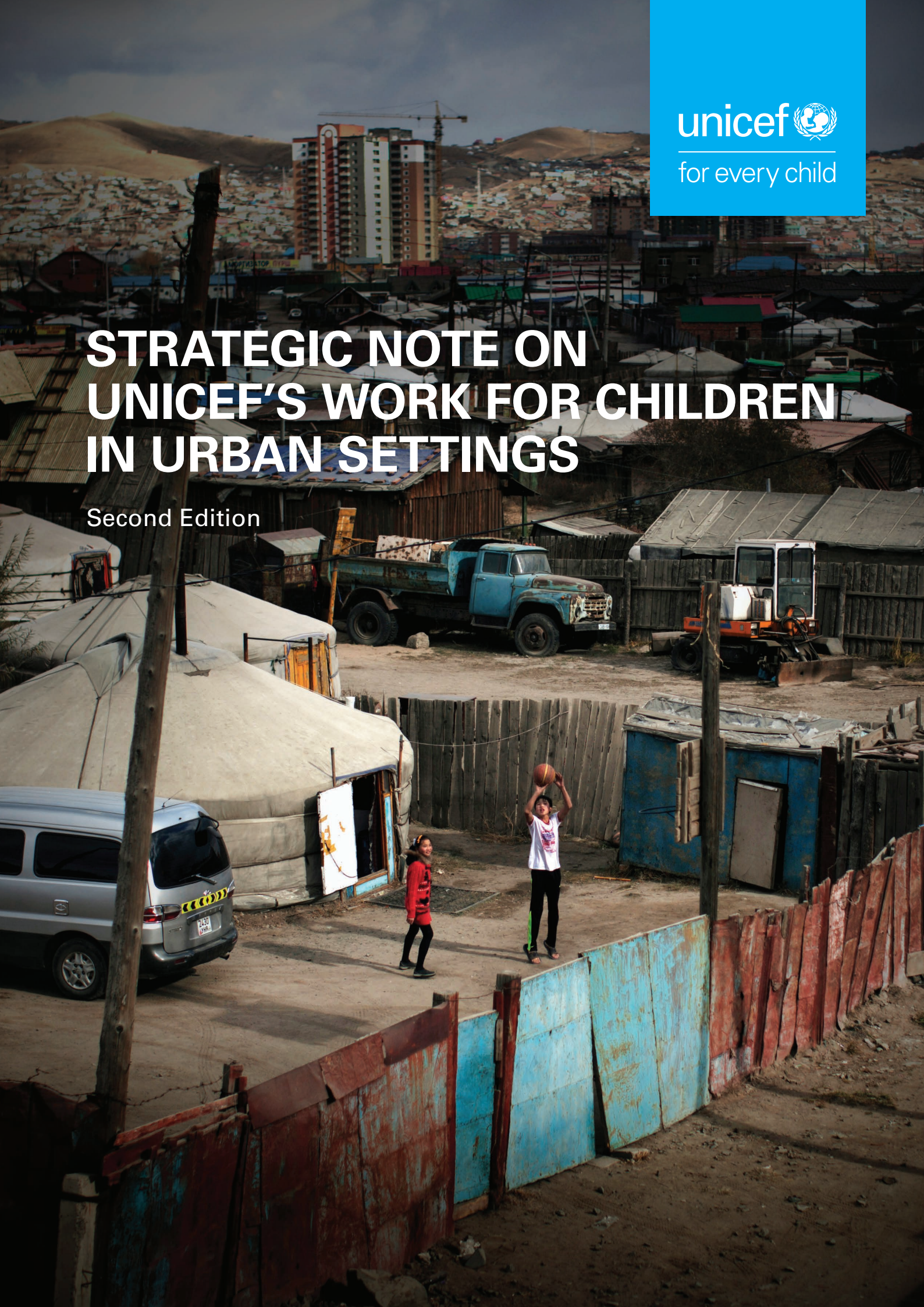


STRATEGIC NOTE ON UNICEF'S WORK FOR CHILDREN IN URBAN SETTINGS

Second Edition



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Acronyms

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Acronyms

CPD	country programme document
CSO	civil society organization
DGF	decentralized government finance
ECD	early childhood development
EWIPA	explosive weapons in populated areas
NGO	non-governmental organization
PHE	public health emergency
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
UMF	Urban Monitoring Framework
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WASH	water, sanitation and hygiene
WHO	World Health Organization



1. Introduction

1.1 Overview

The progress of nations is and will be increasingly influenced by urban areas. In 2020, around 56 per cent of the world's population – some 4.4 billion people – lived in urban areas, of which 1.18 billion are children. That figure is set to rise to 70 per cent by mid-century, with over 90 per cent of the growth taking place in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean.

The World Bank estimates that 1.4 million people move into urban areas each week.¹ Many of them end up in **slums or informal settlements**. The current slum population of 1 billion worldwide is expected to grow to 3 billion by 2050. If it does, it will account for almost one third of the world's population. UN Habitat estimates that, currently, **350 to 500 million children live in slum households**, mostly in Asia and Africa.²

Progress in urban areas will be key to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Specifically, Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 11 aims to make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable, and is closely integrated with the other 16 SDGs. In this context, governments are faced with the complex task of aligning policies to the SDGs and engaging with a range of public and private parties in policy creation and implementation. Further, the New Urban Agenda states that cities can be massive agents of positive change, if they are well-planned, built and governed, and sets out a vision for sustainable development and improved quality of life. Tackling urban inequities in access to services and addressing environmental risks and hazards for children offers the potential to reduce multidimensional child poverty, and adopting a child-focused lens to urban development will have positive benefits for urban planning and governance for all.

¹ <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2016/04/06/from-urban-risk-to-resilience---building-safer-cities>

² Urban indicators database, UN Habitat 2021 version.

1.2 About this document

To address rapid urbanization, complex urban governance and the associated equity and inclusion challenges, UNICEF is strengthening, revamping and scaling up its programming in urban areas. This Technical Strategic Note builds on and replaces the internal *Strategic Note on UNICEF's Work for Children in Urban Settings* (22 May 2017) and is part of UNICEF's Subnational and Local Governance Programming Framework for UNICEF Country Offices and National Committees. Recognizing that many aspects of urban and subnational development are determined at the level of national government, this Note also includes aspects of urban development related to children at the national level.

This Note sets out how to apply UNICEF's five key subnational priorities for children:

- Evidence strengthening and data disaggregation;
- Governance for local planning, financing and budgeting;
- Child, adolescent and community participation;
- Access to quality and equitable basic services; and
- Child responsive urban spatial planning and environmental sustainability.

Each priority area, outlined in Section 4, highlights the unique needs of children in slums and informal settlements given their specific vulnerability and marginalization.

In addition, this Note provides guidance for programme teams and Country Offices on how to integrate child rights into national urban policies and action urban programming for children, including in humanitarian and fragile contexts.



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³ <https://www.oecd.org/gov/sustainable-development-goals-and-public-governance.htm>

⁴ Adopted at the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) in Quito, Ecuador, on 20 October 2016. It was endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly at its sixty-eighth plenary meeting of the seventy-first session on 23 December 2016.

⁵ https://www.unicef.org/executiveboard/media/3406/file/2021-3-Evaluation_Summary-Children_in_urban_settings-EN-ODS.pdf

⁶ <https://www.unicef.org/reports/humanitarian-review>

A photograph showing three young children running across a large, dark pile of trash and debris in an urban setting. The scene is backlit by a bright light, creating a hazy, golden glow. In the background, there are simple structures and clothes hanging on a line. The children are in motion, running from left to right. The child on the left is wearing a patterned shirt and shorts. The middle child is wearing a striped tank top and shorts. The child on the right is wearing a patterned tank top and shorts.

2. Situation of children in urban settings: Urban as a programming context

By 2050, over 90 per cent of urban population growth of 2.5 billion people will occur in Asia and Africa.⁷ More than half of this projected increase will be concentrated in just eight countries: the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Philippines and the United Republic of Tanzania. The 46 least developed countries (LDCs) are among the world's fastest growing, with many projected to double in population between 2022 and 2050. Low-income countries are home to the world's youngest and fastest-growing populations, with a majority of the urban population residing in secondary cities.⁸

Rapid urbanization, which is largely unplanned and unregulated, exerts stress on infrastructure and public services, and raises a myriad of development challenges, including massive environmental, socio-economic and spatial challenges. Most developing countries are not well prepared or have limited capacity to plan for rapid urban expansion, which makes the provision of public goods and services more expensive, and can lead to inadequate public spaces, along with environmental degradation and increased exposure to natural hazards.⁹ Given these conditions, the risks to children's rights arise from inequalities in access to services and incomes, and from deficits in urban governance systems and capacities to tackle urgent issues.

⁷ 2018 Revision of World Urbanization Prospects

⁸ World Population Prospects, 2022

⁹ Shaping urbanization for children- Handbook.

2.1 Inequalities in access to services in urban areas

The wealth of cities – their infrastructure, and their greater availability of goods, services, resources and functioning commodity markets – should provide the opportunity to achieve results for children at scale. There is a general notion that higher incomes, better infrastructure and proximity to services grant urban dwellers better lives. However, not all children in urban areas benefit equally from the urban advantage.

Urban averages mask grave inequalities. Due to deep-rooted inequalities, the urban advantage bypasses the most vulnerable children and populations, including those living in slums and informal settlements. This phenomenon, widely referred to as the **'urban paradox'**, highlights the **gap between rich and poor** in urban areas.

For example, a UNICEF analysis of 70 countries¹⁰ shows that in half of these countries, urban children in the poorest quintile are at least twice as likely to die before their fifth birthday as their peers in the richest quintile. Lack of sufficient access to and utilization of **preventive and curative health services**, such as immunization and other health and social services, exacerbates vulnerabilities and inequities. In terms of immunization, urban averages were worse than rural averages. While this highlights the effectiveness of vaccination programmes in rural areas, it also points to system inefficiencies in urban areas. Further, urban areas contain large numbers of zero-dose children.¹¹ According to latest estimates, more than 28% of overall zero-dose children are in urban areas.¹²

The relative disparity is even more pronounced for stunting. In approximately 8 out of 10 of the countries analysed, the prevalence of stunting in the poorest urban quintile is at least twice as high as for peers in the richest quintile, and in the remaining 2 of 10 countries, at least four times higher. Urban dwellers have greater access to food, but at the same time are vulnerable to unreliable food provision and sudden surging prices. For poor families, the cost of nutritious food can be prohibitive. Conversely, foods that are high in fats, salt and sugars are cheap and readily accessible – indeed, street food accounts for about a quarter of household food spending in low- and middle-income countries – which can contribute to children suffering from undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies and overweight.

Unplanned and unregulated urban growth contributes to the growth of slums and informal settlements.

Little data is available on their size and socio-economic profile, with statistics at the city level masking inequities. The reach of formal governance structures is limited and residents have great difficulty having their voices heard. Many slums are overcrowded, at both neighbourhood and household levels, with limited availability of quality essential services such as health care, education and adequate sanitation. Even when such services are available, they may be unaffordable and inaccessible to the poorest urban children and families. Without access to adequate housing and open public spaces, poorer families tend to live in over-crowded spaces and face the constant threat of forced eviction. These challenges are further exacerbated for some inhabitants due to their gender, disability, refugee or migrant status, or other factors.

¹⁰ United Nations Children's Fund, *Advantage or Paradox? The challenge for children and young people of growing up urban*, UNICEF, New York, 2018.

¹¹ <https://www.gavi.org/vaccineswork/zero-dose-child-explained>

¹² <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pgph.0001126>

Children's safety in the urban context can be compromised in unique ways: exploitative labour, living and working on the street, trafficking, unsafe infrastructure, vehicular traffic, overcrowding, unsafe passage to school, armed violence, criminal gang activity and unsafe public places.

- In urban areas, boys are at higher risk of being victims of homicide than girls. For example, homicide rates in Latin America and the Caribbean are especially high among boys (9.3 per 100,000 for boys, compared to 2.1 for girls), although the homicide rate for girls in the region is still almost double the rate for girls globally. Beyond homicide, girls may also join gangs, but are more likely to be exposed to sexual violence in gangs. Girls may also be trafficked and/or exploited by criminal groups.¹³
- Children with disabilities in urban settings face unique protection risks and are more likely to be exploited into working or begging on the street, making them more vulnerable to violence, assault, victimization, child labour and trafficking.¹⁴
- Armed violence has reached crisis proportions in many urban hotspots around the world, often linked to the proliferation of small arms and organized crime. How **violence and the urban environment** interact is unique: there is evidence both of cities changing where the violence occurs, and of urban planning or the lack of it, influencing urban violence.¹⁵
- Explosive weapons in populated areas (EWIPA)¹⁶ are predominantly linked to 'urban warfare'. When EWIPA are used in populated areas, 91 per cent¹⁷ of the casualties are civilians, with children representing a large proportion.
- Children living in urban slums are often engaged in dangerous and exploitative work. Many urban families work in the informal economy, without access to social protection mechanisms.¹⁸ And even though social protection, including social cash transfers, could play a critical role in supporting the poor and vulnerable when they need it the most, it is not extensively implemented in urban areas, with only some exceptions. There are still gaps in ensuring effective reach and adequate design of cash transfer programmes to meet multiple vulnerabilities of children and families in urban slums and informal settlements.

2.2 Spatial and environmental challenges

In urban settings, there is a strong correlation between the vulnerability of the most disadvantaged children and the built environment. An unsustainable built environment constrains children's access to urban services and leads to urban-specific environmental health problems that shift the focus from communicable to non-communicable diseases, which health support systems cannot address alone. The built environment also influences to what extent children's participation is possible in terms of public spaces where children can congregate and other infrastructure that allows physical, social and digital connectivity.¹⁹

¹³ Preventing and responding to violence against children in the Americas – Regional Status Report 2020

¹⁴ UNICEF Rosa advocacy brief of child labour

¹⁵ <https://igarape.org.br/en/urban-violence-and-humanitarian-action>

¹⁶ "Populated areas" encompass all areas with a "concentration of civilians" - mainly but not limited to urban areas - defined in international humanitarian law (IHL) as "permanent or temporary, such as in inhabited parts of cities, or inhabited towns or villages, or as in camps or columns of refugees or evacuees, or groups of nomads."

¹⁷ "A decade of explosive violence" - AOAV – May 2021

¹⁸ <https://www.unicef.org/reports/global-social-protection-programme-framework-2019>

¹⁹ UNICEF Handbook on child responsive urban planning

The quality and safety of **public spaces** influence many aspects of children's lives, including their physical and mental health, skills and social relationships. Access to child-friendly neighbourhoods provides children with the opportunity to play and exercise outdoors, furthermore, the World Health Organization (WHO) lists green spaces among the social determinants of health. Access to neighbourhood facilities for play and leisure is a key environmental dimension that can impact children's well-being. The UNICEF Innocenti Report Card 16 indicated that across a sub-group of Report Card countries (high income) for which data was available, children who felt that there were enough places in their local area where they could play and spend time also reported higher levels of happiness.

Finding **safe, open play places** in crowded cities is difficult. Based on 2018 data from 220 cities in 77 countries, it was found that on an average only 31 per cent of the population had access to an open public space within 400 metres walking distance.²⁰ In addition, streets that are needed to access public spaces and services for children can be dangerous and are places with high exposure to ambient air pollution and road traffic, with road injuries the leading cause of death for children aged 5-19 years.

Climate change largely impacts urban life. Rising global temperatures cause sea levels to rise; increase the number of extreme weather events such as floods, droughts and storms; and increase the spread of tropical diseases. These impacts are costly to cities' basic services, infrastructure, housing, human livelihoods and health, and disproportionately affect the poorest in under-served areas, deepening existing inequities,²¹ particularly for children. In Asian coastal cities, extreme heat is a growing problem. Almost 70 per cent of cities are already dealing with the effects of climate change, and nearly all are at risk.²²

Informal settlements at the edge of cities tend to be in the most exposed areas, with limited access to early warning systems and protective infrastructure. Children and families in poor urban settings are exposed to extensive risk from persistent events, such as localized flooding and fires, and intensive risk from large-scale events, such as hurricanes and earthquakes.²³

At the same time, cities are key contributors to climate change, as urban activities are major sources of greenhouse gas emissions. Although the world's cities currently occupy less than 2 per cent of the Earth's surface, more than 80 per cent of the global gross domestic product (GDP) is generated in cities.²⁴ In addition, cities account for around 78 per cent of the world's energy consumption and produce more than 60 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions.²⁵ Estimates suggest that cities are responsible for 75 per cent of global CO₂ emissions, with transport and buildings being among the largest contributors.²⁶

Unplanned urban expansion is another driver of environmental degradation and risk. Children in urban settings are exposed to **environmental pollutants** in air, water and soil. Industrial growth contributes to air pollution, which affects over 90 per cent of children around the world. Children living in urban areas are also vulnerable to a broad range of toxic metals and chemicals due to improper household, industrial and electronic waste (e-waste) management and disposal, and hospital waste incineration.

²⁰ SDG report 2019

²¹ <https://www.unep.org/explore-topics/resource-efficiency/what-we-do/cities/cities-and-climate-change>

²² https://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar5/wg2/WGIIAR5-Chap8_FINAL.pdf

²³ <https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2021/01/crpt-guide.pdf>

²⁴ <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/urbandevelopment/overview#1>

²⁵ <https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/climate-solutions/cities-pollution>

²⁶ <https://www.unep.org/explore-topics/resource-efficiency/what-we-do/cities/cities-and-climate-change>

2.3 Challenges of urban governance

Rapid urbanization across the world challenges the **weak capacities of urban governments** to manage complex governance processes. The problem is exacerbated in countries where urban governance is characterized by fragmentation and a lack of coordination between governance actors, which makes the ability to enforce regulations limited. Skills and resources are more thinly spread in such situations, reducing the ability of urban governance systems to address key urban issues such as housing, sanitation, health care, transportation, infrastructure and education.

Urban settings tend to be more complex and fragmented than rural areas, and have people from different ethnic, linguistic and socio-economically diverse groups living side by side. Children generally do not have a **political voice** in decision-making, and poor families, especially, tend to have limited political power. Decision-making structures in slums and informal settlements are more likely to be informal and lack accountability; therefore, the entry points for communities to influence decisions are less evident.

2.4 Humanitarian crisis and fragility in urban areas

Aggravating inequalities, **humanitarian crises** are increasingly affecting urban areas, either directly through civil conflict, natural disasters such as flooding or earthquakes, urban violence, or disease outbreaks, or indirectly through urban areas hosting people fleeing these threats. Migrant and displaced populations are moving to urban centres seeking access to services and income-generation opportunities. Some 60 per cent of refugees and 80 per cent of internally displaced persons settle in urban areas, outside the reach of traditional humanitarian operations,²⁷ making their situation even more fragile.

All these issues, disparities and inequalities, alongside amplified population density, crowded environments, poor living conditions and climate change in urban areas are increasing the frequency and severity of **public health emergencies** (PHEs), including infectious disease transmission. PHEs are made more complex by inadequate access to essential services – including health, water and sanitation – which can lead to bigger outbreaks especially in the poor and dense urban settings.

In fragile countries, economic, political, societal, environmental and security factors converge to manifest as risks, and coping capacities of governance structures in urban settings are often challenged in the delivery of public goods and basic services. Furthermore, violence and conflict are increasingly localized and ‘urban’ in nature. Urban governance is key to both understanding these conflict dynamics and addressing them. This is especially true in fragile contexts where the reach of central authorities is limited or non-existent.

²⁷ Muggah, Robert and Adriana Abdenur, ‘Refugees and the City: The twenty-first-century front line’, World Refugee Council Research Paper No. 2, Centre for International Governance Innovation, July 2018, www.cigionline.org/publications/refugees-and-city-twenty-first-century-front-line, accessed 21 May 2021.



3. Urban Programming in UNICEF

3.1 Lessons learned

The following lesson learned emerged from the 2020 evaluation of UNICEF's work for children in urban settings.

- A first step toward reducing urban inequality is **identifying the patterns of poverty and exclusion**. National and urban averages tend to mask the experience of urban children and families and fail to capture inter- and intra-urban disparities. National household surveys are not well adapted to urban contexts, with inadequate sampling within urban areas, particularly in slums and informal settlements. Moreover, the temporal interval of national surveys is often not conducive for programme planning and monitoring, especially in cities experiencing rapid growth. Strengthening measurement of intra- and inter-urban disparities, insisting on administrative data as much as possible (with a focus on informal areas and vulnerable populations) and investment in research for capturing the different experiences of urban vulnerable groups are needed to underpin evidence-based urban programmes.
- Urban issues are increasingly being identified in situational analyses, and these need to **be fully translated into urban programming and reflected in country programme documents (CPDs) across relevant sectors and goal areas**. Instead of sectoral, project-based approaches, an integrated approach to urban programming has the strongest potential to demonstrate results in child rights and the reduction of urban disparities. For example, some UNICEF Country Offices, including Bangladesh, Brazil, Lebanon, Peru and the Philippines, have experience using an integrated approach to urban programming.

- **Sectoral guidance for work in urban contexts is crucial.** This guidance is more technical and is still needed even for an integrated approach. The WASH sector provides an excellent example of a comprehensive framework for urban settings. Similarly, the health sector has developed an urban immunization toolkit providing guidance for immunization in urban settings, as a result of which these two streams have mainstreamed programming in urban areas into their sectoral programmes reaching out to zero dose children and providing WASH services in poor urban settings.
- **Two key trends need to be addressed by urban programming:**
 - (a) rapid growth and privatization in planning that can exclude the urban poor and new migrants from formally planned city spaces; and
 - (b) widespread informality, such as an increasing number of people living in informal settlement and slums.

Lessons from Brazil, the Philippines and other countries that experienced early urban expansion show that once unplanned and inequitable urban growth has occurred, undoing the negative consequences is difficult and costly. Underlying structural vulnerabilities that affect urban children remain intact if action is not taken. Given the rapid, unplanned and unregulated growth in urban populations, a deeper focus on addressing the equity challenges and urban planning is needed.

- **Upstream programming needs to progress alongside downstream approaches.** Municipal policy and resources are dependent on national and regional policy frameworks and fiscal transfers to varying degrees, depending on the specific country frameworks. UNICEF urban programmes recognize that it is not possible to achieve results at scale working solely on bottom-up approaches with cities. This is particularly the case in humanitarian crises, in which municipal resources can be easily overwhelmed. UNICEF needs to engage closely with private sector partnerships, public finance for children at local levels, and the complex systems that manage urbanization and planning.

3.2 Drivers of change

UNICEF programming aims to contribute to the realization of children's rights including for the most disadvantaged, marginalized and vulnerable. Given the current rapid urbanization trend and the specific challenges faced by children in urban areas, UNICEF has committed to develop programming approaches that support the drivers of change for children in urban contexts. Defining these drivers is not a straightforward task, as urban settings are complex and diverse, ranging across mega cities (with populations of 10 million or more) to peri-urban towns and slums (with populations as low as 5,000 in some countries). However, some common elements can be identified (see **Annex 2: Drivers of change in the urban landscape and their programmatic dimensions**).

UNICEF's programming in urban areas addresses three interconnected drivers of change:

- 1) **Equity and inclusion (the core vision of change):** Equity and inclusion promise better lives for people living in cities and human settlements. The importance of this driver is underpinned by the SDGs and the New Urban Agenda. Increasingly, the urban poor live in under-served and inaccessible areas, which further deepens their exclusion, marginalization and vulnerability to economic and environmental shocks.²⁸ The greatest inequalities appear in cities in low- and middle-income countries, where the urban poor are concentrated in informal areas, with limited access to basic services, employment and infrastructure, and have unequal social standing and influence on decision-making.²⁹

²⁸ United Nations Human Settlement Programme, *State of the World's Cities, 2012/2013: Cities of prosperity*, UN-Habitat, Nairobi, 2013.

²⁹ Satterthwaite, D. and Mitlin, D., 'Inequalities Within the Urban Half of the World', *A Planet for Life*, 2013. <http://regardssurlaterre.com/en/inequalities-within-urban-half-world>.

Informal and excluded areas are often home to marginalized urban population, migrants, refugees and internally displaced people who face additional barriers to inclusion. Structural inequality can also be a determinant of urban violence.³⁰ UNICEF will support interventions for strengthening evidence on poverty and inequality, improved access to essential goods, services and social protection, and advocacy for housing among other basic services. This work will be supported by an enabling national policy environment that takes into consideration the needs of the whole urban population, including the poor and the most marginalized populations, and allows for the development of a more equitable and inclusive urban environment.

- 2) **Urbanization, planning and the environment (the spatial organization of change):** Rapid urban expansion is underway in low- and middle-income countries. The fastest rates of growth are in sub-Saharan Africa.³¹ Another fast-urbanizing region is South Asia, where urbanization has often been characterized as ‘messy’ due to the widespread existence of slums and sprawl.³² Most developing countries are unprepared for rapid urban expansion, particularly in small and medium-sized cities, where urban land expansion often outpaces the governance capacity of cities and towns.³³ The lack of city-scale planning, regard for equity, inclusion and the environment in market-driven urban projects or municipal investment in public space and safe mobility make the provision of public goods and services more expensive, and contribute to environmental degradation. These conditions increase risks and hazards for children in urban areas³⁴ – particularly the most vulnerable. UNICEF, in partnership with other United Nations agencies, will work towards making urban planning child responsive, addressing issues of children related to unregulated urbanization, rising informality, urban safety and environmental risks; strengthening urban resilience; and ensuring active participation of children in urban planning.
- 3) **Adaptive urban governance systems (the management and implementation of change):** Within the complex system of a city, adaptive urban governance is a key driver and manager of urban change. Cities are characterized by governance structures that include national, regional and municipal levels across sectors, often with overlapping jurisdictions.³⁵ This complexity makes it more challenging to deliver assistance while also offering more opportunity for partnerships. With a big push for decentralization in countries across the world, local governments, including in urban contexts, are increasingly accountable for the delivery of services to children and families. Capacities – technical, human and financial – can vary widely between cities. Low or limited capacity can prevent urban governments from reaching every child, especially those most vulnerable to poverty and exclusion.³⁶ Civil society – including local and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and faith-based organizations – and the private sector increasingly provides services within cities, but often do not address issues of equity and quality of such services. The urban poor often face barriers to political influence and participation. Migrants and displaced populations face additional legal and practical barriers. Children’s participation in planning and design is an emerging area of practice in cities. However, for the most part, children have little say in city decisions.³⁷ UNICEF programming will focus on strengthening urban governance systems and building their capacity to integrate and address child-related issues. This includes working on the convergence of service delivery, mobilization public financing for children in urban settings, community and adolescent participation for inclusive development and better accountability, and engagement with the multiplicity of actors in urban contexts.

³⁰ Maclean, K., *Social Urbanism and the Politics of Violence: The Medellín miracle*, Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2015.

³¹ World Urbanization prospects 2018

³² Ellis, P. and Roberts, M., *Leveraging Urbanization in South Asia: Managing spatial transformation for prosperity and liveability*, World Bank, Washington, D.C., 2016.

³³ Birkmann, J. et al, ‘Boost Resilience of Small and Mid-Sized Cities’, *Nature*, vol. 537, no. 7622, pp. 605-608.

³⁴ Bartlett, ‘Children’s Experience’.

³⁵ Avis, W. R., ‘Urban Governance: Topic guide’, GSDRC, University of Birmingham, Birmingham, 2016.

³⁶ Bardhan, P., ‘Decentralization of Governance and Development’, *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, vol. 16, no. 4, pp.185–205.

³⁷ Bartlett, S., ‘Building Better Cities with Children and Youth’, *Environment and Urbanization*, vol. 14, no. 3, pp.3-10.

3.3 Urban programming in the Strategic Plan 2022–2025

In UNICEF’s Strategic Plan 2022–2025, urban programming is a cross-cutting priority, spanning all goal areas with a special focus on slums and informal settlements. There are nine impact indicators, three outcome indicators and eight output indicators across goal areas that focus on urban change (see **Annex 1**), in addition to an indicator on urban system strengthening under Change Strategies. This urban-specific indicator is, *Number of countries with improved and child-sensitive urban policies, spatial-planning standards and programmes that address the unique structural barriers to child well-being in urban settings, with a special focus on those living in slums and informal settlements.*

In the theory of change underpinning the Strategic Plan,³⁸ UNICEF recognizes slums, where hundreds of millions of children under 18 live, as the worst form of informal settlement.

In the Strategic Plan 2022–2025, UNICEF commits as follows:

#71. UNICEF will step up its urban programming, especially in poor and dense urban settlements, with a focus on disaggregated intra-urban data and its use in planning and budgeting, child-responsive urban planning, and public spaces for children. UNICEF will also strengthen its partnership with UN-Habitat (the United Nations Human Settlements Programme) and other external partners, to integrate children’s issues into global and national urban policies and frameworks.

#424. UNICEF will develop an integrated approach to local governance, incorporating tailored approaches to different territories, **including urban programming targeting slums and informal settlements**, and Child-Friendly Cities. This work will prioritize a community- and people-centred development approach, enhancing agency and empowering children, adolescents and caregivers to participate and shape pathways out of poverty.



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³⁸ [unicef.org/media/107936/file/Theory_of_Change%2C_UNICEF_Strategic_Plan%2C_2022%E2%80%932025.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/media/107936/file/Theory_of_Change%2C_UNICEF_Strategic_Plan%2C_2022%E2%80%932025.pdf)



4. Priority Areas in urban programming for children

The following priority areas reflect the outcomes of UNICEF's work for children in urban settings including in humanitarian and fragile contexts. They are based on an integrated analysis of the drivers of change, findings of the Evaluation of UNICEF Work for Children in Urban Settings and UNICEF's Humanitarian Review, the global strategies and various sectoral and programme guidance notes,³⁹ and the Core Commitments for Children.

- **Priority 1: Data and evidence**
Disaggregated data on the situation of children informs decisions at local level.
- **Priority 2: Local/city governance for planning, budgeting and financing**
Local development policies, strategies, plans and budgets are child responsive.
- **Priority 3: Community engagement/empowerment**
Communities, children and adolescents have a say in decisions at local level affecting their lives.
- **Priority 4: Access to services**
Delivery of social services at local level is effectively co-ordinated.
- **Priority 5: Urban planning**
Urban spatial plans are child responsive.
- **Priority 6: Humanitarian crisis in urban areas**

³⁹ UNICEF (2019) A Local Governance Approach to Programming; UNICEF (2019) Global Framework for Urban Water, Sanitation and Hygiene.

4.1 Priority Area 1: Data and evidence

Why?

A critical step toward reducing urban inequality is **identifying the patterns of poverty** (both monetary and multidimensional) and **exclusion experienced by children and families**. However, intra- and inter-urban data are often not readily available. For monitoring the SDGs at city level, there are few standard city-level indicators, inconsistent spatial analysis, and widely different capacities to regularly collect and report reliable data.⁴⁰ Quality, disaggregated and timely data (from surveys and administrative sources) are essential for monitoring the situation; providing the rationale for equity-focused work with the most vulnerable children and the basis for planning in urban settings; and assessing progress towards results and outcomes for children.

Slums and informal settlements: Informal settlements and slums are often not officially recognized by governments and therefore, sometimes not covered by administrative data. This makes it difficult to assess the deprivations faced by children and measure children's access to basic services in these settlements. National household surveys produce aggregates for urban areas but these surveys may not be useful for analysing inequities, particularly with regard to slums and informal settlements.

How?

Investing in evidence strengthening, following the new United Nations system-wide global Urban Monitoring Framework (UMF), to collect data so that a city's development and specifically, its impact on children can be monitored against the New Urban Agenda Commitments and relevant SDGs. A starting point will be using and adapting or improving the following urban data sources:

- **Administrative data systems:** Cross-sectoral administrative data is important in urban areas, particularly regarding service delivery.⁴¹ In countries with strong monitoring systems (e.g., Brazil and the Philippines), the primary evidence source is the cities' own data that includes impact/outcome indicators for children and are typically generated at the service delivery point.
- **Surveys and censuses:** Household surveys, such as Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS), Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS), and censuses, are an essential part of UNICEF urban approaches. They provide important data to inform national and sub-national situation analyses and to identify priorities, particularly for marginalized groups (for example, MICS has a data collection tool for children with disabilities). Further, sectoral surveys provide useful snapshots. In health, UNICEF leads the immunization coverage and equity assessment (CEA) using the CEA tool to map inequities. However, it can be challenging to generate large enough samples for intra-urban data analysis in vulnerable areas such as slums and informal settlements.
- **National civil registration system:** Civil registration is the continuous, permanent, compulsory and universal recording of the occurrence and characteristics of vital events (live births, deaths, foetal deaths, marriages and divorces) and other civil status events pertaining to the population as provided by decree, law or regulation, in accordance with the legal requirements in each country.

⁴⁰ Simon, D. et al, 'Developing and Testing the Urban Sustainable Development Goal's Targets and Indicators: A five-city study', *Environment and Urbanization*, vol. 28, no. 1, pp.49–63.

⁴¹ See the 'Evaluation of UNICEF's work for children in urban settings', pp. 45-46, & 93

- **Humanitarian data:** Rapid humanitarian needs assessment and or household surveys, wherever possible, remain essential in urban humanitarian contexts, where access is constrained, or local government capacity has been interrupted. However, where there is access and solid local government capacity, administrative systems should be strengthened.
- **Community-based data collection:** Real-time community feedback, collected through SMS and other channels for dialogue, adds an additional layer of information, giving decision-makers better insight into the experiences of urban populations. This includes, for example, citizen data collection, such as the work [Slum Dwellers International](#) is doing.
- **App-based data platforms:** U-Report is a social platform created by UNICEF, available via SMS, Facebook and Twitter, on which young people express their opinions as agents of change in their communities.⁴² RapidPro, open-source software, has been used to collect data and has been used by UNICEF to reach caregivers, health workers and communities, including during the COVID-19 pandemic response.⁴³
- **Geographic Information Systems (GIS):** UNICEF leverages innovative and emerging technologies including Geographic Information Systems (GIS), and new diagnostics and artificial intelligence (AI) to help achieve health goals. GIS can be a powerful tool in urban programming, especially for mapping and monitoring the spatial dimensions of intra-urban inequities and tracking population movements. It could also be used for geographic priority setting to inform area-based planning and programming.
- **Social media and mobile data collection:** Innovations in real-time data collection and visualization, complemented by big-data analytics and AI, provide safe, rapid and comprehensive alternative approaches to in-person data collection. UNICEF has and can continue to pursue strategic partnerships with social media platforms and technology providers to maximize this potential.

Programme components

UNICEF will build on its experience to strengthen data collection and analysis for monitoring the situation of children in urban settings. This can be used to spotlight urban disparities through the following key focus actions:

- **Improving sampling and disaggregation within surveys:** Urban (Slum), Urban (Non-Slum), and Rural.
- **Supporting the strengthening of civil registration systems** to improve birth and death registration and certification, especially in vulnerable urban settings and communities.
- **Strengthening urban administrative data systems** to collect, share and use disaggregated data, including by age, gender and disability.
- **Providing technical guidance to integrate data systems** in cities so that information can be pooled in one place to enhance urban planning and programming and facilitate sharing and use of data.
- **Improving child poverty measurement** by including informality, higher cost of living, security of tenure, quality of housing and other risks that threaten vulnerable urban families in multi-dimensional child poverty measurements.

⁴² <https://www.unicef.org/innovation/U-Report>

⁴³ <https://www.unicef.org/innovation/rapidpro>

- **Developing and/or adapting epidemiological data systems** for the urban context, including using Integrated Outbreak Analytics⁴⁴ within a public health emergency context and ensuring surveillance systems that address urban issues, such as road injury indicators and blood lead levels.
- **Providing technical support for developing equity- and child-focused** urban situation analyses to influence urban planning processes.
- **Engaging in consultations** with organizations representing vulnerable groups, including children, adolescents, women, and children with disabilities.
- **Using participatory mapping methods** and app-based technology to collect community-based data.
- **Using open-source software and GIS to collect geo-spatial data** for measuring and mapping intra-urban disparities in vulnerable urban territories, and monitoring access conditions for children to services and quality of urban infrastructure. This is particularly important to identify hotspots for climate, disaster and environmental impacts and to prioritize action.
- **Facilitating the use of the Urban Monitoring Framework (UMF)** to assist cities in tracking their progress in efforts to meet the SDGs for children. Measuring a UMF indicator should produce actionable information for policy making or investment decisions.

4.2 Priority Area 2: Local/city governance for planning, budgeting and financing

Why?

Cities are characterized by complex governance structures that include national, regional and municipal levels across sectors, often with overlapping jurisdictions. There is no single, universally applicable model of urban governance with institutions and decision-making models largely dependent on the process of decentralization. Authority for planning, decision-making and resource allocation is distributed among different levels of government. Capacities – technical, human and financial – can vary widely between central and local levels, and between cities and countries. With a big push for decentralization in countries across the world, urban governments are increasingly accountable for the delivery of services to children and families involving many partners and stakeholders. Like NGOs, the private sector increasingly provides services within cities, but often with challenges in quality and accountability.

Slums and informal settlements: City governments often lack the capacity to plan for urban growth strategically and equitably. Even when they have the capacity, planning lags, with people coming to cities far faster than the planning process can incorporate them. Dealing with slums and informal settlements remains one of the main challenges for many urban governments globally. Urban governments either do not have the planning tools to deal with rapid urbanization, or the tools in place are not sufficiently responsive.

⁴⁴ The Integrated Outbreak Analytics (IOA) approach brings together multiple data types from different sources to better respond to outbreaks and public health emergencies. IOA integrates surveillance data, programmes data, community and healthcare worker perceptions and behaviours data, health services and systems data (DHIS2), as well as key data on context including key events, changes in prices and population movements as well as data on gender and social norms.

How?

UNICEF's Subnational and Local Governance Programming Framework outlines the importance of adapting urban programming needs to the governance context. It considers the forms of decentralization that exist in countries, the roles and responsibilities of urban governments for the delivery of social services, the capacities of urban governments to effectively implement, and the availability of relevant systems and structures at the different levels of government that support coordination and delivery. UNICEF support contributes to strengthening the system for better planning, budgeting, financing and coordination of social service delivery for children in the urban settings.

Decentralized government finance (DGF) or municipal finance covers all the resources managed at the sub-national level, whether through funding provided to elected local governments for the implementation of their functional assignments, or funds generated and retained at the local level. UNICEF works with urban governments, ministries of finance and development partners to strengthen budgeting processes and public finance management systems at the local level and help mobilize resources through local taxes and other own-source revenues and intergovernmental fiscal transfers to subnational governments. DGF addresses bottlenecks in local budgeting by linking local and inter-governmental planning and budgeting processes, strengthening budgeting systems and practices, and influencing resource allocation to improve equity and the quantity and quality of local services.

Programme components

- **Evidence-based planning** supporting systems, capacities and resources for the development of local plans that equitably respond to the priorities of children and their families, including in slums and informal settlements. Strengthening planning processes should consider complex governance and relationships between different levels of governance to ensure coordination between different structures and levels of government within the city and with national and regional levels in the delivery of services.
- **Mapping to identify financing sources and financing flows** for services for children in urban areas. This could include public or private resources, funds generated and retained within the city, or transfers from national or regional level.
- **Analysis of urban budgets** to identify budgets for key social services, trends over time and spatial distribution of spending, to expose gaps in budgets, such as coverage of slums and informal settlements.
- **Diagnosing financing bottlenecks** through analysis and consultation with service users, service providers and finance actors at urban and other levels of government.
- **Costing exercises** to assess the costs of equitable services that respond to the needs of urban children and families.
- **Engaging in social sector budget** processes with budget actors, including urban finance authorities, legislative oversight bodies, and civil society actors in their respective roles.

- **Capacity building of urban planning and finance staff** to acknowledge child rights issues in urban budgets.
- Support for local government in **resource mobilization**, including innovative mechanisms such as developing social projects linked to municipal bond issuance, strengthening tax incentives, and working with ministries of finance to strengthen the design and execution of intergovernmental fiscal transfers.
- Support for **social accountability** initiatives by citizens and other organized groups, including residents' associations, to hold public officials to account for their fiscal decisions.

4.3 Priority Area 3: Community engagement/empowerment

Why?

The voice and participation of the children and adolescents in urban areas are often lacking in the urban decision-making process. Strengthening social accountability and establishing effective and functioning child and community participation mechanisms in urban programming requires an understanding of urban complexity, barriers to social inclusion, and building partnerships with civil society organizations (CSOs) and other local stakeholders.

Slums and informal settlements: The reach of formal governance structures in slums and informal settlements is often limited, and residents have great difficulty in having their voices heard. This exclusion often translates into limited understanding about the community, stigmatization, mutual distrust and exclusion of government-led responses. Despite their apparent informality, many slums are highly organized, with well-established leadership structures and a wide variety of community-based organizations. Larger slums are not homogeneous and can be comprised of several smaller 'villages' with different customs and social behaviours.

How?

UNICEF will focus on engaging communities through social and behavioural approaches to make programmes relevant for children, generate demand for services and strengthen accountability. There are several key areas in which UNICEF's work can help enhance the agency of children, families and communities living in urban settings to better express their opinions, influence urban development, advocate for policies and hold city governments and other stakeholders accountable. For example, building on U-Report work and other participatory adolescent mechanisms, UNICEF can make accountability and participation a core part of its work with urban girls and boys and provide tools for them to express their views and become agents of change. This includes creating spaces where refugee, migrant and internally displaced children and youth can participate in a meaningful way – together with local children and youth and other local stakeholders – in municipal governance and decision-making processes, as representatives of their respective communities. This needs

to include children and youth with disabilities both from local and from refugee, migrant and internally displaced populations.

Programme components

UNICEF Country Offices

- Establish **and advocate** for meaningful and institutionalized child participatory mechanisms, and sustainable financing of effective and inclusive child participation, with special attention to equal participation of girls and boys, including those from disadvantaged groups, especially children living in slums and informal settlements.
- Capacity building of children and adolescents for meaningful participation on issues concerning their lives.
- Modelling social **accountability mechanisms** for regular and inclusive community dialogue and/or consultations, with special attention to the equal participation of women and men and the inclusion of disadvantaged groups, such as persons with disabilities.
- Support the development and/or strengthening of **national, sub-national and local standards and guidelines** for child and community participation and raising awareness of urban governments on the importance and benefits of child and community participation in decision-making processes.

4.4 Priority Area 4: Access to basic services

Why?

In urban areas, children are at times affected by inadequate access to health care, educational opportunities, child protection services, food, water supply, sanitation and waste management, housing, and transport. Basic infrastructure and public services often fail to keep pace with rapid population growth. In lower-income countries, or countries experiencing prolonged urban crises, mass exclusion from public services is the norm. Marginalization in cities is also prevalent in high-income countries, but to a lesser extent and typically for specific populations such as refugees, migrants and certain ethnic groups. Even when social services are the responsibility of central and regional governments, depending on the level of decentralization, local governments in urban settings have some decision-making within their remit. This includes decisions regarding the prioritization, availability and delivery of local goods and services, and ultimately access. In many countries, the slow response of the public sector to rapid urbanization has left the private and informal sectors to fill the gap, providing health, education, housing and water at high costs, sometimes with critical issues in adequacy and quality.

Slums and informal settlements: Populations in slums and informal settlements are left out while planning for delivery of services if they are not included in the official database. In some countries, governments actively discourage delivery of services in slums to prevent migration from rural areas into the cities. However, these populations use public services, where available or accessible, increasing the burden on existing services. In addition, the quality of urban services accessed by marginalized and disadvantaged people is often poor. Effective mechanisms are usually not in place to regulate the private and informal sectors, which play a major role in service delivery in urban areas, including in informal settlements. People use these services, often at a great cost of time, money and health, such as when queuing to fill water containers at a private tanker that may come a few times a week. Extension and outreach or mobile services are not always as developed in urban areas as in rural areas. These issues are compounded by the ambiguity in functional responsibility: it is not always clear

How?

UNICEF's urban programming in any given country aims to reduce equity gaps in service delivery by strengthening the capacity of local authorities to reach the most marginalized and impoverished children, including children on the move and children in slums and informal settlements. Reducing legal and practical barriers to access for excluded and underserved urban children requires investment at-scale in expanding quality service provision. UNICEF will support integrated models for coordinating quality services in urban centres with particular focus on low-resource settings within each country. This will be guided by careful consideration of national and local contexts and capacities. Country Offices are encouraged to integrate this across goal areas into CPDs, streamlining it into their workplans.

Programme components

a) Overall

- Work with partners to **integrate issues related to children in national urban policies** and sectoral policies to make them child responsive.
- Ensure systems and capacities are in place for the **implementation, coordination, monitoring and oversight** of arrangements for equitable, effective and efficient local service delivery to all.
- Slums and informal settlements should be consistently and systematically included in all urban plans and strategies for strengthening services delivery. This includes adequate budget allocations that enable access to quality services for all children, adolescents and their caregivers, especially the most marginalized.
- Undertake an **analysis of barriers to accessing basic services** for different groups of children living in urban areas. Use this evidence to work with national governments on policy improvement and allocation of resources and local governance structures on the implementation of services that are inclusive and accessible to all children, including those with disabilities.

b) Health

UNICEF is committed to strengthening primary health care in urban settings, ensuring service delivery systems are adapted to the context, including:

- Determining context-specific **integrated packages** for maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health (MNCAH); HIV and AIDS, immunization, nutrition and early childhood development (ECD) services, leveraging primary health care investments to address inequities in urban settings, and promote public-private partnerships. This can build on UNICEF's urban immunization [toolkit](#), especially to reach zero dose children.
- **Strengthening urban primary health care**, particularly systems strengthening, to build resilience in the face of public health emergencies (see below), environmental pollutants, and the effects of climate change. Work on urban primary health care will also promote universal civil registration and provision of services to address violence against women and children.
- **Promoting environmental health, including waste management:** UNICEF is committed to reduce the impact of environmental risks to child survival, health and well-being through advocacy to lawmakers for action against pollutants, and work with communities to minimize children's exposure to toxic pollutants.

c) Public health emergencies

At both national and local levels, a comprehensive, community-based and multisectoral approach to public health emergencies is required, encompassing all services that contribute to prevent, prepare or respond to health threats, including in urban settings. This approach includes working with national and local capacities to identify PHE risks in urban spaces, and to develop, strengthen and maintain core capacities to prevent, detect and respond to public health events in such environments.

d) Nutrition

UNICEF is focused on supporting responsive food systems and tailoring the programme to the urban food environment:⁴⁵

- **Supporting producers of fresh produce and retailers to improve access to healthy, minimally processed food** that is affordable in all parts of the city.
- **Promoting the** adoption, implementation and enforcement of **restrictions on marketing of unhealthy foods and beverages** and breastmilk substitutes in urban areas.
- **Decrease demand for and reduce availability** of unhealthy food and beverages through use of location-based regulations and zoning restrictions on unhealthy food retail outlets.
- **Scale up healthy food procurement** and food environments in and around urban schools.
- Ensure any food transfers, school feeding programmes, healthy food vouchers or cash transfers targeting the urban population are informed by nutrition experts.

e) Early childhood development

UNICEF is prioritizing ECD for children in urban settings, particularly as a programme area that necessitates multisectoral action and has an impact on entire families, not just on young children. Programme components include:

- **Improve data systems and evidence** on the needs and challenges of childcare for urban families, especially in slums and informal settlements, including for families with working parents. This research should explore factors that affect the availability and accessibility of safe areas for play, nurseries, kindergartens and other services for ECD, and support services or networks for parents.
- **Promote the use of multisectoral packages** that address early stimulation and responsive care in public spaces in urban settings.
- Provide recommendations contributing to the **development of standards/principles for community-based childcare.**

⁴⁵ https://www.unicef.org/UNICEF_Nutrition_Strategy_2020-2030.pdf

f) Education

UNICEF is focusing on building both foundational and transferable education skills for all children and adolescents including those in urban settings. Programme components include:

- Action for **foundational literacy and numeracy**, including innovative catch-up learning programmes.
- Support development of a range of skills for adolescents through accelerated education, catch-up and bridging programmes, and through use of digital platforms.
- **Non-formal and community-based multisectoral programmes** that equip young people as agents of change, including on school-to-work transition, girls' empowerment, and sports for development.

g) Child protection

In line with UNICEF's Technical Guidance (2020),⁴⁶ UNICEF will focus on a broad framework for global and local action for child protection in urban settings:

- Strengthen **inclusive child protection systems** in urban areas to address the most vulnerable children, including children in slums and informal settlements, refugee and migrant children, children from linguistic minorities, and children in street situations. This should include advocating to governments to increase capacity of social workers to respond to the high caseloads in urban areas.
- Strengthen **communication skills and tools** of service providers within child protection and justice systems to address linguistic barriers some children face and accessibility issues for children and youth with disabilities, which can prevent equitable access to child protection services. This should include physical accessibility to buildings.
- Strengthen **birth and death registration** in urban centres, especially in precarious and vulnerable urban settings and communities.
- Strengthen **child protection systems and services** for children in street situations and their families, prioritize educational outcomes and skills, and increase investments in evidence on children in street situations.
- Prevent and mitigate the impact of **armed violence on children** and their recruitment or use by criminal gangs by building resilience amongst adolescents in urban hotspots and offering them alternatives, and through supporting adolescents' disengagement from gangs.
- Support ways for **children on the move** to access services and participate in political processes. This focus is on ending any discrimination in local legal and policy frameworks based on migration, asylum, nationality or residence status, as well as all practices that criminalize the undocumented staying in the city (see [Children Uprooted- What Local Governments Can Do](#)).
- Strengthen the **capacities of the social service workforce** through targeted training on the protection needs of children with disabilities, including addressing stigma, discrimination and harmful social norms that prevent workers from providing services in an inclusive and equitable manner. This includes ensuring that referrals and connections to other services – for example, health and education – consider accessibility needs.

⁴⁶ [Transformative-Action-June-2020.pdf \(unicef.org\)](#)

h) Water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH)

Building on the [UNICEF Global Framework for Urban Water, Sanitation and Hygiene](#), the following are critical contributions to promote equitable access to WASH for the poorest and most marginalized populations in urban areas. The UNICEF urban WASH programme focuses on strengthening systems and capacity for effective service delivery and empowering urban communities to demand WASH services and support behaviour change. The level of urban WASH engagement should be based on detailed situation analyses with a focus on addressing inequality in access to WASH services. Some of the urban WASH programme thematic areas, which are critical contributions to promoting equitable access for the poorest and most marginalized populations in urban areas, include:

- Evidence generation and sector analysis;
- Policy and strategy development;
- Institutional arrangements and coordination;
- Capacity development;
- Planning, monitoring and review;
- Sector financing;
- Delivery of services and supplies;
- Building sustainable markets;
- Community empowerment;
- Urban WASH behaviour change; and
- Leadership and coordination in urban humanitarian contexts.

i) Social protection

UNICEF aims to help all children have access to inclusive protection and to a standard of living adequate to their well-being. The following are intended to realize this ambition:

- **Address gaps in coverage of or access to social protection services** and disparities in family-friendly policies for vulnerable populations in cities, including families of urban informal workers.⁴⁷
- **Adjust the delivery mechanisms of social protection systems** – including registration, payments and grievance mechanisms – to work in urban contexts.
- **Integrate urban social protection schemes** with other social services and support to increase coverage of services for families facing multidimensional poverty.
- **Develop training on employment preparedness** for adolescents and youth while addressing structural barriers to access employment opportunities.
- **Assess the feasibility of cash transfers in urban areas** affected by humanitarian crises, in coordination with other humanitarian actors.

⁴⁷ See WIEGO, ILO and UNICEF (2021) [Family-Friendly Policies for Workers in the Informal Economy](#).

4.5 Priority Area 5: Urban planning

Why?

Most developing countries are unable to keep pace with rapid urbanization and lack capacity for urban planning.⁴⁸ This in turn contributes to inadequate land-use allocations for housing, streets, public open spaces and public facilities. Inadequate investment in urban planning and infrastructure has led many cities and towns in developing countries to be shaped by market forces while ignoring wider issues of equity.⁴⁹ This can result in infrastructure services being concentrated in wealthy areas and moved away from poorer ones, leading effectively to the fragmentation of service provision. This then divides populations with the middle and upper classes choosing private enclaves in the best locations with the best services, and the working class and poor left with fragmented and risky spaces, and limited access to basic services.⁵⁰ Deficits in the availability, access and quality of infrastructure are at the core of urban challenges, and are linked to growing exposure to natural hazards, environmental degradation and pollution, which is compounded by climate change.⁵¹ These conditions contribute to increased risks and hazards for children in urban areas and perpetuate structural inequality, which in turn can foster conditions of conflict, crime and violence.

Better-planned cities are more likely to be able to improve air quality, manage waste, provide access to essential services and critical infrastructure, and promote safer and healthier lifestyles. They can also help to increase social cohesion, including between and migrant, refugee or internally displaced populations and host communities. Providing public spaces, such as safe street environments for young children, offers benefits such as increased levels of physical activity, improved social and emotional well-being, and enhanced cognitive and cardio-metabolic development of children.

Adequate housing is a right of every person regardless of age, gender, race, migration status, or income level, and is the foundation for all human development, well-being and survival.⁵² Children's access to adequate housing helps eliminate child poverty, improves health, creates enabling educational environments, reduces gender inequalities, and increases access to basic services. However, adequate housing is not the reality in many cities around the world.

Development partners can work in newly urbanizing areas to encourage planning for public spaces, water and sanitation, and resilience. COVID-19 has made evident many deficits in planning and design of cities that add to the precariousness of living environments with direct impacts on children's well-being.⁵³

⁴⁸ Randolph, G. F. and Storper, M. (2022). Is urbanisation in the Global South fundamentally different? Comparative global urban analysis for the 21st century. *Urban Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00420980211067926>

⁴⁹ Sager, T. (2011). Neo-liberal urban planning policies: A literature survey 1990–2010. *Progress in Planning, Volume 76, Issue 4*, Pages 147-199

⁵⁰ Graham, S. and Marvin, S. (2001) *Splintering Urbanism: Networked infrastructures, technological mobilities and the urban condition*, London and New York: Routledge

⁵¹ Fraser, A., Pelling, M. and Solecki, W. (2016) *Understanding Risk in the Context of Urban Development: Definitions, concepts and pathways*, in Bartlett, S. and Satterthwaite, D. (2016) *Cities on a Finite Planet: Towards a transformative response to climate change*, Abingdon: Routledge

⁵² Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR).

⁵³ <https://www.habitat.org/sites/default/files/documents/Children-Cities-and-Housing-Rights-and-Priorities.pdf>

Slums and informal settlements: When the poor are left out of formal planning processes, growth of slums in cities is inevitable, which in turn can contribute to widespread informality in unequal cities. Between 20 to 80 per cent of urban populations in low- and middle-income countries live in informal areas. Two key factors that contribute to widespread informality are:

- the reluctance of governments to address the needs of the urban poor and their right to the city; and
- deeply insufficient public and private finance for basic urban infrastructure.⁵⁴

It is more cost efficient to plan for growth. Retroactively building infrastructure for already existing slums and informal communities can cost three to nine times as much as if the city had made room in the first place.⁵⁵

How?

UNICEF has developed a framework of **Child Rights and Urban Planning (CRUP)** with ten principles,⁵⁶ as set out in the handbook ‘*Shaping Urbanization for Children*’. In urban planning for children, UNICEF prioritizes the following areas for advocacy and programming: public spaces, road safety, and child-responsive national planning standards.

Programme components

- **Advocacy and provision of policy guidance** to create environmentally safe urban spaces for all children, including advocacy for integrating pollution reduction into urban policy. Policy also needs to limit children’s exposure to the sources of pollution, such as factories not being located within the vicinity of schools and playgrounds, and improve waste management.
- **Child-centred slum transformation:** UNICEF will work with partners to include child-related issues and indicators in the Global Action Plan and Participatory Slum Upgrading Index⁵⁷ and advocate for child-centred slum upgrading.
- **Child-responsive national planning standards:** Planning standards are minimum quantitative measurements that need to be in place for land use and built space to ensure security, accessibility, safety and health. They are often accompanied by qualitative guidelines and procedures in the phases of planning, design and maintenance. Planning standards are usually issued by the national government, the Urban Ministry, Ministry of Housing, Transportation, Environment or any other related ministries. In some countries, planning standards may even be part of the national urban policy. UNICEF will work together with partners at the national level to ensure that:
 - The standards set for land use and built space are focused on children’s well-being, such as housing, infrastructure for child-related services, public spaces and transportation. These are not exclusively needed for children but must be designed and planned in ways that are safe, healthy and accessible for children.
 - The definition and implementation of the standards are informed by children’s voices.

⁵⁴ Pieterse, E., “Grasping the Unknowable: Coming to grips with African urbanism”, in Pieterse, E. and Simone, A., eds., *Rogue Urbanisms: Emergent African cities*, Jacana Media, Cape Town, 2013.

⁵⁵ Solly Angel (Marron Institute, NYU)

⁵⁶ Principle 1 – Investment; Principle 2 – Housing and Land Tenure; Principle 3 – Public Amenities; Principle 4 – Public Spaces; Principle 5 – Transportation Systems; Principle 6 – Integrated Urban Water and Sanitation Management Systems; Principle 7 – Food Systems; Principle 8 – Waste Cycle Systems; Principle 9 Energy Networks; Principle 10 – Data and ICT Networks

⁵⁷ <https://unhabitat.org/programme/the-participatory-slum-upgrading-programme-psup>

- **Public spaces:** UNICEF, UN Habitat and WHO will develop principles and guidance for children in public spaces. This guidance will be used by UNICEF and partners in cities to advocate for and promote safe and accessible public spaces for children.
- **Road safety:** Road safety is the focus of UNICEF programming in urban safety and will work with countries on the following four road components:
 - **Strengthen data systems for action:** Develop methods and observatories to collect disaggregated data on children’s morbidity and mortality, road safety, broader non-communicable disease and injury patterns, and environmental determinants. Support local stakeholders to use the data to develop country road injury data profiles, assess data systems, dashboards and surveys, and promote, design, monitor and adjust the safe system programmes to address road safety concerns and hazards.
 - **Establish national road safety action plans:** Create and implement countrywide action plans to address road injuries of children as part of wider health, safety and multisectoral strategies within the country.
 - **Strengthen public awareness of road injuries through strategic communications:** Engage children and adolescents in road safety by developing participatory tools and community-based action platforms to allow school-aged children, caretakers and the broader community to help assess, co-design and advocate for safe journeys to school.
 - **Scale up evidence-based road safety interventions:** Include evidence-based early childhood development into the planning and management of cities, engineering designs and applications of community planning, and transport routes to kindergartens, schools and play areas.
- **Children’s right to adequate housing:** As a critical component of urban inclusion, resilience and sustainable development, UNICEF will work on advocacy with partners to address the housing needs and priorities of children, especially those living in informal settlements, slums and on the streets who are without secure tenure and access to basic services.



4.6 Priority Area 6: Humanitarian crisis in urban areas

UNICEF's humanitarian action⁵⁸ encompasses interventions focused on preparedness to save lives and protect rights as defined in the Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action (CCCs) in line with international standards and guided by humanitarian principles. In addition, UNICEF works to address underlying causes of vulnerability to disasters, fragility and conflict through response to humanitarian crises, as well as through its regular programmes.

Moreover, displacement is a particular concern in urban contexts. Actions aimed at providing access to quality services for migrants, refugees and internally displaced people should go hand in hand with support to local communities. Programming should also address the effects on host populations for long-term rebuilding in addition to targeted support to meet the immediate needs of displaced and disaster-affected populations. Host populations may have very similar immediate needs for shelter, healthcare, food and sanitation.

Programme components

- City preparedness planning for enhancing disaster risk reduction and preparedness capacity within urban areas from a multi-hazard and multi-scalar perspective. This should cover natural disasters, humanitarian crises, epidemics, pandemics and other forms of emergencies. City preparedness planning builds on existing work in emergency response capacity, including preparedness to tackle multiple emergencies. UNICEF uses four main approaches that can be integrated into climate-smart, resilient city planning for building urban resilience:
 - making children the centre of climate change strategies and response plans;
 - recognizing children as agents of change;
 - protecting children from the impact of climate change and environmental degradation; and
 - reducing emissions and pollution.⁵⁹
- Efforts to build on local government capacities, systems and structures ensure they can function effectively during crises. This includes developing or adapting operational tools and guidance to build the capacity of municipal authorities to lead and coordinate multisectoral preparedness and response programming and service provision to children in urban areas.
- An area-based approach focuses on meeting all the needs within a geographical area of both host and displaced populations.
- Adaptation of emergency preparedness plans for precarious urban environments, especially slums and informal settlements.

⁵⁸ UNICEF in emergencies and humanitarian action, http://www.unicef.org/emergencies/index_68712.htm

⁵⁹ <https://www.unicef.org/environment-and-climate-change>



5. Partnerships

Cities are characterized by complex governance structures that include national, regional and municipal levels to varying degrees across sectors, often with overlapping jurisdictions. This complexity makes it more challenging to deliver assistance, while also offering more opportunity for partnership.

Considering the cross-cutting nature of urban issues, a Systemwide Strategy for Sustainable Urban Development has been developed for the United Nations system to coordinate its efforts facilitated by UN Habitat, the normative agency for urban programming. UNICEF is working with UN Habitat and other agencies to introduce a child lens to urban policies and frameworks. For example, UNICEF is working with UN Habitat to make national urban policies and planning standards child responsive, and with UN Habitat and WHO to develop principles and guidance for Public Spaces for Children.

In addition, UNICEF is working with other global partnerships, including the Cities Alliance, United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), and Global Parliament of Mayors, to leverage their technical expertise and networks for promoting the rights of children in urban settings. UNICEF is a founding member of the Cities4Children, a network of international organizations working for children living in urban settings, and also an active partner in the Local2030 coalition to strengthen and support governance to deliver outcomes for children at a local level.

The private sector is increasingly important to child-focused urban work. Building on UNICEF's Child Rights and Business Principles, UNICEF has the opportunity to influence the ways in which the private sector contributes to the development and life of urban areas, in communities, in the workplace, and in the production and consumption of goods and services.

Civil society has tremendous potential as a partner on urban issues for children. The urban components of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development have given CSOs a prominent role to play in the development of urban areas, building on their existing presence and experience. UNICEF is already working with a range of CSOs in urban areas, and it is essential that these relations be strengthened – particularly since many CSOs represent the most disadvantaged children and communities.

Annex 1: Urban-related indicators within the UNICEF Strategic Plan 2022–2025

a. Direct indicators

Within the UNICEF Strategic Plan 2022-2025, there is one direct indicator on urban programming under systems strengthening to leave no one behind:

6. Number of countries with improved and child-sensitive urban policies, spatial-planning standards and programmes that address the unique structural barriers to child well-being in urban settings, with a special focus on those living in slums and informal settlements

b. Indicators with urban/rural disaggregation

Impact Indicators (Nutrition, Child Protection, WASH, Child Poverty and Gender)

9. Percentage of children under 5 years of age who are stunted (SDG 2.2.1)
10. Percentage of children under 5 years of age who are wasted (SDG 2.2.2)
11. Percentage of children (a) under 5 years of age (SDG 2.2.2) and (b) 5 to 9 years of age who are overweight
21. Percentage of children under 5 years of age whose births are registered (SDG 16.9.1)
24. Proportion of population using safely managed drinking water services (SDG 6.1.1)
25. Proportion of population using safely managed sanitation services (SDG 6.2.1)
26. Under-5 mortality rate attributed to unsafe water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) (SDG 3.9.2)
28. Percentage of children living in extreme poverty (SDG 1.1.1)
31. Percentage of time spent on unpaid domestic and care work, by sex, age and location (SDG 5.4.1)

c. Outcome indicators (Goal Areas 1,2 and 3)

Goal Area 1

1. Percentage of pregnant women receiving at least four antenatal visits

Goal Area 2

4. Out-of-school rate for girls and boys of primary and lower secondary school age

Goal Area 3

4. Proportion of women and girls aged 15 to 49 years who have menstruated in the last 12 months who did not participate in work, school or other social activities during their last period

d. Output indicators (Goal Areas 4 and 5)

Goal Area 4

1. Number of people reached with durable solutions in development and humanitarian contexts with at least basic sanitation services
2. Number of people reached with durable solutions in development and humanitarian contexts with at least basic water that is safe and available when needed
3. Number of people reached with at least basic hygiene services
4. Number of schools reached with basic WASH services
5. Number of health-care facilities reached with basic WASH services
7. Number of people in humanitarian contexts reached with appropriate drinking water services
8. Number of people in humanitarian contexts reached with appropriate sanitation services

Goal Area 5

3. Number of countries, including in humanitarian and fragile contexts, in which UNICEF has enhanced national and local governance capacities for poverty reduction at the local level





Annex 2: Drivers of change in the urban landscape and their programmatic dimensions

Source: UNICEF. Evaluation Report, October 2020: Evaluation of UNICEF Work for Children in Urban Settings pages 17-22.

One of the challenges faced by UNICEF and partners is that delivering results at scale for children in urban settings requires different approaches than those used in rural areas, approaches which address the drivers of change in urban contexts. However, defining the drivers of change is not a straightforward task; urban settings ranging across mega cities (with populations of 10 million or more) to peri-urban towns (with populations as low as 5,000 in some countries) are complex and diverse. Even within a single urban setting, there can be multiple contexts, from highly developed city centres to peripheral rural areas and informal settlements. City governments range from mayors with executive powers and budgets on par with small nations to officials with limited responsibilities and resources. Efforts to identify a consistent set of drivers of change risks oversimplifying this complexity and diversity.

At the same time, children experience urban areas differently from adults and other vulnerable populations. Children and their families are highly reliant on social services and basic infrastructure, the access to and quality of which will have life-long consequences for children's health and socio-economic outcomes. In addition, children need space for play, and adolescents require safe public spaces and mobility for growing independence. At the same time, children are dependent on their parents' ability to secure stable employment and adequate housing, and to provide emotional security and support. Children are unique in not having a political voice to affect decision-making, and poor families tend to have limited political power. These distinct needs introduce a different perspective to understanding the dimensions and drivers of change in cities for children than one derived from an adult perspective.

With these caveats in mind, **the evaluation team has created a framework to guide the analysis of drivers of change in urban contexts (and to answer the evaluation questions). The framework is based on three inter-connected dimensions of change:**

- 1) equity and inclusion (the core vision of change);**
- 2) urbanization and planning (the spatial organization of change); and**
- 3) complex adaptive systems (the management and implementation of change).**

The key dimensions of each driver are described as they relate to the experience of children and families and link with the mandate of UNICEF, including in humanitarian settings.

1) Equity and inclusion

This driver sets the vision of change for cities and human settlements promising better lives and is underpinned by the SDGs and the New Urban Agenda. Increasingly, in cities, the urban poor in under-served and often inaccessible areas, further exacerbating exclusion and marginalization.ⁱ The greatest inequalities appear in cities in low- and middle-income countries, where the urban poor are concentrated in informal areas, with less access to basic services, employment and infrastructure, and have unequal social standing and influence on decision-making.ⁱⁱ In turn, structural inequality is a primary determinant of urban violence.ⁱⁱⁱ Increasingly, informal and excluded areas are home to refugees and internally displaced people, who face additional barriers to inclusion.

2) Urbanization and planning

Rapid urban expansion is underway in developing countries. The fastest rates of growth are in sub-Saharan Africa, with most of the growth concentrated in small and medium-sized cities (with populations of less than 500,000) and in urban peripheries.^{iv} Another fast-urbanizing region is South Asia, where urbanization has often been characterized as “messy” due to the widespread existence of slums and sprawl.^v Most developing countries are unprepared for rapid urban expansion, particularly in rapidly-growing small and medium-sized cities, where urban land expansion often outpaces the governance capacity of these cities and towns.^{vi} Moreover, planning standards and norms are typically from developed countries, and increasingly, the process of urban development is controlled by private developers, reinforcing inequities.

The lack of city-scale planning, regard for equity and inclusion in market-driven urban projects or municipal investment in public places, along with low-density urban sprawl, make the provision of public goods and services more expensive. It also reduces the availability of public spaces and contributes to environmental degradation. These conditions contribute to increased risks and hazards for children in urban areas.^{vii} As seen with COVID-19, the lack of adequate space and infrastructure make hygiene and social distancing difficult to implement and complicate humanitarian response.

ⁱ United Nations Human Settlement Programme, *State of the World's Cities, 2012/2013: Cities of prosperity*, UN-Habitat, Nairobi, 2013.

ⁱⁱ Satterthwaite, D. and Mitlin, D., 'Inequalities Within the Urban Half of the World', *A Planet for Life*, 2013. <http://regardssurlaterre.com/en/inequalities-within-urban-half-world>.

ⁱⁱⁱ Maclean, K., *Social Urbanism and the Politics of Violence: The Medellín miracle*, Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2015.

^{iv} United Nations Human Settlement Programme, *State of the World's Cities, 2008/2009: Harmonious cities*, UN-Habitat, Nairobi, 2008.

^v Ellis, P. and Roberts, M., *Leveraging Urbanization in South Asia: Managing spatial transformation for prosperity and livability*, World Bank, Washington, D.C., 2016.

^{vi} Birkmann, J. et. al, 'Boost Resilience of Small and Mid-Sized Cities', *Nature*, vol. 537, no. 7622, pp. 605-608.

^{vii} Bartlett, 'Children's Experience'.

3) Complex adaptive systems

Within complex systems such as cities, adaptive urban governance is a key driver of and manager of the dynamics of urban change. However, there is no single, universally applicable model of urban governance, as the institutions and decision-making models are relevant to local context and history. Cities are characterized by complex governance structures that include national, regional and municipal levels to varying degrees across sectors, often with overlapping jurisdictions.^{viii} This complexity makes it more challenging to deliver assistance, while also offering more opportunity for partnership. But effective urban governance involves numerous factors, including the city-national interface, municipal capacity, the role of the private sector, political systems and institutions, the political agency of the urban poor, opportunities for collective action, service delivery dynamics, the prevalence of conflict and violence, and the experience of vulnerable groups.^{ix} With a big push for decentralization in countries across the world, urban governments are increasingly accountable for the delivery of services to children and families. Capacities – technical, human and financial – can vary widely between cities and prevent urban governments from reaching every child, especially those most vulnerable to poverty and exclusion.^x The private sector increasingly provides services within cities, but often with issues of equity and quality. The urban poor often face barriers to political influence and participation, and migrants and displaced populations face additional barriers. Children's participation in planning and design is an emerging area of practice in cities, but for the most part, children have little say in city decisions.^{xi} The different dimensions underpinning the three main drivers of change are summarized in **Table 1**.

Table 1: Drivers of change in the urban landscape

Drivers	Dimension	Description and programme possibilities
Equity and inclusion	Data/different experiences and needs of vulnerable groups	<p>A first step toward reducing urban inequality is identifying the patterns of poverty and exclusion. National and urban averages tend to mask the experience of urban children and families and fail to capture inter and intra-urban disparities.^{xii} National household surveys are not well adapted to urban contexts, with inadequate sampling within urban areas, particularly in slums and informal settlements. Moreover, the temporal interval of national surveys is often not conducive for programme planning and monitoring, especially in cities experiencing rapid growth.</p> <p>Strengthening measurement of intra- and inter-urban disparities, insisting on administrative data as much as possible (with a focus on informal areas and vulnerable populations) and investment in research for capturing the different experiences of urban vulnerable groups are needed.</p>

^{viii} Avis, W. R., 'Urban Governance: Topic guide', GSDRC, University of Birmingham, Birmingham, 2016.

^{ix} Ibid.

^x Bardhan, P., 'Decentralization of Governance and Development', *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, vol. 16, no. 4, pp.185–205.

^{xi} Bartlett, S., 'Building Better Cities with Children and Youth', *Environment and Urbanization*, vol. 14, no. 3, pp.3-10.

^{xii} Intra-urban disparities are disparities *within cities*. Of all scales of spatial disparities, intra-urban disparity suffers from the greatest dearth of data, especially in low- and middle-income countries.

Table 1: Drivers of change in the urban landscape (continued)

Drivers	Dimension	Description and programme possibilities
	Disparate access to quality services	A core driver of change in cities is reducing inequalities in access to social services. For middle-income countries, the focus is often on reducing urban marginalization, reaching children and families who have been excluded and reducing barriers to access, or improving equity in spending and service quality across urban areas. Marginalization in cities is also prevalent in high-income countries, but to a lesser extent and typically for specific populations such as refugees, new immigrants and ethnic minorities such as the Roma. However, for lower-income countries, or countries experiencing prolonged urban crises, mass exclusion from public services is the norm. This requires investment at scale in expanding services.
	Tenure security/housing	<p>The challenge for UNICEF is to reduce inequities in access to quality services for marginalized children while expanding access in situations of mass exclusion.</p> <p>Insecure tenure leads to evictions and prevents families from investing in improved living conditions and also from accessing services. Poor housing conditions are a major driver of adverse health for children and family stress.</p> <p>Urban programming needs to promote secure and legal tenure to help families living in cities and towns to escape poverty and improve living conditions through child-sensitive slum upgrading. This is a key driver for attaining better outcomes for poor children living in urban areas.</p>
	Poverty and employment	<p>The experience of poverty in urban areas is distinct from that in rural areas. All basic needs have to be paid for, often at a high cost – factors not often captured in poverty measurements. Social protection systems are not effectively designed for urban areas and coverage of the lowest income quintiles is higher in rural areas, by 7 to 24 percentage points.^{xiii}</p> <p>In South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, employment is being generated largely in the informal sector, characterized by low pay and precariousness.</p> <p>Poverty measurement and social protection need to address higher cost of living and barriers to social protection access in urban areas. Urban programming needs to provide training on employment preparedness for adolescents and youth and remove structural barriers to access employment opportunities.</p>
	Violence	<p>Structural inequality is a primary determinant of urban violence.^{xiv} Violence in the public realm of the city disproportionately affects adolescent boys and is concentrated in neighbourhoods with overlapping disparities. However, sexual violence in urban private and public spaces disproportionately affect adolescent girls.</p> <p>Tackling urban violence requires a coordinated approach that tackles “economic, spatial and social exclusion” that improves social cohesion and provides young people with access to jobs and life-skills.^{xv}</p>

^{xiii} Gentilini, U., ‘Entering the City: Emerging evidence and practices with safety nets in urban areas’, Social Protection and Labour Discussion Paper No. 1504, World Bank, Washington D.C., 2015.

^{xiv} Maclean, K., The Medellín Miracle.

^{xv} Muggah, R. and Wahba, S., ‘How Reducing Inequality Will Make Our Cities Safer’, World Bank Blogs, <https://blogs.worldbank.org/sustainablecities>, accessed 31 August 2020.

Table 1: Drivers of change in the urban landscape (continued)

Drivers	Dimension	Description and programme possibilities
Urbanization and planning	Privatized planning and splintered urbanisms	<p>Neo-liberal restructuring in the 1990s led to a retreat of the state from the urban planning function in many countries, relegating the task to market forces and ignoring wider issues of equity.^{xvi} Exclusionary and privatized planning produce splintered urbanisms that exclude the urban poor and new migrants from formally-planned city spaces and leave them little option but to find housing in slums and informal settlements. Services and infrastructure are privatized and splintered between affluent and poorer areas, and there is an absence of connective flows within the city.^{xvii}</p> <p>Requires investments in inclusive and child-responsive planning that address connections and flows across cities, specifically tackling socio-spatial exclusion of marginalized children in high-density informal areas and in rapidly-urbanizing peripheries of cities without adequate infrastructure.</p>
	Rapid urban growth and widespread informality	<p>1.4 million people move into urban areas each week,^{xviii} with many ending up in slums or informal settlements. Consequently, the slum population continues to increase in actual numbers and in proportion to the overall urban population. Between 20 to 60% of urban population in low- and middle-income countries live in informal areas, requiring large-scale investment in infrastructure and services. Two key factors that contribute to widespread informality are: a) the reluctance of governments to address the needs of the urban poor and their right to the city, and b) deeply insufficient finance (public and private) for basic urban infrastructure.^{xiv} When the poor are left out of formal planning processes, growth of slums in cities is inevitable that in turn contribute to widespread informality in unequal cities.</p> <p>With over a billion people living in slums across the world's cities and that number likely to double by 2030, addressing the needs of vulnerable children in urban settings, especially in slums and informal settlements, should be at the core of UNICEF programming in countries with widespread urban informality. In large cities, this could entail strengthening slum upgrading from a child-sensitive lens to drive positive outcomes for urban poor children at scale. However, it is more cost efficient to plan for growth, and development partners can work in newly-urbanizing areas to encourage planning for public spaces, water and sanitation and resilience.</p>
	Urban safety	<p>The United Nations System-Wide Guidelines on Safer Cities and Human Settlements promote a participatory and inclusive vision through integrated policy approaches to urban safety and security that includes good urban governance, planning and management. Beyond a focus on crime and violence, safe cities should address issues of unplanned urban expansions with a deficit of streets and safe public spaces and a rise in road traffic accidents.</p> <p>Programming requires coordinated approaches across planning, urban investment and enforcement.</p>

^{xvi} Sager, T., 'Neo-Liberal Urban Planning Policies: A literature survey. 1990–2010, *Progress in Planning*, vol. 76, no. 4, pp. 147-199.

^{xvii} Graham, S. and Marvin, S., *Splintering Urbanism: Networked infrastructures, technological mobilities and the urban condition*, Routledge, London and New York, 2001.

^{xviii} World Bank, 'From Urban Risk to Resilience: Building safer cities', <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2016/04/06/from-urban-risk-to-resilience---building-safer-cities>, accessed 31 August 2020.

^{xiv} Pieterse, E., "Grasping the Unknowable: Coming to grips with African urbanism", in Pieterse, E. and Simone, A., eds., *Rogue Urbanisms: Emergent African cities*, Jacana Media, Cape Town, 2013.

Table 1: Drivers of change in the urban landscape (continued)

Drivers	Dimension	Description and programme possibilities
	Environmental risks and urban resilience	<p>Informality raises exposure to environmental risks, compounded by climate change, pollution and adequate lack of waste management. Overcrowding and lack of WASH facilities contributes to creation of epidemic/pandemic hotspots in slums and informal settlements, as the ongoing COVID-19 spread in cities around the developing world has shown.</p> <p>Green cities and urban resilience initiatives driving urban change receive substantial attention and can provide an opening and a platform for addressing environmental risks of children in urban settings and in climate and disaster hotspots within them. Urban disaster preparedness can help lay the groundwork for humanitarian response.</p>
Complex adaptive systems	Urban governance	<p>Cities are characterized by complex governance structures that include national, regional and municipal levels to varying degrees across sectors, often with overlapping jurisdictions. With a big push for decentralization in countries across the world, local governments and its service delivery partners need adequate revenues as well as the authority to make decisions about children's services.</p> <p>Urban programming needs to address issues related to multiple layers of governance, disparate patterns of decentralization and devolution of decisionmaking power, and should strengthen adaptive capacities of local and higher tiers of government to work for children in urban settings.</p>
	Public financing for children in urban settings	<p>The major problem confronting most local authorities in developing countries is the widening gap between the availability of financial resources and municipal spending needs in rapidly-urbanizing contexts, which creates an ever-increasing demand for public services and infrastructure. Budgets for social services for children and implementation of local plans for children in different countries rely on both local and central revenues, but there is not enough tracking of these budgets are or can be utilized in urban programming for children in urban settings.</p> <p>Engagement with public financial management at the local level can track and strengthen the budgets of local plans for children, using local government revenues as well as central government transfers.</p>
	Participation for inclusive development	<p>Fostering community and adolescent participation in cities is more complicated than in rural areas as the idea of 'community' is often a forced one without common roots. Marginalized groups can face barriers to participation from a lack of social capital and cohesion, and the urban poor typically have limited time and resources to invest in participatory processes. Yet there are more available venues and organizations to support participatory process in cities.</p> <p>Strengthening participation in urban programming needs to address the issues of urban complexity and inclusion, and build partnerships with CSOs to support child, adolescent and community participation.</p>
	Multiplicity of actors	<p>Cities are inherently more complex, with more actors involved in delivering infrastructure, utilities and services, while competing for public attention and resources: public sector, private sector, communities of practice, patronage systems, resident collectives and social groups.</p> <p>Mapping the roles of different actors will inform strategic partnerships for urban programming.</p>



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