

## Overview

The October 2002 issue of *Environment & Urbanization* on “Building cities with and for children and youth” brings together papers that are relevant to the quality of life for urban children, and that discuss policy, regulation, planning and programming that address their rights and needs. Among the topics of particular interest discussed in this issue are:

- **Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child**

The local responses that are needed to implement the Convention on the Rights of the Child within each neighbourhood, municipality and city. The Convention on the Rights of the Child has been ratified by almost all governments but the focus has been on developing national frameworks. There is an urgent need to develop local mechanisms to ensure that children's rights are addressed within each city, municipality and neighbourhood. Two of the more far-reaching initiatives in this regard have been the Child Friendly Cities movement, a network of cities with governments committed to making them better places for children and to involving children in this process; and the Growing up in Cities project, an international research programme that has supported children in low-income urban neighbourhoods all over the world to assess their local environments and to work with local officials to improve them.

- **Access, safety and inclusion**

The services facilities, policies and supports that make the most difference to children and adolescents living in poor quality, overcrowded housing, and in neighbourhoods lacking basic infrastructure and services. A particular interest here is support for children's play and recreation, recognizing that this requires a range of responses to meet the needs of different age groups. A Child Friendly City should be one where children can walk around, meet friends and play safely within their neighbourhoods and, as they get older, travel around and make use of opportunities in the wider city. Yet most urban areas are far from meeting this ideal. Children contend not only with a lack of space but also with levels of traffic and social insecurity that present a constant threat to their safety.

- **Children's participation**

Responses that have allowed children and youth to participate in the planning and management of the spaces and services that they use - including schools, health services, recreational space and various activities and facilities. This issue of the journal includes a case study of the Brazilian city of Barra Mansa, which has an ambitious and innovative programme to involve children and youth in discussing and debating their priorities with an elected children's council working with municipal authorities to address these. Other papers demonstrate how very effectively children can respond when there are real channels to include them in planning and decision making. A paper on Child Friendly Cities in Italy addresses

the deterioration of the urban environment along with the implications for children's safe mobility and independence. This paper includes a very useful critique by children of their participatory experiences. Other contributions deal with processes or interventions, formal or informal, that have made it possible for children and adolescents to be involved in assessing their own needs, designing and implementing responses, and setting and monitoring measurable goals.

- **Broader responses to children's rights**

Child protection: what measures are needed to protect children and youth from disease, injury and abuse within the home, neighbourhood, city and, where needed, the workplace? Meeting children's needs often focuses on services and forgets the legal and institutional structures necessary to protect children and prosecute offenders. The authors discuss the inadequacies in income-based poverty lines and make the case that economic growth does not necessarily reduce either monetary or non-monetary aspects of poverty. Accounts of UNICEF projects in the Philippines and Brazil describe such broad-based responses to urban children's requirements.

- The challenges for parents or other caregivers of providing adequate care and safe, healthy, stimulating environments for young children in the context of urban poverty. Contributions focus on what municipal, NGO or community initiatives have addressed caregivers' concerns, and what supports have caregivers found most useful.

### Downloading:

- *Contents page* (PDF, 53KB)
- *Article summaries* (PDF, 40KB)
- To download the PDFs of the UNICEF articles consult the [Child Friendly Cities Database](#)
- To order a copy of the issue of *Environment and Urbanization* consult the [IIED - Human Settlements](#) website.