Planning Cities with Children in Mind

A background paper for the State of the World's Children Report

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Introduction

This essay reaches into the complex issues of urban growth to ask how we can insert a better understanding of children's needs and perspectives into the governance, planning and management of cities. The issue of how cities develop has distinct and serious implications for children. Children are more vulnerable to many of the hazards of cities, but, with the exception of schooling and sometimes recreation, the particular needs of children are rarely given a special focus by those who plan and manage cities. There is a tendency to think that people who live in cities are better off than those in rural areas and, in average terms they are, in many respects this is misleading because of the great disparities in wealth.[1] For this reason the paper gives particular focus to identifying and working with those children and families living in poverty who are most in need of support.

Most city families live in communities that are growing organically, rather than ones that have been planned. Many of these are not officially recognized—illegal families living in the most deprived places that are not even mapped. Sometimes, as many as a third of a city's population live in unrecognised informal settlements with no secure home ownership, clean water, sanitation, basic health services, or education. Also, many children live on the streets. But while this paper is particularly concerned with children living in developing countries, it does not do so exclusively; for with globalization, it is clearer than ever that the inequities of rich and poor can be found in all of the world's cities. Also, there are different kinds of deprivations suffered by children living in the more industrialised nations that will increasingly become a problem for other nations. This paper considers models, from rich and poor nations alike, of how to identify children's needs and how we can improve governance and planning and find better ways to work with communities, including children themselves, to solve them.

After presenting an outline of what children need to find from cities for their full development, this paper identifies some of the important principles to adopt in order to better guarantee that the assessment, planning, and everyday governance of cities is done with children in mind. Particular attention is given to the quality of the physical environment in cities as a necessary complement to the emphasis on service provision in discussions of urban poverty and development in relation to children. While international NGOs and city governments have not developed a systematic, targeted focus on physical environments for children in their policies and plans, critical reviews of the research show that it is at the root of questions of children's survival, health, and development. Also, research with children themselves shows it to be their priority.[2]

What Children Need from Cities

In this section, we outline a range of dimensions of children's engagement with cities that need to be satisfied in order for children to be able to develop to their fullest. These are not mutually exclusive dimensions and they are even sometimes in tension with one another. However, laying out the dimensions of what children need to find in cities is valuable in helping us see the breadth of the issue and the necessity of engaging a broader range of actors in the task than we typically think of in city planning for children. Also, it enables us to see that while the greatest challenges lie in the rapidly

growing cities of the developing world, there are also some distinct problems faced by children in the industrialised ones.

Secure and Adequate Housing

Most fundamentally, as the base for the fulfillment of their rights, children need a stable home. The family is the primary institution for maintaining a child's rights and it is extremely difficult for parents to fulfil their roles in this regard if they live with the constant fear of expulsion from their dwelling. Millions of poor families living in this situation reside in poor neighbourhoods lacking basic resources and services and often suffering high rates of crime.[3] It is the cumulative impact of chronic stressors on parents that is so damaging to their effectiveness as caregivers, and insecure tenure is a foundation for many of them. Parental stress frequently leads to a range of psychological impacts on children: anxiety, depression, poor school performance, and aggression[4]. With so much stress to parents and risk to children's lives, the problem of insecure household tenure should be at the very top of the list of child-focussed planning policies for any city. All of the many other threats to good parenting, and more directly to children, that we discuss below accumulate upon this dangerously weak foundation for a child's development.

Even when they have a secure home, children in very poor communities typically live in small homes that are packed very tightly together. Crowded neighborhoods and high-density homes affect children's freedom to play and their physical development, but, most seriously, they can have a negative impact on children's mental health. These conditions can have both direct negative impacts on children and also indirect ones through the difficulties they create for effective and caring parenting. The particular needs people have for privacy vary culturally, but there is a great deal of evidence that in crowded homes and neighborhoods of any culture there are constraints on the ability for both caregivers and children to be able to control the extent of their interaction with others and that this has profound implications. Density increases stress on parents and this leads to poorer parenting, neglect, abuse, and violence. Symptoms of anxiety and depression in adults have important implications for parenting by low-income parents who are already under pressure from other factors. The research on children in crowded homes has found that children have greater conflict with their parents and that parents are more critical and less responsive to them.[5] This is believed to be one reason why children in high-density settings suffer psychologically.[6]

One of the underlying mechanisms that help account for the effects of inadequate housing on children's well being is the issue of privacy—a loss of control over social interactions.[7] Starting from early ages, children have been observed to seek locations—such as hiding under tables and behind curtains—where they can exercise a sense of privacy.[8] Through privacy, children, like all human beings, control the access of others to the self in order to construct a sense of self as separate from others.[9] They learn to negotiate shared space, remove themselves from the hustle and bustle around them, consolidate skills free from the presence of others, and experience the pleasure of mastery or creation of a unique product, alone. How much control or choice one has over experiencing, perceiving, or exercising one's privacy plays a decisive role in the development of autonomy and the development of a sense of self. In high-density housing, there is a loss of control and choice in daily living that can be deeply threatening to the development of a child's sense of self. In the later school years, the lack of personal space also has important implications for homework and other independent learning activities. In many developing countries, where many families still live in single rooms, the relationship between the importance of quiet homework space and school success is well documented.[10]

Even if it's not possible to upgrade housing size and quality, the creation of public play spaces adjacent to homes could do a great deal to relieve the problem by offering children the freedom to play and by giving caregivers some freedom from the frequent demands of perpetual child care. Sadly, in poor neighbourhoods, the demand for housing is such that open space is commonly seen as an unacceptable luxury. This is an example of an important problem that should not have to wait until some grand municipal housing redevelopment scheme. Communities can be supported to conduct mapping of housing and of the local use of common spaces by adults and children as a first step for thinking together of possibilities for creating small play spaces between residences[11].

An Equitable and Inclusive City

Before reviewing the different domains of cities that are particularly important for children, it is important to note that while "children" is a vulnerable category, not all children are equal in their vulnerability. We need to consider centrally in each of the following sections the issue of inequalities of provision, protection, and participation of children and the related issues of discrimination and social exclusion. The right to non-discrimination, one of the four over-arching principles of the CRC, is fundamental to ensuring that every child can realize their rights, regardless of race, ethnicity, language, religion, gender, or any other distinction. Our challenge with cities is to think of both formal discrimination, or discrimination that local governments can correct through the design of appropriate policies and regulations, and informal discrimination, that can only be addressed by working with civil society. Formal discrimination, however, can profoundly influence informal discrimination. A good example of this is when a municipal government segregates different income groups in a city through its housing policies. Finally, we must remember that equality does not always mean treating all children in the same way; sometimes additional measures are necessary to overcome disparities, as with the issue of children with disabilities, described below.

A core issue for local governments to address in the planning of cities is the great inequality of access to resources and services that affect the survival and health of children. Neoliberal policies with their reliance on markets to drive economic development, have exacerbated these differences, and marginalized the poor both economically and socially[12]. Improved spatial data on inequity within cities, to be discussed later, is a critical first step needed to deal with the problem.

Municipal governments also have a central role to play in countering informal discrimination. Perhaps the most effective way for a local government to help correct some of the exclusionary biases children learn from their various caregivers is to make sure that it provides large amounts of safe, accessible public space for boys and girls of all ages, regardless of ability, culture, religion or wealth of their family. The belief that privatization can replace government investment is a great threat to children's use of public space. In fact, the privatization of "public" space is a logical impossibility. Children and youth need to be able to play and congregate freely with children of different classes, cultures, and physical abilities without stigma. It is through play and recreational activities, more than in the competitive setting of the classroom, that friendships are formed[13].

Girl children continue to suffer inequity of opportunities. Significant strides have been made in addressing inequalities in school attendance by girls, but there are many other important issues to address. All over the world, the tendency to be more protective of girls and to expect them to contribute to household chores and assist their mothers is seen as a norm by policymakers and so it is common for there to be a greater provision of play, recreation and leisure opportunities and resources for boys[14]. Central to addressing change in issues like this is children's right to have a voice on matters that concern them; girls need to be able to systematically give their perspectives about their lives.

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There is also a great deal of work to be done in all countries to bring the rights of disabled children, or children with "special needs," into line with all of the provisions for the CRC and to fulfil the spirit of the convention that all children be allowed to develop to the fullest—meaning that they have maximal control over their own activities and development. The concept of "mainstreaming" in policies and programs for disabled children recognizes that all children have equal right to be able to learn and develop to the fullest. Furthermore, it also recognizes that segregating children is seriously damaging to all children's social development, creating in children without special needs an alienation from, and fear or dislike of, children who are different from them. Where they exist, national policies to mainstream children in schools are an important contribution, but much of the support to families to help them enable their children with special needs to develop in a wide range of daily settings can only come from support at the community and municipal levels. How people see and treat children with special needs are deeply ingrained and vary a great deal by culture. In some cases, they are seen as less than full citizens and are ignored by neighbours and, in others, they may be cared for well but no interventions are made to improve their situation for it is accepted as fate. The most effective interventions for raising public awareness are surely those where children are given the opportunity to be with one another as peers—in classrooms and play and recreation settings, under the supervision of adults who recognize that all children are equal in their rights and aspirations.

Many children with physical disabilities rarely get to engage in free play or unstructured leisure even though this is equally important for their development. Some cities build ramps into parks and playgrounds to make them accessible to children with wheelchairs but to respond to just this group of disabled children can be tokenistic. It is also important to think not only about access to the physical environment but also to other children as playmates. However, it is not possible for municipal governments alone to create the multitude of everyday physical affordances that can change the lives of children with special needs. NGOs and community-based organizations can do a great deal to help families create solutions that are sensitive to the needs of children and families at the local level[15]. For example, 'Kilikili,' an organization based in Bangalore, India, creates inclusive play spaces for all children, regardless of their abilities[16]. It is run by parents of children with special needs who were concerned that none of the parks or playgrounds in the garden city of Bangalore were accessible to children with disabilities. Some had ramps, but none had specially designed equipment for children with special needs. The transformation of neighborhood green pockets into inclusive play spaces for all children comes about by involving children with a wide range of abilities in the design process. The process also involves the children's typically developing peers and siblings, parents, and teachers. The NGO now has a partnership with the Bangalore Municipal Corporation and are working together to develop inclusive play spaces.

A Healthy City

The physical environment of poverty in cities presents special challenges, particularly for children. There is no need to detail here how the environmental health problems of garbage disposal, poor sanitation, water availability, and water quality that bring contamination and disease are primary causes of death to children for this has been discussed at length elsewhere.[17] It is important to add however that beyond the risks to physical survival there are also related psychological ones. Many of these environmental health problems call for major infrastructure improvements that are largely beyond the capacity of communities to address. However, there are important examples where communities, with modest government support, have been able to improve conditions. For example, the enormous

problem of open defecation in poor communities is now being addressed in many Indian slums through the building of excellent community toilet blocks, including special toilets for young children.[18]

These has long been a concern with poor nutrition related particularly to poverty in developing countries but there is now a new problem related to urbanization that is found in rich and poor nations alike. According to several 2011 reports by the World Health Organization, childhood obesity is a growing and increasingly serious public health problem worldwide.[19] Children living in the urban centers of low and middle-income countries are experiencing the highest rates of increase in overweight and obesity[20]. A WHO report estimated that in 2010, 43 million children under the age of five were overweight. These estimates indicate that the rate of obesity in industrialized counties is twice that of developing countries, but in absolute numbers an estimated 35 million of overweight/obese children live in developing countries, and 8 million in industrialized countries.[21] Because overweight and obese children likely grow up to be overweight and obese adults at risk for a great deal of obesity-related illnesses (e.g., heart disease and diabetes), it is critical to act while children are young.

Two global trends have contributed to increases in calorie intake and decreases in physical activity: a shift towards energy-dense foods that are high in fat and sugars but low in nutrition, and a shift towards an increasingly sedentary lifestyle caused by changes in recreational opportunities, transportation, and urbanization. To the extent that the problem has been triggered by economic development and global agricultural policies, it would seem that the solution should be through national and international policies and that cities could do little to influence change. But some disagree with this and look to the potentials of locally changing the culture of nutrition, eating information, and educational programs[22]. Certainly, there is a great deal that cities can do create better affordances for physical activities of children through policies on transportation, recreation, and zoning of types of eating places for children in cities.

The World Health Organization recommends at least one hour of moderate-to vigorous-intensity physical activity for children ages 5-17 on a daily basis.[23] In order to promote and allow for such activity, cities must maintain mixed-land use planning and provide a variety of safe and easily accessible space for recreation. Some cities around the world are already starting to implement such changes, most notably as street closures and active design in the built environment. Cities across Europe, the United States, and South Africa, for example, have initiated programs to close off streets either permanently or at regular times during non-school hours to give safe, easily accessible places to children who might otherwise be unable to play outdoors. Additionally, 'active design' in the built environment can also encourage physical activity (e.g., stairs, sidewalks, plazas, walkways, active transport systems), and many cities worldwide are beginning to incorporate such design features into their city and building plans[24].

A Safe and Accessible City

There is a tendency in urban planning to think categorically of people's needs and to plan specifically for each of them but this is too constraining a way to think of human development. Good planning thinks more dynamically in terms of human ecology and attempts to anticipate human behavior in space. Many places can be used in multiple ways – they offer affordances of use for children well beyond what they might have been primarily designed for. A small neighborhood park for example might be planned as a place for providing physical play opportunities for younger children but

because it is planted with trees and has benches it might also afford opportunities for elderly to find a space for relaxation and retreat and come into contact with young children or serve as a gathering place for family events, such as picnics, or community celebrations. Planners cannot be expected to anticipate all of these possibilities but they can try to do so as they lay out the city with the two principles of safety of access and diversity of opportunity in mind. Many of the needs that are described in this section are best fulfilled by making cities safe and diverse so that children, or parents with young children, can have greater freedom to explore and take advantage of the city's resources.

A safe city is not a city free of risk because all children need to face and monitor risks in order to learn how to self-manage their safety. It is, rather, a city that attempts to remove the unacceptable levels of life-threatening risk that lead to permanently disabling injuries. In many countries social fears have become dominant in public discourse, but automobile traffic is still the second leading cause of death and injury to school-aged children globally and for the industrialized countries it is the major cause[25]. Traffic has long been thought of by planners as the greatest danger to children but achieving the right balance with traffic has been difficult in cities because children have no voice and parents are rarely able to face the powerful economic forces that drive the building of streets and highways. Children of primary school age are the most vulnerable because of their size (making them less visible to drivers), their perceptual and motor skills, and the fact that they are often the greatest pedestrian users of streets.

Traffic is not just a fear of parents for their children's safety. All over the world, children themselves are aware of the difficulties of negotiating traffic and how it curtails their freedom to explore and play outdoors. During one period at the end of the nineteenth century, after the streets of the Lower East Side of Manhattan, New York City, were asphalted, the traffic speed increased. Boys spread glass on the streets to stop this speeding traffic from preventing their play[26]. A similar problem still occurs today with residents of many poor areas of the world's developing cities, sometimes resisting the desire by planners to improve the speed and efficiency of traffic by adding asphalt without regard to the impact it has on the community.

Planners have developed numerous designs to segregate pedestrians and traffic or to reduce the speed of traffic in residential areas[27]. One broadly used solution is the Dutch concept of the 'woonerf' where one end of a street is closed off to through traffic. This not only makes a street safer from traffic, but often also seems to enable families to monitor the passage of strangers through their territory, thereby building a greater sense of community and reclaiming the streets for their children[28]. However, traffic danger is not removed by many of these strategies, it is simply slowed down and dangers can sometimes be increased. Good planning and design requires good evaluation, including listening to both children and parents. The problem of traffic safety lends itself to research by young children, for they particularly enjoy neighborhood mapping as a school activity[29]. In Sweden, where traffic safety for children has long been a national priority, the National Road Administration fosters research by children in primary schools on traffic conditions as a basis for improved awareness and better planning planning[30] This is sometimes part of a "child impact analyses", that is the systematic process to assess the impact of law, policy and practice on children[31]. The teacher's role is to serve as a link between children and the planners.

The issue of preventable injuries inside homes and in neighbourhoods and play spaces is a problem that has not received much attention in the developing world because of the assumption that it is a small issue compared to the many problems described above. It is true that the ratio of deaths from injury is much higher in the minority world, but the number of preventable injuries from falls and

from burns related to cooking is commonly very high in the crowded homes and difficult neighbourhood conditions of cities in the developing world[32]. Children are at greater risk of preventable injuries because of immaturity in their understanding of hazards and their skills for avoiding them. There is a paucity of data on the location and incidence of injuries in developing countries and, as a first step in taking action on the problem, it would be valuable for any community to map out where injuries have occurred as part of a basic community-based health assessment and monitoring effort.

A Caring City

Children should be able to gradually extend their social world from a few intimate caregivers to an expanding number of people they can trust, knowing that at any time they can return to the loving safety of a home base. Unfortunately, as we have already noted, in many countries children are increasingly denied free access to outdoor public space because of parents' fears for their safety. It has in many countries become a matter of policy to increase the programming of children's free time in segregated and supervised spaces. This is having profound impacts on the nature of public space in these countries, and for middle- and upper-class neighborhoods in many countries of the developing world. The idea of removing children from their streets is diametrically opposed to the conception of civil society articulated by urban planner Jane Jacobs, who argued that children need opportunities to mix with one another and with neighbors[33]. But streets need to be sufficiently safe to allow children to be there and, as we saw in the previous section, they are commonly not.

In many ways, this is a continuation of the process of segregating children as a distinct group into institutional settings that began with schooling in the Nineteenth Century in the industrialised countries.[34]. We have already noted that playgrounds are another domain of segregation that have become a norm in cities of many countries and that this may not have entirely happened with children's best interests in mind. Research in many parts of the world has shown that children generally prefer not to be isolated away on playgrounds, but to be in a closer, interactive relationship with others, including family, friends, and neighbours[35]. Whatever spatial solutions are developed for children's play, it is a good idea to create settings where caregivers can be comfortable nearby to their children, and maybe even involved in their own recreational activities. This principle is an important factor if children's play is to be as much as possible an integral part of community life. All of these qualities can be created informally in neighborhoods with modest material support from a local government. Local government officials can help by designing a policy of integrated public space planning for all ages. Much of the problem of not having public spaces that are close to families and safely accessible to children is not caused by the policies of a city parks department but is related more generally to the planning and design of housing layouts. High-rise housing is a particularly poor kind of housing solution for families with children because play is either completely inside the home or is entirely removed and isolated from the caregiver[36].

Not only is children's free play with peers a reflection of the degree of cohesiveness of a community, it also contributes to that sense of community. The concept of "social capital" is useful for thinking about this matter. It refers to social networks of a community's residents and the degree of mutual trust that are established between residents. A broad-based network of informal supports has been found to be important for children's social-emotional well being during the primary school years[37]. This is a period of active expansion and integration of the social world beyond the home. "Collective efficacy" is a closely related concept that refers to the shared expectations and mutual engagement by

adults in the active support and social control of children [38]. The components of collective efficacy—the active maintenance of intergenerational ties, the reciprocal exchange of information and services among families, and a shared willingness to intervene on behalf of children—have all been found to benefit children within a locality. Parents who form ties and come to share parenting philosophies have mutual expectations about the behavior of their children. Similar standards of behavior are then communicated to children through cooperative monitoring by parents. These kinds of social networks have positive behavioral outcomes because shared norms are being communicated and reinforced both inside and outside the home[39]. The weaker the levels of social cohesion and social control, the greater the problem behaviors. Children are less mobile than adults and, hence, more susceptible to local influences. As a result, those children who live in neighborhoods with high levels of social disorder are likely to internalize the risks that surround them and engage in unacceptable behaviors such as aggression and substance abuse.

It is important to note in this discussion that children are not just passive beneficiaries of the creation of a cohesive sense of community; they are also agents. Their use of public space helps to foster interaction between adults and this can easily lead to other forms of cooperation.[40] Some communities have even found that children's play can help reduce problems of neighborhood violence.[41] These kinds of community bonds may grow more easily in low income neighborhoods where people have many reasons to depend on one another, in contrast with more wealthy areas of the city where greater mobility and car ownership often leads to residents being out of touch with the their neighbors. As a result, we commonly have the ironic situation of low-income neighborhoods in cities of developing countries offering greater outdoor play accessibility for children than more wealthy areas of the city. The social security of a city is a self-perpetuating quality: parents have greater confidence to allow their children to explore and play with peers, which helps children to develop their social competence, which further enables them to extend themselves into the social world and thereby increases the solidarity of the community's social networks.

So far we have emphasized the capacities of families and community residents to care for children, but, as children become older, they often face issues that cannot be solved by families and neighbors alone. They need safe spaces with recreational opportunities, and sometimes sports and artistic activities, where they can find someone who will listen to any problems and issues they may have in a non-judgmental atmosphere, and guide them to social and health services if needed. This is particularly important for adolescents in crisis such as drug addiction and physical or sexual abuse. Unfortunately when community centers are established for this age group they typically give adolescents little or no opportunity to participate in decision making or planning, implementing and evaluating their own activities. Ideally, the staff of these kinds of safe spaces should include youth who are close enough in age to offer close understanding and rapport and can help build a genuine sense of ownership of the program by young people[42]. These spaces need to be culturally appropriate and designed based on local understanding of everyday lives of young people. For example, the Ministry of Youth Sports and Culture in Addis Ababa conducted research and designed a program for domestic workers, and other socially isolated adolescents, that addressed their vulnerability through the availability of single sex and age-specific safe spaces for girls and boys[43].

A Playful City
Play is commonly thought of as frivolous, what children do when they are not involved in the important activities of education or work. But child psychologists are unanimous in agreeing that play

is fundamental to children's physical, intellectual, social, and emotional development and that constraints on children's freedom to play can be detrimental in numerous ways[44]. Children need adequate space and play materials in and around their homes[45]. Unfortunately, there is not a broad understanding by caregivers, and by most professionals, of the great importance of play. The dimension of play that most people understand is its value for healthy physical exercise and the growth and development of physical skills. Less obvious to many adults is the value of play for the development of children's thinking and creativity and to the learning of social skills of cooperation, sharing, and caring[46]. Also, it has also long been established that play can offer an important means for children to establish a sense of control over difficult circumstances[47]. In all cases, the important principle is that children have settings that allow for play to take place, not that it be planned or scheduled.

Children strive to gradually expand their competence outside of their homes by exploring, playing, and experimenting with a gradually larger and more diverse physical and social world. They seek out manageable challenges in their everyday environment that enable them to exercise their competence through play. But as cities become more "developed," it seems that children's lives become increasingly contained and controlled. There has been a dramatic erosion of children's independent mobility in many cities of the industrialized countries due to a combination of factors ranging from parents' fears of safety from strangers and the dangers of traffic to the seductive forces of new electronic technologies inside children's homes[48]. Policies and programs have responded by providing a plethora of after-school programs to fill the gap, but this kind of programmed activity is not a substitute for the benefits of children's unstructured play[49]. This reduced freedom of the city contrasts greatly with so many of the poor neighborhoods of the developing world, where children have great freedom to roam but do so at high risk of serious health problems from an unhealthy physical environment. The contrast between these two different types of infringements of children's right to play can also often be seen close together in the same city in the developing world, with poor children running freely together through uncollected garbage and jumping over drains of raw sewerage while other children remain alone trapped behind the high fences and secured gates of their upper class homes.

Municipal agencies usually think of satisfying children's play needs through the provision of playgrounds and mayors gain considerable political capital from opening them, even though, as explained above, children do not have such a circumscribed vision of play[50]. When they do play in playgrounds, they break out of the narrow range of goals intended by the planners and designers and discover or create affordances in the equipment for additional kinds of activities. The goal of planning and design should be to provide physical settings that afford young people the chance to find and create the widest possible diversity of activities as they develop.

Planners need to think of a spatial hierarchy of types of play spaces in order to afford play opportunities for children of all ages. First, there is a need for some kind of small safe, transitional play space outside of the home, shared with neighboring children for they are not yet ready for full exposure to the bustling complexities of the city. The ideal kind of play space between homes is neither truly "public" nor "private;" some have suggested the term "parochial space"[51]. As children become more confident and wish to extend their range, they simply want to find places that are close to home, physically diverse, have other children to play with and where supportive adults are available nearby, but not hovering. These qualities can be created informally even in poor neighborhoods with very little material support from a local government. But a municipal parks or recreation agency can play a valuable support role in assessing the environmental health conditions of

a neighborhood and perhaps helping with some basic grading and drainage of a site. Traditional playgrounds with swings, climbing frames, and slides can satisfy much of a child's desire for large muscle activity, but they do not afford opportunities for the entire repertoire of sensory play, fine manipulate play, construction play, and imaginative activities that young children seek. A natural setting, including sand and water, is an inexpensive solution for creating a superior play area for young children if there is a community organization to maintain and manage it.

In the later primary school years and throughout adolescence, children are more interested in organized team games with conventional rules, and games and sports facilities become the recreational priority for many. The public provision of this kind of space is very important to the engagement of children and youth in any community. Communities cannot obtain large sized spaces and equipment for games and sports without the help of local government in providing the space and landscaping and equipping it; as a result, most low-income communities have severe shortages of such spaces. Aware municipalities should know that community sports and games are valuable to the building of a sense of community identity and that a lack of opportunity for such meaningful engagements can lead to community alienation and anti-social behavior. Parks are important spaces to provide for all family members in an integrated manner. They should provide all of the features described above together with the more sedentary values of parkland.

Finally, it is necessary to address the global tendency towards the privatization of public spaces. Play and recreation provision should not be left to the free market competition of private provision because this will result in segregation and exclusion. If a municipal government does turn to some private provision of this most basic of public resources, they are at least obliged to increase their monitoring of the equity of provision. The frequent monitoring of playground use and accessibility throughout the city of Rotterdam is the kind of survey that every city needs to carry out regularly.[52]

A City for Learning

We will not address at length here the large topic of schooling for formal education is typically organised from a central national government authority. We should note, however, that municipal authorities can do a great deal to create institutions that further the goals of fulfilling children's rights by ensuring that the physical structure of the school satisfies the kinds of environmental health conditions described in this essay, particularly for toilets, and that the school grounds enable children to have play and sports opportunities appropriate for their age. The schools should also fulfil children's "participation rights"—to have a voice on matters that concern them. Very few fulfil this goal or they satisfy it in a very weak manner through school children's councils.

It is not always recognized that there are multiple other ways that municipal governments can creatively contribute to children's learning beyond the building of schools. Article 31 of the CRC is usually thought of as the "play rights article," but it is more than that; it also calls for children to be able to "participate freely in cultural life and the arts." While the arts might be promoted through schooling, participation in cultural life cannot be entirely programmed; it must be experienced with integrity through spontaneous access within the community. This is the idea behind the relatively modest international movement called "Educating Cities".[53] When there are multiple cultures in a city, children should have the opportunity to observe these cultures, lest ignorance towards them breeds an antipathy later in life. One way of doing this is for a municipal government to embrace the cultural diversity of its city. This can be done in many simple ways such as creating sections in all local libraries related to each of the cultural groups in the community and adding to this the products of research by children on local history and culture and guaranteeing the use of public spaces for celebrations, festivals, and parades by all groups. Mobile libraries are another effective way of making sure that all children have access to books. In Manila, for example, street workers make books accessible to working children through the use of mobile library carts.

A Green City

Research is increasingly revealing what so many writers have known intuitively in the past—that contact with the natural world is broadly important for human development[54]. Access to green spaces for play, and even a view of green settings, has been found to enhance peacefulness, self-control and self-discipline within inner city youth, and particularly in girls. Proximity and daily exposure to natural settings has been found to increase children's ability to focus and enhance their cognitive abilities[55] Green settings also significantly reduce symptoms of attention deficit disorder in children as young as five years-old, and the greener a child's everyday environment, the bigger the impact.[56] Also, studies of children in schoolyards with both green areas and manufactured play areas found that children engaged in more creative forms of play in the green areas, and also played more cooperatively.[57] Finally, children who have access to play in natural areas have been found to be more physically active and more aware of nutrition than children who lack such access, resulting in better physical fitness and lower rates of obesity[58]. From this growing body of research we can conclude that changes in the planning of cities to optimize children's positive contact with nature[59]. Unfortunately, while the benefits of the natural world are clear, many children live at such high densities of housing that they never experience contact with green space during their play. More surprisingly perhaps, because of the severe restrictions in children's spatial freedom, previously described, even many wealthy children in the industrialized countries now only experience nature through educational programs rather than through direct engagement in their everyday lives[60].

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The planning implications of the benefits of green areas to children's development overlap closely with the growing awareness of the need to plan cities in relation to the global priority for sustainable development. There was an early history of green urban planning and the placing of green spaces adjacent to residential areas but is has not become the norm globally for city planning.[61] Fortunately, green infrastructure planning is now again being discussed by an increasing number of planners as a means of working simultaneously on environmental quality and on social values[62]. A network of green infrastructure in a city is a means of providing wider access to green spaces and allowing a greater proportion of the public to benefit. The ribbons of green need to be preserved or planned in relation to the natural patterns of the landscape of course but they also need to recognize that access to green space and other natural areas is typically not evenly distributed in cities. Children of the poor are the least mobile and are thus deprived of the physical and mental health benefits of contact with nature. Also, for young children, we should think of an even finer-grain to the landscape than the green planners typically think of. As noted in the section on play, given the limited range of young children, it is important to create a safe, diverse landscape close to home. Given the small amount of space necessary for pre-school children, it is possible to conceive of nature as being a component of these spaces in the form of "play gardens". Diversity of the physical environment is important for young children's exploration and the natural environment is more diverse than any amount of toys or play equipment.

Improving Governance and Planning for Children

The term 'governance' is broader than 'government'. It includes the quality of the relationship between government institutions and 'civil society' (citizens, community groups, and NGOs) and offers a broader net of provision, protection, and participation than government alone can offer. [63] For this reason, a key strategy for the creation of improved planning for children is for municipalities to find ways to work more closely with community groups and local organizations to support them in doing better what they already do and to coordinate their planned efforts with the goals of residents. Consequently, this section is concerned with improvements to both municipal government and to community governance.

Making Children a Distinct Concern within Municipal Governments

There is much that can be done to improve the focus on children in local government, such as creating some kind of independent advocacy office for children and establishing a city-wide children's rights strategy with a regular children's budget and a state of the city's children report, including monitoring and data collection.[64] Such new institutions are all implied by the CRC in its call for all levels of government to work to fulfill children's rights. But because so few cities have done so, we need to ask what might motivate a city to improve its governance for children. In some cases the national policy for children has helped to set municipalities on a good course of local governance for children. This was the case with The Philippines, a leader in creating new forms of local governance for children since the early 1990's. The democratic opening at that time coincided with the release of the CRC, which was embraced by the Philippines. In Brazil, also a pioneering country in its work on children's rights, has found that setting up a competition between cities for a UNICEF "Municipal Seal of Approval" has been a very effective way of mobilising a concern for children in both municipal governments and civil society.[65] The seal is recognition that a municipal government is in the process of implementing public policies focused on children and adolescents. It

provides national and international publicity to approved municipalities that attain the highest average scores in their group. To ensure that all municipalities can compete, including smaller and poorer ones, they are grouped into five categories based on the structure and resources they have. Mayors have found that the seal offers a challenge that is inspiring to the government and also impresses journalists, citizens, and voters.

Improving Coordination for Children Within Municipal Governments

Coordination of planning in general is a problem for most cities, and not just coordination between city agencies, but also different levels of coordination with national and regional governments, with NGOs and with the private sector. The example of Dhaka, Bangladesh from a recent report from the World Bank is useful: "DCC [Dhaka City Corporation] does not manage planning, does not decide on the use of public land located within the city, and has no power over the public utility companies within its jurisdiction. While a precise census would be necessary, figures quoted range from 16 to 40 different institutions intervening at one stage or another in urban matters in Dhaka". [66] Coordinating governance for children is made even more complex because of the need to include those agencies that do not typically think of themselves as child-serving agencies, such as water, sanitation, waste management, pollution control, and public transport. The agencies responsible for these issues typically have no persons responsible for thinking of how their work impacts children and may never even have thought about this as their responsibility.

The cities of the Philippines have been at the forefront in developing systems of coordinated governance for children and offer many valuable lessons on child-centered planning for children. Pasay City, a sub-division of Metropolitan Manila is one of the "child-friendly cities" of the Philippines and serves as a good example. The Pasay City Child Welfare Council (PCCWC) serves as the regulatory body for operations of all existing programs and projects designed for children in the municipal government. It formulates a city plan of action for children, monitors and evaluates plans for children, advocates for the passage of child and youth protective ordinances and for increased allocation for children's programs, provides technical assistance to community-based frontline workers, and prepares contingency measures to protect children and their families in crisis situations. It is a most comprehensive body, including the heads of city agencies and city councilors chairing relevant committees. Furthermore, it has representation ranging from the very local level Barangay (neighborhood) councils to the national government departments.

If a city has a genuine commitment to consider the special needs of children in their planning, one would expect there to be some kind of specific *action plan for children* and Pasay City has one. The Comprehensive Development Plan for Children covers a 25-year (2000-2025) period in which the Pasay City government, in collaboration with national line agencies and nongovernment organizations, will undertake strategic interventions so that the city's vision for its children is realized. It is integrated into the general Pasay City Development Plan and is prepared in coordination with the Barangay (neighbourhood) council's own action plans for children. The council uses this plan to monitor and evaluate actions for children and to prepare quarterly reports.

Improving coordination between local governments and communities

Many of the details in the planning and design of community spaces are best carried out in participatory ways with community residents, but local government are typically not inclined or well-prepared to do this. Community safety, both physical safety from traffic and other hazards and security from violence and crime, are obvious examples of matters of which the community has better

knowledge than do municipal officials. The insights of both parents and children are also valuable to those city officials who plan roads and pedestrian circulation, locate schools, childcare facilities, and health centers, and plan and design play and recreation facilities. It is futile, for example, to locate play facilities in a location that parents do not consider safe because of drug dealers or a lack of watchful residents or where children know they will be intimidated by gangs of youth. Furthermore, in many cases, public spaces will need to be managed and maintained by the community, and this is more likely to happen if the community was involved in the planning and design of these spaces.

One of the greatest challenges is that local governments are sectoral in their organization, whereas residents experience community problems in a more integrated manner; a drainage problem, for example, might also be a problem of solid waste disposal, recreation, transportation, and health. To deal with this kind of communication challenge, a local government needs some people who can serve as a community/government liaison and talk across agencies. This often happens in the Philippines, where there has been a concerted effort to find ways of linking communities to municipal governance. The training of residents as community health volunteers in preventive healthcare, waste management, and nutrition often leads to them becoming valuable change agents in the community, with the capacity to talk with officials of different city agencies. The barangay (neighborhood) councils are a key to local participation, including children, and the council membership includes at least one child or youth representative[67].

Involving children, and parents, in local government

The CRC presents a challenging new vision of children as individuals that are capable and deserving of a greater degree of participation in society. It recognizes that children need to be gradually allowed to participate—according to their developing interests and abilities in their communities. This implies finding new ways to listen to children on all issues that concern them. In the early years of the 1990s, after the CRC was introduced, progress was made in a number of countries in listening to city children who had in the past been 'forgotten'— particularly children working or living on the street by 'streetworkers' and others. These new kinds of child rights professionals became expert at working with children in more horizontal and respectful ways and experimented with innovative ways of enabling the children they worked with, who often lived outside of families, to learn about and act on their rights[68]. Progress in finding ways to work in participatory ways with the many more millions of children who are very poor but living in families and not working on the streets has been slower.

In some countries, particularly in the industrialised nations, cities and towns have acted on their commitment to the CRC by trying to engage children in local governments but usually with relatively weak forms of representative government called 'councils' or 'parliaments'. They are weak because they involve only small numbers of children who are not usually linked with the peers they are meant to represent. The Dominican Republic's child friendly city program is one of the better examples of children's councils, for it at least engages all children in the process. In each town that declares itself 'child-friendly,' all of the children in the schools become involved in the election campaign for the children's council. This ensures that every child learns about his or her rights as a citizen and gets the chance to elect a peer, but there is no systematic way for them to be involved until the next election. Some argue cynically that this is, of course, also true for most adults in the world's democracies, but the answer to this is that we need to find better ways of enabling the young generation to help build equitable cities in democratic ways.

There is a need to find ways to supplement representative democratic structures, like children's councils, with opportunities for direct or participatory democratic opportunities by children in their communities. There are dozens of ways that children can be frequently involved directly in the different settings of their lives including: the assessment and regular monitoring of the physical environment of their neighbourhoods; the participatory management of school grounds and early childhood facilities; participation in the planning and design of community play and of recreation facilities; and even in the management of their own children's organisations[69]. By considering these kinds of more local engagements, all children can have opportunities to be involved in making decisions that affect their lives. Furthermore, by having these many opportunities for direct participation, those cities that have representative democratic structures, such as children's municipal councils, can link them to these more inclusive forms.

Participatory Budgeting

One of the more exciting innovations for bringing new visions of children's rights into practice has been the idea of "participatory budgets". When there are opportunities for citizens to be involved in a city's budget, the decisions seem to result in improved conditions for children. Furthermore, the opportunity to participate in decisions regarding the allocation of public funds for projects has been found to foster a shift in the local political culture from confrontational tactics and corrupt political bargaining to constructive debate and civic engagement in governance[70]. The concept began in Porto Alegre in Brazil and has since expanded to many hundreds of cities in Brazil and other countries. In some Brazilian cities, children's councils have become involved in the participatory budgeting process[71].

The Barra Mansa children's participatory budgeting council, in the State of Rio de Janeiro, involves all children attending school but only those aged between nine and sixteen can vote or be elected as delegates or councillors. Thanks to a rare kind of longitudinal analysis of changes in the administration of the program since 1998, we know some of the problems and some of the key issues to consider in the design of a successful program[72]. The research illustrates why it is so valuable to follow closely important experiments like this to see what the conceptualization of children's agency and citizenship really looks like in practice. The author found that even though the municipal law specifically recognizes citizens' participation in decisions about the municipal budget, the existence, development, and efficiency of children's councils still depend to a great extent on who is in power. The Children's Council has no power to modify its own rules of operation, and it remains a structure at the whim of whichever political party is in charge.[73]

Since its inception, the most significant change in the Barra Mansa program, for our understanding of children's participation in community governance has been the elimination of children's neighbourhood assemblies and the shift of activities to the schools. Many children do not now attend school in the same administrative unit as their home and so they can no longer participate in decisions that relate to their own community, which was one of the main objectives of the previous experience[74]. This unlinking of children from a school within their community has been one of the disturbing trends associated with the growth of neoliberal educational policies throughout the world. It is disastrous for any teachers who wish to build upon children's local knowledge and attachment to their communities and to foster citizenship in a locally meaningful way. We know from the body of participatory community research with children in schools that they know and care a great deal about the physical environment of their communities and that this knowledge can be valuable in guiding sensitive planning decisions.[75] With the unlinking of communities and school this knowledge is largely

lost and children find it more difficult to discuss and define community priorities. Nevertheless, in Barra Mansa, the initiative has had tangible impacts on the city's environment, including a sewage treatment station for one neighbourhood with a river with untreated sewage running through it and the building of a sports facility in another neighbourhood.

Creating and Sharing Data on Children

Obtaining data on the conditions of children and how they vary across an entire city is essential if cities are to begin addressing inequities of conditions and services in that city. We know that in cities of the developing world there are enormous variations in wealth, with both large areas and small pockets of households living in extreme poverty[76]. We need methods that will capture the conditions of all children in need. A spatial analysis of cities is important because problems overlap in space and they are made worse when they coexist. Unfortunately, most cities do not have data that is adequate for the task. The data on the conditions of children in a city often contains no information on how the data varies geographically within a city. Many cities do not even have maps showing the location of homes in the informal settlements that often house tens of thousands of children. Furthermore, when there is such spatial data it commonly refers to the entire household rather than providing information about the children in that household—how many there are, whether they attend school, and what their health and nutritional status is, etc. In consider some of the possibilities for bringing effective data collection and mapping into the process of improving cities for children it is important to consider the potentials of both comprehensive, centralised municipal systems of data collection and more grounded approaches involving partnership between communities and municipal authorities.

In a recent self-critical analysis of an urban health slum identification and assessment program in India, it was found that services were not reaching all of the poor within a slum for a variety of reasons, including the concentration of certain ethnic groups, the absence of shelter, unsuitable timings of the intervention, and the fact that "the neediest groups seemed to be the ones left out"[77]. The conclusion was that there was a need to identify and target the neediest families with children. Furthermore, there were disparities among the slums owing to various factors that called for context-appropriate solutions that were based in the particular community. In one group of slums, diarrhoea might be the major cause of morbidity, and in another group of slums, low immunization coverage of children could be the major issue. The conclusion was that it was necessary to engage in community need-based assessments that could lead to specific implementations if inequity and exclusion was to be fully addressed.

Mapping of populations in relation to their living conditions has taken a giant leap forward in recent years through the growth of computerised mapping, called geographical information systems, or "GIS". Intra-urban inequalities can be discovered by mapping spatial indicators of inequality, and this data can then be used by city agencies to precisely target their programs and services to households with children that are most in need.. This offer great potential but it is only in the early stages of use by cities. One of the barriers is that the technology is often not available in the city agencies of developing countries. As a result, most experiments with the methods are taking place in the industrialized countries[78] . One of the exciting possibilities is to involve children in the use of hand-held GPS technologies in order to them map informal settlements that have not previously been mapped by the government, such as the Kibera settlement in Nairobi, Kenya. [79]

Community-based assessment, planning and design

In a special issue of *Environment and Urbanization* on how to meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in urban areas, the editors conclude that the poor are rarely consulted and their knowledge, resources, and capacities are rarely recognized in development efforts: "Development is still something that professionals and development institutions "do" for them, and interventions are designed and implemented by intermediaries over whom they have little or no influence".[80] To work with communities is to recognize the inherent drive people have to improve their lives and the pride that comes with collective efforts. Investments in this kind of effort have greater potential for building social capital and the sustainable development of communities, and for fostering the collective care of children.

Children can often be seen hanging around new development projects, wistfully observing the work, when they might have been usefully directly involved. In a community where residents are involved in the creation and management of their community environment, an informed community worker can make a great contribution by helping adult residents discover the great capacities of young people to take part. There are multiple benefits to also involve children in community development. Much of the literature describes the developmental benefits to individual children—from understanding and 'owning' their rights, to becoming more flexible and resilient citizens, to fostering democratic values. But, for this paper, it is important to stress that children also have the capacities to play very important roles in community development—through research, planning, and action to improve the everyday living environments of their communities. When we look to the efforts that have been carried out to involve children in research, planning, design, and action within their own communities, there seem to be more authentic examples of children's contributions to urban development than is typically found in children's councils and parliaments at the municipal level. Opportunities to be involved in improving the physical environment are an ideal way for children to feel that they are making a meaningful contribution and to feel recognized as community members. The public spaces of any community are the most obvious territory for children's involvement and this is a domain where a municipal government can easily help support community action.

Typically, when community residents are involved in research, it is called PAR (participatory action research). PAR studies are usually carried out in relation to a particular problem identified by the group as a needed domain for action. They can be a very effective strategy for targeting a problem, but they typically involve small numbers of people in collecting qualitative data. In the rare instances when a community collects data with large numbers of people, it is usually on a narrow range of observable data, such as mapping dwellings, as in the case of the remarkable shack dwellers surveys in Indian slums[81]. But sometimes communities collect local data with all of the residents as a way of systematically monitoring a range of local conditions in their residential areas, such as the community-based monitoring of the environment in urban neighborhoods of The Philippines .[82]

In order to find ways of enabling children as well as adults to be involved in surveying neighborhood conditions, a new kind of pictorial survey tool has been designed for use with child friendly communities[83]. By using the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) as the framework for identifying what range of conditions should be assessed data is collected is

being collected on a much greater range of dimensions than is typically available for city-level planning for children. The methodology is designed to be facilitated by people with no formal research training and it allows for high levels of participation by community residents, both adults and children. Data can be collected and analyzed by them to identify priority areas for action on children's living conditions. The same tools can be used subsequently by a community for periodic monitoring of progress regarding conditions for children. While the toolkit focuses on the community-level collection of data, municipalities could also use the tools for citywide data collection by working with children in schools

Research by children can be the basis for environmental action for children in any community. By building upon an analysis of their own daily lives, children can develop plans for the improvement of their living conditions and go on to a larger, community-wide analysis of environmental issues. Mapping is a particularly useful way for children to discover how neighborhood issues—such as the lack of safe, healthy, play spaces for young children and the dumping of solid waste—are related. When children make presentations of such research to local civic leaders or environmental planners, they typically achieve more genuine dialog than when they simply make declarations of what needs to be improved. For primary school-aged children, it is ideal if they can take some direct action themselves emerging from their research as a way of rounding out and making their experience concrete. The National Program of Working Children in Ecuador found it best to first design micro-actions—small projects close to children's homes that could be completed in a matter of days or weeks—before joining with other children to conduct macro-actions of considerable importance to their community[84].

"Growing up in Cities", supported by UNESCO, was an international program of action research run through schools or community-based organizations using a wide variety of methods to engage small groups of children, aged 10 through 14 years of age, in evaluating the resources in their community as a way of influencing the priorities for change[85]. A set of methods were developed to maximize participation, including drawing, mapping, interviews with parents and city officials, time schedules, photographs, model-building, child-led tours through the community, focus group discussions, role play, visioning, and ranking exercises[86]. It is an excellent example of the capacities children have to be involved in the assessment and communication of conditions for themselves, and it has been utilized in many countries[87]. In a number of cases, the research was used to influence local decisions, but, unfortunately, because most communities do not have on-going governance structures to which they can link such research, it has not resulted in sustained processes for community improvement with children.

Although the youngest of children themselves cannot be involved in planning, their parents can be. The example of play space planning and design again serves as a good example. The immediate spaces around homes are very important for very young children. There are a number of ways that parents can be helped to design and create such spaces. A good community planner can work with parents in small groups to describe and simply analyze their existing patterns of use. Whether with adults or children, mapping with models or moveable cardboard map symbols is the most convivial method for this kind of work; the use of pens for drawing information or plans on maps is not ideal for participatory planning and group discussion because the pencil or pen fixes the ideas too soon. Out of an analysis of where children are currently allowed to go, with whom, for what, and who oversees them can come valuable insights of what small spaces between homes might work as improved and managed play spaces.

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Some Valuable International Initiatives

The Child Friendly Cities Initiative has been referred to frequently in this paper because it is a movement that is leading to considerable innovation in child-focused urban planning. It is a worldwide movement advocating for the fulfillment of children's rights at the level of cities and communities[88]. The CFCI Secretariat was established at the UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre in 2000 to serve as a common point of reference for the Child Friendly Cities movement, and the location of a website and an online database[89]. It is designed to foster the simultaneous engagement of citizens acting on children's rights at the community level and government and non-government agencies officials improving governance for children at the municipal level. It does this through building a broad awareness of children's rights; the critical assessment of living conditions for children and potential advocacy and planning actions at the community level; improved local governance for children through an integrated cross-sectoral approach to the development, implementation, and evaluation of policies, laws, and budgets affecting children; and improved participation of children, parents, and caregivers in the governance decisions affecting children's well being and development in the community.

The Healthy Environments for Children Alliance (HECA) of the World Health Organization (WHO) is a global coalition whose mission is to reduce the health risks children face in their everyday home, school, and play environments. HECA seeks to provide knowledge; increase political will, mobilize resources, and catalyze intense and urgent action. By partnering with WHO and various country-specific NGOs, HECA hosts conferences, workshops, and forums aimed at ensuring advocacy, raising awareness, exchanging information with and educating key stakeholders, promoting effective policies and action across levels and sectors, and monitoring and evaluating progress towards healthy environments for children. A critical element of HECA's program lay in its country- and community-level support to connect governmental agencies and sectors. While HECA's work is not limited to urban communities, it recognizes that cities pose a unique set of environmental risks, and children who live in cities in the developing world are especially prone to toxic exposures and other environmental hazards.

The Safer Cities Programme of the United Nations Human Settlements Program (HABITAT) seeks to reduce violence within the world's cities, with a particular emphasis on African cities, by developing municipal-level prevention strategies. The program is focused on the unique vulnerabilities that specific cities may face with regard to violence and crime management and prevention, and has developed tools and strategies for implementation at the local level. Of chief importance is the effort to use participatory planning processes to establish regional strategies to reduce overall levels of urban violence. It is believed that improving urban safety will reduce poverty, secure living conditions, and improve quality of life, especially for children and youth. The Safer Cities Program has hosted a series of regional youth conferences to address the most effective responses to youth crime and violence in South Africa, Latin America, and Dar as Salaam, among others. These conferences are wholly participatory, inviting youth (both youth leaders and youth at risk), government agencies, civil society organizations, and local authorities (including police and magistrates) to enter into discussion on the causes of and policies surrounding urban youth violence. Because youth make up a large proportion of the population in these cities and, because they are often excluded from social and political realms of city life, they are at greater risk for becoming involved in violence, both as perpetrators and as victims. It is through these conferences, then, that youth become empowered to modify the social climate that leads to delinquent behavior, self-

advocate, and eventually work to decrease crime and violence through increased cooperation and understanding.

Conclusion

The scale of the problem of poverty and conditions for children in cities often seems daunting, but we should take heart from the knowledge that so many of the world's poor currently plan and manage their communities by themselves with no assistance from governments. The challenge then is not for governments and NGOs to completely solve all of the problems of the urban poor but rather to find ways of working with the residents of these communities - including their children - to listen to them, coordinate with them and support them in matters that they cannot be expected to manage alone. Good governance is already the recognised priority of Habitat, the UN Agency for Human Settlements. But while Habitat recognizes the importance of working with youth aged 15 to 25, like the International development community in general, it has not so far made children a focused priority in thinking in the planning and management of cities.[90] We need to make sure that children of all ages, from birth to 18 years of age, are kept in mind in all efforts to improve conditions to fulfil children's rights, as outlined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). In doing so, we should also follow the progressive principles of children's evolving capacities and their rights to participate that are at the heart of the CRC - that in working to improve children's rights we must work both for them and with them.

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