

Domain of Change: Safer Cities for Children

Safer Cities is one of the four inter-related domains of change identified within WV's *Cities for Children (CFC) Framework*¹

Concept of Safer Cities

The concept of *Safer Cities* has evolved over the past two decades from simply including crime and violence, to encompassing safety from disaster risk, from conflict, and more generally, from poverty and exclusion. Safety is increasingly seen as a public good and a fundamental right, an integral element of an inclusive society. It is also linked to the notion of the “right to the city” and is an indicator of livability of a city.

In 2012, the Rio+20 outcome document, under the overarching theme of sustainable cities and human settlements, mentioned, among other key areas:

*“...a **safe** and healthy living environment for all, particularly children, youth, women and the elderly and disabled; affordable and sustainable transport and energy; promotion, protection and restoration of **safe** and green urban spaces; **safe** and clean drinking water and sanitation; **healthy** air quality; generation of decent jobs; and improved urban planning and slum upgrading [...] disaster **risk reduction**, resilience and climate risks in urban planning.”* (United Nations, 2012)

The United Nations' Issue Paper on Urban Safety, developed as one of a set of background documents to inform the New Urban Agenda, articulates an explicitly rights-based approach to urban safety, stating that: *“In addition to addressing the prevention of crime and violence, urban safety also includes the enhancement of individual rights including the physical, social and psychological integrity of a person.”* (UN Task Team on Habitat III 2015: 2). This also draws on UNICEF's Child Friendly Cities Programme, which has a broader mandate than safety as such, and underscores the importance of children's rights being incorporated in laws, policies, programmes and budgets.

The New Urban Agenda, launched at the UN Conference on Housing and Sustainable Development (Habitat III), commits to ensure *“a safe and secure environment in cities and human settlements for all to live, work, and participate in urban life without fear of violence and intimidation, taking into consideration that women and girls, and children and youth, and persons in vulnerable situations are particularly affected”*.²

World Vision's own conceptualization of Safer Cities is through a child protection and advocacy model, emphasizing the safety of children at home, in schools, in neighborhoods, in public spaces, and particularly emphasizing elements of child protection, which aims *“to strengthen the protection of children from abuse, neglect, exploitation and other forms of violence.”*³

Issues of urban safety, especially for children

Urban violence can be short-lived or chronic, localized or widespread, heterogeneous yet overlapping. Its impacts can be as varied as its nature, including not only loss of life, injury or disability, but also physical and mental trauma, loss of

¹ World Vision International (WVI) (2016). *Cities for Children Framework: A Strategic Framework for Urban Programming*.

² United Nations, General Assembly, *The New Urban Agenda*, A/CONF.226/4, (29 September 2016), available from <https://habitat3.org/the-new-urban-agenda/>

³ WVI (2014) *Child Protection: Theory of Change*. World Vision International.

property and assets, displacement, the breakdown of social fabric and trust, as well as extreme pressure on social and health services as well as law and order. Indirect consequences may include the creation of an environment of insecurity which limits “*mobility and thus access to basic goods and services, livelihoods, markets and social networks*”⁴, especially for vulnerable groups such as women, children, the elderly and disabled, minorities and displaced persons. Often, it results in a vicious cycle that leads to more violence, including that perpetrated by state institutions, as well as blurred boundaries or even role reversals between the presumed perpetrators of crime and guarantors of peace and stability. Children and youth from refugee communities have particularly “*complex relationships with the security environment whereby they may simultaneously occupy the role of perpetrator and victim*”⁵.

Currently there is a large proportion of children, adolescents and youth migrate to the city due to several reasons: to support their rural households, adolescents and youth exploring opportunities for education, livelihoods to improve their livability standards, and then there are those who are forced to move due to conflict and climate change issues. In cities, the vulnerabilities of these children and youth increase due to the risks they are exposed to in a complex, dynamic environment that is a result of urban diversity and density and lack of social cohesion. Furthermore, large influxes of displaced people into areas affected by violence can lead to civil unrest, food riots, xenophobic and identity-based violence⁶.

Research shows that allowing residents to participate in shaping their own safety systems can improve general perceptions of safety within a community and strengthen confidence in local institutions⁷. This can be done by providing platforms, in violence-free environments, for people to discuss informal urban safety structures, tensions and channels of communications.

World Vision is already present in the world’s most rapidly urbanising settings, and we are learning that more than one billion children residing in the world’s urban centres, of which millions live in squalid, unsanitary and unsafe slum conditions without access to education or viable employment opportunities in adulthood. These children live in overcrowded spaces, on streets contaminated with garbage and dangerous waste, and lack access to safe public spaces to spend their free time. They become vulnerable to crime, street violence including atrocities by criminal gangs and corrupt police, and other social risks such as drugs and unsafe sex; and engage in hazardous forms of forced and unforced child labour and even become victims to human and sex trafficking.

It is estimated that nearly 1.2 million children are affected by child trafficking at any given point in time. Most of them are forced into child labour or prostitution, where they end up being physically, emotionally and sexually abused and exploited. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), trafficking children is closely interlinked with the demand for cheap, malleable and docile labour. They are engaged in sectors characterized by environments that are unacceptable as well as dangerous to the health and development of the child. These forms range from bonded labour, camel jockeying, child domestic labour, commercial sexual exploitation and prostitution, drug couriership, and child soldiering to exploitative or slavery-like practices in the informal industrial sector⁸. According to the ILO, hazardous child labour is work in dangerous or unhealthy conditions that could result in a child being killed, or injured and/or made ill as

⁴ Lucchi, E. (2013) Humanitarian interventions in situations of urban violence. ALNAP Lessons Paper. London: ALNAP/ODI. Page 6

⁵ WVI (2013) Situational analysis: Urban Safety and Security in Beirut. A desk based research conducted by UN Habitat, World Vision Lebanon and Makassed Philanthropic Association.

⁶ Macaluso, A. and I. Briscoe (2015) Trapped in the city: communities, insecurity and urban life in fragile states. Policy Brief. The Hague: The Hague Institute of Peace and Justice.

⁷ Interpeace, and Indigo Côte d’Ivoire (2015) “Obstacles à la cohésion sociale et dynamiques de violence impliquant les jeunes dans l’espace urbain”, July 2015, Abidjan, pp. 1-115.

⁸ See International Labour Organization: <http://www.ilo.org/ipecc/areas/Traffickingofchildren/lang--en/index.htm>

a consequence of poor safety and health standards and working arrangements. Some injuries or ill health may result in permanent disability.

Urban safety is a multi-dimensional phenomenon and challenge, and *Safer Cities*, a complex aspiration. Not one individual actor or stakeholder in the city can claim to develop safety strategies and address crime and violence. These strategies need to be the outcome of collaborative efforts and resources from a myriad of citywide actors and stakeholders, particularly government

Responding to the challenge - Emergence of the Safer Cities approach

WV's proposed *Safer Cities for Children Framework* was inspired by several frameworks as outlined in the Safer Cities Literature Review, but particularly informed by UN-Habitat's Safer Cities Program⁹, specifically with its shift to a multidimensional approach to urban safety and its work on enhancing safety through planning, management and governance - this approach addresses the gaps in WV's current child protection models.

The Framework identifies five thematic areas / elements of Safer Cities for consideration based on the issues identified above. These are:

- Safety from urban violence
- Safety from conflict
- Safety from natural and man-made disasters
- Safety in the built environment
- Safety from abuse, neglect and exploitation of children

The present Framework based on a comprehensive literature review on Safer Cities' theories of change, initiatives and approaches internal and external to WV, proposes overarching goal and entry points using the strategic pillars and enablers of change identified in the Cities for Children Framework¹⁰. For greatest impact, these interventions are encouraged to utilize both a lifecycle approach and citywide programming strategy to advance urban safety at local, city and national level.

Achieving Safer Cities for Children

The goal for the Safer Cities domain of change is *"to ensure that children and their families live in a safe and protected and environment, free from violence, abuse, exploitation and harm"*. Below, we describe how we aim to achieve this goal using the **strategic pillars** and **enablers of change** of the *Cities for Children Framework*. The Framework proposes a number of **entry points** that will assist practitioners and policy makers develop issue-based focused interventions using a lifecycle approach that responds to the protection needs of children and adolescents in the city.

- **Strategic pillar 1: Building social cohesion among diverse communities and promoting inclusion of marginalized and vulnerable groups**

Urban environments tend to exhibit higher heterogeneity than rural ones. New urban neighbourhoods are often constitute a highly diverse intermix of residents from various cultural, ethnic, linguistic, religious, political backgrounds, motivated to relocate to the city by the promise of economic opportunities. The trust and solidarity usually existing

⁹ See UN-Habitat: <http://unhabitat.org/urban-initiatives/initiatives-programmes/safer-cities/>

¹⁰ WVI (2016). Cities for Children Framework: A Strategic Framework for Urban Programming.

among rural community members can be lacking in the diverse, often fragmented, urban societies. People often lack the relationships fundamental for maintaining cohesive and strongly networked communities. This is especially true for urban migrants. They are often separated from their perceived 'homes' back in rural areas, a concept emotionally denoted by familial, kinship, cultural and land ties¹¹. Building a sense of community is essential for effective urban programming. The urban poor, often migrants, need to develop social capital and networks in the city to compensate for the loss of intergenerational links and support that hold rural communities together.

The lack of community and neighborhood networks heightens vulnerabilities and safety issues of children. Building and strengthening social cohesion among diverse communities can help to decrease social tensions. Proven practices from the Safer Cities literature review propose the following entry points for this pillar: Safer schools in Kenya, Child Friendly Street mapping in Beirut and Surabaya, Siliguri anti trafficking network, Youth led waste alliance in Kenya, children and youth led safe public spaces.

- **Strategic pillar 2: Strengthening the quality of urban governance, promoting community engagement, local-led advocacy in order to achieve citywide effective policy impact**

The complex urban governance environment is one of the greatest dilemmas facing NGOs seeking to address the larger societal issues associated with urban poverty. This arena incorporates formal governance structures of government, civil society and private-sector activities, as well as the informal governance dynamics of power, decision-making, networks and relationships. Both formal and informal governance components can either facilitate NGOs to function in an urban context or create challenges and resistance to their programme implementation.

Local government, municipal authorities and national departments all have responsibilities and interests in making a city function effectively. Most service-provision and development policies will require a locally led analysis and problem solving, including policies on waste disposal, air and water pollution, sanitation, road use, and upkeep and provision of inclusive affordable services. However, the government is not the only power structure in play in urban environments. Micro-politics are extremely important in informal urban communities, notoriously involving gang violence. One key advantage of urban development is the number and scale of local actors who can collaborate and develop shared visions and goals. Overcoming the 'wicked' challenges associated with urban governance to becoming a positive enabling force will require long-term collaboration and partnerships that strive to identify mutually agreeable objectives and develop enduring trust and meaningful participation.

Weak and corrupt urban governance systems and structures among several other factors is a lead contributor to urban violence. Improving urban safety relies on effective and inclusive formal and informal governance structures, which is fundamental to strengthening its overall effectiveness and accountability. These steps will necessarily depend on the inclusion of marginalised and vulnerable voices into decision-making processes, especially children and youth, so they are not overshadowed by the interests and voices more powerful or visible sections of urban societies. Proven practices from the Safer Cities literature review propose the following entry points for this strategic pillar: Safer Schools in Kenya, Child Friendly Street mapping in Beirut and Surabaya children, and youth engagement in municipal programmes in La Paz, Bolivia

Strategic pillar 3: Supporting knowledge building through enhancing the accessibility, representation, accuracy of data and information to leverage and advocate for transformational change.

¹¹ World Vision International (2016/2014). *Making Sense of the City*. Revised ed.

The issue of gaps in formal data on urban safety is often due to the challenges posed by the urban distinctives. Official data sets are often presented in aggregated forms where the needs and concerns of particular groups (e.g. street children) are obscured behind the relative affluence of their neighbours living within the same urban space. The lack of data about safety and the changing environment in a city has consequences not only for urban programming needs (programme design, implementation and evaluation), but also impact inclusion of the most vulnerable groups to violence in city planning and policies, social welfare services and economic opportunities that neglect these institutionally ‘invisible’ populations who are most in need of safety measures. Therefore, this strategic pillar aims to fill in the data gaps, improve the effectiveness, accuracy and systematic collection, analysis, dissemination and use of information and data, while increasing the capacity of local actors and official institutions to do the same. The pillar also promotes actors to collaborate in mutually beneficial cycles of information sharing, in order to become valuable local knowledge assets for local decision-makers to support more inclusive and accurate policymaking and pro-poor interventions.

Effective and accurate collection, analysis, dissemination and use of information are fundamental to support all other steps, from community mobilization and awareness-raising to impacting urban planning. Proven practices from the Safer Cities literature review propose the following entry points for this strategic pillar: Safer schools in Kenya, and Child Friendly Street mapping in Beirut and Surabaya, and equipping and training communities to conduct their own regular evaluation and assessment of urban safety, for example conducting safety audits of their neighbourhood with a view of providing this information to local authorities and decision making institutions.

Strategic pillar 4: Improving the quality of the *built environment*, shared public space and service delivery

The lack of planning specially in the informal areas and fragile pockets of the city means lack of child-friendly public spaces and green areas resulting in children forced to play in dangerous areas, such as along train tracks, in graveyards or near hubs of dangerous activity. Therefore, it is pivotal to address the built environment in effective large-scale urban programming. Given the density of city populations combined with a lack of space, urban planning and design becomes a key factor for allocating safe and adequate settlement areas, infrastructure and service delivery for the urban poor, particularly in situations of high transitions or sudden large-scale shocks. Children have the right to playgrounds and green and clean spaces for better a healthy living and basic quality of life. Infrastructure, community driven solutions and inclusion of community especially the most vulnerable groups in planning for basic infrastructure, safe and healthy public spaces to enhance liveability is critical for sustainable cities.

Proven practices from Safer Cities literature review propose the following entry point for this strategic pillar: Supporting schools to open their doors as public spaces, especially in slums and congested areas, during weekends and holidays to encourage urban residents’ interaction as demonstrated in the good school good neighbourhood program

To successfully implement entry points projects to contribute to Safer Cities for Children, four enablers of change are suggested within the CFC to build on the urban advantage. Each enabler for change guides development practitioners and local stakeholders in recognizing and utilizing the assets, capitals and advantages already present in urban environments.

The four enablers of change for the Safer Cities domain of change (common to all domains of changes) are:

1. **Partnerships:** Establishing strong citywide partnerships with and strengthening capacities of all key stakeholders to promote collective action and collaboration for quality, scale and impact. It is increasingly evident that no single actor can unilaterally achieve the type of large-scale transformational change necessary to create cities

where children really thrive. Therefore, a partnering approach becomes an excellent sustainability strategy. Partnering takes direct advantage of high urban density and diversity of local actors, who often possess first-hand knowledge and experience on local contextual issues, established social capital, access into the target community, and resources appropriate to the context. The partnering approach provides opportunities for dispersed local actors and organisations to pool together resources and unite around a shared vision and value proposition. This can act as a starting point to formalising such partnerships, and establishing citywide networks of partners in a long-term sustainability strategy.

2. **Technology:** Utilizing existing and new technological capacity and innovations to assist in effectiveness and scale up of urban programming, wherever possible. There already exists significant technological infrastructure in urban areas, from widespread mobile phone usage, to infrastructures built-in with technology (e.g. automatic street lamps that turn on after dark). While access to the benefits of technology is not equally distributed for all urban residents, their mere existence in urban environment provides an excellent resource and opportunity for development practitioners to support, assist and enable various programmatic activities. . Technology can address data gaps due to the dynamic nature of cities. Constant mobility erodes periodic data sets collected by local governments; technology can produce easy user friendly tools for all urban residents to contribute to knowledge building in the city. Examples for entry points include using social and mainstream media to deliver messages of non-violence and other urban safety issues, including addressing harmful misconceptions (e.g. supposedly increased crime and theft rates due to the presence of refugees).
3. **Urban Planning and Design:** Ensuring urban planning and design is inclusive, participatory and responsive to the needs and solutions of the most vulnerable groups in urban settings. World Vision recognizes the well-established administrative capacities and systems already present in urban municipalities. Therefore, this enabler of change takes advantage of urban planning and design processes to guide them towards strengthening its inclusion and responsiveness to the vulnerabilities faced by all its urban residents, especially the most vulnerable such as residents of informal settlements. Improvements in urban planning and design can have profound positive impact across all the strategic pillars. Upgrading of the built environment can involve allocation of safe, secure, sufficient and affordable housing developments, upgrading of slum areas, public spaces and road usage, and ensuring the adequate and consistent delivery and accessibility of essential services, like waste disposal. Inclusive and responsive urban planning can directly address the challenges posed by the three urban distinctives, including planning for better absorption of its incoming migration population. Some promising examples are Advocating for the opening and /or rehabilitation of public spaces for children and youth adults to use for play and leisure e.g. Ensuring safe access to public services (for example infrastructure, education and health facilities) for diverse groups living in the same or adjacent neighbourhoods.
4. **Urban Policy:** Ensuring that urban policy at all tiers of the city, from neighborhood level to city and national level, promotes equity and advocates for sustainable development. Urban policy is an excellent instrument for harnessing the abundance of political capital in the city to address rapid urbanisation. Influencing urban policy at its various tiers of government (local, district/municipal, city, state and national) will allow stakeholders and development actors to place important urban development priorities within the official government agenda for the immediate and long-term future of the city and its populations. This can include, but is certainly not limited to, identification of vital issues and opportunities, better coordination across official actors and various stakeholders, allocation of budgets, resources and public-private investment, and reform of legislation and

regulations important for urbanisation and urban development issues. Advocating to influence policy change to be more responsive, inclusive and accountable to all urban residents is indispensable for launching long-term, sustainable and citywide impact across all the strategic pillars. Promising examples include the Safer Cities My City Initiative in India, and training of local authorities, police, media, social services, etc. to prevent and address gender and age-based violence in streets, parks and other public spaces.