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BUILDING CHILD FRIENDLY CITIES

A Framework for Action

For every child
Health, Education, Equality, Protection
ADVANCE HUMANITY

unicef 

Florence, 15 March 2004

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Building Child Friendly Cities A Framework for Action

This document provides a framework for defining and developing a Child Friendly City. It identifies the steps to build a local system of governance committed to fulfilling children's rights.

The framework translates the process needed to implement the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child by national governments into a local government process.

The concept of Child Friendly Cities is equally applicable to governance of all communities which include children – large and small, urban and rural. The framework is intended to provide a foundation for adaptation to suit all localities.

The Child Friendly Cities Initiative emerged in recognition of several important trends: the rapid transformation and urbanisation of global societies; the growing responsibilities of municipal and community for their populations in the context of decentralisation; and consequently, the increasing importance of cities and towns within national political and economic systems. The Initiative promotes the

Note: Throughout this document, the term “state” is used in reference to national governments. In the Convention on the Rights of the Child, “state parties” are the nations that have ratified the Convention. Similarly, the term “child” refers to young children, adolescents and youth according to the definition set out in the CRC, as persons aged 0 to 18.

implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child at the level where it has the greatest direct impact on children's lives. It is a strategy for promoting the highest quality of life for all citizens.

A Child Friendly City is committed to the fullest implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

So a Child Friendly City guarantees the right of every young citizen to:

- **Influence decisions about their city**
- **Express their opinion on the city they want**
- **Participate in family, community and social life**
- **Receive basic services such as health care, education and shelter**
- **Drink safe water and have access to proper sanitation**
- **Be protected from exploitation, violence and abuse**
- **Walk safely in the streets on their own**
- **Meet friends and play**
- **Have green spaces for plants and animals**
- **Live in an unpolluted environment**
- **Participate in cultural and social events**
- **Be an equal citizen of their city with access to every service, regardless of ethnic origin, religion, income, gender or disability.**

If we think of children we know, and cities we know, we can all begin to develop a vision of a Child Friendly City...

BUILDING A CHILD-FRIENDLY WORLD the process of implementing the CRC

The Committee on the Rights of the Child, the human rights Treaty Body which oversees implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), has identified what are termed “general measures of implementation” for the CRC. States must report to the Committee regularly on progress towards full implementation. Reporting guidelines from the Committee group the provisions into eight clusters and the first of these is “general measures”. These general measures – legal, administrative and other – are also the building blocks for a Child Friendly City. In preparing reports for the Committee, national governments have had to go through what is for most of them a new process of gathering information on the state of laws, policies and practice which affect children, and on the state of children themselves. In doing so, most have realised not just that they need new laws and new policies, but that they also need new government structures and new activities to promote a new visibility of children in government, a clear priority and more positive attitudes towards children throughout government and society.

Building a Child Friendly City is the process of implementing the Convention on the Rights of the Child led by local government. The aim is to improve the lives of children *now* by recognising and realising their rights - and hence transform for the better communities today and for the future. Building Child Friendly Cities is a practical process which must engage actively with children and their real lives.

It is the State which takes on obligations to children under the Convention – governments, including local governments, must lead the process. But building Child Friendly Cities cannot be achieved by government alone. There must be partnerships with children themselves, with families and with all those who affect children’s lives.

The purpose of this document is to describe the strategy for building genuinely Child Friendly Cities – a process that will come alive through the injection of working examples from real cities.

Experience indicates that the building process can start in different ways: from the top down – with an edict from the Mayor or a formally adopted governmental resolution, actively coordinated to reach all levels of administration and all corners of the city region. Or bottom up - from a small neighbourhood initiative led by children claiming their right to play and move safely in the city, which demonstrates the potential for going city-wide. In most cases there is a combination of different approaches.

The building process can develop from or pull together other child-friendly initiatives: child-friendly hospitals and schools; environmental projects to guarantee children safe water and hygiene. Children themselves, or child-led organisations, other non-governmental organisations or human rights institutions – a children’s ombudsman - can initiate a campaign.

The concept of as Child Friendly City is not based on an ideal end state or a standard model.

It is a framework to assist any city to become more child-friendly in all aspects of governance, environment and services.

This framework document outlines what we term the “building blocks” for a Child Friendly City - structures and activities of government which are necessary

to engage children’s active involvement, to ensure a children’s rights perspective in all relevant decision-making and equal rights of access to basic services.

The process of building a Child Friendly City demands political commitments – which are fundamental – as well as concerted action throughout government.

CHILD FRIENDLY CITIES a component of building *A World Fit for Children*

In the Outcome Document of the UN General Assembly’s Special Session on Children (May 2002), states commit themselves “to take action to promote and protect the rights of each child... We acknowledge that the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the most universally embraced human rights treaty in history, and its Optional Protocols contain a comprehensive set of international legal standards for the protection and well-being of children” (para.4). The Declaration and Plan of Action were adopted by consensus at the end of the Special Session (for full text see www.unicef.org).

A World Fit for Children identifies partnerships which States commit themselves to strengthen in order to “advance our common cause — the well-being of children and the promotion and protection of their rights...”. In this context it identifies, among others, local governments and authorities, which “... can ensure that children are at the centre of agendas for development. By building on ongoing initiatives, such as child-friendly communities and cities without slums, mayors and local leaders can significantly improve the lives of children.”

Thus the Outcome Document specifically highlights the contribution that the existing and growing movement for Child Friendly Cities can make. The immediate process proposed in the Outcome Document is that States should “*develop or strengthen as a matter of urgency, if possible by the end of 2003, national, and where appropriate, regional action plans with a set of specific time-bound and measurable goals and targets based on this Plan of Action...*” (para. 59).

This provides an immediate opportunity for those involved in promoting Child Friendly Cities to highlight how this concept can be harnessed and developed as a major contribution to the national process of implementing the CRC and building a world fit for children. The movement needs to ensure that it is fully represented in national discussions on the development of national and regional action plans. This process may be led by central government – promoting the development of Child Friendly Cities throughout the state – or by existing regional and local initiatives promoting their experiences as part of the national process of developing an action plan.

The building process is synonymous with implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in a local governance setting. The nine elements include:

- 1. Children's participation:** promoting children's active involvement in issues that affect them; listening to their views and taking them into consideration in decision-making processes.
- 2. A child friendly legal framework:** ensuring legislation, regulatory frameworks and procedures which consistently promote and protect the rights of all children.
- 3. A city-wide Children's Rights Strategy:** developing a detailed, comprehensive strategy or agenda for building a Child Friendly City, based on the Convention.
- 4. A Children's Rights Unit or coordinating mechanism:** developing permanent structures in local government to ensure priority consideration of children's perspective.
- 5. Child impact assessment and evaluation:** ensuring that there is a systematic process to assess the impact of law, policy and practice on children – in advance, during and after implementation.
- 6. A children's budget:** ensuring adequate resource commitment and budget analysis for children.
- 7. A regular State of the City's Children Report:** ensuring sufficient monitoring and data collection on the state of children and their rights.
- 8. Making children's rights known:** ensuring awareness of children's rights among adults and children.

- 9. Independent advocacy for children:** supporting non-governmental organisations and developing independent human rights institutions – children's ombudspersons or commissioners for children – to promote children's rights.

These activities and structures will develop systematically once the political argument has been won and politicians have accepted that building a Child Friendly City is an obligation under the Convention, and is also in the interests of all citizens, not just children now.

At present, very few states, regions, cities or even neighbourhoods can be truly said to give clear political priority to children. Placing children on the political agenda and moving them up it is generally a struggle – not least because children lack the vote.

Practical demonstrations of the importance and usefulness of involving children actively in community development can be highly influential in developing political sympathy for child-friendly policies, and these demonstrations are most likely to happen at a local or neighbourhood level: involvement of children in developing play facilities; child-friendly design of new housing, safe water or hygiene projects, traffic and transport schemes; in schools, consultations with children over curriculum and behaviour policies.

Until local government has itself adopted a clear and ambitious strategy for building the Child Friendly City, there will be a need for others to set out a vision and systematically advocate with officials and politicians and governmental bodies. Even if the

JUSTIFYING A SPECIAL CITY FOCUS ON CHILDREN

How does a city justify making children a priority?

First, because it is a legal obligation: under the Convention, States have an obligation under international law to ensure that the child's best interests are a primary consideration in all actions concerning children. Recognising and realising all other rights for children are also legal obligations, undertaken when the State ratified the Convention. Beyond the legal imperative, there are other compelling reasons why putting children first is in the interests of everybody in the city:

- Children are individual people - they have equal status to adults as members of the human race - they are not possessions of parents, products of the State, not people-in-the making.
- Children's healthy development and active participation are uniquely crucial to the healthy future of any city or society.
- Children start totally dependent. They grow towards independence only with the help of adults.
- Their dependence, and their developmental state make them particularly vulnerable - so they are more affected than adults by the conditions under

political will exists at senior levels in local government, there will be a need for additional pressure – from children themselves and from NGOs and others.

which they live, by poverty, by poor housing, environmental pollution and so on.

- Similarly, children are more affected by the actions - or inactions - of government than any other group. Almost every area of government policy affects children to some degree, either directly, or indirectly. The state of children is a very sensitive barometer to the effects of social, environmental, economic and other changes.
- Children have no vote and play no significant part in the conventional political process. Without special arrangements, they will have little influence on the huge impact government has on their lives.
- Because of their status, there are particular and serious problems for children in seeking remedies for breaches of their rights.
- Finally, it is important to avoid the huge costs to society of not attending to children: governments know from research beyond doubt that what happens to children in the early years, within the family, within other forms of care, and even before birth in the womb, significantly determines their positive, or negative, growth and development. This, in turn, determines their cost or contribution to society spread over the rest of their lives.

Where local authorities may not yet be fully supportive, there is still much that can be done by non-governmental organisations, including local community organisations. One approach could be

to set up an independent system to audit the sensitivity of various strands of government or of public institutions - schools, libraries, museums, parks - to children, establishing child-friendly indicators and awarding "prizes". This can attract media attention and political interest.

The meaningful involvement of children themselves is a necessary condition for building a Child Friendly City. Children have a *right* to be heard and to have

their views given due weight in decision-making. Continuing attention is of course needed to the nature of children's involvement and voice: consulting with children can be cosmetic, and in any case babies and very young children are going to need effective representation of their rights and needs. But the process is not sufficient, and it is not an end in itself. It is the means to achieving sensitive implementation of their rights – real practical improvements in their lives.

The foundations for building a Child Friendly City

The foundations for building a Child Friendly City are the four key principles of the Convention:

Non-discrimination (article 2) - a Child Friendly City is friendly and inclusive for *all* children. So it needs to seek out and give special attention to any children who are suffering discrimination in access to their rights. Discrimination affects children in very many different ways - children living on the streets, disabled children, children from minority ethnic or other groups, working children.

Best interests (article 3) - a Child Friendly City ensures that the best interests of the child are a primary consideration “in all actions concerning children.” A first call for children, putting children first, is the hallmark of a Child Friendly City. Most actions of city government affect children, directly or indirectly – so all departments and levels of government need to be aware of and sensitive to the impact that existing and new policies have on children.

Every child’s right to life and maximum development (article 6) - a Child Friendly City seeks to maximise the survival and development of all its children – providing the optimal conditions for childhood, for the child’s life *now*. And “development” in the context of the Convention means children’s physical,

mental, spiritual, moral, psychological and social development.

Listening to children and respecting their views (article 12) - Children are seen *and* heard in a Child Friendly City. Their active participation as citizens and rights-holders is promoted, ensuring them the freedom to express their views on “all matters affecting them” and making sure that their views are taken seriously – in government, in their neighbourhoods and schools and in their families. The process of building a Child Friendly City must involve children as active, informed participants.

Building blocks for developing a Child Friendly City

The nine building blocks or elements of this framework, set out below, are inter-connected and inter-dependent, all focused on the aim of improving the real lives of city children. The first building block – promoting children’s active participation – is fundamental to the entire process and to every other element.

1. CHILDREN’S PARTICIPATION:

promoting children’s active involvement in issues that affect them; listening to their views and taking them into consideration in decision-making processes

This is the very essence of the process of building a Child Friendly City: informing and involving children and respecting their views and experiences; recognising children as partners and as individual human beings, rights-holders and equal, active citizens. It is not enough, of course, to open up government information and structures and meetings to children. Engaging with children will mean substantial and ongoing change: changes in the form and dissemination of information, in the structures for debate and consultation, and in the organisation, timing and agendas of meetings.

The almost universal global acceptance of the Convention on the Rights of the Child has already, in just over a decade, had a profound influence in

many states on the way in which children are regarded. Listening to children and taking their views seriously – a legal obligation under article 12 of the Convention – is beginning to change relationships and slowly to transform institutions and services in a child-friendly direction.

There is already a great deal happening, in many states and many cities. Laws, reflecting article 12, are challenging traditional “seen and not heard” attitudes to children and placing duties on parents, teachers, care workers and others to listen and give due consideration to children’s views. Governments are holding special consultations with children and are in some cases seeking to build consultation into their everyday practice.

Those seeking to lead the process of building a Child Friendly City will find many examples of positive involvement – but even more room to develop new and innovative participatory practices with children.

CHECKLIST

- Is the principle of article 12 of the Convention reflected throughout city government at all levels?
- Is respect for the views of the child promoted to the public and in particular to parents?
- Is respect for the views of the child built into initial and in-service training for all those working with and for children?
- Are children meaningfully and without discrimination consulted on all matters affecting them?
- Are “specialist” groups of children consulted and

involved in “specialist” issues? (children in care on care issues; children in trouble on juvenile justice issues and so on)

- Are there arrangements to ensure consideration of the perspective of babies and very young children?
- Do children have a right to be heard in any administrative or judicial proceedings affecting them?

2. A CHILD-FRIENDLY LEGAL FRAMEWORK:

ensuring legislation, regulatory frameworks and procedures which consistently promote and protect the rights of all children

Local authorities must ensure that all aspects of the legal framework which are under their control promote and protect children’s rights. The local government needs to act as a strong advocate for children to try to ensure that legislation over which it has no direct control – national and regional legislation – does so too.

Without a clear, principled legal framework, rooted in the principles and provisions of the Convention, positive policies and practice for children are unlikely to develop except in a very patchy and so discriminatory way. On the other hand, strong legal frameworks are not useful to children unless they are known about, and properly implemented through awareness-raising and training, and where appropriate, enforced.

The key principles in the Convention, summarised

above, must be reflected in legislation. The article 12 obligation to respect children’s views on all matters affecting them and ensure they are heard in all administrative and judicial procedures affecting them is a matter for legislation as well as policy and practice.

Reviewing legislation to ensure that it promotes and protects children’s rights involves government, as well as independent and expert engagement and scrutiny. On some issues, children themselves are the real experts: who else can tell whether, for example, their participation rights are respected in the family, in their schools and neighbourhoods?

CHECKLIST

- Has there been a rigorous national review of legislation affecting children to ensure it respects the CRC?
- Has there been a rigorous local-level consideration of how national legislation affects children?
- Have local authorities reviewed all legislation under their control to ensure it respects the CRC?
- Have these reviews included an independent element and have children themselves been consulted and involved?
- In particular, are the four general principles of the CRC appropriately reflected in legislation affecting children in the city:
 - ▶ All rights to be recognised for each child without discrimination on any ground (appropriate anti-discrimination legislation and affirmative action for disadvantaged children).

- ▶ The best interests of the child to be a primary consideration in all actions concerning children.
 - ▶ The right to life and to maximum survival and development.
 - ▶ Respect for the child’s views, including the right to be heard in any administrative or judicial proceedings affecting the child.
- Has there been a city-wide review to ensure that children – including children in difficult circumstances – have access to advice, advocacy and complaint procedures to ensure remedies for breaches of their rights?

3. A CITY-WIDE CHILDREN’S RIGHTS STRATEGY:

developing a detailed, comprehensive strategy or agenda for building a Child Friendly City, based on the Convention

States have been encouraged to develop national plans of action for children (by the World Summit for Children in 1990 and by the 2002 UN General Assembly Special Session for Children). They have been urged to base them on the Convention. The Committee on the Rights of the Child strongly encourages States to develop unified strategies or agendas embracing the whole Convention. Local Children’s Rights Strategies need to be rationally linked to any such national processes. These local strategies or plans of action can act as a bridge between national planning and the city-level process which is seeking to make reality of the Convention for children.

A World Fit for Children, the Outcome Document from the 2002 Special Session on Children, highlights the importance of state governments developing partnership with, among others, local governments and authorities, helping to ensure “that children are at the centre of agendas for development. By building on ongoing initiatives, such as child-friendly communities and cities without slums, mayors and local leaders can significantly improve the lives of children” (para. 31(iii)).

Ensuring a unified, rights-based approach to all services for children at city-level demands adoption of principles, rooted in the Convention, and development of a unified Children’s Rights Strategy, ideally with goals and targets. Because so many departments and strands of government, so many different services impact on children directly or indirectly, coordination is essential. If developing the Strategy is undertaken as a cross-government exercise, the need for coordination will reveal itself in the process. The Strategy can then provide the unifying focus, defining the purpose of coordination (a dedicated unit or coordinating mechanism close to the heart of local government may be needed as the instrument to lead coordination – see 4 below).

Developing a Strategy focused on building a Child Friendly City should aim to engage children and all other citizens. Local-level processes need to be linked to national planning; they also need to be reflected at local and neighbourhood levels of government. The Children’s Rights Strategy requires continuous commitment at the highest political level in the local

government, to give it sufficient authority to really change things for children.

Going beyond statements of policy and principle, the Strategy needs to set real and achievable targets in relation to the full range of economic, social and cultural and civil and political rights for children. More than a list of good intentions, it must include a description of the process of implementation for all children in the City. A key purpose of the Strategy is fulfilling the non-discrimination principle in the Convention.

Once drafted, if the Strategy is to be influential, it needs to be well known to all those involved in implementation at municipal, community and neighbourhood level. It needs to be made available to children, translated into appropriate and accessible languages and forms and to those working with and for children.

Developing a Strategy requires considerable effort, and it is not a one-time process. The goals and priorities set in the Strategy will need to be updated, and so it should include provisions for monitoring and review. These must be able to assess the Strategy's impact on children's real lives, which of course again highlights the importance of engaging with children directly.

CHECKLIST

- Is there a state-wide children's rights strategy, promoting full implementation of the Convention?
- Is the State developing a National Plan of Action as proposed in *A World Fit for Children*?
- Are local authorities developing a children's rights strategy focused on creating a Child Friendly City?
- In developing the Strategy, has there been widespread consultation to engage children and young people, NGOs and all those working with and for children in its preparation?
- Is the Strategy based on the whole of the Convention, thus covering children's economic, social and cultural rights as well as civil and political rights?
- Does the Strategy cover all children in the city, with special attention to children who may be socially excluded or marginalised?
- Is the Strategy and the process of developing it given high priority by local authorities – for example, being adopted and promoted by the Mayor and local government assembly?
- Is the Strategy integrated with other local and national planning mechanisms, including any national children's rights strategies or national plans for children, to ensure it is not marginalised?
- Does the Strategy include specific priorities and time-limited goals, relevant to all aspects of city children's lives?
- Does the Strategy set out a decentralised process for implementation?
- Is the process of preparing the Strategy and the Strategy itself well-disseminated throughout all levels of the local governance system, to children,

their families and communities and all those living and working with or for them?

- Is the Strategy kept under effective review?

4. A CHILDREN'S RIGHTS UNIT OR COORDINATING MECHANISM:

developing permanent structures in local government to ensure priority consideration of children's perspective

The machinery of local government varies from country to country and from city to city. In any setting, building a Child Friendly City demands that children become very visible at the heart of government. One way of seeking to achieve this is to establish a high profile cross-cutting unit or coordinating mechanism. This will need to be given authority at the highest political level – direct links to Mayor's/Leader's office - to pursue implementation of the Children's Strategy, ensuring effective co-ordination, monitoring and evaluation. Such a Unit will not take over the functions of other government departments relating to children; its purpose is to ensure a children's perspective and appropriate priority for children right across government. Unless there are unified agreed aims rooted in the Convention – the purpose of the children's rights strategy outlined above - and effective co-ordination between the many departments which significantly affect children's lives, building a Child Friendly City will be incomplete.

There will also need to be co-ordinating structures between the various central departments and

with and between any more local levels of community or neighbourhood government. Too often, children's interests get lost between government departments, and very few of the intractable problems can be solved by the action of one government department alone.

Additionally, it will be important to identify contact points and key officials responsible for ensuring/developing a children's perspective in each department or area of government. This is required both for internal co-ordination across government and also for those externally who need to be able to identify who is responsible for children and their rights.

The focal point on children in local governance should become a centre of innovation and expertise on working collaboratively with children and young people themselves – putting article 12 into practice in its own structure and day-to-day activities.

CHECKLIST

- Is there an identifiable department, unit or coordinating mechanism within city government responsible for:
 - ▶ promoting the Child Friendly City?
 - ▶ ensuring co-ordination of policy affecting children?
 - ▶ drafting and following through the Children's Strategy?
- Has it been given the authority of the Mayor/Leader of local Government?
- Does it maintain direct contact with children and

ensure that children's views are respected in its work and in the work of all government across the city?

5. CHILD IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION:

ensuring that there is a systematic process to assess the impact of law, policy and practice on children - in advance, during and after implementation

Under the Convention, governments at all levels, including city governments, are required to ensure that the best interests of the child are a primary consideration in all actions concerning children. No government can know whether this principle is being fulfilled without there being a rigorous process in place to assess the impact of law, policy and practice on children.

The Committee on the Rights of the Child has promoted the concept of child impact assessment at a national level. There has been considerable international and national discussion of the concept, but very few states have yet implemented the process. It is, of course, not easy. The non-discrimination process means that the impact of laws and policies on all children needs to be assessed, with particular attention to groups of children who are traditionally marginalised. Some laws and policies will only impact, or impact significantly, on certain groups or ages of children. Laws or policies should be assessed for their potential impact, in advance of being implemented. This needs to happen as early as possible in the process of policy formulation to enable it to influence decision-making.

As possible models, there are many good examples among governments, including city governments, of working systems of environmental impact assessment, and some of gender impact assessment.

Once new policy or laws are implemented, there should be continuing assessment of the actual impact on children. And while city government needs to build these processes into policy development, it is also important that there should be independent child impact assessment, by NGOs and, where they exist, by independent human rights institutions for children (see 9 below). These innovative bodies, whose definition requires that they are established with legislative powers, should be empowered to act effectively as champions and watchdogs for children. Children's direct involvement in the process of impact assessment will be essential as children are often the only people who can accurately determine the impact of law or policy on their lives.

CHECKLIST

- Is there a process to ensure that the impact, on children generally and on particular groups of children, of proposals for new law, policy or practice which significantly affect children in the city is considered?
- Is child impact assessment carried out early enough to influence decision-making?
- Is there regular evaluation of the actual impact on children of aspects of city government?
- Do these processes of assessment and evaluation take account of the situation of all children

including disadvantaged and marginalised groups?

- Do these processes involve children?
- Are there in addition independent processes of child impact assessment and evaluation?

6. A CHILDREN'S BUDGET:

ensuring adequate resource commitment and budget analysis for children

Budgets are one particular way in which actions by a city affect children, and so budget analysis forms an important aspect of child impact assessment. The Convention on the Rights of the Child requires States to implement economic, social and cultural rights of children “to the maximum extent of available resources”. No state or city can determine how well it is fulfilling this obligation without detailed and accurate budget analysis, including a framework for examining how budget expenditures impact upon children.

As with all the building blocks for a Child Friendly City, a key purpose is to ensure that children are visible – in budgeting as in other government activities. Without that visibility, there is little hope of children getting the share that they have a right to.

Just as city government needs to act as an advocate for its children in relation to national laws, so it does in relation to national budgeting, ensuring that its children – and in particular disadvantaged children – are getting their fair – indeed ‘maximum’ - share of resources. Where the financing of key services like education and health is determined nationally rather

than locally, city government will need to consider whether the distribution of resources is equitable and what it can do to redress inequalities or discrimination in the application of resources.

The budgeting process needs to be de-mystified and made accessible to children as to all citizens, and children and young people need to be consulted.

CHECKLIST

- Is city government able to identify whether its children are receiving a fair share of resources, in services in which the distribution is administered nationally?
- Are the overall city budget and the elements within it analysed adequately to reveal the proportion spent on children?
- Is the city budget process transparent and does it involve consultation with children?
- Is a Children's Budget prepared and disseminated to indicate resources committed to children in all aspects of city government?

7. A REGULAR STATE OF THE CITY'S CHILDREN REPORT:

ensuring sufficient monitoring and data collection on the state of children and their rights

Child Friendly Cities will keep a constant check on the state of their children. Systematically collecting a range of statistics and information on the full range of children, from birth to 18, is fundamental to child-centred policy development. Ensuring that the

statistics and information are disaggregated is necessary to highlight any discrimination, for example against girls or boys, minority ethnic groups, disabled children and other groups.

The Committee on the Rights of the Child has identified disaggregated data collection as a vital general measure for implementation of the Convention. Individual government departments and any national statistical and research bureaux hopefully will be involved in developing national “state of the children” reports. City-level processes can link into this, but at a city level it may be possible to look in more detail at the reality of children’s lives and in particular at the lives of those suffering discrimination. It is important that the exercise of preparing a report not only documents available information but clearly identifies gaps in knowledge which inhibit evidence-based policy-making in the city.

If a “State of the City’s Children” Report is to assess the degree of respect for children’s civil and political rights, it will need to regard children as the experts and the only ones in a position to contribute an accurate assessment. The use of child researchers as well as children as objects of research, should be considered. Children should be involved in carrying out evaluations, assessing needs, proposing solutions and in preparing the report.

The statistics and information that are collected will then be analysed and written up, and the report published, disseminated and used as a building block for the Child Friendly City. The report should be prepared and published in forms that make it

genuinely accessible not only to key policy makers and community leaders, but also to the public and to children. Use of the internet is valuable, where it is available. Formal and regular debate should be organised among politicians and experts on the conclusions of the report.

CHECKLIST

- Is sufficient statistical and other information about children in the city collected to assess progress towards building a Child Friendly City?
- Is there a “State of the City’s Children Report”?
- If so -
 - ▶ Does it document the lives of all children, birth to 18?
 - ▶ Does it provide disaggregated information to assess discrimination against particular groups of children?
 - ▶ Is the report published and disseminated in ways which make it accessible to
 - key policy-makers?
 - children and those working with and for children?
 - ▶ Does the report document gaps in available statistics and information?
 - ▶ Is the report used effectively to inform policy development?

8. MAKING CHILDREN’S RIGHTS KNOWN: ensuring awareness of children’s rights among adults and children

Human rights, including children’s rights, must be known about to be useful. In a Child Friendly City, children’s equal status as rights-holders will be

promoted by all those working with and for them.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child assigns to States a specific obligation to make its principles and provisions “widely known, by appropriate and active means, to adults and children alike”.

And article 29 of the Convention, on the aims of education, requires education to be directed at, among other things, “the development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms”. If a State or a city is committed to build a culture of human rights, it is logical in that process to have a special focus on children. Including human rights and teaching about the Convention in the curricula of schools is an important start. In addition to the content of lessons, the ethos and the organisation of schools must reflect the Convention.

As a part of this process, initial and in-service training should be organised for all those who work with and for children – including politicians and government officials - to promote awareness of, understanding and respect for children’s human rights.

City government will need to take advice from children themselves on the most effective means of disseminating knowledge of their rights to them and to their parents and others. Partnerships with non-governmental organisations, youth groups and with the media, as they have a crucial role to play in communication and information.

Ensuring knowledge of and respect for children’s rights is an unending, life cycle task.

CHECKLIST

- Has the city developed a strategy to ensure knowledge of and respect for children’s human rights among children and adults?
- Have city leaders, politicians and key officials received training concerning children’s human rights?
- Is teaching about human rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child integrated into the school curriculum at all levels?
- Does initial and in-service training for all those who work with and for children include teaching about and promotion of respect for the human rights of children?
- Are there regular evaluations of the state of knowledge of children’s rights among adults and children?

9. INDEPENDENT ADVOCACY FOR CHILDREN:

supporting non-governmental organisations and developing independent human rights institutions - children’s ombudspersons or commissioners for children - to promote children’s rights

A city administration committed to building a Child Friendly City will have the courage to be held to account for its treatment of children.

Non-governmental organisations have in many States played a large role in improving the lives of children. Since the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, many NGOs have been established that are committed to monitoring,

promoting and protecting children's rights. In many States there are alliances or coalitions of child-focused NGOs, which come together to promote the fullest possible implementation of the Convention. The term non-governmental organisation can encompass many different groups: those committed explicitly to promote human rights, traditional child welfare groups, professional organisations, trades unions, church and faith groups and so on. Increasingly, child- and youth-led organisations are appearing, developing self-advocacy of human rights: they need consistent but non-controlling adult support.

NGOs can play an increasingly effective role in a formal, influential relationship with city government, as partners in building a Child Friendly City.

Internationally, the UN system has emphasised the importance of establishing human rights institutions to monitor, promote and protect human rights at the national level. The Committee on the Rights of the Child has promoted independent human rights institutions for children. Many states now have either children's ombudspersons or children's rights commissioners, or a focal point for children within a national human rights institution. In a few cases, such institutions exist at regional or city level. It is essential to ensure that these institutions are genuinely accessible to children where they are living.

The key to the effectiveness of these institutions is their independence in acting as a powerful watchdog or champion for children. Having appropriate

statutory powers and duties, linking them to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, makes them complementary to NGOs with the added influence that a statutory basis provides. A city government may not have the powers to legislatively establish a children's ombudsman, but it can advocate with the central government to do so.

CHECKLIST

- Has the city government developed a partnership with a broad and appropriate range of non-governmental organisations?
- Are NGOs given appropriate non-controlling support and access to influence decision-making?
- Are child- and youth-led non-governmental organisations encouraged and supported?
- Has the city established/lobbied for the establishment of an independent human rights institution for children – a children's ombudsman or children's rights commissioner?

Child Friendly Cities in a Child Friendly World

A Child Friendly City is a system of good local governance committed to the fullest implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Large cities, medium-size towns as well as smaller communities – even in rural settings – are all called to ensure that their governance gives priority to children and involves them in decision-making processes.

The Child Friendly Cities Framework provides a broad approach that will be tailored according to local needs, aspirations and practices. Adapting the Framework is a participatory process involving all concerned stakeholders – local authorities, civil society, experts, communities and, especially, children.

Child Friendly Cities translate national processes for implementing the Convention on the Rights of the Child into actions at the local level – where children live and have the concrete opportunity to influence decisions that affect their lives. The nine CFC “building blocks” lay the foundation of a Child Friendly City.

Child Friendly Cities are developing in all regions of the world. They illustrate the creativity and commitment of communities, children and their governments in making the Convention on the Rights of the Child a daily practice.



Credits : Layout by Bernard&Co.
Front cover from an original by ALTAN
Printed by ABC Tipografia, Sesto Fiorentino (FI), Italy
August 2004

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