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Child Friendly Cities Initiative  
**Child and Youth Participation – Options for Action**

April 2019



Child  
Friendly  
Cities  
Initiative

## Aknowledgements

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# Child and Youth Participation – Options for Action

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## Contents

<b>1. Introduction and rationale.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>2. Understanding meaningful participation.....</b>	<b>6</b>
2.1 Different levels of participation	4
2.2 Inclusive participation	8
<b>3. Participation of children and young people throughout the CFCI cycle.....</b>	<b>10</b>
3.1 Establishing the CFCI	11
3.2 Child rights situation analysis	12
3.3 The CFCI Action Plan and budget	14
3.4 Implementation	16
3.5 Evaluation and review	20
3.6 CFCI recognition event	22
<b>Resources.....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Annex I: Child Friendly Cities Initiative Safeguarding Guidance.....</b>	<b>24</b>

## 1 Introduction and rationale

A Child Friendly City is a city or community where the local government is committed to implementing the Convention on the Rights of the Child by translating the rights into practical, meaningful and measurable results for children. It is a city or community where the needs, priorities and voices of children are an integral part of public policies, programmes and decision making.

Recent years have shown a significant growth in the implementation of the Child Friendly Cities Initiative (CFCI), and today the CFCI reaches up to 30 million children in 40 countries.

Participation is a fundamental right of every child – children of all ages, from all communities, of all abilities, and in all parts of society. None must be excluded. Enabling children to be involved in decisions that affect them is an inherent recognition of human dignity. It is also a means for realizing other rights, including protection and ensuring that local policy is responsive to children's needs and priorities.

Children's participation is consequently integral to the creation and implementation of the CFCI at the local level, where children's active citizenship can be exercised more easily and immediately than at the national level.

The perspectives of children are essential to ensure that the policies, services and facilities they use or affect them reflect and address their concerns, ideas and priorities. Children have unique insight into their own lives, which will offer important perspectives that are likely to be missed if excluded.

Furthermore, through participation, children acquire greater competencies, skills and knowledge that in turn benefit the communities in which they live. Presenting child participation, not only as a child rights issue, but also as a way to strengthen key local services, may motivate local leaders to demonstrate commitment.

As the child rights situation and the commitment to engage with children and young people vary from country to country, it is important to understand the specific factors in any given context that might support or hinder meaningful participation in the CFCI.

This brief offers guidance and suggestions on how children and young people can participate in decisions involving their lives through the CFCI and, more broadly, within their local communities.

It introduces the principles of meaningful and inclusive child participation (Chapter 2) and offers options for action throughout the CFCI cycle, from setting up the CFCI to evaluating progress (Chapter 3). At the end of the document, a list of additional reading material is available, as well as the CFCI Child Safeguarding Guidance (Annex I).

The brief intends to inform and inspire all stakeholders involved in the CFCI by providing a mix of guidance and good practices from existing CFCIs.

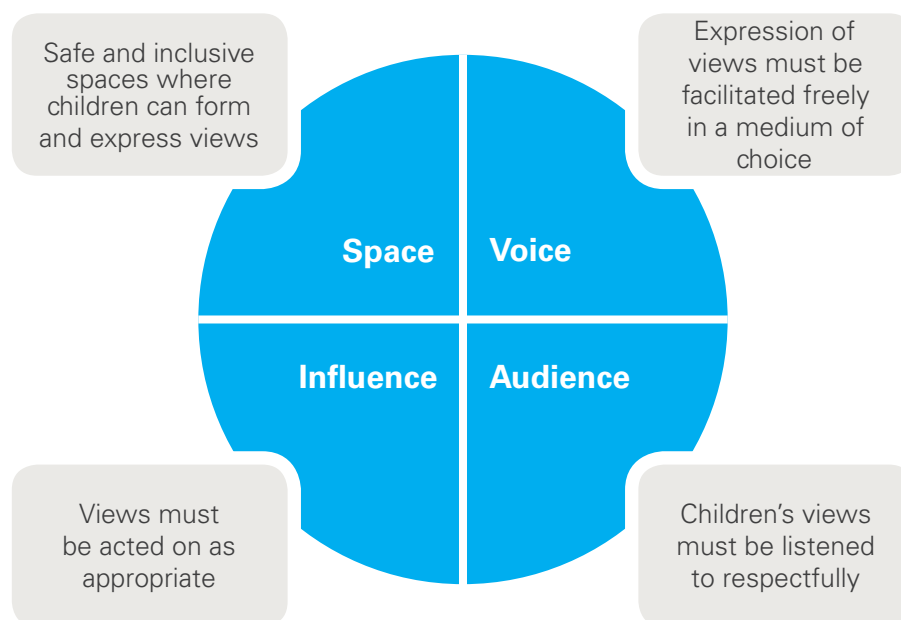
*The CFCI engages children under the age 18 and young people between the age of 18 to 24.*

## 2 Understanding meaningful participation

Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child introduced a fundamentally new right into international human rights law. It provides that every child capable of forming a view must be assured the right to express that view and have it given due weight in accordance with age and maturity, including in judicial and administrative proceedings. In place of a traditional focus on children's lack of competence, it establishes an obligation to consider how to enable them to engage.

In other words, it transforms the status of the child from one of passive recipient of adult care and protection to one of active participation and agency. Simply listening to children is not enough. To be meaningful, the Article also requires that they have access to decision makers and that their views are given consideration. It can be defined as: children, individually and/or collectively, forming and expressing their views and influencing matters that concern them directly and indirectly. This right has been commonly conceptualized as 'participation'.

Achieving meaningful participation involves the following processes:<sup>1</sup>



In all these processes, it is important to ensure that children's and young people's participation is ethical, safe and meaningful. Nine basic requirements have been agreed internationally as necessary for quality participation.<sup>2</sup> It must be:

- Transparent
- Voluntary
- Respectful
- Relevant
- Child-friendly (adequate time and resources, approaches adapted to children's capacities)
- Supported by adults with appropriate training
- Inclusive
- Safe and sensitive to risk
- Accountable

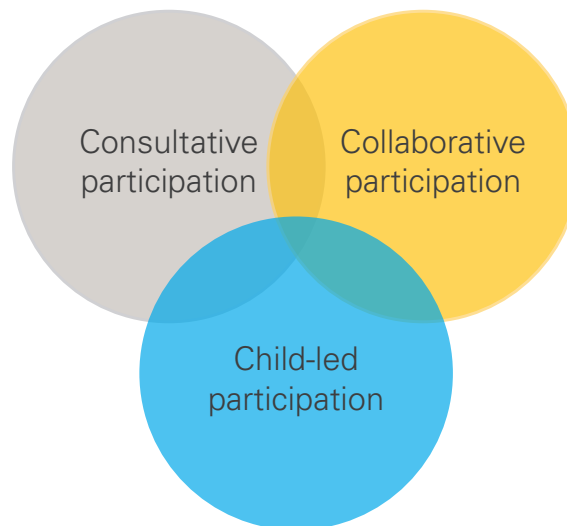
1. L. Lundy, Voice is not enough: Conceptualising Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, *British Educational Research Journal*, December 2007, 33(6)(6):927-942.

2. CRC General Comment, No. 12, The right of the child to be heard, CRC/C/GC/12, 2009.

## 2.1 Different levels of participation

Children and young people can be involved in different ways, depending on the context, the issues and the support and resources available. All levels can be appropriate for different purposes, but must always comply with the need for space, voice, audience and influence.

The levels of participation include:



**Consultative participation** is where adults seek children's and young people's views to build knowledge and understanding of their lives and experiences, or to design a programme. Consultative participation involves an approach that is adult-initiated, and led and managed by adults. However, it recognizes that children and young people have a valuable perspective to contribute to the development of policies, services or local facilities.

### Examples:

- Undertaking an online survey to find out how safe children feel in different spaces throughout the community, to determine priorities for investment in street lighting, park supervision or community policing
- Ensuring that individual children's views are heard and considered regarding decisions on emergency placement in foster care

**Collaborative participation** involves a degree of partnership between adults and children and young people. Collaborative participation is usually adult-initiated, but involves working with children as partners and empowers them to have an influence over an initiative. It allows for increasing levels of self-directed action by children and young people over a period of time.

### Examples:

- Engaging children and young people as partners in developing a programme for increased access to sports activities for girls across the community
- Involving children and young people in developing the school rules, staff recruitment or anti-bullying policy in school

**Child-led participation** is where children and young people are provided with the space and opportunity to initiate their own activities and carry out advocacy. Instead of responding to ideas or projects suggested by adults, the children and young people are supported to make their own choices or establish their own structures or organizations for determining the issues that are most important to them, and which they want to address. It allows children and young people to meet to organize their own activities and identify the issues that concern them. It involves adults serving as facilitators rather than leaders, although it is important to recognize that, increasingly, children and young people can and do participate actively online without adult involvement.

### Examples:

- Children and young people using a Facebook network to campaign locally on the levels of environmental pollution
- Facilitating the establishment of a local youth group that can meet regularly to develop its own programme of activities or campaigns
- Enabling children to pursue self-directed play in a preschool environment

The CFCI should provide safe spaces for children and young people to participate. This might encourage them to share and discuss experiences, including disclosing abuse. Therefore, whenever adults working with the CFCI engage with children and young people, appropriate safeguarding principles must be followed. Should a disclosure of abuse take place or concerns be raised during the CFCI process, the [Child Friendly Cities Initiative Safeguarding Guidance](#) in Annex I provides guidance on how to proceed. The guidelines should be read in the context of any existing guidelines that the reader's organization might have in place.

## 2.2 Inclusive participation

Some groups of children are especially vulnerable to discrimination and may face different barriers to inclusion. When planning for participatory activities, it is important to identify these potential barriers to inclusion and to take active steps to overcome them. Barriers may include:

- Attitudinal barriers, when certain groups of children are stigmatized, rejected, bullied or otherwise excluded
- Physical barriers, such as narrow doorways, steps and staircases, affecting especially children with physical disabilities
- Communication barriers, affecting especially children with sensory impairments, not speaking fluently the local language or lacking access to internet
- Economic barriers, for example the cost of travel, affecting especially children living in poverty
- Legal and policy barriers, for example based on nationality or legal status

When developing strategies to ensure participation is inclusive, the following strategies can be considered<sup>1</sup>:

### 1. Find out which children are excluded

- Undertake a comprehensive review of which children do and don't get involved and heard – for example, children with disabilities, in institutions, from refugee and minority communities, from poorer families – and the specific barriers they face.
- Reach out to all sections of the community to find out from children themselves whether they experience direct or indirect discrimination and social exclusion, and what forms it takes.
- Review legal and policy frameworks to identify any which serve as barriers to inclusion

<sup>1</sup> See chapter 6 of the Child Friendly Cities and Communities Toolkit for National Committees (2017) for more information on inclusion.



## **2. Introduce measures to remove the barriers impeding participation**

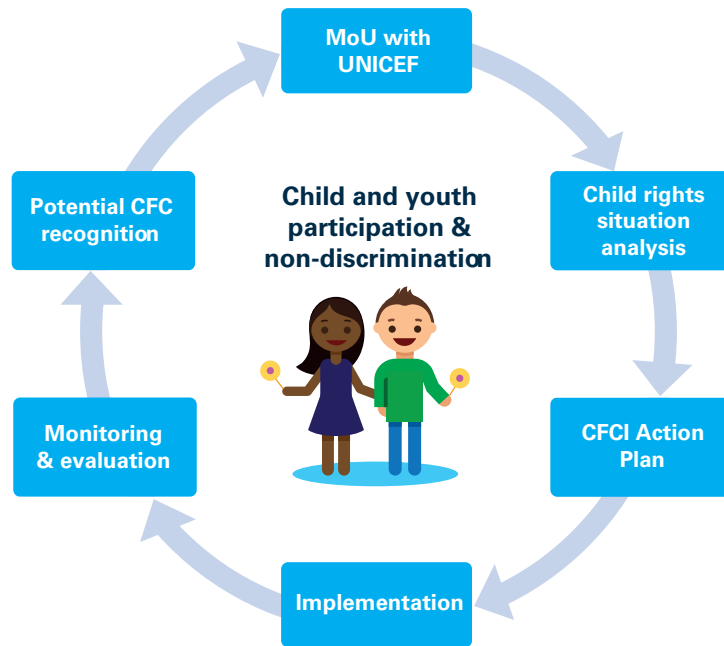
- Develop a comprehensive strategy for inclusion based on an analysis of the barriers.
- Set criteria for the inclusion of children and young people of different ages and experiences, and approach them in different contexts – schools, child clubs, children’s homes, NGOs and youth councils. If representatives are to be selected, guarantee a fair and inclusive process.
- Develop clear indicators against which to measure progress in inclusive child participation, and undertake regular monitoring and evaluation.
- Invest in measures to reach children in a wide array of settings.
- Consider positive measures to facilitate access and inclusion, for example lower fares or entry fees for certain groups of children.
- Use culture and language mediators when needed.
- Develop empowerment strategies to promote self-esteem and confidence for all age groups.
- Introduce safe and accessible complaint procedures to enable children and young people facing discrimination, bullying or social exclusion to seek redress.

## **3. Undertake awareness raising and advocacy to challenge exclusion and discrimination**

- Provide training to all relevant staff on how to promote social inclusion in child participation, ideally based on an adapted strategy to promote social inclusive child participation.
- Promote school-based programmes to address discrimination and inclusion.
- Engage the widest possible community support, including, for example, civil society organizations, the private sector, media outlets and professional bodies.

### 3 Participation of children and young people throughout the CFCI cycle

Children and young people need to be central to the development and implementation of the CFCI. Their participation throughout the process will help to ensure the Initiative responds appropriately to the real issues experienced by different groups of children and young people across the community. It also enables local governments to benefit from the creativity, knowledge and perspectives of children to contribute to the building of an inclusive and child-friendly community.



Children can participate through both informal and formal mechanisms. **Informal participation mechanisms** include social media, surveys, petitions, focus groups, youth groups or local meetings. **Formal mechanisms** include child and youth councils, located in schools or under the auspices of the local government.

Participation also means children and young people being able to speak up on matters that affect them – for example, in schools, in health care, in child protection or in the courts. It involves building a culture of respect for children and young people to feel confident that their views will be listened to and taken seriously at all levels in the community, by adults who have the necessary skills and the commitment to promote children’s participation.

The following section provides some ideas about how children and young people can be involved in the CFCI and more broadly in decisions and policies influencing their lives and future, as well as what action is needed to support that involvement.

### Useful Tips

- » Involve children and young people from the earliest stage.
- » Recognize that children and young people will need ongoing training and support.
- » Make sure adults have training as well.
- » Always provide feedback to children and young people on how their views were taken into account and may have influenced local policy-making decisions.
- » Engage parents and caregivers.
- » Reach out to all children and young people, including the most marginalized.
- » Ensure the necessary resources are committed from the outset to support the process of participation – participation does not come cost-free!
- » Remember, participation is a right and not an obligation.
- » Make it fun!

## 3.1 Establishing the CFCI

When setting up the governance structures for CFCI implementation at the local level, it is essential to recognize children and young people as a key stakeholder group from the outset, and include youth voices in the governance structures of the CFCI. This engagement can happen, for example, through membership in the local steering group, or through separate children's advisory boards or councils.

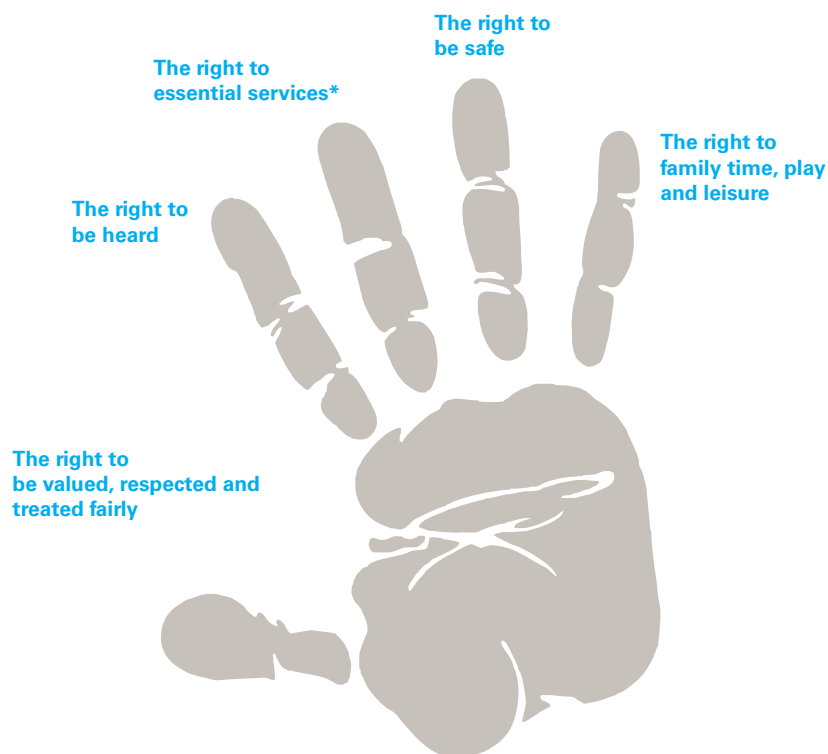
To ensure the participation is representative of the children and young people living in the city or community, the following steps must be taken:

- Disseminate information about the CFCI and its implications for children and young people.
- Map and engage any existing inclusive children and young people's forums.
- Wherever possible, ensure child and youth councils are engaging with the local steering group.
- Ensure the selection of child and youth representatives is fair, transparent and inclusive.
- Draw up an accessible terms of reference for children's and young people's participation in the governance structures in a language clearly understood by them.

To ensure participation is both appropriate and meaningful to those involved, it is important to provide induction training for children and young people as well as for adults in the local government. This training should address:

- The role of children and young people
- Principles and ethics of quality participation
- The scope and limits of the decision-making power of the local government to establish realistic expectations of children and young people
- How the views of children and young people will be considered
- Definition of how children and young people will be involved (in a planning session at the end of the training)

## CFCI Goals and Results Framework



### 3.2 Child rights situation analysis

The design of the CFCI and the CFCI Action Plan is based on a child rights situation analysis. The child rights situation analysis provides the evidence base for establishing and designing the CFCI, and is crucial to ensure the programme design responds to the most significant concerns of children. The participation of children and young people is paramount when conducting the situation analysis and developing the Action Plan.

To ensure children and young people participate in developing the situation analysis, it is important to:

- Involve the children and young people in designing the process and analysing findings
- Ensure the fact-finding process reaches children from different backgrounds to guarantee the process is inclusive and reflects their different perspectives
- Consider different approaches to engage children and young people, for example:
  - » An online survey disseminated through schools
  - » Social media outreach
  - » Focus groups with children and young people in different contexts, for example children with disabilities, children in public care, young children, and children who are asylum seekers and refugees

### **Sharjah, United Arab Emirates: Consultations with children and young people to inform the situation analysis and Action Plan**

Together with Emirate of Sharjah (CFCI pilot), UNICEF's Gulf Area Office organized a series of consultations with children and young people to learn about their views and priorities, as well as to get their feedback on the draft Action Plan before it was presented to the steering committee for endorsement. The groups of children consulted included local children in public schools, refugee children from Syria, children of migrant workers from Pakistan and Bangladesh, and children with disabilities. They included boys and girls ranging from 10 to 18 years of age.

The issues they raised included concerns over frequency of testing in schools, burdensome levels of homework, lack of time to spend with peers, discrimination against and over-protection of girls, restrictions in access to social media, and the inaccessibility of the environment for children with disabilities. Their views were fully incorporated into the Action Plan. Volunteers from each group attended a meeting with the steering group to present their major concerns.

### **Mozambique: Children evaluating their living environments using innovative research methods**

UNICEF Mozambique has used U-Report, UNICEF's reporting tool, to survey children's opinions on their living environment in urban areas. More than 18,000 children replied, and the answers were used to inform public space interventions in municipalities participating in the country's CFCI pilot.

Children have also been involved through a mobile platform to map and assess how children use spaces in informal settlements and high-density neighbourhoods. Working in groups, they have assessed areas, roads, parking lots, abandoned houses and other places where children meet to play or discuss, and have identified related critical issues. In a second phase, in collaboration with UN-Habitat, they will design small interventions to improve the spaces using the Minecraft planning game. The proposed interventions will be presented to local governments for implementation.

### 3.3 The CFCI Action Plan and budget

When developing the CFCI Action Plan, stakeholders' involvement is essential for partners to have ownership and feel committed. This also applies to children and young people.

Children and young people can be involved by:

- Identifying priorities, goals, activities and indicators in the CFCI Goals and Results Framework:
  - » Develop accessible information on key findings regarding the situation of local children
  - » Organize meetings with groups of children and young people from different backgrounds and communities to explore ideas and ensure the Action Plan reflects their priorities and needs
- Engaging children in budgeting for the Action Plan:
  - » Ensure open and transparent processes
  - » Provide complex information in a child-friendly format
- Ensuring children and young people participate in the final decision-making forum in which the Action Plan is approved

#### Finland: Municipal budgeting

In one municipality, Grade 8 students (aged 14 and 15 years) are asked to identify key initiatives for them to influence local planning or budgeting. They then vote on the initiatives. Each school has two child representatives on the local Youth Council, which has an annual budget that can be allocated to the initiatives that win the most votes.

Children who are members of the Youth Council also contribute to drawing up the action plan for implementing the CFCI. The Youth Council receives an annual budget of €30,000, which can be used for the students' own initiatives.



## New Zealand: I am Auckland – The Children and Young People’s Strategic Action Plan

In 2013, the Child Friendly City of Auckland adopted a strategy for children and youth that was fully developed in partnership with young people. [‘I am Auckland – The Children and Young People’s Strategic Action Plan’](#) was elaborated by the Auckland Council and the Youth Advisory Panel consisting of 21 child representatives from each region of the city. It built on a consultative process with 6,000 children and young people, focusing on:

- targeted schools and existing council networks and relationships;
- marginalized youth; and
- rangatahi (Maori young people).

project plan was developed that considered the Code of Ethics for Youth Work in Aotearoa, New Zealand.

Children were approached in their communities and places where they hang out and feel comfortable and safe. The intention throughout the project was to use language as a connector, be it slang, inclusive words or te reo Māori. All communications to children and young people used the same three questions, which enabled council staff to gather as many voices of children and young people as possible using postcards, workshops, an online survey and Facebook:

Question 1: Putting me first means ...?

Question 2: Actions that will help me be the best I can be are ...?

Question 3: The best thing about Auckland is ...?

These consultations were compiled into a strategy consisting of seven goal areas addressing participation, belonging, health and well-being, education and skills development, connectivity and mobility, play and leisure, and empowering Maori children and young people. [A progress report from 2017](#) that over 200 activities related to the goal areas had been implemented, although further action in areas related to inclusion was needed.

## 3.4 Implementation

Building an environment where children and young people can express their views and have them taken seriously on a sustained basis at all levels of the community is both an immediate and a long-term goal of the CFCI.

### 3.4.1 School, child and youth councils

Establishing and institutionalizing formal spaces where children and young people can be heard is an important starting point. In the context of the CFCI, this is most often ensured by establishing school councils<sup>1</sup> or child and youth councils. The councils also serve to educate and support children's development into politically aware and responsible citizens by involving them in political thinking and promoting (inter)cultural understanding. The forms of such councils vary widely, and children and young people need to determine for themselves how they want to organize such forums. However, the following broad issues need to be considered:

- Establish a mechanism for determining the numbers involved and the process of elections.
- Ensure children from more marginalized communities are able to participate.
- Identify posts as necessary to provide adult support for the administration and general guidance of the forum.
- Establish a school or council budget to support the management of the forum.
- Allocate a budget for the children and young people themselves to spend on activities. This provides them with more autonomy and enables them to become familiar with budgeting and project management processes.
- Set up systems for ensuring the forum has regular access to the relevant decision makers, whether in schools or at municipal level, to present and advocate for the proposals, ideas and changes the children and young people wish to see.
- Make all relevant information available to the children's councils in a child-friendly format, to promote a respectful, inclusive, transparent and accountable way of working.
- Provide training on child participation for all relevant decision makers.

#### Spain: Youth council involved in developing the city-wide strategy

The city of Avilés, Spain, has involved the local Youth Council in developing a city-wide strategy for children and young people. Through a consultative process, the Youth Council drafted a set of proposals for the Municipal Council, ranging from cheaper public transportation to improved facilities for outside leisure activities. The proposals were unanimously approved by the Municipal Council and put into action.

Moreover, the Spanish Committee for UNICEF, in collaboration with partners, organizes a national meeting of youth councils every two years. In some parts of the country, youth councils also organize regular meetings at the regional level.

<sup>1</sup> If councils are located in schools, ensure that the voices of children outside of school are included.



### 3.4.2 Child rights education and the whole school approach

Whole school approaches to child rights education<sup>1</sup> – also referred to as child-friendly schools, rights respecting schools and human rights friendly schools – provide a solid platform for inclusive and democratic child participation.

Regardless of the specific characteristics of a particular model, whole school approaches have certain principles in common, as they all should be:

- Inclusive
- Child-centered
- Democratic
- Protective
- Sustainable
- Actively promoting and implementing the child rights approach, and the provisions and principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)

Child participation is integrated into the everyday functioning and management of the school, as well as through high-quality, rights-based school councils.

In some contexts, school might not be the best entry point for child rights education. However, many of the methodologies and principles of child rights education are equally applicable in other contexts. Whenever schools are approached, it is important to pay attention to children who might not be reached through the school environment.

#### Denmark: Rights Schools and National Rights Council

All of UNICEF's 22 'Rights Schools' in Denmark have a Rights Council, consisting mainly of children, but also with participation from school leadership and parents' associations. One child from each Rights Council was elected to be part of the new National Rights Council, which the Danish Committee for UNICEF launched during its assembly for 350 children in the United Nations Building in Copenhagen in October 2017. The 22 children in the National Rights Council prepared a resolution with recommendations for decision makers, which they handed over on World Children's Day (20 November 2017) to the chairpersons from the Teachers' Association, School Leaders' Association and Students Association. Later in December that year, they met with the Danish Prime Minister to discuss the content of the resolution, and they continue to engage in child rights advocacy with different audiences.

### 3.4.3 Child rights advocacy and awareness raising

Children and young people can play a crucial role in advocating for and creating awareness of their rights and those of their peers, but also of the importance of child and youth participation.

The media constitutes an important platform for children and young people to communicate and discuss their rights and visions for their future.

Media and awareness campaigns not only should be child-friendly, but can also be initiated and led by children with the support of appropriately trained adults. The same goes for developing social media outreach and leading discussions on social media on specific campaigns and thematic debates.

<sup>1</sup>For more information about child rights education and whole school approaches, please see the [CFCI Toolkit](#) and the [Child Rights Education Toolkit](#).

### **Children express their voice and dreams on World Children's Day**

Ahead of World Children's Day 2017, children and young people joined forces and produced the online paper 'Our lives. Our Futures. Our cities.' This first-ever Child Friendly Cities paper, written by children for children and adults, seeks to give children around the world a global voice and a channel to share their visions and dreams as well as their concerns and the things they wish to change in their life and city.

### **Republic of Korea: Children's Council featuring monthly reports**

The Municipality of Wanju has partnered with the local media to strengthen children's voices in the community. Each month, child reporters from the local Children's Council feature on a local news channel. These reporters act as spokespersons for children, writing articles and raising awareness on children's issues and concerns.

#### **3.4.4 Participation in decision making and other forums**

Beyond its implementation, the CFCI can support the transformation of the local culture so children feel they are listened to in all areas of their lives. This goal can be supported through, for example:

- Creating children's forums in all relevant settings where they can influence policies, programmes and practices, for example youth clubs, residential care settings and hospitals
- Engaging children and young people in evaluating, developing and managing local services
- Facilitating online networks, through which children and young people can organize and communicate with local politicians
- Including children and young people in local meetings, conferences and other forums
- Budgeting for child participation
- Training adults on child participation
- Producing child-friendly information to encourage engagement in all relevant local issues
- Developing safety and ethics codes for child participation

### **Switzerland: Youth observatory**

The Child Friendly City of Sion has set up a youth observatory to coordinate youth policies and to detect, prevent and address emerging issues affecting youth. It involves approximately 20 stakeholders, including professionals from various sectors, such as the police, integration, urban planning, schools, social service employees and staff from civil society organizations. They meet two to four times a year, alongside the ongoing activities of working groups. The observatory supports inter-institutional coordination, advises the municipal council on youth policies, and supports the implementation of the decisions made. Each year, it focuses on a dedicated theme. The observatory has prompted several projects, many of which are still in place today.

### United Kingdom: Children shaping public service delivery

Public services play a vital role in the lives of children and young people, and are one of the key arenas where children and young people encounter the local government. Improving public services through a child-rights-based approach has been a key feature of the UK Committee for UNICEF's CFCI approach, from design to commissioning of services.

The London Borough of Tower Hamlets is one of the UK Committee's local authority partners, and the focus in the Child Rights Partners programme is on embedding a child-rights-based approach in its children and families commissioning framework.

The partnership and its focus area were approved by Tower Hamlets' local Children and Families Partnership Board. Following child rights training provided by the UK Committee, the Council successfully embedded the principle of a child-rights-based approach into the Partnership's Joint Commissioning Framework to "guide all future commissioning activity". A Rights-Based Needs Assessment was conducted, bringing together an evidence-based needs analysis and a child rights framework. Young people from Tower Hamlets were also trained and supported to become Young Commissioners and to work alongside the local authority during the commissioning process.

The work culminated in the commissioning of the first service through a child-rights-based approach: Tower Hamlets' new Young People's Substance Misuse Specialist Treatment Service. Some of the features of the new, rights-based service include: a greater focus on outcomes across the whole service; young people being introduced to and discussing child rights during care planning and review; young people having access to small, personalized budgets that allow them to address issues of significance to them.

A 'Mayor's Charter of Child Rights' was also developed by young people and signed up to by schools, health services, the police and the voluntary sector across Tower Hamlets.

### 3.4.5 Participation in international initiatives and global fundraising

Children and young people can also engage in activities beyond their local environment. Many of them feel concerned about issues of national or global significance. The CFCI can be a platform to empower children to act on issues affecting children at the national or global level, often in collaboration with UNICEF and other child rights organizations.

Some forms of engagement include:

- Providing inputs to or drafting an alternative report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child as part of the period report of the State's progress in implementing the Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Providing inputs to or drafting an alternative report to the [Voluntary National Reviews](#) submitted to the High-Level Political Forum
- Fundraising for UNICEF's global humanitarian work

### **Slovenia: Children raising funds for UNICEF**

UNICEF has engaged with 18 children called 'Junior Ambassadors' who advocate for child rights in their communities and encourage children to become active citizens in their communities.

One Junior Ambassador, with the support of the city of Postojna (UNICEF Child Friendly City Initiative), launched a fundraising campaign called 'Cent on Cent, a Fountain' to collect funds for a water well in Chad. The idea of the campaign was to encourage children to donate an amount of their choosing (e.g. spare change, hence the name of the campaign, 'Cent by cent') using donation boxes placed in elementary school classrooms.

The campaign was supported by UNICEF staff and UNICEF awareness-raising materials. Many workshops and other small activities were conducted in the classrooms about clean and safe drinking water – in Slovenia and in developing countries. The activities were conducted by the children themselves or by their teachers. The whole campaign was supported by awareness raising about different child rights, with emphasis on the right to a safe environment.

## **3.5 Evaluation and review**

Involving children and young people in the evaluation of the CFCI both during and at end of the project cycle is important – it will ensure their assessment of whether improvement was achieved is considered. Based on their needs and priorities, children and young people might rank improvements differently from adults.

Children and young people can become involved in ongoing monitoring activities tracking progress throughout the CFCI cycle, such as:

- Audits
- Surveys using social media
- School-based discussions

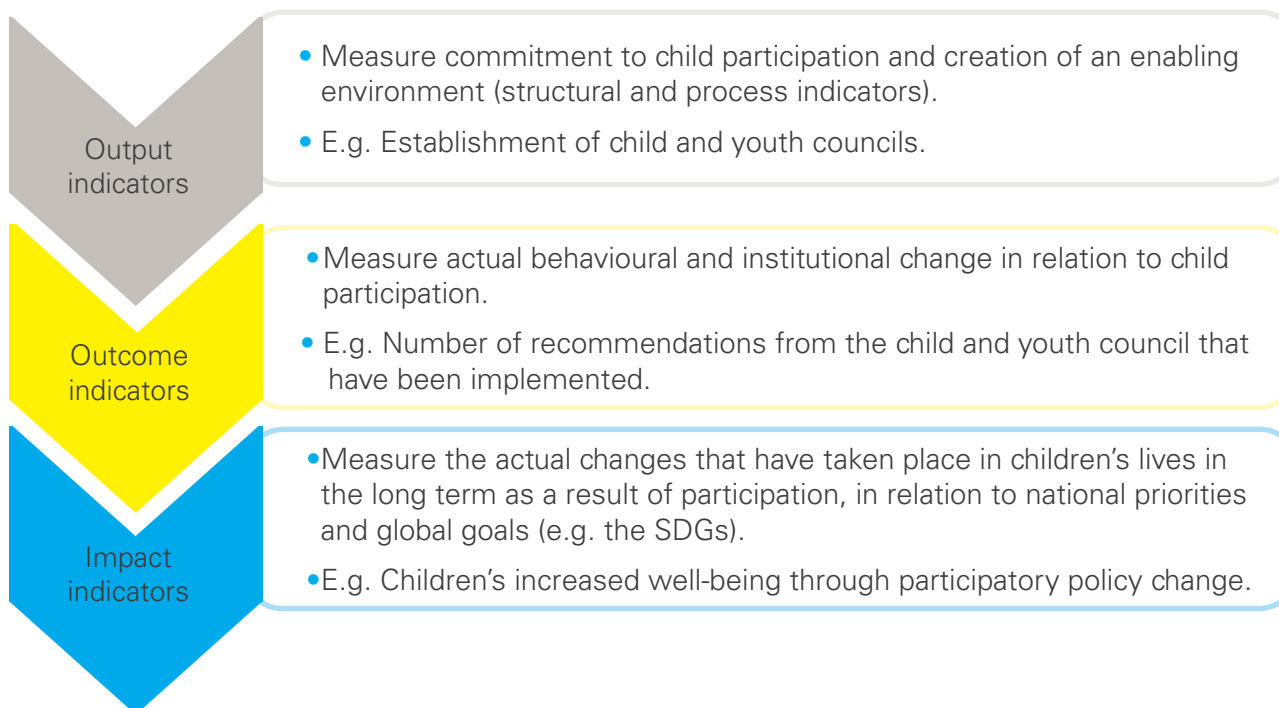
Prior to granting CFCI recognition, it is important to engage children and young people in the final evaluation of the CFCI. This process includes:

- Supporting children and young people in ongoing data collection
- Involving children in data analysis
- Producing child-friendly summaries of feedback
- Developing accessible matrices to help children and young people review findings
- Encouraging child and youth councils' involvement in the review
- Using child-friendly tools for assessing progress in achieving objectives, for example stories of significant change, body mapping, surveys and focus groups
- Getting ideas from children and young people on next steps – building on progress and failures
- Producing a child-friendly report on progress and disseminating it widely

### 3.5.1 Measuring the quality and effectiveness of child participation

Establishing child and youth participation mechanisms is important, but it is also important to pay attention to the quality and effectiveness of participation mechanisms. It is recommended to measure how effective the CFCI has been in strengthening children's and young people's opportunities and experiences of participation.

#### Three types of indicators<sup>1</sup> measure child participation:



The examples below provide some ideas of how to assess whether children have participated throughout the CFCI cycle, and whether enabling structures and environments have been put in place.

#### Output indicators

##### Protecting the right to participate

- The right to participate is explicitly stated in the CFCI Action Plan.
- An independent children's rights commissioner has been appointed at the local level.
- Child-friendly complaints mechanisms for all local services are in place and effective.

#### Outcome indicators

##### Promoting awareness of the right to participate

- Schools provide children and young people with information about the Convention, what it means and how to exercise their rights, including the right to participate.
- Local government officials and members of the steering committee are trained on child rights and meaningful child participation.

<sup>1</sup> It is worth noting that another approach to constructing indicators, adopted in the human rights field, is the structural, process and outcome framework. Structural indicators measure the legislative, regulatory and policy measures put in place to protect and promote children's rights (aligned with output indicators); process indicators measure the effort made to implement those commitments, for example, budgets, training, establishment of children's forums (comparable with outcome indicators) ; and outcome indicators which measure actual changes in children's lives (comparable with impact indicators)

## Creating spaces for participation

- Child/youth councils have been established.
- Surveys of children's views are conducted regularly (including in the CFCI situation analysis).
- Child-focused feedback mechanisms are in place to inform how children's views have been considered in local government processes (including in the CFCI).

## Impact indicators

The following domains could be used to develop indicators for measuring the impact of participation both for children as individuals and as group in the wider environment, for example, schools, youth groups or municipal level. You could work with children and young people to develop a survey building on these domains to gather evidence.

**Feeling a sense of self-worth/self-esteem/efficacy** – Children and young people feel valued, respected, able to make a difference and confident, and have high self-esteem.

**Being taken seriously** – Children and young people feel they are listened to and their views are considered by parents, teachers, judges, doctors, local community members, religious leaders and local government. They feel they can challenge abuse or discrimination safely and with confidence, and that their concerns will be acted on.

**Making decisions** – Children and young people feel they are enabled and encouraged to take responsibility for the decisions they feel competent to make, including by parents, teachers, judges, doctors, local community members, religious leaders and local government.

**Engaging in civic participation** - Children and young people feel that there are spaces and opportunities for them to act on issues of concern to them both online and offline, that they have access to policymakers and decision makers, and that those spaces are safe, respectful and effective.<sup>1</sup>

## 3.6 CFCI recognition event

The recognition of a city as a UNICEF Child Friendly City can be organized as a formal event or a public celebration, and often both. This is a positive moment for the city and its administration, and for the children and young people living in the city. The event can offer many possibilities for children and young people to participate, including, for example:

- Taking part in the planning of the event
- Contributing to the communication strategy to promote the recognition
- Designing posters and other materials to celebrate the recognition
- Speaking at public meetings and other media events
- Leading demonstration tours to show the public what actions have been taken and which changes have been made
- Using different art forms to celebrate children's creativity and engagement, such as concerts, drama and murals

1. Conceptual Framework for Measuring Outcomes of Adolescent Participation, UNICEF 2018

## Resources

The [Child Friendly Cities and Communities Handbook](#) (UNICEF, 2018) offers guidance on how to plan, implement and evaluate the CFCI. It defines child participation as one of three global minimum standards for the CFCI as well as an independent goal in the CFCI Goals and Results Framework.

The [Child Friendly Cities Initiative Toolkit for National Committees](#) (UNICEF 2017) provides information on engaging children as active partners in the CFCI process (see chapter 5 and tools 8, 12, 13 and 17).

[Child Participation in Local Governance - A UNICEF Guidance Note](#) (UNICEF Public Finance and Local Governance Unit, Programme Division, 2017) provides detailed, programmatic information on how to include child participatory mechanisms in local governance.

The [Child Rights Education Toolkit](#) (UNICEF 2014) provides detailed guidance on a child-rights-based approach to child participation.

[Conceptual Framework for Measuring Outcomes of Adolescent Participation](#) (UNICEF 2018).

[Council of Europe's Child participation tool](#) ( Council of Europe, 2016) provides specific and measurable indicators with which States can begin to measure progress in the participation of children and young people.

[A Toolkit for Measuring Children's Participation](#) (Lansdown, G. & O'Kane, C., for Save/UNICEF/Plan/World Vision/CWC 2014).

# Annex I. Child Friendly Cities Initiative Safeguarding Guidance

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*This document has been based on safeguarding guidance developed by the Child Friendly Cities and Communities team of the UK Committee for UNICEF. UNICEF is thankful for the team's inputs to this adaptation of the guidance to the global context of the Child Friendly Cities Initiative.*

## 1. RATIONALE

A wide range of actors engage with children during the planning, implementation and evaluation of the Child Friendly Cities Initiative (CFCI), including staff from UNICEF and the local government, civil society organizations, academia, media and private sector partners.

It is crucial that this engagement is conducted in a manner that provides a conducive space for children to reflect and share, both individually and with other children. Should a disclosure be shared or concern be raised by a child, it is important to respond swiftly, appropriately and in the child's best interest.

Through face-to-face trainings and other capacity-building activities, UNICEF CFCI teams encounter professionals who assume various roles that both directly and indirectly have an impact on children. Members of the CFCI teams will respond to concerns about adults they encounter in line with this guidance document.

As with all of UNICEF's work, the welfare of the child will be the paramount consideration in everything the CFCI teams do.

This guidance should be seen in the context of any existing child safeguarding guidelines that the reader's organization might have in place.

### Working with young people over the age of 18

The CFCI engages both children (under the age of 18) and young people (aged between 18 and 25). Although legally defined as adults, young people may be vulnerable due to their personal circumstances or individual needs, e.g. experience of alternative care, having additional needs, being in conflict with the law or being a young parent. The CFCI Safeguarding Guidance consequently covers children and young people until the age of 25.

When a stakeholder is concerned about a vulnerable young person, the stakeholder should endeavour to offer support by liaising with local staff who know the young adult (whenever possible), know what support is available in the area and can direct the young person to an appropriate local service. This would be done exclusively with the young person's knowledge and permission, unless there is reason to worry that a young person is or has been at risk, including from self-harm, or there is a concern that a crime may have been committed.

## 2. RECOGNIZING SIGNS OF ABUSE

There are four main categories of abuse. These definitions are from 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' (2015).

### Physical abuse

A form of abuse that may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or caregiver fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.



## **Emotional abuse**

The persistent emotional maltreatment of a child or young person that causes severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child that the child is worthless or unloved, inadequate or valued only if meeting the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express personal views, deliberately silencing the child or 'making fun' of what the child says or how the child communicates. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond a child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child from participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyberbullying), causing children to frequently feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

## **Sexual abuse**

Involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation of abuse (including via the Internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

## **Neglect**

The persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychosocial needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or caregiver failing to:

- Provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment);
- Protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger;
- Ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate caregivers); or
- Ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

## **Other issues that children face include:**

### **Bullying**

Bullying can be experienced in different ways, for example through direct physical harm, name-calling, and being isolated or left out of a group. Sometimes bullying behaviour has racial, homophobic or sexual content, and increasingly, children are being bullied in social media and online environments. Disabled children and children with learning difficulties are at significantly increased chance of being bullied.

## **Female genital mutilation**

Female genital mutilation includes procedures that intentionally alter or cause injury to the female genital organs for non-medical purposes. Female genital mutilation is recognized internationally as a violation of the human rights of girls and women, and places children at severe risk of harm, including death. It is nearly always carried out on children.

## **Child sexual exploitation**

Child sexual exploitation is a form of sexual abuse where children are manipulated or forced into performing sexual acts for rewards such as gifts, money or affection. They are often tricked into believing they are in a consensual relationship, which can make this form of abuse difficult to identify. Children can be trafficked as part of this abuse, and are often subjected to prolonged and severe sexual abuse. Child sexual exploitation can happen directly or online.

## **Radicalization**

Many countries have in place strategies to identify people, including children, that could be at risk of radicalization. Radicalization is not about any particular ideology – it covers all forms of extremism. Where adults are concerned that a child may be at risk of radicalization, they have a duty to report it so that the young person involved can receive appropriate support.

## **Sexual abuse by children**

A significant amount of child sexual abuse is perpetrated by other children. Sometimes this can be an indication that the children themselves have suffered sexual abuse and are acting it out on another child. It is important to remember that both parties are children, and both have a right to be protected from harm. Specialist support will always be required to enable these cases to be handled appropriately.

## **Child trafficking**

Child trafficking and modern slavery are child abuse. Children are recruited, moved or transported and then exploited, forced to work or sold. Children are trafficked for:

- Child sexual exploitation
- Benefit fraud
- Forced marriage
- Domestic servitude such as cleaning, childcare or cooking
- Forced labour in factories or agriculture
- Criminal activity such as pickpocketing, begging, transporting drugs, working on cannabis farms, selling pirate DVDs, or bag theft

Many children are trafficked from abroad, but they can also be trafficked from one part of a country to another.

## **Other types of exploitation**

Children can be exploited in many other ways, including for financial purposes, in work place settings, for their medical organs, and in drug and other illegal activities.

## Signs of abuse

Indications that a young person may be being abused could include:

- Unexplained or suspicious injuries such as bruising, cuts or burns, particularly if situated on a part of the body not normally prone to such injuries
- An injury for which the explanation seems inconsistent
- The young person describes what appears to be an abusive act that involves the young person
- Someone else (a young person or adult) expresses concern about the welfare of another
- Unexplained changes in behaviour (e.g. becoming very quiet, withdrawn or displaying sudden outbursts of temper)
- Inappropriate sexual awareness
- Engaging in sexually explicit behaviour
- Sudden or unusual distrust of adults, particularly those with whom a close relationship would normally be expected
- Having difficulty in making friends
- Being prevented from socializing with other young people
- Displaying variations in eating patterns including overeating or loss of appetite, or a sudden weight change
- Becoming increasingly dirty or unkempt

This list is not exhaustive, and the presence of one or more of the indicators is not proof that abuse is taking place.

## 3. RESPONDING TO CONCERNS

Whenever stakeholders involved in the CFCI are concerned about a child or a young person, they have a duty to report their concern. This will enable steps to be taken to help protect the child from further harm.

It is not the responsibility of the person suspecting abuse to decide whether child abuse is occurring, but it is the responsibility of that person to act on any concerns by reporting them. In other words, concerns should always be reported, even if it is not sure that a child has been abused.

Concerns about risk of harm to children may be brought to attention in different ways, including:

- **Observation:** Something that an adult observes about an adult or child's behaviour that causes them concern.
- **Disclosure:** Children or adults disclosing that they have been abused, either currently or in the past, or that they are worried another child may be being abused. This is the least likely way to hear about abuse, so vigilance must be used to identify other signs of potential harm to a child and then to act upon them.
- **Risk assessment:** UNICEF risk assessment processes identifying potential safeguarding risks that could occur due to our actions.
- **Recruitment:** Information that is disclosed through safe recruitment processes.

### 3.1. Responding to direct disclosures from children or young people

It is always difficult to hear about or witness harm or abuse experienced by a child or young person. The following points will be helpful – for both the listener and the child – should a child choose to disclose abuse.

- Stay calm.
- Listen carefully to what is said and try not to interrupt.
- Find an appropriate point early on to explain that it is likely that the information will need to be shared with others – do not promise to keep secrets.
- Allow the child to continue to set the pace.
- Ask questions for clarification only, and avoid asking questions that suggest an answer (leading questions).
- Reassure that the child is not to blame and has done the right thing in telling you.
- Tell the child what you will do next and with whom the information will be shared. If the child is adamant that the information should not be shared, explain that this is not something you can keep to yourself, and that you need support to help keep the child safe.
- Note down what has happened using the child's words as closely as possible. Note the date, time, any names mentioned, names and addresses to whom the information was given, and who else is aware of the allegation. Note or describe clearly any visible injury.
- Report the concern by following the process in the flowchart below (or any existing reporting processes outlined in your organization's safeguarding guidance).

#### **Actions to avoid**

The person receiving the disclosure should not:

- Panic or show shock;
- Ask questions other than to clarify enough information to act, as this could compromise any future statutory investigations;
- Speculate or make assumptions;
- Make promises or agree to keep secrets;
- Make negative comments about the alleged abuser;
- Approach the alleged abuser;
- Discuss the allegations with anyone who does not have a need to know;
- Take sole responsibility;
- Delay in reporting the concerns.

It should be noted that not all children are able to express themselves verbally. Communication differences or difficulties may mean that it is difficult for them to explain or to be understood. Sometimes it is challenging to distinguish the signs of abuse from the symptoms of some disabilities or conditions, in relation to the nature of the individual's impairment. However, the welfare of the child is paramount, and where there are concerns about the safety of a child, record what has been observed in detail and follow the procedures to report the concerns.

### 3.2. Barriers to responding and reporting (for children and for staff and volunteers)

Depending on the context, there may be barriers to children or young people disclosing abuse or harm, and they can be very powerful. It is important to be aware of them to understand their

importance when a child discloses the abuse.

In addition, there are often powerful barriers to the adult listening and responding appropriately. For example, the adult may be late for another meeting and might simply suggest the child comes back later or talks to someone else.

### **Barriers for children and young people**

Children and young people often do not report their concerns because they:

- Are scared because they have been threatened;
- Are scared because they fear what will happen next;
- Are afraid they will not be believed;
- Are ashamed or embarrassed;
- Are dependent for their primary care needs on the person implicated in the abuse;
- May not want the abuser to get into trouble;
- May not have adequate language, vocabulary or understanding to describe what has happened;
- May think it is normal.

### **Barriers for adults**

The experience of professionals who work in this field has shown there are many barriers that individuals often must overcome before taking appropriate action when dealing with a concern. Initial personal reactions are commonly:

- Shock or disbelief;
- Fear or denial;
- A fear of getting it wrong;
- Not believing the young person;
- Fear of over- or under-reacting and making the situation worse;
- A reminder of similar past personal experiences;
- Anxiety about jeopardizing existing relationships, for example with parents;
- Anxiety about potential damage to UNICEF's reputation if the issue comes to light.

Supervision and training can help to prepare staff. All personnel need to know and be clear about what to do and who to contact.

### **Cultural barriers**

For some adults and children, there may be cultural barriers to them being able to talk about abuse they, or someone else, may have suffered. For example, it may be culturally inappropriate to discuss sexual issues, or any issue that could cause their family or community shame, with someone outside of the family. Possible cultural barriers should be identified as part of any risk assessment to ensure stakeholders are as aware as possible of the impact the barriers may have, and to ensure they take the steps necessary to minimize the impact.

## Power issues

There can be multiple reasons why both adults and children feel unable to report their experiences of abuse. One key factor in aid and development work is the power that aid and development workers can have and can be perceived as having in the communities with which they work. This can manifest itself in power and control over essential resources such as food and education, as well as extreme exploitative behaviour. Personnel involved in the CFCI must never engage in such behaviour and must always report any concerns they have through safeguarding and whistleblowing procedures.

### 3.3. Responding to broader well-being concerns

There may be situations where CFCI personnel have concerns about a child or young person's broader well-being that do not warrant a formal referral process. This may concern, for instance, a remark from a child or young person that they would like to access activities locally but do not know how to, or that they feel lonely because they are new to an area. In such cases, members of the CFCI teams will endeavour to connect the child or young person with local staff members, from statutory or third sector services, who will be able to identify suitable local support resources. It is necessary to seek the child or young person's verbal consent before referring the child or young person to another professional or to a service.

### 3.4. Confidentiality

Any information shared with members of the CFCI personnel should be treated as confidential and stored in line with data protection legislation and guidelines. Confidentiality should only be breached in the circumstances outlined above. In these circumstances, the right to protection from harm supersedes the right to privacy, and there must be a duty to report the concern to the organization. This protocol must be explained at the outset of a programme, project or activity, including training. The process outlined below for reporting concerns should be followed.

## 4. RESPONSE AND REPORTING STRUCTURES AND PROCESS

### 4.1. Designated safeguarding persons

Both UNICEF and the local government should nominate staff members responsible for safeguarding and child protection in the context of the CFCI delivery. They should include:

- A designated safeguarding person (DSP) (mandatory, within both UNICEF and the local government)
- A deputy designated safeguarding person (mandatory)
- Contact details for a local 'out-of-hours' child protection service (mandatory)

They should:

- Be paid members of staff who have undergone the relevant safe recruitment checks
- Be familiar with the CFCI Safeguarding Policy and Procedures as well as with national child protection policies
- Hold enough authority/seniority to challenge practices and escalate concerns, including in cases of allegations against professionals

The contact details of the DSPs and their deputy will be circulated to other partners working on the CFCI at the start of the initiative. As a general principle, concerns will be directed to the local DSP or, in their absence, the deputy. If, however, a person has concerns about the local authorities themselves and cannot be confident that the issue will be dealt with in an appropriate and transparent way, advice should be sought from the DSP at UNICEF to decide who should address the concern.

## 4.2. Response and reporting process

Where CFCI personnel have concerns about a child or a young person, they should follow the following process:

- Enough information should be gathered from the adult/child to clarify the nature of the concern without asking probing questions.
- The child or young person should be told that the information disclosed will need to be shared with someone who can help by providing support. Note should be taken of whether the child or young person has agreed to passing on the concern, as this will assist those dealing with the case.
- Where the child or young person needs urgent medical or police intervention, emergency services should be contacted and informed that concern is of a safeguarding nature.
- If the child does not require support from emergency services but the risk is considered severe or urgent, it should be reported to the local DSP immediately or at the earliest possible opportunity; otherwise, it should be reported within 48 hours.
- If the local DSP is not available, the concern should be reported to the local deputy DSP. In the deputy's absence, the UNICEF DSP should be contacted for advice. In some countries, it is appropriate to contact emergency services outside working hours in urgent safeguarding concerns.
- Any referral should be followed up to ensure action has been taken.

### Escalating referrals

All referrals and concerns shall be responded to by the designated safeguarding person or persons in an appropriate, swift and transparent manner. In the rare event that a referral is not carried out or it is impossible to establish whether action has been taken, it is mandatory to re-refer the concern. If no action is taken despite a re-referral, a senior leader within local children's services must be contacted.

### Concerns raised about CFCI personnel

UNICEF's partners must have full confidence that members of the CFCI team will prioritize children's and young people's well-being and safety at all times, and that they will model person-centred and rights-based practices in all interactions with children and young people. If any member of the partner organization or local authority is concerned about the attitude, behaviour or actions of a member of the CFCI team and they feel unable, for any reason, to raise it with that staff member, they should contact the senior management of the UNICEF office or implementing partner organization, or a designated safeguarding person within the organization.



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