

## City Governance for and with Children

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### Introduction

It must be difficult to be a mayor and to be continually told by every specialist that more attention is needed to that specialist's own particular area of competence. Few specialists appreciate the difficulties that mayors face in promoting change in large, complex bureaucracies. Or the limitations that most city governments face in terms of resources available for investment and the capacity to act. Or the complexities for city governments of working with government institutions or services managed by higher levels of government. It is easy for us to recommend that you follow the example of some Italian, Swedish or Spanish cities with their innovative child-friendly policies or the Brazilian city of Barra Mansa in its participatory budgeting for children, or the example from Dutch and British cities of closing through roads in residential areas to make street play for children safer – without appreciating what can and what can't be done within your own city.

What this paper seeks to do is to suggest certain principles of 'good governance' for children, drawing on examples of local governments from around the world that have addressed children's needs in new ways. It is not so much 'what was done' as the principles behind these actions that can be transferred from city to city.

### What is governance

Governance for children is both simple and complex. Simple because its goals are simple – to ensure adequate provision and protection for children. Complex because this requires action on many fronts (water, sanitation, drainage, schools, housing, parks, public transport, justice system, waste management, pollution control.....) from many agencies that may never have considered their responsibilities to children:

- The institution responsible for pollution control may give little thought to the permanent impairment that certain pollutants can cause to children's developing brains or bodies.
- The agency responsible for roads and highways may have little idea of where most deaths and injuries on the roads are occurring or how their improvement may even contribute to more deaths and injuries.
- The water and sanitation agency may have no information on the health burden to the city's population coming from diarrhoeal diseases or intestinal worms (whose impacts are primarily to its children) that are linked to provision for water and sanitation – yet have nothing to do with the quality of the water in the pipes.<sup>1</sup>
- The police and the agencies who manage parks and other public spaces may never have talked to each other about the management of public space from a perspective of supporting children's development (and meeting children's priorities). Indeed, does the department responsible for managing public space have anyone on their staff that knows the tremendous importance for children's physical, mental and social development of appropriate spaces for play and social interaction?<sup>2</sup>

City governments have a major influence on the health, development and life-chances of the infants, children and youth within their jurisdiction. But it is difficult to recognize and respond to the multiple influences that their decisions, institutions, policies, regulations and resource

allocations have on children. The key role that local government has in shaping the quality of children's everyday environments through their role in ensuring or supervising provision for water, sanitation and drainage is obvious. So too is their role in ensuring the availability of day-care provision and schools and health care services (with the needed provision for children of all ages and pregnant mothers) – although national or provincial agencies may be responsible for many of these. But the policies, plans and regulatory frameworks of city authorities generally have important influences on the quality and price of housing (with all the implications this has for children's development), on the availability of emergency services, on provision for roads and paths and (directly or indirectly) on the availability, accessibility and quality of public transport and public space. Urban governments influence the possibilities for older children to work (or inhibit them from doing so); they generally have important influences on policing and courts and how these work with young people. Urban governments often have the primary responsibility for minimizing the differences in life-threatening and health-threatening risks between districts – so infant or child mortality rates are not 5-20 times higher in low income districts compared to high income districts (which they often are in poorly governed cities).<sup>3</sup>

Good governance for children means having a set of public institutions within each locality:

- that are clear about their roles and responsibilities with regard to children;
- that do so in ways that are accountable to local populations;
- that fit within other government institutions and tasks; and
- that understand the implications of their actions and investments for children.

It needs the different public agencies that work within any city to have a coherent shared understanding of the needs and priorities of children and youth - backed by appropriate information systems, legal frameworks and financial mechanisms.

### **From good government to good governance**

Evaluations of 'good government' centre on the performance of government institutions; evaluations of good governance are broader because they also evaluate the quality of the relationship between government institutions and 'civil society' – including citizens, community organizations and local non-government organizations. This shift from good government to good governance is not an easy shift for any government institution. Even if regular public consultations are held (for instance, city fora), it is easier for city governments to listen than to act on what they hear. In addition, many of the suggestions and requests voiced by citizens may be the responsibilities of national or state/provincial agencies, not local governments. But city governments that provide room for involving their citizens and civil society organizations in the 'governance' of the city get much in return. Suddenly, solutions appear to what previously seemed impossible or too expensive. The city of Ilo in Peru lacked the funding for needed investments in infrastructure so it set up a system where government funds were available to match and support the investments and actions of neighbourhood committees – and the result was that public investments went much further and that major improvements were made in infrastructure and the quality of the city, despite rapid population growth. Over a 20-year period, with consistent support for 'good governance' centred on partnerships between municipal agencies and neighbourhood organizations, the quality of the city was transformed.<sup>4</sup> The city of Porto Alegre in Brazil is famous for developing 'participatory budgeting' where public forums in each neighbourhood each year discuss the priorities in that neighbourhood and set priorities for government investment – and monitor whether their priorities are followed. The city also publishes all details of its budget so every citizen knows how much funding is available and how it is allocated. It is no coincidence that Porto Alegre is also one of the most successful cities in Latin America in terms of attracting foreign investment and that its quality of life (with an life expectancy of 76 years) ranks as one of the best.<sup>5</sup> Many of the cities that have achieved a good quality of life in Europe and South America (or the greatest improvements) have done this on the basis of 'local agenda 21s', long-range environmental plans and investment programmes developed through extensive public consultation and public, private and community action.<sup>6</sup>

Good local governance provides a web of institutions to ensure provision, protection and participation that serve all citizens. For instance, water of drinking quality piped to all homes and sanitation and electricity 24 hours a day and garbage collected regularly - with the costs of these representing a small and affordable fraction of household incomes. Schools and health centres to which even the lowest-income households have access. Emergency services available to all, when needed. Local politicians through whom demands can be made and grievances voiced. Legislation and courts that provide protection from eviction, discrimination, exploitation and pollution. Safety nets for those who lose their jobs or fall sick. Lawyers, ombudsmen, consumer groups and watchdogs to whom consumers can turn when they feel they have been cheated. Even if some services are provided by private companies or non-profit institutions, the framework for provision and quality control is provided by local governments or local offices of national or provincial governments.

Good local governance is also in part getting the right balance between good administration, good financial management (including cost-effectiveness), appropriate political support and technical competence.

### **Good governance for children**

Good governance for children is thus ensuring that there is a web of local institutions that ensure provision, protection and participation for each age group between 0 and 18. Thus, it is not simply having a special unit within city government that “deals with children’s issues” but ensuring that all departments and agencies within local government contribute to city environments and institutions that meet children’s needs.

Good governance for children is also about ensuring that children feel that city government takes their views seriously – as well as ensuring that their needs for housing, basic services, schools, health care, etc. are met. Providing opportunities for children to become more involved in city government may seem a strange idea. Many government institutions assume that their responsibilities to children are achieved through meeting their responsibilities to parents (and other adults). Yet city governments that have involved children find themselves benefiting greatly from the energy, enthusiasm and creativity that children can bring. Children can provide a detailed, cheap source of basic data about each locality in a city – for instance through support for each school to include in their curriculum an evaluation of the quality of their local environments, which also identifies children’s priorities for improving it – although children’s enthusiasm for doing this will be much diminished if city officials take no notice of their findings. Older children (or young adults), if given the support and leeway to contribute to city governance, bring amazing energy, enthusiasm and resources – but if denied such an opportunity, this same energy can manifest itself in opposition not only to government but to the law. And, as the examples of ‘good governance for children’ given later will show, engaging with children also means that children learn of the limits in what local government can do. They become more realistic in what they expect of local government. The Convention on the Rights of the Child recognizes that children’s participation is as important as provision for children and protection of children. Children may not vote, but in many cities in North Africa and the Middle East, they make up half the total population and parents’ choices are powerfully influenced by how well the needs of their children are met. The fact that they cannot vote means that the space for their participation depends on adults providing it; it is not something they can demand at the ballot box.<sup>7</sup>

Discussions of ‘good governance’ became fashionable among international funding agencies in recent years, a rather belated recognition that the quality of the projects they fund depends heavily on the quality of the government institutions through whom their funding and support is channelled. But this discussion of good governance all too often remains at the national level – perhaps because international agencies tend to deal directly with national ministries. The importance of good local governance is forgotten – yet the success of cities depends on it. City

populations (and businesses) depend on local institutions to ensure provision for most forms of infrastructure and services. For children, local governance is particularly important in that it is largely local institutions that determine the extent of provision of services, protection and scope for participation.

In any city, governance for children includes:

*Governance to ensure provision of services for children* (health care, child care, schools); special provision for children with special needs e.g. working children, street children, children with disabilities;

*Governance to ensure good quality living environments for children* (housing, water, sanitation, drainage, provision for play....). An important part of this is ensuring that low-income parents can find good quality housing;

*Governance for children and youth in conflict with the law* (street children, children working illegally, juvenile justice system, special programmes for youth to prevent their conflict with the law);

*Governance to protect children* – for instance from exploitative working conditions, violence, sexual abuse and pollution;

*Governance to make cities child friendly* – for instance recognizing the specific needs of children of different ages in schools, public transport and the management of parks, other open spaces and streets - particularly important in areas where houses are overcrowded and space for play within homes is very limited;

*Governance for children's inclusion* (in schools, neighbourhood organizations, city-wide); including systems to gather appropriate information about their needs, permanent channels for consulting them about needs and mechanisms to ensure that their views are acted on

### **The role of local government**

In most cities, much progress can be made in addressing children's needs by encouraging and supporting all the key 'players' in a city that influence conditions for children and youth to do a little more and perhaps to do it in different ways. These key players include households, community organizations, parent-teachers associations, youth clubs, sports clubs, religious institutions, schools, each public institution or agency..... As in many areas of government, one of the keys for effective local government with limited budgets is what the different local government agencies can do to encourage and support the investments, energies and innovations of individuals, households and formal and informal groups and institutions at all levels. Some suggestions and examples of local governance for children and youth are given below under the following headings:

- *Involving children in government;*
- *Creating new incentives for local action;*
- *Developing a local plan* that recognizes the needs of children of different ages and that involves them where appropriate and uses this as the basis for developing better inter-agency and inter-municipal co-ordination;
- *Improving information systems*, especially those capable of generating the kind of detailed data at neighbourhood level that allows better planning;
- *Training for those who deal with children;*
- *Learning from each other;*
- *Making all other areas of governance supportive of children, especially for low-income households with children*

### **Innovating on local governance for children and youth**

#### **Involving children in government**

There are many examples of city governments that have 'child friendly' policies and practices from a great range of countries (including Spain, Palestine, Croatia, Ecuador, Brazil, India,

Bangladesh, Sweden, Lebanon, Albania, the Philippines, Italy and the Ukraine).<sup>8</sup> Most include programmes to involve children in government – for instance setting up and supporting children’s councils with advisory powers and possibilities to review policies and projects. The city of Barra Mansa in Brazil provides perhaps the most comprehensive example of a city government that seeks to fully involve children within city government (see Box 1).

Box 1: Children as citizens: The Children’s Participatory Budget Council in Barra Mansa, Brazil A council of children and teenagers, elected by the children in the city, determines the use of a portion of the city’s budget and help ensure that children’s needs and priorities are represented within city government. The Children’s Council meets once every two weeks. The 18 boys and 18 girls on the Council are supported by specially trained co-ordinators and facilitators and also by teachers at their schools, neighbourhood residents’ associations and religious leaders. Two child councillors attend each meeting of the city council; some child councillors have also taken part in neighbourhood residents’ associations.

Each year, some 6,000 children and teenagers take part in assemblies in each of the city’s neighbourhoods in which they debate and elect their representatives. The elected representatives work in district assemblies and in turn elect district delegates – who then form the 36 child councillors. All children between 9 and 15 can take part, nominate candidates and vote; children younger than 9 and older than 15 can participate but do not vote.

Each year, the Children’s Council selects dozens of projects to be implemented – including repairs to schools and school equipment (especially the chairs and desks at which children sit), better security and improved playgrounds in low-income areas, repairs of sewers and drains and tree planting. The child councillors take great pride in inaugurating the projects funded by the budgets they control.

The child councillors also learn how to represent their peers, to prioritize (based on the resources that are available) and to develop projects with the complex and often slow political and bureaucratic process of city government. As one of the children involved in this commented, they learnt that “it isn’t a game.... it’s responsibility..... we are dealing with a city, so we have to take it seriously.”

The Children’s Council built on earlier initiatives. Prior to this, a children’s secretariat had been set up which sought to involve one child and one teenager in each department of city government, with the child representatives chosen from a school-based competition among children on the theme of how I see my city. The children’s budget also grew out of a city consultation that had sought to improve local governance. It was also stimulated by exchange visits with some municipalities in France that had established children’s secretariats.

SOURCE: Guerra, Eliana (2002), "Citizenship knows no age; Children's participation in the governance and municipal budget of Barra Mansa, Brazil", *Environment and Urbanization*, Vol. 14 No. 2, pages 71-84.

It is as important to involve children in neighbourhood-level government institutions. As the above box notes, many of the elected ‘child councillors’ were active not only at the city level but also in their neighbourhoods. It must also be remembered that Barra Mansa is quite a small city (around 100,000 inhabitants) which helps keep down the distance between ‘city’ and ‘neighbourhood’. In cities in the Philippines, the ‘bottom tier’ of government is the ‘barangay’ and in cities where these are small enough (including not more than around 10,000 persons), there are many examples of barangay youth councils that have gone beyond the conventional programmes of sports and environmental improvements to address issues such as health, drug abuse and child abuse.<sup>9</sup>

Providing opportunities for children to become involved in local government also means that they learn active and responsible citizenship through the opportunities to practice it.<sup>10</sup> It is obviously important to encourage children to learn about ‘responsible citizenship’ but this is not something easily taught in the abstract in a classroom. Involving children in mapping and evaluating their local environments, allowing them opportunities to discuss their findings with representatives from those agencies with some responsibility for these environments and supporting them in developing their own individual or co-operative actions teaches responsible environmental and civic behaviour. When children are involved in investigation, design and carrying out projects related to local issues, children are more likely to demonstrate responsible behaviour. This means that there is a need to include formal channels for incorporating children into school-based and community-based programmes for evaluating, planning and caring for local environments.<sup>11</sup> It is also important to link local evaluation and action with city-wide evaluation and action. For instance, in Cebu in the Philippines, there is an annual children’s congress where children of different ages report on conditions in their own locality (barangay) and put forward their priorities.<sup>12</sup>

The Growing up in Cities programme provides many examples of how to involve children in evaluating their communities, determining their priorities for change and helping to implement local improvements.<sup>13</sup> This involved local teams in a range of countries (including sites in England, Norway, the USA and Australia as well as in Argentina, South Africa, Poland and India). Perhaps surprisingly, among all the sites where the programme was active, the settlements in Argentina (a low-income district in central Buenos Aires) and India (a self-built community on the periphery of Bangalore) received the highest ranking from their children because of *their sense of social integration* (a sense of belonging in public and semi-public spaces and feeling part of the community); *the variety of places where they could meet, talk, play informal games and sports*; *a sense of safety* as they could move around under the protective eye of adults; *peer-gathering places* where children had spaces, corners and niches of their own; and *cohesive community identity* (children taking pride in their community’s accomplishments and culture). Three important characteristics of these two settlements was that their inhabitants had secure land tenure, provision of basic services and a tradition of community organizing and self-help. By contrast, in many other sites, including those in nations with much higher incomes per person, the children highlighted the difficulties they had finding places to meet and to play, the many areas in their neighbourhood that they avoided because of harassment, crime or bullying and their frustration in feeling unable to get change and to get adults to listen to them.<sup>14</sup> The Growing up in Cities programme also has considerable importance for its demonstration of the need for all cities to have a network of committed people in city government and civil society organizations who are willing to press for more child-friendly urban policies.

There is also evidence that the most effective responses to youth crime and violence centre on prevention and inclusion (especially of youth in government) rather than exclusion, punishment and incarceration. Managing this means that local governments need to develop local responses that draw in and support all the key actors – parents, community organizations, schools, police, social services and businesses.<sup>15</sup> This requires a consensus on the need to give greater priority to investing in and supporting young people and their families which includes recognising and acting on circumstances that place young people at risk as victims or offenders and that exclude them from schools, employment, health care and participation in governance. One of the most important aspects of the Convention on the Rights of the Child is the guidance it gives for youth justice systems; to make these systems compatible with this Convention usually means that significant changes are needed in laws, procedures and the make-up and attitude of authorities and institutions with responsibility for managing children in conflict with the law.

One final point about examples of city governments involving children in neighbourhood, district and city government. These can help to get a city noticed – no bad thing in a world where all cities have to compete for new investments. This is not to say that city governments should involve children in government as the means to get more international investment – but certainly

the city of Barra Mansa has enhanced its international reputation through its support for children's participation. The city of Cebu in the Philippines which is well known for the support the government gives to people's organizations and where the city government has a long history of commitment to children's needs and to children's participation is also one of the most successful cities in the Philippines in terms of attracting foreign investment.<sup>16</sup>

### **Creating new incentives for local action**

There are obviously key roles for external agencies to support local government innovation. For instance, this paper mentions innovations in three sites in Brazil: participatory budgeting and the high quality environmental management in the city of Porto Alegre, the Child Participatory Budgeting Council in Barra Mansa and the Municipal Seal of Approval scheme in the state of Cear?. These and many other municipal innovations in Brazil were all supported by the new Brazilian Constitution in 1988 which emphasised more accountable, democratic and active local government; also by efforts within many parts of government at all levels to respond to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Box 2 describes the UNICEF- supported scheme in the state of Cear? to encourage local governments to better address children's needs.

#### **Box 2: The Municipal Seal of Approval in Cear?, Brazil**

Local governments in the state of Cear?, Brazil were encouraged to seek a UNICEF 'Municipal Seal of Approval' based on their performance in meeting children's needs and rights. In 2000, their performance was evaluated based on indicators of basic service delivery (the proportion of children immunized, primary school enrolment and school drop out) and on outcomes (infant mortality rates, level of malnutrition). In 2002, the criteria for judging their performance was widened to include diarrhoeal disease incidence, the availability of water and libraries in schools, the availability of services for young children and the quality of pre-natal care. The evaluation also considered local achievements for different age groups (early childhood, primary school age, early teens and adolescents) and the extent to which the different departments within the municipal government worked together (rather than each working separately). Municipal governments could apply for inclusion in the certification process; in 2000, out of 170 municipalities, 129 requested that they be considered and 26 received the 'municipal seal of approval'. In 2002, 121 were evaluated and 33 received the seal of approval. The municipalities who applied for certification were clustered in five groups depending on their level of social and economic development with the performance of each evaluated relative to the average in their group. This division into five groups meant that the municipalities with greater difficulties and less resources were not overshadowed by richer and stronger municipalities.

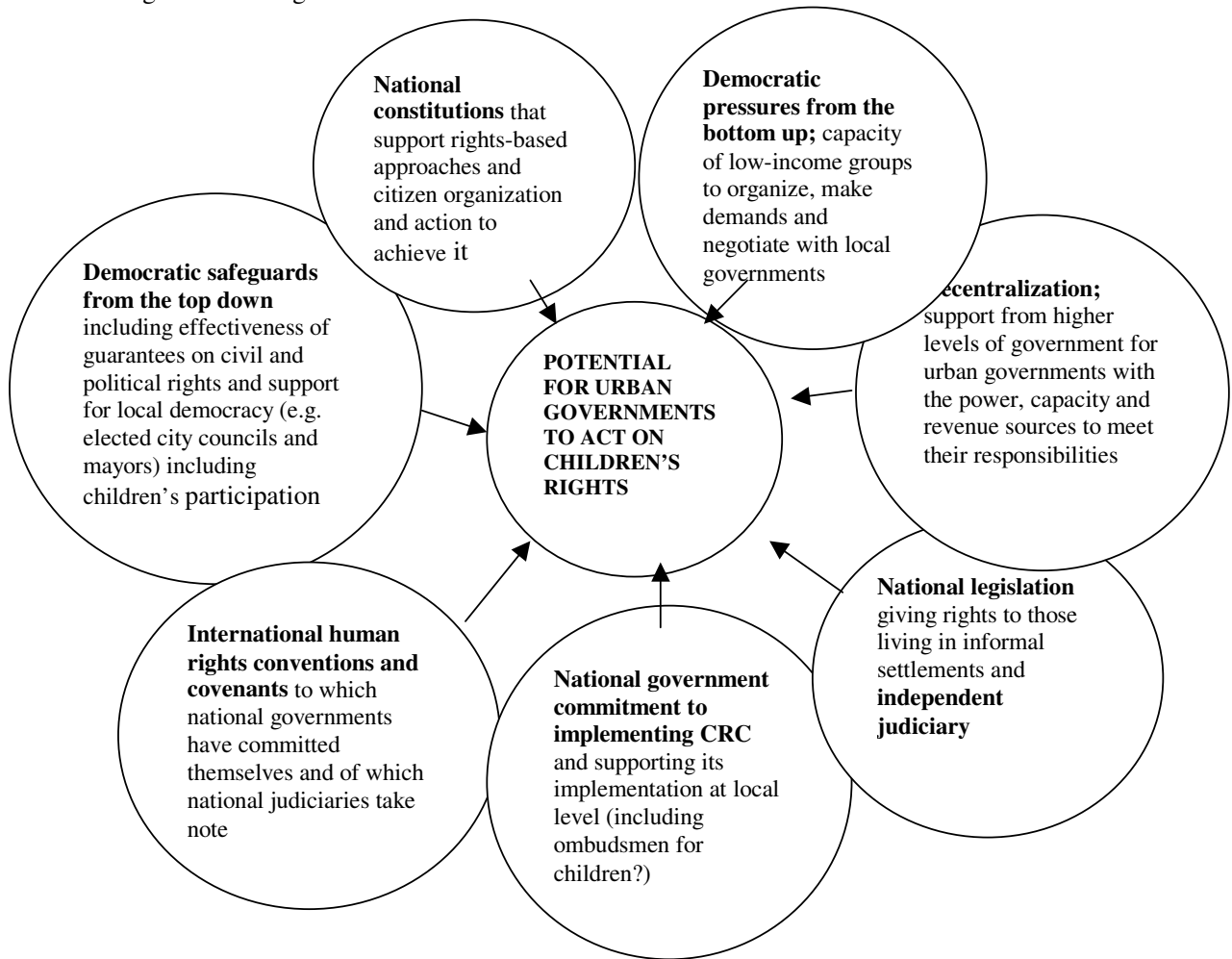
Getting the municipal seal of approval meant that the successful local governments could put an official seal on their stationary and in schools and health centres. There was no other reward. Its success seemed to be because it provided "something new in the political landscape" with mayors interested in gaining recognition as being child friendly and good managers. But this programme did require a considerable effort to provide mayors and municipal officials with guidance and materials to help mobilize efforts from the many organizations and people who contributed (including staff of NGOs and volunteers).

It also received support from the national union of municipal education leaders and the state association of mayors.

SOURCE: Fuentes, Patricio and Reiko Niimi (2002), "Motivating municipal action for children; the Municipal Seal of Approval in Cear?, Brazil", *Environment and Urbanization*, Vol. 14 No. 2, pages 123-133.

Inevitably, good local governance for children depends heavily on whether local governments have the power, resources and legislative and regulatory base they need to be effective and accountable. Figure 1 outlines the critical supports that urban governments need from higher levels of government to become more effective for children – as they provide the political, economic and legal underpinnings for local action – the framework for ‘good’ local governance.

Figure 1: The many actors that help support more effective action by local governments to meeting children’s rights



SOURCE: UNICEF - Innocenti Digest (2002), *Poverty and Exclusion among Urban Children*, Innocenti Research Centre, United Nations Children's Fund, Florence.

**Developing a local plan**

Many cities have developed their own ‘child-friendly’ plans and programmes or have had city consultations out of which child-friendly plans and programmes emerged.<sup>17</sup> This local plan needs to identify what drives local changes, including those driven by external factors from the policies of local and national governments to changing patterns of investment. As Louise Chawla notes, external factors are “transforming children’s environments, social networks, patterns of work and learning and possibilities for action and self expression in ways that are poorly understood; and children need to be involved in identifying and evaluating these changes.”<sup>18</sup>



Local plans need to review current budget allocations and the main government projects and investments from the perspective of children and youth; checking their compliance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child is one useful way of doing so.<sup>19</sup>

### **Improve information systems**

It is impossible to have a child-friendly city without good information systems – for finding out needs (including the needs and priorities of children) and what conditions are like and how they are changing. Good information systems inevitably draw from many sources. Good censuses should have great importance because they are generally the only official data source that collects information on conditions for each household. Thus, they can provide local authorities with information not only on conditions within the city but conditions in each street and neighbourhood – so investment and improvement programmes know which streets and neighbourhoods to prioritize. But how many census bureaux or national statistical offices provide local governments with census data in a form that allows them to use this in ‘small area’ planning?<sup>20</sup> Or if they do, how many years after the census was held does this information come to local authorities? There is still an assumption among many government statistical offices that they are serving national government policy rather than the policies of each local government. The recognition of the importance of local institutions and local action (or local governance) for good development and environmental management is well established. But most nations have not changed their official information-gathering systems to serve this recognition. This can also be seen among international agencies that tend to support household surveys with representative samples that can tell you with accuracy and precision the proportion of the national (or the total urban) population that has basic services or that has incomes below the poverty line. Yet they tell you nothing about where those with inadequate services or inadequate incomes live. They may serve national policy but they provide little information of use to local governments or other local agencies.

Many city authorities who find themselves ill-served by the official national statistical services develop their own information base. For instance, cities in the Philippines that are developing ‘child-friendly’ programmes develop information systems to monitor provision of immunization for children and mothers and pre-natal care, growth monitoring, school attendance and provision for working children.<sup>21</sup>

Of course, there is also a need for strong information systems ‘from the bottom up’. Even where census data are available to local authorities in a form that provides the data for each street, this gives little clue as to what underlies poor conditions. In addition, identifying where poor households are in a city is not the same as identifying children in need. The Growing Up in Cities programme described earlier is an example of how to engage young people in evaluating their communities, determining their priorities for change and helping to implement local improvements.<sup>22</sup> Box 3 gives an example of the rich and detailed conclusions and recommendations that arose from consultations with children in four sites in Johannesburg on the quality of their local environments, the places they value or fear, the problems they face and their priorities for making the city a better place in which to grow up. The recommendations themselves are very much rooted in the needs of the children in particular areas of this city. Although some of the recommendations will have relevance for all cities, they are included more to show the kinds of specific recommendations that can come from consulting children than as a general list to which cities should respond.

### Box 3: Children speak out on local conditions in Johannesburg

In four sites in Greater Johannesburg, a group of boys and girls aged 10-14 worked together during a school break to evaluate their communities. The children drew images of their daily routines and of themselves in various settings (home, school, neighbourhood). They used green stickers to show favoured places and red ones to indicate problem areas. They undertook transect walks together through their neighbourhood and located their homes on a map of the area. The groups worked together, except for some discussions where groups of boys and girls worked separately to identify and prioritize problem areas. Children worked in pairs to draw proposed solutions to problems on small cards and put these on the map. Then the whole group put stickers on the projects they felt were most important. These resulted in very detailed lists of problems in each of the four sites (with boys and girls giving their own listing of which were most serious) and an agreed set of recommendations. The findings were presented by the children to parents and representatives of city offices and community organizations. A report was also prepared and presented to the Greater Johannesburg Metropolitan Council and the mayor's office, via the Child-Friendly Cities Office. In addition to the site-specific recommendations made in each of the four sites, a series of more general recommendations was made on six themes:

#### Theme 1: Insufficient and unsafe places to play

Even when children have nearby parks and play spaces, they may not be able to use them because of bullies, hostile adults, broken equipment, littering and rules prohibiting many forms of play.

- Identify areas where there is insufficient protected and multifaceted recreational space relative to population density, and play space in the home environment.
- Train staff in parks and swimming pools to work with children to reduce harassment and violence in recreation areas.
- Work with children and local residents to identify spaces near schools and homes that can be upgraded and secured for play.
- Consider creating protected rooftop play.

#### Theme 2: Pedestrian problems

Pedestrian accidents involving children are a major public health issue.

- Establish children's routes of movement in local areas and provide frequent and safe crossings to children's amenities such as parks and schools.
- Consult children about the placement of these crossings.
- Repair faulty traffic signals rapidly.
- Provide mechanisms to slow down traffic in residential areas.
- Install adequate street lighting and prune trees that obscure lights.

#### Theme 3: Public transport

Children suffer a range of difficulties in using inefficient and expensive public systems, which often forces them to use taxis where they feel more vulnerable to abuse.

- Introduce a range of public transport types and sizes.
- Consider a single ticket for all types of public transport.
- Offer free or reduced fares to children below a certain age.
- Consider special weekend and holiday buses to take children and their families to popular recreational places.

#### Theme 4: Harassment and public safety

Children are harassed in multiple ways in their daily living environments, by other children and by adults.

- Train members of the police force to listen to and assist children, and to take threats against children seriously.
- Produce public awareness programmes about children's need for protection from bullying, harassment, crime and abuse.

- Create safe haven programmes for children with local businesses and community organizations.

Theme 5: Waste management and littering

- Waste and litter worry children. Children understand that they pose health hazards and it damages their sense of self-worth when people dump rubbish in the places where they live and play.
- Prioritize clearing litter and waste in places that children occupy.

Theme 6: Taverns and bottle stores

Children experience verbal and physical abuse from patrons of drinking establishments near their living areas.

- Zone drinking establishments away from residential areas.
- Enforce regulations against open drinking in public areas.

SOURCE: Swart Kruger, Jill with Louise Chawla (2002), "We know something someone doesn't know..... children speak out on local conditions in Johannesburg", *Environment and Urbanization*, Vol. 14 No. 2, pages 85-96.

There are many other examples of programmes that have worked with children in developing strong information bases about needs and priorities.<sup>23</sup> Much relevant information can also be drawn from other professionals, especially those that interact with children such as workers in day care centres, teachers and community health workers, especially those who provide services through home visits.

### **Training for those who deal with children**

Any city that wants to improve its performance in meeting children's needs requires people who are trained to work with children and who know how to do so within the framework of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. City governments need to invest in people who can facilitate children's participation and who can work with children. The success of the children's participatory budgetary council in Barra Mansa described in Box 1, of the Municipal Seal of Approval described in Box 2 and of the children's consultations described in Box 3 all depended on having a group of committed, knowledgeable people who know how to engage with and listen to children. These people provide the opportunity for children to engage with municipal government. They also help children to change the attitude of staff in all the different city agencies to children. They help broker new ways through which different agencies and departments can collaborate. Working with children, they have to make city officials aware of the problems that affect children most and erode deep-seated assumptions that most city workers have about children and youth. Box 4 highlights three areas where municipal policies and practices can facilitate children's participation. It highlights how it is not only training for those who work with children but also training for those in other departments who need to recognize how their work affects children.

**Box 4: Municipal policies and practices to facilitate children's participation**

*Invest in people who can facilitate children's participation.* Young people need adults to create the opportunities for them to be able to participate. This includes a team of people that can: engage with children, youth and families; network and lobby to build support for the implementation of children's ideas and more child-sensitive policies and practices; and train others to work with children in participatory ways

*Train people who work with children.* There is a need to incorporate principles of children's rights into the education/training of everyone who works with children e.g. parents, teachers, child care workers, doctors, nurses, police officers, juvenile and justice workers; also those

professionals whose decisions affect the quality of life for children such as planning officials and development agency staff.

*Institutionalise children's inclusion.* There is a need to make participatory initiatives for children 'usual practice'. There are a number of ways to achieve this such as: involving children's representatives in city government (see Box 1 for an example) and in neighbourhood associations; the creation of children's councils with advisory powers and real powers to review proposals; the creation of school- based and out-of-school curricula that involve children in the study and improvement of their local environments; the creation of certificate courses on children's rights and participation; and fixed budget lines to support the above.

SOURCE: Chawla, Louise (2002), "Insight, creativity and thoughts on the environment: integrating children and youth into human settlement development", *Environment and Urbanization*, Vol. 14 No. 2, pages 11-21.

### **Learning from each other**

It is exciting to read about 'successes' in cities. It is also important to provide those working in cities to improve conditions for children (including the children themselves) with the opportunity to learn from other experiences. But considerable care is needed since something that worked well in one country or city for children may not be transferable or replicable. Most 'successes' are rooted in local circumstances and conditions. The 'success' often owes much to changes made many years earlier that are 'invisible' or forgotten. For instance, just before and after the UN Earth Summit in Brazil in 1992, the city of Curitiba was applauded for innovation in its effective public transport system and many other areas. Yet these owed much to innovations nearly three decades earlier: a masterplan developed in the mid 1960s and the decision of the municipal authority to set up a local urban research and planning institute in 1965.<sup>24</sup> Innovations in one city can and should inspire innovations in others but it needs a strong knowledge of local context to know which elements of an innovation that worked elsewhere are worth trying in one's own locality.

### **Making all other areas of governance supportive of children**

Much of what is discussed above is about initiatives specifically for children. Of course, their effectiveness often depends on changes to institutional and regulatory frameworks, as highlighted by the paper to this Conference by Eliana Riggio. One final issue that needs stressing is that the quality and effectiveness of a city governments' policies, programmes and projects for low-income households is a very important part of their 'governance for children and youth'.

### **Making cities work with and for parents**

It is obvious that low-income households have the most difficulties in providing good quality homes for their children. The quality of housing and the neighbourhood in which it is located depend on what can be afforded. In many cities and smaller urban centres, most households that have a low income live in poor quality housing, resulting in dangers to their children (as described by the paper by Sheridan Bartlett to this Conference). Perhaps the single most important characteristic of 'good governance' for children is to minimize the child health and development gap between middle income and low-income households. In a poorly governed city, infant or under five mortality rates can vary by a factor of 20 between neighbourhoods. That is to say that in low-income neighbourhoods, twenty times more infants or children die before the age of five than in middle-income or high-income neighbourhoods. In a well-governed city, the differentials are much smaller or no longer exist. Good governance means ensuring that all housing in a city has good provision for water, sanitation and drainage and that all city neighbourhoods have health care, schools and appropriate facilities and spaces for children's play. In effect, it guarantees that 'low income' does not mean that a household with

children has to live in housing that is dangerous and that does not have basic services. Good governance is also about ensuring that safety nets are in place so households that suddenly suffer from one income-earner falling ill or losing their source of income do not plunge into poverty. It is also about guaranteeing that low-income households can afford to keep their children at school and get access to good quality health care.

This kind of ‘good governance’ might be seen as something only high-income nations can afford and something that needs sophisticated and well-developed redistributive tax systems that are politically unfeasible outside of Europe. But this is not necessarily so because there are many examples of cities in middle-income nations that have managed to break the link between ‘having a low income’ and ‘living in housing that is life-threatening for children.’ Or having programmes that move towards this. For instance, a good ‘slum and squatter upgrading programme’ can be one of the most direct means by which the quality of homes, neighbourhoods and services are improved for low-income households; obviously, good quality upgrading programmes transform conditions for the children in the area that is upgraded. So too can a programme that supports low-income households to obtain better quality housing, including building their own housing.

Much has been learnt from the experience of the last 30-40 years. For instance, the most effective upgrading programmes have been those that have worked with low-income households and their organizations in designing, implementing and managing the upgrading programme (and providing secure tenure) and that have included not only improved provision for water, sanitation and basic services but also support for households to improve their home and (where appropriate) support for strengthening their livelihoods. Box 5 provides an example. One wonders how many upgrading programmes have considered providing advice on how to make the upgraded homes safer for children; perhaps this is an area in need of development.

Another important lesson (although one still to be acted on by many governments and international agencies) is the multiple ways in which secure, better quality housing helps reduce poverty in urban areas as it can:

- ‘Increase’ incomes by reducing costs (for instance as mortgage repayments for the new unit are less than the rent previously paid to landlords, as connection to official water systems and sewers replaces reliance on expensive water from water vendors and pay-to-use toilets, as better health reduces expenditures on treatment and medicines and reduces loss of income from time off work);
- Provide households with a valuable asset base (and one that may be used to obtain credit);
- Serve as the location for income-earning activities;
- Reduce risks to health and property (as so many informal settlements are in areas at risk of flooding, landslides or other disasters);
- Provide children with a secure, stable and safe home with many positive benefits for their development;
- Provide households with the means to exercise their democratic rights and access their entitlements (citizens’ right to vote and to access official government programmes and services including getting their children into school often depends on them having an ‘official’ address).

*Box 5: The Experience of the Local Development Programme (PRODEL) in Nicaragua*

The Local Development Programme (PRODEL) in Nicaragua provides small grants for infrastructure and community works projects, and loans and technical assistance for micro-enterprises and for housing improvement. The Programme also helps to develop the capacity of local institutions to implement these. Its immediate goal is to improve the physical and socio-economic conditions of families living in poor communities. Between 1994 and 1997, it was active in five municipalities. From 1998 it became active in three more.

By the end of 1998, more than 38,000 families had benefited from the US\$10.5 million programme - 48 per cent of the total population of the eight towns. Just over half this funding was provided by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) with the rest being mobilized locally, mostly from the households taking part and the municipal authorities. Between 1994 and 1998, the infrastructure and community works component supported 260 projects (up to US\$50,000 per project) in 155 neighbourhoods with a total investment of US\$4.4 million. Among the works funded were piped water supplies, sewers and drains, treatment plants, roads and footpaths, electrification and street lighting, health centres and day care centres, playgrounds, sporting facilities, and sites for the collection, disposal and treatment of wastes. The communities contributed 132,000 days of work (volunteer and paid).

Housing improvement loans of US\$200-1,400 were provided to 4,168 households to enlarge and improve their homes, including funding for indoor plumbing, the construction of additional rooms, the upgrading of kitchens and the repair or replacement of roofs. Loans of US\$300-1,500 supported 2,400 small enterprises (most of which had more than one loan). Both loan programmes were serving low-income households. For instance, 70 per cent of the households receiving housing improvement loans had monthly incomes of US\$200 or less. Both achieved good levels of cost recovery (and low default rates) despite the economic difficulties within Nicaragua. The funding recovered through loan repayments went to support new loans. More than 60 per cent of the housing improvement loans and 70 per cent of the micro-enterprise loans were taken out by women.

SOURCE: Stein, Alfredo (2001), *Participation and sustainability in social projects: the experience of the Local Development Programme (PRODEL) in Nicaragua*, IIED Working Paper 3 on Poverty Reduction in Urban Areas, IIED.

There are also many examples of government programmes that reduced the gap between the price of good quality housing and what low-income households could afford through a combination of supporting low-income households' savings schemes, allocating land for their self-managed building programmes in appropriate locations and supporting self build. What is surprising (and evident in so many cities) is the quality of the homes and neighbourhoods that low-income households can develop themselves with low unit costs if given the appropriate support.<sup>25</sup> Particular stress is needed on 'appropriate'. For instance, in South Africa, the government has a policy of providing low-income households with a subsidy to allow them to get their own housing. The size of the subsidy is not very large; the equivalent of around US\$1,500 per household. Where this programme has provided the subsidy to low-income households that are organized in their own savings and credit scheme and land was available, the results are remarkable: good quality, four-room homes in well- designed and managed neighbourhoods. Households that were previously homeless or which had rented poor-quality insecure accommodation suddenly had their own good quality homes and neighbourhoods. This is achieved for a unit cost of US\$1,500 per household. But compare this with instances where the \$1,500 per household subsidies went to contractors to build units for low-income groups. This has generally produced very poor results; usually a house plot with a water connection and provision for a toilet but no house (or at best a very small core house) often in locations that are far from income-earning opportunities.<sup>26</sup> Limited resources go a long way if they are made available to organized groups of urban poor households, allowing them the key role in developing solutions that work for them. This also seems to be a principle that has wide transferability as is shown by evidence of comparable successes in many other nations including Thailand, India, Zimbabwe, Cambodia and the Philippines.<sup>27</sup> The example in Box 5 is interesting in that it shows a mechanism by which foreign funding can support locally-rooted innovation. The external funding (in this instance from the Swedish government) was channelled through a local institution in Nicaragua to support upgrading, house improvement and micro-enterprise development in eight urban centres. The local institution was staffed primarily by

Nicaraguans and worked in ways that were accountable to national agencies and local governments.

One final thought on governance. The quality of governance in any city can be much influenced by the attitudes of senior civil servants and politicians to ‘children’ and to ‘the poor’ and how these influence their interactions with children and ‘the poor’. Community-based organizations formed by households within the poorer areas of cities (including informal settlements) can be seen as threats to existing political stability or as potential partners in greatly improving city conditions, including progress towards more ‘child-friendly cities’. Slums and squatter settlements can be seen as eyesores in need of removal or places with tremendous potential for improvement at low unit cost (and with many examples available to show that working with their inhabitants can achieve this). Youth can be seen as sources of trouble, dissent and crime or as groups with great capacity for work and innovation. Low-income households can be seen as ‘a problem’ or as a group with capacities and resources that make them very effective partners in improving homes, neighbourhoods and cities. Of course, the ‘positive’ aspects often depend on positive attitudes from those in authority. We not only have clear evidence of the benefits of upgrading programmes in slums and squatter communities but also clear evidence of the devastating negative impact on children (and their parents) of slum clearance and forced eviction programmes.<sup>28</sup> As noted by one of the leaders involved in the South African community-managed housing programmes described above, evictions create slums, they don’t remove them.<sup>29</sup>

Many of the most successful examples of ‘child-friendly’ policies and programmes began from a mayor or senior civil servant giving a little more space or opportunity for community organizations or youth groups or low income households to try something new. When a local innovation worked, the mayor or civil servant recognized its potential for encouraging other groups to innovate. So there was an intense local process of learning from it, supporting other groups within the city to visit it and to talk to those who had developed it – and then trying comparable initiatives elsewhere in the city. This then produces an effect that has influence at city scale, not just in one or two neighbourhoods. Developing child-friendly cities needs actions and processes in each neighbourhood or micro-district that responds to the particular needs and priorities of children and their parents in that district. So it is much more likely to be achieved by supporting local processes, not through standardised city-wide programmes. Supporting local processes also means mobilizing local resources, something that standardized programmes can rarely do.

Many aspects of child-friendly cities depend on voluntary contributions within each locality by parents, teachers, health workers, the police, and of course by children and youth groups. If ‘child-friendly cities’ are seen as something that government agencies must implement, there will never be enough professional staff and resources to achieve this. But if ‘child-friendly cities’ are seen as something that government agencies achieve through support, encouragement (and sometimes guidance) for all formal and informal groups to make appropriate contributions, the resource constraints are much less serious. Barra Mansa is not a wealthy city yet it could implement the Children’s Participatory Budget Council (see Box 1). The state of Ceara with its innovative ‘municipal seal of approval’ programme (see Box 2) is one of the poorer states in Brazil. The findings of the Growing up in Cities programme reported earlier showed that it was low-income areas in cities in Argentina and India that delivered most for the children, not those in high-income nations. The Local Development Programme described in Box 5 was implemented in one of the poorest nations in Latin America. Perhaps this is the most important point about ‘city governance for and with children’. How much can be achieved if local resources are mobilized and local innovation supported? And how important for this are the resources and innovations that children and adolescents can bring?

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- <sup>1</sup> The main links being insufficient water for washing, food preparation and personal hygiene and inadequate provision for safe food preparation and storage rather than contaminated water.
- <sup>2</sup> See the paper presented to this Conference by Sheridan Bartlett on *Urban Children and the Physical Environment*; also Hart, Roger (2002), "Containing children; some lessons on planning for play from New York City", *Environment and Urbanization*, Vol. 14 No. 2, pages 135-148.
- <sup>3</sup> Hardoy, Jorge E., Diana Mitlin and David Satterthwaite (2001), *Environmental Problems in an Urbanizing World: Finding Solutions for Cities in Africa, Asia and Latin America*, Earthscan Publications, London, 470 pages.
- <sup>4</sup> Lopez Follegatti, Jose Luis (1999), "Ilo: a city in transformation", *Environment and Urbanization*, Vol.11, No.2, October, pages 181-202.
- <sup>5</sup> Menegat, Rualdo (2002), "Participatory democracy and sustainable development: integrated urban environmental management in Porto Alegre, Brazil", *Environment and Urbanization*, Vol. 14 No. 2, pages 181-206.
- <sup>6</sup> See for instance Velasquez, Luz Stella (1998), "Agenda 21; a form of joint environmental management in Manizales, Colombia", *Environment and Urbanization*, Vol.10, No.2, pages 9-36 and Roberts, Ian (2000), "Leicester environment city: learning how to make Local Agenda 21, partnerships and participation deliver" *Environment and Urbanization*, Vol.12, No.2, pages 9-26.
- <sup>7</sup> Chawla, Louise (2002), "Insight, creativity and thoughts on the environment: integrating children and youth into human settlement development", *Environment and Urbanization*, Vol. 14 No. 2, pages 11-21.
- <sup>8</sup> See Riggio, Eliana (2002), "Child friendly cities; good governance in the best interest of the child", *Environment and Urbanization*, Vol. 14 No. 2, pages 45-58 for summaries of these, within a discussion of what makes a city 'child friendly' and the legal, institutional, budgetary and planning measures needed to underpin this. Also Racelis, Mary and Angela Desiree M. Aguirre (2002), "Child rights for urban poor children in child friendly Philippine cities: views from the community", *Environment and Urbanization*, Vol. 14 No. 2, pages 97-113 for a discussion on the Philippines and Corsi, Marco (2002), "The child friendly cities initiative in Italy", *Environment and Urbanization*, Vol. 14 No. 2, pages 169-179 on Italian cities 'child friendly' programmes.
- <sup>9</sup> Racelis and Aguirre 2002, op. cit.
- <sup>10</sup> Chawla 2002, op. cit.
- <sup>11</sup> Chawla 2002, op. cit.
- <sup>12</sup> Racelis and Aguirre 2002, op. cit.
- <sup>13</sup> Chawla, Louise (editor) (2002), *Growing Up in an Urbanising World*, Earthscan Publications and UNESCO Publishing, London and Sterling VA, 254 pages.
- <sup>14</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>15</sup> Shaw, Margaret and Lullu Tschiwula (2002), "Developing citizenship amongst urban youth in conflict with the law", *Environment and Urbanization*, Vol. 14 No. 2, pages 59-69; see also Cohen, Larry and Susan Swift (1993), "A public health approach to the violence epidemic in the United States", *Environment and Urbanization*, Vol. 5, No. 2, October, pp. 50-66.
- <sup>16</sup> See Racelis and Aguirre 2002, op. cit.; also Etemadi, Felisa U. (2000), "Civil society participation in city governance in Cebu City", *Environment and Urbanization*, Vol 12 No 1, pages 57-72.
- <sup>17</sup> Riggio 2002, op. cit.
- <sup>18</sup> Chawla 2002, see reference 4.
- <sup>19</sup> See Riggio 2002, op cit; also Bartlett, Sheridan, Roger Hart, David Satterthwaite, Ximena de la Barra and Alfredo Missair (1999), *Cities for Children: Children's Rights, Poverty and Urban Management*, Earthscan, London, 305 pages.
- <sup>20</sup> See Navarro, Lia (2001), "Exploring the environmental and political dimensions of poverty: the cases of the cities of Mar del Plata and Necochea-Quequén", *Environment and Urbanization*, Vol. 13, No.1, pages 185-199.
- <sup>21</sup> See Racelis and Aguirre 2002, op. cit.
- <sup>22</sup> Chawla 2002, see reference 4.
- <sup>23</sup> See for instance Nieuwenhuys, Olga (1997), "Spaces for the children of the urban poor: experiences with participatory action research" *Environment and Urbanization* Vol.9, No.1; also *PLA Notes 42*, IIED, London.
- <sup>24</sup> Rabinovitch, Jonas (1992), "Curitiba: towards sustainable urban development", *Environment and Urbanization*, Vol. 4, No 2, October, pp. 62-77.



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<sup>25</sup> Baumann, Ted, Joel Bolnick and Diana Mitlin (2001), *The Age of Cities and Organizations of the Urban Poor: The Work of the South African Homeless People's Federation and the People's Dialogue on Land and Shelter*, IIED Working Paper 2 on Poverty Reduction in Urban Areas, IIED, London.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> See *Environment and Urbanization* Vol. 13, No. 2.

<sup>28</sup> See the paper presented to this Conference by Sheridan Bartlett on *Urban Children and the Physical Environment*

<sup>29</sup> Rose Molokoane from Shack Dwellers International.