisms and, consequently, is taking its time to develop the CFCI model.

## Overview of the initiative

### Management of the CFCI, funding and sustainability of the CFCI

Currently, two part-time advocacy officers of the National Committee dedicate approximately 30-40% of their time to the CFCI. The financial resources are taken from the available development money of the National Committee, however at a later stage it is planned to find a sponsor for the CFCI.

### Contents of the planned CFCI model

The UNICEF CFCI 9 building blocks have all been taken into account when planning the CFCI in Poland, however not all of them will be used. For example, the National Committee does not consider it relevant to suggest the establishment of a local Ombudsperson for Children, due to the existence of the National Office of the Ombudsperson.

**Child participation** is a new concept for Poland, so the National Committee is particularly focused in this area. There are some existing mechanisms for child participation at local level, but they are largely ineffective. The National Committee will suggest for child-friendly cities to use the existing school council as the child participation mechanism to be included in the CFCI because they believe it will ensure a broader consultation with children. At present, the National Committee is engaging with 4.000 schools in the country, of which 1.000 belong to the National Committee programme 'UNICEF Schools Club'. This already includes thematic projects in schools that take place twice a year and an existing online platform for schools. The CFCI could take advantage of this existing resource. Indeed, the National Committee believes that at a first stage, this would facilitate the process because it is difficult for cities to access children outside of school.

**UNICEF Schools Club** is an educational initiative, which associates schools interested in promoting among their pupils the idea of bringing help to children in need all over the world. Schools who become members of the Club participate in educational campaigns prepared by the National Committee for UNICEF and take part in activities, which are aimed at educating and making children and young people aware of the problems of the contemporary world. In 2015, as many as 1,450 educational units all over Poland actively participated in the work of UNICEF Schools Club.

**Engaging with the business sector, civil society and the media** is a priority for the National Committee. One foreseen strategy is that, once a year, the Action Plan developed by the municipality would be presented to the local stakeholders, both to raise awareness about the situation of children and related priorities and to discuss possible partnerships.

### The situation analysis and action plan

In terms of the contents of the CFCI, a template for the situation analysis will be developed focusing on six elements, namely education, health, accidents, foster care, children with disabilities and child protection and poverty. This template will be used both for the situation analysis at the start of the CFCI implementation process to assess the current situation of children in the municipality and as a monitoring tool. Following this, an Action Plan will be developed by each municipality. The National Committee aims that the Action Plan becomes part of the City Strategy, because in that case, it will have a budget for implementation and the National Committee finds this point crucial.

## Implementation approach

The National Committee wants to promote a very independent process, which is to be run by the cities. Initially, the National Committee foresees a more active role in the preparation of the situation analysis, action plan, child participation platform and collaboration with the business sector, civil society and the media. After this first stage, two years later, the National Committee will monitor the achievements in relation to the action plan and engagement with the business sector, civil society and the media. The accreditation of the cities as Child-Friendly Cities will take place after the first stage described above. An initial training will be carried out at the beginning of the process.

## Desired information to be included in the CFCI toolkit

The National Committee valued the meeting in Basel because it enabled to see how the different countries are managing the CFCI. In terms of guidance, the National Committee for Poland would value the description of the different ways and concrete steps taken by the National Committees regarding accreditation, management, use of the building blocks, highlights of the most important points in the different approaches and how to involve the business sector. The National Committee found it difficult to collect information about how the CFCI is running in different contexts.

## Lessons learnt

- The National Committee is conscious about the limitations and possible constraints that exist in their national and local context and, consequently, is taking its time to develop the CFCI model. At the same time, it has looked at the resources available in the country and, as an example, is using the National Committee programme 'UNICEF Club Schools', which is already established and functioning in 4.000 schools in the country, to implement the child participation component of the CFCI.
- Another priority for the National Committee is the engagement with the business sector, civil society and the media. A strong component of the CFCI will be both to raise awareness of these stakeholders at local level and to establish partnerships with them.
- An interesting point is that the National Committee aims that the Action Plan developed by municipalities becomes part of the City Strategy, because in that case, it will have a budget for implementation and the National Committee finds this point crucial.
- In order to sustain the programme, the National Committee aims to get a donor in the future for the implementation of the CFCI.

# Portugal

## Background

### Re-launching the Child Friendly City Initiative in Portugal

The CFCI had been planned in 2007, but it did not develop and was recently re-launched in Portugal. Various factors contributed to the need to reformulate the model that had been adopted previously. In 2007, there was a partnership established between the National Committee and the Ministry for Social Affairs. At the time, the Ministry selected

13 municipalities to be part of the programme and the National Committee would have preferred a more open and transparent approach. In addition to this, the responsibilities to be carried out by the Ministry and the National Committee were not clear, there was not a properly structured process and there was a lack of human and financial resources, which led to the end of the process that had been started then. In 2012, the National Committee felt the need to create the internal conditions to respond to the expression of interest by municipalities. An effort was made in terms of making financial and human resources available and setting up a credible structure that could implement the CFCl in the country.

## *Overview of the initiative*

### Management of the CFCl, funding and sustainability of the CFCl

The development of the CFCl has been supported by the Advocacy and Child Rights Education Officers, which dedicate approximately 60% and 50% of their time to the CFCl, respectively.

### Contents of the planned CFCl model

The development of the CFCl has been supported by the Advocacy and Child Rights Education Officers, which dedicate approximately 60% and 50% of their time to the CFCl, respectively.

The National Committee has adapted the UNICEF CFCl nine building blocks and the Action Plans developed by the CFCs must incorporate the four building blocks identified for the programme, namely 1) children's holistic approach, 2) child participation, 3) children's rights strategy and 4) child impact assessment and evaluation. The recognition is given to municipalities who demonstrate commitment and involvement in key issues and areas, across 2 requirements (the establishment of a coordination mechanism for the design and implementation of the programme and development of an Action Plan based on children's rights) and a range of criteria (defined by the National Committee). The National Committee does not propose specific measures or programmes to be adopted, as the action plans should be based on a comprehensive needs assessment undertaken by the municipalities.

The CFCl promoted by the UNICEF National Committee for Portugal is based on four steps, being that the duration of each step depends on the situation of each participating municipality and respective local dynamics. The four steps are as follows:

#### Phase 1 – Application

The National Committee held an open call for municipalities in Portugal who wished to join the CFCl and become a Child Friendly City (CFC). To apply to the call, the municipality has to fill in a questionnaire on the situation of children in the city.

The applications were opened between the 1st of December 2015 and the 1st of March 2016. All Portuguese municipalities received the information by email and it open call was further publicised in social networks. 39 municipalities applied to the call, of which 35 have officially joined the CFCl and 2 are pending a decision. However, most likely all 37 cities will join the CFCl. The application process foresaw that every municipality had to fill in a template provided by the National Committee with a brief characterisation of the city and a letter signed by the mayor. All municipalities that joined the CFCl were those that sent both documents within the deadline. In addition, the municipality was assessed in accordance to internal criteria developed ad hoc. Those that did not fulfil the criteria were not accepted.

## [Phase 2 – Implementation](#)

The implementation phase is made-up of two actions: the first one foresees the identification of a coordination mechanism or group, which represents all sectors and one element that will act as the main focal point for the CFCI. The second step is the preparation of an action plan, to be implemented in the subsequent four years. The action plan has to be prepared within six months of joining the CFCI.

## [Phase 3 – Recognition](#)

After the adoption of the action plan (phase 2), the municipality prepares and submits a progress report (within six months after the adoption of the action plan). Only after the submission of the progress report, does the municipality receive the Child Friendly City seal. The recognition may be removed if the CFC does not fulfil the proposed measures foreseen in the action plan.

## [Phase 4 – Monitoring and renewal of recognition](#)

The CFC will submit a yearly progress report. After four years, the CFC can apply for the renewal of the seal.

## *Implementation approach*

Before the open call for municipalities, there were two foreseen approaches: if the number of applicants had been small, the National Committee had foreseen to provide individual support to municipalities; if the number of applicants was significant, the support would be group-based (i.e. to all CFCs rather than individual support).

Given the high number of municipalities that will be part of the CFCI, the National Committee will set up an informal network between the cities with the aim to share experiences. The support will not be individual (i.e. the National Committee will try not answer to individual requests) but they will analyse each action plan and progress reports, with foreseen discussions to be held at the Committee's headquarters. Furthermore, it is not foreseen for the cities to receive any visits by the National Committee. The exchange between the National Committee and the CFCs is to take place at regional workshops, which may take place yearly or twice a year. The themes of the workshops will be focused on child rights, child participation, impact assessment and evaluation and will incorporate also some gaps verified at the time of submission of the situation analysis questionnaire or specific support requested by the CFCs.

There is no foreseen training for municipalities; the workshops themselves will be training and action-oriented. Additionally, the National Committee is developing a technical guide to support the CFCs in developing the Action Plans and implementing participatory methodologies at local level, setting up the mechanism that will coordinate the Programme and managing and solving the most common challenges and steps to be taken.

## [Desired information to be included in the CFCI toolkit](#)

Alike other National Committees that were visited and interviewed, the National Committee for Portugal valued the meeting in Basel because it enabled to see how the different countries are managing the CFCI. In terms of guidance, the National Committee said that it would be useful to have good practices described in greater detail and an explanation of the advantages for municipalities when they are part of the CFCI.

## *Lessons learnt*

- The past experience of attempting to develop the CFCI in Portugal in 2007 has marked the National Committee and some of the choices made for the re-launch of the CFCI still reflect that history. For example,

in the recent re-launch, the National Committee was reluctant to select a specific number of municipalities and has opened the new CFCI to all municipalities that expressed an interest and fulfilled the criteria defined.

- Most likely, 37 municipalities will join the CFCI and the management of the programme will have to reflect this. Therefore, the National Committee's approach will be setting up an informal network for municipalities that have joined the initiative, rather than a very structured process.
- The CFCI seal is awarded quite early in the process and this was a clear decision to make the CFCI more attractive to municipalities.
- The CFCI is based on 4 pillars that are based in the CFCI building blocks, there is guidance as to how these should be implemented, but there are no specific requirements to be adopted by the member municipalities.

## United Kingdom

### *Introduction*

The National Committee in the UK has translated the Child Friendly City Initiative into what it has named the Child Rights Partners programme. UNICEF UK Child Rights Partners focuses on integrating a child rights-based approach (CRBA) to the planning and delivery of public services for children and young people. The objective is to demonstrate the benefits of a CRBA in enhancing the quality of services and their outcome. The National Committee concentrates on targeted structures delivering services for children, including social services, in order to generate evidence on the added value of the approach and provide models for inspiration and replication. The ultimate objective is to fundamentally change children's and families' experience of public services. The programme currently involves 5 local authorities in England, Northern Ireland and Scotland: Derry and Strabane, Glasgow, Leeds, Newcastle and the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. It was initiated in 2013 as a 3 year pilot.

Child Rights Partners was launched at a time when austerity had significantly affected resources available for the delivery of services to children and young people, resulting in drastic diminution of service provision. The programme was therefore seen as a way to enhance the level of service quality and keep ensuring access to services to all rights holders, in particular the most vulnerable.

### *Overview*

#### *Detailed overview of the process*

Child Rights Partners aims to generate "pockets of good practice" which can clearly demonstrate the value of adopting a child rights-based approach and be replicated. By starting small, the objective is to have a direct, tangible impact on children, which can be featured as success stories. In spite of a high demand from many localities to be recognized as a UNICEF UK Child Rights Partner, the National Committee made the decision to keep the initiative limited during the pilot phase in order to preserve quality. It was deemed that working with more than 5 localities at the programme outset could compromise the initial goal to build solid examples of the benefits of a CRBA. As the programme moves beyond the pilot phase, the National Committee is exploring the introduction of a 'recognition' element to the programme.

Furthermore, UNICEF UK's approach does not focus on accreditation or labeling, but on a partnership and a process. This helps ensure that the National Committee does not act as an inspectorate, but rather as an equal partner fostering local authorities' ownership of the process.

The programme started with an action-research project focusing on 5 municipalities. The research aimed to identify gaps and areas where outcomes for children were particularly poor, and where the municipalities felt they could improve their practice. The programme then concentrated on systematically embedding a CRBA in these specific service and policy areas.

The development of the partnership therefore follows several steps:

- The entry into an official partnership with UNICEF UK;
- A situation analysis with local authorities;
- The identification of a service, strategy or policy that can be improved through embedding a CRBA;
- UNICEF UK accompanying local authorities in implementing the partnership.

UNICEF UK delivers workshops for staff on the CRBA and facilitates planning sessions aiming to design policies, strategies and services with a child rights lens. It works with multi-agency teams and departments across the local authorities, at all levels, to develop the approach.

The National Committee supports municipalities with an extensive ‘child rights in practice’ training programme. This has been developed through the pilot and is accredited by a third-party professional development organization. The training programme includes specialist modules for specific professional groups such as elected members (local politicians), social workers and commissioners as well as thematic training on topics such as ‘child rights governance’ and ‘child-centred service design’. Nearly 1000 professionals have been trained by the National Committee during the pilot.

Evaluation and quality assurance remain significant outstanding issues the National Committee is currently working on. It is in particular in the process of developing a child rights outcome framework with indicators, which is likely to be aspirational but aims to provide local authorities with guidance and direction towards concrete objectives. This aspirational outcome framework is supplemented with bespoke logframes for each locality developed in collaboration with the National Committee. The National Committee is also in the process of commissioning an academic partner to evaluate the pilot.

A major outcome reached in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets has been a change in the commissioning<sup>1</sup> and tendering process managed by the local government for service provision, which now includes a CRBA component for all services. This is an example of how the positive outcomes the initiative has yielded in one type of service has supported the expansion of the approach within the locality.

**The London Borough of Tower Hamlets** is one of Unicef UK’s Local Authority Partners and their focus within the Child Rights Partners programme is on embedding a child rights-based approach (CRBA) in their children and families commissioning framework.

The partnership and its focus area were approved by Tower Hamlets’ local Children and Families Partnership Board. Following child rights training provided by Unicef UK, the Council successfully embedded the principles of a CRBA into the Partnership’s Joint Commissioning Framework to “guide all future commissioning activity”. They also carried out the required needs assessments through a rights lens: a Rights Based Needs Assessment was conducted, bringing together evidence based needs analysis and a child rights framework. Young people from Tower Hamlets were also trained up and supported to become Young Commissioners and work alongside the local authority during the commissioning process.

<sup>1</sup> In the UK, local government commissioning is the process through which public authorities organize the provision of a social service. According to the Institute of Public Care, commissioning is the “process of identifying needs within the population and of developing policy directions, service models and the market, to meet those needs in the most appropriate and cost effective way.”

This work culminated in the commissioning of the first service through a child rights-based approach: Tower Hamlets' new Young People's Substance Misuse Specialist Treatment Service. The service was successfully re-commissioned in April 2014 and is currently being piloted. Some of the features of

the new, rights-based service include: a greater focus on outcomes across the whole service; young people being introduced to and discussing child rights during care planning and review; young people have access to small personalized budgets which allow them to address issues of significance to them.

Following on from the success of using the approach to commission the Young People's Substance Misuse Specialist Treatment Service, the Council is now planning to embed a CRBA across the Children and Families Partnership. The Council will also work with Unicef UK to evaluate and measure the effectiveness of the new approach and its impact on policy, practice and outcomes for children and young people.

*Source: UNICEF UK, Child Rights Partners – Putting Children's Rights at the Heart of Public Services, Information booklet, 2014, p. 13.*

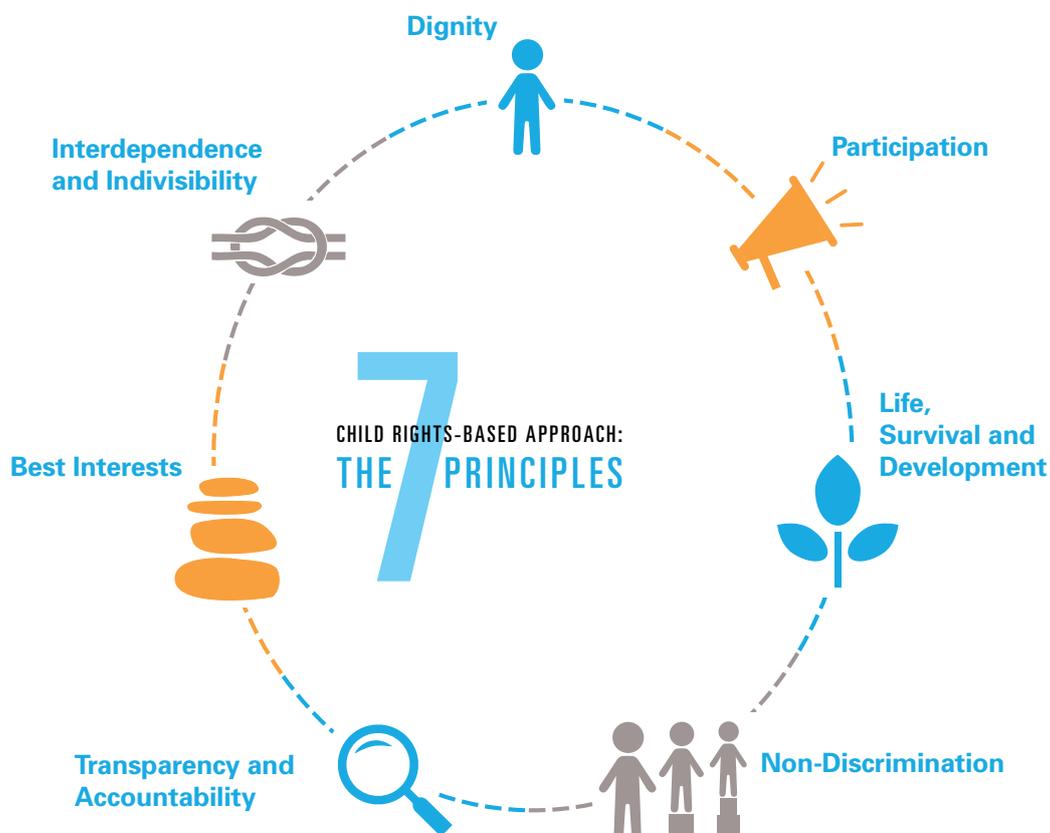
UNICEF UK has 2 full-time staff dedicated to the Child Rights Partners programme out of a total of 300 staff members. This makes it a relatively small programme compared to UNICEF UK's overall resources. Given the close engagement by UNICEF UK with local authorities, resources are found to be relatively limited and would make it difficult to expand the programme beyond its current size while retaining a high level of quality, according to staff.

UNICEF UK also runs two programmes closely related to Child Rights Partners. The Baby Friendly Initiative and the Rights Respecting Schools programme, which respectively support hospitals and schools to embed human rights in their ethos and functioning. Both programmes have influenced the development of the Child Rights Partners programme, particularly in respect to their staged approach to achieving scale and national coverage. A core component of this is that both programmes successfully seek direct remuneration from the institutions they support in order to sustain and grow the programme teams.

### Building blocks/principles

UNICEF UK has identified 7 principles for a child-rights based approach, serving as the guiding framework. It had initially relied on the 9 traditional building blocks of the CFCI but found that they were too broad and abstract, and did not contain sufficient information on children's rights. It was also felt that the building blocks could be seen by localities as presenting an 'add-on' structure which localities might not be keen to adopt in austere times, whereas using a principle-based framework presents a way of systemically changing and strengthening existing structures and mechanisms.

The CRBA principles are represented as a circle in which they are all interconnected and on an equal level. The diagram UNICEF-UK uses is reproduced below:



The 7 CRBA principles combine the 4 Convention on the Rights of the Child guiding principles and 3 overarching human rights and good governance principles. It therefore includes both the rights public services are to respect and realize, and principles related to the functioning of these services.

More specifically, UNICEF UK provides guidance on the 7 principles and what they concretely imply for public services:<sup>2</sup>

1. *Dignity - Each child is a unique person with intrinsic worth and should be respected and valued in all circumstances.* This principle guides how services relate to children. It concretely implies that staff should have the skills required to interact with children and ensure that children are part of the conversation.
2. *Best interests of the child - Determining and doing what is best for a child, with that child, at that time and in that situation.* It implies weighing different factors and taking into consideration the child's views. It also applies to policy-making at the local level.
3. *Non-discrimination - Each child is treated fairly and protected from discrimination.* This implies that duty bearers are aware of the multiple barriers that may prevent children and families from accessing services and lead to inequitable outcomes, as well as some children's need for special assistance to enjoy their rights.
4. *Life, survival and development - Each child is able to develop, thrive, achieve and flourish.* A multiplicity of interventions are involved in the realization of this right, making cross-sectoral coordination and oversight mechanisms paramount.

<sup>2</sup> UNICEF UK, Child Rights Partners – Putting Children's Rights at the Heart of Public Services, Information booklet, 2014.

5. *Participation - Each child is heard in matters affecting them and participates in the lives of their family, community and wider society.* Duty bearers should ensure that children receive relevant information, can associate with others, and can freely express their views, as a continuous process. Barriers to participation need to be identified and addressed.
6. *Interdependence and indivisibility - Each child enjoys all rights enshrined in the Convention, whatever the circumstances.* The situation analysis needs to be comprehensive and services need to work holistically. A decision concerning a child to address a right, cannot lead to a breach of other rights.
7. *Transparency and accountability - Dependable, open and accountable relationships and dialogue between Local Government, communities, families and children and young people is essential in the collective goal of securing children's rights.* Making children and families aware of their rights, making information openly available, setting up social accountability mechanisms, and ensuring access to a remedy for rights holders are essential components.

## Lessons learnt

- The UNICEF UK experience is different from many others. It has not retained the reference to the CFCI, which was not deemed flexible enough to adapt to the multiple realities and responsibilities of local authorities in the UK . It has also sought to develop principles that are different from the building blocks, even though they integrate them from a different angle. Rather than providing local authorities with a set framework, it has developed a generic approach and vision to be incorporated on a case-by-case basis to localities providing services, based on their particular mission, market needs and perspectives. However, in order to ensure that the CRBA is adequately reflected, the National Committee needs to provide extensive guidance and support, meaning that it can only work with a few localities at a time.
- The National Committee approaches municipalities with a ‘pincer movement’, using both a bottom-up and top-down approach. It focuses on interventions at the street level to change service design and delivery, while working with local politicians and policy-makers to bring about changes in policy and strategy . The rationale of the CFCI in the UK, or its Child Rights Partners equivalent, is to develop small-scale but meaningful interventions that can contribute to building local capacities, generate knowledge on what works, and serve as models to be replicated. Underlying the approach is an advocacy strategy based on evidence and on the identification of a few key champions. Accordingly, political buy-in is key, not only to the implementation of the framework in a given municipality, but also in keeping momentum around the programme. As such, there is a risk that change in political leadership may significantly affect results achieved.
- The link between Child Rights Partners and UNICEF UK’s fundraising function is limited. While the programme is likely to provide visibility to UNICEF at the local level where it is implemented, its limitation to 5 municipalities means that it is not yet seen as a major fundraising tool. It does however have solid potential for communicating on how UNICEF works in developing countries, by showing how these approaches successfully work in the UK. While the link has not seemingly be made thus far, it could help the National Committee communicate about the changing nature of development work, focusing on system building and advocacy rather than delivery of goods and services.
- The Child Rights Partners framework was developed step-by-step and adjusted along the way through a process of trial and error. The National Committee has reflected that having a clear framework and guidance from the inception of the pilot would have accelerated progress within localities. However, developing the framework ‘in real time’ and in partnership with localities, including input from frontline practitioners and children and young people, has also resulted in a framework that is more robust, contextualised and ‘fit for purpose’, according to staff.

- Capacity building is a significant element of the process. Like in other countries, UNICEF UK has found that staff at the local level require significant training to fully grasp the CRBA, be able to apply it in their daily work, and use it to transform the way services operate. Capacity building however requires significant resources, and can only be carried out to its full extent in a limited number of areas. A related challenge is staff turnover within local authorities, which has been frequent especially in a context of austerity. This has affected the pace of the programme, and required ongoing capacity building efforts.

### 3. Final remarks – Comparative analysis

The review of these 4 experiences enables to highlight several important elements determining how the CFCI is being initiated in different contexts.

#### 1. *Initial incentive*

The decision to develop a CFCI usually originates in an assessment by the National Committee that it will serve a specific purpose in the current country context. These incentives may significantly differ from one country to the next. They often stem from a variety of elements, and may not be reduced to one single factor. However, they are important to consider in that they contribute to shaping how the CFCI will be developed domestically.

Specific elements in the national context often prompt the initial decision to engage in a CFCI. In most countries reviewed here, and in other examined elsewhere, the National Committee frequently sees in the CFCI a response to trends or evolutions affecting children's rights. In the United Kingdom, the Child Rights Partners programme is an instrument to address shrinking social services for young people, and make existing ones more effective – even with lower resources. In Poland, the civil society space opening at the local level is seen as an asset that needs to be built upon to advance children's rights in the country, through the development of a CFCI. In Hungary, the National Committee has identified child participation as a significant outstanding gap in child rights realization in the country and aims to use the CFCI to strengthen it.

Motives for setting up a CFCI are also often internal to the National Committee. They may relate to the National Committee's need or perceived value to position itself in the national landscape. The CFCI offers prospects for visibility and enables the National Committee to have a deeper local anchor. In Poland for example, civil society is currently evolving at a fast pace. Beyond the opportunity presented by the increase of civil society at the local level, the CFCI may also present an opportunity for the National Committee to strengthen its visibility and credibility in the national landscape. In Hungary, the availability of funding was determined by factors beyond the National Committee. Yet the decision to allocate it through the Child-Friendly City Initiative was driven by internal considerations. Specifically, particular consideration was given to the fact that it was, among existing UNICEF national programmes in high income countries, the most likely to provide a fair and consensual way to allocate resources directly benefitting children in Hungary.

#### 2. *(Anticipated) Size of the initiative*

The anticipated size of the initiative is both a major determinant and a result of the approach the National Committee decides to take. This issue is most visible in the case of Portugal, where the number of interested municipalities was an explicit parameter in the approach taken – providing group support to all CFCs, rather than individualized support, given the high interest the initiative has drawn.

In other places, the National Committee's approach has determined the size of the initiative. In Poland and in the UK, a conscious decision was made by the National Committee to concentrate on a very limited number of local entities in order to develop a model and decide at a later stage on whether to expand it further, or keep it small. In Hungary, the size of the initiative is directly related to the funding available, since it is based on a prize. The distinction the municipality enjoys by being a child-friendly community stems from the fact that there are very few selected municipalities (3 per year).

### 3. *National Committee's resources*

The National Committee's resources vary from one to the other. In all cases reviewed, funding for CFCI comes from internal resources, except to some extent in Hungary but staff salary is paid from regular resources. The number of staff members managing the initiative, and most importantly whether they are full-time or part-time, appears to be a significant determinant in the National Committee's level of support to CFCs.

In Poland, two staff members work on a very part-time basis on the initiative (30 to 40% of their time), while in Portugal two staff members devote 60% of their time to CFCI. Here, the National Committee does not provide individualized support to cities nor guidance, but aims to facilitate a network. Similarly in Hungary, one of the limitations to the full development of the initiative thus far has been that only one staff member has worked on the programme, among many other duties. The recruitment of another staff member, even if on a part-time basis, is expected to help refine the initiative and provide closer guidance to the overall process and to cities. Conversely, in the UK, the initiative benefits from the support of 2 staff members working on a full time basis.

The resources available to the CFCI are also a function of the size of the National Committee itself. Consequently, what may be perceived as a lower level of engagement in absolute terms may actually reflect significant involvement in relative terms. For this reason, an assessment of the current situation in the National Committee, but also anticipations in terms of future growth and possible future opportunities for funding, are important elements to consider in developing a CFCI.

### 4. *Implementation approaches*

The approaches National Committees have used depend on strategic choices, depending on the objectives and motivations for setting up a CFCI, and available resources internally. The level of support the National Committee provides can therefore significantly vary.

In Poland and in the UK, National Committees have opted for limited geographic scope, yet extensive support to selected municipalities in their pilot-testing phases. In both cases, the objective is to support the development of high-quality models that can be replicated and serve as the basis for the further development of the initiative. However, these National Committees do not necessarily plan to significantly scale up the initiative geographically in the immediate future in light of their limited resources. They have made the decision to develop localized programmes and keep the focus on quality. Although more local entities are interested in participating, National Committees have maintained a limited geographic scope.

In Portugal and Hungary, the CFCI has a larger scope and targets a high number of municipalities. Through nationwide calls, the National Committees seek expression of interest by cities to participate in the initiative. Even if in Hungary only three of them receive the title, the logic is similar. CFCI is used to motivate a large number of cities to do better to realize children's rights locally, following the CFCI framework. As a result, even though the initiative is very new in both countries, the CFCI draws interest from a significant number of municipalities, which are likely to interact and network to strengthen their

interventions. Here, the National Committee acts as a network facilitator making tools available to a large audience, rather than as an advisor to specific cities.

#### 5. *Training*

Training appears to be a common approach to National Committees in setting up a CFCI. National Committees reviewed here have generally developed or are in the process of developing training programmes or workshop to share knowledge about the CFCI framework with municipal staff. National Committee staff see training as a critical element for the development of the initiative. The CFCI is often little known, and the complex nature of a child rights approach, which goes beyond structures and mechanisms but requires an understanding of daily practices and attitudes, calls for significant capacity-building.