

UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office

Child Friendly Cities

in the East Asia and Pacific Region

A Regional Overview of Modalities, Practices, and Instances to Shape Inclusive and Sustainable Cities for Children



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FOREWORD

In a region as dynamic as East Asia and Pacific, the pace of change in our cities is unparalleled. It brings clear opportunities, yet also profound challenges. Cities offer children improved access to education, health, and cultural experiences, but also expose them to safety concerns, air pollution, social and economic segregation. Challenges associated with climate change are intensified in densely populated urban areas. This is a serious concern in East Asia and Pacific, where children are already experiencing a sixfold increase in the number of climate-related disasters compared to their grandparents.

In the East Asia and Pacific region, UNICEF has been at the forefront of promoting Child Friendly Cities since 1999. Interest has been growing ever since. We engage with mayors and local governments. We give a platform to the voices and needs of children. We prioritize inclusive planning and facilitate participatory decision-making. We are guided by the Convention on the Rights of the Child in our dedication to safeguarding the rights of every child, regardless of their background, nurturing their well-being, fostering their mental and social development, and promoting a strong sense of belonging.

While we draw inspiration from global practices and experiences, we must acknowledge and adapt to the uniqueness of each local context: each community, village, town, city, and megacity. This balance between global collaboration and local adaptation lies at the core of Child Friendly Cities.

I would like to draw attention to the emphasis placed by Child Friendly Cities on children's participation in decision-making processes, recognizing them as active citizens rather than simple inhabitants. Children offer unique insights into the world of adults. When empowered, they bring forth innovative solutions to the challenges they face, thus shaping their future. Above all, a city co-designed with children is one that truly meets the needs of all its residents, today and for the generations to come. Because a city fit for children is a city fit for all.



Debora Comini
UNICEF Regional Director for East Asia and Pacific

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BHC	USAID Building Healthy Cities
CAP	Climate Action Plan
CFC	Child Friendly Cities
CFCI	UNICEF Child Friendly Cities Initiative
CFC GP	Child Friendly Cities Government Programmes
CFLGA	Philippines' Child-Friendly Local Governance Audit
CFM	Child Friendly Movement
CO	UNICEF Country Office
CRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
CWC	Philippines' Council for the Welfare of Children
DILG	Philippines' Department of the Interior and Local Government
DSWD	Philippines' Department of Social Welfare and Development
DRC	China's Provincial-level Development and Reform Committee
FYP	China's Five-Year Plan for Economic and Social Development
GCoM SEA	Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy South-East Asia
GNLC	UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities
GFA s	Mongolia's Geographic Focus Areas
HCA	Healthy Cities for Adolescents Project
HCMC	Ho Chi Minh City (Viet Nam)
KLA	Kabupaten/Kota Layak Anak Child Friendly Cities in Indonesia
LDF	Mongolia's Local Development Fund
LGUs	Philippines's Local Government Units
MCR2030	UNDRR's Making Cities Resilient 2030
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MoHURD	China's Ministry of Housing and Urban Rural Development
MOLISA	Viet Nam's Ministry of Labour, War Invalids and Social Affairs
MoWECP	Indonesia's Ministry of Women Empowerment and Child Protection
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MTR	Country Programme Mid-Term Review
NatCom	UNICEF National Committees
NWCCW	China's National Working Committee on Children and Women Office
PCF	Philippines's Performance Challenge Fund
PJ	Petaling Jaya (Malaysia)
PSN	UNICEF Programme Strategy Note
RWP	Rolling Work Plan
SBL	Viet Nam's State Budget Law
SCFLG	Philippines' Seal of Child-Friendly Local Governance
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SitAn	Situation Analysis
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats
UN	United Nations
USD	United States Dollar
UNICEF EAPRO	UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WCCW	Working Committee on Children and Women

GLOSSARY

Child refers to every human being who is below the age of 18 years, as defined by Article 1 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) ratified by all countries in the region.¹

Decentralization is a process in which authority for planning, management and resource allocation is transferred from the central government to regional or local government bodies. There are three types of decentralization: devolution is the transfer of authority to local government; delegation is the transfer of authority to semi-autonomous public authorities (e.g. housing authorities); and de-concentration is the transfer of authority to ministry departments at the subnational level.

Local governance refers to the way local decisions are made and implemented. This includes decisions regarding the mobilization, prioritization, allocation, and utilization of public resources to deliver local goods and services. Local governance is shaped by formal national, regional, and local government policies and by informal interactions and relationships among various levels of government and local actors (e.g. local government, private sector, civil society, communities, traditional or religious leaders). While decentralization is intended to formalize local governance, local governance takes place in both centralized and decentralized contexts.

Local government refers to local-level bodies and institutions created by a constitutional, legislative, or executive power for the purpose of carrying out specific functions. It includes all levels of government below the national level (or state level, in federal contexts) as well as those in rural (e.g. districts, communes) and urban (e.g. towns, municipalities). Variation of their powers and mandates exist. For example, individuals and/or units who may be appointed or elected as mayor or governors; local councillors or assembly members; technical and administrative units that deliver social services assigned to local government; and local offices semi-autonomous government.

Municipality is an administrative division (city, town, village), or local government body, having the powers of self-government or jurisdiction as granted by national and regional laws.

Social protection is a set of policies and programmes aimed at preventing and protecting all people against poverty, vulnerability, and social exclusion, throughout their life cycle placing a particular emphasis on vulnerable groups. Programme areas of child-sensitive social protection systems include: Social transfers; Social insurance; Labour and jobs; Social service workforce (UNICEF Global Social Protection Programme Framework).

Social services at the local level are a range of public services provided by the local government, private, profit and non-profit organizations. These public services aim to strengthen wellbeing of people in the community, including children, build stronger and more resilient communities, and promote equity and opportunity. Social services include the benefits and facilities such as education, health care, child protection services, police, fire service, subsidized housing, etc.

Child friendly as generic term may refer to anything (city, town, law, policy, plan, project etc) that considers and integrates the best interests of children and makes sure that needs and priorities of children are reflected to improve the well-being of children and enjoyment of their rights (UNICEF, 2022b).

Child Friendly Cities Initiative (CFCI) is a UNICEF-led initiative that supports municipal governments in realizing the rights of children at the local level using the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child as its foundation. The term Child Friendly Cities Initiative and the acronym CFCI is covered by UNICEF copyright and can be used only by cities officially recognized by UNICEF offices.

East Asia and Pacific (EAP) Region includes the following countries: Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Viet Nam, and all Pacific islands.

¹ The term "adolescents" and "youth," on the other hand, do not have a universally agreed legal definition, and may vary depending on the country or on the different institutions.





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Child Friendly Cities (CFC) have become an essential concept for the advancement of cities that cater to the needs and rights of children. Since their introduction in the East Asia and Pacific region in 1999, there has been growing interest in creating cities that are both inclusive and nurturing for children. Rapid urbanization rates in East Asia offer new opportunities while also exacerbating children's vulnerabilities, posing unknown socio-economic and environmental risks, and is a challenge for delivering adequate infrastructure and basic services. Hence, it is increasingly important to ensure that cities in the region are designed and managed to meet the needs of all residents, especially children.

This report explores the various modalities, practices, and contexts in which Asian governments, in collaboration with UNICEF are working together to set up and build child friendly cities. Central to these strategies is the vision of shaping cities that are secure, inclusive, and sustainable, ensuring the holistic development, welfare, and safety of children. The report describes experiences from the Child Friendly Cities Initiative (CFCI) led by UNICEF as well as other Child Friendly Cities Government Programmes (CFC GP) led by central governments with the technical assistance of UNICEF. The objective is strengthening child-friendly urban environments by sharing knowledge, strategies, and best practices. The report highlights the significance of creating cities prioritizing the importance of tangible results, inclusive child and youth participation, and a commitment to equity and eliminating discrimination.

The Child Friendly Cities Initiative (CFCI) was launched by UNICEF in 1996 to respond to the challenge of realizing the rights of children in an increasingly urbanized and decentralized world. CFCI is a UNICEF-led global partnership and engagement platform to support cities and communities in their commitment to achieving results for all children at the local level, using the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

as its foundation. The CFCI has been instrumental in encouraging local governments and other stakeholders to pay greater attention to meeting the rights and needs of their youngest citizens and ensuring their participation in local decision-making.

The report offers a comprehensive history of the Child Friendly Cities initiatives and programmes in the region. Additionally, it presents insights from a recent policy dialogue between children, mayors, and government officials. This conversation underscored the significance of child participation in the Child Friendly Cities process. The dialogue emphasized the role of child-friendly cities in post-pandemic recovery and highlighted children's priorities for safer, more inclusive urban environments.

The thematic focus and the nature of activities of CFC in the region vary from country to country, Malaysia, Mongolia, and Viet Nam are currently implementing the CFCI. China, the Philippines, and Indonesia have national programmes inspired at various degrees by the CFCI. The report emphasizes the crucial interplay between decentralization and accountability in the Asian context. It underscores the need for tailored, localized approaches to child-friendly city initiatives while ensuring effective implementation and monitoring.

In the countries implementing the CFCI, country offices directly work in partnership with municipalities to effectively implement various interventions to improve child outcomes in urban settings. In the countries where CFC are government-led, UNICEF mainly provides technical support to central governments on child-friendly policies, guidelines, tools, indicators, auditing, and monitoring systems.

The UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Child Friendly Cities Network is a strategic platform for promoting child-friendly urban planning and programming in the region. The network fosters collaboration, establishes common standards, strengthens child

rights and participation, encourages innovation, and optimizes resources. It addresses challenges such as disaster resilience, cultural sensitivity, and research, ensuring that child-friendly initiatives are tailored and effective.

The network also aligns with other urban initiatives like the ASEAN Smart Cities Network, UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities, UN Women Safe Cities Programme, and Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy South-East Asia, leveraging their goals to benefit children in different sectors.

In the last part, the report delves into a comprehensive analysis of the Child Friendly Cities (CFC) Initiatives and Government Programmes, based on the Country Profiles of Malaysia, Mongolia, Viet Nam, China, the Philippines, and Indonesia.

For each country, it presents a detailed snapshot of the national context, encompassing the political landscape, decentralization efforts, public finance dynamics, accountability frameworks, and urbanization trends. It traces the national CFC history, results, and partnerships in which CFC cities are engaged. It analyses the CFC implementation status, recent activities, programmatic areas, UNICEF's role and resources, strengths and opportunities, and future direction.

In **Malaysia**, the CFCI was launched in 2018 and has swiftly expanded. In 2022, two MoUs were signed with Miri and Kuching South. Petaling Jaya achieved UNICEF CFCI Candidate City status in 2022, and in 2023 three further MoUs were signed with Kuching North, Padawan, and Sibul. Thus far, 24 other local councils have announced their interest in CFCI. The future direction outlined envisions an expanding network of child friendly cities.

The CFCI started in **Mongolia** in 2012, where two CFC pilots were implemented in Khuvsgul and the Nalaikh district. In 2017, three further provinces were added and one district of Ulaanbaatar. A fourth province, Omnogovi, was then included in 2020. In 2020, the CFCI was implemented in 11 provinces. Local authorities are currently reviewing the results, lessons learned, and good practices of CFCI and producing Sustainability Action Plans to ensure the continuity of the Initiative.

In **Viet Nam**, the CFCI was launched in 2015. Although the CFCI started in Ho Chi Minh City, the city concluded its engagement in 2021 before reaching the CFCI Status. Since 2019, the CFCI has been implemented in Da Nang. Da Nang is implementing CFCI activities based on the City Programme of Action on Children 2021-2030. The future direction involves expanding CFCI to other Vietnamese cities.

China officially launched its CFC Government Programme in 2021, influenced by the CFCI. In 2015-2016, initial CFC activities were carried out in Changsha and Shenzhen. CFC was included in China's 14th Five-Year Plan and the National Programme Action for Children, and partnerships were established between UNICEF and national agencies. Since then, 54 cities from the first and second batches have been actively working on CFC as official pilot cities. By 2025, the Chinese Government has set the objective to pilot 100 child-friendly cities across the country.

The National Child Friendly City/District (CFC/D) Programme started in **Indonesia** in 2006. It began as a pilot project in Surakarta and expanded to several cities. In the first 16 years of implementation, 457 districts/cities have joined the CFC/D. The Programme is coordinated by the Ministry of Women Empowerment and Child Protection and supported by UNICEF. Recently, the Country Office has helped align the CFC/D with international standards, enhance child participation, and strengthen local government capacity.

The **Philippines** was the first country to launch CFC with the launched of the Child Friendly Movement (CFM) in 1996. However the dedicated and formal institutionalization of CFC took place in 1999 with the recognition for LGUs through the Presidential Awards for Child-Friendly Cities and Municipalities.

The CFCI is also being implemented by two National Committees in the region: **Japan** and the **Republic of Korea**.

The UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office (EAPRO) has exhibited continuous commitment towards encouraging municipalities to design and implement child-centric urban policies,

budgets, and programmes. In 2018, the seminal “Growing up Urban” assembly in Surabaya provided a platform for representatives from 12 East Asian cities to deliberate on urban trends, risks, and the implications for child and women’s rights. The deliberations were further amplified at the 2019 UNICEF Global Child Friendly Cities Summit in Cologne, Germany, where young advisors from East Asia made invaluable contributions. The summit culminated in the signing of the Cologne Mayors’ Declaration, while the “Our cities, through our eyes” photographic exposition on East Asia and Pacific provided poignant insights into children’s urban experiences.

In the aftermath of the summit, stakeholders recognized the need for continuous dialogue, leading to the formation of the UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Child Friendly City Network. The 2021 publication by UNICEF EAPRO,

“Programme Notes on CFCI in East Asia and Pacific,” marked a pivotal moment, offering substantive guidance and influencing the inception of a global CFCI guidance note in 2022. As a result, in 2023 recorded CFCI activities, most notably, the intergenerational dialogues between children and mayors from the EAP region, and the East Asia-Europe Interregional Exchange, accentuating EAPRO’s commitment to the CFCI’s vision.

In conclusion, the varying decentralization contexts of East Asian and Pacific Countries show there are different modalities to promote Child Friendly Cities to strengthen the realization of child rights locally. Enhancing and expanding UNICEF’s work with multiple levels of government in the region is fundamental to creating cities that provide safe, inclusive, and sustainable environments for children.







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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 About this report

This report provides a regional overview of Child Friendly Cities (CFC) UNICEF Initiatives and CFC Government Programmes in East Asia and Pacific (EAP) region. It offers a solid knowledge base for developing policies and interventions focused on child friendly cities within the EAP Region. It aims to facilitate learning exchange among countries implementing CFC and to support UNICEF Country Offices (COs) in south-south exchange among cities.

The objective of this report is to strengthen CFC in the region by providing a database of modalities, practices, and concrete examples of policy interventions. It showcases how UNICEF and Asian governments are shaping cities that offer secure, inclusive, and sustainable environments for children by refining their policy approaches and testing different strategies.

Box 1. UNICEF's definition of Child Friendly Cities

A Child Friendly City is defined by UNICEF as a city, town, municipality, or any system of local governance committed to fulfilling child rights as articulated in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). It is a city or municipality where the voices, needs, priorities and rights of children are an integral part of public policies, programmes, and decisions.

Source: UNICEF, Child Friendly Cities and Communities Handbook, 2018.

The Child Friendly Cities Initiative (CFCI) is a longstanding UNICEF-led partnership and engagement platform that supports cities and municipalities in their efforts to become child friendly and achieve results for children. The initiative was launched in 1996 by UNICEF to act on the resolution passed during the second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) to make cities liveable places for all. The CFCI has been instrumental in encouraging local governments and other stakeholders to pay greater attention to meeting the rights and needs of their youngest citizens and ensuring the latter's participation in local decision-making (see Box 2). Currently, there are 40 countries in the world actively implementing CFCI, mostly in developed countries.

Box 2. Child Friendly Cities: Guiding articles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)

- Art 2. Non-discrimination
- Art 3. Best interest of the child
- Art 4. Use of maximum extent of country available resources
- Art 6. Rights to life and maximum development
- Art 12. Respect for children's views and child participation

There is strong momentum on CFC in East Asia. Among developing countries, the East Asia and Pacific region has the highest number of countries working on CFC, with over 150 cities involved across six countries: China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mongolia, the Philippines, and Viet Nam. The broader concept of CFC has been implanted in East Asia since 1996 and has met with growing interest in recent years. There are different levels of engagement across the region: the thematic focus and the nature of activities varies from country to country, reflecting the local child rights situation and the institutional context.

In different decentralization settings, there are various ways to promote CFC and strengthen the realization of child rights locally. The regional mapping will look in detail at each country

through a common analytical framework that allows comparison among governance structures, practices, and modalities. Ultimately, the regional overview aims to foster knowledge sharing, capacity building, and partnerships among CFC stakeholders, including civil society organizations, the private sector, academia, media, and, most importantly, children and child-led organizations. It will also facilitate the consolidation of UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Child Friendly Cities Network.

Guiding questions that will be explored in this report are:

- What opportunities and challenges does urbanization bring for children in the East Asia and Pacific region?
- What are the best results and practices in the region in implementing CFC?
- What synergies could be strengthened with other urban initiatives, networks, and programmes, and what partnerships with international organizations, NGOs, civil groups, academia, and the private sector?
- What are each country's current activities, focus, and programmatic areas?
- What is the level of resources needed to implement CFC, both from UNICEF and local governments?
- What is the future direction of CFC in the region?

In summary, this report offers:

- An introduction to the CFCI, its guiding principles, cycle, and implementing strategies for child-friendly local governance.
- An insight into the urbanization trends in East Asia and Pacific region and the evolving challenges for children and communities.
- A regional mapping of UNICEF CFCI and other national Child Friendly Cities Government Programmes (CFC GP) in East Asia and Pacific region.

Methodology: The regional mapping of CFC in East Asia and Pacific region has drawn material from interviews with CFC Focal Points from China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mongolia, Philippines, and Viet Nam COs. It is also based on a desk review of country-specific CFC documentation, including national policies, assessments, indicators, work plans, and reports. The report has included the outcomes of the East Asia CFC event on *'Child Friendly Cities to Accelerate Recovery in East-Asia and Pacific Region: An Intergenerational Dialogue,'* part of the Tenth Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development in March 2023. Children, mayors, and government officers from the five countries that are part of the UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Child Friendly Cities Regional Network were engaged in a productive dialogue to make cities safer and more sustainable. This report has drawn additional information

from *'UNICEF Growing Up Urban in East Asia: A Conversation with Mayors on Making Cities Safe and Sustainable for Every Child (2018)'*. Finally, it has used materials and text from the primary reference documents on the CFCI: *'UNICEF The Child Friendly Cities Initiative Guidance Note (2022)'* and *'UNICEF Child Friendly Cities and Communities Handbook (2018)'*.

Target audience: This report's guidance and regional overview primarily targets UNICEF country offices and local and central governments in the East Asia and Pacific region but may also be helpful to other stakeholders involved in CFC. Cities, communities, and governments that work towards realizing the CRC, but do not partner with UNICEF, can also use the guidance and best practices described in this report.



1.2 Core Child Friendly Cities principles

The strategic decisions regarding the engagement, design and implementation of Child Friendly Cities initiatives or programmes are made at the country level. The CFCI, as a policy engagement platform, contributes to the achievement of results within the framework of goals and strategies outlined in UNICEF Country Programme Document (CPD) or National Strategies.² Additionally, the CFCI enables monitoring, reporting, and recognition of results for children at the subnational and local levels in alignment with local priorities and capacities. For these reasons, CFC initiatives and programmes in different countries might exhibit varied characteristics and modalities,

but all are anchored in fundamental principles recognized globally (UNICEF, 2022a).

After almost 30 years of experience, UNICEF identified core criteria for recognition of child friendly cities, aligned with the CRC principles and UNICEF framework for subnational and local governance programming. The CFCI implementation requires articulating specific national, regional, and local issues. It must contribute to the realization of the rights of children within the context of national priorities, translating these commitments at the subnational and local levels, according to the capacity of local institutions (UNICEF, 2022a).

Box 3. The CFCI global minimum criteria

The CFCI global minimum criteria are threefold:

- Demonstrated **solid results** for children based on the priorities, goals and objectives for children set in the local development plan.
- Meaningful and inclusive child and **youth participation**.
- Demonstrated dedication to **enhancing equity** and eliminating discrimination, including through reaching out to the most excluded and marginalized children and young people, as demonstrated through policies and actions by the local government, including in the CFCI.

Source: UNICEF The Child Friendly Cities Initiative Guidance Note (2022).

1. Solid results, not just plans. The effectiveness and impact of the CFCI can only be understood if systems are in place to **measure the positive changes (impact) on children's lives** following the implementation of the CFCI at both the local and subnational levels and potentially at the national level. The evidence of progress, results, and impact for children generated through the monitoring and evaluation can

be used for advocacy and encouraging other municipalities and the national government to adopt measures to promote and strengthen child rights. Involving all local partners and stakeholders, including children and young people, in monitoring CFCI implementation is essential as it leads to better accountability and transparency at the local level.

² Although based on global criteria, CFCI remains a fully decentralized initiative, managed at country level. The decision on whether to implement the CFCI, the extent of scale, the level and form of support, and the recognition process are at the discretion of the local UNICEF Office, as outlined in the CPD and reflecting existing capacities and resources. (CFCI UNICEF Global Reference Group decision, 2018).

2. Meaningful and inclusive child and youth participation can be enabled through advocacy for and with established and institutionalized mechanisms such as child and youth councils throughout all phases of the CFCI cycle, noting that child participation under the CFCI is both a means and an end goal. The views expressed by children add a relevant perspective to decision-making and should be reflected in the preparation of laws and measures and their evaluation. The criteria for meaningful and inclusive participation are set out in General Comment 12 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, which states, inter alia, that:

- (a) *Transparent and informative* - children must be provided with complete, accessible, diversity-sensitive and age-appropriate information -;
- (b) *Voluntary*- children should never be coerced into expressing views-;
- (c) *Respectful* - children's views have to be treated with respect and they should be provided with opportunities to initiate ideas and activities-;
- (d) *Relevant* - the issues must be of real relevance to their lives-;
- (e) *Child-friendly* - the issues on which children have the right to express their views must be of real relevance to their lives-;
- (f) *Inclusive* - void existing patterns of discrimination, and

- encourage opportunities for marginalized children,-;
- (g) *Supported by training* - adults need preparation, skills and support to facilitate children's participation-;
- (h) *Safe and sensitive to risk* - must take every precaution to minimize the risk to children of violence, exploitation or any other negative consequence of their participation-;
- (i) *Accountable* – a commitment to follow-up and evaluation is essential.

3. The CFCI must reach out to and include all children without discrimination. Children's rights apply equally to every child. To be recognized as child-friendly, the local government must demonstrate efforts to understand and remove all barriers that hinder children from realizing their rights throughout the CFCI cycle. Laws and policies, the physical or built environment, poverty, attitudes, cultural beliefs, communication, or language may cause these barriers. They may be rooted in direct discrimination, where policies deliberately exclude certain groups of children. Or they may derive from indirect discrimination where a group of children is excluded as an unintended consequence of a policy.



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1.3 The CFCI process and cycle

To ensure an integrated and coherent approach to CFCI implementation that contributes to results for children, six mandatory steps constituting the CFCI cycle (see Box 4) should be implemented by municipalities throughout the CFCI implementation process.³

Box 4. The CFCI cycle

1. The CFCI cycle
2. Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with UNICEF
3. Child-rights Situation Analysis (SitAn)
4. Actions prioritized and included in the local development plan (Synthesis Action Plan for Children) with detailed budget and resources
5. Implementation and monitoring of the activities in the Synthesis Action Plan for Children
6. Evaluation of the implementation and results for children
7. Potential recognition of a Child Friendly City

Source: UNICEF The Child Friendly Cities Initiative Guidance Note (2022).

After securing national and local government commitment, the CFC process begins with a detailed local situation analysis. This analysis examines the conditions of children in cities, the various levels of decentralization, the accountabilities between local and national institutions, and the capacity of local administrators. It also establishes an understanding of the specific deprivations and child-rights issues faced by children, young people, and their families, addressing the roles and decision-making processes of the local government and other key stakeholders.

A specific CFC development plan, complete with concrete actions, resources, and targets, will be formulated based on the findings from the child-rights situation analysis, the CFC global minimum criteria (which includes attending to children's expressed needs and recommended interventions), and the autonomy and priorities of the local government. This evidence-based strategy ensures more impactful results compared to programmes solely built on assumptions. The recognition process will be based on a solid monitoring and evaluation plan.

The duration of the CFCI cycle may differ, depending on the capacities of the local government and on the time required to implement the CFCI planned activities included in the local development plan. Detailed guidance for each of the six steps is provided in *UNICEF The Child Friendly Cities Initiative Guidance Note (2022)*.

In the development, implementation, and assessment of the results of the Action Plan, some key aspects must be taken into consideration:

Measuring the well-being of and results for children. CFCI is, by definition, an evidence-based exercise rooted in solid information and data on results achieved for children. This includes a preliminary Situation Analysis to be done before the beginning of the programme and the definition of appropriate indicators and targets to be completed. A local situation analysis should be conducted for each city, municipality, or local government area. The local Situation Analysis (SitAn) establishes an understanding of the specific deprivations and child-rights issues faced by children, young people, and their families in the respective territory. It provides a baseline for local government actions and investment in children. The CFCI can be used to monitor commitments and results of local governments by:

³ The CFCI serves as a broad policy instrument, guiding the financial and strategic planning of municipalities. It encompasses more than just the spatial aspects of urban design, offering a holistic approach that goes beyond shaping and designing urban areas and public spaces.

- Monitoring priorities: was an increase in resources allocated for children?
- Monitoring participation: what participatory processes were established? How many proposals from children and youth have been accepted?
- Assessing commitments: how many of the planned activities were realized?
- Assessing outcomes: what are the results on children?
- Assessment of children's perspectives: what do children think of the results?

Mobilize local financial and human resources for children. The CFCI-related activities should be an integral part of the local government's development planning and budgeting cycle, ensuring that child-responsive goals, objectives, and actions are reflected in strategic priorities and supported by adequate human and financial resources allocated for their implementation. More specifically, the child-related priorities with respective activities in the local development plan should be funded through local government budgets. The degree of autonomy that local governments have over budgets is related to the degree of decentralization and the extent of discretionary resources. It is crucial to assess

the level of the decentralization of financial, administrative, or service delivery systems of the country in which it operates and be aware of the scope of action that local governments have. For instance, Mongolia introduced the Local Development Fund (LDF) in 2012 to enable investments and the priorities of local communities, and a participatory process that includes the voices of children and adolescents. Spending from LDF transfers allows sub-national governments more local autonomy transfers to finance minor capital investment spending such as WASH facilities and improvements to school and health facilities. In 2020 and 2021, 23–30 per cent of Local Development Funds were spent on children in Target Areas.

Compliance with the three global minimum criteria and a comprehensive Action Plan are fundamental steps in the CFCI recognition process. A city or municipality is recognized as a 'Child Friendly City' by UNICEF upon fulfilling the minimum criteria for obtaining the recognition, a positive evaluation of the implementation of the child-related goals, objectives, and activities in the local development plan, and the achievement of planned results for children.





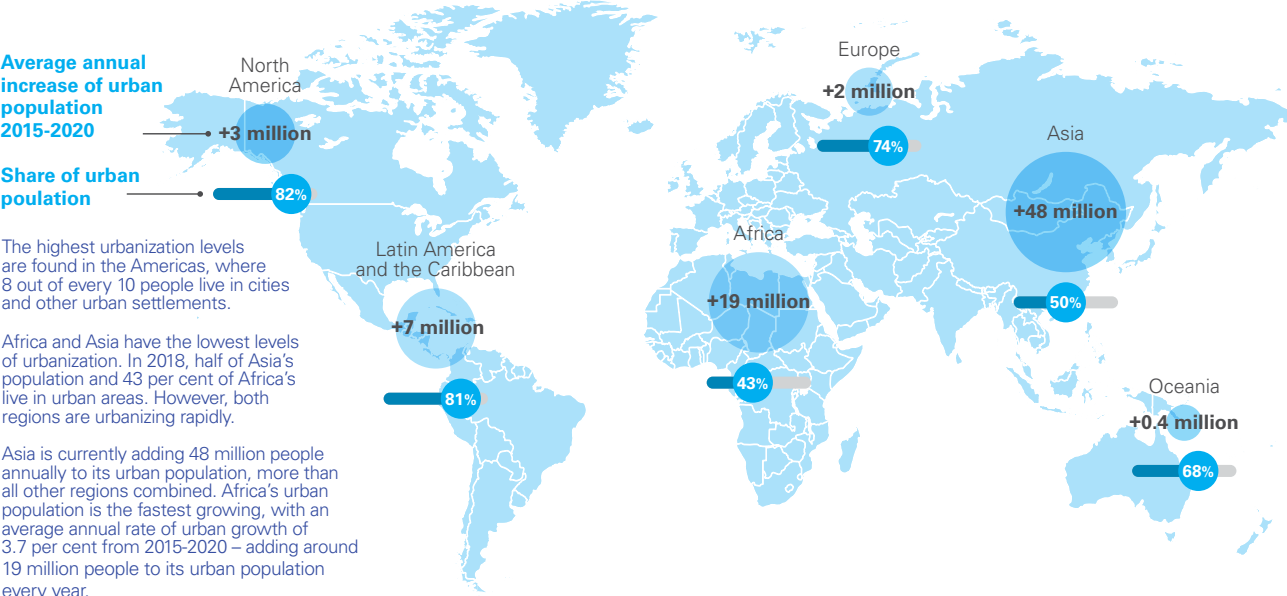
2. CHILD FRIENDLY CITIES IN THE EAST ASIA AND PACIFIC REGION

2.1 Urbanization in the East Asia and Pacific region

East Asia has seen enormous growth and change over the past few decades. It has undergone a process of fast-paced urbanization in the past few decades and is home to nearly half of the world’s urban population. In 2018, half of Asia’s population lived in urban areas. Moreover, Asia

is adding 48 million people annually to its urban population, more than all other regions combined. Experts predict that by 2030, more than 70 per cent of people in the region will live in urban areas, and East Asian cities will be home to 800 million children (UNICEF 2018c).

Figure 1. Urbanization levels by region (UNICEF, 2018)



Source: Advantage or Paradox? The challenge for children and young people of growing up urban (UNICEF, 2018c).

The East Asia and Pacific region is home to some of the world’s fastest growing and most populated megacities. It is also experiencing dramatic growth in small and medium-sized cities, where more than half of its urban population lives.

On the one hand, rapid urbanization has been an engine of development in the region. It has been a critical driving force behind East Asia’s impressive pace of economic growth in the last three decades. Real per capita growth has averaged nearly 7 per cent over the period (UNICEF 2018c). On the other hand, urbanization has brought new challenges and exacerbated existing ones. Existing inequalities between urban and rural areas have been aggravated. Within cities, the population growth rate often exceeds the pace of growth of public services, quality housing, and employment opportunities, resulting in increased intra-urban inequality.

Environmental and health hazards, such as air pollution, unprocessed waste and wastewater, pollution, and poor air quality, can heighten disease risk. In addition, higher population density in coastal urban centres in the region means that an increasing share of the population is exposed to climate-related shocks. Poor migrants tend to settle in informal settlements and marginalized neighbourhoods disconnected

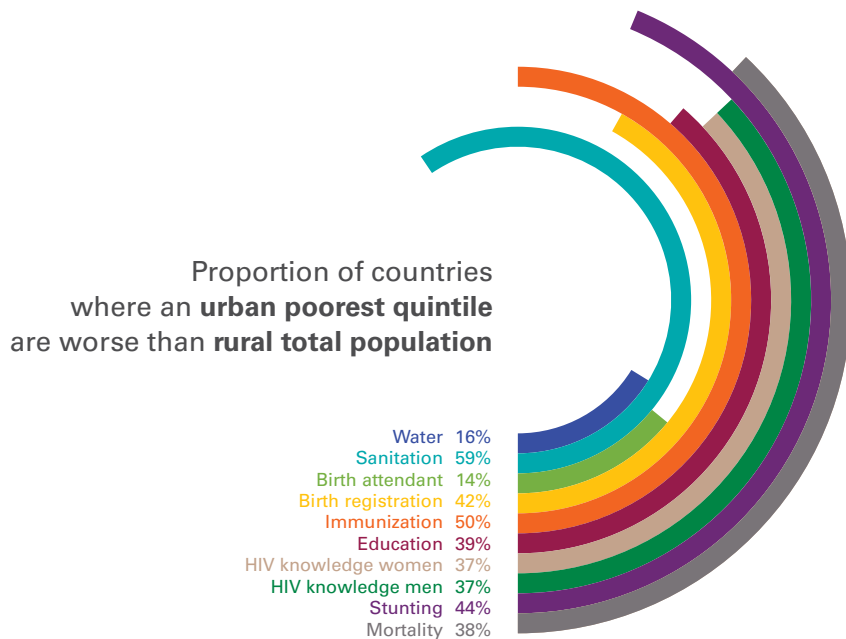
from services and have lower resilience to shocks and stressors such as natural hazards (including those exacerbated by climate change) or economic turbulence.

These factors often leave the poorest urban children at a considerable disadvantage compared to their more affluent urban peers and sometimes even compared to their rural counterparts. Though urban residents enjoy better access to services and opportunities on average, a substantial part of the urban population must be included.

In a large number of countries, children in the urban poorest quintile are worse than the rural total population (Figure 2). For example, in approximately 60 per cent of countries analysed, the percentage of children in the poorest urban quintile with access to basic sanitation is lower than the percentage of all rural children with access (UNICEF, 2018c).

But in some circumstances, even when comparing with the poorest quintile in rural areas, children in the poorest urban quintile fare worse in quite a number of countries. For example, in 24 per cent of countries analysed in a UNICEF study (UNICEF, 2018c) children among the urban poorest face a higher risk of dying before their fifth birthday than their rural peers (UNICEF, 2018c). This reversal of the

Figure 2. Share of countries where the poorest urban quintile fares worse than the rural population



Source: Advantage or Paradox? The challenge for children and young people of growing up urban (UNICEF, 2018c).

‘urban advantage’ is called the ‘urban paradox.’ Poverty, previously predominantly a rural phenomenon, is becoming increasingly urban. Turning the urban paradox experienced by millions of children and young people into an urban advantage is a crucial challenge for cities and towns in the region (UNICEF, 2018c).

In the East Asia and Pacific region, UNICEF developed an Urban Risk Framework⁴ which may be used to conduct urban situation analyses through a child-specific lens.⁵

The Urban Risk Framework is based on the following focus areas:

- **Services for all children:** Despite the availability of essential services in cities, children from disadvantaged urban households often need help to gain access to critical services such as education, health, nutrition, protection, water, and sanitation. Rapid urbanization places immense pressure on existing facilities to deliver accessible, equitable, quality services.
- **A society for all children:** Comprehensive analysis of children living in urban contexts reveals multiple deprivations and inequities, and identifies unique vulnerabilities that children face during early childhood and adolescence. Migrants and minorities are often deprived of the rights of urban citizenship and are prevented from contributing to social and economic life. The decision-making process often needs more voice and participation of families

and children. Gaps in social protection and a lack of support for expecting parents and families with young children lead to unrealized early childhood potential.

- **Infrastructure and sustainable environment for all children:** Urbanization compounded by migration stresses infrastructure, intensifying the vulnerabilities children face and threatening social cohesion. Infrastructure that is missing or dysfunctional creates dangers for children. Poor transportation infrastructure leads to safety concerns, including road crashes; the spatial and social structure of urban areas affects physical and mental health; digital access brings with it safety concerns; and inappropriate or insufficient infrastructure can fail to prevent and even exacerbate environmental issues, including air pollution, flooding, and other impacts of climate change.⁶

Children and adolescents – whose personal, cognitive, physical, and socioemotional development is powerfully influenced and ‘sculpted’ by the new urban experience – should be the clear winners of this urban century.⁷ Sustained economic growth in the years ahead will depend on the cognitive capacity of the future labour force, which, in turn, depends on the health and well-being of today’s children. Children’s rights, health, and well-being in cities must be central to municipal administration processes, and CFCs play a crucial role in this process.



⁴ Part of the “Surabaya Vision”, the outcome of UNICEF’s East Asia Growing Up Urban Meeting held in Surabaya, Indonesia, in 2018.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

2.2 The history of Child Friendly Cities in the East Asia and Pacific region

The broader concept of CFC has been implanted in East Asia since 1999 and has met a growing interest in recent years.

The Philippines was the first country in the region to engage in UNICEF's work to mainstream child rights into local government via the Child Friendly Movement (CFM) in 1996. Dedicated awards/recognition for Local Government Units (LGUs) was institutionalized in 1999 through the Presidential Awards for Child-Friendly Cities and Municipalities. In partnership with UNICEF, the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) established the CFM to enact and implement expanding policies, frameworks, and legislation focused on children's rights. In 2014, the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) and the Council for the Welfare of Children (CWC), supported by technical assistance from UNICEF, developed and launched the Child-Friendly Local Governance Audit (CFLGA). The CFLGA was designed to encourage child-responsive Local Government Units (LGUs) by conducting annual audits of their performance on child outcomes and initiating programmes and measures to improve children's conditions across various sectors. Alongside the auditing system, the Presidential Award for the Child-Friendly Municipalities and Cities has been active since 1999, serving as a flagship programme of the CWC and the Office of the President.

Indonesia's first experience with Child Friendly Cities (CFC) began in the late 90s when UNICEF collaborated on a CFC initiative in Surakarta City. Based on Surakarta's journey, the Ministry of Women Empowerment and Child Protection (MoWECP) developed a Child Friendly City/District programme, or 'Kabupaten/Kota Layak Anak' (KLA), which was introduced in 2005 as a national government programme. In 2006, five pilot regencies and cities were selected for KLA implementation. KLA cities and districts expanded over the following years, spreading across various provinces, cities, and communities, including rural and village settings. In 2011, the President of Indonesia requested the MoWECP to mobilize at least 100 cities and districts to implement the KLA. The collaboration with

UNICEF continued, and in 2018, the city of Surabaya hosted 'Growing Up Urban,' a regional meeting organized by UNICEF and attended by representatives from 12 cities in East Asia, recognized for their roles and achievements in promoting child rights.

Mongolia started implementing the Child Friendly Community Strategy in 2021 in two municipalities as part of the UNICEF Country programme. Based on the pilot experiences of these municipalities, the Child Friendly Community Initiative (CFCI) was scaled up in the 2017-2021 Country Programme to include three western provinces and one district of Ulaanbaatar. In 2020, CFCI saw more provinces implementing child-friendly communities, including six provinces selected by the Authority for Family, Child, and Youth Development. Geographic Focus Areas (GFAs) provinces began to roll out the CFCI with minimal UNICEF technical support.

In **Viet Nam**, the CFCI was introduced in 2015, with Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC) being the first municipality to express interest in the initiative. UNICEF Viet Nam began implementing CFCI in partnership with HCMC by establishing official cooperation with the Ho Chi Minh City People's Committee for 2017-2021. The CFCI in HCMC involved setting an innovative platform for child participation, studying children affected by migration, improving childcare in industrial areas for migrant workers, and creating a biannual Children's Council to connect children with government members to discuss and propose solutions. Council members included a diverse group of children, with representatives living in social protection centres and shelters. In 2019, Da Nang became the second city in Viet Nam to express interest in the CFCI. A Partnership Framework was established between the UNICEF Country Office and the Da Nang People's Committee the following year. Da Nang conducted a Situation Analysis of children and adolescents (SitAn) to inform the City Programme of Action on Children (CPAC) 2021-2030 and the City's Socio-economic Development Plan and sectoral plans.

Malaysia started the UNICEF Child Friendly Cities Initiative (CFCI) in 2018 by advocating the CFCI in Petaling Jaya (PJ). PJ began its sustainability and child empowerment agenda in the early 2000s through the PJ Local Agenda 21, focusing on strengthening the role of children in cities. The first Petaling Jaya Child’s Forum was organized in 2009. In November 2019, the City Authority, UNICEF Malaysia, the Childline Foundation, and the Malaysian Institute of Planners organized a Child-Friendly Cities Conference in PJ. As a result, in 2020, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed between PJ and UNICEF Malaysia.

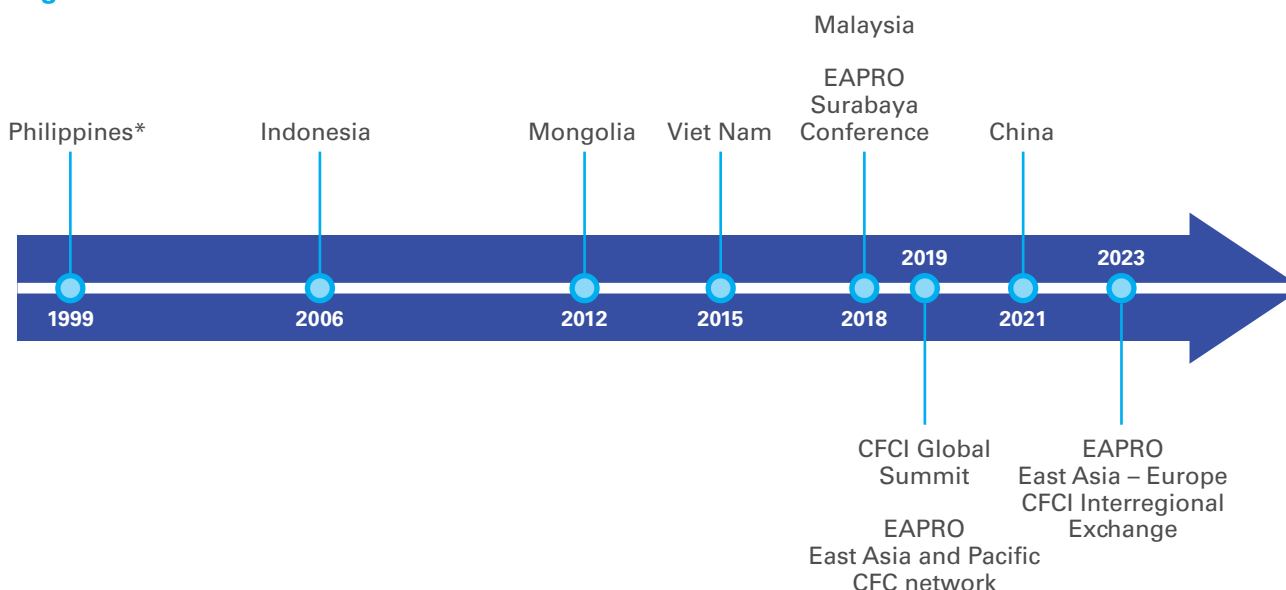
China officially introduced Child Friendly Cities in its 14th Five-Year Plan in 2021, a high-level document for childhood development. Interest in CFC began in 2010 when the National Working Committee on Children and Women Office (NWCCW) under the State Council started discussing with UNICEF China. Some Chinese cities showed interest in the CFCI in 2015, and the following year, Shenzhen participated in the UNICEF Global CFC Summit in Cologne, Germany. In mid-2018, UNICEF began discussing CFC as part of the collaboration with the National Development Reform Committee (NDRC), responsible for all development blueprints in China. This collaboration supported the government’s decision to include CFC in China’s 14th FYP. In 2022, China began its first

batch of CFC pilots as part of a national programme led by the government.

In the **Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTs)**, roughly half of the inhabitants live in city-like settings. This ratio, however, needs to be more consistent across the country. In Nauru, the entire population is based in urban locales, while in the Cook Islands, 75 per cent live in such areas. Conversely, only 19 per cent of those in Samoa and 22 per cent in the Solomon Islands and Federated States of Micronesia stay in urban zones. Importantly, in the smaller nations, there is a tendency for the population to congregate in one main area (UNICEF, 2017). There is no Child Friendly City initiative or programme in the PICTs, even if the situation of children in urban areas has been a priority for different government and international partners’ interventions.

The thematic focus and the nature of the region’s activities vary from country to country, as they reflect the local child rights situation and the institutional and decentralization context. While Malaysia, Mongolia, and Viet Nam are part of the official UNICEF CFCI, China, the Philippines, and Indonesia have National CFC Government Programmes that are inspired to varying degrees by CFCI experiences but are led and managed by central governments (see Chapter 2.6 for a detailed description of the two modalities).

Figure 3. CFC timeline in East Asia



*Note: CFM was launched in 1996, but more dedicated awards/recognition for LGUs was institutionalized in 1999 through the Presidential Awards for Child-Friendly Cities and Municipalities.

Source: Authors.

In addition to UNICEF Country Offices, two Committees for UNICEF are implementing the CFCI in the East Asia and Pacific Region: Japan and the Republic of Korea.

In **Japan**, the CFCI has begun to spread gradually and the preparatory work for the CFCI began in August 2016. After a two-year usefulness check of the CFCI in five municipalities (Niseko Town, Abira Town, Tomiya City, Machida City, and Nara City) starting in October 2018, the CFCI was officially launched in June 2021. As of the end of April 2023, these five municipalities have been recognized as the CFCI implementing municipalities. In addition, Toyota City has been recognized as a CFCI candidate municipality and is working toward becoming a CFCI implementing municipality. Moreover, the Japanese government has begun a full-scale effort to promote children's rights. In April 2023, the Basic Act on Children's Policies came into effect and the Children and Families Agency was also established. This is in line with UNICEF's CFCI and is expected to increase the number of municipalities in Japan that engage in the CFCI.

In the **Republic of Korea**, the CFCI has made significant progress in raising awareness about children's rights since its launch in 2013. This initiative, one of the key platforms of the Korean Committee, complements other advocacy and fundraising activities at the national level. It follows the global CFCI framework while adapting its components to the specific needs and context of the Republic of Korea. The National Committee has collaborated with 119 municipalities, 92 of which have received recognition as Child Friendly Cities. The initiative has reached approximately 49 per cent of all municipalities and has the potential to impact around 80 per cent of the total child population in the country. To facilitate mutual learning and co-funding activities among these local governments, the Korean Committee established the Association for the Promotion of UNICEF Child Friendly Cities in 2015. By March 2023, this network had grown to include 102 municipalities.

At the **regional level**, the UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office has been particularly active in promoting the role of municipalities in developing child-friendly policies, budgets, and programmes. EAPRO was one of the members of the UNICEF Child Friendly Cities Initiative (CFCI) Global Reference Group, contributing to the revision of the

CFCI guidelines and advocating for the importance of CFCI as one of the key UNICEF initiatives.

In 2018, UNICEF EAPRO organized "*Growing up Urban*," a meeting of mayors for child-friendly cities in Surabaya, Indonesia, with representatives from 12 cities across East Asia. During the meeting, city mayors, governors, and other representatives of UNICEF discussed urban trends, risks, and opportunities and how these impact the rights of children and women in the region. They also explored partnerships, financing, and innovative solutions to ensure child and adolescent-responsive urban policy and planning. They crafted a vision of how urban administrations in East Asia could prioritize action for all children, including young children and adolescents from disadvantaged backgrounds (UNICEF, 2019b).



East Asia delegation to the first CFCI Summit in Cologne, Germany.

In 2019, the UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office along with UNICEF Country Offices, supported the organization and participation of mayors and children from cities in the region at the first *UNICEF Global Child Friendly Cities Summit*, held in Cologne, Germany (UNICEF 2019b). Children from China, Indonesia, Mongolia, and Viet Nam participated as members of the Summit Child and Youth Advisory Board. At the end of the Summit, more than 100 mayors and local leaders signed the Cologne Mayors' Declaration for Child Friendly Cities to accelerate progress toward improving the lives, opportunities, and well-being of children in urban areas. In preparation for the CFC Summit, UNICEF EAPRO promoted the regional initiative '*Our cities, through our eyes*,' which engaged more than 60 children from three cities in the region in a discussion about their vision of child-friendly cities using photographs (UNICEF 2019a).

Box 5. UNICEF's regional initiative 'Our cities, through our eyes'

'Our cities, through our eyes'

In 2019, three groups of adolescent girls and boys from Surabaya (Indonesia), Ulaanbaatar (Mongolia) and Ho Chi Minh City (Viet Nam) had the chance to share a view of their cities through their own images and words: what they like and what they would like to change. UNICEF conducted three week-long workshops for 60 children aged 14-18 to help them express their views through the power of photography. This initiative helped promote the voice of children, opening policy dialogue between youth and local institutions, as well as strengthening partnerships between local governments, youth and other organizations. The pictures taken during the initiative are used throughout this report, on the cover page and on pages xiii, 8, 28, 37, 46, 67.

The photo exhibition of all children's work and reflections was one of the main highlights of the Summit. The CFCI Global Summit marked an essential step in developing CFC in the East Asia and Pacific region and expanding UNICEF's regional work. During a special CFC Summit Session dedicated to East Asia, the mayors, government officers, and child representatives from cities in the region requested UNICEF to support the creation of a regional network, named the UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Child Friendly City Network, to continue the positive experience of the CFC Summit, share experiences and address the CFC modalities implemented in the region (refer to Chapter 2.6 for a detailed description of the network). Under the guidance of the UNICEF EAPRO Regional Director, the UNICEF Regional Office accepted the request of

supporting a regional CFC network, and included CFC as part of the regional work on social policy. The UNICEF Regional Office continues to provide direct technical assistance to UNICEF Country Offices and organize regional activities such as the first *UNICEF Regional CFC Training for Mayors and Government Officers*, a series of capacity-building webinars, the revision of new Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) between UNICEF and interested cities, and the organization of study tours and policy dialogues with other countries and regions. During the COVID-19 emergency, special attention was given to the impact of the pandemic on children in urban areas and on the potential role of municipalities in the response and recovery. A consultant was hired to support the coordination work at the regional level, and a staff member from UNICEF Spain with specific expertise on CFCI was deployed during a stretch assignment in 2023.

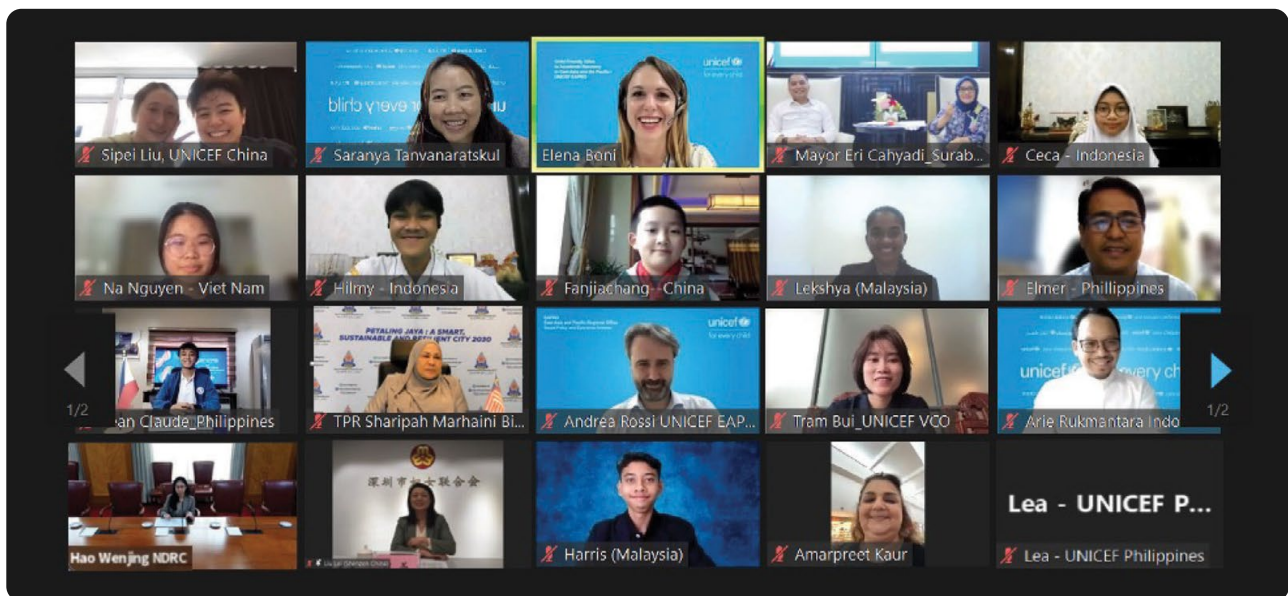
In 2021, the Social Policy section of UNICEF EAPRO developed a document titled "*Programme Notes on UNICEF Child Friendly Cities Initiatives in East Asia and Pacific*" (UNICEF, 2021) to fill the lack of specific guidelines to programme countries in the implementation of CFCI.⁸ This note was the result of programmatic reflections initiated at the regional meeting "Growing up Urban" in Surabaya, and continued at the first EAPRO regional training on Child Friendly Cities, as well as subsequent CFC regional focal points meetings. The process took into account the debates that arose during the revision of the CFCI handbook by the CFCI Global Reference Group, discussions around the UNICEF Urban Evaluation, and feedback and contributions from UNICEF offices and experts in the EAP region. The objective of the regional notes was to strengthen the effectiveness of CFCI in programme countries in East Asia and Pacific, minimizing possible risks and maximizing the results of the initiative in low and middle-income countries. The notes contributed to the formulation of the global *UNICEF Child Friendly Cities Guidance Note* published in 2022 (UNICEF, 2022b).

⁸ The original *UNICEF Child Friendly Cities and Communities Handbook* produced in 2018 was designed mainly to provide guidelines to UNICEF National Committees working in industrialized countries (mainly in Europe) and not for developing countries with direct UNICEF programmes.

In March 2023, children, mayors, and government officers from five East Asian countries engaged in an intergenerational dialogue to make cities safer and more sustainable for children. The event *‘Child Friendly Cities to Accelerate Recovery in East Asia and Pacific Region: An Intergenerational Dialogue’* (UNICEF 2023) was included in the official programme of the Tenth Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (further described in

chapter 2.3). During the same year, UNICEF EAPRO, in collaboration with UNICEF Spain and UNICEF Finland, organized the *‘Child Friendly Cities East Asia-Europe Interregional Exchange,’* bringing around 40 delegates from China, Malaysia Philippines, and Viet Nam to visit Spanish and Finnish CFCI cities and engage in a two-day policy dialogue with delegations from Spain, Austria, Denmark, Germany, Portugal, Switzerland, Finland and Iceland.

2.3 Child Friendly Cities in East Asia today: A regional perspective from children



Virtual event *‘Child Friendly Cities to Accelerate Recovery in East-Asia and the Pacific: An Intergenerational Dialogue,’* which took place in March 2023.

UNICEF EAPRO’s event *‘Child Friendly Cities to Accelerate Recovery in East-Asia and Pacific Region: An Intergenerational Dialogue’* (UNICEF 2023), provided an important exchange platform for policymakers and children currently involved in CFC in the region through an intergenerational dialogue that focused on what makes a city child friendly, the role of CFC in bringing childhood back on track and children’s priorities in urban areas after the COVID-19 pandemic. During the dialogue, children in the region could directly engage with city mayors and government officials by sharing their vision of child-friendly cities, posing direct and bold questions, and responding to inquiries from their adult counterparts.

At the event, a child representative emphasized that in the past three years, the pandemic and the intermittent lockdowns have restricted children from playing and interacting with one another and magnified children’s issues concerning education, mental health, and child protection. Moreover, children and adults called for inclusive and meaningful engagement with children to incorporate children’s perspectives into the city’s planning and development. Another child representative from the region emphasized how child participation can help children understand their roles, responsibilities, and decision-making skills.

Alongside participation, children highlighted the importance of mental and physical health support for children and adolescents, integrating technology in learning environments, and ensuring child safety as focal areas to make cities more child friendly. Moreover, children expressed a pressing need for improved access to and learning from nature in cities and increased opportunities for outdoor recreation and cultural activities to promote their well-being after the pandemic.

A vision of a child friendly city as a place where children can meaningfully participate, feel safe, protected, and respected, emerged during the conversation. Cities play an essential role in delivering this vision alongside UNICEF's work with local governments in promoting south-south cooperation among the countries of the UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Child Friendly Cities Network.



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2.4 The first UNICEF Child Friendly Cities East Asia-Europe Interregional Exchange

The first UNICEF Child Friendly Cities Interregional Exchange between East Asia and Europe took place on 4-9 September 2023 in Spain and Finland. The objective of the exchange was to bring together knowledge and experience from two regions.

UNICEF EAPRO in collaboration with the UNICEF National Committees of Spain and Finland and the UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Child Friendly Cities Network organized a policy dialogue with over 80 Delegates from municipalities and regional and national governments, youth representatives, UNICEF NatComs, UNICEF country offices from East Asia (China, Malaysia, Philippines and Viet Nam) and Europe (Austria, Germany, Iceland, Finland, Poland, Spain, Switzerland). It was followed by a 3-day study tour to Spanish and Finnish municipalities.

The event reflected the importance of international cooperation in creating Child Friendly Cities. It also emphasized the role of the CFCI as a partnership and engagement platform to support cities and communities in their commitment to achieving results for all children at the local level. Overall, the event proved a great example of experience and expertise sharing between a Regional Office, Country Offices and European NatComs.

The Policy Dialogue focused on four major areas of work related to the expansion of CFC in East Asia and Pacific:

- Replicability and scalability
- Sustainable, safe and thriving environments
- Innovation, data, and knowledge
- Child participation

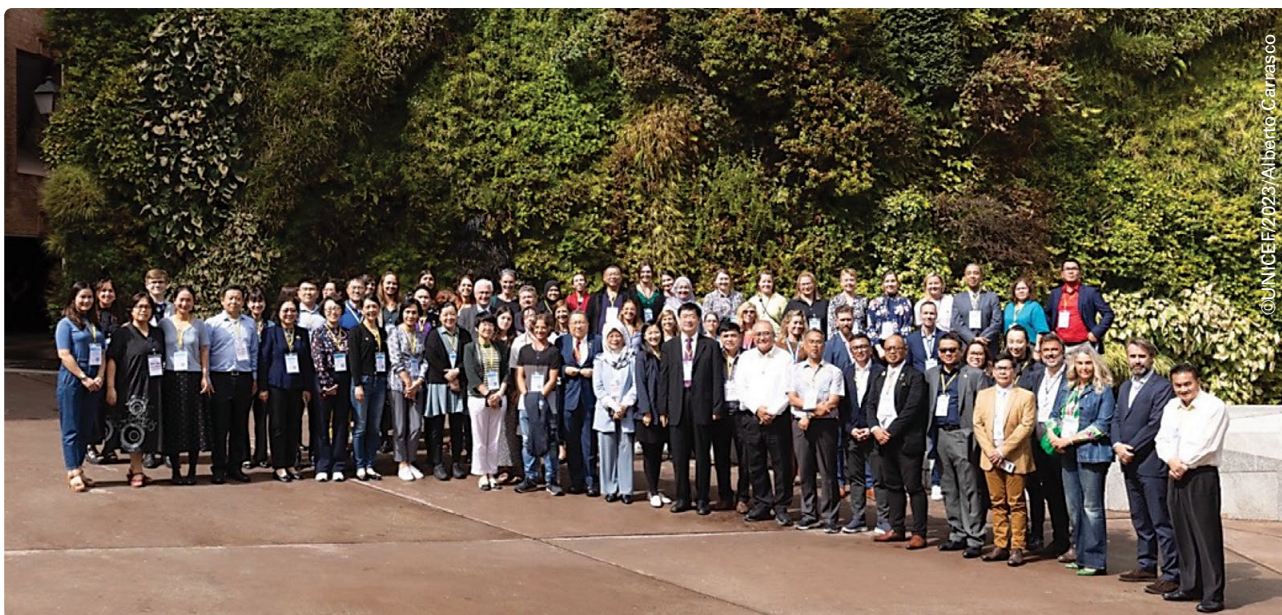
It was an important platform to explore the importance and relevance of regional networks and partnerships.

Delegations had the opportunity to discuss with and hear from experts, practitioners and children about the diversity of good practices, research, theories and lessons learned on Child Friendly Cities.

In an interactive session, Asian and European delegates exchanged ideas on how to strengthen the effectiveness of CFC by identifying specific areas and modalities of collaboration between cities and governments. Central government engagement, initiatives for bigger cities, the balancing of top-down and bottom-up approaches, networking opportunities, and creating benchmarks for child friendly spaces were the possible areas identified for future collaborations between Europe and East Asia.

As a result of the exchange, mayors, government officers and UNICEF representatives from both Europe and East Asia have furthered their expertise on prioritizing child rights in policymaking and ensuring tangible results for children in city planning and management.

Photographs from the first UNICEF Child Friendly Cities East Asia-Europe Interregional Exchange, in September 2023



Asian and European delegation at the CaixaForum, Madrid, Spain.



Asian and European delegates involved in networking activities.



Replicability and Scalability session during the CFC Policy Dialogue in Madrid.



Beijing's presentation on sustainable, safe, and thriving environments.



The intergenerational dialogue during the special session on participation of the CFC Policy Dialogue.



Partnerships building activity during the CFC Policy Dialogue.



Asian delegates visiting a daycare centre in Hämeenlinna, Finland.



Asian delegates visiting the Youth Centre in Fuenlabrada, Spain.

2.5 The role of decentralization and accountability in the Asian context

The well-being of children and adolescents is frequently determined by decisions made by local governments. Given the diversity of governance systems in the region, it is crucial that UNICEF Country Offices assess the country's governance context and level of decentralization.

Decentralization can be defined as the transfer of authority and responsibility for public functions from the central government to subordinate or quasi-independent government organizations and the private sector. There are several types of decentralization, including political, administrative, fiscal, and service delivery, and those can appear in various forms and combinations across countries, within countries, and even within sectors.⁹

In the context of child-friendly cities, decentralization can allow for more localized, tailored approaches to planning and implementation. With their understanding of community needs and cultural nuances, local governments are often better positioned to design and execute initiatives that genuinely resonate with the children and families in their jurisdiction.

On the other hand, accountability refers to the mechanisms that hold governments and other stakeholders responsible for their actions, decisions, and the outcomes of their initiatives. In child-friendly cities, accountability ensures that policies are well-intentioned, effectively implemented, and monitored.

In the Asian context, the commitment to creating child-friendly cities must be matched by a robust system of accountability that involves regular monitoring, transparent reporting, community participation, and clear channels for feedback and redress. This ensures that child-friendly initiatives are not mere rhetoric but translate into tangible improvements in the lives of children.

Accountability fosters trust, as citizens know that their government is committed to child-friendly policies and is held responsible for realizing them. It helps build a culture of transparency and continuous improvement, where successes are celebrated, failures are learned from, and the relentless pursuit of a better future for children is a shared responsibility.

The synergy of decentralization and accountability in the Asian context profoundly impacts the design of CFC in the region. Decentralization can allow for more context-specific, culturally sensitive, and agile approaches, while accountability ensures these initiatives deliver on their promises.

The combination of decentralization and accountability can promote meaningful participation, giving children, their families, and communities a voice in the decision-making process. It ensures that child-friendly city designs are not top-down impositions but collaborative creations that genuinely reflect the needs and desires of the children they aim to serve.

Furthermore, decentralization and accountability in the East Asia and Pacific region are vital in shaping child-friendly city initiatives that are responsive, responsible, and resonant with the unique characteristics of the communities they serve. Together, they form a robust framework that guides the design of CFC and ensures success and sustainability.

It is essential to highlight that in various decentralization settings, the implementation of the CFCI may take different formats. For example, the national government has limited influence in federal systems, and the regional government assumes a more prominent role. In the case of highly centralized countries, local governments and municipalities often have restricted power or institutional capacity to make decisions that impact the welfare of children, including

⁹ 'Different Forms of Decentralization,' World Bank (2022), Centre for International Earth Science Information Network. Source: http://www.ciesin.org/decentralization/English/General/Different_forms.html

decisions related to service delivery or the allocation of resources. In this scenario, there may be better approaches to strengthen the realization of child rights at the local level than the CFCI.

A careful assessment of a country's political background, decentralization level, and accountability framework of the local government is necessary to optimize UNICEF's role in implementing CFC and providing safe, inclusive, and sustainable environments for children.



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2.6 CFC modalities in East Asia

In East Asia and Pacific there are different modalities of implementation of Child Friendly Cities. In some countries the initiative is led by UNICEF, while in others it is centrally led by national governments, with technical support of UNICEF.

Box 6. CFC engagement modalities in East Asia and Pacific

The two CFC Engagement modalities in East Asia and Pacific are:

- **UNICEF Child Friendly Cities Initiative CFCI:** Malaysia, Mongolia, and Viet Nam are currently implementing UNICEF Child Friendly City Initiatives, led by UNICEF Country Offices;
- **Child Friendly Cities Government Programmes (CFC GP):** China, the Philippines, and Indonesia have developed national CFC programmes that are led by national authorities, with the technical support of UNICEF and inspired by the UNICEF CFC Core Principles.

Source: Authors.

In the countries implementing the CFCI, UNICEF country offices work directly with municipalities to implement interventions to improve child outcomes in urban settings. Key areas of work include:

- Strengthening evidence on children and adolescents living in cities, focusing on social, economic, and spatial risks.
- Collaboration with municipalities to identify strategies and interventions to make policymakers more accountable for improving child outcomes.
- Multi-sectoral work in education, health, WASH, social protection, and nutrition to scale up innovative solutions and expand opportunities available to urban children and adolescents.

Ultimately, the goal of the CFCI is to align with the principles of the CRC through strengthening partnerships with central and city governments, the private sector, academia, civil society, and UN agencies.

In the countries with CFC Government Programmes, UNICEF's engagement includes:

- Supplying technical support to central governments on child-friendly policies, guidelines, tools, indicators, auditing, and monitoring systems.
- Providing strategic and technical advice, training, and awareness strengthening to municipalities.
- Functioning as a platform for sharing, exchanging, and peer-to-peer learning among cities, experts, and policymakers.

The table below summarizes some of the roles, features, scope, weaknesses, threats, strengths, and opportunities of CFCI and CFC GP in this region, as it has emerged from the regional mapping analysis.

Box 7. Comparison between CFCI and CFC Government Programmes in EAPR

The UNICEF Child Friendly Cities Initiative in EAPR	Child Friendly Cities Government Programmes in EAPR
UNICEF's role	
UNICEF-led initiative. Direct support to cities and communities in their efforts in becoming child friendly.	UNICEF provides technical assistance to the government under its country programme.
Government's role	
National Governments can be a member in the Technical Committee and Steering Committee.	Government-led initiative.
Recognition	
UNICEF provides official CFCI recognition to cities for their achievement. Cities can use the international CFCI logo and are part of the international CFCI Network. The recognition highlights exceptional achievements, not just minimum standards.	The recognition is awarded by the national government. Cities cannot use the UNICEF official CFCI logo. In most of the cases, recognition focuses on minimum standard.
Geographic scope	
Individual cities, municipalities, districts, and communities.	Country-wide or selected pilot cities.
Cities' level of involvement	
A voluntary exercise for municipalities demonstrating genuine commitment and leadership in doing extra efforts to invest in children.	Cities are selected from regional and national governments, according to the government's criteria. The CFC GP is often used as monitoring instrument for assessing all municipalities in terms of their obligations.
Process	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adherence to the process outlined in the 'Child Friendly Cities Initiative Guidance Note' and the 'Subnational and local governance programming framework'. • A MoU (or a Partnership Framework) is signed directly with municipalities. • All interventions are locality based, depending on the findings from the Situational Analysis. • Progress needs to be reported periodically and results must be made publicly available. 	Process designed following a CFC framework and principles established by national governments, including selection, monitoring and evaluation, indicators, and rewarding criteria.
Strengths and opportunities	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A solid methodology, approach, criteria, and approach developed as part of the UNICEF-led model historically implemented since 1996 and widely replicated around the world. • UNICEF providing an independent and globally trusted quality control over cities achievements and recognition. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large scalability and wide coverage within a country. • Sustainability of the programme since CFC are enshrined in national policy. • Potential for strong involvement between UNICEF and national stakeholders, with UNICEF impacting the decentralization process

Box 7. Comparison between CFCI and CFC Government Programmes in EAPR (continued)

The UNICEF Child Friendly Cities Initiative in EAPR	Child Friendly Cities Government Programmes in EAPR
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct engagement and empowerment of municipalities and local authorities. • Visibility for municipalities and mayors not necessary aligned with national ruling parties. • Provision of a strong international platform for knowledge sharing of good practices and innovations. • Use of proven methodology to identify and address risks and challenges. • Interventions directly respond to the challenges identified during the SitAn. • Tangible improvements in child indicators that can be used for evidence to inform national and local child-friendly governance policies and child-friendly equitable investments. • Provision of a framework for local authorities to formulate a plan with their community. • Unifying focus and coordination among local government departments to increase effectiveness of service delivery. • Cities can participate in the UNICEF Inspire Awards. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Components of the programme can be built upon the key principles and goals of CFCI. • Cities can still be engaged in the regional network and other initiatives such as the UNICEF Inspire Awards.
Weaknesses and threats	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty to scale up and reach a large number of cities with the same level of technical assistance. • Political cycles and staff turnover hamper the institutionalization of CFCI, as these require high-level commitment. • Different levels of decentralization and accountabilities between cities and national government may impact the possibility of reaching meaningful change for children. • Capacity gaps between national and sub-national decision-making bodies require constant attention and follow-up. • Without national government engagement large externalities and environmental threads such as air pollution and climate impacts are not always reflected in how the initiative is locally implemented. • CFCI is a tool to allocate available local public resources for children but has limited capacity to expand the allocation from central to local authorities. • Political affiliations may limit the support of local governments to engage in the process if local political leadership is of a different party. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Often, CFCs are viewed merely as a minimum requirement or compliance mechanism, rather than an incentive to excel for children’s welfare. • National governments may lack the necessary capacity or technical expertise to effectively oversee and support the programme. • Dominant engagement by one ministry could overshadow or restrict the involvement of others. • National governments may show bias in selecting cities and local governments based on political affiliations. • National priorities might overshadow local priorities. • UNICEF has limited influence over programme design and decreased direct contact with participating cities and communities. • There’s potential for discrimination against cities not managed by the ruling parties. • UNICEF is often unable to support individual cities and provide customized guidelines. • UNICEF may face challenges in assessing the quality of implementation and its results. • The initiative’s continuation largely depends on the government’s goodwill, especially if funding isn’t institutionalized.

Source: Authors based on national and regional consultations.



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2.7 UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Child Friendly Cities Network

Since 2018, with the regional meeting in Surabaya, UNICEF promotes and supports the East Asia and Pacific Child Friendly Cities Network with the participation of cities from the region. The network serves as a strategic investment to encourage the development of urban programming with a focus on the needs and rights of children. The regional network of child-friendly cities in the UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional network can address the following functions:

1. **Enhanced collaboration:** A regional network allows cities to collaborate, share best practices, and develop unified strategies. This collaboration ensures that individual successes can be replicated throughout the region, leading to more comprehensive and efficient child-friendly approaches. Major past activities included the Surabaya Meeting in 2018, the participation of a regional delegation of CFC to the Global Summit in 2029, and the participation to the *UNICEF East Asia-Europe CFC Interregional Exchange* in 2023.
2. **Common standards, guidelines and capacity building:** Establishing a network promotes shared standards and guidelines. Such a framework ensures consistency in applying child-friendly principles across cities, creating a level playing field and allowing for the measurement and comparison of progress. The UNICEF Regional Office organized a series of CFCI trainings and capacity building for mayors, administrators and UNICEF officers in 2019, 2020 and 2022.
3. **Strengthening child rights and child participation:** By focusing on creating environments that prioritize children's needs, the network reinforces the commitment to child rights. This empowers children and ensures their voices are heard, creating a more democratic and participatory society. For instance, in the *Intergenerational Dialogue on Child Friendly Cities in East-Asia and Pacific* in 2023, children and policymakers shared ways to progress child-friendly cities to accelerate recovery in the region (UNICEF 2023).
4. **Potential for innovation:** The synergies between cities in a regional network foster innovation and creativity. By working together, cities can explore new avenues for enhancing child-friendliness through technology, policy, or community engagement.
5. **Inter-regional collaboration:** By forming a regional network, the East Asia and Pacific region can become a model in the child-friendly city movement. This leadership can inspire other regions and contribute to a worldwide shift towards cities prioritizing children's needs.
6. **Resource optimization:** By pooling resources and knowledge, cities can benefit from economies of scale. They can develop and implement initiatives at a reduced cost, making the child-friendly concept more accessible and sustainable.

The UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Child Friendly Cities Network can also be used as a platform to identify new challenges and areas of engagement with cities, mayors and local administrators, such as:

Disaster and climate change resilience:

The region is prone to natural disasters and societal challenges. A cohesive network provide a robust platform for cities to respond collectively to crises, ensuring that the rights and well-being of children are protected even in adverse situations.

Cultural sensitivity and diversity: The East Asia and Pacific region has diverse cultures and traditions. A regional network ensures that child-friendly initiatives are tailored to meet different communities’ unique needs and values. This cultural relevance enhances the impact and acceptance of these initiatives.

Research and analytics: Investing in data collection and analysis helps to continuously evaluate the effectiveness of child-friendly initiatives and use insights to drive improvements and innovations.



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2.8 Capitalizing on other urban initiatives and networks in the region

In the East Asia and Pacific region, several international and local organizations, NGOs, and movements are implementing programmes and initiatives on urban issues that can be linked with the child-friendly concept applied to cities or cover sectors essential to children's well-being.

Leveraging innovation and technology, the ASEAN Smart Cities Network (ASCN) works towards smart and sustainable urban development. The primary goal of the ASCN is to improve the lives of ASEAN citizens, including children and youth, by adopting an inclusive approach to smart city development that respects human rights. The 26 ASCN Pilot Cities in Malaysia, Viet Nam, the Philippines, and Indonesia that are or can be engaged in CFC are Makassar, Banyuwangi, DKI Jakarta, Johor Bahru, Kuala Lumpur, Kota Kinabalu, Kuching, Cebu City, Davao City, Manila, Da Nang, Hanoi, and Ho Chi Minh City. Although the Smart Cities Network does not explicitly focus on children, it aims to create sustainable and inclusive cities that benefit citizens from all levels of society.¹⁰

Focusing on education and learning opportunities, the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities (GNLC) is an international network promoting peer learning among member cities; fostering partnerships; providing capacity development; and developing instruments to encourage and recognize progress made in building learning cities that effectively mobilize resources in every sector to promote inclusive learning from primary to higher education and revitalize learning in families and communities among others. The UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities is implemented in China and Malaysia.¹¹

The UN Women Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces Global Flagship Programme Initiative (Global FPI) takes a gendered approach to cities' safety by promoting strategies to prevent and

respond to sexual violence against women and girls in public spaces. City initiatives include strengthening laws and policies and fostering transformative social norms that promote women's and girls' rights to use public spaces. In the region, the Global FPI has been implemented in Quezon City (Philippines) and Ho Chi Minh City (Viet Nam).¹²

The *Global Partnership and Fund to End Violence Against Children* focuses on child protection and was launched by the UN Secretary-General to end all forms of violence against children by 2030. The End Violence Partnership was established as a platform for collective, evidence-based advocacy and action, with over 750 organizations. The End Violence Fund is a flexible funding vehicle that invests in innovative initiatives that have the potential to replicate and scale. Mongolia, the Philippines, and Indonesia are the 'pathfinding' countries in the region.¹³

There is growing attention on environmental issues in cities and their effects on the most vulnerable. The following two networks of local governments are dedicated to climate action. *UNDRR's Making Cities Resilient 2030* (MCR2030) is a cross-stakeholder initiative for improving local resilience to disasters, climate change, and rapid urbanization through advocacy, sharing knowledge and experiences, and establishing mutually reinforcing city-to-city learning networks. Until now, the MCR2030 has not focused on children and youths.¹⁴

Broader attention to vulnerable populations, including children, is paid by the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy South-East Asia (GCoM SEA), the largest global alliance for city climate leadership. Cities' climate change adaptation and resilience efforts have the potential to reduce and mitigate the exposure and vulnerability factors and increase the long-term adaptive capacity of vulnerable populations.

¹⁰ <https://asean.org/our-communities/asean-smart-cities-network/>

¹¹ <https://uil.unesco.org/lifelong-learning/learning-cities/learning-cities-drivers-inclusion-and-sustainability>

¹² https://observatoirevivreensemble.org/sites/default/files/safe-cities-and-safe-public-spaces-international-compendium-of-practices-02-en_2.pdf

¹³ <https://www.end-violence.org>

¹⁴ <https://mcr2030.undrr.org>

2. CHILD FRIENDLY CITIES IN EAST ASIA AND PACIFIC REGION

Climate mitigation and adaptation actions are then included in the city's Climate Action Plan (CAP). Eight cities in Indonesia (Medan, North Minahasa, Pontianak, and Tangerang) and Malaysia (Iskandar Puteri, Petaling Jaya, Putrajaya, and Segamat) have joined GCoM SEA and have recently launched their CAPs. Four Vietnamese cities (Cao Lanh, Hue, Nam Dinh, and Sapa) are finalizing their CAPs.¹⁵

Aside from building synergies with existing initiatives, programmes, and networks, the CFCI was established as a cross-sectoral initiative where partnerships are essential and ideally include the government at various levels, civil society, the media, academia, and the private sector. Having a broad base of local practitioners working to advance the well-being of children helps to build the initiative's sustainability.



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¹⁵ <https://www.asean-mayors.eu>



3. REGIONAL MAPPING: COUNTRY PROFILES

This chapter provides a detailed regional overview of CFC modalities by building a profile for each country. Malaysia, Mongolia, and Viet Nam are implanting UNICEF CFCI. China, Indonesia, and the Philippines have Child Friendly Cities Government Programmes (CFC GP) that receive technical support from UNICEF.

The regional mapping in this report begins with an overview of the national context, focusing on the country's political background and decentralization, public finance information, accountability framework of local governments, and urbanization status. It continues with the CFC history, best results and practices, urban initiatives, networks, and CFC partnerships in which cities are engaged. An overview of the current situation - updated to March 2023 - is also provided and includes the CFC implementation status and activities, focus and programmatic areas, UNICEF's role and resources, and a SWOT analysis. Finally, the future direction of CFC in the short-term, mid-term, and long-term is explored.

Below is the analytical framework used in the analysis of the CFCs in the region:

National context

- Political background and decentralization
- Public finance information
- Accountability framework of local governments
- Urbanization

CFC history

- CFC launch and timeline
- Best results and practices

Urban initiatives and networks and CFC partnerships

- Urban initiatives and networks
- CFC partnerships




CFC overview

- Implementation status and current activities
- Focus and programmatic areas
- UNICEF's role and resources
- SWOT analysis

Future direction

- Activities planned for the short-term, mid-term and long-term

Box 8. Summary of CFC initiatives and Government Programmes in East Asia and Pacific

UNICEF Child Friendly City Initiative (CFCI)	Child Friendly Cities Government Programmes
<p>Malaysia</p> <p>UNICEF CFCI </p> <p>Launch: 2018</p> <p>Timeline and cities involved: In 2020, MoUs were signed with Petaling Jaya and in 2022, MoUs were signed with Kuching South and Miri. Petaling Jaya achieved UNICEF CFCI Candidate City status in 2022. In 2023, MoUs were signed with Kuching North, Padawan, and Sibü.</p> <p>Current activities: Petaling Jaya completed its SitAn in 2021 and approved the Plan of Action in 2022. In 2023, the SitAn for Kuching South, Miri, Kuching North, Padawan, and Sibü started. Thus far, 24 other local councils have announced their interest to join Malaysia’s CFCI network.</p>	<p>China</p> <p>Launch: 2021 (partial engagement from 2010)</p> <p>Timeline and cities involved: In 2015-2016, initial CFC activities were carried out in Changsha and Shenzhen. In October 2021, China started implementing CFC at the national level, and UNICEF has expanded the partnership at multiple levels with different stakeholders.</p> <p>Current activities: 54 cities from the first and second batches have been actively working on CFC as official pilot cities. By 2025, the Chinese Government has set the objective to pilot 100 child-friendly cities across the country.</p>
<p>Mongolia</p> <p>UNICEF CFCI </p> <p>Launch: 2012</p> <p>Timeline and cities involved: CFC pilots were implemented in Khuvsgul and the Nalaikh district in 2012. In 2017, 3 further provinces were added and 1 district of Ulaanbaatar. A fourth province, Omnogovi, was then included in 2020. In 2020, CFCI was implemented in 11 provinces.</p> <p>Current activities: Local authorities are reviewing the results, lessons learned, and good practices of CFCI. CFCI Sustainability Action Plans were produced to ensure the continuity of the Initiative.</p>	<p>Indonesia</p> <p>Launch: 2006</p> <p>Timeline and cities involved: In 2007, pilot projects were launched in 5 cities. In the first 16 years of implementation, 457 districts/cities have joined the national child-friendly city/district (CFC/D) programme.</p> <p>Current activities: Since 2011, the central government has been implementing the CFC/D country-wide, coordinated by the Ministry of Women Empowerment and Child Protection.</p>
<p>Viet Nam</p> <p>UNICEF CFCI </p> <p>Launch: 2015</p> <p>Timeline and cities involved: CFCI started in Ho Chi Minh City but phased out in 2021. Since 2019, CFCI is implemented in Da Nang. Da Nang produced a Situation Analysis of Children and Adolescents in 2020, followed by the Action Plan in 2021.</p> <p>Current activities: Da Nang is implementing CFCI activities based on the City Programme of Action on Children 2021-2030. In 2022, UNICEF co-organized a national CFCI conference with several Vietnamese cities.</p>	<p>Philippines</p> <p>Launch: 1996</p> <p>Timeline and cities involved: The CFM was initially implemented in 20 provinces and five cities. In 2014, the Department of the Interior and Local Government, the Council for the Welfare of Children, and UNICEF launched the Child-Friendly Local Governance Audit (CFLGA) country-wide.</p> <p>Current activities: The CFLGA has become the mandatory annual audit for all LGUs. Those passing the CFLGA with 80 per cent and above are conferred with the Seal of Child-Friendly Local Governance (SCFLG).</p>



Malaysia

Population under age 18 (2022): **9.3 million**¹⁶

Total population (2022): **33.93 million**¹⁷

Population under age 18 as percentage of total population: **27.4%**¹⁸

Urban population as percentage of total population (2021): **78%**¹⁹

GDP per capita in 2021(current): **USD 11,109**²⁰

3.1 National context

3.1.1 Political background and decentralization

Malaysia is a federal constitutional elective monarchy. Malaysia's administrative division consists of a federal territory (Peninsular) two regions (Sabah and Sarawak), 13 states (Perlis, Kedah, Kelantan, Terengganu, Perak, Selangor, Melaka, Negeri Sembilan, Johor, Pahang, Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur, Federal Territory of Labuan, Federal Territory of Putrajaya) and 154 local authorities, divided into city, municipal and district councils. Since 1965, the state government has overseen the appointment of mayors and municipal councillors. Malaysia has a decentralized government, although it remains relatively centralized compared to other federations.²¹

From 2018 onwards, after the 14th General Election, the political landscape in Malaysia has entered deep uncertainty. In the recently completed 15th General Election, the Parliament is hung with no coalition able to achieve a simple majority. For this reason, more significant intervention at the local government level is needed to implement the CFCI effectively.

3.1.2 Public finance information

Local authorities receive funding and delegated power from states, regions, and the federal

territory. City and municipal councils have the autonomy to enter into legally binding agreements and are accountable for their financial management. Criteria for determining the type of local authority rely on population size and financial turnover. City councils correspond to local authorities with a population over 500,000 people and total revenues above RM 100 mil, municipal councils correspond to local authorities with a population of between 150,000 and 500,000 people and total revenues between RM 20 mil and RM 100 mil, districts councils correspond to local authorities with a population below 150,000 people and total revenues below RM 20 mil.

3.1.3 Accountability framework of local governments

Despite their role as the third tier of government, which is considered critical to implement and facilitating national policies and programmes, local governments often need to be better resourced, coordinated, and managed. In general, state governments have limited power to decide their investment priorities. The functions of local authorities are governed by the Local Government Act (1976) and the Town and Country Planning Act (1976). Responsibilities shared between states and municipalities include social welfare, urban planning, healthcare, fire safety, housing, culture and sports, and more. Municipalities' responsibilities include environmental protection.²²

¹⁶ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2022).

¹⁷ Department of Statistics Malaysia.

¹⁸ UN Habitat (2023).

¹⁹ World Bank Data (2023).

²⁰ World Bank Data (2023).

²¹ OECD/UCLG (2016), Subnational Governments around the world: Structure and Finance.

²² Ibid.

When focusing on social policy, cities facilitate more access points for children from the undocumented population and marginalized groups, and the central government should capitalize on this.

3.1.4 Urbanization

Based on the key findings of the Population and Housing Census of Malaysia 2020, the urbanization rate in Malaysia has tripled from 28.4 per cent in 1970 to 75.1 per cent in 2020. The urban population expanded by 21.4 million from 3 million in 1970 to 24.4 million in 2020, while the rural population slightly increased

to 8.1 million persons in 2020 from 7.5 million in 1970.²³

Among the cities involved in the CFCI, Petaling Jaya is the 8th largest city in Malaysia, with a total population of over 620,000. It is known as the leading growth centre in Selangor. Kuching is the capital city of Sarawak State. Kuching is divided into Kuching North and Kuching South, and the population reached 812,900 people in 2020.²⁴ Miri is the second largest city in Sarawak, with a population of 300,545 as of 2020. Johor is a state of Malaysia, with Johor Bahru as the capital. As of 2020, the state's population is 4.01 million, making it Malaysia's second most populated state.

3.2 CFC history

3.2.1 CFC launch and timeline

In 2018, UNICEF Malaysia started advocating the CFCI in Petaling Jaya (PJ). PJ had started its sustainability and child empowerment agenda in the 2000s through the PJ Local Agenda 21, focusing on strengthening the role of children, pushed by the following three main reasons: 1) Children will inherit the past and the responsibility of taking care of the Earth. 2) Children represent a large group of the population, approximately 28 per cent. 3) Children are particularly vulnerable when environmental degradation and social problems occur.

Among the early programmes and projects implemented by Petaling Jaya City Council is the organization of the first Petaling Jaya Child's Forum in 2009, a free school bus service, a complimentary healthy breakfast for poor children, an International Youth Leadership Camp, several school infrastructures upgrading programmes as well as the organization of a safety programme at school.

The Petaling Jaya City Council made its first move towards formalizing its commitment to creating a child-friendly city in September 2019,

when it had its first preliminary meeting with UNICEF to explore the possibilities.

Subsequently, several outreach children's sessions were organized in each of the four zones in the city to engage and create awareness of the objectives of becoming a CFC.

In November 2019, the City Authority, UNICEF Malaysia, the Childline Foundation, and the Malaysian Institute of Planners organized a Child-Friendly Cities Conference in PJ. The outcome of the meeting also saw the appointment of 32 Petaling Jaya Child Council members. Children were appointed as Child City Councillors to serve the City Authority voluntarily for two years and played an essential role in the inception phase of the CFCI.

Since 2020, several Malaysian cities have expressed interest in participating in CFCI. In 2022, MoUs were signed with the City Council of Kuching South and Miri City Council. The City Council of Petaling Jaya achieved UNICEF CFCI Candidate City status in 2022. In 2023, MoUs were signed with the City Council of Kuching North, the Padawan Municipal Council, and the Sibu Municipal Council.

²⁴ <https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2022/12/23/statistics-dept-malaysias-urbanisation-rate-tripled-over-five-decades/46783>

²⁴ https://sarawak.gov.my/web/home/article_view/240/175/

3.2.2 Best results and practices

CFCI has enabled UNICEF to establish cross-sectoral engagement with city councils, ministries, and agencies. The Ministry of Women, Early Childhood and Community Wellbeing Development, Sarawak (KPWK) invited UNICEF to comment on their portion of the State Nutrition Workplan and asked UNICEF to focus on the nutrition element in the upcoming CFCI SitAn. Moreover, during the CFCI Workshop hosted by KPWK in Kuching in 2022, the CO engaged

with different ministries and agencies.

For instance, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Urban Development expressed its intention to institutionalize child participation in city planning, and the Land and Survey Department offered support to local councils in certain areas of the CFCI Plan of Action implementation. Thanks to the CFCI, there has been more attention on climate change action at the local level, for instance, by supporting air pollution monitoring in PJ.

3.3 Urban initiatives and networks and CFC partnerships

3.3.1 Urban initiatives and networks

Petaling Jaya is part of UNESCO’s Network of Learning Cities and won the 2019 UNESCO Learning Cities Award for making great strides to improve access to public learning spaces by providing free bus services across four city routes. Johor Bahru, Kota Kinabalu, Kuala Lumpur, and Kuching are part of the ASEAN Smart Cities Network. Miri Smart City joined in September 2019, and Miri is currently the only city in Sarawak reporting on SDGs. Petaling Jaya, alongside Iskandar Puteri, Putrajaya, and Segamat, are the four Malaysia pilot cities part of GCoM SEA.

for building partnerships between local governments, the private sector, civil society organizations, and communities. Collaboration with other government-funded organizations (e.g. All-Party Parliamentary Group Malaysia on Sustainable Development Goals) can provide a stronger voice to influence national policies on the social well-being of children. Professional bodies (e.g. Malaysian Institute of Planners, Urbanice), academia (University of Swinburne, Curtin University, University of Science Malaysia), and NGOs are other potential CFCI implementation partners.

3.3.2 CFC partnerships

UNICEF Malaysia recognizes CFCI as a framework

Petaling Java City Council is collaborating with various actors on implementing the CFCI, including the Childline Foundation and the Malaysian Institute of Planners.

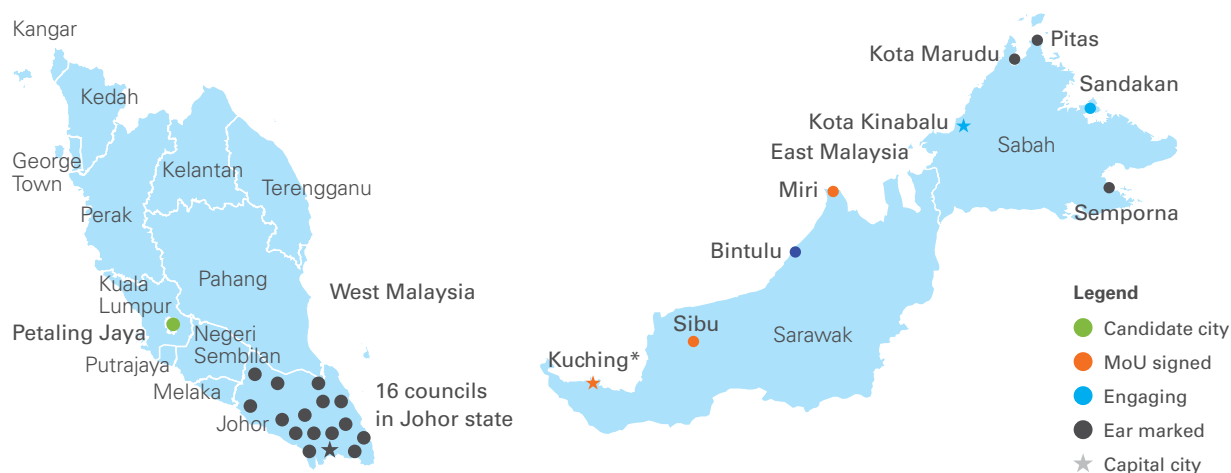
3.4 CFC overview

3.4.1 Implementation status and current activities

In Malaysia, the CFCI is a UNICEF-led framework for local authorities to formulate a plan with their communities, creating a sense of ownership among citizens. In 2022, Petaling Java became the first Malaysian city to achieve the Candidate City status, has recently completed the implementation of its Plan of Action, and is currently undergoing an independent evaluation of its performance. Five MoUs have been signed in Sarawak between 2022 and 2023 with City Council Kuching South (MBKS),

Miri City Council (MCC), City Council Kuching North (DBKU), Padawan Municipal Council (MPP) and Sibu Municipal Council (SMC). Bintulu Development Authority (BDA) is expected to sign in 2024. Furthermore, the signed councils have had a series of CFCI kick-off meetings. The councils recently set up CFCI Steering Committees and Working Committees. The SitAn started in August 2023. Thus far, 24 other local councils have announced their interest and potential commitment to the CFCI. UNICEF Malaysia is undertaking discussions with the 16 councils in Johor State, 5 in Sabah State, and 3 in Selangor State.

Figure 4. Map of Malaysian cities involved in the CFCI in 2022



Note: *Kuching is divided into 3 local councils; Kuching North, Kuching South and Padawan

Source: UNICEF Malaysia.

3.4.2 Focus and programmatic areas

The results of Petaling Jaya's SitAn showed severe issues, including children's safety, malnutrition, poverty, dropping out of school, and constraints of time and places to play and leisure. These issues were addressed in the CFCI Action Plan, covering five key areas: 1) Knowledge, Attitude and Practices; 2) Governance and Coordination, 3) Legal Framework and Policy; 4) Data and Information; 5) Financing and Human Resources.

The CFCI Action Plan was supported by 22 activities and 35 programmes, including awareness seminars, training, and guidelines for the appointment and roles of the Petaling Java Child Council. The PJ city council also formulated a child participation and protection policy, as required by UNICEF.

The Petaling Java City Council has appointed 44 members of the children to represent the voices of PJ children in focus group discussions in city planning and management. These 44 representatives cover the various community groups (Malay, Chinese, Indian, Indigenous People, children with disabilities and Urban Poor). This ensures that the voices of each group of children will be brought into the conversation and heard.

To show PJ's solid commitment to implementing the CFCI, one of the 10 Thematic Projects of the PJ Sustainable Development Agenda, also known as PJ Smart, Sustainable, and Resilient 2030, is a Child Friendly City (CFC).

In the CFC Thematic Project, to ensure that the CFCI in Petaling Java sustains and has an impact, the PJ City Council has determined a mechanism for monitoring the achievement of the CFCI. These include the Petaling Java Smart City Project's Dashboard on Smart Child Friendly City, a Technical Committee Meeting for Community Development, which provides for children, youth, women, and senior citizens, an annual work target meeting is held twice a year, and the Child Friendly City Key Performance Indicators set up by the PJSSR 2030. Through these monitoring mechanisms, PJ aims to achieve the targets and the implementation of activities included in the CFCI Action Plan.²⁵

3.4.3 UNICEF's role and resources

UNICEF Malaysia assists the local councils through the various steps of the CFCI cycle, including designing, co-financing, and implementing their Situation Analysis and Costed Plan of Action development.

²⁵ Intervention by Ms. TPr Sharipah Marhaini Binti Syed Ali Deputy Mayor of Petaling Jaya City Council, during the 10th APFSD Virtual Side Event: 'Child Friendly Cities to Accelerate Recovery in East-Asia and the Pacific: An Intergenerational Dialogue', on 28th March 2023.

UNICEF Malaysia has two staff covering the CFCI portfolio – a Social Policy Specialist and a Knowledge Management Officer, with the potential to expand the team in 2023.

The 2022 to 2023 allocated budget is based on the number of interested local councils. UNICEF Malaysia started with the total funding of MBPJ SitAn and the Costed Plan of Action of about USD 100,00, followed by total financing of the Sarawak cohort under USD 120,000. In the future, UNICEF Malaysia will transition towards a cost-sharing (50-50) with the local councils and State Government to develop the next SitAn and Costed Plan of Action.

3.4.4 SWOT analysis

Since the CFCI is still in its initial stages in Malaysia, further strengths, opportunities, weaknesses, and threads are expected to arise as the initiative progresses.

Strengths and opportunities

- CFCI offers an inclusive and comprehensive approach using a proven methodology to identify and describe all community segments' challenges.
- CFCI provides financial transparency since the activities included in the Action Plan are costed, and the information is publicly available.
- The CFCI recognition shows the local authority's 'extra' commitment to social well-being and participatory governance.
- CFCI can enable the pilot of small innovative solutions with a manageable risk that can be scaled up nationwide when fiscal and political situations improve at the Federal level.

- CFCI is seen as a catalytic entry point in the following three key areas:

1) Positioning with state and local

government: Data and evidence generated at the sub-national level are valuable insight for programme design, which is currently unavailable in Malaysia (e.g. disability, child protection, and climate change).

- ##### 2) Support UNICEF's fundraising:
- CFCI can offer opportunities to expand and enable fundraising activities in locations controlled by the sub-national government. Additionally, CFCI can be an added value for large institutional donors, for instance, the Johor Football Team.

- ##### 3) Strengthen social policy advocacy:
- CFCI can influence the design and implementation of social protection programmes funded by the sub-national government. CFCI is also seen as an entry point for better public service delivery as a coordination mechanism among multi-stakeholders.

Weaknesses and threats

- Generally, there is a lack of motivation to generate disaggregated data for children in municipalities that might hinder the preparation of the cities' SitAn.
- Given the instability of the political landscape, CFCI requires an additional discipline of action and relentless engagement to achieve even slight progress.
- Due to tight fiscal positions, governments are only inclined to venture into innovative approaches for children if they can mitigate the risk through best practices and successful case studies.

3.5 Future direction

3.5.1 Activities planned for the short-term, mid-term and long-term

Several Malaysian cities are expected to join the CFCI. During 2023, all 16 councils in Johor are expected to sign the CFCI MoU. In 2024, 2 cities in Sabah (Kota Kinabalu and Sandakan) with one city in Sarawak (Bintulu) are set to sign the CFCI MoU, and five councils (MBKS, MCC, DBKU, MPP, and SMC) in Sarawak are expected to complete and approve their costed Plan of Action and start implementation of activities. Moreover, the 16 councils in Johor and Bintulu are expected to finalize their Situation Analysis and costed Plan of Action. In the short term, UNICEF Malaysia will undergo a consultative process among local councils to determine a standard criterion for assessment and monitoring and evaluation framework.

The CFCI was included in Malaysia's Programme Strategy Note (PSN) 2022-2025, where it is stated that 'through the CFCI and in collaboration with wider UN engagements on sustainable urban planning and development, UNICEF will work

with the Ministry of Federal Territories, the Ministry of Local Government and Housing, the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development and selected states and municipal authorities to strengthen the positioning of child outcomes within local government plans and budgets; to generate evidence and promote dialogue on appropriate institutional arrangements and capacity requirements for local level implementation of disability inclusive and gender transformative child friendly plans and budgets; provide feedback and advice to national authorities on policy implementation bottlenecks and increase the effectiveness of policy reforms for children.'

According to Malaysia's PSN 2022-2025, UNICEF will support selected states and cities involved in CFCI to prioritize and mainstream climate change within their plans and budgets and strengthen risk-informed planning. Furthermore, an ongoing evaluation of business engagement and partnerships with the private sector will provide evidence and guidance on how to best leverage the private sector around climate change and environmental degradation.



Mongolia

Population under age 18 (2022): **1.2 million**²⁶

Total population (2022): **3.39 million**²⁷

Population under age 18 as percentage of total population: **35.4%**

Urban population as percentage of total population (2021): **69%**²⁸

Population living in informal settlements in 2020 (percentage of urban population): **18%**²⁹

GDP per capita in 2021 (current): **USD 4,566**³⁰

Gini Index (2018): **32.7**³¹

3.1 National context

3.1.1 Political background and decentralization

Mongolia is a semi-presidential representative democracy. Mongolia has three tiers of sub-national government: 21 provinces (*aimags*) comprised of 330 districts (*sumd*), and 1,559 sub-districts (*baghs*). The capital city of Ulaanbaatar is an independent administrative unit, divided into nine districts and 151 sub-districts (*khoroos*). Mongolia has a decentralized form of government. Following the Revised Budget Law 2011, local governments and communities have gained greater responsibility and decision-making authority.³²

Mongolia has achieved significant development gains in the last few decades. In 2015, Mongolia graduated to Upper Middle Income due to notable progress in reducing poverty and improving people's well-being. Reflecting this progress, CFCI has shifted from a community-oriented concept based on equality and family empowerment to a governance approach based on embedding children's rights in local governance.

3.1.2 Public finance information

The central government is responsible for spending on child-related activities through various welfare transfers to individuals or households. These transfers take place separately from local budgeting

processes. The other central government budgeting responsibility concerning child support is for capital budget investments in local primary and secondary level education and health facilities and for capital and current budgets for tertiary-level facilities. In these areas, local authorities only make proposals but have no final investment decision-making power.³³

The prime financing sources for child-related local government budget spending are:

- Special purpose transfers for social services (SPTs) to finance recurrent spending on early childhood development and general education, primary health care, and child development and protection. Local spending from these transfers is tightly regulated by central ministry budget norms and guidelines, leaving little scope for local authorities to change SPT allocations between sectors and little room for local flexibility, even within industries.
- Local Development Fund (LDF) transfers to finance minor capital investment spending, for instance, WASH facilities, kindergartens, improvements to school and health facilities, playgrounds, public toilets, showers, and lighting. In 2020 and 2021, 23–30 per cent of local development funds were spent on children in target areas.

²⁶ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2022).

²⁷ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2022).

²⁸ World Bank Data (2023).

²⁹ UN Habitat (2023).

³⁰ World Bank Data (2023).

³¹ World Bank Data (2023).

³² UNICEF Report: 'Evaluation of UNICEF Mongolia's Geographic Targeting Approach in programming' (2021).

³³ Ibid.

The LDF transfers were introduced in 2012 to enable investments based on the priorities of local communities, based on a participatory process that includes the voices of children and adolescents. Spending from LDF transfers allows sub-national governments more local autonomy than SPTs.³⁴

3.1.3 Accountability framework of local governments

At the sub-national level, responsibility for providing essential social services has moved between various levels of government over the last decade and continues to do so. Although several new laws have attempted to clarify the roles of multiple levels of government, duplication and fragmentation still happen between central, provincial, and district governments. This results in weakening the accountability of sub-national authorities for service provision.

The Constitution, the Law on Public Administrative and Territorial Units, and the Law on Local Self-Government define local government's function.

Sub-national governments are responsible for the following activities:

- Profiling of children's rights, service access, protection, and other welfare issues in the province;
- Review these issues with children's councils;
- Development of a CFC strategy for the province;
- Establishment of a CFC participation framework, with Children's Councils at province, district and sub-district levels;
- Recommendations for issuance of CFC policies and plans by provincial authorities;

- Approval by provincial authorities and citizens' representatives of budget allocations to finance CFC activities, including a minimum 10 per cent allocation of provincial LDF for children's issues.

3.1.4 Urbanization

Regional disparities lead people to move from rural into urban areas for better opportunities, which has resulted in rapid urbanization. There has been a 6.3 per cent annual increase in the population of Ulaanbaatar and, to a lesser extent, in secondary urban centres. In 2022, the urban population represented 70 per cent of the country's 3.3 million people. Rapid urbanization has resulted in unplanned settlements and increased air, water, and soil pollution. Nearly 60 per cent of Ulaanbaatar's 1.37 million inhabitants live in under-serviced areas, as the city's infrastructure grid was initially designed for a much smaller population. Ulaanbaatar is one of the most polluted capitals in the world, with devastating impacts on child health, impacting neurodevelopment and damaging lung function.

The rapid influx of migrants presents challenges in delivering urban services (garbage collection, street lighting, water), especially in the relatively low-density peri-urban areas where migrants tend to settle. Basic social services are also affected for children and families. For instance, there is an overburdening of health and education facilities. Moreover, registration issues affect maternal and child health, employment, and social welfare.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ ADB Report: 'Decentralization, Local Governance, and Local Economic Development in Mongolia' (2021).

³⁷ More scientific knowledge on the links between exposure to air pollution and adverse health effects in children can be found in WHO Report 'Air pollution and child health: prescribing clean air' (2018).

3.2 CFC history

3.2.1 CFC launch and timeline

CFCI was launched in Mongolia in 2012 and named Child Friendly Community Strategy, with pilots in the Khuvsgul province and the Nalaikh district of Ulaanbaatar. UNICEF adopted the approach of CFC to promote the integrated delivery of childhood interventions and increase the capacity and commitment of local governments and communities to improve children's situation. CFCI was included in UNICEF's Country Programme Document 2012-2016 and consisted of situation analysis, planning, implementation, and evaluation. Khuvsgul province and Nalaikh districts conducted initial assessments of children's situation analysis and Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS), which provided quantitative and qualitative information for planning CFCI.

The results of a child-friendliness assessment of Khuvsgul aimag and Nalaikh district demonstrated the need for a system for solving children's issues and that awareness of child friendly governance needed to be improved. This determination was based on low spending levels for children by the local development fund in 2012, insufficient support provided for child-led organizations, failure to listen to children's opinions at the decision-making level, an inadequate number of decisions made for children, and insufficiencies in the implementation process.

Following the assessment outcomes, the Khuvsgul Provincial Government developed a CFC strategy that has become the leading inter-sectoral planning and monitoring tool for child rights at the local level, setting accountability targets and milestones for child survival, development, protection, and participation.

Based on the pilot experiences of Khuvsgul and the Nalaikh district, the CFCI was scaled up in the 2017-2021 Country Programme to include three western provinces (Govi-Altai, Bayankhongor, Zavkhan) and one district of Ulaanbaatar (Bayanzurkh). A fourth province, Onmnogovi, was then included in 2020.

During the last two decades of its work in Mongolia, UNICEF has used different targeting to define the most effective and efficient approaches to support more rapid progress for children toward intended results. Hence, the number of Geographic Focus Areas (GFAs) has varied. Provinces and districts are chosen based on multiple child deprivations, persisting inequalities among children, government capacity, and the partnership landscape. CFCI has been implemented in districts and provinces included in the GFAs.

During the 2017-2021 programme cycle, the local government in Khuvsgul province approved a sub-programme called the 'Child Friendly Province 2017-2020' to safeguard the results achieved by CFCI in the previous programme cycle. Moreover, Khuvsgul province developed and adopted a new strategy called "A Developed Khuvsgul 2016-2030", a long-term policy document to support the effective implementation of CFCI and cement its future course while developing good governance at the local level.

In 2020, CFCI saw an increased number of provinces implementing child-friendly communities, which reached 11, including six located outside GFAs and selected by the Authority for Family, Child, and Youth Development. Non-GFAs provinces were chosen as regional representatives to roll out the CFCI with minimal UNICEF technical support.

Figure 5. Map of Mongolia’s geographic focus areas involved in the CFCI during the UNICEF Country Programmes 2012-2016 and 2017-2021



Source: UNICEF Mongolia.

3.2.2 Best results and practices

The CFCI has promoted inter-sectoral coordination in the country by establishing a CFCI Coordination Council headed by provincial and district governors. The Coordination Council includes members from the health, education, and family sectors and meets quarterly to monitor and enhance CFCI implementation.

Targeted local governments have been supported to allow children to express their opinions on specific child-related issues through Children’s Councils and to reflect those opinions in local development planning and budgeting. Children’s Councils are established under the leadership of provincial and district governors, with representatives tasked to participate in relevant Governor’s Council meetings

and ensure the integration of children’s issues into the Governor’s development action plans.

Child participation has been further strengthened with UNICEF’s technical assistance, evidenced by the increased number of decisions at the local level informed by children in GFAs. Back in 2015, in Khuvsgul province and the Nalaikh district, children’s councils advocated for the allocation of a portion of the LDF to be invested in child-related programmes for the province, and this resulted in resolution of investing no less than 10 per cent of the LDF for the wellbeing of children. Notably, the LDF investment for children in Khuvsgul province reached 22.5 per cent in 2015 (compared to 8.8 per cent in 2013). These results have been sustained in 2022 when GFAs spent 25 to 30 per cent of LDF on children.

3.3 Urban initiatives and networks and CFC partnerships

3.3.1 Urban initiatives and networks

Mongolia's capital city Ulaanbaatar and all its 21 Provinces participate in UNDRR global network MCR2030.

Composed of 18 Mongolian cities, the Healthy City Network of Mongolia (HCSC) is a non-profit organization focused on promoting a health-friendly environment for city dwellers in Mongolia. HCSC organizes capacity-building activities for local government officials, implements health-promoting model projects in cooperation with local governments and international urban development organizations, and research to improve the quality of life in Mongolian urban areas.

3.3.2 CFC partnerships

Partnerships with donors, NGOs, and the private

sector have helped to build local capacity while relieving pressure on dedicated public funding and providing opportunities for broader collaboration. The depth of these partnerships can vary, from the dissemination of information to financial support, to help implement activities under CFCI.

UNICEF Mongolia has increased efforts to engage the private sector in implementing the CFC. Examples of private sector partnerships from the past include the cooperation with the national mobile phone operator Mobicom.

Additionally, a collaboration on CFC was established between UNICEF, a district of Ulaanbaatar, the financial institution Arig Bank and the private company Wagner Asia. Overall, corporate social responsibility is increasing because of UNICEF efforts, as are partnerships in the NGO sector.

3.4 CFC overview

3.4.1 Implementation status and current activities

CFCI in Mongolia is a UNICEF-led, child-friendly governance tool that can be linked to tangible improvements in child indicators and used for evidence to inform national and local child-friendly governance policies and child-friendly, equitable investments.

In 2022, local authorities in GFAs reviewed the results, lessons learned, and good practices of CFCI and worked towards ensuring the sustainability of the initiative's implementation in their provinces. Following the review, the districts and provinces committed to developing CFCI Sustainability Action Plans with their resources.

GFAs maintained the spending for children from Local Development Fund at 25-30 per cent in 2022.

In 2022, critical activities in provinces included:

- Increased multi-sectoral coordination for children in Zavkhan.

- Increased commitment of Gobi-Altai to child-centred disaster risk reduction.
- Enhanced child participation through a 'Mini Parliament' in the Bayankhongor province.
- Establishing a formal child participation mechanism in the Omnogobi province focusing on children with disabilities resulted in two schools being made more accessible for students in wheelchairs.

UNICEF provides technical support to the Municipality of Ulaanbaatar to review the indicators and recognition system used to assess the city's child friendliness. This joint effort aims to introduce UNICEF's global indicators on CFCI and integrate them into the 'Happy Ulaanbaatar City Index.'

In 2022, the central government conducted advocacy initiatives to promote the scaling up of CFCI. Advocacy resulted in a joint effort with the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection to review the annual performance contract between the Minister and local governors to include relevant CFCI indicators.

3.4.2 Focus and programmatic areas

UNICEF Mongolia's advocacy and technical support to the sub-national government is focused on reviewing the results and ensuring the sustainability of the CFCl.

Broader programmatic areas of the CFCl in Mongolia are:

- Building a child-friendly policy environment by linking global goals, such as the realization of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Sustainable Development Goals, to national goals, such as the implementation of child rights law, laws on family, on domestic violence, and local legal regulations.
- Demonstrating specific models of child-friendly basic social services such as child-friendly governance, health service, educational and protection services, and operational councils for children, increased budget and investment for children, visibility and voice of children in local government planning processes.
- Strengthen the local government's role in providing child-friendly basic social services to marginalized household children under the poverty line and those with disabilities.
- Collect and analyse data on the situation of children at province and district levels as a basis for programme development formulation and planning.
- Mobilize all possible partners at the local level – decision-makers, government officials, non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations, and the private sector – to increase communication for development on CFCl-related issues and promote business principles and social responsibility for children.

3.4.3 UNICEF's role and resources

Given the weak accountability of sub-national authorities for service provision, UNICEF Mongolia plays a critical role in strengthening child-friendly local governance and planning and integrated service delivery at the sub-national level.

UNICEF Mongolia provides advocacy and direct technical support to local governments in GFAs to strengthen their capacity to implement the CFCl, focusing on the CFCl's sustainability.

The Mongolia CO periodically organizes events with cities to review CFCl cycles and provide a platform to share lessons learned and good practices of CFCl. UNICEF can also bring critical partners together and mobilize high-quality expertise.

UNICEF Mongolia currently has two members of staff allocated to CFCl in the Social Policy Team. Sub-national governments primarily finance CFCl activities from the LDF, and co-funding from local revenues and the Local Governor's Reserve Fund to a lesser extent. NGOs, such as World Vision, the private sector and local community members provide occasional co-funding.

3.4.4 SWOT analysis

Strengths and opportunities

- CFCl is the leading planning and monitoring tool for child rights at the local level in the GFAs, setting accountability targets and milestones in child survival, development, protection, and participation.
- Implementing CFCl contributes to improving child-friendly governance at the subnational level with increased budget allocations that ensure access to social services for the most disadvantaged children.
- CFCl is aligned with the mid-term and short-term local development plans and programmes of local governments and national priorities in Mongolia.
- CFCl engages duty-bearers from various sectors (teachers, social workers, law enforcement, local government, and local NGOs) and meets the intersectional needs of child rights-holders.
- CFCl embraces local priorities for advancing child rights and therefore increases ownership and sustainability of communities.
- A whole perspective of children's needs is aggregated and embraced through institutionalized children's councils and direct consultation organized by governors.
- Highly motivated government officials, such as the Governor of Khuvsgul, have expanded the CFCl's reach and success and convinced other province governor's offices to implement the initiative.
- CFCl implementation in GFA has piloted innovative models that generated evidence for national policy advocacy.

Weaknesses and threats

- Uncertainty about the country’s economic panorama and a significant budget deficit in coming years threaten social-sector expenditures and the allocation of decentralized budgets for local spending.
- Political cycles and staff turnover hamper the institutionalization of the CFCI, as these require ongoing, long-term monitoring and high-level commitment.
- Capacity gaps between national and sub-national decision-making bodies require constant attention and follow-up since local authorities need help managing decentralized funds.
- The CFCI monitoring system needs strengthening to capture quantitative and qualitative dimensions and track progress on key child indicators.
- The challenge is to discern the benefits of the CFCI from the contributions from specific sectors, such as health or education, and provide evidence of CFCI achievements to local governments.
- NGOs and civil society involvement in CFCI implementation need a clear definition.
- Environmental threats profoundly affecting the country, such as air pollution and climate change, are not reflected in CFCI activities.

3.5 Future direction

3.5.1 Activities planned for the short-term, mid-term and long-term

In 2023, UNICEF Mongolia will start a new country programme cycle. CFCI will see a more

programmatic and institutionalized approach than in the previous programme cycles, looking at the local governance structures and mechanisms of all 21 provinces and nine districts of Ulaanbaatar City. Hence, CFCI will be expanded outside GFAs.



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Viet Nam

Population under age 18 (2022): **26.2 million**³⁸

Total population (2022): **98.19 million**³⁹

Population under age 18 as percentage of total population: **26.7%**

Urban population as percentage of total population (2021): **38%**⁴⁰

Population living in informal settlements in 2020 (percentage of urban population): **6%**⁴¹

GDP per capita in 2021 (current): **USD 3,757**⁴²

Gini Index (2018): **35.7**⁴³

3.1 National context

3.1.1 Political background and decentralization

Viet Nam is a socialist republic with a one-party system led by the Communist Party of Viet Nam. The local government system was established in 1945, and sub-national levels are part of national governments. Viet Nam has a three-tier local government system consisting of provincial, district, and commune levels, with 63 provincial-level units (including 58 provinces and five centrally controlled cities), 710 districts, and 11,145 communes. Vietnamese provinces, districts, and communes are governed by the People's Council and the Executive People's Committee since 2003, with authority in deciding budgeting issues. The Executive People's Committee has a provincial planning department in charge of coordination between levels of government.⁴⁴ Hence, Viet Nam's government is centralized.

3.1.2 Public finance information

The budgeting process for all levels of government is defined under the revised State Budget Law

(SBL), approved by the National Assembly in June 2015. Budgets of local authorities are prepared and submitted through a bottom-up process, in which local legislatures review and appropriate the local budgets before submission to the upper tier of government. The budget at each level is approved by the respective People's Council and the upper level of government. The national legislature ultimately adopts a state budget for the country, consolidating central and local budgets. Additionally, SBL establishes regulations on minimum budget allocation to certain areas, for instance, at least 20 per cent of total spending on education.

Regarding expenditure decentralization in Viet Nam, the SBL allocated more significant responsibility to provinces and promoted transparency through an enforcement mechanism to make communes publicly post their budgets.⁴⁵ According to the SBL, local authorities are responsible for over half of government spending. The expenditure is executed directly by local authorities out of revenues raised and retained within their jurisdictions and out of transfers from upper tiers of government. Local authorities, therefore, play a significant role in service delivery for children.⁴⁶

³⁸ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2022).

³⁹ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2022).

⁴⁰ World Bank Data (2023).

⁴¹ UN Habitat (2023).

⁴² World Bank Data (2023).

⁴³ World Bank Data (2023).

⁴⁴ OECD/UCLG (2016), Subnational Governments around the world: Structure and finance.

⁴⁵ OECD/UCLG (2016), Subnational Governments around the world: Structure and finance.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

3.1.3 Accountability framework of local governments

The 2013 Constitution clearly states that the local administration has two types of tasks and powers: organizing and ensuring implementation of the Constitution and laws in their localities and deciding on local issues. The underpinning view is that policies and regulations are to be issued by central bodies, and local administrations at all levels are responsible for implementing them under the supervision of state bodies. Administrative departments at each level of government are horizontally accountable to the People’s Council within their tier (financially) but also vertically responsible to their functional line department at the immediately higher level of government and, ultimately, central line ministries (technically).

The Law on Organization of Local Governments, from 2015, defines specific tasks and powers of each local administration level and those of the People’s Councils and People’s Committees. According to this Law, most duties and powers are assigned at the provincial level, considering the capability of each level of administration. Local governments decide the long-term, midterm, and annual Socio-Economic Development Plan of the provinces and districts, defining the goals, targets, and resource allocation for achieving the set targets, including investment and expenditure on education, healthcare, and social welfare.

3.1.4 Urbanization

As economic growth increases quickly and Viet Nam transitions from the lower middle-income category

towards a middle-income country, urbanization and internal migration have become significant trends over the last three decades. With more than one-third of the population living in urban areas in 2016 and children accounting for 26 per cent, Viet Nam has one of the largest urban populations in East Asia. Viet Nam has continued to experience heightened migration to industrialized zones in urban areas, which brings a complex range of challenges and adverse impacts on children. Migrant children often lack parental care and enjoy limited access to education, exposing them to child exploitation and abuse due to migrant families’ limited access to essential social services at their destination. These challenges are particularly acute in larger cities such as Ho Chi Minh City and Da Nang.

Da Nang is Viet Nam’s third largest city, with roughly 1 million residents. Da Nang is a vibrant industrial, commercial, financial, educational, technological, and tourist hub. The children and youth population are about 253,000, accounting for 26 per cent of the city’s population. Although the city issued the Master Project on Population Distribution in Da Nang 2013-2020, the large influx of migrants is placing pressure on infrastructure (transportation, power, water supply, and drainage, as well as environmental sanitation) and social services (education, healthcare, and housing).

Moreover, Da Nang’s urban challenges are exacerbated by the increasingly severe effects of climate change, including increasing average temperatures, rising precipitation, and land erosion affecting districts along rivers and coastal areas.



3.2 CFC history

3.2.1 CFC launch and timeline

The CFCI was introduced in Viet Nam in 2015 to promote and protect a better quality of life for vulnerable children in the country's prosperous cities. Before 2015 a Provincial Child Friendly Programme (PCFP) was introduced under the UNICEF Country Programme in Viet Nam in the period from 2006 to 2010 covering DongThap, Ninh Thuan, Dien Bien, Kon Tum and An Giang provinces, and in Ho Chi Minh City (UNICEF 2010).

Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC) was the first city to express interest in the CFC Initiative. UNICEF Viet Nam started the implementation of CFCI with HCMC as a partner by establishing official cooperation with Ho Chi Minh City People's Committee for 2017-2021.

Although UNICEF did not sign an MoU with HCMC, the city achieved significant results for children. In 2017, HCMC conducted a SitAn. Following the outcomes of the SitAn, HCMC implemented some programmatic interventions and activities between 2015 and 2018, including the establishment of an innovative platform for child participation, a study on children affected by migration, activities to improve childcare in industrial areas for migrant workers; and a joint plan to address obesity by education and health sectors.

HCMC piloted a community-based approach to child participation by establishing a biannual Children's Council to connect children to government members and discuss and propose solutions. Council members included a heterogeneous group of children, including social protection centres and shelter representatives. The first HCMC Children's Council meeting took place in 2017. It resulted in discussions on traffic congestion, air pollution, flooding, public transportation, child abuse,

poverty, and affordable opportunities for leisure, including those for poor households.

Despite successful initiatives and activities like the Children's Council, HCMC saw a low commitment from the local government and a need for more financial resources. Hence, UNICEF phased out the CFCI in HCMC after completing the 2017-2021 cycle. Nonetheless, some activities were sustained as part of UNICEF's local governance programming.

In 2019, Da Nang was the second City in Viet Nam to express interest in the CFCI. The following year a Partnership Framework between UNICEF CO and Da Nang People's Committee was signed in place of the standard MoU. Da Nang conducted a SitAn in 2020 to inform the City Programme of Action on Children 2021-2030 and the City's Socio-economic and Development Plan and sectoral plans. Da Nang's first city-level Children's Council was also established in 2019 to allow children to contribute meaningfully to the challenges they face living in the city.

To further foster participation, a virtual coding competition named 'Youth On! Hackathon 2021' was co-organized by UNICEF and Da Nang People's Committee. This competition focused on the well-being and education of adolescents aged 15 to 18 and offered them an innovative platform to propose solutions and share their voices.

During an international urban-related event in 2019, Viet Nam CO met a representative from the Fondation Botnar, a Swiss philanthropic foundation working to improve the health and well-being of young people living in growing cities worldwide. After the exchange with the Fondation Botnar, a funding opportunity materialized for the CFCI in Da Nang through the "Healthy Cities for Adolescents in Da Nang" project.

3.2.2 Best results and practices

A strong commitment at the highest level in Da Nang by the Chairman of the City-Level People's Committee and the interest and active engagement of adolescents and youth-led organizations have contributed to the successful implementation of the CFCI in the city. Moreover, the city's strategies and plans have been developed to include targets and indicators for children.

In Da Nang, an effective process and system are in place to promote the participation of children and adolescents in the SitAn, the Action Plan

on Children, the design of projects, and the identification of urban issues. The first city-wide Children's Council was established in Da Nang in 2019. The children's councils were expanded to district and ward levels in 2021-2022 with UNICEF's support. The Council meets twice a year before the city-level People's Committee meeting. It debates ideas and issues on child rights, participation, child protection, care, and education programmes.

Da Nang Children's Council has contributed to ensuring children's voices are heard in local decision-making. For instance, following the children's request, the city has improved schools' water quality and has built a new cultural house.

3.3 Urban initiatives and networks and CFC partnerships

3.3.1 Urban initiatives and networks

Da Nang, Ha Noi, and Ho Chi Minh City are part of the ASEAN Smart Cities Network. Da Nang and Ho Chi Minh City are part of UN Women's Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces for Women and Girls Global Initiative. Cao Lanh, Sa Dec, and Vinh City are part of UNESCO's Network of Learning Cities.

Da Nang is also part of USAID-funded Building Healthy Cities (BHC), a project to refocus city policies, planning, and services with a health equity lens while improving data-driven decision-making to prioritize and fund people-focused activities. In Da Nang, the Building Healthy Cities (BHC) project worked with multisectoral stakeholders to prioritize, plan, and support urban health activities on food safety, education, and waste management.⁴⁷

Cao Lanh, Hue, Nam Dinh, and Sapa are the four Vietnamese pilot cities in the Global Covenant of Mayors Southeast Asia.

3.3.2 CFC partnerships

Besides Da Nang City Authority, UNICEF collaborates with various implementing partners, including youth-led organizations, academia, and the private sector. In particular, the engagement with the private sector has effectively mobilized technical support on innovative interventions for child participation.

Since October 2020, UNICEF Viet Nam has partnered with the Fondation Botnar and capitalized on the US Fund for UNICEF for Healthy Cities for Adolescents (HCA) project. The project objective is to support the development of Da Nang into a healthy, dynamic, and adolescent-friendly city to ensure the well-being and participation of adolescents and youth, and it fits under the overall umbrella of Da Nang CFCI. The American International Society for Urban Health, the managing agency for Botnar Foundation's HCA Phase 1, was also involved in Da Nang CFCI and brought in US funds.

⁴⁷ USAID-funded Building Healthy Cities project (2023). Available at: <https://urban-links.org/project/building-healthy-cities/>

The Da Nang HCA project's consortium includes the Da Nang People's Committee, the Da Nang Youth Union, the Ministry of Education and Training, and the Ministry of Health. The programme aims to ensure the well-being and participation of young people through strategic partnerships, capacity building, and the fair use of AI and digital technology.

UNICEF's interventions focus on adolescent skill building, promoting active participation of young people, and ensuring the integration

of critical child-related targets and indicators in the new Da Nang's City Programme of Action on Children.

HCA Phase 2, which has recently started, is managed by Ecorys, an agency based in the UK. Strong support and close collaboration between CO, the Swiss Committee for UNICEF, the Fondation Botnar, and Ecorys bring remarkable contributions to Da Nang CFCI and show the power of multi-stakeholders' partnership in child friendly cities initiatives.

3.4 CFC overview

3.4.1 Implementation status and current activities

In Viet Nam, CFCI is a UNICEF-led initiative implemented in a single city: Da Nang. Da Nang is implementing CFCI activities based on the City Programme of Action on Children 2021-2030. In addition, UNICEF Viet Nam and Da Nang are finalizing an official cooperation programme on CFCI from 2022 to 2026.

At the national level, the CFCI is integrated into the urban agenda in the programme document signed with the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA) on the protection and promotion of children's rights and offered the opportunity to promote knowledge and experience exchange with other cities in the country. CFCI has been included in the Country Programme Document agreed upon between UNICEF and the Government of Viet Nam for 2022-2026.

In collaboration with Da Nang, UNICEF Viet Nam is developing a nationwide CFCI Performance Indicator Framework. Da Nang will initially use the Framework to monitor and evaluate its progress and results for children toward becoming

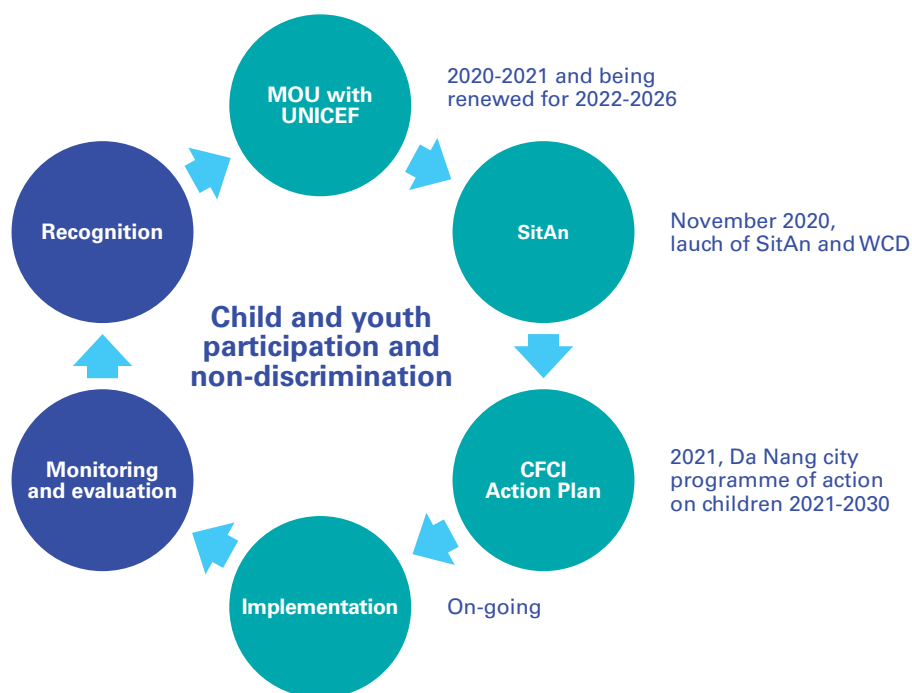
a child-friendly city by 2030. After the piloting phase in Da Nang, the Framework will be expanded to the entire country.

UNICEF Viet Nam is also developing a Budget Brief to review the baseline budget used by sub-national governments for children's issues, to be monitored over four years. The Budget Brief assesses the variation in local governments' resource allocation to children.

The establishment of the city-level Children's Council in Da Nang was followed by a district-level pilot in the Hai Chau District and is being scaled to all districts in the city to include about 400 children. Phu Dong primary school in Hai Chau is among the first in the country to have a Children's Council at the school level. Furthermore, Da Nang frequently holds events and dialogues between children in the city and leaders from government agencies and organizations.

In early 2022, UNICEF supported the organization of a national conference to share experiences on implementing CFCI in Da Nang, attended by several Vietnamese cities, including Hai Phong, Hue, Can Tho, and Quang Ninh.

Figure 6. Progress on the CFCI cycle in Da Nang in 2022



Source: UNICEF Viet Nam.

3.4.2 Focus and programmatic areas

Under a Partnership Framework, a signed 5-year work plan for the period of 2022-2026, UNICEF Viet Nam and Da Nang agreed to cooperate in the following areas:

- Developing the capacity of the local government in Da Nang to formulate, budget, and implement effective plans for children, strengthen a child-sensitive social assistance system, and establish innovative platforms to enable the participation of children and adolescents in decision-making.
- Strengthening the local child protection system, improving the quality of the child protection and social services workforce, and enhancing parents’ and children’s knowledge about violence prevention and mental and psychosocial healthcare for children.
- Increasing equitable access to inclusive, quality learning and digital and transferable skills development and opportunities for participation in a clean, green, and safe environment for children and adolescents, especially those with disabilities and those living in the industrialized zones.
- Improving access of children and adolescents to WASH information and services, living in a safe, clean, and green environment, and equipping them with skills in healthy practices.

The stated general objectives of Da Nang’s Programme of Action on Children 2021-2030 are: to create a safe, healthy, and friendly living environment; ensure the right to survive and develop; the right to access quality and equitable education; the right to be protected from abuse, violence, accidents, and injuries; prevent children from being exploited and abused in cyberspace, and from breaking the law; implement the CFCI as per international standards.

3.4.3 UNICEF's role and resources

UNICEF Viet Nam provides direct technical and indirect financial support to the municipality involved in the CFCI – Da Nang City Authority – to implement the activities identified in city's development and urban plans, budget, and work plans.

According to the Partnership Framework signed with Da Nang City Authority, UNICEF Viet Nam promotes the enabling environment for meaningful and inclusive children participation of children and adolescents to address pressing urban issues, impacting their well-being, including through Children's Councils, engagement with youth-led organizations and other innovative platforms and technology-oriented approaches to co-create solutions.

UNICEF Viet Nam also shares research, guidance, and tools related to the CFCI nationally and internationally. The CO facilitates knowledge sharing, experience exchange, and capacity building on CFCI between Da Nang, other Vietnamese cities, and the CFCI network.

In the CO, two staff members are working on the CFCI: the chief of Social Policy and a Social Policy Officer (partially).

In 2022, a dedicated budget for the CFCI was covered under the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs work plan. Da Nang has allocated resources to implement the City Programme of Action 2021-2030. Nonetheless, while Viet Nam CO aims to mobilize Da Nang's public funds, the CO is still in the early stages of engagement with the city.

The CFCI in Da Nang has received funds from the Fondation Botnar through Da Nang's HCA project and technical support from the UNICEF Swiss NatCom. During Phase 1 of HCA, running from October 2020 to April 2022 and managed by the American International Society for Urban Health, Da Nang was allocated a total of USD 450,000.

Upon the successful implementation of Phase 1, the CO was invited to apply for Phase 2, and UNICEF Swiss NatCom supported the negotiation with Ecorys, the managing agency for Botnar HCA Phase 2. The Proposal for HCA

was built upon the 4-year Programme Document on CFCI between UNICEF Viet Nam and Da Nang City for 2023-2026, covering about 50 per cent of the planned budget for CFCI. This successfully resulted in signing an agreement with the Fondation Botnar and Ecorys for 36 months, between February 2023 and February 2026, with a total fund of around USD 1 million.

3.4.4 SWOT analysis

Strengths and opportunities

- CFCI has been used as an entry point for programme interventions and partnering with local governance systems.
- Da Nang's leadership strongly embraced child-friendly cities, contributing to the success of the Initiative.
- Diverse partnerships set up with local authority, private sector, academia, and youth-led organizations helps the implementation of the CFCI.
- Strong mechanisms for promoting child participation have been set up, such as children's councils at three levels – city, district, and ward – and innovation platforms and tools such as Hackathon, leadership training, website, fan page, mobile app, etc.
- Capacity building and training have helped to improve children's knowledge and skills, such as leadership and digital skills.
- The CFCI has contributed to promoting knowledge exchange among medium-sized cities.
- In Da Nang, the Children Council's membership was expanded to allow more children to participate by establishing several district- and ward-level councils.

Weaknesses and threats

- Since CFCI is a UNICEF-led Initiative and requires solid local government ownership and commitment to using local resources for scaling up and impactful implementation.
- Promoting participation at the community level and among the most marginalized girls and boys remain challenging.
- UNICEF Viet Nam has limited human and financial resources for implementing CFCI and lacks strategic guidance for scaling the CFCI to other cities.

3.5 Future direction

3.5.1 Activities planned for the short-term, mid-term and long-term

More cities and provinces in Viet Nam are expected to embrace and join the Initiative based on good practices and lessons learned from HCMC and Da Nang.

UNICEF will support Da Nang in CFCI activities based on the city's future directions and policies as follows:

- Regarding policies and building on achievements, strengthening the normative framework (including planning and budgeting processes) to progressively realize child rights and support and care for children.
- Focusing on the most disadvantaged and vulnerable children and adolescents, including those affected by migration, those with disabilities, minors in conflict with the law, poor children, and other vulnerable children and adolescents.
- Improving the capacity of key stakeholders and local authorities to ensure equitable and comprehensive social service delivery

to children and adolescents and enhance the quality of essential services.

- Strengthening institutions and systems to consider climate change risks, natural disaster scenarios, and social impacts of environmental degradation to ensure a sustained investment in human capital development.
- Enhancing the mobilization of resources and budget investment from the private sector to ensure adequate services for children.
- Facilitating an enabling environment and encouraging the participation of children, adolescents, and young people as critical partners of the Initiative.
- Reviewing the CFCI Performance Indicators Framework to measure progress towards certifying Da Nang as a child-friendly city by 2030.

In the following years, Da Nang will implement CFCI activities and work towards meeting its target of being recognized as a child-friendly city by 2030. In 2025, the implementation of the CFCI in pilot districts and wards of Da Nang will be reviewed and evaluated as a basis for its implementation on the city-wide level in the 2026-2030 period.



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China

Population under age 18 (2022): **294.9 million**⁴⁸
 Total population (2022): **1425.9 million**⁴⁹
 Population under age 18 as percentage of total population: **20.7%**
 Urban population as percentage of total population (2021): **63%**⁵⁰
 GDP per capita in 2021 (current): **USD 12,556**⁵¹
 Gini Index (2019): **38.2**⁵²

3.1 National context

3.1.1 Political background and decentralization

In China, the relationship between local and central government is constitutionally defined.⁵³ The country has pursued economic decentralization by granting significant autonomy to provinces and special economic zones to stimulate growth and innovation. For the latter, there are four levels: the provincial, the prefectural level, the county level, and the township level. Rural villages and urban communities are sometimes considered the sixth level or the smallest-scale administration; however, they are by constitution 'basic level autonomies', and there is no government at this level. By 2022, China administers 31 provincial-level regions, 333 prefecture-level divisions, 3843 county-level divisions, 38602 township-level administrations. There is no official data of basic-level in NBS.⁵⁴

3.1.2 Public finance information

Central budgets play a guiding and leveraging role in actively supporting CFC development. Local governments in China use the funds transferred from the central government and their financial resources

to improve supporting policies. In addition, local governments are encouraged to purchase services and waiver rentals to support the development of universal children's services. Local governments are also given ample space to apply innovative financings, such as leveraging resources from the private sector and philanthropies.

3.1.3 Accountability framework of local governments

As per the Guiding Opinion of Promoting CFC Development of China, there are two primary levels of accountability:

1. National level: National Development Reform Committee (NDRC), the National Working Committee on Children and Women Office (NWCCW), and the Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development (MoHURD) are mandated to integrate and coordinate CFC development, including improving mechanisms on development, appraisal, monitoring, and evaluation of CFC. Sectoral ministries and authorities will conduct CFC activities aligned with their functions and develop specific standards and guidelines.

⁴⁸ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2022).

⁴⁹ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2022).

⁵⁰ World Bank Data (2023).

⁵¹ World Bank Data (2023).

⁵² World Bank Data (2023).

⁵³ Definition from the Constitution of the People's Republic of China (2019). Available at: <http://www.npc.gov.cn/englishnpc/constitution2019/201911/1f65146fb6104dd3a2793875d19b5b29.shtml#:~:text=Article%201%20The%20People's%20Republic,the%20People's%20Republic%20of%20China.>

⁵⁴ <https://data.stats.gov.cn/english/easyquery.htm?cn=C01>

2. Sub-national level: Related agencies of the provincial government, usually the provincial-level Development Reform Committee (DRC) and Working Committee on Children and Women Office (WCCW), are responsible for developing the provincial CFC implementation plan. Cities bear the significant responsibility of implementation by developing detailed plans. Cities are encouraged to innovate and contextualize CFC by developing special policies, technical guidelines, and tools to guide local actions.

3.1.4 Urbanization

China had urbanized dramatically since 1949, when just over 10 per cent of the population was urban. According to the National Bureau of Statistics, 2021,

the urbanization rate reached around 65 per cent and is forecasted to rise to 75-80 per cent by 2035.⁵⁵ The 7th National Census from 2020 revealed that the migrant population of China is approximately 376 million. Among them, 71.09 million are migrant children, making up one-fourth of the total child population of China. In addition to children on the move, in 2021, 12 million 'left behind' children remained in their hometowns while one or both parents left to work in large urban areas.⁵⁶

Fast urbanization and dense urban settings have also resulted in a need for more child-friendly public spaces and green areas such as parks, pocket parks, or community gardens. Since most cities are at the stage of urban renewal, with upgrades to infrastructure, built environment, and services, much thought has gone into aligning CFC with ongoing urban regeneration projects.

3.2 CFC history

3.2.1 CFC launch and timeline

In 2010, the NWCCW under the State Council started discussing how to promote and launch CFCI with UNICEF China. Some background research and discussion among NWCCW and UNICEF China led to the production of a CFC brochure with strategies and objectives or implementing CFC. Nonetheless, a people-centred approach in urban development was not embraced, and activities on CFC were frozen until 2015.

In 2015, a group of Chinese cities, such as Changsha and Shenzhen, learned about CFCI from the UNICEF global website, contacted UNICEF China for technical support, and initiated their voluntary actions to introduce CFC. Inspired by these pioneering cities, more and more local governments - Beijing, Changsha, Chongqing, Chengdu, Nanjing, Shanghai, Shenzhen, Suzhou, Tianjin, Weihai, and Wuhan - started to use UNICEF's global guidelines and other knowledge products to guide some of their work. They also contacted UNICEF China Country Office (CCO) to search for technical support,

but the CCO did not have any CFC-allocated resources or implementation experience. Consequently, those cities generated the primary evidence informing UNICEF China about CFC's next steps.

In 2016, Shenzhen included the goal of making the city child-friendly in its 13th Five-Year Plan for Economic and Social Development (FYP). It published Shenzhen's Child Friendly City Strategic Plan 2018-2035, focusing on three CFCI areas: children's social security, participation, and child-friendly urban space. Between 2017 and 2018, districts of Shenzhen implemented a range of activities, such as establishing a children's council at the community level and promoting the construction of child and woman friendly streets.

Changsha emerged as China's first city to prioritize child safety and mobility as part of local urban planning and policies. In Changsha Long-Term Development Plan 2050, the city has included a series of child-friendly transit improvement initiatives.

⁵⁵ Article by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences published on China Watch Vol. 2, No. 39, November 2022.
⁵⁶ China Rural Education Development Report (2020-2022) published by Northeast Normal University.

Between mid-2017 and mid-2018, UNICEF China underwent initial preparation in the Country Programme Mid-Term Review (MTR) for introducing CFC in the following Country Programme. Considerable effort went into selecting governmental partners and discussing and advocating with five ministries.

In 2019, UNICEF built contacts with NDRC, responsible for all development blueprints plan of China, to carry out a series of activities and discussions on the feasibility and approaches of implementing CFC in China. That same year, China also hosted the Second Belt and Road Forum, in where the President of China and the UN Secretary-General participated. In the meeting, the President announced the proposal to promote care for children.

As a result of the Forum, an MoU was signed between UNICEF and NDRC to encourage child development and create a child-friendly environment in the Belt and Road areas facing rapid urbanization. In 2020, UNICEF institutionalized an official Rolling Work Plan (RWP) with NDRC, and the two parties have forged a formal partnership to support CFC development in China jointly.

2021 was a ground-breaking year since the government included CFC in the 14th FYP

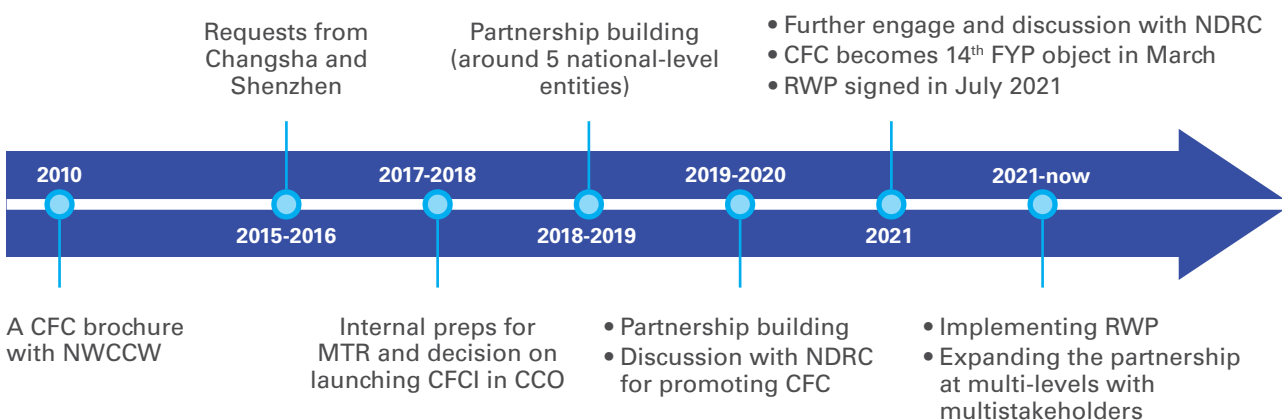
of China and the National Programme Action for Children, a high-level document for childhood development. Since then, UNICEF China has implemented a structured collaboration framework with NDRC to promote CFC in China.

In 2021, the national policy ‘Guiding Opinion Guideline on Promoting Child Friendly City’ was jointly released by three national-level CFC coordination agencies: NDRC, MoHURD, NWCCW, and 20 other line ministries. The three agencies are responsible for setting up mechanisms for the development of CFC, establishing the recognition’s standards and indicators, and defining the monitoring and evaluation criteria.

The following year, MoHURD and NDRC jointly released the first technical document on spatial planning for children, the ‘Guideline on Child Friendly Urban Spaces.’ UNICEF China has provided extensive inputs into the Guideline through expert consultations and feedback reports. It has also contributed to its alignment with UNICEF’s ‘Shaping Urbanization for Children: A Handbook on Child-Responsive Urban Planning.’

In 2022, China began its first batch of CFC pilots called ‘Demonstrations.’

Figure 7. Roadmap of UNICEF’s support of CFC in China



Source: UNICEF China.

3.2.2 Best results and practices

Even if the institutionalization of CFC in China is recent, UNICEF China has achieved remarkable results in building a solid partnership with the central government. A formal partnership was forged with the leading national CFC coordination agency, the NDRC, to jointly promote CFC development in China. UNICEF also built fruitful relationships with the two other national CFC coordination agencies, NWCCW and MoHURD, based on communal areas aligned with their mandates. In addition, UNICEF's extensive technical inputs were included in the MoHURD-led

National Guideline on Urban Child Friendly Spaces. Responsive support and proactive knowledge sharing have reinforced UNICEF's position as China's leading CFC technical player. As a result, UNICEF has become the primary reference for advice and supports when partners and stakeholders need assistance.

UNICEF China has also established an informal network of around 30 cities receiving creative, flexible, and responsive support through strategic and technical advice, capacity building, awareness-raising, resource sharing, partnership facilitation, and international exchange.

3.3 Urban initiatives and networks and CFC partnerships

3.3.1 Urban initiatives and networks

Xi'an, Taiyuan, Wuhan, Beijing, Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Hangzhou, Shanghai, Changzhou, and Chengdu are part of UNESCO's Network of Learning Cities. Chengdu was awarded the 2019 UNESCO Learning Cities Award with its innovative programme combining learning with walks around the city, each route focusing on a different subject area, such as regional features, traditional cultures, and modern industry, demonstrating intelligent use of public and non-public resources.

3.3.2 CFC partnerships

Aside from government stakeholders, UNICEF China has several 'informal' partners, including:

- A network of around 30 cities.
- Preeminent technical experts on CFC, predominantly Chinese urban designers and planners.

- International agencies, including UN-Habitat, on urban design projects in Wuhan and other Chinese cities.
- The Danish Embassy and the Innovation Centre Denmark, on implementing a child-friendly city project and facilitating conversations between Chinese and Danish stakeholders.
- Local and international NGOs. Initial conversations are held with C40 Cities China to identify potential synergies, particularly at the community level.
- Private sector. Companies such as Lego, real estate developers, and design firms often approach UNICEF with technical inquiries.

UNICEF non-governmental partnerships are based on sharing ideas, knowledge, consultations, and attending joint meetings and seminars.

3.4 CFC overview

3.4.1 Implementation status and current activities

China has a government-led CFC model greatly inspired by UNICEF's CFCI. Currently, 54 cities from the first and second batches have been actively working on CFC as official pilot cities. By 2025, the end of the 14th FYP period, the Chinese government has set the objective to pilot 100 child-friendly cities across the country, with the requirements of child-friendly social policies, public services, rights protection, and the space and environment for children's development. The CFC process will follow a progressive approach moving from piloting, to recognition, to universal action for cities, with child-friendliness used as a symbol of high-quality urban development.

In 2022, UNICEF China contributed to CFC policymaking at the national level by conducting a range of policy studies, particularly on certain areas relatively new to cities. The CO has also conducted field investigations, covering multiple provinces and cities, to map and understand the current situation, challenges, and for future direction.

Cities conferred status of Demonstration also receive substantial financial support calibrated to geographical disparities. Western cities receive higher financial aid since they are less wealthy than Eastern ones.

Chinese cities cover different types and stages of development, but these should not be a precondition for whether they can participate in CFC; provinces and cities can start their CFC work from different points and follow different paces. For instance, Shenzhen and Changsha already have extensive CFC experience from the past ten years.

The CFC Government programme in China is non-competitive. Instead, cities are expected to improve their work with children and show their progress through milestones achievement. Hence, until 2025 there is yet to be an official recognition for Demonstrations, and CFC are considered a learning process for the central government,

the cities, and other stakeholders.

3.4.2 Focus and programmatic areas

The Guiding Opinion Policy has five dimensions similar to the CFC framework, following a holistic approach. Still, China has focused on the spatial dimension since the beginning, positioning it as a vital entry point to leverage development in other dimensions.

The focus on spatial elements is also related to China's development path. While in the past Chinese people were concerned about access to services, social protection, and education, nowadays, new generations of middle-income parents seek more interaction with nature, play opportunities, spaces for social interaction, and improved walkability of their neighbourhoods. Hence, UNICEF is discussing a more formal collaboration with MoHURD on urban planning and public spaces for children.

3.4.3 UNICEF's role and resources

Despite being a national government-led programme, UNICEF's global CFCI heavily influenced the birth and boost of CFC in China. Because of this background, UNICEF China is the official partner of the Chinese government in supporting cities toward child-friendliness jointly. Hence, all levels of government and national stakeholders have high expectations of UNICEF's role. Stakeholders' needs can be grouped as follows:

- At the national level, the central government seeks UNICEF technical support in developing contextualized policies, guidelines, and tools by learning from global policymaking on CFC. More specifically, case studies and concrete examples are in high demand and are pursued by other countries on child participation, provision of services, child-friendly public spaces, etc. National-level government officials are also keen to participate in international training, learning, and exchange organized by UNICEF.

- At the local level, local governments require customized tools based on concrete examples covering the whole lifecycle of CFC from planning to implementation. UNICEF is perceived as a ‘knowledge hub’ and cultivates an informal platform for sharing, exchanging, and peer-to-peer learning among cities, experts, and policymakers from China and internationally. The CO uses a flexible and on-demand approach to advising cities’ actions or responding to technical inquiries. For instance, in 2022, the UNICEF CO provided strategic and technical advice, training, and awareness strengthening to 23 cities.
- Other stakeholders, such as technical sectors and NGOs, perceive UNICEF as the unifying factor bringing all resources and stakeholders together to build, foster, and expand partnerships. UNICEF can offer them a platform to exchange perspectives and lessons learned.

Finally, UNICEF provides essential awareness raising and advocacy on CFC. Finally, UNICEF provides important awareness raising and advocacy on CFC.

UNICEF China has a dedicated team working on CFC and an Urban and CFC task force comprising members of different sections. In addition to a programme officer exclusively focused on CFC, the CFC work is supported by a part-time CFC consultant and partly by the pillar head and the section’s programme associate.

3.4.4 SWOT analysis

Strengths and opportunities

- Building CFCI is not a one-off movement in China. Its sustainability is enshrined in

the national policy, including the 14th FYP, the Long-range Planning of 2035, and the Guiding Opinion.

- Most of the essential components of CFC in China reflect the key messages UNICEF has advocated through CFCI. The ‘Guiding Opinion’ policy is fundamentally grounded on the UNCRC and defines CFC to protect child rights. Moreover, the thematic coverage of the five child-friendliness elements outlined in the Guiding Opinion aligns with the five goal areas included in UNICEF’s 2018 CFCI Handbook.
- Despite CFC will be implemented on a vast scale by involving hundreds of cities, the programme follows a stepped approach informed by a learning curve: a first batch of cities is engaged in pilot activities before moving to a broader rollout.

Weaknesses and threats

- Although the national governments primarily use UNICEF’s CFCI and urban knowledge products as a reference for China’s CFC model, there is a need for more customized guidelines and focused support for cities.
- Cities need concrete tools and know-how step-to-step guides to facilitate and assist their actions and implement national plans or policy studies, which still need to be produced.
- When the Chinese government expands the CFC Government programme to include hundreds of cities, UNICEF cannot provide tailored or financial assistance to each city since it lacks a systematic approach for supporting cities at scale.



3.5 Future direction

3.5.1 Activities planned for the short-term, mid-term and long-term

According to the 2023 workplan, the following priorities have been identified for future work:

- Developing two technical guidelines based on the two macro-level policy studies on child participation and children’s urban technological experience to provide more operational support to cities.
- Releasing ‘China CFC Development Report 2024’. The report monitors results from the past years and summarizes good practices and differentiated models, building a set of replicable experiences for all cities.
- Carry out multiple policy studies and standards development to facilitate the implementation and further specification of the Guideline on Child Friendly Urban Spaces, such as a study on the integration of child-friendly environments into existing urban assessment mechanisms, study China contextualized standards on planning and building play, leisure and recreation systems for children (including spaces, facilities, service, etc.).
- Contributing to CFC awareness raising and advocacy by creating public communication products for citizens, for instance, a series of CFC visuals or videos accessible to the broader audience. The intention is to make CFC equally well known to citizens as, for example, the concept of climate change and create a new buzzword.
- UNICEF China is creating a CFC training package in the Chinese language. The package will provide a learning resource for local government officers as a basis for organizing internal training.
- Create more systematic opportunities for international exchange and collaboration for Chinese stakeholders to facilitate learning and knowledge sharing.

By 2035, after the piloting phase, more than 50 per cent of cities nationwide, with a population of over one million people, will build child-friendly cities, and about 100 will be recognized as national child-friendly cities. The government’s long-term goal is to make CFC a universal action for all Chinese cities, including economically developed regions, less developed regions, and cities of different sizes.



Indonesia

Population under age 18 (2022): **83.1 million**⁵⁷

Total population (2022): **275.5 million**⁵⁸

Population under age 18 as percentage of total population: **30.2%**

Urban population as percentage of total population (2021): **57%**⁵⁹

Population living in informal settlements in 2020 (percentage of urban population): **19%**

GDP per capita in 2021 (current): **USD 4,333**⁶⁰

Gini Index (2021): **37.9**⁶¹

3.1 National context

3.1.1 Political background and decentralization

Indonesia's government is a presidential representative democratic republic. Indonesia has two levels of sub-national governments composed of 34 provinces and 508 local governments - regencies and cities - and counts over 83 000 villages, which have gained some autonomy since the new 2014 Village Law.⁶² Following Law 22/1999, local governments gained broad responsibilities, making Indonesia one of the largest decentralized countries in the world.⁶³

3.1.2 Public finance information

The high share of intergovernmental transfers makes for a budget dependence of the local government on the central government and makes the local governments vulnerable to political intervention. Transfers from the central government consist of three major components:

- The general allocation fund (Dana Alokasi Umum) is an equalization transfer system to reduce fiscal imbalances between sub-national governments. Transfers are formula-based, consisting of a base allocation (equal to the amount of spending on personal) and a budgetary gap allocation (which can be

positive or negative). This fund is allocated to the provinces (10 per cent) and districts and municipalities (90 per cent), accounting for 50 per cent of local revenues on average.

- The shared revenue fund (Dana Bagi Hasil) is subdivided into two categories. The DBH from taxes is a shared tax system based on receipts from the personal income tax, etc. The DBH from natural resources is based on revenues derived from forestry, mining, oil, etc.
- The special allocation fund (Dana Alokasi Khusus) is a transfer system to fund responsibilities considered national priorities.⁶⁴

3.1.3 Accountability framework of local governments

Sub-national governments in Indonesia have gained considerable power, responsibilities, and autonomy over the last two decades. The central government retains responsibility only for national security, foreign and monetary policy, justice, governance, planning, and religious affairs. Competences for public works, healthcare, education, cultural and social affairs, labour, citizenship, environment protection, public works, spatial planning, youth and sport, telecommunication, housing, and transport are devolved to local governments.⁶⁵

⁵⁷ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2022).

⁵⁸ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2022).

⁵⁹ World Bank Data.

⁶⁰ World Bank Data.

⁶¹ World Bank Data.

⁶² OECD/UCLG (2016), Subnational Governments around the world: Structure and Finance.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

Indonesia's decentralization process has facilitated the implementation of child friendly cities (CFC). However, given that each local government has its priorities, policy enforcement, decision-making processes, and varying levels of experience and capacity, translating national commitments and priorities into action has often proved challenging.⁶⁶

3.1.4 Urbanization

Indonesia, the world's fourth most populous country, has been transformed by urbanization. In 2019, about 151 million people, over half Indonesians, lived in cities and towns. By 2045, approximately 220 million people, or more than 70 per cent of the population, are expected to be urban.⁶⁷

A growing number of children in Indonesia are living in cities. According to the National Socio-Economic Survey, nearly 46 million children lived in urban areas in 2019, compared to 41 million in 2015. Urbanization has the potential to bring new opportunities for children and their families, but it also presents novel challenges. As many as 5.6 million children in Indonesia's cities live in slums, and around 37 per cent live in poverty.⁶⁸

Even in large cities with good health coverage and basic services, there remain pockets of children and families living in poverty with limited access to health, education, social protection, and water and sanitation. They are also highly vulnerable to climate hazards, such as sea level rise and flooding.

3.2 CFC history

3.2.1 CFC launch and timeline

Indonesia's Child Friendly City/District programme, or 'Kabupaten/Kota Layak Anak' (KLA), was officially introduced in 2006 as part of a substantial series of economic and policy reforms that began in the late 90s. Before 2006, Joko Widodo, the former Mayor of Surakarta and a long-time partner of UNICEF, embraced the CFC concept. They mobilized resources to support the city as the first pilot area in the country. Having learned from Surakarta's experience, the Indonesian Government decided to expand the initiative to other cities and adopt UNICEF's concept of a child friendly city.

In 2004, a workshop and national seminar on the KLA were organized by the Indonesian Children's Welfare Foundation, the Rainbow Foundation, the Indonesian People Forum, the Ministry of Women Empowerment and Child Protection (MoWECP), the Indonesian Children's Welfare Foundation and Department of Architecture of the Bina Nusantara University.

In 2005, a coordination meeting for the development of the KLA took place, and the KLA was listed as one of the programmes planned under the supervision of the MoWECP.

In 2006, five pilot regencies and cities were appointed for KLA implementation: Jambi City (Jambi), Surakarta City (Central Java), Sidoarjo Regency (East Java), Kutai Kartanegara Regency (East Kalimantan), and Gorontalo Regency (Gorontalo). A year after, ten further cities and residences were appointed.

The successful implementation in Surakarta and the other pilot cities incentivized the MoWECP to issue the Ministerial Regulation 2/2009 on KLA Policy. In this regulation, the KLA programme was defined as 'a comprehensive and sustainable city and district development system that integrates the commitment and resources of government, community, and private sector into policies, programmes, and activities to fulfil children's rights.

⁶⁶ UNICEF Indonesia, 2013.

⁶⁷ Roberts, Mark, Frederico Gil Sander, and Sailesh Tiwari, editors. 2019. Time to ACT: Realizing Indonesia's Urban Potential. Washington, DC: World Bank. doi:10.1596/978-1-4648-1389-4.

⁶⁸ Kusumaningrum, S., Siagian, C., Sari, W. L., Adhi, A. A., Wandasari, W., Febrianto, R., Tiekem, S., 2021. The Situation of Children and Young People in Indonesian Cities, Jakarta, Indonesia: PUSKAPA, UNICEF, and BAPPENAS.

KLA cities and districts grew and spread in various provinces, cities, and communities in the following years, including villages and rural settings. Based on this evidence, the MoWECP stipulated a series of legal instruments: Ministerial Regulation No. 11/2011 on KLA development policy (as an amendment of regulation number 2/2009); Ministerial Regulation No. 12/2011 on KLA indicators; Ministerial Regulation No. 13/2011 on guidelines for the development of KLA; and Ministerial Regulation No. 14/2011 on Guidelines for Evaluation of KLA.

In 2011, the President of Indonesia requested the MoWECP to mobilize at least 100 cities and districts to implement the KLA by 2014, and the regional meeting 'Child Friendly Cities Asia Pacific Conference' was hosted in Surakarta City. City administrations responded positively to the KLA, which gave the MoWECP the confidence to amend Child Protection Law 23/2002 and add the KLA framework to the new Child Protection Law 35/2014. The law states that a KLA is a manifestation of a city with child-rights-based development systems, reflecting UNICEF CFCI's commitment to fulfilling child rights as articulated in the CRC.

In 2018, Surabaya hosted 'Growing Up Urban,' a regional meeting organized by UNICEF and attended by representatives from 12 cities in East Asia, recognized for their catalytic roles and achievements in championing child rights. Key themes discussed during the event included the impact of urbanization in two critical periods of growth, the early years and adolescence, and

innovative ways to ensure cities are child-friendly for all, especially those living in poverty.

In 2021, MoWECP reaffirmed the KLA was through the 'Regulation of the President of the Republic No. 25 on Policy on Child-Friendly City/District', on stages of implementation, clusters, and KLA indicators.

3.2.2 Best results and practices

Surabaya, the second largest Indonesian city after Jakarta, has emerged as a KLA champion in the long term after gaining prestigious presidential recognition in 2016. Surabaya has embraced the principle that 'all Surabaya children are our children,' nurturing a collective effort to protect children.

Among Surabaya's achievements is subsidizing social services to families in need to reduce economic stress for parents and caregivers. In 2018, the Mayor of Surabaya dedicated around 130 hectares of land for parks and public spaces fit to accommodate disabled children. The city included traditional and digital learning opportunities in public areas, public health centres, and government offices.

In early 2023, the Mayor of Surabaya contributed to the international dialogue organized by UNICEF EAPRO during the Tenth Asia Pacific Forum for Sustainable Development, by highlighting the importance of including children's opinions in the development of the city's policies, by consulting children on their needs in education, basic services, recreation, and cultural activities.

3.3 Urban initiatives and networks and CFC partnerships

3.3.1 Urban initiatives and networks

Banyuwangi, Jakarta, and Makassar are part of the ASEAN Smart Cities Network. Surabaya is a member of UNESCO's Network of Learning Cities. Samarinda recently participated in the Urban 95 Academy, a leadership programme designed to make cities more child friendly.⁶⁹ Medan, North Minahasa, Pontianak, and Tangerang are the four Indonesian pilot cities part of GCoM SEA.

3.3.2 CFC partnerships

Independent advocacy for children is provided through partnerships with civil society and establishing advocacy forums at the district level. The forums' members are NGOs, community-based organizations, media, universities, and children's representatives. The primary function of these independent forums is to ensure the continued commitment of the government and community to implement the KLA.⁷⁰

3.4 CFC overview

3.4.1 Implementation status and current activities

Since 2011, the central government has mainstreamed the agenda of the KLA to all regions in Indonesia, coordinated by the MoWECP. Currently, 457 districts/cities have joined the initiative.

The process for a city or district to enrol in the KLA starts with the mayor accepting the programme and creating the KLA Task Force through an official decree. The KLA Task Force coordinates policies, programmes, and activities related to KLA's development, promotion, monitoring, and evaluation.

The KLA Task Force often includes stakeholders such as local government agencies, parents and children's representatives, businesses, religious and community leaders, universities, and non-governmental organizations. According to MoWECP's direction, children's representatives should be involved in all the steps of the KLA, taking part in children's forums created at the city, district, and sometimes village levels.

In the current KLA guidelines, the government developed 24 KLA indicators based on the CRC and organized into 6 clusters: Institutional Aspect (3 Indicators),⁷¹ Civil Rights and Freedom of Children (3 Indicators),⁷² Family Environment and Alternative Care (5 indicators),⁷³ Basic Health and Well-Being (6 Indicators),⁷⁴ Education and Use of Leisure and Cultural Activities (3 indicators),⁷⁵ and Special Protection (4 indicators).⁷⁶

⁶⁹ The Urban95 Academy is a six-week leadership programme designed to make cities more child friendly, organized by the Bernard van Leer Foundation and the London School of Economics. The programme was created to help local governments develop urban strategies and systems that improve the lives of babies, toddlers, and caregivers. The Urban95 Academy is open to all local governments. Participants learn how to implement policies, gain effective strategies, and leadership skills to create urban environments that support healthy child development.

⁷⁰ Paper: Utama, I. (2016). Realizing Child's Right Through Child Friendly City Initiative in Indonesia.

⁷¹ The three indicators are: 1) Regional Regulation on KLA, 2) Institutional Strengthening of KLA, 3) Role of community institution, mass media and business sector in fulfilling the rights of the child and special protection for children.

⁷² The three indicators are: 1) Percentage of children whose birth are registered and who obtained certificate of birth, 2) Availability of child-friendly information, 3) Institutionalization of children's participation.

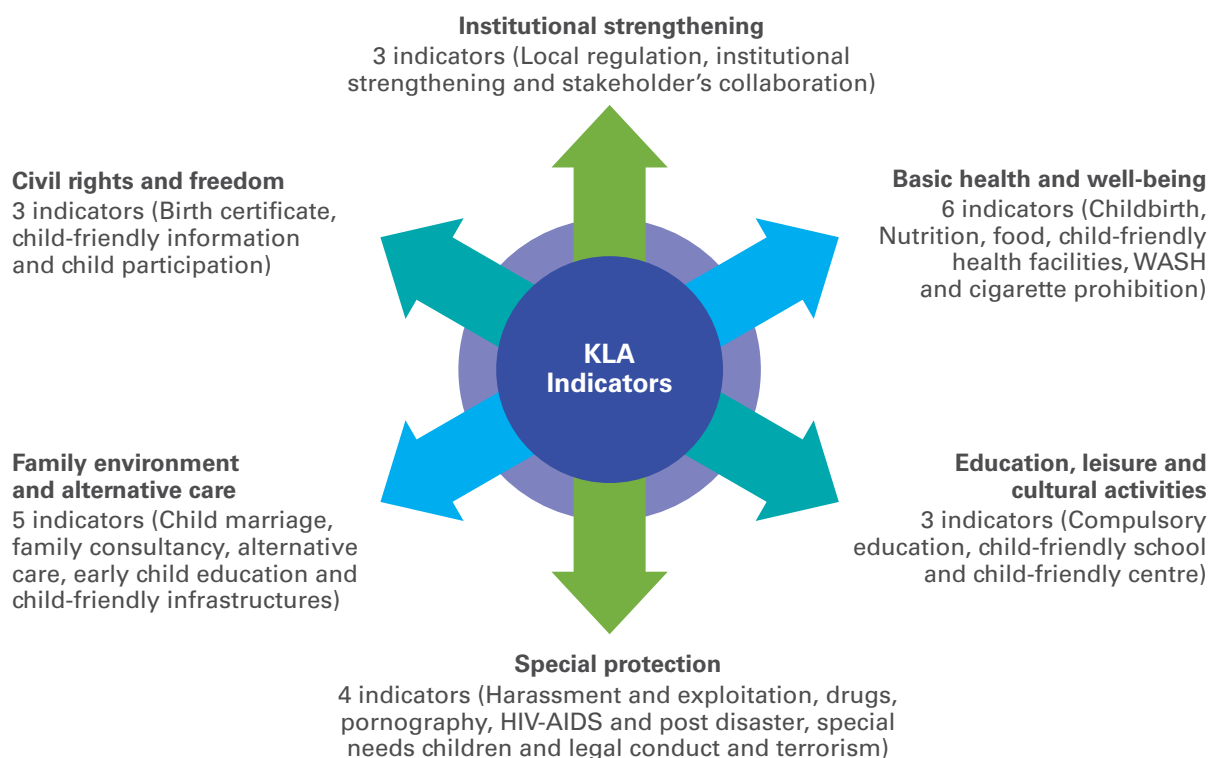
⁷³ The five indicators are: 1) Prevention of child marriage, 2) Strengthening the capacity of consulting agencies providing childcare services for parents/families, 3) Holistic and Integrative Early Childhood Development, 4) Standardization of alternative care institutions, 5) Availability of child-friendly infrastructure in public spaces.

⁷⁴ The five indicators are: 1) Delivery at a health facility, 2) Nutritional status of children under 5 years old, 3) Feeding for infants and children under 2 years old, 4) Health facilities with child-friendly services, 5) Healthy environment, 6) Availability of a no smoking area and a ban on cigarette advertising, promotion, and sponsorship.

⁷⁵ The three indicators are: 1) Compulsory 12 (twelve) years of study, 2) Child-friendly school, 4) Availability of facilities for child-friendly cultural, creative and recreational activities.

⁷⁶ The four indicators are: 1) Services for children victims of violence and exploitation and Children freed from child labour and the worst forms of child labour, 2) Services for children who are victims of pornography, drugs or infected with HIV-AIDS and Services for children who are victims of disasters and conflicts, 3) Services for children with disabilities, or from minority and isolated groups and Services for children with deviant social behavior, 4) Settlement of cases of children in conflict with the law through diversion (for perpetrators only) and Services for children who are victims of terrorist networks and stigmatization as a result of labelling related to the condition of their parents.

Figure 8. Indonesia’s KLA components and indicators



Source: UNICEF Indonesia.

The KLA Task Force collects initial data on the 24 indicators, disaggregated by sex and age. Based on the results, the KLA Task Force influences the Regional Action Plan Development and can create a budget allocation for the KLA, ensuring its sustainability despite the mayors’ turnover.

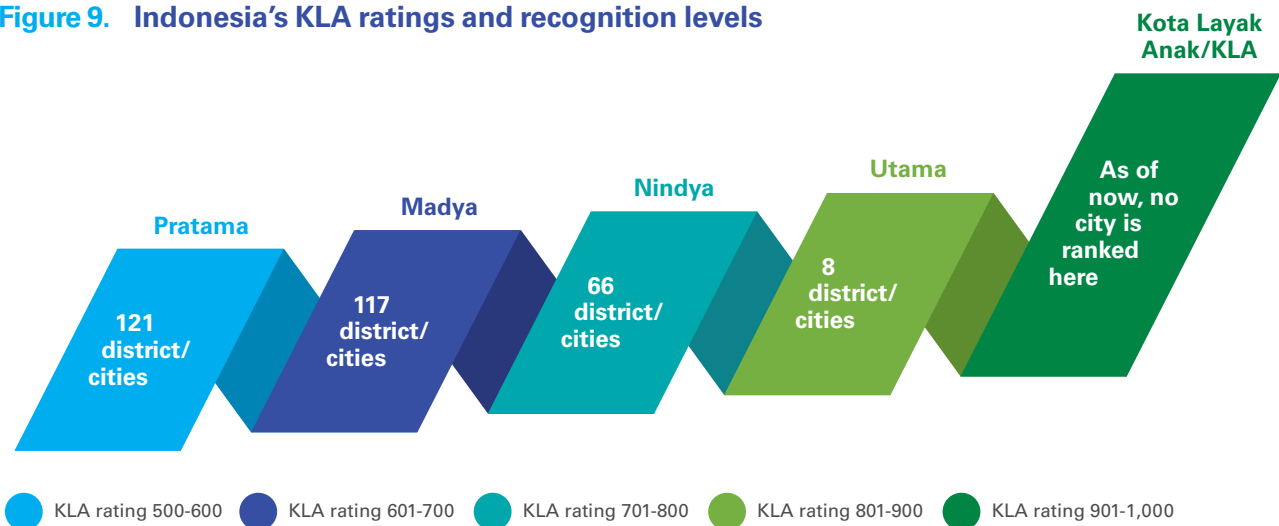
When implementing the KLA, cities, and districts do not receive monetary transfers from the central government. Hence, they assume full responsibility for managing the programme financially - by setting up the KLA Task Force, organizing the team, creating structures and financing equipment - and in programmatic terms – by assessing which policies should be designed and changed and how they should be implemented.

Once a year, the KLA Task Force reports on the 24 indicators yearly to the Regional Bappenas, and after initial screening, the reports are sent

to a National Panel. The National Panel, consisting of several ministries and led by the Ministry for Women Empowerment and Child Protection, validates the information submitted by cities through questionnaires and the request to provide evidence. After that, the Panel scores each of the 24 indicators. Hence, the KLA Task Force comprises district and city government levels, while the provincial and central governments are evaluators.

All indicators add to 1000 points and allow the Panel to classify the cities and districts into five categories: (i) KLA (Child-Friendly City’s Status); (ii) Utama; (iii) Nindya; (iv); Madya, and (v) Pratama (lower level of achievement). Hence, the monitoring and evaluation is carried out solely by the national government and based upon a classification system. After determining the KLA ranking for all participating cities and districts, the results are shared with the MoWECP and the President and publicly announced.

Figure 9. Indonesia's KLA ratings and recognition levels



Source: UNICEF Indonesia.

So far, Indonesian cities and districts have yet to reach the highest KLA recognition (KLA Status). In 2022, among the 457 participating cities and districts, only 312 have received rankings from the national government (ranging from Pratama, Madya, and Nindya to Utama). More than 50 per cent of cities and districts are still in the lowest rank (Pratama and Madya), and only eight cities have achieved 'Utama' status.

3.4.2 Focus and programmatic areas

UNICEF's work in Indonesia focuses on improving the Government's KLA policymaking and implementation. The KLA core principles are:

- **Non-discrimination** against ethnicity, race, religion, gender, language, political understanding, national origin, economic status, physical or psychological condition of children, or other factors.
- **The best interests of the child**, making the child the paramount consideration in policy making and the development of programmes and activities.
- **Children's right to life, survival, and development** guarantees the right to live, survive, and develop as much as possible.
- **Respect for children's views**, acknowledging and ensuring that every child can express their opinions freely.
- **Good governance** ensures transparency, accountability, participation, information, and the rule of law.

Based on a perceived need for improvement, in 2022, the Indonesian government requested that UNICEF produce an implementation assessment of the KLA and align the KLA indicators with the CFCI. From the initial results of the assessment, it emerged that UNICEF's CFCI could be used as a reference to improve current KLA policy on the following aspects:

- **Stages:** Children and young people involvement throughout the whole life cycle of the CFCI, from the drafting of the child situation analysis to the monitoring and evaluation process.
- **Indicators:** 5 goal areas and 11 indicators that not only focus on achievements but are developed to monitor the progress and impact of CFCIs and divided into output, outcome, and impact indicators. The central focus is not to implement all five goals in the first CFCI cycle but to demonstrate solid and progressive results.
- **Task Force:** The CFCI Task Force comprises a national coordinating body, a local steering committee, and other stakeholders. The national and local committees have worked together from the beginning of the CFCI process.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E):** Processes and impacts are monitored and evaluated in a process open to the public. The M&E is carried out by internal and external institutions to track, change and highlight positive and negative outcomes and strengthen the capacity to understand which specific measures work and why.

3.4.3 UNICEF's role and resources

UNICEF Indonesia provides critical support in sub-national planning to the Indonesian government through assessing policies and the implementation of the KLA. The CO also provides direct technical assistance to cities and districts on establishing a coordination mechanism for planning, monitoring, and evaluation, allocating resources; establishing a child participation mechanism; and developing an action plan with clear targets, timelines, and resources.

3.4.4 SWOT analysis

Strengths and opportunities

- KLA is a long-standing government-led programme, and the number of child-friendly cities and districts has grown steadily.
- The Presidential Decree on the KLA calls for the involvement of children in all stages of KLA. Hence children's participation is considered a pillar of the programme.
- UNICEF is well positioned to improve the capacity of local government in KLA implementation.
- UNICEF has the government's support on KLA capacity building since Indonesia has set a national target of becoming a child-friendly country by 2030.

Weaknesses and threats

- The key issues that local governments face in the KLA implementation are the need for more commitment to the funding and implementation programmes related to KLA, the limitation in human resource capacity, and the need for stronger inter-agency coordination.
- The role of provincial governments in providing technical assistance needs to be strengthened, and the diverse roles of the provincial government clarified.

- The involvement of various stakeholders in KLA, particularly the regional legislative bodies, needs to be improved by disseminating information on KLA and CRC.
- Cities and districts require more support in the form of budget and technical assistance, including in drafting the Regional Action Plan.
- Although participation is a pillar of the KLA, the participation form is not outlined. Therefore, the involvement of children and young people in KLA is not the same between cities and districts.
- The involvement of children is mainly focused on the Children Forum, which often ignores the representation of diverse groups of children, including children with disabilities.
- The KLA programme does not provide enough guidance on how to build the local government's capacity to implement KLA.
- Cities and districts need to get complete evaluation results from the central government, including precise information on which indicators need to be improved and feedback on weaknesses and best practices.
- Human resources of local governments need more capacity, including an understanding of the KLA policy and programme and knowledge of the CRC.
- In several municipalities, the role of the KLA task force in coordinating KLA policy and programme still needs to be fully implemented.
- Cities and districts still need to achieve KLA Status. The low achievement in most regions is caused by a lack of commitment to funding and implementing KLA programmes.
- The focus of the KLA is on the achievement of all the indicators rather than focusing on solid and progressive results in specific areas.
- Often facilities or infrastructure are not child-friendly, have not reached standards, and do not support the achievement of KLA.

3.5 Future direction

3.5.1 Activities planned for the short-term, mid-term and long-term

In 2023, UNICEF Indonesia will develop a child-friendly roadmap for the New Capital City of Indonesia - Nusantara - by involving several UNICEF sectors, from social policy to education, to climate change and environment, in collaboration with UNICEF EAPRO.

The city of Surabaya has expressed its interest in joining UNICEF CFCI. Hence, UNICEF will facilitate the first steps towards the establishment of the initiative and will connect Surabaya with other CFCI cities in the region. In addition, UNICEF will continue to provide technical assistance to the Indonesian government in improving the KLA policies and indicators.



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Philippines

Population under age 18 (2022): **41.7 million**⁷⁷

Total population (2022): **115.6 million**⁷⁸

Population under age 18 as percentage of total population: **35.8%**

Urban population as percentage of total population (2021): **48%**⁷⁹

Population living in informal settlements in 2020 (percentage of urban population): **37%**⁸⁰

GDP per capita in 2021 (current): **USD 3,461**⁸¹

Gini Index (2018): **42.3**⁸²

3.1 National context

3.1.1 Political background and decentralization

The Philippines is a presidential constitutional republic. The Philippines comprises 18 administrative regions, including the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao. At the sub-national level, the country has three tiers of decentralization: provinces and independent cities; component cities and municipalities; and villages or urban wards (barangays). Sub-national governments are collectively called Local Government Units (LGUs). As of 31 March 2023, there are 82 provinces, 148 cities, 1486 municipalities, 42,027 villages (barangays).⁸³ Municipalities have a minimum population of 25,000 inhabitants and are governed by mayors. Within municipalities, the barangays also have elected officials, known as councillors, and are led by a chairperson or captain. The Philippines has a highly decentralized form of government.⁸⁴

3.1.2 Public finance information

At the national level, allocations for inter-government transfers to the LGUs are computed based on a formula that accounts for land area, population, and equal sharing. The Department of Budget and Management (DBM) manages the annual budget allocation for each local government level. At the same time, the Department of Finance (DOF) provides technical and administrative supervision of the revenue operations of the LGUs. More recently, allocations for intergovernmental transfers have significantly expanded with the National Supreme Court ruling, also called the Mandanas-Garcia Ruling,⁸⁵ which provides that the base share of the local governments must be computed from all the national taxes and allotments not just based on internal revenues. Cities have more autonomy than smaller LGUs since they can generate more local revenue sources.

In the past, the most significant revenue received from LGUs was internal revenues. However, the number of resources and financial incentives LGUs received has expanded to include all national and customs taxes.⁸⁶

⁷⁷ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2022).

⁷⁸ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2022).

⁷⁹ World Bank Data (2023).

⁸⁰ UN Habitat (2023).

⁸¹ World Bank Data (2023).

⁸² World Bank Data (2023).

⁸³ https://www.dilg.gov.ph/PDF_File/factsfigures/dilg-facts-figures-2023717_4195fde921.pdf

⁸⁴ OECD/UCLG (2016), Subnational Governments around the world: Structure and Finance.

⁸⁵ Data source: Department of Budget and Management of the Philippines. Available at: <https://www.dbm.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/Mandanas-Garcia-Case/Legal-Bases-and-Other-Issuances/EO-138.pdf>

⁸⁶ Ibid.

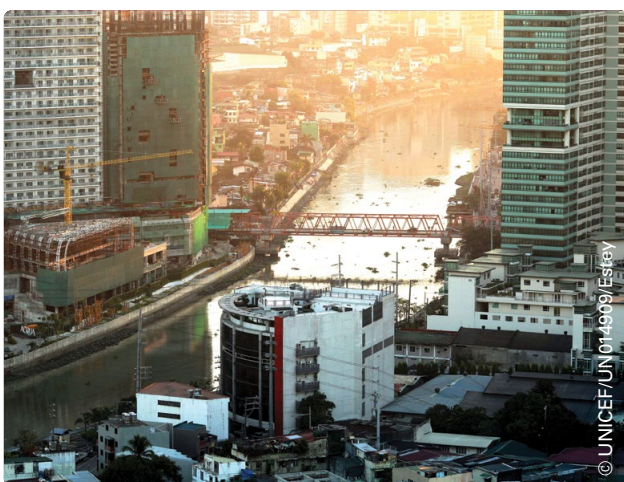
3.1.3 Accountability framework of local governments

Republic Act 7189, also called the Local Government Code of 1991, provides the legal framework for decentralization in the Philippines. The code facilitated the rearrangement of the local government's structure to transform them into self-reliant communities and active partners in nation-building by decentralizing government functions such as powers, authority, responsibilities, and resources. LGUs can enact local legislation, raise taxes, and assume various powers. These powers are essential to promoting the general welfare and include preserving and enriching culture, promoting health and safety, enhancing economic prosperity and social justice, and maintaining law and order.

The delivery of services - including interventions and programme delivery – mostly happens at the city and municipal level since the provinces' role is to provide guidance and oversight.

According to the Local Government Code, LGUs have the explicitly stated mandate to implement programmes and projects on:

- Primary health care, maternal and childcare, and communicable and non-infectious disease control services; access to secondary and tertiary health services.
- Child and youth welfare, family and community welfare, women's welfare, the welfare of the elderly and disabled persons, community-based rehabilitation programmes, nutrition services, and family planning services.



LGUs should also provide for the following:

- Development and welfare of children in the Barangay by promoting and supporting activities for children's protection and total development, including establishing non-formal education centres.
- Public works and infrastructures, which include municipal buildings, cultural centres, public parks, playgrounds, sports facilities, equipment, and local road networks.

3.1.4 Urbanization

The Philippines is a lower middle-income country rapidly urbanizing and experiencing multisectoral issues related to population health, child protection, education, water and sanitation, climate change, migration, and urban resettlements. The population in urban areas is increasing from 27 per cent in 1950 to a predicted 62 per cent by 2050.

There are 148 cities in the Philippines, of which 33 are classified as highly urbanized cities with 200,000 or more residents. Urban areas vary; greatly, ranging from urban barangays in otherwise rural areas to large towns or conurbations.

The Philippines is ranked among the top five countries most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Climate change impacts the urban poor, including children, through effects on health, damage to housing and neighbourhood infrastructure, and undermining livelihoods. Therefore, it is essential to position the resilience of the urban poor within the broader context of urban resilience at the city scale.⁸⁷



⁸⁷ Ibid.

3.2 CFC history

3.2.1 CFC launch and timeline

In the Philippines, UNICEF's work to mainstream child rights into local government planning can be traced back to the Child Friendly Movement (CFM) in 1996. The Child Friendly Cities and Municipalities Presidential Awards took place in 1999, formalizing the CFC GP supported by UNICEF. In partnership with UNICEF, the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) developed the CFM to monitor the enactment and implementation of the increasing policies, frameworks, and legislation on children.

By 2000, the CFM was adopted as the strategic framework to realize the Philippine National Development Plan for Children 2001-2025, also called Child 21. The CFM focused on institutional changes emphasizing advocacy, capacity building, and service delivery. It included key players such as the national government, LGUs, community and civil society, schools, families, and children. The CFM promoted linkages and cooperation between and among the different sectors for a more effective and holistic response to the needs of children.

The CFM was initially implemented in 20 provinces and five cities: Pasay, Manila, and Quezon in Metro Manila; Cebu in the Visayas; and Davao in Mindanao. Zamboanga City, a conflict-sensitive area, also participated in UNICEF's CFCI with a programme focusing on humanitarian aid and child protection.

The CFM ran until 2011 but was discontinued due to shortcomings in extending quality essential services to all children and reducing urban disparities. Nonetheless, it incentivized the government to move towards an integrated approach to achieve outcome-level results for children focused on reducing inequalities across municipalities at scale.

The national government has focused on improving LGUs' accountability in the last decade by introducing evidence-based performance assessments and monitoring mechanisms.

In 2014, the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) and the Council for the Welfare of Children (CWC), with technical assistance from UNICEF, developed and launched the Child-Friendly Local Governance Audit (CFLGA). The CFLGA is designed as a system to foster child-responsive LGUs by annually auditing their performance on child outcomes and implementing programmes and measures to improve the situation of children across different sectors.

In 2018, UNICEF Philippines provided further technical support to the DILG in reviewing and updating the CFLGA. Revised CFLGA Indicators were approved in August 2019. They were expanded to include 15 assessment criteria based on the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the four categories of survival, development, protection, participation, and the cross-cutting category of governance.

UNICEF also assisted the government in producing the Child-Friendly Local Governance Audit Handbook. The Handbook was created to provide standard operating procedures for conducting the CFLGA. More specifically, the Handbook guided the legal bases of the basic social services required from LGUs; the indicators that reflect the LGU's performance and the local situation of children, the implementing procedures; and the institutional arrangement for the audit and expected support from the national government agencies.

Alongside the auditing system, the Presidential Award for the Child-Friendly Municipalities and Cities has been running since 1999 as a banner programme of CWC and the Office of the President. It was established to provide recognition and national visibility to overachieving LGUs. A total of 31 LGUs have been recognized as Presidential Awardees between 1999 and 2018. Among those, 8 LGUs have been conferred with the prestigious Hall of Fame Award - awarded when LGUs show a subsequent and improved performance for three consecutive years.

3.2.2 Best results and practices

The Philippines government-led CFC Programme is an excellent example of how implementing CFC in the region can go beyond UNICEF working directly with municipalities. Given the substantial engagement with the national government through the CFLGA, UNICEF Philippines has influenced the decentralization process.

The high audit coverage and passing rates demonstrate that the CFLGA incentivizes LGUs to become more child friendly. The CFLGA also provides a regular monitoring instrument that generates essential evidence to inform LGU's planning and programming. However, there is scope for government agencies to improve their use of the audit results to revisit their role and improve their assistance to the LGUs.

3.3 Urban initiatives and networks and CFC partnerships

3.3.1 Urban initiatives and networks

Cebu City, Davao City, and Manila are part of the ASEAN Smart Cities Network. Quezon City and Manila are part of UN Women's Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces for Women and Girls Global Initiative. Balanga is part of UNESCO's Network of Learning Cities.

In 2019, Valenzuela City became the first Pathfinding City in the world to commit to End Violence against Children as part of a Global Partnership joined by the Government of the Philippines, supported by UNICEF.

3.3.2 CFC partnerships

UNICEF's work on local governance in the Philippines has been mainly with government

partners, particularly DILG and CWC. With the recent establishment of the Public Finance for Children Technical Working Group chaired by the Council for the Welfare of Children, the work on local governance and subnational public finance for children has also expanded to include the Department of Budget and Management, Department of Finance, Department of the Interior and Local Government, Department of Education, together with the leagues of local governments.

In 2019, UNICEF partnered with an academic institution, the School for Urban and Regional Planning of the University of the Philippines, to develop capacities for child-responsive urban planning among policymakers in selected LGUs. Partnerships with the private sector on CFC have yet to be maximized.

3.4 CFC overview

3.4.1 Implementation status and current activities

The government-led CFC programme in the Philippines follows an integrated approach based on an auditing and recognition process in which UNICEF has upstream involvement at the national level.

The primary tool for monitoring the performance of LGUs on CFC is the CFLGA, a results-based assessment framework and mandatory annual audit for LGUs. Overall, the CFLGA seeks to:

- Determine the level of performance of LGUs on delivering services for children.

- Identify priority areas for interventions and programming for children.
- Utilize audit results as a basis for planning and programming.
- Determine areas for technical and financial assistance.
- Recognize good LGU performers.

As the first step, LGUs self-assess 12 social outcome indicators - survival, development, protection - and 14 governance and participation indicators. LGUs reports are validated and quality-checked by the provincial and regional governments and then reviewed at the national level. The entire process takes around six months.

LGUs that pass the CFLGA with a rating of at least 80 per cent are conferred with the Seal of Child-Friendly Local Governance (SCFLG). In 2017, the SCFLG was included as a requirement of the Seal of Good Local Governance. Consequently, SCFLG recipients can access the Performance Challenge Fund (PCF)⁸⁸ through the Seal of Good Local Governance. The PCF can reach USD 100,000, bringing a robust financial incentive to LGUs.

Cities showing the best performances in the audit can qualify for the Presidential Award for Child Friendly Municipalities and Cities. The Presidential Award is awarded following specific criteria calibrated to the capacity and financial standing of LGUs. Over the years, LGUs have shown lower uptake of the Presidential Award. Among the reasons is the highly competitive process with the different layers of validation too time-consuming for the LGUs and more minor financial incentive (around USD 10,000). Consequently, the national government has recently sought UNICEF's support to strengthen the Presidential Award and its linkage to other existing performance recognition and management systems at the local level.

In 2022, UNICEF EAPRO and UNICEF Philippines explored the possibility that Cotabato City, one of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region's cities, could participate in the CFCI. The city has received the SCFLG for various years from the government and therefore has a good record in implementing programmes and measures to improve the situation of children.

In June 2022, UNICEF Philippines invited the Council for the Welfare of Children (CWC) to a regional network meeting. CWC showed initial interest in the co-existence of the global CFCI and the national CFC initiative since UNICEF could provide more support and advocacy to CWC. The establishment of CFCI in the Philippines could allow UNICEF to increase its urban programming scope and offer more support

to LGUs, not only to SCFLG cities but to any city showing capacity and commitment.

3.4.2 Focus and programmatic areas

According to the Government of the Philippines' current cycle of cooperation with UNICEF, the Country Programme 2019–2023, the focus of UNICEF's work with DILG and CWC is promoting the use of the CFLGA results as a benchmark for generating local commitment and increasing political will to fulfil the Convention on the Rights of the Child in cities, municipalities, and provinces nationwide. UNICEF is also supporting the government in raising awareness of the updated audit system and strengthening the Presidential Award.

3.4.3 UNICEF's role and resources

In the past, UNICEF's role in providing policy advice and technical guidance to the national government was more substantial, for instance, in influencing the institutionalization of the CFLGA in 2014. UNICEF guided the development of the audit, determining the indicators and the resourcing priorities for children. Since 2018, UNICEF's focus has shifted to strengthening the central government auditing and monitoring system and providing support in policy development, specifically in areas that address local governance bottlenecks in planning, budgeting, and mainstreaming children's participation in local development planning processes.

UNICEF has upstream involvement at the national level providing technical support for developing policies and standards, as well as tools for monitoring the performance of LGUs. Since the national government is responsible for CFC monitoring, no quality assurance is provided by UNICEF directly to the municipalities and cities, except for those priority LGUs sites included in the Country Programme.

⁸⁸ Following implementation of the Mandanas-Garcia Ruling, the Performance Challenge Fund has recently been revised and shall be changed to Growth Equity Fund.

In UNICEF Philippines, the work on CFC is carried out by existing Social Policy staff (a Social Policy Specialist based in Manila and a Social Policy Officer based in Cotabato). The Social Policy staff manages all the work which supports strengthening local governance for children, particularly mainstreaming children in the local planning and budgeting processes.

A consultant has also been engaged to support the development of CFLGA at the provincial and village levels.

The current Country Programme 2019–2023 has a dedicated ‘result/output for local government strengthening’ where the work on CFC largely falls under. Allocation for this result is estimated at USD 400,000 for the current Country Programme.

For the next cycle of the Country Programme 2024–2028, the work on local governance will come into the fold with the work under Public Finance and Governance for Children. It shall also include continuing support for technical assistance on child-friendly local governance to strengthen national systems that will achieve impact at scale for the local governments nationwide.

UNICEF technical assistance shall provide a strong focus on providing support to institutionalizing and building the capacities of the local governments on performance-based budgets and budget tagging for children that will contribute towards strengthening local planning, tracking of expenditures, and monitoring of budgets to ensure the efficient and effective use of resources to deliver results for children. Areas of collaboration shall also be pursued to strengthen local governance finance through evidence generation and support to policy development that will further expand the capacities of local governance to generate resources and revenues that could be used to develop social services at the local level.

3.4.4 SWOT analysis

Strengths and opportunities

- The roll-out of CFC in the Philippines shows that UNICEF country offices can successfully work with national ministries in charge of decentralization, with UNICEF influencing how this decentralization occurs.

- The CFLGA is a relevant model of decentralized governance where local governments are responsible for creating a ‘child-sensitive and child-friendly society’ according to the national law.
- Since the national government manages the CFLGA and the conferment of recognition, the CFC implementation follows a sustainable model that ensures the continuity of the CFC Government programme.
- UNICEF has a strong engagement with the national stakeholders.
- The self-assessment mechanism promoted by the CFLGA can help LGUs ascertain their performances and lead to a better understanding and ownership of children’s situation, consequently leading to more responsive, sustainable, and inclusive programmes and services for children.
- The CFLGA and SCFLG have created a community of practice and exchange among local governments.
- Strengthened community involvement in the CFLGA could ensure a bottom-up incentive for excellence and more accountability. It could also ensure a bottom-up incentive for excellence and more accountability.

Weaknesses and threats

- Although LGUs have a high autonomy that facilitates the implementation of child friendly cities, there are service delivery bottlenecks because of the patronage politics happening on the ground.
- Since UNICEF operates within the government-led CFC programme, there is little scope for ‘raising the bar’. The CFLGA and SCFLG are often done for compliance and do not provide an incentive to go the extra mile for children and support the translated results of the CFLGA to scale up impact for children.
- The quality of data generated by LGUs for the CFLGA can be inadequate due to a lack of consistent guidance on measuring the indicators. Different guidelines are generated by various government agencies and compounded by inconsistent personnel and low expertise at the local level to generate administrative data.
- Over the years LGUs have shown low interest in the Presidential Award due to a marginal financial incentive and a perceived lack of prestige. Hence, the Award requires a new strategy to encourage better LGU participation.

3.5 Future direction

3.5.1 Activities planned for the short-term, mid-term and long-term

UNICEF Philippines will explore how the global CFCI, and the national CFC Government programme could co-exist. UNICEF CFCI could provide LGUs a robust platform for knowledge and experience sharing among child-friendly practitioners nationally and internationally. CFCI could also allow UNICEF to extend its reach to cities with financial resources without technical experience.

Hence, UNICEF Philippines is considering integrating CFCI in the following Country Programme in 2024-2028. For this purpose, the CO will produce a national stock take to map the cities most suited to participate in the CFCI. The CO will collaborate with the national government to create the stock take to ensure it will not undermine the existing CFC programme.



Annex

List of UNICEF CFC Focal Points in the East Asia and Pacific Region

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