

UNICEF CHILD FRIENDLY CITIES

# Our Futures Our Lives Our Cities

News by Children  
for Children and Adults



unicef 

WORLD CHILDREN'S DAY

**Imagine a day you had a voice. A day you were heard, listened to, and understood. Imagine a moment when you could voice your message for the whole world to hear.**

**On November 20, children everywhere will be raising their voices for their rights and to help other kids reach their full potential. Are you in?**





# We are listening

UNICEF works to advance child rights globally and in the cities and communities where you live. Together with politicians, teachers, adults, parents and children, we work to ensure that your voices, needs and priorities are reflected in decisions and activities that influence your lives.

This first-ever Child Friendly Cities Newspaper seeks to give all children and young people around the world a global voice. We have invited you to share your visions and dreams, but also the challenges you face and the things you wish to change in your life and city.

We would like to thank you for sharing your stories, poems, drawings, action plans and pictures. We are encouraged by your vision, creativeness and dedication, just as we are inspired by your commitment to advocating for the rights of all children wherever they live.

This Newspaper is your voice - and we are listening.

Thank you,

Louise Thivant, Child Friendly Cities Advisor  
UNICEF



**Non-violent parenting:**  
"Mum and dad are lovely. We do lots of fun things together."  
Ben, 6 years

**Free and leisure time:**  
"Going on vacation."  
Laura, 5 years



# These are my rights!

Children from Remchingen, Germany, made their own Action Plan. Here are some of their thoughts on what child rights mean to them!



**Health:**  
"Go to the doctor and stay healthy. You need air, food and water."  
Lola, 6 years

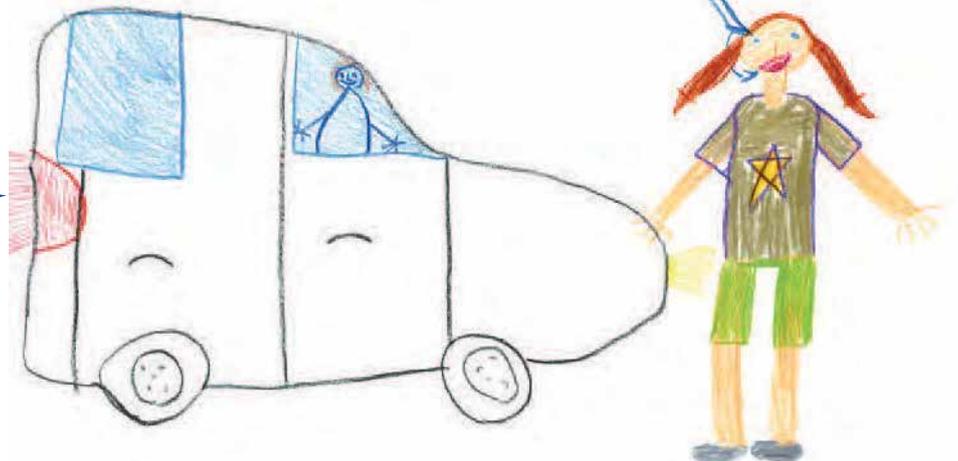


**Equity:**  
"All people are equal."  
Lola, 6 years



**Protection from war:**  
"Avoid war. Before the war begins, go to the airport and fly away."  
Ben, 6 years

ICH KENN DICH NICHT,  
ICH GEH NICHT MIT!



**Protection from all types of abuse:**  
"I don't know you, I won't go with you!"  
Lola, 6 years



**Non-discrimination:**  
"Joint table games.  
Taking the wheelchair  
and going to Nature Day  
together."  
Laura, 5 years

**Education:**  
"Really cool at home,  
kindergarten and  
school."  
Amalia, 5 years



**Family life:**  
"Mum and dad  
are important."  
Laura, 5 years

# Practical advice for inviting young people to meetings

1. Make sure the meeting is scheduled at a suitable time for young people.
2. If the meeting is scheduled to take place during school hours, send confirmation to the school of the young people invited to attend the meeting.
3. Be openminded to ideas and opinions of young people.
4. Schedule discussions on topics in the meeting agenda so that young people can voice their opinions, concerns and views.
5. Attendees should always be polite and listen to young people that have been invited to the meeting and avoid interrupting.
6. It is important that government officials give clear answers to young people.
7. Use the information provided by young people.
8. It is important to provide young people with information on results of the meeting.
9. Do not say you will invite a group of young people to a meeting and then not stand by it.
10. Talk to young people as peers.

Developed by the Young Ambassadors of Iceland

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# Imagine you had a voice



Child Friendly Cities offer millions of children around the world a chance to raise their voice and transform their cities and communities.

Martin, Fiamma, Erika and Shamiil explain, what being listened to means for them.

The Children's Council in Avilés has not just been a means of conversing face to face with our Lady Mayor and the city council, but also a way of bringing together many people, boys and girls, children and adolescents, and also many adults, with a view to learning about the various aspects of how our city works and to expressing our own ideas and projects to help it work even better.

Who would have foretold that our group, which started out with just 16 children from various schools, would end up now with some 125 youngsters and with such positive influence in our city? We have been able to undertake dozens of activities, organized, led and rolled out by ourselves: from a radio workshop to express our views and opinions, to a city children's plan designed by 850 children, boys and girls between 9 and 16 years of age; from a video investigation into ways to improve the education system in its day-to-day running of classes, to artistic representation of rights in the city thoroughfares; from creating a children's and adolescents' social

volunteer force, to participation in the municipal "good social behavior" group, or campaigns against domestic violence, or the organization of cultural, sports and social activities . . .

We even went as far as sending a letter to Barack Obama, when he was President of the United States, asking that his country ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Seeing that this was not met with success, we started up a campaign to get many more people and organisations to copy our example and write to the President. And hundreds of people and associations from our region responded to the call.

I believe that the children's council and children's plans and initiatives have to reach out to many more areas, so that all children and youngsters have a voice, a voice which has to be heard and taken into account.

*Martin Rotella, 16 years, Member of the Avilés Children's Council since 2010*

**“ To be able to express an opinion shows we are integrated in the community in which live and shows the adults that we, too, are part of it. ”**

As a child, you often hear people talk of children's "rights". Sometimes, for example, they tell us we have a right to attend school, to be educated. And to have a family to look after us and, when we are ill, the right to hospital care. So, yes, we hear a lot about the rights of children, but do we children really know what that word means?

For me, the best place to learn all about child rights was at the children's council in my home town of Laviana. There, in the council we discuss the question of these rights, and how to defend them.

One of the things I learnt was that we are very fortunate to be able to participate. Sometimes we have formal meetings with the Mayor, and we put forward proposals to make our town a better place.

I know many places where children do not have a voice and cannot participate in their local community. It is true that there are times

when it is not all smooth sailing for the council. For example, when some official comes along to listen to us, but you can see that he or she is not really interested. Perhaps that person is not on the same wavelength with us, not really interested, or dismisses us out of hand just because we are children. That is when we must defend our rights. Because although as members of the children's council our voice carries more weight than that of other children, there are times when our opinions are not really valued as they should be.

But in any case, we really are fortunate because to have and express an opinion, to be listened to, to say what we feel, is a privilege in this world of so many millions of people.

Being able to express our opinions shows we are integrated into the community in which we live and shows the adults that we, too, are part of it.

*Fiamma Di Naro Gonzalez, 15 years, Member of Laviana Children's Council 9*

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**Children's voices will be heard, if adults are able to stop and listen.**

”



I am Shamiil Mahammed, 12 years old. I am active in our school council and the board of the Children's Parliament of Turku, Finland. I think it's important to bring out children's views. I think that children's voices will be heard, if adults are able to stop and listen.

On my shirt the text says WE WILL CHANGE THE WORLD. This is true, if children and youth's views are taken into account in planning and decision making locally. We are future citizens and want to have a say in things that are important to us.

I joined the Laviana Municipal Council three years ago. I remember that I took part in a town council meeting to read aloud something we had prepared at school, and after the meeting finished Javi, one of our monitors, came up to me and my parents to invite me to join "Peke1la". In the spur of the moment I was in a daze. What was that? I had never heard of it. So, the following Saturday I went along to the social services center to find out. I met Ana, the girl who was there to organize and help us, and I discovered there were several children of my age. After that, I went along every week and had such a good time that it became my usual Saturday venue. What I found great was the fact that even as children, in some ways we were helping the community in which we lived. And then, when they told us that we would be going to the Ministry in Madrid to express our views and proposals... Wow! That was over the top!

The following year brought a change: instead of Saturdays, I went along on Fridays, because I was then in secondary school and needed to join the older children's group. To my surprise, in the group there were many colleagues I already knew. Ana was no longer there, instead there were Javi and Charo, known as "Tito" and "Tita", adult monitors who had been there for a long time and who treated us as equals.

With them you could always count on laughter and more entertaining ways of discussing issues.

I should mention that last year the annual Meeting of Children's Councils of Asturias was organized here, and I was one of the people lucky enough to attend it. Despite it being on "home ground", I must say it was an incredible experience, both the startup day and the night-time activities and the group activities. I met boys and girls there with whom I now chat practically every day, and I thoroughly enjoyed myself. However, what most amazed us all was the presence of members of the Asturias parliament who had come to listen to us and ensure that our opinions were taken into account. My own group put forward quite a few proposals, and we hope to hear soon whether they have been acted upon.

In time, my participation in the Council has become even more interesting: I have made friends with many of the persons I met there, and organized with them a lot of things to make our township even better; I have found a place to debate, express my opinions and listen to other people, and to have the town council listen to us.

*Erika Durán, 14 years, Member of Laviana Children's Council*

# When teacher tells you **YOU'RE WORTHLESS**

*Norma McLean, 15 years, New Zealand*



**Y**ou are walking into a classroom five minutes late and the first thing you are greeted with is a teacher telling you to get out. At my high school we have an attendance problem. Students are choosing deliberately not to come to classes and are skipping days of school. I have had many friends and classmates who I have watched fail subjects, gradually stop coming to classes and then drop out of high school all together. To tell you the truth it isn't at all hard to sympathise with them. Fellow students who read this might have thought, at some point, that dropping out might be easier. Although that thought is usually snubbed out by logical reasons like that a high school education is essential for most higher income jobs, unless you want to pursue a career in serving McDonald's. The difference is that the students who I see dropping out don't have much of a choice.

The attendance at my school isn't the only problem we have. Our school has a behavioral problem, and I'm not talking about the students. Teachers have such a large effect on a young person's life. They are the people that guide us, along with our parents, down the path we might follow for the rest of our adulthood. The education we receive from teachers will stay with us for the rest of our lives. That is also to say that things

you say to a student and the way you act towards a student will also leave permanent damage. Calling students "worthless" and "stupid" will ultimately affect the way they see themselves and the way they behave. These actions and behaviours from teachers are what can cause problem in adolescents.

**“When was the last time you checked on a student that seemed like they were having problems?”**

I have watched my own friends being mistreated by teachers and I can see a pattern developing between the negative effects of a teacher and developing negative behaviour in adolescents. In my classroom, we are divided. The good students sit at the front, they participate and receive positive attention and feedback from the teacher, the students who aren't confident in a subject sit in the back. The students at

the back of the class are ignored by the teacher when those students are who need the teacher most of all. This doesn't seem fair. Students who are ignored begin to develop a narrative that they aren't any good. This narrative feeds into the negative behaviour in adolescence. A student starts to think they are bad and therefore they act bad. Students at the back of the class start acting up, they start behaving badly in class, they stop wanting to succeed in the subject. All of this behaviour is then received by a teacher and students start being targeted for ongoing criticism, judgement and just plain abuse.



Imagine being a student that comes into a class that they don't feel confident in. You go and sit in the back because you don't want to draw attention to yourself, already you are starting to feel not wanted and not welcome. In a short amount of time you start hating that subject and already you are framed as a "bad student." Teachers might pick on you to show as an example to the class of how not to act. You can be told to your face by a teacher that "you are worthless" or you can receive it through the teacher's attitude, regardless, the message is the same and it is what can cause a student to drop out. When you make an environment that is toxic for a student to be in, then of course a student would not want to come back to class. It doesn't matter if the education is important for them, when you are in a class where instead of learning you are just being criticised, it's just a waste of time for that student.

I can't help agreeing that it isn't sustainable for these students to be coming back to class, when they haven't been given a chance to even learn without abuse. I'm not saying that it's better for students to drop out of high school, but I know that it isn't good enough that students should have to come to class and suffer abuse from teachers.

Call on the teachers. When was the last time you checked up on a student that seemed like they were having problems? When was the last time you went down to the table at the back of the class and tried to engage with the students there? They are the ones that need help. Instead of instantly jumping to the conclusion that this is a bad student, reflect on your own behaviour. Have you ever put down a student in front of the class? Have you ever kicked a student out of the classroom because it's easier than dealing with the real problem? These are the things that trigger bad behaviour and it's not because this is a bad student. We are young and we look to you, and you let us down when you tell us we are "worthless" or you tell us to "get out." you might not believe it sometimes but we really do want to succeed. All it takes is a reflection. Growing up is stressful enough without classrooms becoming a toxic place for a student. Help us to achieve our full potential through a healthy education.

# Focus on the Front

**D**on't look up and speak a sound from your lips.  
Keep bent low but eyes raised high in a strain.  
Thoughts wondering but aren't allowed,  
Quick! Think of an answer and speak it now,  
Wrong! Never speak again.

Pay attention to the words spoken like a barking dog.

Stay attentive but stay perfectly still.

Like the chair you sit in, your body becomes like plastic

Wash away in a swarm of thought.

What was that sound just now behind my mind?

Thought is cut like a thread and straightened out.

Rung out like a rag until you are drained.

Would rather lie down and rest longer than greet the day.

The sun shines like dandelion petals falling from the sky,  
In through windows you wish to leap from to save the day.

Enjoying resting your head on your bag for awhile,

Rather than take notes from an electrical wire,

Threatening to zap you into a mechanical state,

Keeping you from feeling the need to create.

Stalling the thirst inside for fresh air.

The wind felt briskly against your face,

Now only the feel of stale breath and robotic stares.

Feel the eyes from the back of their heads,

Staring a hole in your chest and a swimming pool in your head.

Don't let them catch you move, it's the game that adolescents play.

Be seen but not heard, and when heard, give the right answer.

Not that answer! The right one. Copy down that note,

But don't cheat! Put it into your own words.

That answer isn't good enough, write it like this.

Thats better.

Now focus.

*Norma McLean, 15 years, New Zealand*

**“We think having an Open Street is a great way to encourage more people to our central business district and show off what our town has to offer!”**



# New Zealand: Map Your World

The city of Masterton in New Zealand is looking to the future, and has asked the question 'What is the future of Masterton in 50 years?' to help with the design and planning for their future city. UNICEF New Zealand has collaborated with 46 students from 11 schools across the region to have a say in the future of their city. These are some of their visions.

## Douglas Park School: Street on Fleek



From surveying 114 students:

**91% said YES** they would come to Street on Fleek  
**74% said YES** they would still come if it was cold  
**88% said YES** to allowing bikes/scooters/rollerblades  
**80% said YES** to going to the North end of Queen Street

“ Our Street Fleek day will be a day for all the family to come and enjoy our town centre. ”



Douglas Park School's 'Street on Fleek' proposal

# Masterton Intermediate School: Queen Street

**“ This street will be a social area that celebrates the treasures of Masterton. Our culture, our environment and our people. It will be making our central business district a brighter and more visually appealing place.”**

## **What features would you like to see in Queen St?**

- Kid friendly playground
- More green spaces with trees and shade
- Seating areas
- Cultural features like art and sculptures
- Water features
- Dogs allowed in town

Our idea was to make a pedestrian only, car-free area. We want to make this area to be the ultimate colourful, fun, pizzazzful area.

Inspiration for pedestrianising Queen St in London and Wellington.

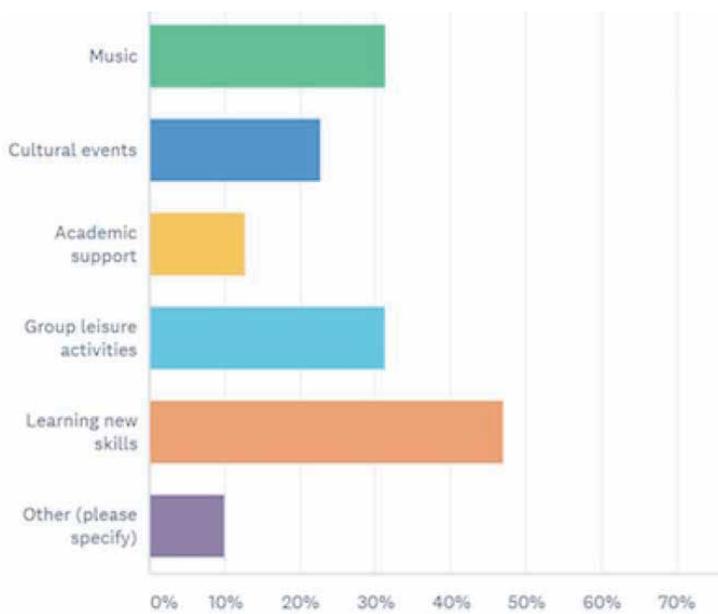




Rathkeale College's 'Youth Space' interior

Example of a '880 Cities' youth space.

**The survey found students wanted a youth space to learn a new skill, play music, have group activities and cultural events.**



**81% of students said** they spend less than 2 hours per week downtown  
**63% of students said** they hardly ever or never use the library  
**78% said NO** they didn't know where to play music in Masterton  
**81% said YES** they would go into town more if there were more free activities available

# Rathkeale College: Youth Space

# My city, Maribor

*Gašper Cvetič, 16 years, Maribor, Slovenia*

I am standing in the middle of the main square of my autumn-coloured city, Maribor, which is located between the mountain Pohorje, crossed by River Drava in the middle and confined by fields joining into a whole. Warm, sunny weather with a refreshing breeze, families, friends sitting and drinking their coffees with happy children playing all around, almost represents the perfect scene imaginable.

With the sound of the wind, there comes the voices of people as well. Voices of negative mindsets and a 'black and white' view on the world, which in my eyes takes the hope away from children. Children, with hundreds of different, colorful ideas, but who are deemed too young. "You don't know anything about real life" and "We don't have the resources for your idea to ever see the light" or "You are to ensure your own projects".

Of course, we could debate on political and economic choices of people up above, that brought my community to its current state of mind, but I am not going to spend another word on that. When I think about it, the community itself should take a part of the blame, too.

Another negative side of my town is the never fulfilled potential of our city centre that could be better defined as a ghost town.

But our city isn't only bad, when it comes to supporting children. With every end of the school year, there is a festival in our city park, called Art Camp. During almost two weeks, it provides every child attending a possibility to enlarge their artistic and communicational skills through a palette of different workshops, entirely

for free - available for every child. And every year since I started school, the municipality has provided financial support to families that cannot provide their children an opportunity for after-school activities.

I think that not many citizens of my town realizes it but we live in a very safe place, which is another big positive part in compared to the rest of the world.

To give a conclusion, I think that my town is on a good path that is just full of bricks and rocks slowing down the process of reaching a higher level. But after all, it deserves the name of a Child Friendly City and claims its almost 10-year-old status.





Friendly Planet, Yike Elizabeth, 11 years, Shenzhen, China

# MY DOBRUŠ IS A NICE AND CHILD-FRIENDLY CITY

*Alina Sopat, 14 years, Belarus*

**R**ecently, Dobruš has been growing and developing rapidly, arranging modern recreation areas, creating cultural, educational, and sports facilities. We, the young people of Dobruš, have been growing, changing and evolving together with our city.

These days we have the opportunity to express our thoughts and opinions, and influence the decision-making processes related to all spheres of the city life. We have this chance thanks to our participation in the work of the Youth Parliament.

What is a Youth Parliament? What does it do and how to get there? The initial task of the Parliament is to develop and implement ideas about improving the urban environment. Youth Parliament also represents motivated young people gathered in one place – young people who lead an active life and can change their city and region for the better.

**C**reating such an organization uniting young, yet undoubtedly talented, enthusiastic, caring boys and girls, contributes to solving some urban problems, such as, for example, the revival of the recreation zone called “Vostra” (“Island”), with more consistency, productivity and, moreover, taking into account the opinions of the children. In addition, the cooperation of local authorities and young people helps to develop and implement a system of effective measures aimed at enhancing the welfare of the younger generation. Thus, adults can efficiently solve the most pressing issues related to health, safety and education of their children, having created an environment ruled by peace, tranquility, and tolerance.

For example, the fact that I belong to the city Youth Parliament gave me confidence that I can contact the authorities and at least be heard by them.





**A**nd what are the achievements of the Dobruš Youth Parliament? Boasting is not very nice, but still... For a number of years, the Youth Parliament has been realizing the Survival school project. Lectures on how to quit smoking or prevent HIV are based on a peer-to-peer education approach.

Volunteer group "Milasernas" ("Mercy") which consists of the Youth Parliament members has been initiating events for children with disabilities and children with special developmental needs who attend the Dobruš District Center for correction and development training and rehabilitation. At the initiative of the Youth Parliament, a contest for school projects on improving the recreation zone "Vostra" was held. In 2011, the unique area in the city center received a second life.

"Opening of a cafe is an important stage of the excellent project on reviving "Vostra" recreation zone", said Olga Mohorova, the Chair of the Executive committee.

**B**eing a young resident of a child friendly city means, first of all, that you are a creator in your own home, on your own land, and that you need to take care of your country, protect its wealth, study and work decently. Young people think about what to change in their school, in their backyard to make the city totally child friendly.

Nowadays many young people can do a lot for their home city. The most important thing is not to be indifferent to everything that is happening around. This is the first step on the way to ensure that the city becomes nicer and more comfortable for all the children living in it.



# Child Friendly Sharjah

*Sneha Binu Joseph, 16 years, Sharjah, United Arab Emirates*

**O**n the outside, Sharjah appears to be a quiet, cultural and historical city, but on the inside, there is more to this small city located in the Middle East. Being born and raised in Sharjah, I have witnessed every changing aspect of this city and its endeavours to become the city that it is today. With its child-friendly laws and city plans, I believe that Sharjah is one of the best cities for children across the globe.

The government of Sharjah has put enormous efforts into making it a safe and secure place for even the youngest of the population, like us. Our rights and opinions are given due consideration, regardless of our nationality, age or even ability to generate a successful community

upbringing of the children. Priority has been given to education, wherein we are provided with the highest quality of education, not as a privilege for few, but for everyone. Special attention has also been paid to the health and safety of every child with top-class health care services being undertaken in every part of the city.

The safety, security and protection of all children living in the United Arab Emirates and even those coming as visitors has been highly regarded with great concern. For many, going out alone is no longer a concern. The many places such as parks designed specifically for children have been instrumental in the creation of the city's greatness. Moreover, activities and workshops for children have been organized



“ Build a good city for children and it becomes a good city for all. ”

by the government, creating awareness and engaging us in an interactive environment. For me to live in this city where I am aware of the efforts made to make it a better place to live in is brilliant.

It is often said that children are indicators of a good living environment: build a good city for them and it becomes a good city for all. I believe Sharjah stands as a proud example for that!





Photo: Dora Pestotnik Stres

# Right Here and Now

*Dora Pestotnik Stres, 16 years, UNICEF Junior Ambassador, Ljubljana, Slovenia*

**M**y city is unlike any other in the world. I am privileged to live in such a developed city, one that is able to declare itself a Child Friendly City. Despite the efforts of UNICEF and many other people, there are still a lot of cities in the world that are NOT Child Friendly.

There are many wars and different sorts of interpersonal conflicts going on right in this moment and it is not fair that children are affected

by all of this. It is not fair that we do not have equal chances to succeed in our lives, to do the things that we wish.

I often look outside of my little world, a bubble in which I comfortably live. I can see that not only children in other countries, but also children in my own country, Slovenia, are vulnerable and not cared enough for. There are a lot of cities in Slovenia that are still not Child Friendly Cities.



For example, my mom's hometown. I know a family that lives in this little town close to the Italian border with Slovenia. The family consists of two little girls, their mother and grandmother. The marriage was happy until the father found another love in a foreign country. The two girls are now left without their father, but with a loving mother and grandmother. They feel like their father has let them down, they do not want to see him again. but at the same time they miss having a father and another person who would care about them. Even though their mother is well educated, she decided not to go to work because she wanted to give her daughters as much love as she could in the horrors of moving away from a father that did not care for them anymore.

Time passed and the father did not send any money to get the girls educated... and not even enough to maintain a living. Now they live in a tiny apartment, together with their grandmother, sharing the room they have. They attend free school activities and try to live a normal life while their mother maintains occasional employment. She simply cannot get a full-time job even if she wants to work.

There is no money for them to buy new pens, school supplies, clothes, their mother even struggles to get food. The mother and grandmother survive on water and salad from their garden for dinner. The girls get clothes from the Red Cross and Karitas. They cannot ask their mom for even a euro or two to buy their friend a birthday present, because they simply don't have the money. The money we spend on a couple of coffees in the city on a sunny afternoon can go a long way for them.

Luckily the mother has some old friends who help the family, by giving them money and food when it becomes especially difficult for the family. Despite their help, they still have, in comparison to me, not very encouraging childhood that would inspire them to make their dreams come true. A life like this leaves a mark on them, because they are bullied at school for not having a father and they do not have many friends because other children think that they are different and less worthy.

I know that those children have no influence on the finances of the family and so they must really feel like they have no power to change the way they live.

**T**his is just one of very similar sad stories that are happening right here and now. I feel no child in the world should have to live like those two girls and I feel an urge to let them know that they are brave and kind, they are wise and full of courage, beautiful and unique. This is for them because I care about them.

Even though the little town where the story I describe is taking place is not a Child Friendly City, it would be nice if it could become one and if they would change their attitude towards people who are different, and in particular towards kids. This is my plea to them that they open their eyes to offer acceptance and love to all.

I stand with all the disadvantaged children and I raise my voice to give us all equal opportunities.

On the other hand, even though I am living in Ljubljana, a Child Friendly City, I have to express my sadness about how some other people I know, even in this advanced community think about what is going on in the world and in Slovenia.

For example, some of my schoolmates do not know that even though education is their right, we are privileged to have a good chance to get education. Some people think that the world's most disadvantaged and vulnerable children are simply there because they must be, that it is necessary for them to exist that way. My friends in this moment do not imagine a world without poverty. They think that these children are guilty that their families are poor, that it is their fault and some even believe that this is their fate. In my opinion everything would change if the politicians of the world, e.g. the president of Slovenia or the mayor of Ljubljana or any other city would emphasize that we are different from each other and that understanding our differences makes us better. Every time something happens, good or bad, they should include this theme in their





**I stand with all the disadvantaged children and I raise my voice to give us all equal opportunities.**



speeches. For example, when Slovenia wins the European basketball championships, the mayor and the Minister at the festivities could emphasize that this was possible because the players are so diverse, so different from one another, and this was what made our team better. They should tell that it does not matter if we come from different families, that our genders, races and social statuses of our families are different and that we should be considered each other's equals.

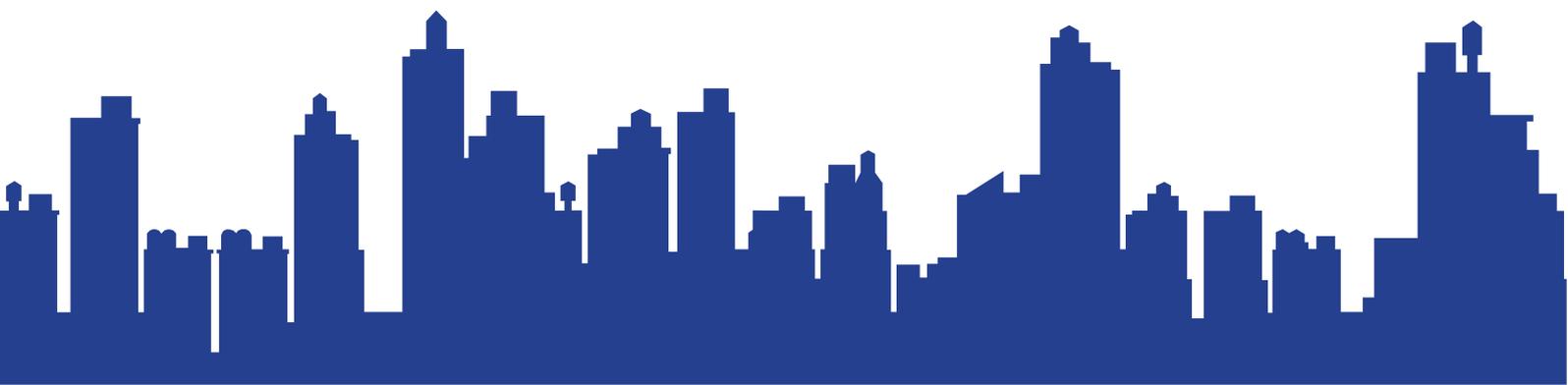
Also, the fact of what age we are, the question whether we are kids or adults, should not influence our rights for equality. I think that we, as children should be given more freedom and opportunities to speak out about certain problems. For example, adults should listen to us when it comes to the discussion about whether "16-year-olds should be allowed to vote or not" and other discussions that are relevant for young populations.

**W**e, the youth, have our own opinions about problems. Even though children might sometimes not understand completely what the problem is, it would be nice if adults would encourage them to think about the problem themselves.

I would make a show in which children would talk about problems that they feel are important for them. I would also suggest that every country should have a children's parliament that would discuss the global problems and think about how would they help the world's most disadvantaged children. We should also have a representative in adults' parliament that would constantly report our wishes, opinions and suggestions about what relevant problems are to adults. The whole project would result in adults hearing our voices more and trying to help us. Such actions would bring more solidarity in a world that needs solidarity very much.

I see that sometimes the poorest families try to help children and other people in need much more than very rich people. Because of their own pain, they can see that not everything in this world is all right. Even though they have very little, they still share it with people that have even less. For example, the family that I described above helped to raise food and money for refugee families that found new home in Slovenia. I think that the whole society should learn from people like this.

We need to help each other. We have to help children that need our help and strive to give us equal opportunities. The sad stories are happening even right now around us. These children need help now.



# World Children's Day

## Children raising their voices for every child

World Children's Day is a day of action for children, by children. On this day children raise their voices to help save children's lives, fight for their rights and help them fulfill their full potential, some of the most poignant voices are from the individual children themselves.

Here's some of what they had to say in their own words when they responded to the question 'If you had a superpower to improve the lives of children, what would it be?'

**"The power to make everyone equal."**

Japan

**"Buy them books, pay fees and give them good housing."**

Kenya

**"It would be the superpower of defending them from any kind of abuse. To always be watching over them and encouraging them to move ahead."**

Mexico

**"To turn dirty water into clean water to help stop diseases affecting children."**

South Africa

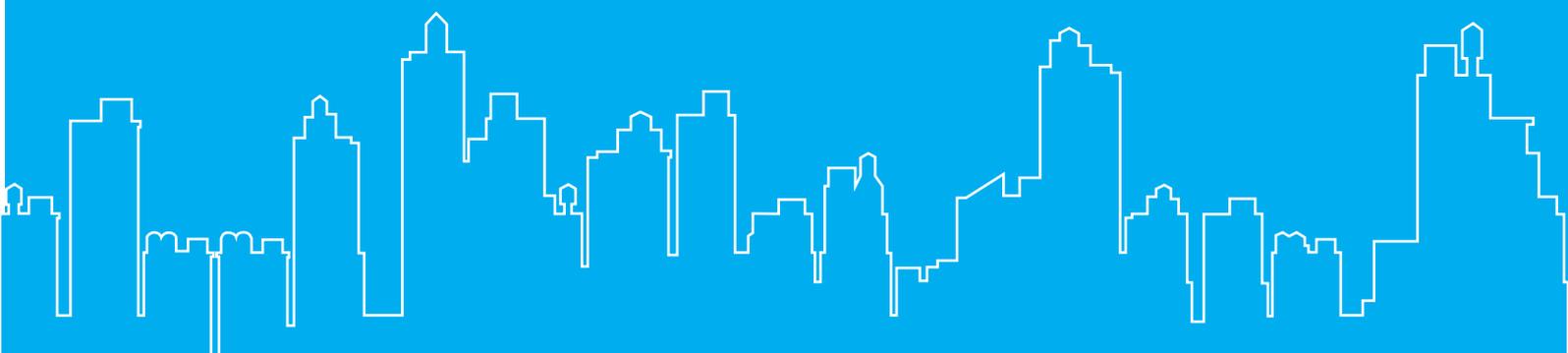
**"Flying. So I could bring food to the poor children."**

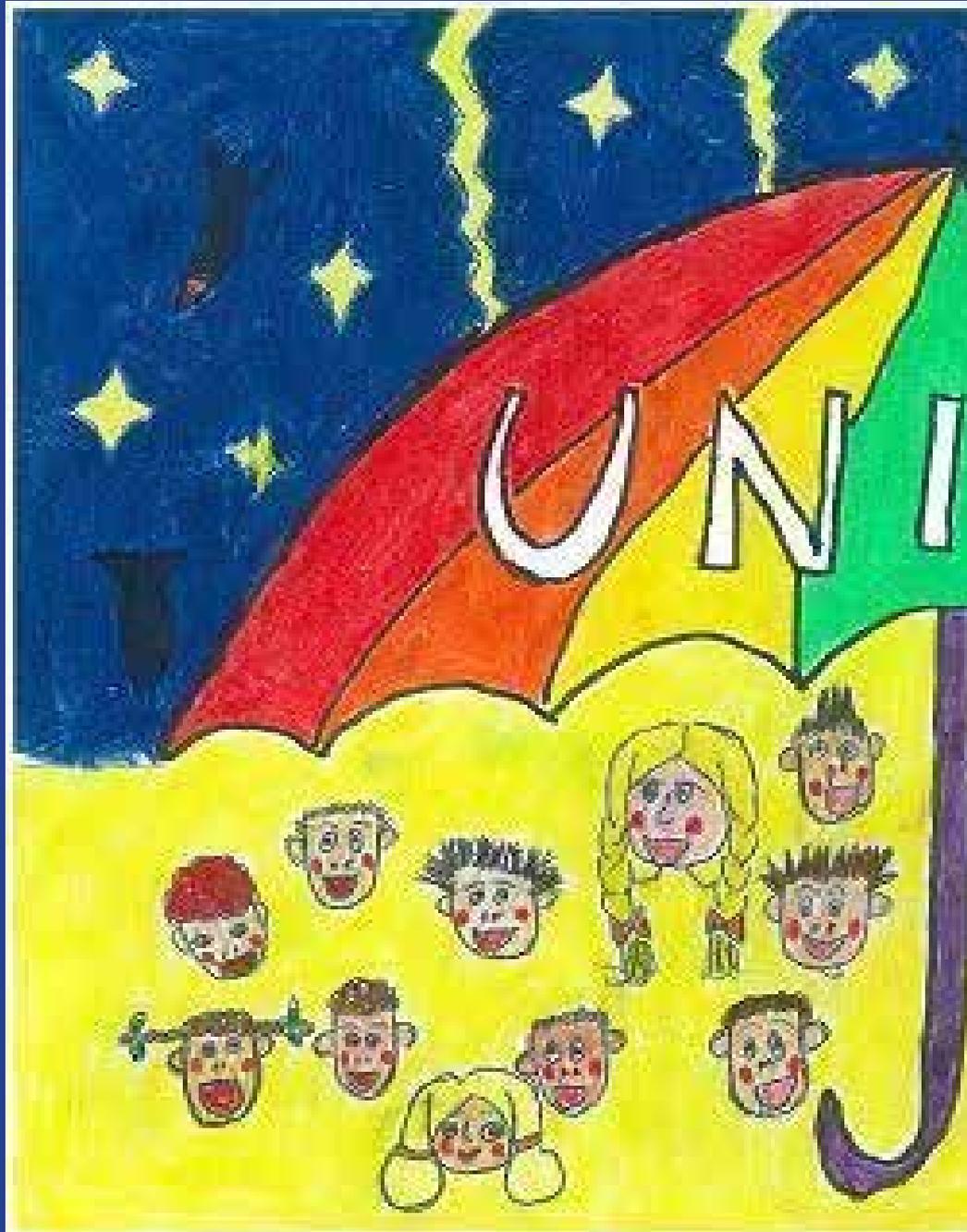
The Netherlands

**"I like to get the magic pencil. Everything I draw will come true. I will draw food and schools and teachers for children."**

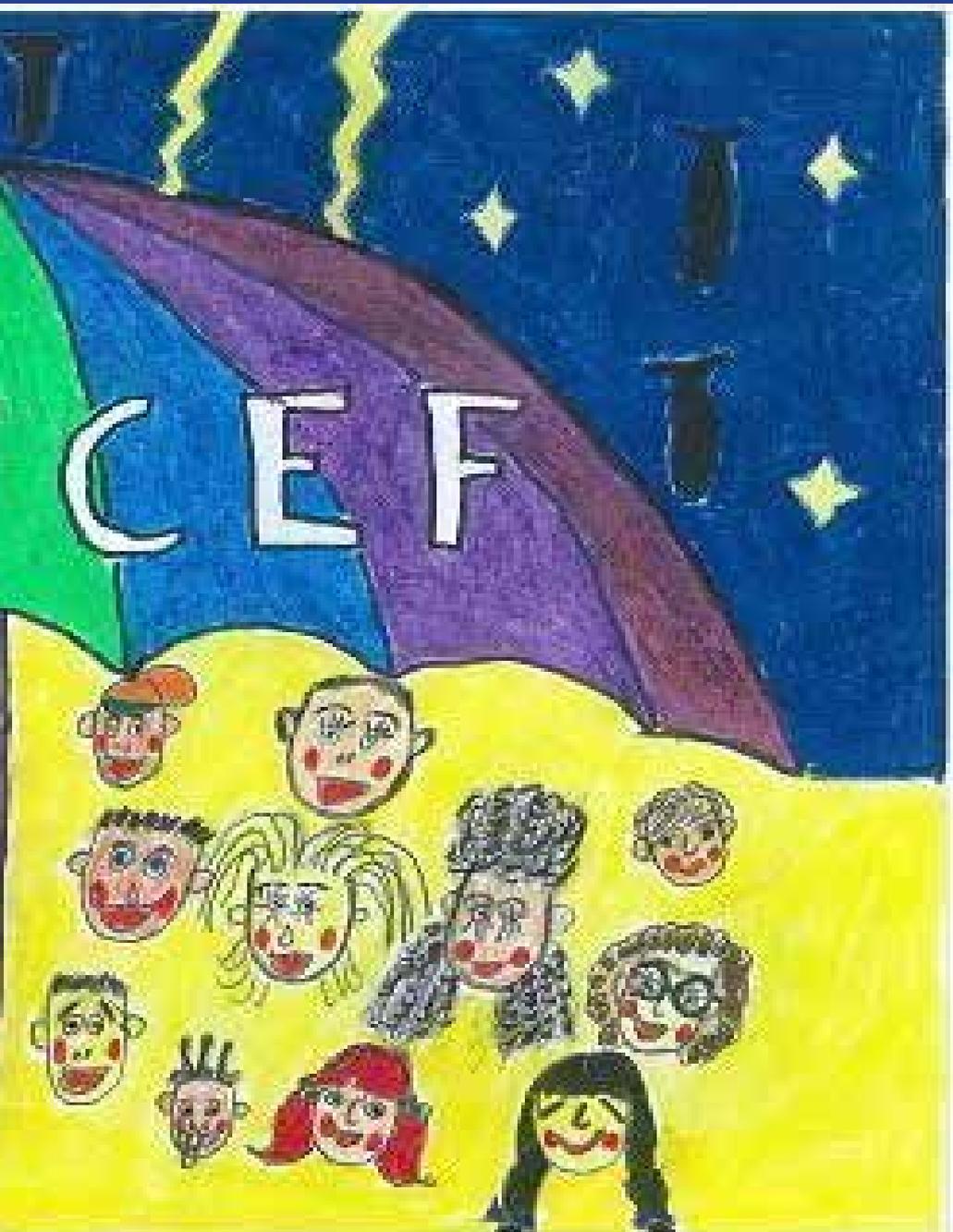
India

UNICEF Children's Survey 2017





Preben H. Saele, 10 years, Norway



A caring city where everyone can work together and make their decisions together and share their work.

**Sumiya Akhter, 12 years**

Child Friendly Cities offer opportunities to make children feel welcome and safe and they get their voices heard.

**Catrin Davies, 15 years**

A city that child rights and children and the best possible thing for children are included in all services and all decisions that are possibly going to affect them or that they might use to make it safe and friendly for them.

**Amy Jones, 15 years**

## What is a Child Friendly City to you?

'Child Friendly Cities & Communities in the UK are currently working with Newcastle and the London Borough of Barnet in England, Aberdeen in Scotland and Cardiff in Wales. Here, children and young people involved in shaping the work in Wales tell us what they think.

A city that expresses children's rights in a good way and helps them develop skills as they're children so that when they grow up they understand about what they need to do.

**Labieb Nekeb, 12 years**

Somewhere everyone is accepted for being who they are and their voices are all heard by the government from anywhere really so that they have the best quality of life.

**April Spiteri, 15 years**

Every city has to make really important decisions about how it's going to prosper and move forward and a child friendly city is one that considers what young people think every time they make a decision and even more importantly when they make one that directly affects young people and to make sure that they approach them, and not only that they approach them, but that they listen to them and that they communicate back feedback as to what they've done.

**David Abadir, 17 years**

I hope that all children have the opportunities they deserve like being able to go to youth group and sports clubs and also making make sure the Government know about this work and are working with young people more often so we can carry on the work instead of just doing it for 3 years and then not carrying it on; making sure it's a constant thing that young people are safe and having a healthy quality of life

**Rose Melhuish, 15 years**

I hope it makes Cardiff a safe place so that no-one's afraid to do anything really, that they feel comfortable and that there are activities available for young people to do and they can put their input into them.

**April Spiteri, 15 years**

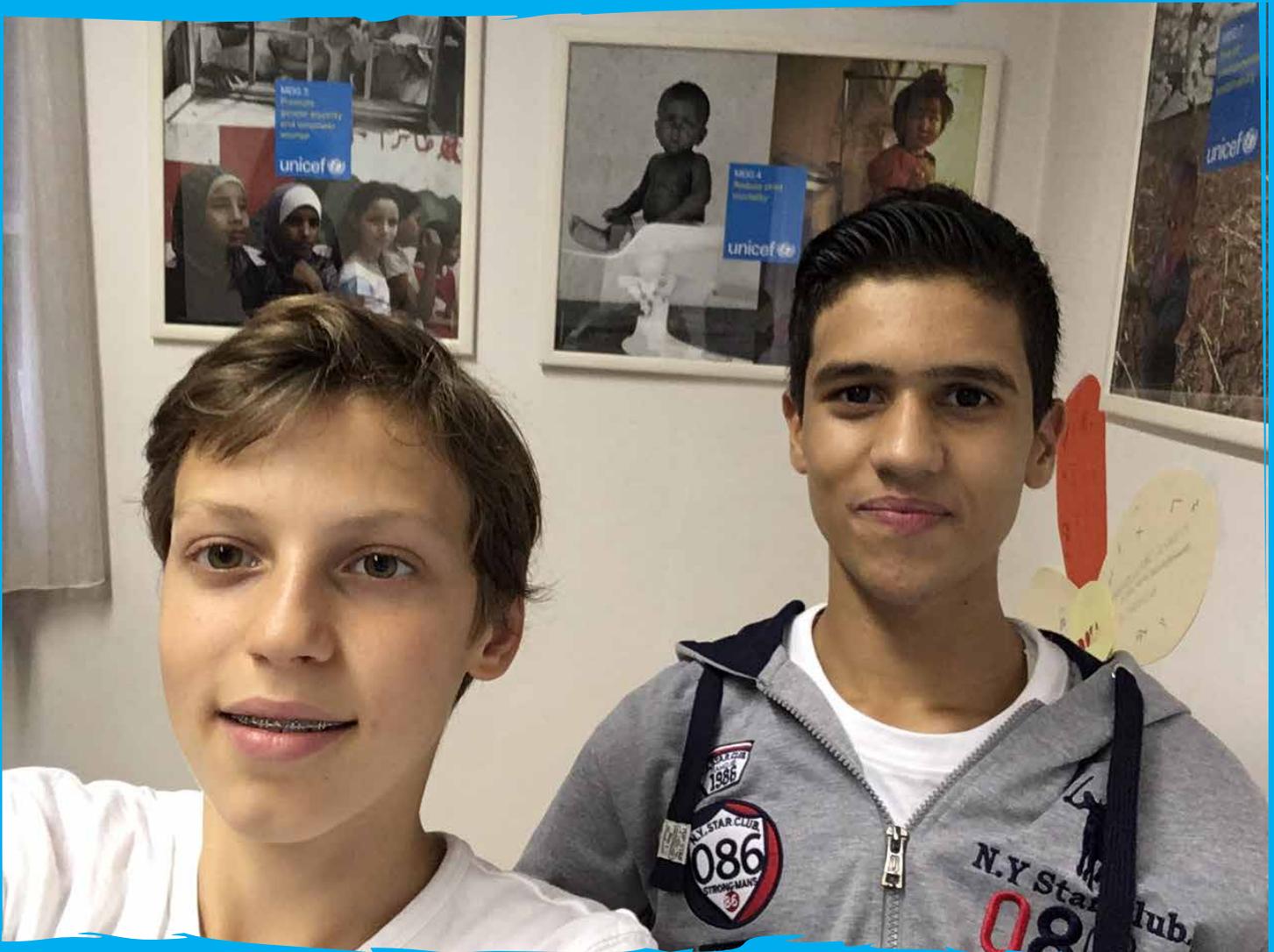


A city that respects children's views, puts them into perspective and builds a society to help children.

**Shamseddin Nekeb, 14 years**

I hope to see that children feel that they are able to express their opinions and get their view point across on what they'd like to see happen and then the people who can make that change take their views into account and make a difference

**Catrin Davies, 15 years**



Lovro and Waleed. Photo: Archive of the Write2Unite project.

# Finding friendship in a world of differences

*Lovro Gliha, 14 years, and Mohamad Waleed Alaswad, 15 years, Ljubljana, Slovenia*

According to our experience, disagreements due to differences between friends are very common nowadays, but to what extent are they normal? We're both wondering about this question, because we've had quite a few experiences with friendships that have ended traumatically.

- Our friendship began with participation in UNICEF's Write2Unite project, which connects refugee and migrant children and children from Slovenia. We were happy to meet at blogging workshops, from where we gained a lot of experience and made many new, trustworthy friends. We soon realized that our friendship was different from others, despite the many differences between us.

Although we didn't always fully understand each other due to different languages, it didn't take much to start laughing, talking and playing. We acknowledge that communication was a major problem at the beginning, but this didn't stop our friendship from growing. We soon discovered that, despite the different environments in which we grew up, and the different experiences, we have more in common than we thought.

Our friendship kept growing, although we sometimes fought over trivial matters, which we then quickly regretted. From our own experience, we knew enough people of different ages and cultures who gave up on their friendship, and under no circumstances did we allow such trivialities to destroy ours.

We recently met a young girl who experienced a lot of disagreements with her classmates. At school, she received physical and verbal abuse from the ones who were supposed to be her closest friends. Due to violence among peers, she still has visible consequences today, such as: distrust, low self-esteem and fear of socializing with others. We could say that teenagers mostly have bad experiences with friends, because they can't solve problems with their, sometimes immature, peers. If it weren't for our own experience, we would agree. We noticed that all of us, who have gone through this, have several things in common, which made us perhaps the easier or more interesting target. We are all well-behaved students, without the desire to stand out, we all try to solve any misunderstandings in a peaceful way, none of us are confrontational even in situations when we are provoked. We search for similar characteristics among our peers, and for us, they represent the possibility of creating and maintaining genuine friendships.

We felt disrespected by our classmates, and together we realized that this is probably due to the influence of the environment in which an individual grows up, regardless of whether he/she grows up like us - in Slovenia or Syria - or anywhere else.

We noticed that social status is one of the most important "values" of friendship today and we realized that this is perhaps more common in Slovenia than in Syria, even before the war. Nowadays, many people quickly judge a man according to his car, clothing, and everything that has material value. Such superficial judgments

Write2Unite is a UNICEF pilot project of intercultural online dialogue, which is being premiered in Slovenia, Spain and the Netherlands.

The project aims to make the voice of children and young people heard in public - no matter who they are and where they come from. Within the project in Slovenia, refugee and migrant children and children from Slovenia create blog posts on topics that are close to them.

also occur in older friendships, which is why it's not surprising that with success you get a lot of new friends, and even more enemies.

We believe that in addition to the importance of social status, the religion of an individual also plays an important role. Divergence in the understanding of religion, even within the ones from the same origin, is the core of certain conflicts. Of course, as a proud Christian and a Muslim, faith means a lot to us. We try our best to live each day according to the principles of our, in this case very different, religions, but with the same postulates such as: mutual respect and inner sincerity. Although, we never thought of putting our friendship in jeopardy due to different beliefs.

Differences in habits and customs, diversity due to (un)identical experiences, the diversity of the environment in which we grew up make our friendship even stronger. For this very reason, our friendship is very special nowadays. No one should underestimate the fact that the key to good relations with others is mutual respect. Therefore, we believe that every individual and institution should strive to adhere to this principle.

It doesn't matter what is your skin color, how tall or well-shaped you are, what clothes you wear, or what you believe in, because without kindness and respect you will never spread warmth and love, which are so important to fill the void in every human. Friends are those who help you in difficult times and make you laugh. We are very fortunate that despite all, sometimes false information, prejudice and other obstacles that are now ruining friendships, we managed to get to know each other. We realized that we fill the void in each other that has never been filled by anyone else.



Sina and Vid. Photo: Archive of the Write2Unite project.

# The Story of our Friendship

*Vid Žefran, 12 years, and Sina Maryami, 12 years, Ljubljana, Slovenia*

**W**e are Vid and Sina. We met at UNICEF's workshop in Ljubljana, and despite coming from different countries and cultures - from Slovenia and Iran - we immediately became friends. This is the story of our friendship.

First, we only met at workshops where we learned about culture and interculturalism, how we can overcome differences through dialogue and work together for peace, and how to describe it all in a blog post - like ours. Our friendship is a good example of everything we learned at the workshop.

We often listened to music at workshops and found that we liked the same musicians and songs, such as Luis Fonsi and Daddy Yankee with Despacito, as well as Avicii. During breaks, we played football, which we both liked very much as well. We were in the same team and we won together.

We also helped each other with math homework and talked about what we liked most in school and what we did not. During the conversation, we found out that we both like kebabs very much and we agreed to go together one day.

We had to postpone our plans because of school obligations and shopping, as Vid had to go to the store with his mother to buy hiking boots for the field day he had the next day. Vid: "I felt bad because of this because I thought I disappointed my friend." Sina: I did not even get mad, we'll go next time! Vid is my friend and I like him because he is funny :)

**W**hat Sina likes most about Vid is that he is funny, he likes and is good at playing football, he wears glasses (Sina wears them too but he is not very fond of them) and they listen to the same music.

As for Vid, what he likes most about Sina is that they can draw together, watch vlogs (especially DudesonVLOG on Youtube), play videogames, such as Spiderman and Geometry dash together on the phone or computer and have fun with Snapchat.

A couple of days ago, we played soccer together and Sina scored! Then we finally got to eat a kebab where we talked about what else we could do together. We hope we can remain friends for a long time!

**“ We  
hope we  
can remain  
friends  
for a long  
time! ”**

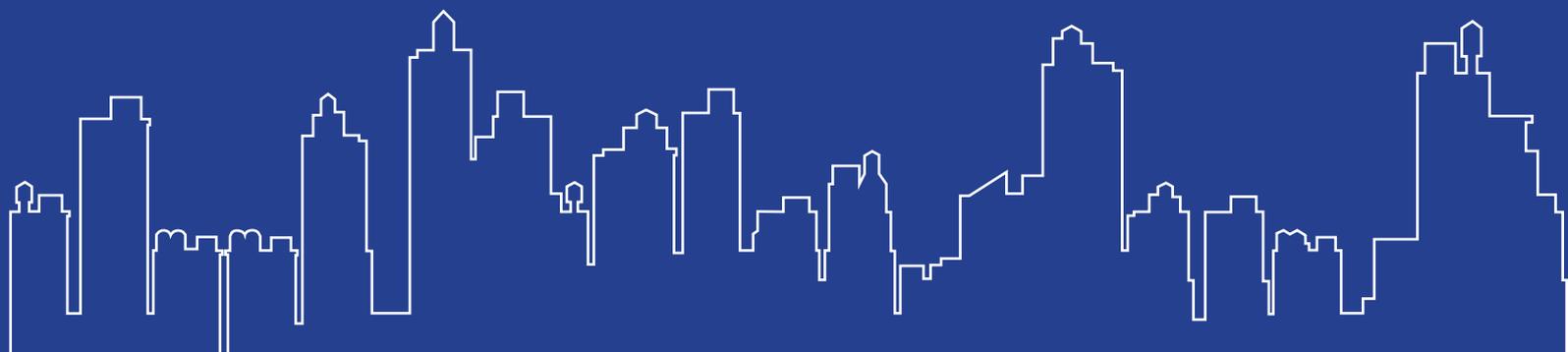
Photo: Archive of the Write2Unite project.





# Youth-led Development of a Street Workout Park

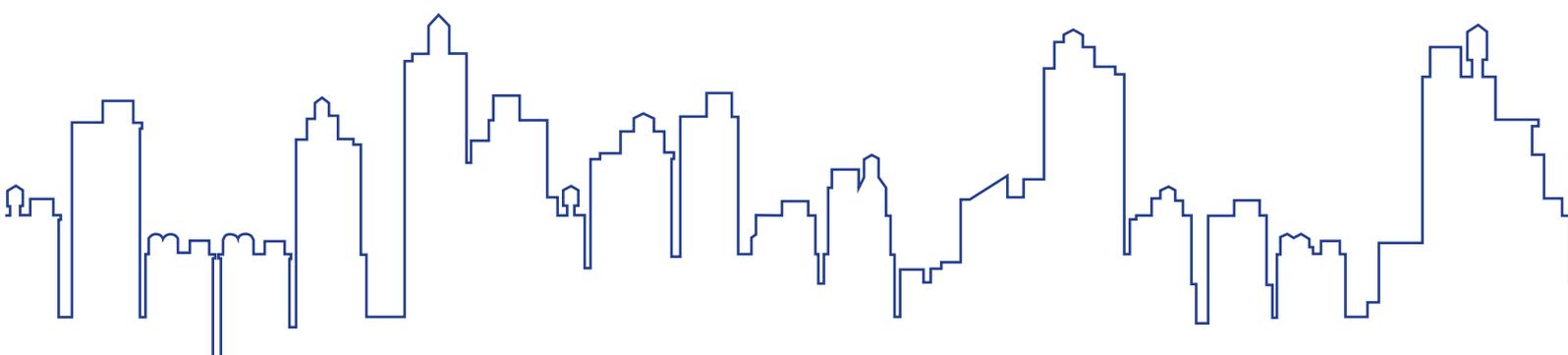
Weil am Rhein, Germany





# Child Rights Workshop

Weil am Rhein, Germany



# Child-friendly Convention on the Rights of the Child



1. Everyone under 18 years of age has all the rights in this Convention.

2. All children have all these rights, no matter who they are, where they live, what their parents do, what language they speak, what their religion or culture is, whether they are a boy or girl, whether they have a disability, whether they are rich or poor. No child should be treated unfairly on any basis.

3. All adults should do what is best for children. When adults make decisions, they should think about how their decisions will affect children.

4. Governments must use all available resources to implement all the rights in this Convention.

5. Governments should respect the rights and responsibilities of families to guide their children so that, as they grow up, they learn to use their rights properly.

6. Every child has the right to life, survival and development.

7. Children have the right to a name, and this should be officially recognized by the government. They have the right to a nationality (to belong to a country).

8. Children have the right to an identity – an official record of who they are. No one should take this away from them.

9. Children should not be separated from their parents unless it is for their own good. Children whose parents have separated should stay in contact with both parents unless this might harm the child.

10. If a child lives in a different country than their

parents do, the child has the right to be together with them in the same place.

11. Governments should stop children being taken out of their own country illegally.

12. Children have the right to give their opinion, and for adults to listen and take it seriously.

13. Children have the right to find out things and share what they think with others, by talking, drawing, writing or in any other way, unless it harms other people.

14. Children have the right to choose their own religion and beliefs. Their parents should guide them about what is right and wrong, and what is best for them.

15. Children have the right to choose their own friends and join or set up groups, as long as it is not harmful to others.

16. Children have the right to privacy.

17. Children have the right to receive information that is important to their well-being, from radio, newspapers, books, computers and other sources. Adults should make sure the information they are getting is not harmful, and help them find and understand the information they need.

18. Children have the right to be raised by their parent(s) if possible. Governments should help parents by providing services to support them, especially if both parents work.

19. Governments must make sure children are properly cared for and protect them from violence, abuse and neglect by anyone who looks after them.

20. Children have the right to special care and help if they cannot live with their parents.

21. When children are adopted, the first concern must be what is best for them.

22. Children have the right to special protection and help if they are refugees, as well as to all the rights in this Convention.

23. Children have the right to special education and care if they have a disability, as well as to all the rights in this Convention, so that they can live a full life.

24. Children have the right to the best health care possible, safe water to drink, nutritious food, a clean and safe environment, and information to help them stay well.

25. Children who live in care or in other situations away from home, have the right to have these living arrangements looked at regularly to see if they are the most appropriate.

26. Governments should provide extra money for the children of poor families.

27. Children have the right to food, clothing and a safe place to live, and to have their basic physical and mental needs met. Governments should help families and children who cannot afford this.

29. Children's education should help them use and develop their talents and abilities. It should also help them learn to respect other people's rights, live peacefully and protect the environment.

30. Children have the right to practice their own culture, language and religion — even if these are not shared by the majority of people in the country where they live.

31. Children have the right to play, rest and relax and to take part in cultural and artistic activities.

32. Children have the right to protection from work that harms them, and is bad for their health and education. If they work, they have the right to be safe and paid fairly.

33. Children have the right to protection from harmful drugs and from the drug trade.

### Fun Fact:

UNICEF is the only UN organization for children that is specifically mentioned in the Convention. Super proud.

34. Children have the right to be free from sexual abuse and sexual exploitation.

35. Governments must make sure that children are not kidnapped, sold or trafficked.

36. Children have the right to protection from any kind of exploitation (being taken advantage of).

37. Children who break the law should not be killed, tortured, treated cruelly, put in prison forever, or put in prison with adults. Prison should be the last choice and only for the shortest possible time. Children in prison should have legal help and be able to stay in contact with their family.

38. Children have the right to protection and freedom from war. Children cannot be forced to go into the army or take part in war.

39. Children have the right to help if they have been hurt, neglected or badly treated so they can get back their health and dignity.

40. Children have the right to legal help and fair treatment in a justice system that respects their rights.

41. If the laws of a country provide better protection of children's rights than the articles in this Convention, those laws should apply.

42. Children have the right to know their rights. Adults should know about these rights and help children learn about them.

43. These articles explain how governments and international organizations like UNICEF will work to make sure all children get all their rights.



As the young people of Mersin, we have found the chance to get to know our city as part of the Child Friendly Cities project. We have come a long way in enhancing the current potential of our city for becoming a Child Friendly City and reaching out to the children of Mersin.

It has been incredibly rewarding for us to directly convey what we had learnt in the effective, efficient and pleasant trainings to the children of our city, and witness how a higher level of awareness was ensured in our city as a result of these efforts. Our aim is to keep acting in cooperation without losing the sense of enthusiasm we had on the first day and ensure sustainability. A million thanks to UNICEF.

**Municipality of Mersin, Turkey**

“I grow up  
with my city.  
I am aware of  
my rights.”

# Thank You!



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WORLD CHILDREN'S DAY