

A photograph of two young boys of South Asian descent smiling and hugging each other. The boy on the left is wearing an orange polo shirt, and the boy on the right is wearing a blue t-shirt. The background is a blurred crowd of people. The image is decorated with yellow and white confetti and a laurel wreath graphic.

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Cities
INSPIRE
AWARDS
2021



Booklet of
Submissions

Introduction

Organized for the second time in 2021, the [Child Friendly Cities and Local Governments Inspire Awards](#) (Cities Inspire Awards) celebrated good, innovative and inspiring solutions or projects that foster child rights at the local level and improve the daily lives of children and young people in the cities and communities where they live.

Several inspiring projects were submitted to the six Awards categories, namely child-friendly governance; child participation; social protection and child poverty reduction; child-friendly social services; safe, clean, sustainable and child-friendly environments; and play, leisure and family time.

The entries were then reviewed by technical panels consisting of experts from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and partner organizations including UN-Habitat, the World Health Organization (WHO), United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), the LEGO Foundation, the Walt Disney Group and ARUP. The shortlisted entries were presented for a public vote on the Child Friendly Cities Initiative (CFCI) website. The winners of each category were defined by a combination of the public vote and panel scores.

This publication features all Inspire Awards submissions that met the technical requirements. Those with a silver badge made it to the shortlist for public vote, and those with a gold stamp were awarded the Inspire Awards at a virtual awards ceremony on 17 November 2021.

This booklet is not a blueprint for best practices but a celebration of commitment to child rights globally that hopefully will inspire other local

governments and actors to action. Cities and communities around the world are taking steps, both big and small, towards becoming more child-friendly. We hope that you find this compilation of submissions inspiring and encouraging, as you too work towards making cities and communities fit for children.

The Child Friendly Cities and Local Governments Inspire Awards (Cities Inspire Awards) are a celebration of inspiring and promising child-friendly practices in cities and communities. The Cities Inspire Awards are not an endorsement—expressed or implied—by UNICEF of the awarded participants nor of the accuracy of the information contained, or the views expressed, in the participants' submissions. The Cities Inspire Awards are not a recognition of the concerned cities and communities as child-friendly.

A note on logo use:

Only those participants who have won an award will receive a certificate and will be entitled to display their certificate and the Inspire Award logo on their websites and social media channels. Use of the Inspire Award logo is limited to the format shown in the certificate along with the date of the award. Any other use requires UNICEF's prior written consent.

Please note that recognition as child friendly and the right to use the Child Friendly Cities Initiative logo require cities and communities to follow separate arrangements and are subject to a separate process. For more information, please see [The Child Friendly Cities Handbook](#).

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1. Child-friendly Governance



Berbera, Somalia (Somaliland): Local government-led decentralized basic service delivery

Goals, strategy and results

The local government-led decentralized basic service delivery programme in Berbera, the Joint Programme on Local Governance, was implemented as part of a larger collaboration effort between the national and local governments, UNICEF, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UN-Habitat, International Labour Organization (ILO) and United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) to strengthen decentralized service delivery at the local level. The programme was funded by the European Union (EU) and the Governments of the United Kingdom (FCDO) Sweden (SIDA), Norway, Denmark (DANIDA) and Switzerland (SDC). UNICEF and other United Nations agencies partnering in the programme and the national and local governments collaborated on developing sector decentralization strategies; dialogue and coordination platforms that bring different levels of government together; training for local staff responsible for delivering services; service delivery planning and budgeting exercises; provision of grants to support districts; social accountability tools, such as the community scorecard, to support community members to provide feedback and engage in dialogue

with authorities; and advocacy efforts aimed at sharing districts' progress and achievements.

Berbera has been the most successful among all districts participating in the programme. In the last seven years, Berbera has built a local system of governance where it became the centre point of service delivery in primary education and primary health care—responsibilities the district did not have before. In Berbera District alone, the amount collected in local revenue increased from US\$40,000 in 2014 to US\$1,340,000 in 2021. Furthermore, the district carries out annual consultation with the local communities, including children, to seek feedback and to engage them in the implementation of local services. The programme has significantly improved access to education, healthcare and clean water across the district. For example, the enrolment in targeted schools in Berbera increased by 38 per cent between 2014 and 2020.

Berbera has demonstrated that local governments can have a clear and active role in local service provision and that local government's investments can contribute to increasing the access, quality and consistency of services for the populations they serve—even in fiscally constrained and fragile contexts.

Lessons learned

- Decentralized service delivery requires coordinated engagement by all relevant ministries and levels of government, backed up by strong political will.
- Sustaining decentralized service delivery depends on predictable funding and financing arrangements. Policy discussions on the transition to domestic financing of basic services must be an integral part of programming.
- Sustained advocacy and technical support are needed to further articulate, align and implement the division of functions and responsibilities between central and local levels of government. Continued advocacy that targets communities, central governments, donors and implementing partners is also important, both to raise the profile of local governments as credible service delivery partners and to mobilize greater support for this role.
- Sustaining local governance reforms in fragile states calls for prolonged technical assistance to address systemic capacity gaps.
- Engaging local government in service delivery improves trust and legitimacy of government. The role of local government should therefore feature more prominently in the development strategies of governments, donors and implementing agencies.



Sharjah, United Arab Emirates: Sharjah Child Friendly City project

Goals, strategy and results

The Sharjah Child Friendly City project started in 2016. It is a holistic approach to local governance that seeks to place children front and centre of local decision-making. The initiative brings the Emirate's longstanding efforts to promote child-friendliness under one umbrella with an objective to ensure the following:

- National law on child rights is adapted and implemented in the local context.
- Child rights are known and applied by children and adults alike, including local government staff.
- Children can actively participate in the community and their views are considered in matters affecting them.
- Opportunities are present for rest, play and leisure for children.
- Discriminatory practices are addressed and barriers excluding certain groups of children are removed at all levels.
- Political support and leadership are in implementation.

The city started its journey by conducting a situation analysis and developed an action plan that reflected the city's priorities and commitments toward becoming a child-friendly city based on consultations with hundreds of children, youth, parents, caregivers, academic professionals, private and public authorities. Since then, Sharjah has taken several steps to become more child-friendly, including integration of children's voices into urban planning decisions (e.g., introduction of child-friendly urban planning principles and assessment of public spaces by children); introduction of child rights principles and child rights education in schools and nurseries; training of media professionals; and promoting child rights through events, awareness raising and communications.

Lessons learned

- Strong political support from the highest levels of government was key to the success of the project and facilitated engagement with different partners. A joint vision ensured a strong institutional commitment and motivation across government departments.



Wanju County, Republic of Korea: Child Friendly Cities Initiative strategic planning project

Goals, strategy and results

In 2020, Wanju County introduced its second comprehensive plan to improve child-friendliness in local governance. The plan was based on a thorough analysis of the local situation, starting from a desk review of existing data on children and budget allocations to children’s services, followed up by child-friendly assessment surveys shared with children, parents and local government officials. Based on the findings of the surveys, the county organized roundtable discussions with citizens and children to prioritize issues to include in its action plan. The work builds on the county’s first action plan, implemented from 2016 to 2019, to become more child-friendly.

Over the years, the county has made important strides in becoming more child-friendly. It has done so by establishing participatory mechanisms for children, with a dedicated budget for children’s initiatives (see the section on child participation in this booklet); improving leisure and play facilities for children; strengthening child protection and early childhood education

services; and creating the first local Children’s Ombudsperson’s office in Korea.

The county monitors its performance across several quantitative indicators of being child-friendly and has demonstrated significant improvements in areas of child rights awareness and general satisfaction with family and community life among residents.

Lessons learned

- Strong partnerships across public and private sectors and academia have contributed to the success of the initiative. The Child Friendly Cities Initiative provides stakeholders with a unifying framework and goal to work towards.
- It is important to raise awareness of child rights and child-friendliness among the broader community, not just local government officials directly interacting with children.
- Children’s participation throughout the process has enabled the project to respond to their needs and empowered them to bring forward their own suggestions. However, participation requires dedicated time and resources to be successful.



Pasto, Colombia: Strategies to reduce low birth weight

Goals, strategy and results

Low birth weight is a global health problem: approximately 15 to 20 per cent of children worldwide weigh less than 2,500 grams at birth. Low birth weight can have significant lifelong health consequences. Thus, the municipality of Pasto set out to reduce the number of children born with low birth weight by improving access to sexual and reproductive health services; strengthening social mobilization around the issue of low birth weight; improving the nutritional status of pregnant women and mobilizing the education sector on the prevention of low birth weight.

The municipality works together with community organizations to signal pregnant women at risk or are in different situations of vulnerability to the programme. This ensures that women have access to regular health services and check-ups throughout the pregnancy. The programme offers monthly food packages for pregnant and lactating women to support their access to nutritious food. Schools are particularly supported to cater to the nutritional needs of pregnant adolescents and to ensure their continued education throughout the pregnancy and after the birth of the baby.

The programme has already reached hundreds of pregnant women with health services and ensured vaccination and birth registration of all newborns participating in the programme. Over 100 pregnant women have been supported through education and entrepreneurship training, which in turn secures livelihoods for the women and their families.

Lessons learned

- It is important to address issues, such as low birth weight, beyond biological factors and consider the social contexts in which they occur.
- Strategic alliances with local actors are important to promote access to services for vulnerable groups.



Lviv, Ukraine: Friendly School competition

Goals, strategy and results

“Friendly School” is an annual competition between student teams of Lviv’s schools and has been organized since 2016. The aim is to engage children and young people in the development of their schools, while also stimulating creativity and teamwork, and directing public funds to solving issues that are important to local communities.

Students can join the contest individually or in teams by registering their proposals on an online platform. A project committee then chooses ten projects for the second phase, where students are offered training on different topics, such as project management, design, architecture, marketing and international opportunities. Students finalize their proposals with the support of a mentor and present them to the committee, who selects the three best proposals to be funded and implemented. Since 2016, 60 student teams have participated in training, and 28 student projects have been implemented across the city’s schools.

Lessons learned

- It is important to ensure the predictability of resources. Budget for the implementation of the projects is included in the city’s education budget to ensure that the resourcing is institutionalized.
- Some aspects of the project can be outsourced. Training for students is provided by different experts. Since 2020, these are conducted by the Ukrainian Leadership Academy



Novoukrainka, Ukraine: MainStream Corporation

Goals, strategy and results

According to research conducted in Novoukrainka in 2019, young people aged 14 to 24 years were found to be the most motivated age group to participate in local decision-making. However, they had very few opportunities to do so. To address this, the local government established MainStream Corporation—a system of appointing youth advisors for various departments and divisions of the local council.

Subsequently, opportunities to participate were advertised on social media, followed by a series of online training sessions for young people on a range of topics, including the implementation of youth policy in the community, opportunities for children and youth in Novoukrainka, and mechanisms for involving children and youth in community decision-making. An online survey was conducted to support young people in selecting areas of local decision-making that they were interested in. The survey contained short summaries of the structural units of the local council and their main activities. Finally, project participants learned about the work of local council units from their leaders, had the opportunity to ask questions and share their suggestions in a World Café format. Zoom meetings were organized according to the pre-defined priorities of the participants, such

as: education; culture and tourism; housing, communal services and architecture; economics and entrepreneurship; protection of children's rights; social services for families, children and youth; youth policy and sports; and information and communication in the community.

As a result, 25 youth advisors are now part of the local council. They participate in the development of project proposals and initiate joint activities with representatives of the local government. Every child who wants to join the initiative is welcome. The work of local youth counsellors is supported with corresponding regulations issued by the Mayor's Office. Together with the local government, children and young people have already organized several events and influenced decisions on education, health care and protection.

Lessons learned

- It was important to have strong political support for the project and to establish the role of the youth counsellors in an official local government setting to ensure that these opportunities are offered and sustained across government departments.
- Social media became an important tool for communicating with young people and a way through which the youth accessed materials and heard about upcoming opportunities.



Prince George's County, Maryland, United States: Youth Action Board driving community change

Goals, strategy and results

In Prince George's County, Maryland at least 1,600 young people are experiencing homelessness and as many as 42,000 may be at risk. The county has worked to address this challenge by implementing a youth-driven, community-based response targeting young people facing homelessness. The county saw the participation of young people as imperative in ensuring that the response meets their needs.

To this end, the county established a Youth Action Board in 2019. It is a decision-making and advocacy body comprised entirely of local youth and young adults with lived experience of homelessness or housing instability. Two of the young people were hired to serve as the Youth Action Board Co-Chairs, who lead the group. The Youth Action Board meets twice a month for official board meetings. Additional convenings include professional development trainings, team building activities, community service events and legislative advocacy. All youth who have attended meetings for at least one month and completed a membership application are voting members.

The Youth Action Board co-authored the County's Coordinated Community Plan to address youth homelessness and evaluated and approved all

projects funded in response to that plan. In collaboration with Prince George's County's Continuum of Care and Youth Homelessness Steering Committee, the Youth Action Board continues to oversee implementation, monitoring and continuous quality improvement of all County projects to address youth homelessness. The Youth Action Board is also tasked with providing direct input on all issues related to youth homelessness across county governance structures. In addition, the Youth Action Board advocates for local and state policies, legislation and budgetary changes to improve the supportive services and resources available to youth who have experienced homelessness.

Beyond the County, the Youth Action Board has had a significant impact at the state level. Following their advocacy efforts, the State of Maryland passed laws both supporting a minor's right to consent to shelter and waiving tuition costs at public institutions of higher education for youth who have experienced homelessness or have been in foster care.

Lessons learned

- Fostering community support and commitment is critical. Young people must be accepted and welcomed by community leaders to ensure authentic and active co-leadership by community stakeholders and youth. This may include, for example, organizing meetings at times that suit young people or being willing to handover some decision-making to them.
- Even if a group is self-governed, it is important for an adult experienced in youth participation to support young people from the outset. Offering financial compensation for young people to take on leadership and coordinator roles may be considered as well.
- It is important to find ways for older members to pass on their knowledge and to support younger members as they age out of the group. This can be done by continuing to engage them as adult allies and mentors.
- Training and capacity building is central to any participatory effort. Map and identify early on the skills young people already have and the skills they would like to learn to be able to foster their development from the beginning.

2. Child Participation



Avilés, Spain: Avilés Child and Youth Council – children shaping our city

Goals, strategy and results

The Avilés Child and Youth Council was established in 2010 with an aim to strengthen and institutionalize child participation across the city and focuses on non-discrimination and involvement of all relevant local stakeholders. The Council's founding rules were agreed with children and young people. Twice a week, the council meets in a different neighbourhood of the city, supported by an adult facilitator, to work on their projects and proposals for the local government. In addition, the council attends a plenary session twice a year with local leadership and has regular meetings with local officials.

Since 2011, the participation in the group has been open to everyone. Efforts are also made to connect and meet with children with disabilities and from vulnerable backgrounds to ensure that their voices are heard. The council is closely connected with the municipal social services, who often refer children and young people to join the council's activities.

One of the major achievements of the council is the development of the local child and youth plans. Since 2014, the city's child and youth plans have been fully designed by children themselves. To this end, the city developed a new working methodology: different children's commissions were created following the structure of the city council (urban development and environment, culture,

sports, family/social services and education). Children analysed the situation in the city in these areas, drew up a survey to collect the opinions of peers, gathered proposals and consulted municipal officers to understand the current regulations and budgets allocated to each area. Each commission developed its own proposals, which were finalized and drawn up into a joint version that was approved and resourced by the city council.

This methodology has now been successfully used to develop two subsequent four-year plans and has been replicated regionally. Children are also engaged in the implementation of the plan. Over the years, children and young people have been engaged in dozens of other successful activities that have had an impact beyond the borders of their city.

Lessons learned

- It is important to have a supporting policy framework for child participation in the city. For Avilés, this was the Child and Youth Plans, which were approved by the city council.
- Although setting up a children's council is not expensive, it requires political will, staff and a dedicated budget line to support it.
- It is important to organize regular meetings for children to be acquainted with the "art of participation" and to sustain their interest.
- In addition to children making proposals for the local government, it is also important to empower them to organize their own activities to boost their confidence in their ability to improve their city.
- It is important to create a support network of educational centres, specialized agencies, non-governmental organizations, and other relevant actors to support and disseminate information about the council, ensure the participation of vulnerable groups and embed participation in structures beyond the local government.
- It is important to trust children to be able to take responsibility. With the right support, children can handle very complex projects, such as the development of local plans or strategies.
- It is important to ensure that opportunities for participation are available across the city. The Avilés Child and Youth Council meets in a different part of the city every week.
- It is also important to document and publicize the work of the council to raise awareness of their efforts, but also to keep a record of their activities. This can also take shape in creative forms such as fanzines, blogs or street art.



Wanju County, Republic of Korea: Wanju County Child and Youth Parliament

Goals, strategy and results

The Wanju County Child and Youth Parliament was established in 2016 to offer a platform for children to voice their views and to implement their proposals. The 38-member Parliament is elected annually and develops and implements proposals from children and young people from its own budget. Children who are not members of the Child and Youth Parliament may make proposals through a dedicated website. Every year, the final project proposals are discussed at a plenary session with municipal decision-makers.

In addition to implementing and resourcing proposals from children and young people themselves, the Parliament plays an advisory role, provides feedback on policy proposals and plays a key role in raising awareness about child rights in the county. In the election of Parliament members, there is a focus on ensuring participation from all regions of the county, and a number of seats are reserved for minority groups.

Over the years, several different proposals from children have been implemented, ranging from traffic safety to improved working conditions for working students, child-friendly bus stops, new child and youth

facilities, and infrastructural improvements. The Wanju Child and Youth Parliament received national recognition from the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family in 2020. Children's active participation has fostered a child-friendly culture and awareness of child rights within the broader community.

Lessons learned

- It is important that the Parliament is representative of the broader community of children. Quotas and regional seats can help ensure this.
- Training and support for the participating children is crucial to empower children in their roles.
- Support from relevant experts within the local government throughout the process is important in helping children develop proposals.
- It is important to ensure that the children and young people are also empowered to lead activities without adult interference.



Yazd, Iran: Shahramooz Summer School

Goals, strategy and results

The Shahmarooz Summer School was initiated in 2021 following the observation that skills relevant to citizenship and participation were not always fostered in school. The aim of Shahmarooz was to introduce the city to the children and foster their citizenship skills and their ownership of the city.

During the two-month summer school, children became acquainted with concepts of relationship between urban areas and the environment, cultural diversity and heritage, waste reduction, sustainable development, and rights through a variety of creative methodologies, such as games, cinema, group work, painting, theatre and visits to different parts of the city. The school also fostered participants' critical thinking, creativity, teamwork and collaboration skills. Feedback from participants was collected at the end of each session to inform following sessions.

Participants' families joined some of the activities to offer families the opportunity to spend time together. Participation in the summer school was completely free, and accommodations were made for children with disabilities.

At the end of the course, participants were awarded a certificate by the mayor, and participants appeared before the city council to present ideas for improving their city. Participants were appointed as city ambassadors for their schools and neighbourhoods, and plans are in place to introduce the programme in other cities in Iran.

Lessons learned

- Engage the family in the activities. Children play an important role also in passing information they have learned to their parents.
- The lesson plan should be developed following issues that are specific and relevant to each city or community, but they should foster children's creativity, discovery and play.



São Paulo South Coast, Brazil: Grow up with protection

Goals, strategy and results

The Grow up with protection initiative is implemented in eight cities across the south coast of the São Paulo State. The project was born from the observation that while many of these cities have a rich cultural heritage and natural resources, they often do not translate into a better quality of life for their citizens, particularly minorities and rural communities, with children and young people being among the most impacted by poverty and violence. These disparities were exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Grow up with Protection initiative, implemented jointly by the eight cities, the Ministry of Employment, two civil society organizations (Camará Calunga Institute and Agenda Publica) and UNICEF, seeks to address these challenges by mobilizing children, young people and families to support child rights; supporting the eight cities in planning and executing public policies for children; supporting children in establishing their own advocacy collectives; and supporting local government officials in the education, social service and health sectors to strengthen the implementation of child rights.

The initiative focused on the training of young people as community mobilizers, followed by the mobilization and establishment of a youth collective in each participating municipality. The aim of this was to create a multiplier effect leading to the creation of youth-led movements in each locality.

When selecting community mobilizers, priority was given to participants from minority groups. Recruitment of the young people was done in close collaboration with their families to ensure their support. When activities had to be moved online due to COVID-19, young people were supported in gaining access to equipment and internet to participate in online activities.

As a result of the initiative, active youth collectives now exist in all eight cities, with almost 200 active members. The youth collectives have become active voices for children and young people in their communities, often using arts and other forms of creative expression to convey messages. UNICEF and Instituto Camara Calunga have developed a guide for training youth mobilizers as a result of the initiative to support other communities in implementing the same.

Lessons learned

- The idea of training community mobilizers is easily replicable, but it is important to base the work on a thorough analysis of the local situation to ensure it reaches those young people who are most likely to be excluded.
- The use of virtual activities has enabled young people to connect across cities participating in the initiative. It has also enabled the coordinators to support several children and young people across different cities without always being physically present in the same place. However, too many virtual activities can become cumbersome for young people.
- Partnerships with schools, student councils, public councils and other similar organizations can help make the initiative sustainable over time.
- Offering community mobilizers a monthly grant helped the young people, as they sometimes have to justify their participation, among other responsibilities young people have towards school and work to support their families. A compensation helps community mobilizers show that their work is being valued.
- While the action of the youth collectives is driven by the children and young people, it is always tied to the work of partner organizations and with an element of more formal participation, such as discussions with city officials, to ensure that they all contribute to shared goals.
- Sufficient investment is important to systematically capture projects and activities implemented by each youth collective to ensure they can be replicated elsewhere.



The children are depicting their dream city

Mogadishu, Somalia: Child inclusive Mogadishu visioning

Goals, strategy and results

Mogadishu is one of the world's fastest-growing cities and is grappling with the unprecedented pace of urbanization, coupled with challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The city lacked a vision to guide these changes. Thus, the city partnered with UNICEF and UN-Habitat to develop a community-based vision plan, with an emphasis on ensuring that children and young people are part of this effort. This was the first time that the local government consulted children since the fall of the central government 30 years ago.

Following a training of trainers for municipal officers conducted by UNICEF, over 210 children aged 10–18 years were selected from the 17 districts of Mogadishu to attend visioning sessions in four zones of the city. The groups included both girls (40 per cent) and boys (60 per cent), as well as children with disabilities. Engaging in the visioning consultations offered an opportunity for children to discuss what they liked and disliked about their city and contributed unique insights on making Mogadishu a more child-friendly city. The consultations used a range of participatory methodologies, such as risk mapping, prioritization, visioning and body mapping.

The positive first consultation sparked a commitment to ensure more children and young people will have a say in the development of the city, leading to the launch of the Child Inclusive Mogadishu Visioning Week in November 2021.

Lessons learned

- Political support from the highest levels is crucial to ensuring the impact of visioning activities in final city development plans.
- To ensure the participation of vulnerable groups, some space in the visioning exercise were reserved for particularly vulnerable groups, including children with disabilities, out of school children and internally displaced children.
- Before the consultation, it is recommended to do awareness-raising about child rights more broadly to gain the support of families and the broader community.



Paracuellos de Jarama, Spain: We are ON, Paracuellos!

Goals, strategy and results

The municipality of Paracuellos de Jarama has grown rapidly in the past 20 years, leading to a drastic increase in the number of children and young people living in the municipality. To respond to the needs of a growing city, the project We are ON! started in 2019 with an aim to ensure that child participation is integral to all policies and decisions.

The child and youth participation programme is rooted in a child participation council that is divided into 14 different sub-committees that follow the structure of the local government. The members are elected by peers from each of the districts of the municipality to ensure that issues from each district is represented. Each of the sub-committees is chaired by a city councillor, has around 12 members and meets, at a minimum, every three months. Suggestions from the Committee are shared with the City Council in writing.

The child participation council has already made its mark in municipal decision-making: participating in the introduction of lowered prices for cultural activities for children, selecting sites in the municipality where speed control panels and zebra crossings will be placed and deciding different cultural activities.

Lessons learned

- Offering children opportunities to showcase their work to adults (be it city councillors, parents or teachers) has been important to generate excitement and interest among adults, but also to motivate the children themselves.
- Support from parents is crucial in ensuring that they see the value in participatory activities alongside other time-consuming activities, such as school or extracurricular activities.
- Offering adults, who are supporting the process, dedicated training opportunities on child participation is helpful in fostering a culture of meaningful participation.



Da Nang, Viet Nam: Children's Council

Goals, strategy and results

In Viet Nam, cities have traditionally not offered many opportunities for children to be heard in decision-making. As a result, the Prime Minister launched a programme to promote children's right to participate in 2016. Following the introduction of this programme, Da Nang's first city-level children's council was established in 2019.

The Council consists of children and young people nominated for being active in their own community. They meet twice a year, ahead of the meeting of the City-level People's Council, to discuss and debate ideas and issues put forward by their peers on issues, such as the implementation of child rights, child participation, or programmes related to the protection, care and education of children. The meetings are always attended by local decision-makers, local government officials, parents and the media. After each meeting, the Council shares its recommendations with the People's Committee for their consideration for inclusion in the annual meeting of the People's Committee of the city. The Council is supported by an Advisory Board of adult representatives from different local government departments to ensure follow-up on children's proposals.

The Council has already been able to contribute to ensuring that children's voices are heard in local decision-making. Following children's request, the city is now working to improve water quality in schools and is building a new cultural house for children. Children also participated in the development of the city's child rights situation analysis and action plan for children. The establishment of the city-level children's council has been followed by a district-level pilot in Hai Chau, which is now being scaled to all districts of the city.

Lessons learned

- It is important to ensure that training is embedded in the programme of the Council to ensure children are equipped with the skills they need to fulfil their roles successfully.
- In the future, the membership of the council should be expanded to allow more children to participate.

LB of Redbridge – Child Participation

External Security Panel: Young People's meeting



London Borough of Redbridge, United Kingdom: External Scrutiny Panel – Young People's Meeting

Goals, strategy and results

The London Borough of Redbridge's democratic structure includes an External Scrutiny Panel. The panel has a role in scrutinizing the appropriateness and effectiveness of the strategies and policies of external partners, including but not limited to the Police, the Probation Service, the Fire and Rescue Authority, and transport providers, and to review their performance. As many of these services directly impact the lives of children and young people, for the last three years the Panel has held an annual meeting with local children and young people.

The aim of these meetings has been to offer young people an opportunity to raise the issues that were concerning them across several public service agencies, to make suggestions on how those issues could be addressed, and for decision-makers to share some of the actions they are already taking to address issues young people have highlighted.

Ahead of the meeting, the local government's Youth Involvement Team supported participating young people in conducting their own research into the topics they were interested in. Subsequently, research meetings chaired by the young people were organized with relevant professionals

within the local government. The team also supported young people in preparing and rehearsing presentations for the Panel meeting. Recommendations from young people were included in an official Young People's Plan, which was signed off by the director responsible for children's services, and a feedback session was held a couple of months later to update young people on progress on their proposals.

Lessons learned

- The topics discussed at the External Scrutiny Panel meeting were chosen by young people themselves. This was key to the meeting's success and to empower young people in their ability to deliver change for their peers. Sufficient time is also required ahead of the meetings to instil confidence in young people to challenge experts in the meetings.
- As many of the local services are delivered by external agencies, it is important to establish good working relationships with each of these service providers. Representatives of these agencies also attend both the research meetings and the actual External Scrutiny Panel meeting.



Inzá, Colombia: Voices that transform

Goals, strategy and results

Voices that Transform is a radio programme led by children and young people from the municipality of Inzá, initiated in 2016, with an aim to ensure that messages around child rights and child participation reach communities dispersed across a large geographical area.

The programme was initiated and is run by the local children's committee, who wanted to find a way to reach their peers in hard-to-reach areas of the municipality. Together, the committee plans and executes different inserts on the topic of child rights, centring around a weekly radio programme, but also including other means of communication, such as social media to raise awareness about child rights. The initiative was selected to participate in the [Concausa 2030 regional summit](#) for children and young people, as a recognition of the great work done by children and young people in Inzá.

Lessons learned

- Engaging children and young people themselves in developing messaging around child rights will make it much more impactful in reaching younger audiences.
- Strengthening alliances with parents and educational institutions will reinforce action on participation.
- Linking awareness raising and advocacy initiatives, such as a radio programme, to institutional action at the local level will ensure that children's proposals can be acted upon. The radio programme is implemented in close collaboration with the local government.



Isfahan, Iran: Children and Adolescents' Advisory Council, Footprint Student project, storytelling activities and painting contest

Goals, strategy and results

Isfahan's first **Children and Adolescents' Advisory Council** was established with the aim to improve children's participation in local decision-making. More than 1,500 children interested in joining the council applied through the city's website, and an initial number of 60 children were selected as candidates for public voting. Children campaigned in their schools and neighbourhoods for 10 days, after which 31 members in two age groups (9–13 years and 14–18 years) were elected as members by their peers. The advisory body is in its early stages, but its role has been recognized in an official statute developed by children and young people themselves.

In addition, Isfahan has implemented several other projects as part of the implementation of the Child Friendly Cities Initiative to support children and young people's participation. The **Footprint student project**, organized in the spring of 2021, brought together student teams to develop solutions and business models for solving urban challenges. Four hundred students

developed solutions with the support of experts. The **Stories of Iran** project invited children to submit their stories about Iran and Isfahan that were published in the form of videos.

To promote child rights, the city organized a **painting competition**, inviting children to submit paintings that depict child rights from their perspective. The competition became a nationwide call for submissions. More than 2,000 pieces were submitted, and selected works were published as a book (Child rights from children's perspective) and as stamps with the Iranian Post Office. Painting materials were made available in cultural centres to offer all children the opportunity to participate.

In the **Sonbolestan neighbourhood of Isfahan**, facilitators worked with children, particularly girls, who are often less visible in public spaces, to improve a green space in the neighbourhood frequented by children. Children improved the public space through artwork, and their proposals for improvement of the space were shared with local leaders.



Ruggell, Liechtenstein: Youth Participation Day

Goals, strategy and results

The Youth Participation Day was first organized in 2018 and was held for a second time in 2021. The day is fully planned and executed with children and young people's participation. Planning started with an information-sharing event, where interested young people could join the organizing committee together with youth workers from the municipality and share their ideas for topics for the event.

All children aged 11 to 18 years from the municipality were invited to the event in June, and approximately a fifth of the young people in the municipality participated. The event was moderated by a young person. In small groups, they worked on concrete projects by and for young people. Topics included places and events for young people, participation in the future, climate change and social issues. The event culminated in a meet-and-greet with municipal leadership and a concert. Proposals made by children at the event are now being elaborated by the local government and included in the local action plan for the coming years.

Lessons learned

- It was useful to collaborate with an organization specialized in child and youth participation in the preparation for the event.
- It was important to have the support of political leadership to attend the event and consider children's proposals seriously. However, it is also important to manage children's expectations and provide feedback as not all proposals can be realized. It is also important to invest in follow-up with young people after the event.
- Offering a concert by a well-known artist was an important motivating factor for children to participate.



Lviv, Ukraine: Mural

Goals, strategy and results

The mural competition was organized as a joint effort between the Department of Education, the City Institute and the media space called Pixlab. The project came at the request of children, who found their school surroundings grey and dull. The competition for murals was piloted in the schools of Zaliznychnyi district of Lviv. Students, with support of their teachers, developed proposals for murals, which were presented for vote by a jury and the Lviv public on social media channels.

Final murals were executed in two winning schools in a joint effort by an artist and children themselves. The development of the murals was paired with lessons on fundraising and pitching for students. Each school had a mentor supporting the students in raising funds for the execution of the project. The city now plans to expand the project to other schools in the city.

Lessons learned

- It was important to engage children not only in the design of the murals, but also in the planning, resourcing and execution of the projects to allow them to use the knowledge they have acquired in practice.
- Voting must be as transparent as possible for children to feel that the process is fair. All students should be able to submit a sketch.



Jaguaquara, Brazil: *A Voz da Educação* (Voice of Education)

Goals, strategy and results

The *A Voz da Educação* (Voice of Education) project was initiated by the Municipal Department of Education in 2020 in response to school closures caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The aim of the daily educational radio programme was to reduce the impact of the pause of formal in person education, especially on children who did not have access to the internet at home. The programme was disseminated twice a day, for a total of 30 minutes every day, on a local radio station.

Children, young people, teachers and the broader community is engaged in the development of the radio programme and in co-creating challenges and activities related to the themes introduced each week. Teachers and a psychologist also contribute to the project to strengthen the link to socioemotional support. The radio programme was complemented by printed materials disseminated to all students.

Lessons learned

- The programme was recorded a week in advance to allow time for editing. However, a live programme would have enabled the team to pick up on topics that were relevant in real time.
- While the programme aimed to reach vulnerable populations that did not have access to the internet, some of the vulnerable children also do not have access to radio either. Therefore, other means of communication, such as printed materials that were disseminated to students, were also necessary.



3. Child-friendly Social Services





Bakhmut, Ukraine: SPILNO (Jointly)

Goals, strategy and results

In Ukraine, social services have until now been offered at the regional level only and have been distanced from the final beneficiaries, leaving many without access to the services they need. This has particularly affected children with disabilities, who are often sent to institutions because of scant accessible social services at the community level. With the decentralization reform, newly established amalgamated communities obtained an opportunity to create a more demand-driven system of social services at the local level. Through the Jointly project, Bakhmut municipality in eastern Ukraine was able to create a continuum of social services for children with disabilities. The goal was to reduce the number of children placed in institutions by 1) creating a case management based continuum of care, which includes identification, early intervention and day care services, and 2) establishing an inclusive environment for the provision of social services.

The project started with a needs assessment among community residents. It revealed that services for children with disabilities are the most requested in the community. The municipality then planned and budgeted additional staffing required for efficient service provision, trained social workers and established intersectoral cooperation between service providers for effective referrals. The

city also invested in the establishment of multidisciplinary teams and introduced new services (early intervention and a day care centre). Spaces for these new social services were made barrier-free.

Parents of children with disabilities were recognized as important sources of expertise. The municipality established support groups for parents of children living with disabilities to build a community of child rights advocates. Parents were consulted at each stage of the project and they were also invited to share anonymous feedback through a mailbox at the day care centre. Civil society organizations representing the interests of children with disabilities also joined the project. For example, partner organizations conducted training sessions for specialists at the social centre.

As a long-term result, the initiative expects the number of families lacking social services to decrease, along with the number of children placed in institutions. A total of 3,252 beneficiaries were supported with individual needs assessments, and a total of 181 families (or 922 individuals) received or have been benefiting from case management services. According to feedback, families highly appreciate the new services.

Lessons learned

- Building an efficient system of social services requires multilateral cooperation and collaboration. Bakhmut strongly relied on the expertise from UNICEF, national NGOs and the expertise of the families themselves. Intersectoral cooperation of service providers at the local level (and beyond) makes it possible to secure a continuous cycle of care through a referral system.
- At the early stages, the organization of social services requires an investment that a municipality may not always be able to afford. In the case of Bakhmut, the municipality successfully engaged local businesses and donor organizations to contribute to the project. In the long-term, a reduced number of children placed into institutions will lessen the fiscal burden on the municipal budget.
- Case management is an effective tool for meeting the needs of vulnerable families with children. A continuum of service provision is crucial for effective community-based social services, including prevention, early identification, assessment and registration, referral and service purchasing, provisions and case review.
- Improvement of social services should be based on an awareness of real needs and data from different sources, including service providers.



Hafnarfjörður, Iceland: The Bridge

Goals, strategy and results

The Bridge project was born out of a need to address the lack of integration and coordination across different service sectors, particularly in support of families with children who may be facing different social or behavioural challenges. The aim is to ensure that challenges are identified early on, using schools as an entry point, and that children and their families receive adequate support as soon as possible, leading to fewer cases being escalated to child protection services.

The Bridge brings together different professionals (psychologists, speech therapists, social workers, special education teachers, school nurses and guidance counsellors) who work within the education and social sectors, and teachers and other school staff working in pre- and primary schools. Together these form an integrated team aimed at supporting children aged 1 to 16 years and their families. The process starts within each school. When school staff have exhausted all available measures to support, the Bridge team is called in. Together with the school staff, the team evaluates each case, decides on an intervention and assigns a case manager who is responsible for making sure appropriate services are provided and facilitates open communications with the families.

The Bridge has been scaled to all schools in the municipality and has already created efficiencies in services. Staff within the municipality have reported increased knowledge of available support measures, more focused interventions and increased accountability. Families appreciate the 'one-stop-shop' approach to social services, and while long term benefits of the approach remain to be seen, the municipality did not see an increase in child protection referrals during the COVID-19 pandemic unlike other municipalities in the country.

Lessons learned

- Having a case manager is crucial to ensuring that each reported case is followed up.
- It is recommended to start small with only a few schools. The Bridge was first piloted for a full year only in a handful of schools. The responsibilities of relevant staff within and outside the school should be redefined to reflect what the model is providing.
- Introducing changes to existing procedures can be challenging. Open and continuous communication and providing a rationale for changes is key. Training of staff is also important to factor in.



Rio de Janeiro, Brazil: Our Zone – Protecting children from violence

Goals, strategy and results

In Brazil, 2.6 million adolescents live in low-income neighbourhoods where armed violence is a constant threat. In the last 10 years alone, 3,650 children have been killed by gun violence in the state of Rio de Janeiro. The COVID-19 pandemic, and the resulting isolation, have only exacerbated the threat of violence and mental health challenges.

To respond to this, Luta pela Paz, in partnership with UNICEF, developed Our Zone—Protecting Children from Violence, a programme aimed at strengthening child protection in the neighbourhoods of Maré and Pavuna, two particularly violent areas of Rio de Janeiro. It has three key objectives: to promote children’s physical and emotional well-being, mitigate the mental health impacts of the pandemic, and improve local child protection professionals’ capacity to identify and respond to vulnerabilities.

The programme used multiple methodologies and was based on a survey conducted with children and young people. First, the organizations designed a methodology titled Community of Care to train local actors in both neighbourhoods. The training programme’s objective is to strengthen the network for identifying, taking in, and caring for local children and teenagers

who have been exposed to violence or have mental health concerns. During the project, the organizations offered two different training and exchange opportunities: a five-session course run in two cohorts for participants from each community and a one-off workshop summarizing course content. The content of the course is available as a methodological guide, and learning from the programme was used to draft legislation to increase investment in mental health support in Rio’s favelas.

Secondly, the organizations designed Quarantine Diaries, a tool using language and activities building on social media as the foundation of a three-month support programme. Activities from the diaries, complemented by weekly sessions with psychologists, help children explore, better understand and express their feelings, and encourage them to take control of their own therapeutic process. Participants showing signs of anxiety were given individual support, whilst participants facing similar mental health challenges took part in small group sessions. Following participation in 12 sessions, psychologists created a continued care strategy with participants, referring them to external support services where necessary. Personal development and sports sessions were also offered online for participants.

Finally, young people from both neighbourhoods were trained to disseminate messages around violence, race, gender and child protection among their peers. Young people co-designed and developed a variety of content, including a podcast, a web series and over 40 social media posts, that became part of a multimedia campaign around the theme of Communities of Care.

Lessons learned

- Luta pela Paz’s credibility and experience in working in vulnerable contexts, particularly the favelas, was crucial in winning the support of local actors.
- Capturing the methodology used throughout the programme in a guide enables replication in other communities. Close monitoring and capturing of lessons learned is crucial for future scale up.
- Consider building innovative partnerships, such as working with academia or training psychologists, to expand access to mental health support.
- Consider including young people in the development of the trainings to reinforce the message of them being active members of their communities and having responsibility for creating safe, caring communities.



São Gonçalo Dos Campos-Bahia, Brazil: Projeto Nossos Campeões (Our Champions)

Goals, strategy and results

The *Nossos Campeões* (Our Champions) project provides free-of-charge sports activities for children and young people living in neighbourhoods marked by social vulnerability. The sports activities are offered every day after school in the neighbourhoods. More than 50 children, aged 6 to 16 years, participate in classes of capoeira, karate and mixed martial arts. The activities and relevant equipment are offered by the municipality. The aim is to offer children an activity to occupy them in the afternoon and to build their self-esteem and to provide them with a safe environment.

Lessons learned

- One of the main challenges was to introduce such a project in a neighbourhood where parents were afraid of letting their children out in the evenings. However, as the activities are organized in the public spaces of the community, they have also contributed to an overall sense of safety in the neighbourhood.

Fundão, Portugal: Fundão – Fundão Terra de Acolhimento (Host Land) project

Goals, strategy and results

The aim of the Host Land project is to support the integration of newly arrived migrants in the municipality of Fundão. While the project targets the broader community beyond children, an important component of it is citizenship education for children, titled School of Citizenship. The School of Citizenship is a whole-school approach to human rights education that aims to instil democratic values and an appreciation of human rights and diversity. Through a variety of different teaching methodologies, including non-formal education, the approach aims to instil critical thinking skills and empower children and young people to become engaged citizens.

Lessons learned

- The School of Citizenship is not only an isolated programme or approach but is also an integral part of the educational strategy of the municipality.





Yopal, Colombia: Food and Nutrition Strategy for a solidary Casanare

Goals, strategy and results

Casanare's food and nutrition strategy seeks to address malnutrition in more than 1,600 families with children aged 5 to 18 years, and in lactating women who are facing food insecurity or are suffering from being either under- or overweight. The project consists of four components: awareness raising and nutrition training for families, establishing 800 family gardens to improve access to agricultural produce, providing technical farming assistance to families, and providing material assistance in the form of food packages, hygienic kits and water filters. A specific component of the project seeks to address the needs of families with family members living with disabilities. A total of 800 families, and 400 families with members living with disabilities, have benefited from the project and it is now being scaled up to new family units.

Lessons learned

- The learning by doing methodology integrates training with supporting families in cultivating their own produce to gain long-term benefits beyond material assistance. Benefiting families have a strong commitment to continue maintaining their family gardens beyond the lifecycle of the project.

Evaz Fars, Iran: Recognizing the Rights of Children and Applying them in Life workshops

Goals, strategy and results

Training children and adults alike on child rights and how to apply them in daily life is an important part of Evaz's efforts to become more child friendly. The series of workshops titled Recognizing the Rights of Children and Applying Them in Life started in 2018 and continue to operate today with the leadership of the non-governmental organization Council for Child-Friendly Evaz. The workshops, consisting of three to four half-day sessions, are designed specifically for preschool teachers, managers, parents and other local government officials interested in the topic. The workshop guides participants to reflect upon their own childhoods and recognize children's rights through a combination of theory and practical exercises.

Lessons learned

- Non-governmental organizations can play an important role in a city's efforts to become more child-friendly.





Hafnarfjörður, Iceland: The chance of leading a normal life

Goals, strategy and results

Recent research with refugees in Iceland sheds light on what can be improved in the reception and treatment of refugee children and their families. It shows that refugee families face various challenges, such as related to language, education and adaptation to a new country. As the number of asylum-seeking and refugee families in the municipality of Hafnarfjörður has increased in the past years, the local government has emphasized supporting children on the move to find opportunities to participate equally in the community.

Several different steps and services have been taken to welcome children to their new community. A special health reception was set up for families where children receive specialized services, such as dental care, an individual health plan and access to counselling, if needed. Parents receive an educational booklet, often in their native language, to best support them in looking after their child's health. Upon arrival, children are offered

care packages with toys and appropriate clothing for winter and school activities. Integration into education happens individually, with specialized support and regular check-ins. Children are also supported in signing up for extracurricular activities, such as sports. Efforts are also made to educate children from the host community about refugee journeys and to prepare teachers for potential discussions on complex or even sensitive issues.

Lessons learned

- Winning the trust of children and their families, who often have faced traumatic experiences, takes time. While offering support, it is important to be flexible and to adapt the programme to the needs of each child.
- Teachers play an important role in supporting children in acclimatizing themselves to their new environment. Therefore, it is important to train not only children, but also the adults that support them.



Qeshm, Iran: Qeshm, an Island for Children

Goals, strategy and results

Qeshm, an island in the southernmost point of Iran, in the Persian Gulf, is relatively prosperous but despite its wealth faces many social problems, such as child marriage and school drop-out. To tackle these, the local government launched a holistic programme to place children front and centre in local development plans, with a focus on education.

The strategy is focusing on three pillars: raising awareness on the importance of childhood, improving the quality of education, and concentrating and mobilizing resources for child-focused services. The programme brings together the government, private sector, community leaders, teachers and families, and uses evidence as a basis for improvements. For example, a needs assessment found that the official education system alienated indigenous children. As a result, the Government started offering bilingual education to accommodate indigenous languages. Several other interventions, some of them developed with the support of private sector partners, have been introduced ranging from child rights education to promoting girls'

education. Anecdotal evidence show promising improvements: households report increasing their spending on education, while children report feeling more comfortable in school.

Lessons learned

- Adopting a broad, partnership-based approach to local development enabled the government to mobilize additional funds from the private sector.
- Establishing trust between the government and local indigenous groups proved to be challenging. To this end, teachers were trained to support dialogue between different stakeholders.
- Although a participatory approach to community development is often the most effective, ideally it is also backed up by policy and legislative change. Actors in Qeshm are now working towards that goal.



Yazd, Iran: Child Rights Clinic

Goals, strategy and results

The Yazd Child Rights Clinic opened in 2019 and is operated by the Yazd Bar Association, with support from the Ministry of Human Rights and International Affairs. It is a non-profit and voluntary organization that supports children and their families in addressing and challenging child rights violations. It provides families with free access to legal aid and child protection services and raises awareness about child rights through educational materials and training of professionals and students in law, psychology, social work and other relevant services.

The clinic can be contacted online, via phone or in person for advice on legal or child protection matters. The clinic may refer the cases to relevant authorities or services. They also provide legal mediation support. The clinic works in close collaboration with non-governmental organizations working with vulnerable groups of children, such as refugees, who are more likely to see their rights violated.

Lessons learned

- As the services of the clinic are completely free, they also draw on an extensive pool of volunteers, including students.
- As legal support builds on the existing legislative framework, it relies on the extent to which children's rights are recognized and protected by the national law. Therefore, advocating for further recognition of child rights in national legislation is central to addressing all child rights violations.



Zamboanga, the Philippines: *JOVENTusiasmo* – A youth civic engagement

Goals, strategy and results

More than 200,000 young people between the ages of 15 to 30 years live in the city of Zamboanga. The *JOVENTusiasmo* project seeks to recognize the potential and leadership of these young people by recognizing youth-led innovation and fostering their enthusiasm. Hence the name derived from *joven* meaning young and *entusiasmo*, which means enthusiasm. The programme is part of the city's broader efforts to invest in child and youth well-being and services. *JOVENTusiasmo* showcases innovations developed by young people and aims to both recognize their efforts and empower other young leaders to take on an active role in their communities.

Innovations showcased in the latest edition of the project include: *Lettuce Do It Jovenes*, a youth-led project that promotes community gardening and trains young people to grow their own food in a fun and easy way. *SALyuDAHAN* is a youth-led project that raises awareness among young people on issues of nutrition, HIV/AIDS and mental health. Finally, the *Reviving Hearth with Hope* project seeks to combat human trafficking and provides support to victims of trafficking.

Lessons learned

- Young people should be recognized as important actors of change in their communities. Offering them official recognition for their efforts and an opportunity to exchange ideas with their peers can be an effective way to boost youth engagement.



4. Child Poverty Reduction and Social Protection



Bogotá, Colombia: District strategy for children

Goals, strategy and results

The COVID-19 pandemic and lockdowns have resulted in an increase in child rights violations in the city of Bogotá. These include challenges caused by poverty, such as child labour, begging, school drop-out or even homelessness.

The District Strategy for Children is designed to address these challenges by deploying mobile teams in the districts of the city to identify children and families at risk, alert them of the availability of support, and refer and accompany them to relevant services. The strategy is implemented in close collaboration with the different local government departments responsible for services for children and their families.

The mobile team sets out to places where child rights violations are likely to occur: in the streets, public transport or commercial centres. Through a set of artistic and other activities, mobile teams seek to engage children who would spend time in those spaces. Identification of situations of risks and referral to relevant services is accompanied by awareness-raising activities targeting parents of children at risk. Depending on the situation

of the children and their family, children may be supported by immediate material aid such as shelter, food or medical care.

Lessons learned

- A proactive strategy enables the city to identify and approach vulnerable groups who may not know how to access local services.
- It is important that the teams on the ground are attuned to the realities of the target group.
- It is important to recognize and address legal and other barriers that may prevent, for example, migrant families from accessing services.
- Child labour is a complex problem. Attention to individual children and their families should be paired with awareness raising with the broader population to tackle behaviours that foster child labour.



Lisbon, Portugal: *Desporto Mexe Connigo* (Sport Inspires Me) project

Goals, strategy and results

The Sport Inspires Me project tackles social exclusion and the impact of poverty by bringing free sports activities to the most vulnerable neighbourhoods of Lisbon. The project, led by the Department of Physical Activity and Sport of the Municipality of Lisbon, has since its launch in 2008 expanded to include access to free sports activities ranging from boxing to hip hop dance classes, under the supervision of accredited trainers. Some residents are trained as coaches to support the implementation of the programme in their neighbourhood. At times, the programme expands to include other citizenship activities, such as events to promote a sense of community and belonging within the participating neighbourhoods.

Today, more than 1,000 children join weekly sports activities organized in the context of the programme, approximately for three hours per week. Access to sports is provided through a range of local partners (associations, clubs and other non-profit organizations). All local activities are developed in close consultation with children and the broader

community. Sessions are continuously evaluated and monitored to ensure they meet the aims of the programme.

Lessons learned

- Building a strong relationship between the participants, their families and the local associations providing the activities is key to making the intervention successful.
- Offering training for young people to become trainers enables them to transition from participant to leader of the activities and contributes to their professional development.
- The activities are designed to be accessible to all children. As children progress in their skills, it creates pathways for children to also join more formal sports activities through local sports clubs that continue to develop children's skills.



Lviv, Ukraine: Social Design School

Goals, strategy and results

The Social Design School was born out of an aim to provide children from low-income families opportunities to explore the fields of design and technology and with the goal for these children to potentially pursue a career in these fields. In partnership with creative agencies, who provided staff to offer classes pro-bono, the school offered children free classes in web design and the use of graphic software Figma. The organizers worked with psychologists to ensure that the course provided a safe space for participating children, many of whom had difficult life experiences. The course curriculum was based on focus group discussions with children to ensure that it responded to their needs. Necessary equipment was purchased by the school.

The course received positive feedback from participants and has since evolved into a creative space for children and young people. The organization is working on a relaunch of the course and continues offering activities for children and young people. For participating children, the course offered a new outlook on potential future careers that they may not have had the resources to explore otherwise.

Lessons learned

- Work with children and young people to inform the course content to ensure it meets their needs.
- If you are working with a particularly vulnerable group of children and young people, work with relevant professionals to ensure the course is adapted to their needs.
- Continue offering opportunities beyond the lifecycle of the course. Participating children continue engaging with each other on a social media group and in the activities of the Pixlab space.



Abaetetuba, Brazil: Beyond Caring

Goals, strategy and results

The project Beyond Caring ran from 2015 to 2017 in the Sister Eufrása Maria de Belém nursery, where many of the enrolled children came from families experiencing vulnerability. The aim of the project was to build children's autonomy by applying a holistic approach to their development beyond providing mere supervision.

The interventions focused on capacity building of the nursery staff, personal hygiene and self-care, playful learning, and gradual support to children's autonomy and participation within the day-care centre. In addition to providing materials, such as personal hygiene kits and toys, children were regularly monitored by professionals (nurse, psychologist, social worker and physician) with referrals to services when needed, and always in close collaboration with children's families. Free meals were offered to all children and reading was integrated into the nursery's daily routine to promote children's language development. Pedagogical interventions were coupled up with physical improvements to the day care space.

Although the initial project was implemented with external funding, the municipality is now considering ways of expanding the learning to other nurseries across the municipality.

Lessons learned

- Improvements to services such as day care should be based on analysis of the local context and the challenges children face. The nursery in Abaetetuba served different communities, and all changes were based on an initial analysis of the local context.
- When projects are based on external funding, it is important to ensure there is continuity beyond the lifecycle of the specific project.



Niterói, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil: Niterói Jovem EcoSocial project

Goals, strategy and results

The *Niterói Jovem EcoSocial* project is part of the efforts to combat violence in the Municipality of Niterói in the state of Rio de Janeiro. It consists of a set of informative, educational, environmental and socio-inclusive actions with young people from the communities involved in the programme. It aims to promote citizen participation, provide professional skills development, and appropriate public space. The programme focuses on areas of high vulnerability.

The programme focuses on offering employment and engagement opportunities for young people in the areas of reforestation, waste and water management, and climate change adaptation. Young people participating in the programme are offered a professional training course, after which they decide on the activities they wish to join, as well as professional development support, such as CV clinics. Participating young people receive a scholarship for the duration of the programme. With the programme, young people have contributed to visible changes in

their neighbourhoods: thousands of trees have been planted and spaces previously used as garbage dumps have been turned into vegetable gardens.

Lessons learned

- Working closely with a range of partners, from local government departments to private sector partners and non-governmental organizations, was crucial to be able to offer young people a diversity of different opportunities. Partnerships with neighbourhood associations, cooperatives, local businesses, social leaders and family health centres enabled the project to create strong links with young people and community residents.

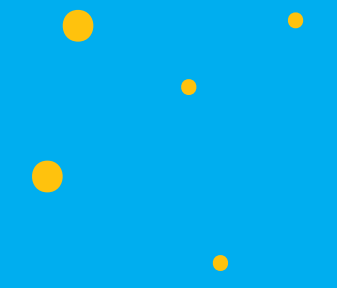



Isfahan, Iran: Free use of the 'City of Dreams'

Goals, strategy and results

The City of Isfahan has an amusement park frequented by children, but due to the admission costs, it is not accessible for children from low-income families. On the occasion of the National Children's Week, the city opened the park for free access for low-income families, with free transportation provided. Around 1,500 children participated. Given the positive response, the city is planning to organize similar events in the future.





5. Safe, Clean, Sustainable and Child-friendly Environments



San Francisco, United States: Heron's Head Nature Exploration Area

Goals, strategy and results

Inspired by the movement to get kids to unplug and reconnect with nature, the San Francisco Recreation & Parks Department and the Port of San Francisco in collaboration with San Francisco Children & Nature, and KABOOM! have engaged kids and community to design and build a nature exploration area at Heron's Head Park. The area will encourage people of all ages to engage with diverse natural elements including loose materials, such as branches, pinecones and tree cookies, and fixed features, such as large rocks, logs and stumps. Located within Heron's Head Park, this natural play space provides San Francisco residents with opportunities to create, run, jump, meditate, climb, touch, smell and look while connecting with the natural community and each other.

A series of five Design Jam events were organized at local recreational centres and YMCAs to help create a responsive, custom design for the space infused with the wishes of children and other residents. Through this process, youth were able to actively use loose play elements and other design objects to imagine their ideal space for play. Additionally, several

virtual community meetings took place and broad outreach was conducted with local businesses to secure additional in-kind support for the project. Logs and other materials were sustainably sourced from local parks and green areas. Hyper local native plants were sourced and grown by Literacy for Environmental Justice, whose nursery employs local teens and engages the community in the process of growing plants, restoring local habitats and preserving the unique biodiversity of San Francisco. Children and young people were also involved in the building of the space. Future use and maintenance of the space will be done in close collaboration with the Greenager programme, an outdoor youth leadership programme designed to offer high school teens a chance to play an important role in the community by improving the city's green spaces.

Equity was an important driving principle in the implementation of the project. The park is in a historically underserved part of the city, with many low-income households that traditionally have had limited access to green space: a survey conducted in the area concluded that a quarter of children living in the district rarely visited nature. It is a first of its kind in the city located in a vulnerable area and will serve as a model for other nature exploration areas in the city.

Lessons learned

- The inclusion of loose natural parts throughout the design process and in the final area creates endless possibilities and invites imaginative play. Loose parts are another way to introduce low-cost programming and pop-up play opportunities in places where there might not be a lot of access to nature.
- Creating cross-sector relationships was important to garner support and buy in with future users of the space. Long-term sustainability of the space is important and is a result of the engagement that occurred throughout the project.
- Permits for new construction can sometimes take time. Allow for sufficient time between design and construction to avoid delays.
- Instead of designing and then look for materials, try doing it the other way around: map existing materials, and use them as a basis for the design.



Rio Quito, Colombia: Protective environments for children and adolescents

Goals, strategy and results

Rio Quito's programme on creating protective environments for children and adolescents was born out of an effort to protect children from the many challenges they were facing in their communities: substance abuse, early pregnancies and violence, which are often linked to the activities of different criminal groups. The programme focuses on the creation of safe public spaces for children and young people in the community.

The programme started with consultations with children, young people and different community groups to understand the impact of violence on the local community. This was followed by a land planning mapping from a child rights and gender perspective, and the creation of different protective environments across the municipality through the offering of sports, play, recreation and cultural activities. Efforts were also made to define institutional roadmaps for care and prevention of, and immediate response to, cases of violence against children across local government sectors. Capacity building of local government actors, parents and other community stakeholders has also taken place.

The programme has led to a greater appreciation of the participation of children and young people, and the establishment of a working group on child and youth participation. Established cultural and sports facilities across the municipality continue to offer children and young people opportunities for play and leisure. Children report feeling happy and protected in these spaces and have increased opportunities to have a say in the development of their municipality.

Lessons learned

- The participation of children and the broader community is essential to strengthening protective systems. Rio Quito engaged successfully with the indigenous communities of the municipality.



Tumaco, Colombia: Fall in Love with the Viento Libre Neighborhood

Goals, strategy and results

The comprehensive strategy Fall in Love with the Viento Libre (free wind) Neighborhood aims to tackle violence in Viento Libre, one of the neighbourhoods most impacted by violence in the municipality of Tumaco. The neighbourhood also had high levels of school drop-out, due to so-called 'invisible borders' that prevented children from continuing their education. The presence of authorities in the neighbourhood was low.

The strategy, focusing solely on the neighbourhood of Viento Libre, aims to bring all social services closer to the citizens in a joint effort between faith leaders, community actors, the police, school leadership, and most importantly, members of the community. This is a novel way of addressing violence in the community, which has often relied on the use of force alone. This time, comprehensive solutions were formulated together with community members to ensure efficiency. Offers for sports and recreational activities were improved, number of social service staff on the ground was increased, and the community benefited from a new playground, a sports hall, a new educational centre and installation of a public Wi-Fi zone. During the process, the local government was also

able to identify improvement opportunities for the local economy, namely handicrafts and other artisanal businesses, and thus boost local economic activity.

The project has led to a notable decrease in violence and forced recruitment in the neighbourhood, and it has increased educational attendance. Local citizens have been able to create more trusting relationships with government institutions.

Lessons learned

- The high degree of participation of the local community meant that they took ownership of the plan. Children and the broader community not only participated in the development of the plan, but also in its implementation, for example as hired facilitators for cultural and sports activities.
- The comprehensive approach relied on the support of multiple different partners, all of whom were ready to explore a new way of approaching solutions to violence. The involvement of faith-based organizations, namely the local church, was important to gain the support of the local community.



Barranquilla, Colombia: *Casa de Valientes* (house of the brave)

Goals, strategy and results

The COVID-19 pandemic caused a surge in student mental health problems and other challenges a result of the lockdown. Faced with this challenge the District Mayor's Office of Barranquilla repurposed an existing programme for preventing child sexual abuse, renaming it *Casa de Valientes* (house of the brave). The aim of the programme is to meet the need for socio-emotional support of families, especially students, by promoting protective school environments and safe family environments through virtual psychosocial support services.

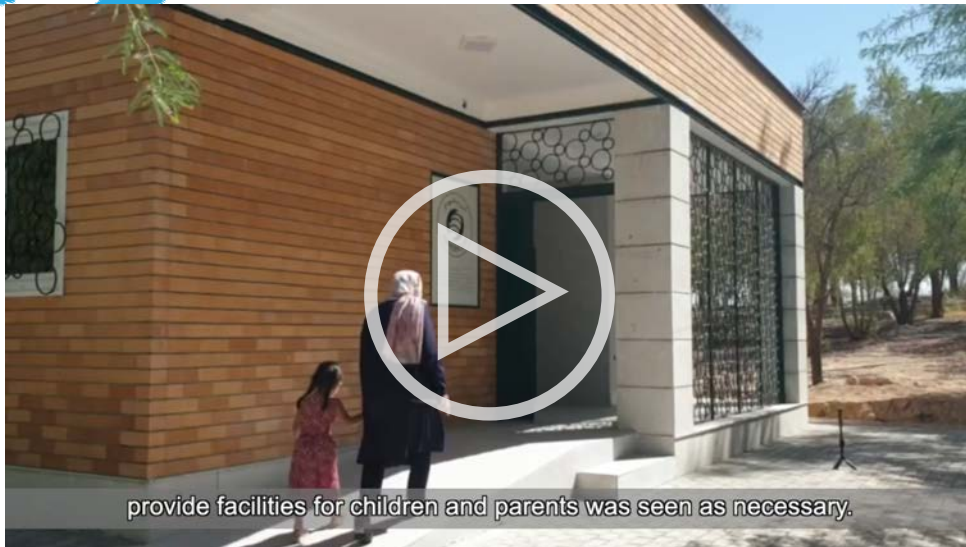
The comprehensive strategy consisted of several actions focusing on promotion, prevention, attention and follow-up. These included weekly videos and advertisements on managing the lockdown period at home, training school assistants and counsellors on psychosocial support to be able to respond to the growing needs of students, supporting teachers in developing activities that promote socio-emotional competences and providing materials, providing positive parenting resources for parents, defining protocols when issues needed to be escalated and creating

different support groups for students and parents, to name a few: more than 400 support groups were set up on WhatsApp by parents, for example. Special activities were organized for migrant communities, many of whom face difficulties in accessing services.

The programme has had a significant reach. More than 3,000 families have joined more than 100 training workshops. More than 30,000 students have been served through the programme, with more than 500 individual cases identified for further follow-up.

Lessons learned

- School plays a central role in children's lives and their development. Therefore, it was important to use school as the entry point for support.
- Some communities lack internet access. With a bigger budget, the strategy could have been expanded to television to reach communities that lack online access and to be able to create even more emotionally engaging learning content.



Evaz Fars, Iran: Abrishoum Baby Care Rooms

Goals, strategy and results

The Abrishoum Baby Care Rooms are part of a larger effort by the Municipality of Evaz to provide child- and family-friendly spaces across the city. Following a situation analysis, the lack of baby care facilities in the public space was considered a challenge.

The city's first dedicated baby care room is in the Norouz park, a public space often frequented by families. It has two dedicated spaces for changing diapers: one is reserved for fathers, and another is a breastfeeding room as well as toilet for young children, and it is easily accessible with a stroller. The project was initiated by a group of concerned citizens and was finalized with the support of a private donor. Similar projects have now been initiated in other parts of the city.

Abaetetuba, Brazil: Sowing Colors

Goals, strategy and results

The general objective of the Sowing Colors initiative is to mitigate the inadequate disposal of solid waste in the municipality of Abaetetuba through environmental education, art activities that will promote the social inclusion of children, adolescents and young people, as well as recycling of waste. The project was implemented in areas of the municipality where solid waste disposal was identified as a major problem, causing environmental and health hazards.

Following workshops on environmental issues and an introduction to graffiti painting, children and young people from the impacted communities were mobilized to paint graffiti and street art along the roads where waste was often disposed of. These were accompanied with planting of trees and plants. A total of 100 children, all of whom were assisted by the municipality's social services, joined the project and contributed to the improvement of the city. This has led to a significant decrease in waste disposal in the improved areas. It has also supported children's understanding about the environment and how it impacts their lives and it has empowered children to take active role in changes that would benefit their community.

Lessons learned

- In future editions of the project, the engagement could be done by age group to target activities to different audiences.





Lisbon, Portugal: *Olisipíadas* games

Goals, strategy and results

The *Olisipíadas* games were launched in 2014 to bring together the children and young people of Lisbon around the practice of sports. The games are implemented in close collaboration with the 24 parish councils of Lisbon, providing children between the ages of 5 to 14 years with the experience and opportunity to compete in 13 different sports; the games also accommodate children with disabilities.

Olisipíadas are run in three phases, taking sports from schools to the community and finally the whole city. In the first phase, schools, together with local sports clubs, organize different sporting opportunities in the school, during or after school hours. In the local phase, together with local sports clubs, each parish sets up its own sporting team for each of the 13 sports. The event culminates in a festive event, usually in June, where local teams compete in the different sports, with other open sports activities available for anyone to join with their own initiative.

The programme has a mascot that is well-known across the city and has been supported and sponsored by many famous athletes. It is supported by the Portuguese Olympic and Paralympic Committees as well as local sports clubs. Each year, the schools that have encouraged the largest

numbers of children to join sports activities are recognized with a financial award to enable them to purchase sports equipment.

Lessons learned

- Throughout the years, there has been increased focus on accommodating and encouraging children without previous experience in sports by establishing school-based sports clubs. The school phase was introduced to encourage more children to try out and practice sports.



Abaetetuba, Brazil: The Library is On

Goals, strategy and results

The Library is On project was initiated by the municipal library of Abaetetuba. The library is an important resource for education and additional training for many children and young people. It is a place where many children and youth access the Internet and computers that are not available at home. While supporting children attending the library, staff noticed that many of them had limited knowledge of using a computer and surfing the Internet safely. The aim of the course was to offer all 4th and 5th Grade students in the municipality's public schools a free course on computer technology to improve digital skills. A school in the rural area of the municipality was selected as a pilot.

In the first phase, children completed exercises at home, shared through WhatsApp or as handout by teachers. In the second phase, students attended in-person computing classes at the library. As a result, children have acquired digital skills, can access the Internet safely and use their new skills for improved opportunities in life.

Lessons learned

- Many children do not have equipment or Internet connection at home. The course was therefore adapted to this context. The content of the course also had to be adapted to the COVID-19 pandemic, with some of the activities taking place offline due to the lockdown.



Lviv, Ukraine: Let Kids Move! project

Goals, strategy and results


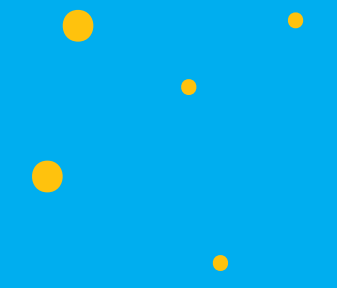


Let Kids Move! is an innovative pilot project currently implemented in the city of Lviv, with an aim of increasing children's physical activity at school. The project was born out of the observation that few children reach the daily physical activity levels recommended by the World Health Organization and that many children complained about issues of back pain because of bad postures.

Building on learning from similar projects around the world, Let Kids Move! introduced standing desks in classrooms for first grade students in three pilot schools. The standing desks are paired with regular sitting desks allowing students to change posture at regular intervals (as standing for long periods of time can also be harmful to the body). The pilot project is paired with regular medical check-ups by academic researchers to verify whether the change has health benefits for the students. Although it is too early to assess whether this is the case, feedback from participating students and teachers is positive: children find standing up more interesting, and teachers report improved concentration in class.

Lessons learned

- The expenses for standing desks are slightly higher than regular ones, but the increase is not drastic. However, at times it may be difficult to gain political support for proposals that introduce an increase in costs and only bring benefits over the long term. The pilot project in Lviv has been financed by a private sector sponsor.
- Improvements in the school space should be attentive to children's needs. Children in pilot classes are always given the opportunity to sit down at a regular desk at their wish.





6. Play, Leisure and Family Time



Regensburg, Germany: Brixenpark – A child-friendly and inclusive park for all

Goals, strategy and results

During the development of a ‘masterplan of play’ with children for one of the city’s vulnerable neighbourhoods, the City of Regensburg identified a former army base in the area that would be made available for new development. At the behest of local young people, the city decided to turn it into a child-friendly green area for the whole community.

The goal was to build an inclusive public park that is suitable for all, has a positive impact on the climate, flora and fauna, is built in a sustainable way and can be accessed easily by all. As the park was located near a school for children with disabilities and an inclusive housing project, accessibility for people with disabilities was considered a priority. As with all playground projects in the city, engaging children and young people in the process was also prioritized.

The city, together with the landscape architects planning the park, organized three workshops to engage children and young people in the development of the park: one at a local school targeting children from Grades 5 to 10, including a class of newly arrived refugees; one at a local after school care facility targeting younger children and a third school for

children with disabilities. Special support was provided to support children with disabilities in verbalizing their needs. Final playground plans were finalized following children’s inputs and wishes. The final playground was tested by the local child and youth council, with the aim of ensuring it was accessible to children with restricted mobility. Children participating in the planning process joined the opening of the park in October 2021.

The park has already won the *Deutscher Spielraumpreis* (German Play Space Award) for its inclusive, sustainable and child-friendly design. The park is easily accessible by bike and public transport and offers access to green areas in a neighbourhood where many children had limited access to outdoor play.

Lessons learned

- The ‘masterplan for play’, developed together with children, laid the foundation for the work. The park was built in an area where there was an identified lack of access to green space by repurposing land that was no longer used.
- Including children with disabilities in the planning process was crucial. The engagement also made these children feel welcomed in the park, resulting in their frequent use of the park.
- Although the participation process was facilitated by social workers experienced in facilitating participation, it is important for planners to be engaged in the participation process and to not just receive the end results. This way, planners both understand children’s needs, but can also help prioritize and find alternative solutions, if proposals are not feasible.
- It is important to give the required time and space for the participation process. As the park was a large-scale project, the participation process was conducted two years before the final opening date. While this meant that many participating children had already outgrown the playground but their participating was crucial in making sure their proposals were considered.



Bucaramanga, Colombia: Santander, a Protective Scenario through Family Play!

Goals, strategy and results

The project Santander, a Protective Scenario through Family play! intends to address the issue of domestic violence across the 87 municipalities in the Department of Santander. Play, and more importantly, positive time with family, was found to be a key component in fostering children's sense of safety and protection within the home.

The comprehensive strategy, centring around awareness raising around play and positive parenting, consisted of online play activations, training local leaders to foster play and positive parenting in their territories, distribution of educational materials and games across schools and municipal offices, supporting child participation through, for example, 'Kids takeovers' of leadership roles in the department, and parenting trainings, among others.

Almost 200,000 families have been reached through face-to-face activities, and 40,000 families have been reached online. A survey on the impact of the programme demonstrated that parents reported agreeing with the need to spend more time with their children.

Lessons learned

- The use of a multitude of different channels, including television and radio, meant that the initiative had a wide reach across the department. As lack of Internet access is a significant barrier in some areas of the department, it was important to come up with innovative solutions, such as family movie nights, in rural communities.



Navapolatsk, Belarus: *V Dvizhenii* (In Motion)

Goals, strategy and results

V Dvizhenii, meaning in motion, was developed by members of the Navapolatsk Youth Council as a response to a challenge: according to a survey conducted by the young people, less than half of children in the municipality were aware of their rights. *V Dvizhenii* is an interactive outdoor board game that teaches children about their rights. The development of the game was done in the context of UNICEF's UPSHIFT programme, where young people learn entrepreneurship skills. The first version of the game was tested by a group of 12 child activists, and the final materials were printed by the local government. The members of the Youth Council launched a promotional campaign at schools and social media to promote the game.

While the group of children developing the game were supported by an adult mentor, the entire process is based on the principle of peer-to-peer education. The group is working to train new mentors who will support the scale up of the game to new schools. To date, several schools in the city have implemented the game, and it has now been taken to other cities in the country. The team is also working on an online version.

Lessons learned

- It is good to develop a national promotion plan for taking innovations, such as *V Dvizhenii*, to scale during the development phase.
- Involvement of adolescents from a diversity of backgrounds in the development of the game would allow further adaptation to their needs (for example, for children with visual impairments).



Abaetetuba, Brazil: CEU of Arts

Goals, strategy and results

The United Arts and Sports Center (CEU) in Abaetetuba brings cultural and sports activities under the same roof as the Social Assistance Reference Center, in a neighbourhood that has high social vulnerability. Through provision of different programmes, cultural activities and professional trainings, the centre aims to provide a safe space for children and young people in the community. It is a way of bringing social services closer to the communities they serve to combat organized crime and violence through arts and culture.

Today, after seven years of existence, the CEU has contributed to educational achievement of young people living in the community and reduced violence in the neighbourhood. Around 90 children participate in the centre's activities on a daily basis.

Lessons learned

- Art is also an effective way of strengthening intergenerational bonds. The CEU welcomes not only children and young people but also the elderly.
- No isolated public policy can combat issues, such as violence. These require multidisciplinary interventions. Although safe spaces, such as CEU, cannot combat the issue alone, they can make an important contribution towards the well-being of the community.



Titiribí, Colombia: With a knock knock, Titiribí touches the hearts of children and adolescents to face together, with love, the pandemic

Goals, strategy and results

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the local government in Titiribí noticed an increase in cases of domestic violence, mental health challenges and family distress. Confinement increased stress on families and cut many off support networks they were relying on before the lockdowns. To address this, the municipality decided to mobilize animators to take play and arts activities to children's homes, right to doorsteps, to alleviate the stress of confinement.

The activities included painting workshops, crafts, cinema in the neighbourhood, musical assembly workshops, family picnics, contests for decorating homes with positive phrases, decorating pots and planting as a family. In addition, audio-visual programmes on cooking, reading, crafts and other activities were offered by a local magazine. Activities were disseminated through social networks, the community radio station, printed material and on the street. Through this intervention, children in the community continued having daily activities, right at their door, while respecting the restrictions imposed by the pandemic.

Lessons learned

- Social networks played an important role in the activation. However, as online access in some communities is limited, it was important to combine these with face-to-face activities, while respecting health regulations.



Isfahan, Iran: Equipping the game room of the Mahmoud Abad neighbourhood & Laleh creativity playground

Goals, strategy and results

The City of Isfahan has taken steps to introduce play into children's lives. Following an analysis of the city's services, the city noticed that the Mahmoud Abad neighbourhood had limited access to educational and leisure facilities. To address this, the city established a creativity centre and a game room for children in the neighbourhood to offer a space for playful learning. The game room is annexed to a local library. The space was designed based on feedback from children gathered from questionnaires. As a result of the game room, the number of users of the library has increased as well.

The Laleh creativity playground, on the other hand, aims to provide a space for children to explore traffic rules in a creative way, while encouraging them to use a space in the city usually not frequented by children and on that was previously considered unsafe by many residents. The space is designed in a way that it is visible from surrounding apartment buildings and parents can see their children at all times. By using paint instead of equipment, the space was not expensive to create and lends itself to all kinds of games and creative activities.

Lessons learned

- By placing the room in a library, the city was also able to encourage local citizens to engage in reading.
- Introducing play in new spaces can increase the presence of people and therefore make those spaces safer and more welcoming for everyone.



Maiduguri, Nigeria: Get Involved in Getting Fresh Air project

Goals, strategy and results

Ongoing religious violence in the Borno state of North-East Nigeria has created a sense of insecurity in the Ward of Maimusari, in Maiduguri, leading to many families hesitating to let their children play and spend time outside. With the support of local government and traditional leaders, the aim of the Get Involved in Getting Fresh Air project was to mobilize local youth associations and children and young people to turn schoolyards and open spaces in the community into playgrounds during weekends and holidays. Local youth organizations provided play equipment, such as footballs and ropes, and information about the play opportunities was shared by word of mouth. Now children have shared safe spaces where they can attend supervised leisure activities together.

Lessons learned

- Addressing external factors that hinder play, such as safety concerns or lack of public space, is important, but it is equally important to address attitudes and behaviours that may hinder children from accessing play. Dialogue with the local government and traditional leaders was key to secure support for the project.



Rio de Janeiro, Brazil: *Favelas Do Brincar* (play-friendly communities)

Goals, strategy and results

Favelas Do Brincar or play-friendly communities is a project that launched this year in three favelas across Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo as part of Together for Play, a movement built in partnership with the Lego Foundation and Purpose PBC. Play-friendly communities protect children's right to learn and develop through play in the most underserved communities in Brazil, where multiple barriers of poverty, violence and poor living conditions threaten a healthy and dignified childhood. Many of these challenges have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The goal of play-friendly communities is to deploy scalable, cost effective and customizable urban interventions to transform public spaces into creative and accessible play areas for children in vulnerable communities. The programme has now created three play spaces across favelas in Rio and São Paulo, with an aim to develop a model that would be scalable across underserved communities in Brazil. Prior to the building of these spaces, the organizations conducted focus group discussions with parents to understand their barriers to engage in play with their children.

As many of these communities are hard to reach, the organizations partnered with local non-governmental organizations with experience of working with the local communities. Children were engaged in developing the play spaces. By implementing the play areas in community spaces that were already frequented by locals and supported by local organizations, the programme ensures that they will continue to be used and maintained beyond the lifecycle of the project.

The space in *Complexo do Alemão* in Rio de Janeiro serves at least 320 homes in its immediate vicinity. The play space blueprint, developed together with the Bernard Van Leer Foundation and PLAN, are available to other actors to download at favelasdobrincar.org.

Lessons learned

- By partnering with trusted local actors, the programme was able to reach and work with vulnerable, hard to reach communities.
- Listening to local parents was key to uncovering barriers that were specific to each neighbourhood.
- Working with the local community, including children, in the ideation and execution of the space is key to fostering local ownership of the space, making the intervention more sustainable in the long term.



Cardiff, United Kingdom: Summer of Smiles – a Child Friendly Cardiff Production

Goals, strategy and results

Child Friendly Cardiff curated and organized the Summer of Smiles festival after the harsh and challenging impact of COVID-19 on the basic needs and rights of children and young people. One of the rights most affected by the pandemic was the right to play, leisure and relaxation, and the Summer of Smiles festival aimed to support children in reclaiming that right throughout the city. The festival had two main components: free or low-cost activities organized by partner organizations across the city and a main festival site set up in the city centre for three consecutive weeks.

An important aim of the festival was to make activities accessible to families who would normally not be able to afford them: 95 per cent of activities on offer were free. Efforts were made to ensure that activities were available in all parts of the city. The city organized quiet sessions every Thursday morning to cater for neurodiverse children, young people and their families. On site there was signage for those with non-verbal and additional learning needs; activities for children with disabilities or additional learning needs were also offered. Priority groups, such as young carers and the care experienced, were targeted. All festival information was available on a central website, where participants could sign up for activities.

The festival programme and execution were planned with the city's Children and Young People's Advisory Board. Young artists were engaged in the promotion of the festival, and young entrepreneurs were invited to trade their work at the festival site. Young people were also trained to lead play and sports activities across the city.

Lessons learned

- Making all information available on a centralized website and app was appreciated by participants. Cardiff partnered with the University of Cardiff to make use of their knowledge and licensing of the event platform Sched.com.
- Involving a wide base of external partners and several internal departments led to the successful Summer of Smiles planning and implementation. Consistent briefings, virtual meetings and messaging across all parties was crucial to the overall objective. The wide array of partners also enabled the festival to offer a multitude of different activities.



Santa Marta de Tormes, Spain: Create a natural and leisure area with children, youth and adults

Goals, strategy and results

The main objective of the project was to offer children a rich play environment where they can have a wide variety of play experiences and, where possible, learn about the natural environment. The new green space is located on Isla de Soto, an island on the river running between the municipalities of Santa Marta de Tormes and Salamanca that has a high ecological value. It was therefore important to establish a leisure area that preserved the flora and fauna of the area, while providing opportunities for play and leisure for all ages.

Children were actively engaged in the repurposing of the area, with many proposals that children submitted to the government are now visible in the area. The island has a nature education centre that allows children to learn about the island, its history, and its flora and fauna. It also has an exhibition space. Most importantly, the island offers opportunities for direct contact with the natural environment.

Lessons learned

- Public spaces can help equalize social inequality if they are affordable, accessible to all, and evenly distributed throughout the city.
- Successful citizen engagement was central to promote the active use of the area.



Lviv, Ukraine: Science festival – Open Lab

Goals, strategy and results

Open Lab is an interactive science festival, organized by the youth organization Lviv Open Lab, to encourage children to interact with science in a creative way. The festival was born out of the observation that children were not interested in science—only a fraction of local children found science fascinating. Children’s relationship with science was marked by stereotypes: science defined as boring, difficult, impractical and not suitable for girls. The festival was implemented with dozens of partner organizations and combined lectures, discussions, shows, edutainment, workshops and experiments.

The festival was completely free of charge and was made accessible to children with restricted mobility. One part of the programme was held in a space that provided Braille books, sign language translation and trained support staff to accommodate an audience with different abilities. In preparation of the programme, organizers made sure to reflect gender balance in selecting speakers. The event created a unique platform for demonstrating science in formats that are attractive to everyone. The organizing team relied on research to define issues that would interest young people.

Lessons learned

- When an event is targeting audiences of all ages, special attention needs to be given to developing targeted communications materials for all of them.
- Costs for the organization of the festival were divided between the City of Lviv and local businesses, and to this end, the organizers developed a fundraising campaign. It is recommended to start fundraising as early as possible.



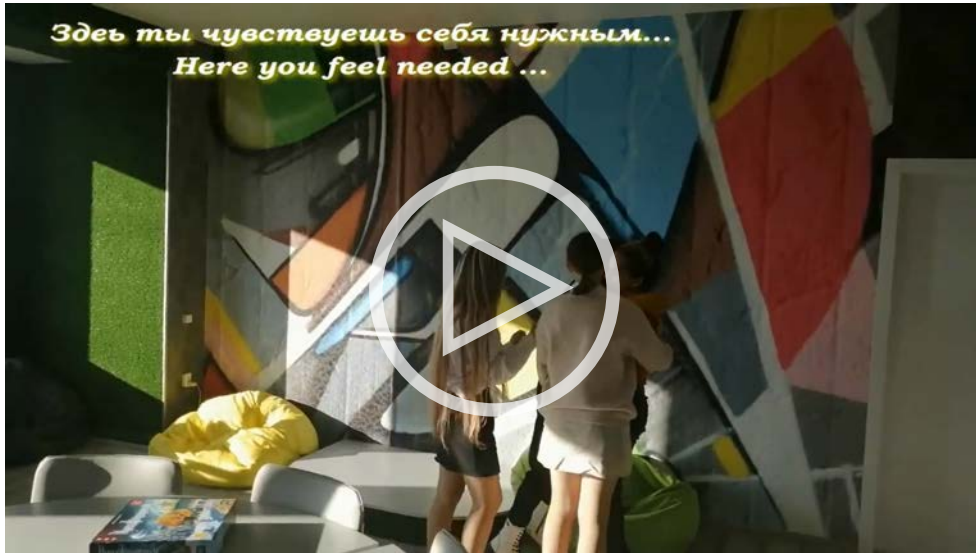
Lisbon, Portugal: Curricular Physical Education Support Programme

Goals, strategy and results

The Curricular Physical Education Support Programme (CPESP) was born out of the observation that all schools in the city of Lisbon were not able to offer students the opportunity to access physical education, particularly swimming lessons. CPESP integrates physical education in school curricula, thus ensuring that all children, regardless of background, have access to quality physical education. Swimming lessons in participating schools start in the first grade, totalling 48 hours of swimming lessons by the end of fourth grade. The City Hall supports transportation for schools to local swimming halls and has arranged for adapted access for children with disabilities to allow their participation, whenever possible, with the rest of the class. The programme has allowed for the expansion of swimming lessons and other physical education activities to almost 90 per cent of the public schools in the city.

Lessons learned

- Physical education should be integrated already into preschool activities.
- The programme is based on the observation that some services, such as access to swimming pools, can only be offered by the municipality. Ensuring the programme is adapted to individual needs (such as disability) and is available for all requires dedicated resources, but was seen as an important added value.
- Involving children and young people in the development of the educational plans is important to ensure it responds to their needs.



Baranavichy, Belarus: Bullying prevention – safe room

Goals, strategy and results

The concept of safe room was developed by students from the municipality of Baranavichy participating in UNICEF's UPSHIFT programme that promotes entrepreneurial skills and youth innovation. The concept aims to prevent bullying by offering students a safe space within the school.

Young people wanted to develop personal skills and qualities that prevent bullying (self-control, emotional skills, self-confidence, critical thinking, responsibility and empathy), to improve students' legal literacy in relation to unlawful actions against a person and to equip children with conflict resolution techniques, including mediation, thus enabling them to prevent and resolve conflicts among peers.

As a result of the project, a dedicated safe room was implemented in the educational institution Palace of Children's Art in Baranavichy. The room is available to any student in distress, where they will find support from trained teachers or psychologists, and peer volunteer students. The space also offers classes and training on conflict prevention, and a space for interested associations and groups. UNICEF Belarus helped procure equipment for the safe room: TV, laptop, printer, armchairs and more.

More than 300 students from Baranovichi have visited the room so far. There are also four youth groups that use the room on a regular basis: PROLeader (a student initiative), RITM (a group for young creatives), SIM (commonwealth of initiatives of young people) and UPSHIFT. More than 150 children and adolescents attend these groups regularly.

Lessons learned

- To spread the news among adolescents about the project, the group posted information on local radio and television and made print information products. Without a broad information campaign, adolescents simply would not know where to get help.
- To make the most of the project, the young people have made a schedule for other groups using the space.
- To overcome adolescents' fear of being lectured by adults when visiting the space, the organizers invited young people to informal meetings and play nights. The task of adults is to accompany the children, regardless of their background—including the children who created the project.



Child
Friendly
Cities
Initiative

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