2020 was a year of serious challenges. Governments around the world have been forced to reconsider their priorities, and to seek funding and effective ways to combat COVID-19 and the socio-economic impacts of the pandemic. Many of these challenges fell on the shoulders of local administrations.

At the same time, Ukrainian cities and municipalities participating in the Child and Youth Friendly Municipality Initiative continued to meet their obligations on the way to obtaining Child and Youth Friendly status. Moreover, in the best traditions of the Initiative, local authorities cooperated with young people to jointly overcome the crisis caused by the pandemic. Despite all the difficulties, the activities of the Initiative continued, and the challenges of 2020 have become an incentive for new achievements.
The family of the Child and Youth Friendly Municipality Initiative welcomed new members.

In 2020, 6 municipalities joined the Initiative:
- Bila Tserkva
- Baranivka
- Kaniv
- Myrhorod
- Tokmak
- Novovodolazka Hromada

7 municipalities became candidates for the status of Child and Youth Friendly Municipality:
- Mena
- Rohatyn
- Ternopil
- Kharkiv
- Berezivska Hromada
- Vakulivska Hromada
- Shyrokivska Hromada
Annual training course on youth participation ‘How to ensure active participation of children and youth in the life of the municipality’

The course consisted of three components – webinars, implementation of course participants’ own projects and the final forum. The training programme was developed for municipalities participating in the Child and Youth Friendly Municipality Initiative. However, the first stage – webinars – was open to everyone.

On the basis of the final testing, the jury selected 43 participants for the next stage of training: the implementation of the participants’ own projects. In the course finals, 8 projects joined the online lectures. Approximately 400 applicants from 30 participating municipalities registered to participate in the training course.

The three best projects received awards: vouchers for

- 75,000 € for 1st place
- 50,000 € for 2nd place
- 25,000 € for 3rd place

The vouchers can be used to produce printed materials for municipality projects.
The UNICEF, in partnership with the Ministry of Youth and Sports, launched the Children and Youth ‘Best Municipality Initiative 2020’ Award. Fifteen members of the jury chose winners among more than 70 youth projects and practices implemented during the year by representatives of Children’s and Youth Advisory Councils from various regions of Ukraine.

The three winning projects reflected the current issues facing children and youth. Firstly, young people want to take the initiative, independently suggest solutions to local authorities and implement their projects. Secondly, today’s adolescents and young people are in great need of socialization, and especially appreciate activities that provide for live communication, exchange of ideas and inspiration. Thirdly, young boys and girls are concerned about complex and deep social problems. Therefore, they relate to supporting and protecting socially vulnerable populations.
The objective of the conference was to synchronize efforts and jointly identify how to further develop an effective system of social services and protection of children's rights at local level.

The space for discussion was organized by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) with the support of the Government of Germany and the German Development Bank (KfW), in partnership with the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine, the World Bank and the Council of Europe.

The agenda of the conference included four main topics: the principles and methods of social services provision, budgeting of social services, staffing of the sector, and innovation in the social services system. The main audience of the conference consisted of experts engaged in arranging the provision of social services in the field: heads of local government, managers of departments, heads of social service providers, social workers, and academics that train professionals.

The participants discussed the challenges of coordinating the social system in municipalities with current state reforms, in particular, with the decentralization reform; sought creative solutions for quality transformation of the social services system; and exchanged effective practices.

On September 15-17, the international ‘Social Services for Families with Children in Municipalities’ conference was held, which brought together representatives of the Government, local governments (including municipalities participating in the Child and Youth Friendly Municipality Initiative), experts and representatives of international and non-governmental organizations.
In 2020, UNICEF developed business partnerships for municipalities participating in the Initiative. In particular, through successful cooperation with Unilever, more than 40,000 liters of Domestos were delivered to the municipalities for disinfection of schools to combat COVID-19.

In addition, Unilever supported the delivery of 2,000 training and information kits for prevention of the spread of COVID-19. The kits contained materials for children of all ages to learn through play about safety measures during a pandemic.

Moreover, the kits included recommendations for staff on maintaining a safe environment in schools, including information materials on disinfection in schools and at home.
Since the beginning of the pandemic, the Initiative team has been sending the municipalities weekly digests with useful materials, including the experience of governments and local administrations in other countries on combating COVID.

Before the New Year, UNICEF sent support packages to the municipalities, with masks for Youth and Children’s Municipality Councils, as well as information on youth participation during COVID-19.
In 2020, UNICEF launched twice-monthly meetings for municipality representatives to share the experiences, successes and challenges of implementation of the Initiative. This practice has had a positive impact on municipalities’ capacity to present their activities.

In addition, in 2020, UNICEF launched a new format for the Initiative’s newspaper.