



# CHILD-CENTRED URBAN RESILIENCE FRAMEWORK

A holistic, systematic and action-based framework for making cities more resilient for children and youth, girls and boys.

October 2016



ARUP



**City resilience describes the capacity of cities to function, so that the people living and working in cities – particularly the poor and vulnerable – survive and thrive no matter what stresses or shocks they encounter.<sup>1</sup>**



**30-60%**

of urban dwellers in developing Asia live without the secure tenure that can protect them from eviction.



**OVER 1/3**

of children in urban areas go unregistered at birth.

By 2030, almost 60% of people will live in cities<sup>2</sup>, exposing urban populations to risks arising from demographic shifts and climate change. Children, youth, girls and boys are especially vulnerable as they may not be able to physically and socially access 'the city' as adults do.

Child-centred organisations working in urban contexts will have to respond to these challenges by supporting and strengthening resilience building in cities to ensure children's well-being. Three key principles can be applied to working in cities: urban systems thinking, strength-based approach and a rights-based approach.

## PURPOSE

This framework guides efforts to build urban resilience that support children, youth, girls and boys. It integrates child and human rights into resilient urban development, enabling children to become agents of resilience.

Public and private stakeholders can use this guide to assess and adapt current efforts to build resilience; identify opportunities; promote co-ordination and develop pathways to greater resilience through new initiatives.

## GUIDING CONCEPTS

Three key guiding concepts have influenced the development of this framework:



### Urban systems thinking

It is important to understand the impact the city's physical and social urban systems have on the well-being of children and youth.



### Strength-based approach

Recognising and leveraging the resilience already shown by children offers ways of building their resilience and contributing to the resilience of the city.



### Rights-based approach

Urban stakeholders must ensure child and human rights are enshrined in resilience-building efforts.

<sup>1</sup> The Rockefeller Foundation & Arup, *City Resilience Index*, 2015.

<sup>2</sup> United Nations, Sustainable Development Goals – 17 Goals to transform our world, Goal 11, [un.org/sustainabledevelopment/cities](http://un.org/sustainabledevelopment/cities).

# BUILDING URBAN RESILIENCE

## FOR CHILDREN

Urbanisation is rapidly transforming cities<sup>3</sup>, with factors including demographic change, economic uncertainty, social and cultural upheaval, and environmental risk. Resilient cities can adapt and grow despite these stresses and shocks.

To function, cities rely on the working of complex yet supportive social, physical, economic and governance systems. While many complex systems and sub-systems enable a city to function, that same complexity presents challenges to governments and organisations seeking to improve urban life. The high interdependence of systems in cities can result in cascading failure.

Some of the most at-risk children live in cities – like children living on the streets, children who are working and children living in informal settlements. Sudden calamities like floods or social unrest; and chronic urban issues like crime and lack of access to basic services exacerbate risk. They also risk exploitation in urban settings, violence, abuse and neglect, and long-term health problems arising from poor environmental conditions.

Urban governance systems, municipal budgets and urban development plans often do not adequately account for the individual needs of children, youth, girls and boys. In addition, some municipal governments are not empowered to make key decisions, which heightens the problem. This is particularly acute in developing countries.

### Challenge of inclusivity

Increasing inequity in cities often results in contrasts between informal and vulnerable communities being more at risk than the wealthiest and safest with whom they live side by side. Unless a clear targeting strategy is in place, urban programs can end up working with relatively well-off groups, and fail to reach those most at risk. This may be for a number of reasons, including: 1) authorities do not have a mandate or interest in poor or informal communities; 2) the most vulnerable children are often deliberately invisible because they avoid authorities; and 3) children, youth, girls and boys in urban settings often work in hazardous conditions for their and their families' daily sustenance, which prevents them from accessing education and engaging with child-centred organisations. It is essential for organisations that intend to reach the most at risk to take these barriers into account when designing their programmatic response.

## ALIGNMENT WITH GLOBAL DECLARATIONS

This framework aligns with and supports the delivery of key global declarations aimed at building better cities for all. It offers strategic interventions for child-centred organisations working with children, youth, girls and boys in urban contexts. It can form a critical step towards promoting sustainability and inclusiveness, and alleviating poverty in cities.

The New Urban Agenda, to be adopted at Quito in October 2016, emphasises children and youth. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC-CoP 22), Sustainable Development Goals and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction all have a similar emphasis. These agreements shape the policies, programs and practices of multinational organisations and national governments, and will influence efforts over the next 20 years in cities.

That said, cities offer many advantages for increasing children's resilience and it is important to identify, maximise and build on those advantages. Cities can offer better access to information and social relations; better services; effective law and order; and concentration and critical mass for more impactful action. Moreover, urban stakeholders, in particular businesses, are driven to ensure continuity of services following a disruptive event.

The urban systems, both man-made and natural, like roads, ecological areas and social infrastructure, usually have clear stakeholder stewardship arrangements. Working together, these stakeholders can potentially play a role in preventing system failures that negatively impact the well-being of the urban population.

Effective urban development looks at the entire system as a whole and not the system's component parts in isolation<sup>4</sup>. Taking a systems-based approach can help to transform cities into safe, connected places where systems, communities and individuals have the resilience to survive and thrive regardless of the stresses and shocks they experience.



**Under the right conditions, children are capable agents of change.**

<sup>3</sup> New Urban Agenda draft outcome document for adoption in Quito, Ecuador, Habitat III, 2016.

<sup>4</sup> Jo da Silva, Sam Kernaghan & Andrés Luque, *A systems approach to meeting the challenges of urban climate change*, International Journal of Urban Sustainable Development, 2012.

# CHILD-CENTRED URBAN RESILIENCE FRAMEWORK

The Child-Centred Urban Resilience Framework comprises four strategic areas. Under the strategic areas are 12 interventions that can direct future action.





**Growing evidence shows that children can act as protagonists for action in reducing risk, and catalysts for behavioural change and collective action in communities. The research...demonstrates the capacity and agency of children when they are provided with adequate support and protection by their parents, particularly when supported by a child-centred NGO.<sup>5</sup>**

## SUSTAIN LIFE

... in urban communities where children and youth lack adequate care.

This can be done by strengthening and improving access to basic services, ensuring decent work and safeguarding survival and development.

## MOBILISE THE COMMUNITY

... to collectively ensure and value the protection and promotion of child and human rights.

This can be done by promoting social security and protection, especially for girls, increasing community involvement and motivating key stakeholders.

## MAKE SAFE PLACES

... in urban areas where children can live, play and grow.

This can be done by designing safe spaces and child and gender-sensitive infrastructure, and providing information that all children, youth, girls and boys can access.

## PROMOTE INTEGRATION

... to influence the management and planning of resilient cities that are responsive to and inclusive of children, youth, girls and boys.

This can be done by improving preparedness to emergencies; promoting participation; and integrating child and human rights into policies and plans.

### **Protecting the rights of children**

Urban risks can endanger the rights of a child – like survival and development, participation, best interest, and non-discrimination. All children, youth, girls and boys have the equal legal right to be protected, and to access pathways and support if their rights are violated. Further, they need to be supported by quality education and opportunities to participate in cultural activities.

A child and human rights based approach supports the Convention of the Rights of the Child treaty. This guidance aims to apply a rights-based approach to building urban resilience.

<sup>5</sup> Donald Brown & David Dodman, *Understanding children's risk and agency in urban areas and their implications for child-centred urban disaster risk reduction in Asia*, 2014.

# WHAT CAN BE DONE?

Grouped under the four strategic areas, the following 12 interventions pose answers to critical questions and suggest action to build the resilience of cities for children, youth, girls and boys.

## 01

### **Strengthen basic services for children to access**

*What do children need to survive and thrive?* Basic needs such as access to nutritious food, clean water and sanitation, shelter and electricity, are the foundation for realising child and human rights, and for strengthening resilience. Action includes mapping these services so they can be strengthened in gender-sensitive ways through new connections, or new products, or through supplementary action taken by NGOs and/or the private sector.

## 02

### **Assure decent work (where children are involved)**

*Are working children protected?* Many children and youth in urban settings are exposed to daily risks when working in unsafe work environments. Assuring decent work involves equipping children with knowledge to ensure their safety. It also includes educating the community and trade unions to advocate for minimum standards to be established and to monitor their compliance. In addition, stable livelihoods for families and youth that are supported by overall economic security can help to reduce the number of children exposed to work-related risks.

## 03

### **Ensure safeguards to health and life of children**

*Are children healthy in cities?* Health systems are critical to preventing illness and the spread of disease, as well as protecting children, youth, girls and boys during emergencies. Child-focused health services, along with emergency response services, should aim to address different forms of exploitation, violence, abuse and neglect, and long term health risks related to poor environmental conditions experienced by girls and boys. This needs to be further supported by gender-sensitive health education.

## 04

### **Increase community involvement in children's welfare**

*Can communities play a role?* Girls and boys should be made to feel they are part of a community that assures their protection and care. Children's well-being contributes to the overall social capital that is fundamental to resilient communities. Building the urban community's awareness of its direct impact on children and youth can improve and enable the physical and social environment where children live. This includes raising awareness of child and gender-related issues, involving the community in developing and activating referral and reporting systems, case management and monitoring.

## 05

### **Prevent crime on or by children**

*Are children committing or falling victim to crime?* Ensuring security and protection will enable children, youth, girls and boys to remain safe. This includes protection from activities committed by others, such as sexual exploitation or trafficking, and also deterring children themselves from committing crime. Action includes conducting child and gender-sensitive situational analyses, facilitating child support networks, organising and empowering community-based child protection mechanisms, and raising awareness of child and human rights – including for girls – among urban stakeholders.

## 06

### **Motivate key stakeholders as champions of children's issues**

*Who else can help?* There is a need to identify and seek support from stakeholders who have influence and control over city operations that have a direct or indirect impact on children, youth, girls and boys. Action includes engaging with a wide range of urban stakeholders – particularly the private sector and government – and raising awareness and/or facilitating multi-stakeholder dialogue towards building resilience.

## 07

### **Design safe spaces**

*Are urban spaces safe for children?* Children, youth, girls and boys thrive in safe spaces that foster learning and enjoyment for everyone, giving them freedom to explore the city, play in open spaces and use city streets. Urban spaces should reduce exposure to hazards such as traffic, waste materials and stagnant water. Access to safe spaces to learn, play and thrive is a particular concern for children living in informal settlements. Action includes involving children in assessing the gendered and common risks associated with the places they live, learn and play, and designing safe solutions, including in prisons. Other activities include visiting schools and communities to educate authorities and children about risks.

## 08

### **Ensure infrastructure is child-sensitive**

*Can children access urban infrastructure?* Safe and accessible infrastructure for all enables children, youth, girls and boys to navigate cities without harm. Child rights organisations can facilitate the involvement of stakeholders in assessing and raising awareness of the need for child-friendly gender-sensitive infrastructure



1 IN 4

of world's school-aged children live in countries affected by crises!

and/or to co-ordinate multi-stakeholder efforts to directly shape the built environment to ensure it respects and promotes the rights and well-being of both girls and boys.

## 09

### Provide information in a child-friendly way

*Does the right information reach children, youth, girls and boys?* Up-to-date and accessible information for all ages will help to enable children to protect themselves. This includes providing information through early warning systems in times of disaster as well as access to more day-to-day public information – in places they frequent – about matters that could affect them, such as local health hazards. Updates must be made accessible and provided in child-friendly, non-technical language, including pictorial and multimedia messaging.

## 10

### Include children in emergency preparedness

*Do children know what to do in times of crisis?* Children need to be able to access emergency services when their community and family life is disrupted and their support network is removed. Action involves providing risk reduction education in schools and in the community, developing safe evacuation plans, establishing temporary gender-sensitive structures and supporting urban search and rescue services during disasters.

## 11

### Empower children to enable participation

*How can children participate?* Inclusive participation can enable children's voices to be heard. This means educating children, youth, girls and boys on risk, engaging them in gender-sensitive risk assessments, and informing them on how and who to report identified risks to in the community. The complexity and scale of cities make it challenging to engage with children. Advocacy by child rights organisations for the creation of designated spaces for girls and boys and capacity for children's inclusion can help institutionalise child-friendly decision-making processes.

## 12

### Integrate child and human rights into policies and plans

*Can a rights approach be integrated into policies and plans?* Policies and plans should respect the equal rights of girls and boys. Planning and building controls, including risk sensitive land use plans, should consider exposure and/or vulnerability of children to hazards. Child rights organisations can advocate for the integration and promotion of child and human rights in these policies and plans as well as facilitate children's inclusion in monitoring and compliance processes.

## HOW CAN WE ACHIEVE THIS?

Transformational change requires holistic and also strategic action. Taking a goal-oriented approach, child-rights organisations can work independently or in partnership, focusing on their strengths, opportunities and strategic abilities. This takes different forms. Organisations can lead, learn, partner or advocate.



### Lead

Organisations can lead child-centred development projects by harnessing their unique strengths and experience, disseminating good examples, sharing learning and facilitating inputs from partners.



### Learn

Organisations can learn from doing, reflect to deepen this learning and improve their practice. Organisations can also learn from others by accessing shared knowledge and learning opportunities to assess and build capacity.



### Partner

Organisations can partner with others that complement their strengths to supplement their skill gaps and enable more holistic project delivery and learning.



### Advocate

Organisations can advocate by raising awareness of key urban issues in the community, among urban stakeholders including government, building coalitions of like-minded organisations, and sharing research findings and insights.

### Engaging urban stakeholders

Cities contain formal and informal networks of urban stakeholders that can build child-centred resilience. Municipal government is a key constituent. Other stakeholders include private sector entities, local and national governments, global, national and regional bodies, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), businesses, traditional leaders and media, among others. A stakeholder mapping exercise is required to identify and actively involve urban stakeholders in pursuing common goals.



215 MILLION

5–17 years olds  
worldwide are counted  
as child labour.

## THE WAY FORWARD

### Next steps for use

The framework can be applied to existing programs and processes, taking a step-by-step approach to systematically widen its application:

**Assess** that your current urban program reaches the most at-risk children and youth. Using the framework, assess your program reach and identify gaps, partners and stakeholders. In an urban context it is very important to relate the detailed physical conditions to the stakeholder analysis.

**Design** with children, girls and boys, the urban community and urban stakeholders to build on existing strengths, and identify and strengthen the relevant urban system/s to ensure they respect and promote the rights of the child. Identify roles and partners by using the Lead, Partner, Learn, Advocate model described above.

**Implement** with project partners, which involves engaging stakeholders, transferring capacity and learning by doing.

**Monitor** using the framework, adapting the approach and reflecting on lessons learned within, across and between organisations.

**Promote** the project by showcasing what has been done both internally and externally. Build a body of field evidence. Use the experiences to establish partnerships, develop networks and stimulate multi-stakeholder, cross sectoral, and trans-disciplinary practices and actions.

### A collaborative project

The development of this document – with funding support from the Australian Government and the Swedish Government – combined the experience of Plan International in child-centred programming in three cities in Asia – Manila, Dhaka and Jakarta – and Arup's expertise in city systems and resilience. Plan International Asia Regional Office led the regional engagement and the Swedish National Office was also deeply engaged.

The Child-Centred Urban Resilience Framework has been informed and underpinned by The City Resilience Index (CRI), which was developed by Arup and supported by the Rockefeller Foundation. The CRI is a comprehensive tool for cities to understand and assess their resilience.

This document incorporates key insights from Plan International and Arup teams, particularly from working in developing countries. Any constraints or assumptions made have been influenced by the experience of the teams working in their individual contexts.

### Next steps for development

The framework is a pioneering attempt by Plan International and Arup to embed resilience holistically within child-centred urban programming. The framework is not definitive and there is scope to build on what we have done to date. The document invites a convergence of interest, alignment and collaboration from a wider audience of child-centred organisations.

There remains a need to build tools for implementation that align with each organisation's project development, implementation and monitoring processes. These tools can be developed and used in conjunction with this guide to further the shared aspirations for a more inclusive, safer, sustainable child-centred urban environment.

### For more information:

*Plan International*  
Jacob Ocharan  
[JacobOcharan@plan-international.org](mailto:JacobOcharan@plan-international.org)

Suresh Pokharel  
[suresh.pokharel@plan.org.au](mailto:suresh.pokharel@plan.org.au)

*Arup*  
Kirsten McDonald (Sydney)  
[kirsten.mcdonald@arup.com](mailto:kirsten.mcdonald@arup.com)

Sachin Bhoite (London)  
[sachin.bhoite@arup.com](mailto:sachin.bhoite@arup.com)