Children at the Heart of the Community

Acting for Children. Acting with Children

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in cooperation with the Government of Ukraine and partners call on municipalities to join the Worldwide Child and Youth Friendly Community Movement.
20% of the Ukrainian society are children, and 27% are youth. All of them have rights as stipulated in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and Revised European Charter on The Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life, but not all of them enjoy equal opportunities. Children are our future — one can often hear this from politicians at different levels. But what are the actual actions that should stand behind these words? How should we work more efficiently for the sake of not only the future, but also the present? All children and young people live in city, village, settlement, or the newly established amalgamated communities.

To what extent do community-level decisions by authorities and the public protect the interests of children and young people, meet their needs, and take their voices into account?

We offer communities at all levels an effective tool that helps implement mechanisms to protect interests, increase prosperity, safety for children and young people, as well as promote respect for their views.
How and when did the initiative arise?

The Child and Youth Friendly Community Initiative is a global movement initiated in 1996 in the framework of practical implementation of the resolution adopted at the Second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II). Today, the initiative spans the world and already covers more than 3,000 municipalities in 38 countries on five continents. Currently, the Child and Youth Friendly Community Initiative covers 30 million children.

The first steps to implement the initiative have been implemented since 2006, with the support of UNICEF, in some regions of Ukraine. Despite its previous successes in such cities as Vinnytsia, Rivne, Lviv, Kharkiv and
others, the initiative has not been widely disseminated due to lack of decentralization reform and limited powers of local governments.

UNICEF, the Government of Ukraine, and its counterparts support the ambitious goal of attaining leadership in terms of the number of child and youth friendly communities, thus promoting the image of the country that not only respects rights of children and young people, but also makes investing in them as a priority. It is important to note that there is no place for a formal approach in this process: only those who deserve and demonstrate through concrete action will receive the honorable status of a Child and Youth Friendly Community and the corresponding logo.
THE CHILD AND YOUTH FRIENDLY COMMUNITY: WHAT IS IT?

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**A global movement** that brings together local authorities, civil society, and business to reach consensus in key areas of developing well-being for all children and youth.

**Safeguards** to ensure that there are no “invisible” children and youth in the community. Focusing on innovative solutions, the initiative stimulates social elevators and provides new opportunities for children and youth from vulnerable populations.

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**A friendly environment**, where favorable conditions for development are created and where every child and young person can fully realize his/her potential.

**Opportunity** of positioning the municipality as a place where children’s and youth rights are respected, as well as, through the UNICEF accreditation procedure, an actual prospect of attracting investment to the municipality.
Practical tool that accelerates the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and Revised European Charter on The Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life, as well as contributes to the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals at the local level. It contributes to comprehensive protection of interests of children and young people by coordinating efforts of all departments, structures, and actors.

Change of priorities in all decision-making: by joining the initiative, local authorities recognize that well-being of children and youth as well as respect for their interests are the key objectives of their activities.

Child and youth participation in community life. The initiative promotes the engagement with children and youth at all stages of local development. As a result, children and youth can constantly keep changing their community for the better.
WHY IS THIS INITIATIVE NEEDED FOR THE ENTIRE COMMUNITY?

The municipality receives powerful public and investment support, which contributes to local democracy- and consensus-building at the municipal level. Moreover, the community joins a large world-wide peer support network, which comprises municipalities from other countries.

CSOs or opinion leaders working on respect for rights of the child and youth in the community are more empowered to constructively work together with municipal authorities.

Local business, investing into social welfare and respecting child and youth rights, help stabilize the situation in the locality, ensure predictability of local development and governance processes, and gain recognition.
AREAS OF THE INITIATIVE’S ACTIVITIES

Right to health care, education, and social protection

Right to safety

Right to childhood

Right to be heard

Right to recognition, respect, and fair treatment

Depending on local issues, the municipality chooses priority aspects for its activities. Any community can, however, direct their efforts to work in all areas of the initiative.
HOW CAN ONE JOIN?

1. Make the decision to join the initiative and sign the respective Memorandum with the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF).

2. Analyze the situation of child and youth rights in municipality.

3. Select at least 3 out of the 5 goal areas that the municipality will work on.

4. Draft an action plan and the budget to be implemented in the coming years.

5. Obtain the initiative candidate logo, which can be used both in internal communication and for communicating with municipalities of other countries, partners, and businesses.
“Child and Youth Friendly City/Municipality”: in Ukraine

Vinnytsia

In 2010, even before Vinnytsia became a candidate for taking part in the initiative, the vision of “Child and Youth Friendly Community” was on the list of priorities in the city’s strategic development plan “Vinnytsia: 2020”. Making use of international experience, the community is working on a fundamentally new format of “city-children” relations. And it’s not just about additional funding for schools, interest groups, and preschools. It is important that the new approach stimulates public initiatives, and most significantly — it has established effective mechanisms to engage children into municipal development planning.

Romny

The city of Romny is partnering with the Dutch city of Vlaardingen. Dutch volunteers held a campaign in their city to raise funds for Romny Center for Rehabilitation of Children with Special Needs, which resulted in raising approximately EUR 15,000. With these funds, the city purchased rehabilitation equipment for the center.

Rivne

Activists of the “Rivne Is a Child Friendly City” group created a page in a social network, where they post links to news feeds and reports on their activities. Now the activists are advocating for the construction of the “Prestige” classical gymnasium. The initiative is also working on funding of kindergartens by the city council and through parents’ contributions, as well as on ensuring a sufficient number of places for children.
HOW CAN ONE OBTAIN THE STATUS OF CHILD AND YOUTH FRIENDLY COMMUNITY?

In the next 2 or 3 years, the municipality works to implement the action plan drawn up earlier. UNICEF evaluate its implementation. If the results are deemed appropriate, the municipality receives the honorary status of a “Child and Youth Friendly Community”.

The next step is a new cycle of work in the selected areas, as establishing a friendly community is not an outcome but a process of practical changes. Participation in the initiative proves that authorities and community members keep caring about children and youth, and they do not want to stop at what they have achieved.
Assistance by the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF)

UNICEF undertakes to provide support for the Ukrainian municipalities that have expressed their basic desire to join the Child and Youth Friendly Community initiative in the following areas:

- Situation of children’s and youth rights as per UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Drafting and Budgeting of the Action Plan.
- Facilitating the cooperation among Ukrainian municipalities and Child Friendly municipalities all over the globe.
- Children and young people participation in local development.
- Fundraising.
Various institutions can become “Safety Spots”: libraries, youth centers, medical institutions, police departments, banks, insurance agencies, small shops and big supermarkets, – to sum up, almost every place where there are people of good will who want to help children. At the entrance to each “Safety Spot”, there is a sticker, which depicts a smiling house.

At the same time, on the reverse side of the lessons schedule distributed to schoolchildren, a map indicating the entire “Safety Spots” network is printed, so it is always available to children. Children, turning for help, can choose the place where they feel calm and confident. Each year, UNICEF prepares newsletters and posters to inform students and their parents about the “Safety Spots”.

**“Child and Youth Friendly City/Municipality”: across the globe**

Slovenia
New tools to raise child rights awareness: Child rights suitcase

In Regensburg and Weil am Rhein, Germany, a Child Rights Suitcase is available at the children’s office in the municipality. It contains various ideas and methods for discussing child rights with children. It is available to teachers to use with three age groups – early childhood education settings, and children aged 9 to 12 years and 12 to 15 years in schools.

Working with local start-ups

UNICEF is launching CFCI in Ho-Chi Minh City, the country’s hub for economic growth and innovation. One of the main focus areas of UNICEF is to work closely with the private sector and the booming innovation sector focusing especially on smart cities, to create healthier and safer cities for children. The initiative has already reached out and created ties to the local start-up community within the CFCI context, although end results of this collaboration are to be seen in the future.
For more detailed information and if you wish to join the program, please, contact us:

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