



Towards cities fit for children

Many cities have pursued initiatives to improve children's well-being. This chapter outlines some examples of good practice spanning service delivery, social protection and safe and inclusive urban environments. These cases illustrate the myriad possibilities and benefits of including children and their interests in urban design and management.

Policy and collaboration

National policies – particularly decentralization – can enable municipalities to deliver for children. For instance, in 1991, the Philippines enacted the Local Government Code, granting fiscal and administrative autonomy and planning authority to local government units. This opened the door for a number of localities – notably Pasay City, a subdivision of Metropolitan Manila – to pursue pro-child urban governance. In addition to creating plans and evaluating projects, the Pasay City Child Welfare Council, the regulatory body responsible for all initiatives for children, promotes child-friendly regulations and budgets, provides

technical assistance to community-based workers and prepares contingency measures to protect children and their families in crisis situations.¹

Collaboration between authorities and child rights agencies can facilitate such efforts. In 1999, the Brazilian state of Ceara teamed up with UNICEF to launch the Municipal Seal of Approval, an initiative that encourages mayors to promote child well-being through local cultural, political and administrative channels. By recognizing and rewarding success, the programme provides municipal authorities with strong incentives to prioritize the well-being of children and young people in their jurisdictions. The initiative has now spread to over a thousand municipalities across Brazil and has been taken up by other countries in the region; mayors from El Salvador signed up in 2009. Within Brazil, it became the inspiration for the Platform for Urban Centres, which aims to reduce disparities that affect children and adolescents living in large cities.

The impetus for collaboration can come from the community itself. Shack/Slum Dwellers International (SDI) is a global alliance of 34 national federations of community-based organizations in developing countries. SDI represents associations of the urban poor that have come together to work towards secure habitats, basic amenities and safer neighbourhoods in dialogue with local and national governments. The movement is founded on empowering women, and children's interests rank high on the agenda.

'Bottom-up' approaches are prevalent in many cities. Civil society organizations and community institutions – including, among others, houses of worship – are often closest to the issues of greatest importance to the most excluded communities. These issues may include water and sanitation, housing, health, education and childcare. In urban settings lacking effective formal means of participatory decision-making, community organizations can enable citizens, including young people, to express their concerns. The challenge is to align the efforts of groups that work to alleviate the plight of the urban poor with those that focus on protecting the rights of the most vulnerable children.

Participatory urban planning and management

Children's right to have their views taken into account in all matters affecting them is enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Nevertheless, children are seldom invited to take part in decisions informing urban planning and design. Urban decision-making and governance on such issues as road safety, land use and air quality can have direct and adverse effects on the lives of both current and future generations of children.

Participatory budgeting, which in some cities involves young citizens in determining how a portion of the municipal budget is spent, can bring about improved results for children.² In Ventanilla, Peru, a successful pilot scheme introduced in 2008 has allowed children and adolescents, who represent a significant portion

of the city's population, to submit proposals to obtain funds for projects they choose to implement. Brazilian cities pioneered this approach more than a decade ago and although many retain participatory budgeting, few continue to include adolescents in the process.

In some cities, young slum residents are involved in surveying, documenting and mapping their urban surroundings, generating essential information for both their communities and municipal authorities. Such initiatives have helped build partnerships with official agencies in ways that enable young people to play a part in influencing the planning, finance and management of urban infrastructure. Children's community mapping has proved successful in pinpointing local needs and resources in places as diverse as Kolkata, India; Nairobi, Kenya; Karachi, Pakistan; and Cape Town, South Africa.

Participatory approaches are not without their challenges. It may be difficult to ensure that the most marginalized children are adequately represented, and careful planning is needed to ensure that participation is not tokenistic. Coordination is further complicated by the fragmentation of service delivery. Agencies responsible for water, sanitation, waste management, pollution control or public transport may not explicitly give consideration to children as users and may lack expertise in appropriate approaches.

Nevertheless, the critical mass and dynamic social exchange characteristic of urban environments can provide singular opportunities for children. A healthy and vibrant city opens avenues to varied educational options; recreational, social and cultural choices; civic engagement; women's empowerment and youth employment, among other benefits and opportunities. Young people can be involved in micro-planning community water and sanitation models, or they may take part in civil society networks that protect children from exploitation. Children's participation can both help guarantee their rights to basic services and protection and contribute to their development as active members of society.



BUILDING CHILDREN'S LIVES TO BUILD A CITY

by José Clodoveu de Arruda Coelho Neto,
Mayor, Sobral Municipality, Brazil

Urban growth adds to the challenges of ensuring that people can enjoy an adequate standard of living.

In Sobral, a municipality in the northwest of the state of Ceara and home to more than 188,000 people, serious efforts have been made to include an expanding population in the labour market, schools, housing and all the social and economic aspects of daily life.

Almost 70,000 people – just over a third of Sobral's population – are not yet 19. With the right policies and services, we can play a part in creating an environment in which they can thrive and build healthy, fulfilling lives.

Although enabling children to realize their rights is part of our mandate, success can also bring long-term rewards. Today's beneficiaries are likely to become tomorrow's benefactors, contributing to stronger, more cohesive communities.

So much needs to be done. An increasing population puts existing resources under strain. Poverty and inequality create a sense of helplessness and frustration, which in turn often leads to crime and violence – daily realities in urban centres across the region – complicating the already complex process of fostering an environment where children can grow. It is difficult not to notice the factors that make young people especially susceptible to violence: poor quality of life, limited opportunities for development and recreation, and an absence of viable prospects.

Of course, an environment conducive to child well-being cannot be created through sporadic, isolated actions. We need a comprehensive, concerted approach to policymaking as well as integral service delivery. Our achievements in improving the lives of children and youth have earned us the UNICEF Municipal Seal of Approval every time it has been issued: in 2000, 2002, 2004, 2006 and 2008.

Sobral is pursuing a series of interconnected initiatives to enable all its children, regardless of background, to have access to appropriate tools to fully develop their capacities. We have steadily focused on enhancing education, chiefly by renovating school facilities and providing continuous coaching to teachers – efforts rewarded by improved results in national tests. We are working to extend access to other forms of training, for example through a planned partnership with the Palace of Sciences and Foreign Languages to deliver language and information technology programmes. This would build on successful initiatives already in place. The School of Music offers complementary courses in a variety of musical instruments to nearly 650 students, largely from public schools. The School Workshop of Arts and Professions provides training in such professional skills as preserving the city's historical heritage. In addition, more than 10,000 of our students participate in after-school sports and tutorial classes under Second Round, a federal government project.

Our municipality also recognizes the educational and social benefits of sports – especially their contribution to building decision-making skills, respect for diversity and confidence among young people. Our Social Nucleus of Sports Initiation programme allows children and adolescents to practice sports by making existing sports facilities in all districts of the city available and accessible to them. We also partner with child rights advocates and a local business to promote the participation of marginalized youth in cultural workshops and training programmes. Many of these young people are adolescents who are excluded because they have experienced drug addiction, pregnancy or sexual abuse.

Beyond the numbers and formal initiatives, individual stories tell us that our efforts help adolescents make positive decisions to the benefit of their communities. I remember one young man who, at a recent project impact assessment meeting, said that many of his friends had been lost to drugs and crime. He had found the motivation to succeed despite the odds. Having entered the School Workshop vocational training programme at 16, he was now, 10 years later, working as an instructor in historical restoration.

I am one of countless mayors facing similar challenges and opportunities. We all have our own insights and experiences. But some motivations are universal – the satisfaction of seeing children on the brink turn their lives around and become role models for others. This is why I believe in the unique role of local government – in Sobral and around the world.

José Clodoveu de Arruda Coelho Neto is a lawyer and professor. Politically active since his youth, he served as vice-mayor of Sobral from 2005 to 2010 and became mayor in January 2011.

URBAN HEART

Measuring and responding to health inequity

The spectrum of urban living conditions is reflected in the health of a city's residents. Despite the wide disparities in health outcomes that stem from differential circumstances, few countries routinely examine such inequities within or between cities.

The Urban Health Equity Assessment and Response Tool (Urban HEART) helps urban policymakers, communities and other stakeholders better understand the local socio-economic factors that influence health outcomes. Developed by the World Health Organization (WHO), Urban HEART is designed to tackle urban health inequities – avoidable differences in health that are socially produced rather than biologically determined. The tool serves to identify and correct policies that perpetuate these inequities – for instance, the higher rates of illness and death among the children of families in urban poverty than among those born into relatively affluent homes.

Urban HEART provides local and national authorities with the evidence they need to set priorities, allocate resources and mobilize urban communities to promote health equity. To determine which interventions are likely to improve health and reduce inequities, this evidence seeks to show not just the immediate causes of disease but also the 'causes of causes' – underlying social hierarchies and the resulting conditions in which people grow, live, work and age.

Reducing health and social inequities is complex. Implementation of Urban HEART focuses on local solutions that engage all stakeholders, consider

existing interventions and are effective and sustainable over time.

The tool is based on three essential elements:

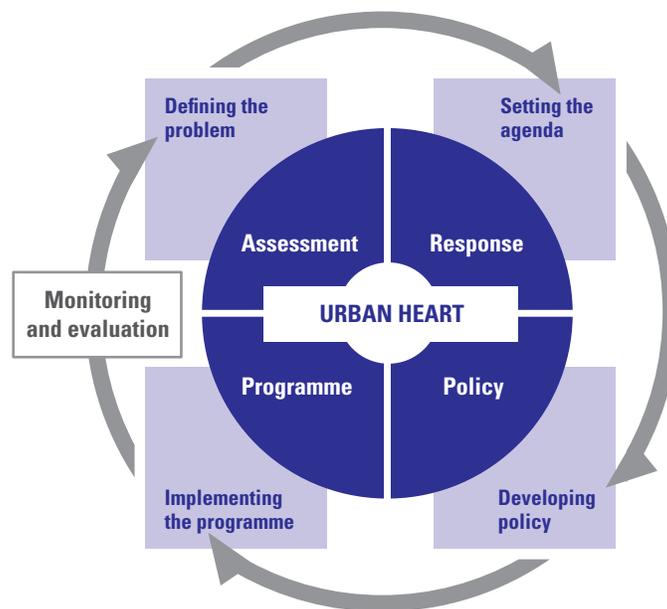
- **Sound evidence:** reliable, representative and comparable data, disaggregated by sex, age, socio-economic status, major geographical or administrative region, and ethnicity, as appropriate
- **Intersectoral action for health:** building relationships beyond the health sector in order to influence a broad range of health determinants – in particular, working with other government sectors (e.g., education, transport and public works), community groups and non-governmental organizations

- **Community participation:** involving community members in all aspects of the process, from planning, designing and implementing interventions to helping ensure that these efforts are learned from and sustained beyond the initial phase.

Urban HEART revolves around a planning and implementation cycle comprising four phases: assessment, response, policy and programme. Monitoring and evaluation take place during each phase.

Urban health inequities are identified in the assessment phase. Evidence gathered at this stage forms the basis for raising awareness, determining solutions and promoting action.

Figure 4.1. Urban HEART planning and implementation cycle



Source: WHO Urban HEART.

The response stage involves identifying appropriate responses, designating key actors, defining goals and establishing targets. This is an opportunity to engage all relevant sectors and communities in setting the agenda – determining which policies, programmes and projects should be introduced, continued, expanded, improved, changed or stopped to achieve equity goals.

During the policy stage, the most relevant interventions are prioritized and budgeted to ensure that they become part of the local government policy-making process. Success is measured by the laws, programmes and interventions implemented.

Programme implementation hinges on resources and time frames determined by local authorities. Health sector programmes implementing pro-equity health policies are complemented by other sectors’ actions to bring about health equity.

Monitoring and evaluation encompass both process and outcomes.

Core indicators

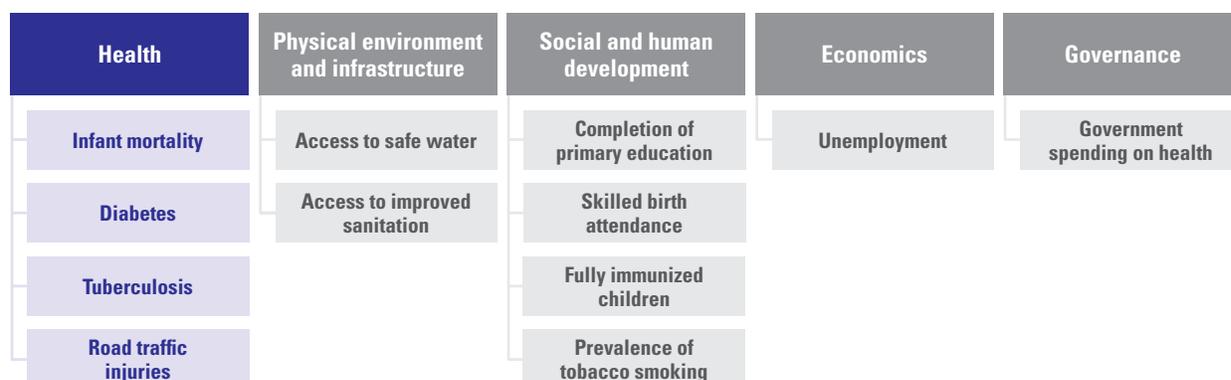
Indicators measuring selected health outcomes and social determinants for different urban population groups form the basis of the assessment component of Urban HEART. Indicators fall into two main categories: health outcomes (shown in blue in Figure 4.2) and social determinants of health (shown in grey). Twelve core indicators are used across all Urban HEART schemes, allowing comparison across cities and countries. This basic set was selected to provide a general picture of the urban health situation in any urban setting, based on generally available data, universality and potential to uncover inequity. The 12 ‘core’ indicators are complemented by ‘strongly recommended’ and ‘optional’ ones to provide an analysis responsive to local priorities and specific health equity concerns. It is recommended that

each indicator be further disaggregated by location, sex, age and/or socio-economic group.

Embedding Urban HEART

Urban HEART is primarily a tool to enhance current interventions as part of existing national and local health planning and programme frameworks. The chosen health equity solutions should be results-focused, cost-effective and timely; use available local resources where possible; ensure broad support among affected communities; and comply with national priorities. Intervention strategies include incorporating health in urban planning and development, strengthening the role of urban primary health care and promoting an emphasis on health equity.

Figure 4.2. Twelve core indicators



WHO Urban HEART was developed by the WHO Centre for Health Development in Kobe, Japan (WHO Kobe Centre), in collaboration with regional offices of WHO and city and national officials from across the world. In total, 16 municipalities and 1 state in 10 countries – Brazil, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Kenya, Malaysia, Mexico, Mongolia, the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Viet Nam – participated in the pilot scheme.



TRAFFICKED CHILDREN IN OUR CITIES

Protecting the exploited in the Americas

by Ricky Martin, UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador

There are an estimated 2.5 million people worldwide who have been trafficked into forced labour. Some 22 to 50 per cent of trafficking victims are children. The precise magnitude of the problem is difficult to ascertain because definitions vary and trafficking is a clandestine business. We do know that children are usually trafficked from rural to urban areas and that the forms of exploitation to which they are subjected – domestic servitude, sexual exploitation linked to tourism, and drug running, to name a few – are most common in highly populated places and on the streets.

For the most part, trafficking is denied or ignored – even if, by some estimates, it is a global industry with US\$32 billion in annual profits from forced labour. Trafficked children toil behind the walls of private homes, hotel rooms and sweatshops – obscure places from which most never come forward for fear of prosecution or, for those who were taken across borders, deportation.

I was moved to join the fight against trafficking when I visited India in 2002. In 2006 I launched *Llama y Vive* (Call and Live), a campaign that established and promoted prevention and victim-protection hotlines. A first for the region when it was launched, the campaign has taken root in Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico, Nicaragua and Peru as well as in the Hispanic community of Washington, D.C.

In my homeland of Puerto Rico, I collaborated with the University of Puerto Rico and the Protection Project at Johns Hopkins University on the first study of trafficking in the territory. Among other things, we learned that although the United States passed the Trafficking Victims Protection Act in 2000, there are no comprehensive local laws to combat this crime in Puerto Rico.

The testimonies we collected were heartbreaking but ultimately enabled us to recommend ways to end this noxious threat to our children and communities. One consequence of these recommendations will be the construction of a safe haven for children and young people in the coastal town of Loiza, where the incidence of trafficking is high.

To effectively address this scourge, we must begin by establishing a universal definition of trafficking. Child trafficking must be distinguished from human smuggling and the activities of organized crime. Doing so will help generate more specific data on which to base policies designed to protect children. Better information will also help ensure that people in general, and policymakers in particular, see all aspects of the problem – a key to mobilizing political support for adequate anti-trafficking legislation and enforcement.

Effective anti-trafficking laws must be passed in conjunction with work done by local protection offices. In order to do this, we urgently need governments, non-governmental organizations and multilateral agencies to work in concert to raise awareness, implement holistic training and guidance programmes for enforcement agencies and build effective systems to protect children and prosecute and punish perpetrators.

Finally, it is our responsibility to support survivors of trafficking. We must endeavour to create a safe environment that allows survivors to come forward despite the inherent difficulties. Policies must be revised to exempt identified victims of trafficking from persecution or deportation, and assistance must be provided to help their reintegration, including tracing families where appropriate. Some of these actions have already been initiated at the state and international levels.

It is easy to forget the silent and invisible – especially when they are lost among the masses in congested cities. For this reason, we must reinforce and develop effective solutions to put child trafficking at the top of the agenda. Taking action now can help address the root causes of trafficking, safeguarding children and defending their right to protection and social development.

Multiple Grammy winner, renowned international artist and UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador since 2003, Ricky Martin established the Ricky Martin Foundation to advocate for the well-being of children around the globe.

Child-Friendly Cities

The Child-Friendly Cities Initiative has generated some of the most effective models for involving children in the governance and development of their communities. In essence, cities aspiring to be ‘child-friendly’ commit to implementing the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, including through a strong participatory approach and the mainstreaming of children’s rights in budgets and policies.

Tracking improvements in child well-being over time is an important component of the initiative. It has become apparent that traditional assessment methods are not always sufficient to reveal the extant differences in child well-being across neighbourhoods within a city. More rigorous monitoring and evaluation, with children and communities playing a greater part in collection and ownership of data, are necessary to ensure equitable progress. To address these needs, the Child-Friendly Cities and Communities Research Initiative led to the development of a set of indicators and tools to assemble a wider range of disaggregated data, enabling more meaningful community engagement in local planning processes. The methodology is based on the experience of nine countries representing a variety of geographic, socio-economic and cultural contexts: Brazil, the Dominican Republic, France, Italy, Jordan, Morocco, the Philippines, Spain and the Sudan.³

Many towns and cities form children’s councils as a way to involve children in governance. This concept is taken further in the Dominican Republic, where child-friendly towns engage all schoolchildren in elections for the children’s council, using this as an opportunity to teach citizenship rights. Children can also be directly involved in decisions that affect their lives by participating in the management of school and early childhood facilities; the planning and design of community recreation areas; the assessment and monitoring of the physical environment of their neighbourhoods; and the running of children’s organizations.⁴

Non-discrimination

The right to non-discrimination is one of the four overarching principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Ensuring that all children are treated equally regardless of race, ethnicity, language, religion,

gender or any other distinction is paramount. For some children, such as those with disabilities, additional measures may be necessary to ensure equality of opportunity.

Within the urban context, an inclusive environment can be created with a focus on two major issues: space and transportation. Cities must be designed to minimize the social and structural barriers children with disabilities may face. Improving physical access to services, for example by building wheelchair ramps, is only a starting point in a strategy that must both strive for equal access for all children with disabilities and target the causes of social marginalization. The most effective initiatives are often those that enable children with disabilities to interact with non-disabled peers – in classrooms and recreational settings.

The parents of children with disabilities in Bangalore, India, found that none of the parks or playgrounds in their garden city were accessible to children with physical disabilities. So they set up Kilikili, a non-governmental organization, in order to create inclusive neighbourhood play spaces for all children, regardless of their abilities, and to involve children in the design process. The success of this initiative led to a partnership with the Bangalore Municipal Corporation.⁵

As discussed in the preceding chapters, while urban settings may offer a greater range of services than rural areas, children from poorer families or marginalized communities do not always enjoy equal access to these services. Children growing up in urban environments – especially those who live with disabilities, happen to be female, live on the street or belong to a minority – may have particular protection needs.

Nutrition and hunger

In the informal settlement of Korogocho in the Kenyan capital of Nairobi, where around 200,000 people live in crowded conditions, the combination of extreme poverty and lack of basic services threatens the health and development of children. The Korogocho Nutrition Programme involves a range of cost-effective interventions, including treatment for malnutrition, vitamin A supplementation and deworming, as well as promotion of breastfeeding and improved hygiene practices.

THE CHILD-FRIENDLY CITIES INITIATIVE

Fifteen years of trailblazing work

With nearly half of the world's children now living in towns and cities, urban planners and policymakers need to pay special attention to the rights and interests of children. The Child-Friendly Cities Initiative (CFCI) – launched by UNICEF and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) in 1996 – is the first multi-stakeholder partnership to put children at the centre of the urban agenda.

City administrations have had to face significant challenges in addressing the needs of a growing urban population. Coinciding with increasing decentralization and as part of efforts to strengthen governance, CFCI taps into the wider acceptance of community participation in decision-making to promote local accountability for children's rights.

The International Secretariat of CFCI has identified nine principal building blocks for local administrations aiming to become 'child-friendly':

1. Child participation at all stages of planning and implementation
2. Child-friendly legislation
3. A child rights strategy
4. A coordinating mechanism or agency for children
5. Assessment of policy and programme impact on children
6. A budget and resources for children
7. A regular report on the state of children in the city
8. Awareness-raising and capacity building on child rights
9. Independent advocacy for children.

While these are necessary components of child-friendly programming and advocacy, true 'child-friendliness' can only be achieved through a long-term commitment to the implementation of child rights.

The Child-Friendly Cities approach can be adapted to diverse contexts. In high-income countries, the focus has been largely on urban planning, safe and green environments and child participation. Low-income countries have tended to prioritize service delivery in health, nutrition, education and child protection. Child-Friendly Cities initiatives range from single-city endeavours (as in Amman, Jordan) to national-level networks (as in France). The potential to promote child-centred governance at the local level is leading to the spread of child-friendly approaches beyond large cities and even to rural settings, for instance in Morocco and the Sudan.

Integrated, multi-level approaches are an important feature of the Child-Friendly Cities movement. In Brazil, the Platforms for Urban Centres promote synergy among municipal and state authorities and other stakeholders in order to reduce socio-economic inequalities affecting children in the biggest cities. Children and other community members assess children's living conditions and develop a plan of action that includes performance indicators for communities and municipalities.

In the Philippines, the Child-Friendly Movement has established an accreditation mechanism for urban communities and municipalities, measuring improvements in 24 priority indicators of child well-being in the fields of protection, health, nutrition, education, water and sanitation, and participation.

In the absence of a formal evaluation mechanism, the benefits of CFCI can be demonstrated by example. In 2005, local authorities in Brazil that had earned the Municipal Seal of Approval were found to have cut infant mortality by 16.4 per cent (against 12.1 per cent elsewhere) and neonatal mortality by 8.5 per cent (against 1.6 per cent), while increasing access to early childhood education from 56 per 100 children to 63.5 per 100.

Underpinning child-friendly urban planning and programming is a human rights-based governance model that embodies the principles of non-discrimination, survival and development, and participation enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Children are recognized as rights holders who should be involved in both planning and implementation of measures that affect them. By making neglected groups more visible and granting all children a platform to secure their needs and rights, the Child-Friendly Cities approach contributes to achieving development goals with equity.



A peer educator discusses how to prevent HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases in Barangay Don Carlos, a poor neighbourhood in Pasay City, Metropolitan Manila, Philippines.

Farming within and on the fringes of urban areas – on abandoned plots, community allotments or roofs, or in sacks and containers, for example – is an increasingly important means of enhancing food security and generating income. Around half the food consumed in Hanoi, Viet Nam, in 2001 was grown in the city.⁶ Additional benefits accrue as the presence of trees and crop plants enhances urban air quality and contributes to a healthier, greener environment for children.⁷

Health

The Global Equity Gauge Alliance is an international initiative designed to target urban health inequities. For example, in Cape Town, South Africa, communities and health workers were involved at every stage of the project, which entailed reallocating health staff, running health promotion programmes in schools and piloting the introduction of dry toilets in informal settlements.⁸

In the neighbourhood of San Juan de Lurigancho in metropolitan Lima, Peru, the Stronger Voices for Reproductive Health project focuses on improving the quality and accessibility of reproductive health services for adolescent girls and other young people, many of them indigenous migrants, by consulting them on how best to deliver these services.⁹

HIV and AIDS

Engaging young people is an essential ingredient of successful efforts to prevent HIV. Take the case of *Shuga*, a television drama set and produced in Nairobi, Kenya. The show uses a plot revolving around young urban Kenyans to explore such themes as alcohol abuse, risky sexual behaviour, stigma and HIV. An assessment of viewers – adolescents and young people – found that quality popular media can be a successful channel through which to transmit knowledge and promote safer practices.¹⁰

The Brazil Active project aims to protect children who live or work on the street and therefore are at higher risk of contracting HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases. These children are particularly vulnerable to rape, sexual exploitation and drug abuse. Breaking with a legacy of mistreatment, the project involves local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in creating safe spaces, recreational opportunities and measures to prevent HIV and sexually transmitted diseases for these marginalized children and adolescents in the cities of Recife, Rio de Janeiro and Salvador. The NGOs also exchange examples of best practice and advocate for changes in public policies to address HIV prevention among children living and working on the streets.

Water, sanitation and hygiene

According to the World Health Organization, every US\$1 spent on improving water supply and sanitation produces economic gains of at least US\$5 and perhaps as much as US\$28, depending on local circumstances. Investment in hygiene promotion, sanitation and water services is also among the most cost-effective ways of reducing child mortality.¹¹

Of course, improved investment in water, sanitation and hygiene is urgently needed in both rural and urban settings. The urban water and sanitation situation, while comparatively better, is worsening as provision fails to keep pace with urban population growth.



An indigenous Wayuu woman holds her newborn daughter in Maracaibo City, Zulia state, Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. The family is participating in the Ministry of Health *Trio por la Vida* programme, which promotes birth registration, breastfeeding and immunization.

Particular attention should be devoted to extending services to slums and informal settlements. User fees, where applicable, must be kept low enough to avoid excluding the poorest. Climate change adaptation strategies, including disaster risk reduction plans and measures to increase infrastructure resiliency, should also be implemented.

Education

Access to education for poor and marginalized children, including the provision of quality schooling in informal settlements, is of paramount importance. Other forms of training, such as vocational courses, can be particularly useful for adolescents seeking to secure future livelihoods in the urban context. Whether through classroom or on-the-job training, apprenticeships or skill-specific courses such as language or computer training, vocational initiatives should aim to increase young people's employability.

Accelerated learning programmes are a practical solution for children who may have had their schooling disrupted, whether by emergency or circumstance. Such programmes offer students the opportunity to follow certified education courses on the basis of competency, not age or previous grade.

In Bangladesh, the Basic Education for Hard-to-Reach Urban Working Children project was set up to provide quality non-formal training in basic literacy, numeracy and life skills. Between 2004 and 2011, the programme reached almost 200,000 children in six cities. Evaluations showed that the project was effective in developing an appropriate curriculum and materials that were tailored to the children's needs, allowing them to overcome the limitations of their environment and receive a quality education. The project provides useful lessons for similar efforts elsewhere.

The Biratnagar Working Children's Club, in Nepal, is an example of children and young people establishing social support networks based on shared educational experiences. Graduates of the local two-year supplementary educational programme for working children established the network in order to continue regularly meeting their peers after completing the course. Since the first club was founded in 2001, the network has



Girls attending the Urban Out of School Programme in Biratnagar, Nepal. The programme offers working and underprivileged children an opportunity to catch up on their education.

grown to include over 2,000 members – more than half of whom are girls – across the whole city. The clubs raise awareness of child rights; campaign on important issues, such as exploitative labour, child marriage and trafficking; and advocate for more child participation in schools, in the community and in governance – including by working with municipal authorities to make Biratnagar a child-friendly city. Many of those who have gone on to pursue college education or professional careers return to the club to mentor their younger peers.

Mobile libraries are an effective way of making sure that all children have access to books. In Manila, Philippines, for example, library carts deliver books to working children.¹²

The Forsa (Opportunity) programme based in El Marg, a large slum community outside Cairo, Egypt, provides three months' training to young people and

helps them secure employment. Trainees are recruited via posters, roadshows and social media. The project, run by Plan International, was developed by the CAP Foundation, a public-private partnership aiming to alleviate poverty by linking the learning and livelihood needs of working children and disadvantaged youth. It was first tried successfully in India.¹³

Following the influx of Iraqi refugees into Syria – more than 200,000 people, according to 2009 data, the majority settling in Damascus – the Syrian Government opened the doors of its public schools to Iraqi children. Allowances were made for late registration and cross-border examinations. Among the obstacles encountered were the absence of school records, children's need to work to contribute to their family's income, and differences between the Iraqi and Syrian curricula. A number of innovative approaches were pursued. One involved 'education volunteers' – selected professionals



Students attend computer classes as part of the CEIBA Programme, which provides supplementary education to young people in marginalized communities in Guatemala.

from the Iraqi refugee community – whose role was to identify not only out-of-school children, but also teachers who could provide remedial classes in subjects such as English, Arabic and mathematics. The volunteers also acted as a conduit for communication between the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the refugee community.¹⁴

Child protection

The UN-Habitat Safer Cities Programme seeks to tackle violence within the world's cities, especially in Africa, by developing municipal-level prevention strategies. Participatory processes are used to establish regional plans to reduce overall levels of urban violence. The programme holds regional conferences where young people have a chance to talk with government agencies, civil society organizations, the police and magistrates to identify the causes of and possible approaches to violence among their peer group.¹⁵

The CEIBA Programme in Guatemala aims to create a protective environment to counteract the unhealthy influence of drugs and gangs on young people in poor sections of Guatemala City and nine other municipalities. The programme emphasizes a quality education for younger children, provides training in skills suited to the local job market and offers community counselling to help parents find alternatives to violent street culture.

Drug use among adolescents and young people is a growing problem in the rapidly urbanizing Sunsari district of Nepal. A local community-based organization, Kirat Yakthung Chumlung, reaches out to drug users through peer leaders with similar backgrounds and works closely with other agencies to provide vital services, such as rehabilitation, needle and syringe exchange, and HIV testing and counselling.

Project Smile in Pakistan's Punjab province offers a broad range of services to children who live or work on the street, and who may be ostracized because people associate them with drug use and other risky behaviour. A mobile team of trained health and social workers provides participants with access to services including medical care, food, clean clothes, counselling, referral for drug treatment, and training. The service also operates a drop-in centre and a peer education programme.

Communities can also help transform social habits, attitudes and practices. Simple but straightforward campaigns have helped transform such violent cities as Bogota, Colombia. Here, three campaigns – 'broken window', 'zero tolerance' and 'carrot hour' – succeeded in reducing crime rates by improving infrastructure and reducing hours for alcohol consumption.

Housing and infrastructure

Families cannot adequately support their children if they live in precarious circumstances or under threat of eviction. Evidence shows that adequate housing can protect children and families living in dense urban areas from communicable and chronic diseases as well as injuries and accidents. Good environments promote social interaction, limit psychological stress and bolster health.

The best national and municipal policies recognize that the urban poor need not only housing, but also basic services. In Brazil, for example, efforts to address a legacy of inequity and exclusion through investment in urban housing and infrastructure include the federal government's Minha Casa, Minha Vida (My Home, My Life) programme, which aims to build 3 million homes in five years while also prioritizing social provision for the poor through education, cash transfers and job creation. This initiative is one of many aiming

to turn the right to housing and ‘right to the city’ enshrined in Brazil’s Constitution and innovative City Statute into reality.

Urban planning for children’s safety

Urban planning needs to ensure that children can move safely within their environments. As noted in Chapter 2, road traffic injuries claim a disproportionate number of young lives in low- and middle-income countries. It is common for high-speed roads to be routed close to schools or through residential areas. Cities must be designed in a way that reduces risk to children. Segregating traffic and reducing speed can save lives.

Sweden’s Vision Zero road safety policy, introduced in the late 1990s, uses car-free play areas, bicycle and pedestrian lanes, and tunnels to protect vulnerable road users. Where it is not possible to separate motor traffic from others on the road, such measures as speed limits are used to safeguard pedestrians.¹⁶

Bogota, Colombia, has been implementing strategies to cater to the needs of non-motorized road users, improving public transport and significantly decreasing transit times. Between 1995 and 2002, the city introduced dedicated cycling and pedestrian-only routes, excluded cars from its centre and developed a rapid transit bus system capable of carrying 700,000 people a day. Subsequently, traffic fatalities fell by 50 per cent.¹⁷

Safe cities for girls

Sexual harassment and violence are a daily reality for girls and women in urban public spaces, and one that has been largely neglected. The risk and reality of violence limit women’s freedom to exercise their rights, as equal citizens, to education, work, recreation and political expression. Those living in poverty may be exposed to heightened risk if they walk through insecure areas to reach school or work. It is increasingly recognized that cities that are safe for women and girls are safe for all, yet municipal development and safety plans frequently overlook specific threats to women and girls.

The UN-Women Global Programme on Safe Cities Free of Violence against Women and Girls, working in partnership with five cities around the world, endeavours to find the best comprehensive approaches to prevent and reduce violence against women and girls in public spaces.¹⁸ Based on successful pilot schemes in Latin America and grounded in rigorous assessment, the initiative is developing a model to be used by local authorities and decision-makers that encompasses good governance, urban planning and political participation. Data collection is critical to the success of the initiative. The absence of reliable and situation-specific information conceals problems and hinders the development of solutions.

Notable among specific initiatives is Safe Spaces, established in Kenya in 2008 by Peninah Nthenya Musyimi, the first girl from Nairobi’s Mathare slum to graduate from university and now a women’s rights advocate. The organization creates safe environments for adolescent girls growing up in slums, providing spaces for recreation, opportunities for mentoring and a forum for discussion.¹⁹ Biruh Tesfa (Bright Future) is a government programme for girls at risk of exploitation and abuse in a slum area of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The project reaches out to girls aged 10–19, mostly migrants living away from their families, who are out of school. It provides them with a space to build peer support networks and offers tuition in literacy, life skills, reproductive health and livelihoods.



A group session at a centre for children and adolescents in Kaliningrad, Russian Federation. The facility offers counselling on drugs, alcohol, HIV/AIDS, abuse and other issues.

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Safer, more inclusive and more accessible cities can come about only if girls participate in creating them. Experts in their urban realities, girls can actively contribute to urban design and municipal decision-making – a process that, in turn, can empower them to become municipal leaders of the future.

Safe spaces for play

Play, both spontaneous and organized, is an important component of healthy development. When children play, they reap the benefits of physical exercise, develop advanced motor skills and find relief from stress and anxiety. Play also promotes children's cognition, creativity and socialization. In urban settings, public play spaces can help mitigate the effects of overcrowding and lack of privacy in the home and may enable children to mix with peers of different ages and backgrounds, laying the foundation for a more equitable society.

Facilitating play can also serve to counteract increasing rates of obesity and overweight among children, which are related not only to changes in diet but also to a sedentary lifestyle reinforced by, among other things, the loss of recreational opportunities.²⁰ Children with disabilities are at a higher risk of obesity, not least because they may have more difficulty obtaining sufficient physical exercise.²¹

WHO recommends at least one hour of daily physical activity for children aged 5–17. Urban planners and other authorities can create better opportunities for children to participate in physical activities by providing safe and accessible spaces for recreation and designing neighbourhoods, streets and outdoor spaces that encourage active transportation, including walking and cycling. In this vein, some cities in Europe, South Africa and the United States have initiated programmes to close off streets either permanently or at particular times so that children have a safe place to play outdoors.²² Examples include the Dutch *woonerf*, where closing one end of a street to through traffic effectively reclaims it for children, reinforcing a sense of community and safety.²³

Neighbourhood play spaces can be created with modest material assistance from local governments. With such support, communities can, for example, conduct mapping exercises in order to collectively

come up with ideas for creating small play spaces between residences.²⁴

Children also need access to nature. There is a large body of evidence indicating that exposure to trees, water and other aspects of the natural landscape has positive impacts on children's physical, mental, social and spiritual health.²⁵ Contact with nature has been found to restore children's ability to concentrate, which is the basis for improved cognition and psychological well-being.²⁶ Measures that bring nature and its benefits to children include tree-planting programmes in urban neighbourhoods, incorporating green areas into municipal housing and using plants, sand and water in children's playgrounds.

Social capital

Social capital is pivotal to the development of children and young people. Trust, reciprocity and a sense of belonging within their family, school, peer groups and larger community have far-reaching effects on children's opportunities, choices and outcomes in life.

Just as physical toxicity threatens human survival and well-being, a toxic social environment – for example, one in which violence, deprivation and abuse are common – can hamper the development of children and adolescents. In general, children are less mobile than adults and can exercise only limited control over their external circumstances. When growing up amid social disorder, they are likely to internalize problem behaviours, including aggression and substance abuse.²⁷ Factors that can mitigate the impact of such an environment include social support, group belonging, stable emotional relationships with parents and relatives, a sense of self-efficacy, access to education and academic support. In addition, opening public spaces to children can foster interaction between adults, enhancing social cohesion.

Cultural inclusion

Host to diverse peoples, cities spur social and cultural exchange, creating opportunities for children to experience diversity. Immigrants make up a great share of some of the world's cities. More than half the residents of Miami, United States, were born abroad, as were

nearly half of those living in Toronto, Canada, and around a third of those in Sydney, Australia; Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire; Singapore; London, United Kingdom; and New York, United States.²⁸ Unfortunately, the urban experience can be alienating, particularly if newcomers or indigenous groups are not in a position to shape urban spaces according to their needs. Planning decisions must be sensitive to cultural diversity and should cater to each group's preferences for housing, land use, facilities, services and transportation.²⁹

Culture and arts

Article 31 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child states that children should “participate fully in cultural and artistic life.” Urban areas, as heterogeneous places of contrast, plurality and interaction, in general provide opportunities for cultural exchange and entertainment for both children and adults. While schools often serve as the gateway to the arts, the community also provides a platform for cultural life. Where children of different backgrounds live side by side, municipal governments and civil society are given an opportunity to embrace and promote diversity by, for example, creating sections related to each of the cultural groups in local libraries or by guaranteeing the use of public spaces for celebrations, festivals and parades.

To promote integration, Singapore's OnePeople initiative assists underachieving students from lower-income families and strengthens bonds between children from different backgrounds – for instance, by prompting children to reflect on the experience of living in the multiracial and multicultural city-state.³⁰



Adolescents take a photograph with a mobile phone in a cafe in Tunis, Tunisia.

Technology

Although not equally accessible to all, information and communications technology (ICT) is especially important in the lives of those born after 1980. Often termed ‘digital natives’,³¹ these young people are employing technology in most areas of their lives – in the classroom, on the street and in the home.³²

Young people all over the world are harnessing the power of ICT to improve city life. For example, some are using social networking sites or community websites to help run carpools and thereby reduce vehicular traffic and its attendant ills. ICT can also be used to prevent violence. For example, computer-aided mapping of the urban environment helps protect and empower young people and allows them to remain safe by keeping in touch through their social networks. While narrowing the ‘digital divide’ that separates technological haves and have-nots is a challenge, so is ensuring the physical and psychological safety of children and young people in the face of online exploitation, cyber-bullying, invasions of privacy and Internet addiction.³³

Take Back the Tech! campaigns use technology to raise awareness about violence against women. Over the course of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence (25 November–10 December), people – especially girls and women – are encouraged to use mobile phones, digital cameras, websites and blogs to oppose gender-based violence. In 2009, the campaign was active in 24 countries and 12 languages, using audio-casts in Malaysia, tweets in Mexico and chat relays in Brazil to spread its message.³⁴

The Amagezi Gemaanyi Youth Association in Uganda is a grassroots NGO that uses technology to empower children and young people in the slums of Kampala. In addition to providing tuition in bookkeeping and marketing, the community centre in Nabulagala trains young people aged 12–25 to operate professional sound equipment and recording software in its solar-powered recording studio. Its after-school programme teaches children to use film and photography to tell their own stories and raise awareness of their situation.

UPGRADING INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS IN JEDDAH

Informal settlements pose a complex question: how best to formalize their unofficial existence, legalize makeshift homes and provide them with appropriate infrastructure and services? Often, such settlements have simply been relocated. But UN-Habitat, recognizing that socio-economic networks have taken root in these areas, identifies participatory slum upgrading as one of the preferred strategies for achieving cities without slums. This kind of slum upgrading is an extremely complicated task and is truly participatory and effective only when it incorporates the needs of children – because communities that work for their youngest members tend to work for everyone. Space Syntax Limited, an urban planning and design consultancy affiliated with University College London, has developed an evidence-based, participatory approach to upgrading informal settlements in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

Jeddah's 50-plus unplanned settlements occupy around 16 per cent of the city's area and house more than 1 million people – one third of its population. Inhabitants often lack sanitation, proper shelter and secure tenure, and they also experience inequality in the allocation of social services and amenities. Despite the challenges, these neighbourhoods do provide opportunities to prosper. Many residents are migrants who join the existing communities by setting up small businesses or working in the service industries that support the local and regional economies.

One of the biggest obstacles to developing slum infrastructure is the lack of formal land ownership. In Jeddah, the authorities are addressing this challenge through the Jeddah without Slums programme. Since 2007, this effort has been overseen by a public-private partnership, the Jeddah Development and Urban Regeneration Company (JDURC), formed specifically to facilitate legalization of land titles, improvement of local environments and increased provision of services for residents.

In their joint work, the Municipality of Jeddah, JDURC and Space Syntax have sought to address a wide range of conditions by combining scientific measurement, spatial analysis and physical intervention with community engagement and cultural considerations. Each settlement is studied, using the urban planning technique of spatial layout analysis, to understand how its problems are related to the streets, paths and other routes that knit it together and link it to the wider city. Many informal settlements are poorly connected. This complicates residents' attempts to make use of opportunities in other parts of the city and can lead to or reinforce economic exclusion, social segregation and stigmatization. Overcoming these problems involves the creation of new physical connections and the redesign of existing ones.

An upgrading plan is developed for each neighbourhood based on its unique situation and needs. These needs might

include physical changes to buildings and the public realm to improve structural soundness and comfort, or the provision of social infrastructure (such as schools and clinics) and utilities (water, energy and sewerage). In each case, care is taken to minimize the disruption caused by the construction process.

Each plan contains interchangeable options that involve greater or lesser degrees of change to the physical fabric. This allows the upgrading plan to respond to different levels and combinations of official, private-sector and community commitments of financial and political capital. Higher levels of funding allow a more complete upgrading of buildings, public realms, social infrastructure and utilities. Lower levels mean the focus will be less on individual buildings and more on shared public services (see Figure 4.3). During all stages of development, consultations are held with local residents, municipalities, traditional representatives, developers and JDURC to ensure that stakeholders are engaged and included in the upgrading process.

Child rights, unfortunately, are not always at the forefront of urban planning and – as inclusive as these stakeholder consultations seek to be – more needs to be done to listen to children's voices. The perception seems to be that conditions adequate for adults are sufficient for all. However, it is important not to treat children as a homogeneous group. Girls and boys of different ages use urban space in diverse ways, respond to it differently

and may have varying preferences and concerns regarding safety, participation, privacy and other factors. For example, small children might be happiest when they can play close to their caregivers in small spaces, but older ones will need larger spaces for activities such as ball games. Reconstruction presents an opportunity to provide children and their families with control over planning and building their environment in a way that works for them. Specific spatial design elements that need careful consideration

by planners and input from children and their families include health and safety features and accessibility.

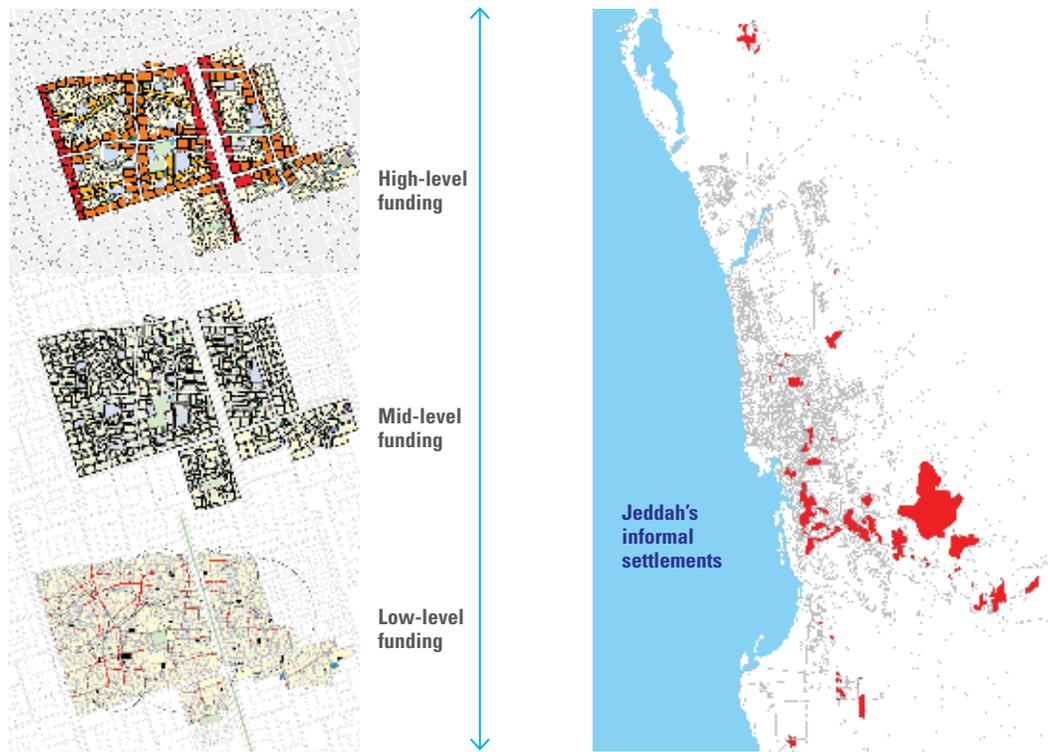
One way to facilitate children's participation as stakeholders is to ask them to collect information about their surroundings. Again, differing preferences must be considered. Some girls may be reluctant or unable to voice their opinions in a meeting where boys, men or even older women are present, for example. Children and their families can also be

included in core planning groups, where those most interested in the development of their area can represent their community and take part in decision-making.

Placing children's rights at the heart of urban policymaking, budgeting and planning would ensure that new proposals and completed projects are judged by their impact on children's lives.

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Figure 4.3. Design scenarios for an informal settlement, showing the scale of change from maximum (high-level funding) to minimum (low-level funding) intervention



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