

Child Friendly Smart Cities Project

Background Note -

Urbanization has become such a force all across the world that the populations of many cities are larger than those of many small nations. A major problem with these cities is that their growth has been so rapid and uncontrolled, particularly in recent decades, that it has outstripped the capacity of urban administrations and their infrastructure services to meet the physical and social needs of people who live in them. Children form an important part and large category of people who live in cities - yet they are a demographic group that is often ignored in planning our cities. Urbanization has significant implications on the growth and development of children especially in a country like India, which has 472 million children (0-18 years) comprising of 39% of the country's total population.¹ 128.5 million of these children reside in urban areas, constituting 34% of the total urban population.

While India is home to the world's largest population of children², the overall the health of children in the country is a matter of great concern - of the **27 million children born each year in India, nearly 2 million of them do not live to the age of five³. Over 40% of the children who do live till 5 are malnourished. 79% of children under 3 have anemia.** Half the children have reduced learning capacity because of iodine deficiency. **Diarrhoea alone kills one child every minute in India** - more than 1000 children under 5 years of age die each day in India due to diarrhoea caused by lack of sanitation⁴. **63 million adolescent girls in India live in homes without proper toilet facilities** - this means they are forced to defecate on the open risking their lives⁵. **One in every eight child in urban India stays in slums** where infrastructure is insufficient and living conditions are poor. Official figures indicate that there are over **12.66 million child workers in India**, but many NGOs reckon the real figure is up to 60 million- this translates to 1 in 8 (12%) children between 5-14 years who work. **India has the largest no. of Child laborers in the world under 14 yrs of age.** Two thirds of children are victims of physical abuse & half face emotional abuse. **Over 50% have faced some kind of sexual abuse**, and over 20% of them severe abuse⁶.

Although the statistics are daunting, progress has been made in improving children's health in various areas and addressing their rights. The Constitution of India guarantees Fundamental Rights to all children in the country and empowers the State to make special provisions for children. The Directive Principles of State Policy specifically guide the State in securing children from abuse and ensuring that children are given *opportunities and facilities to develop in a healthy manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity and that childhood and youth are protected against exploitation and moral and material abandonment.*

Declaring children as the nation's "supremely important asset" the Government of India drafted the **National Policy for Children, 1974**, to reiterate its commitment to secure the rights of its children. This policy recognised that programmes for children should find prominent place in national plans

¹ Source: Handbook on Census 2011 Results, India: Vol. 1

² Source: The National Policy for Children, 1974. Every fifth child in the world is Indian

³ Source: <http://www.friendsofsbt.org/statistics>. 1,600 children die every day before reaching their fifth birthday.

⁴ Source: www.Dasra.org

⁵ Source: www.Dasra.org

⁶ Source: <http://www.friendsofsbt.org/statistics>

for the development of human resources, so that children grow up to become robust citizens, physically fit, mentally alert and morally healthy, endowed with the skills and motivations provided by society. The Policy also lays emphasis on equal opportunities for the development of all children during the period of growth. To affirm the Government's commitment in continuing to address the challenges faced by children, the government adopted **The National Charter for Children, 2003** with the intent to secure a healthy and happy childhood for every child and to address the root causes that negate the healthy growth and development of children, and to awaken the conscience of the community in the wider societal context to protect children from all forms of abuse, while strengthening the family, society and the Nation. **The National Policy for Children, 2013** recognizes a any person below the age of eighteen years as a child. It recognizes that children are not a homogenous group and their different needs need different responses, especially the multi-dimensional vulnerabilities experienced by children in different circumstances. This policy emphasizes on the importance of a long term, sustainable, multi-sectoral, integrated and inclusive approach for the overall and harmonious development and protection of children.

However, despite all good intentions, the status of children in India leaves a lot to be desired. While policy and frameworks exist to address the needs of children in cities, children's requirements are often ignored/ neglected by urban planning processes and mainstream discussions about urbanism. For children growing up in cities there are both a unique mix of advantages as well as disadvantages- access to better schools, sports facilities and health care is often in contrast to disadvantages like pollution, lack of independent mobility, inadequate play spaces, lack of recreational/public spaces and break down of community support structures. It is a well known fact that issues that make urban life difficult for children also make it difficult for other sections of society, such as women, elderly and disabled people. Thus, making cities more child-friendly is an objective that cuts across many overlapping problems and doesn't just benefit children. Given that India is set to be the youngest nation by 2020 with 64% of its population in the working age group with an expected average age of 29 years it is imperative that we plan and build sustainable and inclusive cities from the perspective of young children - ultimately making cities better for everyone.

As children spend a majority of their time within the home, school and recreational spaces - their needs have to be locally provided and easily accessible. For a city to be inclusive and child-friendly, it must provide a physical environment that ensures children's health, develops their faculties, and fosters their love for community, and for nature.⁷ If cities and towns are badly planned, children are the first to suffer - while the urban poor get hit the hardest, all children get affected nevertheless. The effect of the built environment on children's health outcomes is immediate. Today, due to modern zoning practices, planning for the car, and uncontrolled growth, children are growing up unhealthy and burdened with 'lifestyle' diseases at one end of the spectrum while at the other end children are affected by 'chronic' diseases due to lack of access to facilities. Urban Planning and design, architecture, landscape architecture, transportation and land development all play essential roles in ensuring a sustainable physical and built environment.

Given that existing cities are planned in a fragmented way with various stakeholders and city agencies working in silos it is now time to look at children's needs in a holistic manner and build child-friendly aspects into city planning. To advocate child-friendly practices it becomes imperative

⁷ Source: <http://www.livablecities.org/articles/child-friendly-communities>

to look at **issues** such as **appropriate safety standards, guidelines on the quality of the built and spatial environment, equal opportunities of the differently-abled, children's participation in decision making, allocation of special children's budgets and convergence of various city agencies.**

It is in this context the National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA) is undertaking a programme on **Building Child Friendly Smart Cities** to promote policies and practices to make Indian cities child friendly within the urban agenda of building smart cities. NIUA has partnered with the Bernard van Leer Foundation to develop a programme of activities over the next three years, focused on interventions and advocacy related to the issue that urban planning and management in India should address the needs of small children. It is the first time an initiative like this, which looks at children's needs in a comprehensive manner through the lens of urban planning and design across four key theme areas (**Public health, Safety and Security, Transportation/ Mobility and living conditions**) is being taken up in the country. **Governance aspects** across the key theme areas will also be considered for greater convergence of various agencies to address children's needs.

The goal of the project is to mainstream the needs of young children in Indian cities by addressing the gaps in Urban Planning. The main objective of the project is to bring greater awareness amongst urban planners and policy makers about the interrelationship between a child's health and the built environment/ living conditions. The project aims to stimulate innovation and partnerships between urban policy makers, urban planners, architects, business leaders and NGO's to better address and prioritize children's needs around issues such as housing, sanitation, education, health, transportation, mobility, environment, leisure and play etc. through practical and impactful interventions with potential partner organizations such as *UHCRC Surat, Hamara Bachpan Campaign, Clean Air Initiative-Asia* etc. NIUA has partnered with cities like Kota, Surat and others which have already taken initiatives towards becoming child friendly.

Work/ Achievements so Far-

- The initial advocacy and inputs provided on including child friendly aspects in cities had some impact on guidelines for two key National Missions; The Smart City mission guidelines recognized *children as key stakeholders*. Thrust areas within this mission include, **creation of walkable neighbourhoods, preservation and development open spaces, ensuring safety of citizens, especially children**. Similarly, the Thrust areas under the AMRUT Mission include, **enhancement of amenity value of cities by creating and upgrading green spaces, parks and recreation centres, especially for children; including establishing of pollution monitoring systems in cities**.
- NIUA organized a Side Event at PrepCom 3 in Surabaya, Indonesia, July 2016 on the theme: "**Prioritizing Children and Youth within the New Urban Agenda**". The idea of organizing this side event was to help recognize the need for the active participation and involvement of children and youth within the New Urban Agenda and identify collaboration opportunities with a strong affiliate of global partners working on issues related to children.
- Through the CFSC initiative, the intention was also to engage with cities and help support the implementation of some of the ideas. We have also been involved in the structuring of the **Bhubaneswar Urban Knowledge Centre (BUKC)**. The process of setting up the BUKC has given us an understanding that in-house capacities of city agencies are limited around this

subject. It has given us insights on the critical aspects of mobilization phase and the need to invest sufficient time and efforts not just to bring partnerships on board but also in planning the implementation. In addition, we have been working towards setting up a **Chandigarh urban observatory** which actively addresses and collates the data and concerns of Children in the city. Our engagement with **Surat** focuses on mapping the air quality for the city and effects it has on the **everyday health of children**.

- Currently, the CFSC team is carrying out an evidence based mapping study focusing on both observation and interactive primary surveys to physically map how young children move from home to school and around within a neighbourhood, based in the city of Delhi. The study would lay emphasis on three essential areas of a child's everyday needs and movement pattern between 'LIVE. PLAY. LEARN'. It is coupled with the Interactive Spatial Decision Support System (ISDSS), a GIS based online platform to map the vulnerabilities of children to help planners and decision makers correlate community profiles and their vulnerabilities. The study is centred on the age group between 0-10 years (with a special focus on early childhood i.e. 0-5 years).
- Apart from our extensive advocacy and capacity building work so far under the CFSC initiative, we have also developed three key knowledge products (also find the same enclosed):
 - Status of Children in Urban India: A baseline study 2016
 - Indicators for **CH**ild friendly **L**ocal **D**evelopment – **I-CHILD**
 - Compendium for best practices for Child Friendly Cities - 2017

⁸For more information, visit our website:

cfsc.niua.org

Follow us on Twitter:

[@CFSC_NIUA](https://twitter.com/CFSC_NIUA)

⁸ The CFSC team is led by Kanak Tiwari (ktiwari@niua.org), with three researchers Divya Jindal, Ishleen Kaur, Debashrita Chatterjee, under the overall guidance of Jagan Shah, Director, NIUA