

# Partnerships to Create Child-Friendly Cities:

*Programming for Child Rights  
with Local Authorities*



**IULA**  
International Union  
of Local Authorities

**unicef**   
United Nations Children's Fund

# The situation of urban children and adolescents



Around the globe, cities are expanding at an incredible pace and the future of the developing world will be increasingly urban. In the coming years, cities will be 'home' to more and more children — by the year 2025, 6 out of every 10 children will live in urban areas.

Cities are seen as the engines of society, full of possibilities and opportunities. But this promise of a better life unfortunately does not apply to all. Inter-generational patterns of poverty, violence, discrimination and disease threaten the lives, growth and development of children and youth. Still, these problems are not insurmountable and can be met.

The situation of urban children is a rising concern for many people and has caught the special attention of numerous local leaders throughout the world. UNICEF and its partners are calling for leadership and commitment for the realization of a shared vision for children, adolescents and women: cities freed from poverty, discrimination, violence and disease.

## Issues facing children in a more urbanized world:

- From 2000 to 2025, the number of people living in urban areas in the developing world will double from 2 billion to 4 billion.
- A third of urban dwellers in the developing world live in sub-standard housing or are homeless.
- The United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) estimates that the total number of urban poor in developing countries has reached 1 billion.

—*Habitat Debate*, December 2000

*The situation of urban children has caught the special attention of numerous local leaders throughout the world.*

# Progress for children

Achieving the desired outcomes for children requires sustainable systems and increased local capacity. This will be made possible by creating environments that are based on cooperation at different levels, crossing national and local borders, traditional sectors and barriers between social groups. The purpose of this mobilization is to generate new momentum and political commitment to human development goals, giving priority attention to children.

Local leaders, representing governments and civil society, can play an important role in mobilizing action for the Global Movement for Children — a driving force for child rights that seeks to change the world with children. Decentralization has created a new political climate at the local level and offers local authorities a chance to have a real impact on the lives of children. The challenge facing local authorities is to integrate child-oriented programming and policy-making into local governance structures. Innovative strategies and mechanisms have to be developed and implemented to ensure a new political culture in which efforts made by communities and civil society are coordinated with local government activities, all acting in the best interests of children.

**A real difference can be made when efforts are focused on achieving three key outcomes that have the greatest potential for change and impact on the lives of children and adolescents:**

- The best possible start for children in their early years.
- A quality basic education for every child.
- Support and guidance for adolescents in navigating the sensitive transition to adulthood.

*The Global Movement for Children aims to generate new momentum and political commitment, giving priority attention to children.*



# A child-friendly city requires:

*Safe environments nurture children of all ages with opportunities for recreation, learning, social interaction, psychosocial development and cultural expression.*

- Good access for all children to affordable, quality basic health services, clean water, adequate sanitation and solid waste removal.
- Local authorities to ensure that policies, resource allocations and all governance actions are made in a manner that is in the best interests of the children in their constituencies.
- Safe environments and conditions that nurture the development of children of all ages with opportunities for recreation, learning, social interaction, psychosocial development and cultural expression.
- A sustainable future under equitable social and economic conditions, and protection from the effects of environmental hazards and natural disasters.
- That children have the right to participate in making decisions that affect their lives and are offered opportunities to express their opinions.
- That special attention is given to disadvantaged children, such as those who are living or working on the streets, sexually exploited, living with disabilities or without adequate family support.
- Non-discrimination based on gender, ethnic background or social or economic status.



# Local opportunities

## Working at the local level offers:

- a chance for urban communities to develop for themselves viable solutions and manage their living environment.
- opportunities for local leaders to collaborate with diverse partners, including civil society and the public and private sectors, towards improving the situation of poor children.
- a voice for local leaders in developing programmes and projects, as they are closer to the people and can have greater impact.
- a challenge to local governments to be flexible and adapt their organizational structure to meet local level needs.
- a basis for sharing experiences with other cities and communities that have had similar problems and have developed local level solutions.
- possibilities for developing innovative approaches to involve children, adolescents and women, as they know best the problems confronting them and their communities and how to solve them.



# Global challenges



## Working towards an environment that:

- increases community participation, making programmes more effective by empowering communities to take control of activities and programmes.
- builds partnerships to unite efforts of various stakeholders at the local and other levels, ensuring participatory and democratic decision-making.
- improves situation analysis and monitoring by encouraging the use of quality data from all available sources. This would include a thorough evaluation of existing programmes and resources.
- works cross-sectorally to offer an integrated approach for solving often complex and interlocking urban problems.
- creates national and international networks for exchanging experiences on child-oriented strategies and developing a common agenda and joint actions.
- facilitates the active participation of children, adolescents and women in decision-making, resulting in programmes that are more responsive to their needs.

# The Convention on the Rights of the Child at the local level

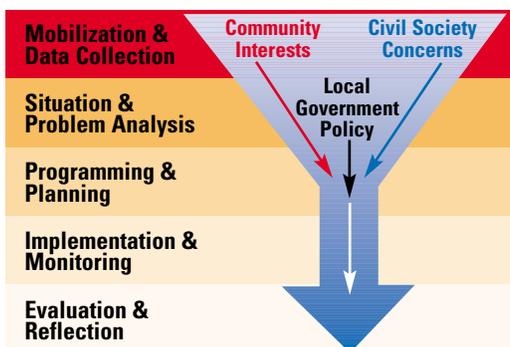
*The Convention provides a framework for creating child-friendly cities that nurture children and youth.*

A powerful tool, the Convention on the Rights of the Child provides a framework for local leaders to use in creating child-friendly cities that nurture the lives, growth and development of children and youth. The Convention has been ratified by virtually every country in the world and incorporates a full range of human rights for children: civil and political rights, as well as economic, social and cultural rights.

Local governments can play an important role in helping realize the Convention on the Rights of the Child and undertake simple and basic actions that transform goodwill into concrete results. UNICEF welcomes the opportunity to collaborate with partners at the local level to participate in developing ideas and actions to achieve the key outcomes for children.

## **Instruments for coordination and cooperation**

Realizing the rights of all children and adolescents requires true leadership, as does mobilizing the whole society, making sure multiple problems are addressed and that everyone is offered the opportunity to express opinions and participate in decision-making processes. Moreover, local authorities have to ensure that all parties cooperate effectively and that their participation and contributions are valued. This will likely result in an increased demand for accountability and new constraints, which can be used as a learning process for all.



## **An integrated approach following a 'project cycle'**

This approach integrates different efforts and divides the whole process of programming and the implementation of programmes into phases. It is a 'cyclical' process, building upon the experiences and results of preceding programmes and other experiences. Examples of this approach are 'Local Plans of Action for Children' that are being implemented in a number of countries.

# IULA and UNICEF are partners

The International Union of Local Authorities (IULA) and UNICEF share a common interest in benefiting children and women throughout the world. Every child has the right to grow up in an environment that cares for, protects and guides that child to adulthood. Local governments carry responsibilities in many areas which affect the life of children: health, education, housing, environmental protection, sports and recreation, to name a few. It is therefore not surprising that IULA has entered into a partnership with UNICEF to further the well-being of children everywhere. Since 1913, IULA has been working as an international association of local governments and their associations to promote and unite local governments worldwide.

IULA fully subscribes to the aims of the Global Movement for Children, the Child-Friendly Cities Initiative and the actions of UNICEF for the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It strongly encourages its members — 112 national associations of local authorities and some 200 individual cities in more than 110 countries — to take an energetic part in these campaigns and urge their citizens to do the same.

In its own programme, IULA has undertaken to integrate the contribution that local authorities can make to the well-being of children as a recurrent theme in its courses, congresses and information activities.

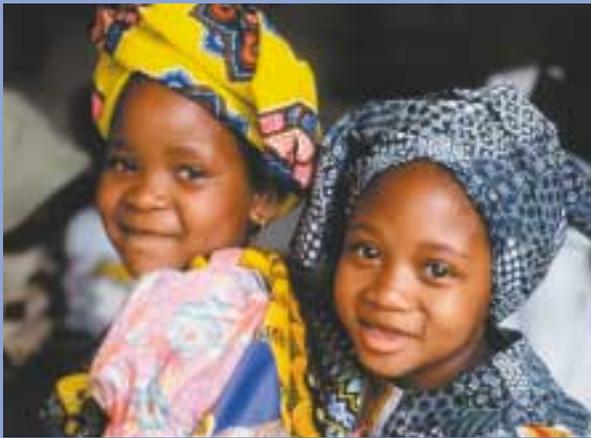


## How local authorities can work for children:

**The League of Municipalities of the Philippines (LMP), a member of IULA, has developed a policy and multisectoral programme of activities to protect and promote children, including their participation in local governance and nation-building. A Declaration of Commitment by the LMP was circulated to all members and to partners in other sectors and spheres of government. The committee in charge of implementing the Declaration uses various tools, including seminars, an award and the regular publication of articles. The challenge to Mayors is to sustain these programmes over the long term.**

The International Secretariat for Child-Friendly Cities has been established at the UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, located in Florence, Italy, as a clearinghouse for information on best practices addressing the situation of urban children. The Secretariat assists Child-Friendly Cities worldwide by:

- collecting, processing and sharing data through database administration and field research
- providing information on events and experiences
- supporting the networking of municipalities, mayors, experts, urban communities and children.



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