Cities for Children:

Defining the Dream and Achieving the Reality

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INTRODUCTION

The realities of most cities are that the traffic dominates the streets, public spaces are often barren or dangerous; children's hunger for trees does not appear to be shared by most developers and city officials; most children have narrowly limited ranges of movement; and research with children and attention to their needs are emphatically not part of most urban policy, planning, design and management practices.[1]

Children growing up in cities have a unique mix of advantages and disadvantages. Access to better schools, sports facilities, and health care is enjoyed in marked contrast to the pollution, traffic danger, and sometimes breakdown of community that exists in many of today's cities. But there is no reason why the situation need be as bad as it sometimes is.

Most countries have signed global declarations that include children's rights. While great progress has been made in addressing their rights, some elements of children's lives remain neglected. For instance, although urban life presents unique challenges, children's needs are often ignored by urban planning processes. The problems faced by children in cities include a lack of independent mobility, danger from traffic and strangers, and a shortage of safe outdoor places to play. Fortunately, a city good for children is a city good for people of all ages.

It may be difficult to imagine making existing cities more child-friendly. Yet we know from the experiences of various modern cities that urban settings *can* be friendlier, *can* better nourish community, and *can* be safer and less polluted. Cities have unique advantages over less urbanized areas; we simply need to imagine something better and develop plans to achieve it.

In India, which is the focus of this book, several organizations address issues related to the liveability of cities, including evidence-based ways to reduce traffic congestion and make the environment safer, cleaner, and more attractive for people of all ages. These groups include the Evangelical Social Action Forum (ESAF), EMBARQ (the WRI Center for Sustainable Transport), the Centre for Science and Environment, the Institute of Transport Development and Policy (ITDP), the Clean Air Initiative-Asia, the Ride a Cycle Foundation, and the Center for Infrastructure, Sustainable Transportation and Urban Planning (CISTUP).

This booklet explores what is meant by a "child-friendly liveable city" and its importance in a world where half of the global population lives in urban areas and where almost half of it is under the age of 24. Drawing on global multi-disciplinary research, and focusing on recent studies from India, it examines the current situation of many of the world's cities and proposes recommendations for child-friendly change.

What does a child-friendly city look like? It is a city in which one actually sees children playing outdoors. It is a city in which children feel safe moving about independently. It is a city in which outdoor spaces are made available for children. In addition to playgrounds, playing fields, and parks, this means sufficiently wide sidewalks for children to have space to play and cycle or streets set aside exclusively for children's use for a few hours each day where no other outdoor areas are available.

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[1] Chawla, L. *Growing Up in an Urbanizing World.* UNESCO, 2002.

THE QUEST FOR A CHILD-FRIENDLY LIVEABLE CITY

> If our cities are unhealthy or lack liveability, "children are the first to suffer—and they suffer more deeply."[2]

Urban growth continues to increase as people search for better lives in the world's cities, but sprawling developments have instigated crises at several levels. Not so long ago, it was common to see children running and playing in the streets. In some cities this is still a common sight, but in too many others, cars and motorbikes have taken over and children have virtually disappeared from sight. Automobile-oriented planning, complemented by television and computer being preferred forms of recreation, has created fractured, and in many cases unsafe, communities where people have become virtual strangers to their neighbours. It has also promoted an epidemic of obesity with its attendant chronic illnesses. Is this the type of environment in which we wish to raise our children?

The pros and cons of the urban environment

Data emerging from multi-disciplinary research on children's environments reveal that children and youth worldwide have similar needs.[3] To function adequately in any environment, children need access to clean water and sufficient food, to be healthy, to have friends and families who love and care for them, to experience peace, safety, and protection from threats of violence, and to trust adults to listen to them and to take their views seriously. Just as importantly, but much less recognized, they also need to have sufficient safe outdoor space in which to learn, develop, and play. A nation cannot truly prosper without the proper care and growth (mental, social, emotional, and

physical) of its children. Children, meanwhile, are profoundly affected by the environments in which they live.

In many instances, urban children can expect to enjoy greater opportunities and a better quality of life than can their rural counterparts. The higher population density in cities attracts a range of public and private services that address/fulfill a variety of cultural, commercial, recreational, health, educational, and psychological needs. Cities also provide significant economies of scale and proximity to basic services such as water, electricity, sewage, communication, health care, education, and public transportation. Similar services may not be available or be of lesser quality outside larger towns. When the distances that need to be travelled within a city are manageable, children's mobility is enhanced. This facilitates independence and provides opportunities for children to safely walk to school, play outdoors with others in a park, and live in a healthy, sociable environment.

Urban children come into contact with a greater diversity of people than do those living in smaller communities. This offers opportunities for them to develop social and other skills, including the essential citizenship skill of empathy. Human interaction also means greater community support and engagement, so that children feel that they belong to a place and that others know them and care about them.

However, children also constitute the most vulnerable component of a city's inhabitants. The reality of many modern urban settings is that children of today's generation spend more time alone than did their peers in the past, and may actually spend more time alone (including watching TV or using the Internet) than with family or friends. Although studies have shown that recreation enhances children's self-esteem, improves skills, promotes team work, provides role models, and

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[2] *Suzanne H. Crowhurst Lennard, presentation made at the 48th International Making Cities Livable Conference, Charleston , SC (USA), 17th October 2010.*
[3] Chawla, 2002.

contributes to children's social and physical well being,[4] "children [today] have fewer friends than ever before. Teens spend more time alone – 3 ½ hours per day – than with family or friends. This affects emotional development. One might say that children suffer from "Community Deficit Disorder".[5] Lack of outdoor recreation can alienate young children from others their own age. A lack of social interaction – particularly independent, unstructured interaction[6] – limits the development of children's social skills, affects their emotional development, poorly prepares them to deal with stress, and leads them in some cases to attempt to "resolve" problems through violence.

The lack of physical exercise that results from dangerous or crowded environments can lead to health problems, including obesity and asthma. In the poorer neighbourhoods of many cities, children can still be seen playing on the streets. While this means that they have more opportunity for mobility and freedom and a greater ability to independently interact with others, they are also exposed to the dangers of fast moving traffic, of hazardous environmental waste, and of abuse by others.

Urban settlements can also become life-threatening environments for children and their families when there is an absence of good governance and a lack of investment in infrastructure, social services, waste management, and resource management. Unless properly managed, many of the advantages mentioned above can actually become disadvantages, placing

severe limitations on the lives of children. Children in cities face a greater risk of becoming the victims of violence and criminal activity than do children living in rural areas. More vehicular traffic increases the likelihood of road accidents. Both the reality and the threat of crime and traffic danger harm children, and their mobility becomes further reduced when parents are afraid to allow them to explore the streets.

Traffic and urban industrial sites also expose children to noise and pollution. Air pollution is a greater threat for children than for adults, as children take in more air – and thus pollution – per unit of body weight at a given level of exertion than do adults. Outdoors, they can face greater exposure to environmental pollutants such as lead which settles near the ground where they play. This pollution is often accentuated by the lack of open and green spaces in the urban landscape. Instead of enjoying healthy environments, children can too often be found playing and socializing in unhealthy surroundings. In some cities, the level of pollution is so high that many children suffer from asthma: in one South Asian city, a lung expert has advised that children should not breathe in the city![7]

What does a liveable city look like?

A liveable city fosters contact with nature and opportunities to walk, cycle, and participate actively in a community's social life, thereby improving the health and well-being of adults and children.

Liveability refers to the extent to which a living environment contributes to the physical, social, and mental well-being of all of its inhabitants. The quality of life experienced by citizens living in a city is related to their ability to access infrastructure (water,

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[4] See, for example, State of California Resources Agency, *The Health and Social Benefits of Recreation*, 2005. http://www.parks.ca.gov/pages/795/ files/benefits%20final%20online%20v6-1-05.pdf

[5] *48th International Making Cities More Liveable Conference Report*, Charleston, SC, April 17-21, 2010. http://www.livablecities.org/articles/48th-conference-report

[6] D Engwicht. *Street Reclaiming, Creating Livable Streets and Vibrant Communities*. Pluto Press, 1999.

[7] Personal comment heard during a workshop on public spaces, Kandy, Sri Lanka, 8 July 2010.

sanitation, transportation, and communication,), healthy food, clean air, affordable housing, good schools, health care, meaningful employment, and green space and parks. The liveability of a city is also determined by the extent to which its residents are able to participate in decision-making about the city.

According to the founder of the *International Making Cities Liveable Council* (IMCLC), Dr Suzanne Crowhurst Lennard, a city should facilitate independent access for children if it wants to be truly liveable.[8] It should provide a physical environment that ensures children's health, develops their faculties, and fosters their love for community and nature. It should provide an environment that is both safe from traffic and from crime to allow children to move around on their own. If we plan our towns and cities with children in mind, we can achieve more liveable neighbourhoods, towns, and cities – not only for children, but for people of all ages, a concept also promoted by 8-to-80 cities.[9]

Dr. Lennard notes that child-friendly cities thrive because everyone needs the same basic things, like an accessible environment and rich social life. Some ideas that foster child-friendly liveability include: (i) designing buildings, roads, parks and street furniture to inspire imagination, invite exploration, and serve multiple uses; (ii) planning social spaces like cafés, shops, and libraries so that they are within walking or cycling distance of residences; and (iii) creating an inclusive environment where people of different age, race, and income groups can live together and learn to appreciate each others' values and differences. A liveable city contains complete communities with mixed-use and affordable housing close to shopping, employment, and cultural centers. Its transportation networks are pedestrian-friendly. It has a vital downtown core with public

spaces and economic activity, as well as green spaces such as agricultural lands and parks. Such an environment will best meet the social needs of children and the broader community.

By creating communities that are responsive to the needs of children and young people, community planning can result in neighbourhoods, towns, and cities that are ecologically and socially beneficial. A healthy community is one that raises healthy children who maintain their involvement in community and love for nature into adulthood, and transmit these values to their own children. When children are able to move about a city safely, to play outdoors with peers, to mix with people of different ages and incomes, and to observe and appreciate nature, then a city becomes a good one for all of its residents. A good community for children is a good community for us all.

> *According to Enrique Peñalosa, former Mayor of Bogotá, Colombia, the single biggest difference between the infrastructure of an "advanced" nation and a "backward" nation is its footpaths (sidewalks, pavements), not its highways. It is the quality of the footpath that determines the quality of life in a city.*[10]

Governments clearly have to play an active role in making cities more liveable, not least by formulating policies that empower schools and neighbourhoods to have better facilities for safe play spaces. Specific aspects of urban planning that local governments need to consider include:

The urban fabric: liveable cities are comprised of walkable, mixed use, higher-density, mixed-income neighbourhoods where it is a pleasant short walk or bicycle ride to school, a store, a workplace, a transit stop, a friend's house, or a park. Walking becomes the primary means by which people travel, interact, and experience what is happening in their immediate communities. The streets are traffic-calmed and tree-lined, with few, if any, being wider

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[8] See, for example, http://wildsingaporenews.blogspot.com/2010/07/want-liveable-city-make-it-child.html.
[9] www.8-80cities.org.

[10]http://www.hindu.com/2009/11/22/stories/2009112260561800.htm.

than three lanes. Safer streets provide more opportunities for fun, exercise, and informal community interaction.

Transport conditions: liveable cities provide quality bicycle and pedestrian facilities throughout the city, enabling most trips to be made by foot or bicycle. As is evident in a number of progressive European and North American cities, urban life without a car or motorbike is perfectly possible and enjoyable. Convenient and accessible public transport of various types increases people's opportunities for education, employment, shopping, and recreation; it also supports equity objectives by ensuring good services and earning opportunities for the low-income and differently-abled while at the same time increasing the quality of independent mobility for children and the elderly.

Attractiveness and identity: a liveable city is full of clean, attractive streetscapes and public facilities. It fosters individual unique community identities that make the city as a whole special. Community pride encourages community cohesion and social networking wherein residents regularly cooperate and interact with each other. Community attractiveness and identity also cultivate friendliness and consideration, wherein positive personal interactions between people (including residents, employees, and visitors) contribute to community liveability. This in turn ensures that people of all income classes and abilities are able to be part of a community, while at the same time reducing stress, uncertainty, and perceived and actual "stranger danger" that is common in larger, more anonymous cities.

The degree to which urban landscapes, transportation systems, and community presence accommodate and reflect the needs of children and other people with special needs can be considered to be an indicator of a community's or city's liveability.[11]

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[11] Van Vliet, Willem. *Creating Livable Cities for All Ages: Intergenerational Strategies and Initiatives*. UN-Habitat, 2008.

What are cities for children?

"I go straight from school to tutoring, then back home. I have no friends; I don't know how to socialize. My parents want me to be an intellectual, but what if I want something different?" –teenage boy in Dhaka

The concept of child-friendliness is grounded in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which mandates the active participation of children in civic life and promotes local systems of good governance committed to children's rights. The term 'child friendly cities' was coined to reflect the fact that the needs of children and youth, particularly with regards to their living environment, must be taken fully into account in the development and planning processes.[12]

Where governments have not learned the lessons of uncontrolled urbanization, many children are forced to suffer inhospitable living conditions: they face health risks caused by lack of clean water, adequate sanitation, and solid waste removal. They are under-stimulated and bored because they live in uninteresting environments with few if any opportunities to interact directly with other people. They fear harassment, crime, and racial tension which in turn makes them feel socially excluded from their communities. As a consequence of these social factors, child rights may be violated or non-existent in urban areas.

Despite this somewhat bleak picture, young people living in cities can also have positive experiences. Often they can create, with the few resources they have, a variety of opportunities for a better physical environment. Children are creative and show that they have a good understanding of the wider context in which they live and of their own problems and how they may be solved.

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[12] UNICEF. *Children's Rights and Habitat.* 1996.

UNICEF's Child Friendly Cities Initiative (CFCI) was launched in 1996 to make cities liveable places for all. According to UNICEF, a child-friendly city is actively engaged in fulfilling the following right of every young citizen to:

- ❋ Influence decisions about their city and community
- ❋ Express their opinion about the city in which they live
- ❋ Participate fully in family, community, and social life
- ❋ Receive basic services such as health care and education
- ❋ Drink safe water and have access to proper sanitation
- ❋ Be protected from exploitation, violence, and abuse
- ❋ Walk alone safely in the streets
- ❋ Meet friends and play
- ❋ Have green spaces for plants and animals
- ❋ Live in an unpolluted environment
- ❋ Participate in cultural and social events
- ❋ Be an equal citizen with access to every service, regardless of ethnic origin, religion, income, gender or disability

Through this and other international projects such UNESCO's *Growing Up in Cities Project* (1996) and HealthBridge's Liveable Cities program, practical methods have been promoted to improve the built environment in a way that recognises and reflects the needs of children and young people. These projects have discovered that physical needs – such as for green areas, basic services, a variety of activity settings, freedom from physical dangers, freedom of movement, and access to peer gathering places – are globally regarded by children as very important to their well-being.

Table 1: Indicators of local environmental quality from the perspective of 10-15 year olds in "Growing Up in Cities" study sites

Rating	Social Qualities	Physical Qualities
Positive	• Social integration • Freedom from social threats • Cohesive community identity • Secure tenure • Tradition of community self-help	• Green areas • Provision of basic services • Variety of activity settings • Freedom from physical dangers • Freedom of movement • Peer gathering places
Negative	• Sense of political powerlessness • Insecure tenure • Racial tensions • Fear of harassment and crime • Boredom • Social exclusion and stigma	• Lack of gathering places • Lack of activity settings • Lack of basic services • Heavy traffic • Trash/Litter • Geographic isolation

Urban Ecology Australia has also offered the following list of basic prerequisites for a city to be a good place for children[13]:

- ♦ Easy access for all children to affordable and quality basic health services, clean water, adequate sanitation, and solid waste removal.

- ♦ All policies, resource allocations, and governance actions are in accord with the best interests of children.

- ♦ A safe environment and healthy conditions that nurture the development of all children, with opportunities for recreation, learning, social interaction, psychological

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[13] http://www.urbanecology.org.au/topics/childfriendlycities.html

development, and cultural expression.

- Assurance of a sustainable future under equitable social and economic conditions, and protection from environmental hazards and natural disasters.

- Participation of children in decision making relating to matters that affect their lives, and abundant opportunities to express their opinions.

- Special consideration for disadvantaged children, such as those living or working on the streets, those who are sexually exploited, living with disabilities, or without adequate family support.

- Absence of discrimination based on gender, ethnic/religious background, or social or economic status.

What does a child-friendly, liveable city look like?

A city for children is a city in which children can thrive physically, socially, mentally...which also means a city good for those of ALL ages.

It can be difficult to imagine a city radically different from the ones in which most of us currently live. It may help to first create a mental picture. Just for a moment, picture your city without motorized vehicles. Imagine a tram moving quietly through the streets on its own track. Imagine people of all ages cycling: adults pedaling their way to work and children and youth riding to school. People cycle home from shops with laden baskets on their handlebars, or sacks tied to their carriers. There may also be three-wheeled bicycles: rickshaws, cyclos, trishaws or pedicabs, some containing groups of children. Vendors push or pedal carts along the street sides, loaded with fruits, vegetables, rice, house wares, clothing, or sandals. Others walk with baskets on their heads that contain live fish, chickens, or bread.

The sidewalks are as lively and busy as the streets. On many street corners there is someone with a pump and a few simple tools to fix bicycles and pedicabs. All sorts of food and drink are readily available for sale: cut-up fruits with chilli and salt, juices, peanuts, fried snacks, tea. Some vendors have a simple stall at the edge of the sidewalk, under the awning of a building, while others carry their wares. When the sidewalk widens out, a portion is used for playing badminton or for small children to learn to cycle. There are benches at regular intervals shaded by trees, where the elderly can rest or simply gather to meet their friends. Young people sit on the edge of the sidewalk, on big flower pots, on the steps of buildings, or on the base of statues, chatting with their friends or just watching the scene. Both water fountains and public toilets are in abundance and are kept clean.

Now listen for a moment. What do you hear? The noise of engines and honking has been replaced with the ringing of bells, the shouts of vendors, and the laughter of children. People socialize outdoors, in view of others on the streets. Casual interactions ensue: people greet each other with a nod and smile or a few words; occasionally they stop to talk, and do not have to shout over the street noise. A child drops onto a low stool on the sidewalk to enjoy a sticky dessert sold by a vendor, then is tapped on the shoulder by friends asking her to join them to play. Children move about and play on their own or in groups under the loose supervision of adults. Why watch TV or play video games when the streets are so lively and fun?

The streets feel safe because they *are* safe. People move slowly by bicycle or pedicab, and make way for those wishing to cross. People look out for others, without even realizing they are doing so. Schools are equipped with playgrounds rather than parking lots because both children and teachers arrive by foot or by bicycle; bicycle racks are common and crowded. Every neighbourhood has a tiny park or a street occasionally closed to traffic so that kids can play on it.

The inhabitants of these cities are not categorized by income, race, class, caste, religion, or physical ability; they are simply people living together. There is little difference between the wealthiest and poorest. There is more communal child rearing, illustrating the wisdom behind the saying that "it takes a village to raise a child." Kids gain from the "gifts" of other adults and kids, and often those doing the giving feel that they are the main recipients. An old man allows a neighbourhood youth to spend his afternoons watching him fix things, gradually passing on what he knows. Young people teach older ones how to use a computer. People learn who makes or does what in their neighbourhood, so they can do most of their shopping and get most of what they need done close by. Trust develops from daily mundane interactions, until strangers become acquaintances and acquaintances become friends.[14]

So much for the dream. In practical terms, what does a city for children really mean?

It is a city in which one actually sees children outdoors, not only escorted and supervised by adults but on their own. It is a city in which children feel safe moving about independently, by foot, by bicycle, and on public transit. It is a city in which spaces are made available for children to play outdoors with other children, typically under the watchful eye of neighbourhood adults though not necessarily the children's parents/caregivers. In addition to playgrounds, playing fields, and parks, this means sufficiently wide sidewalks for children to have space to play and cycle or streets set aside exclusively for children's use for a few hours each day where no other outdoor areas are available. All children in the city would have outdoor play space within a few minutes' walk of their home.

In addition to movement and recreation, children have other needs. These include the basic rights listed in the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, which has been ratified by all countries except the United States and Somalia. These rights translate into the provision of basic amenities of decent quality at a reasonable cost or for free: housing, water, sanitation, electricity, preventive and curative health, and schools.

In a city for children, safety (both in terms of travel and protection from crime or assault) is guaranteed less by police and more by 'eyes on the street'. Famous Canadian activist, urban planner, and writer Jane Jacobs explained that in New York City, the safest place for children to play can be on the sidewalk, not in parks or playgrounds, because children are safest where adults are present.[15] Every small shopkeeper keeps an eye on the stretch of sidewalk in front of her shop; adults selling goods on the street see what is happening around them and make it difficult for people to engage in uncivil behaviours towards others. The more we retreat inside cars and enclosed buildings that are closed off from the street, the more dangerous streets actually become for anyone on them. An empty, unwatched sidewalk or street is crime's best friend. On the other hand, when many people are walking, sitting, buying and selling on the sidewalks, the city becomes both livelier and safer. When our public spaces – including sidewalks – attract people of all ages, they become well-used and safer for everyone. When cities are designed so that different activities occur at various times of the day throughout the city, rather than designating separate zones for living, working, and shopping, there will be more 'eyes on the street,' more people outdoors at different times of the day, and thus more safety, conviviality, and liveability.

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[14] See http://www.abundantcommunity.com/

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[15] See, for example, J Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities,* Random House, 1989.

What else does a city for children mean? If we wish to ensure safety for those moving by foot or by bicycle, we must limit and slow motorized vehicles. Being hit by a car is often fatal. By slowing vehicles down, we automatically make our streets safer. By limiting the entrance of cars and motorbikes onto some streets, we increase the use of those streets by people wishing to walk, cycle, play, or socialize.

So, how does it look? Not modern enough, you say? A bit messy and disorganized, too slow, too much effort to move around without the help of engines? Fear not...to create child-friendly liveable cities we need not return to the pre-motorized vehicle era. High quality public transit, like trams, can provide fairly rapid travel while enhancing rather than detracting from the urban environment. It also helps to remember that with all the advantages of modernization and industrialization, there are also some disadvantages. Many of those disadvantages fall most heavily on children and the elderly. It is difficult to get the best of both worlds, to have peace and quiet and lack of pollution as well as convenience and speed...but we could certainly do a better job of balancing our priorities than we do at present. We can also see which elements of current and potential cities are most important to us, and work to achieve the mix that will optimize the health and happiness of all residents.

THE PRACTICALITY OF CHILD-FRIENDLY LIVEABLE CITIES: GETTING FROM HERE TO THERE

"We worry about what a child will become tomorrow, yet we forget that he is someone today."[16]

Studies have demonstrated that when children get more exercise, they are better able to concentrate and succeed in school.[17] When children walk or cycle as part of their daily routine, they develop a far more sophisticated and detailed understanding of their neighbourhood and increased confidence to navigate the streets.[18] Unstructured play, wherein children meet in a space and decide what and how to play, where they set and enforce their own rules rather than being guided by adults, builds citizenship skills that are critical for democracy: the ability to discuss, negotiate, and decide.[19] Such skills are vital for children's well-being and even their professional success as adults, not to mention their happiness.[20]

Children's needs include both physical and psychological development. While they need decent housing, clothing, clean water, food, and proper sanitation, they also need security from violence, the security of friends and family, and the opportunity to play. It is not sufficient to provide for children's material needs while neglecting their emotional ones; a city that strives to provide a high quality of life in a material sense but that makes independent movement and outdoor play impossible will not

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[16] Stacia Tauscher, http://thinkexist.com/quotation/we_worry_about_what_a_child_will_become_tomorrow/219120.html
[17] University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. "Physically Fit Children Appear to do Better in Classroom, Researchers Say." 18 Oct. 2004, http://www.news.uiuc.edu/news/04/1018fitness.html
[18] Jacobs, 1989.
[19] Engwicht 1999.
[20] D Goleman. *Emotional Intelligence, Why it Can Matter More than IQ.* Bantam Books, 1997.

produce healthy or happy children, youth, or adults.

If all children were able to enjoy a decent quality of life, the benefits would also be shared by others: the benefits of a more equal society, less crime, less violence, less fear of strangers, and more friendliness and conviviality.

Despite the obvious benefits of more liveable cities, people may argue that they are not practical. Cities are about getting around; people need to travel long distances and attempt to do so quickly with the use of motorized vehicles; it is not possible to slow or tame the traffic, and we must just adjust our lives to the level of traffic...or so we are told. But then, what is so practical about existing cities? About telling those with weak lungs not to go outside some days of the year, or training children to be terrified of strangers and of streets? About claiming there is no space for bicycles or even pedestrians on the roads? Of treating pedestrians as obstacles to cars?

It requires a phenomenal absence of imagination and memory to accept existing cities as practical, as liveable, or as child-friendly. Cities worldwide have changed radically in just one generation. As children, could we have imagined living as today's children do, driven to school and playing indoors? Could we have imagined that childhood obesity rates in some countries would become so high as to be normalized? Could we have imagined the level of fear of strangers, so that the TV, with all its violence, would be considered a better companion for children than other kids? Research in Bangladesh, for example, has found that most children play inside and watch television for 2-3 hours a day – more time than they spend at any other leisure activity other than sleeping. Most schools in Dhaka also have no scheduled play time.[21] Only a generation ago, this was unimaginable.

The only way we can feel that denying children and the elderly independent movement and that living in noisy, polluted, dangerous places alienated from our neighbours is our best option is to believe that nothing else is possible.

In *The Omnivore's Dilemma,* Michael Pollan writes that the meaning of sustainability is in its opposite: if something is unsustainable, it will eventually collapse.[22] It is not hard to see that many of our cities are on the verge of collapse, if not already beyond it. Signs of this situation include the observations that in many large cities, it takes an hour or more to travel to a meeting only a few kilometres away, or that every day someone loses a limb or dies trying to cross the street, or that city-dwelling asthmatics constantly struggle for breath, or that school children are without play opportunities because playgrounds have been converted into parking lots, or that a significant proportion of one's income is spent accessing poor-quality transport in an attempt to reach needed destinations under miserable conditions. Similar signs are everywhere; in fact, they are so common that we often overlook them. And that is precisely the problem: when we learn to accept the unliveable, we forget to fight for the liveable.

We should never let the fear of something better stop us from working to achieve it. Although there are some practical difficulties to making (or re-making) our existing cities child-friendly, such difficulties are, in reality, fairly minor when compared to the more practical difficulties of continuing as we currently are.

Direct, visual evidence of the practicality of child-friendly liveable cities actually already exists throughout the world. Woonerf streets (also known as home zones and complete streets), which

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[21] Kabir, N, HI Hillol, and D Efroymson. *The Negative Effects of TV and Our Children*. WBB Trust, Dhaka, November 2007 (available in Bengali only).

[22] Pollan, Michael, *The Omnivore's Dilemma, A Natural History of Four Meals.* Penguin Books, 2007.

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allow cars to go no faster than the speed of pedestrians, thereby allowing children to play in the street, already exist in a number of countries including the Netherlands, Germany, the UK, and the US; currently about 2 million people in the Netherlands live in woonerfs. Even in the car-dominated megacity of Dhaka, people regularly block the streets in some neighbourhoods so that children and youth can safely play outdoors. Kids walk and cycle to school in many cities, even in some heavily traffic-dominated cities in Asia. In October 2000, residents of Bogotá (Colombia) voted to keep cars off the streets every weekday from 6 am to 9 am and 4:30 pm to 7:30 pm from Jan 2015 onwards to make them more pedestrian – and child - friendly. While the referendum results were not implemented, public frustration with traffic congestion and the lack of safety for pedestrians, cyclists, and others was made clear. Worldwide, the popular Carfree Day is celebrated on 22 September. A 2000 French poll supported the idea of car-free days and 44% wanted it to become a weekly event. Opinion surveys in Italy and France show approval for car-free days at 85%.[23]

Cities cannot be only about facilitating movement and attempting to generate wealth. It is at least equally important to give priority to the needs of children. Money will not buy all advantages, and a concerted effort to gain more and more wealth will, ultimately, result in other poverties. Governments, urban and transport planners, and others should prioritize the safe mobility of children, the ability of children to play outdoors in their own neighbourhood, and urban planning and transport policies that enable and encourage short-distance trips by non-motorized modes over longer-distance trips. The following

recommendations – which include policies and ways to better plan cities and communities – are meant to outline a variety of changes that, if implemented, could help to create cities that are more liveable for children and therefore for all.

Recommendations to create child-friendly liveable cities

Policies

- ❊ Ensure appropriate budget allocations for activities related to the needs of children, including not only parks and recreation facilities but also safety and security measures.
- ❊ Ensure the proper implementation and monitoring of child-friendly policies for cycling and walking safely to school; ensure that there are adequate play spaces in all neighbourhoods.
- ❊ As part of building codes, mandate the provision of safe neighbourhood and school play areas for children, including in and around apartment complexes that are under construction.
- ❊ Pass and enforce a pedestrian-first policy.
- ❊ Pass and enforce policies to encourage the establishment of informal street-level businesses, including vendors and hawkers, to increase safety (eyes on the street), attraction, and earning opportunities. This will make the streets safer for children, and will also provide more income earning opportunities for low-income parents.

Urban planning

- ❊ Urban design should focus on the needs of people, not of vehicles. When considering the needs of people, it is important to plan for different groups, including children, the elderly, and the disabled. Not everyone can easily climb stairs, not everyone can or wishes to drive a car or motorbike, and not everyone can safely cross busy streets

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[23] Centre for Science and Environment, *The Leapfrog Factor: Clearing the Air in Asian cities. New Delhi, 2006.*

without assistance. But everybody has the right to move about safely by foot and bicycle, and children have the right to play outdoors.

🌸 Neighbourhoods should be mixed use (homes, offices, shops, services, schools, parks), with important facilities easily accessible and only a short distance from residences.

🌸 People have many needs, including the need for outdoor recreation. High quality open and public spaces should be available throughout the city, designed to attract and serve different types of people, including but not limited to children. Where public spaces are not possible, temporary street closures can be enacted to give children play space and adults space for socializing within their neighbourhood.

Traffic/transport

Walking and cycling

🌸 Make provisions for the safe and independent movement of children, particularly by foot and bicycle, not only to and from school but throughout the city.

🌸 Plan transport networks, including proper infrastructure for walking and cycling and a high quality public transit system, well in advance before new residential areas are built. Ensure that all neighbourhoods are complete, with nearby stores, workplaces, schools, parks, and other facilities to reduce the need to travel by car.

🌸 Promote the use of non-motorized vehicles such as bicycles and cycle rickshaws (pedicabs) by providing them with sufficient road space and parking. Rather than banning these forms of transportation, as has been done in many cities, their use should be expanded. They are not only convenient and inexpensive: they also create no air pollution and thus are good for children's sensitive lungs.

🌸 Ensure amply wide and smooth footpaths and pedestrian lanes free from parking and moving cars and motorbikes.

Provide safe street-level crossings via zebra crossings and traffic signals. Pedestrian bridges and underpasses are car-friendly measures that can be difficult to use for those moving by foot or bicycle.

🌸 Demarcate pedestrian crossings properly and heavily fine/penalize drivers for violating them. Rather than causing pedestrians to cower in fear and dash across the street between them, vehicles should come to a stop to allow pedestrians to cross safely.

🌸 Promote the use of bicycles on campuses and in workplaces through such measures as proper infrastructure, bonus systems such as refunds or discount cards for those arriving on foot or bicycle, and cycle-share programs. The reduced need for parking spaces for cars and motorbikes will mean that the program pays for itself.

🌸 Implement initiatives such as placing cycle racks on buses to encourage people to start using the public transport system wherein cycles can be used at the beginning and/or end of their trip. For those unable or unwilling to cycle, have cycle rickshaws available for that purpose. Whether a bicycle has two wheels or three, it is a non-polluting form of transport which increases urban safety.

Public and shared transport

🌸 Improve public transit systems to reduce the volume of private cars on the road, thereby allowing children, women and the elderly to travel more safely and independently.

🌸 Ensure that buses run regularly and in a timely fashion, especially during school hours.

🌸 Popularize carpooling at campuses and workplaces to reduce the volume of private vehicles on the road. Encourage companies and other offices to provide financial incentives to those who do not drive to work.

Traffic reduction and speed control

* Place sign boards that clearly demarcate school zones and parks. Institute measures to reduce traffic in these areas, such as narrowing the streets, adding bicycle lanes and bicycle parking, widening the footpaths, and setting very low speed limits (30 km/h or less).
* Institute parking management throughout the city, including sufficiently high parking fees to reduce demand. Ensure that parking fees are charged by unit of time rather than for the whole day, in order to create higher turnover and reduce the amount of valuable space dedicated to parking.
* Make road crossing designs mandatory with sufficient aids to ensure the needs of the differently-abled and children. This includes ensuring that pedestrian crossing signals allow sufficient time for those who move slowly to cross safely.
* Institute traffic calming measures to slow vehicles. This includes replacing car lanes with tram lines, wider footpaths, and segregated bicycle lanes; placing fountains or other attractive items in traffic circles; instituting congestion charges for entering the downtown area; etc.

Recreational facilities

* Ensure that all schools have playground facilities with age-appropriate play materials.
* Ensure that every neighbourhood has parks which are inclusive for all children and easily accessible, e.g. easy to reach from nearby residences (the adjoining streets are easy and safe to cross) and physical barriers are avoided.
* Create play spaces as well as unstructured spaces for play and for socialization in all neighbourhoods with traffic restrictions to ensure safety.
* Carefully maintain all park furniture, play equipment, and other amenities; there should not be any discrimination in what is made available based on the neighbourhood's income level. Amenities include benches, drinking water, toilets, pedestrian-oriented lighting, trash bins, and shade.
* Design parks for the needs of a wide array of users. Parks are not just for people walking and jogging, but for those interested in playing a variety of sports, engaging in group exercise, socializing, and so on. Allowing/encouraging vendors can mean that a range of goods and services (refreshment, bicycle repair, toys) become available, thereby making public spaces even more desirable while also contributing to equity.

Overall

* Recognize and work for the understanding that government has the responsibility to provide good quality services, with plenty of citizen oversight, for housing, schools, preventive and curative health services, water, sanitation, and so on.

Steps for implementation

There are a number of ways that we can move towards more child-friendly liveable cities. The most important is to get a wide range of people on board. Governments alone cannot be effective at creating and implementing cities for children. Many other people of different ages, including but not limited to children and youth, must be involved. One way to begin is to set up a committee for child-friendly cities and start meeting regularly. Build partnerships with non-government organizations, private entities, youth groups and the media as each of these bodies has a strategic role to play in communication and information dissemination in society. Learn about the issue. Conduct research on existing problems, including by observing and talking to people. Study the lessons of other cities locally,

regionally, and internationally. Learn which policies are effective at improving the situation for children.

The media can be a great way to access people with decision-making and implementation power. Media personalities can help to document and raise awareness about the key dimensions of and measures for child-friendly cities in ways that can then be effectively shared with relevant stakeholders responsible for urban planning. Share information and ideas and ask for suggestions and input.

City administrators who are committed to building child-friendly cities need to make children's basic needs a priority when planning interventions. The visibility and participation of children and youth in planning processes will help to ensure that the processes are feasible and, indeed, child-friendly. Children and young people need to be consulted and their concerns taken into account when making resource allocation decisions.

One viable starting point might be the creation of a vision statement, such as the one included on that next page that was developed in Nagpur (India) to outline a set of desires and priorities articulated by a community for its city.

- *We envision a city that gives equal rights for our children from all sections of the society to be safe and secure.*
- *We envision a city with healthy children, free from obesity.*
- *We envision a city that provides our children with good air to breath.*
- *We envision a city that gives our children opportunities to walk and cycle to school and throughout the city.*
- *We envision a city whose streets are available for our children to grow up interacting and socializing with all members of the community.*
- *We envision a city which provides facilities for our children to explore their utmost abilities by providing green spaces, playgrounds, and other outdoor spaces that provide extensive recreational opportunities and space for independent, creative play and socializing.*
- *We envision a city where the independent mobility of our children, and their lives, are not limited by motorized vehicles.*

CONCLUSION

There is no reason for a city to be a bad place to raise children. Cities have many advantages that cannot be replicated in the countryside, including more and better job opportunities for adults and youth, better schools and health care, and a wide array of recreational opportunities. But cities also have problems that make life difficult, dangerous, and sometimes devastating for children, including pollution, traffic, crime, and erosion of public spaces due to rapid urban sprawl.

It is possible to retain the advantages of urban life while decreasing many of its disadvantages. The psychological, developmental, and spiritual needs of children, in addition to their physical ones, can be met in cities. Appropriately developed and implemented policies and programs can ensure a better life for urban children. The first step is to acknowledge that, at present, children are not given priority in urban life and priorities need to be reworked so that children are recognized as what they are: our most valuable asset as well as our most important treasure. With the acknowledgment and acceptance of the importance of children can come the various policies and measures needed to create a liveable environment for them, and thus for all residents of our cities.

PART 2: CITIES FOR CHILDREN – A TALE OF TWO CITIES

INTRODUCTION

While the situation in any city will of course be unique, the issues that were identified as important to children and adults in Bangalore and Nagpur are inherently global. The results from this project may thus be illustrative of the situation in any number of cities elsewhere, and provide a useful foundation upon which to design and implement concrete recommendations and solutions.

As part of its ongoing *Cities for Children* program, the Evangelical Social Action Forum (ESAF) conducted a research project in the Indian cities of Bangalore and Nagpur to look at the situation of children in modern cities.[24] The objectives of the research study were multi-fold:

- To prepare profiles of the local child-friendly social infrastructures.
- To list existing organizations and institutions involved with children.
- To identify existing and potential programs, projects, and activities aimed at children.
- To review how local policies and laws address children's rights.
- To identify differences between children who enjoy the rights to education, health, recreation, and survival, and those who are deprived of these rights.
- To gain an understanding of an average child's daily schedule, including recreation, in Bangalore.
- To assess how safe the cities are for a child to grow up in.

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[24] The project received financial and technical support from the HealthBridge Foundation of Canada.

- To identify the cities' contribution to child development, from different perspectives
- To discover children's dreams about their cities.
- To build an evidence base about the presence of street children in Bangalore and their living situation.

The research involved a cross-sectional study, using a combination of quantitative and qualitative methodologies that adopted a descriptive design. A wide variety of anecdotal and experiential data was also collected to complement the study, highlighting children's perspectives of what they do and do not like about their current living environments. The study was undertaken with the participation of 1,210 children aged 7-18 (1,200 school-attending and 10 disadvantaged), 300 parents of school-attending children, 300 teachers, 20 health professionals, 20 NGO representatives, 12 police officers, and 20 government officials. Detailed interviews were conducted with stakeholders to investigate the following issues:

- What are the issues encountered by today's children?
- What are the direct and indirect causes of the problems children face?
- How child-friendly are the two cities in terms of transportation, safety, health, land use, neighbourhoods, education, and governance?
- What policies and laws exist that help to make the cities child-friendly?
- What is the role of various stakeholders in creating child-friendly cities?

CITIES FOR CHILDREN – STUDY RESULTS

Bangalore

Overview

Bangalore is the capital city of the southern Indian state of Karnataka. With a population of about 7.1 million in 2009[25], it is the fifth most populous city in India. In preparation for the Silver Jubilee celebrations of Krishnaraja Wodeyar IV's state rule in 1927, several projects were instituted to beautify the city, including the construction of parks, public buildings, and hospitals. The aesthetic results of these projects initiated the city's reputation as India's "garden city."

Beginning in the 1940s, job prospects in the public sector and educational opportunities resulted in rapid population growth as people migrated from elsewhere in the state in search of work. By the mid-1980s, Bangalore began to evolve into the information technology capital of India. In the course of the many changes the city has undergone, not only has its population increased tremendously, but so too has the number and use of motorized vehicles, traffic congestion, and infrastructural obsolescence. A 2003 evaluation of Bangalore's physical, biological, and socioeconomic infrastructure indicated that although the city's water quality and ecosystems were good, some of its socio-economic conditions (such as traffic and quality of life) scored poorly.[26] The city has attempted to ease traffic gridlocks with a flyover system and one-way traffic systems; however these have been insufficient to deal with the city's ongoing and unplanned growth and low-rise sprawl. While these problems affect all residents, children are particularly vulnerable.

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[25] https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/in.html
[26] Bangalore Metropolitan Rapid Transport Corporation Limited. *Environmental Impact Analysis*. Government of Karnataka, 2005.

Transport, traffic, and safety

Half of the surveyed children walk to school. This does not, however, indicate that there is safety on the streets; rather, children live in close proximity to their schools and there is a general lack of alternative modes of short-distance transport. As the city continues to expand both vertically and horizontally, transportation and safety have become growing problems.

The increase in fast moving and motorized vehicles – together with the city's ban on cycle rickshaws – has drastically and negatively impacted connectivity and the affordability and availability of short distance local transportation.[27] At least half of the interviewed parents indicated that they did not feel that it is safe for their children to play in the streets, mainly because of heavy traffic and pollution. The dangers posed by traffic were also cited as a problem by children, teachers, and other adults.

Although most of the interviewed parents said that they *could* allow their children to travel independently to *nearby* places, at least a third of them noted that they had never actually sent their children anywhere alone. The vast majority of them asserted that, because of the high volume of motorized traffic, it is not safe for children to travel alone in the city. The parents' concerns were echoed by teachers, two-thirds of whom felt that the city is unsafe for children, and most felt that children are not safe while travelling alone. This seems to suggest that there is a general perception that the city's 'development' has resulted in it being designed for motorized vehicles, not for children.

The poor quality of the city's public transport system – with few suitable local, short-distance routes – adds further to concerns about children's mobility. Long, meandering bus routes mean

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[27] For a discussion of cycle rickshaw bans, see
http://thecityfix.com/blog/restrictions-on-cycle-rickshaws-arbitrary-says-delhi-high-court/

children who travel by bus to school spend an inordinately long time in transit. In addition, although all school premises should have posted speed zone sign boards and speed bumps, these traffic calming measures are typically absent or ignored. Due to the heavy traffic near school premises, children experience difficulty crossing the road, getting onto buses, and so on. Aside from the dangers of heavy traffic and the inconveniences of poorly designed public transport, traffic-related pollution also contributes to poor health conditions among children. People's fears and concerns about children's independent mobility have, unfortunately, served only to increase traffic congestion, as parents take them everywhere by motorized vehicle.

While cycling is a popular and healthy source of fun for children, bicycles are virtually non-existent in Bangalore, due to high traffic volumes on the roads and the ongoing shrinking of public spaces. Safety remains a major hindrance to making cycling popular among children.

Sports, play, and recreational facilities

The study results demonstrated that parents and teachers are aware of the importance of open spaces for children's physical and emotional growth. The majority of surveyed teachers felt that it is extremely important for children to have regular access to open space; unfortunately, the majority of parents admitted that their children do not have enough space in which to play. At the same time, the parents appeared to have the perception that if their child excels in academics, they could consider themselves to be good parents. Homework, rather than any type of recreational activity, thus takes up a large proportion of children's day; almost two thirds of the surveyed children reported that they study for an additional 1 to 3 hours each day, outside of their school attendance.

Many of the schools lack open spaces or proper playgrounds. Sports are not an important part of the school curriculum, despite

evidence that physical activity is important for children's school performance, health, physical development, and acquisition of social skills. Most of the schools allocate only about 1 hour per week for sports activities.

Children of the middle and upper classes are likely better off, but even for them, the space crunch harms their health due to their lack of exercise and opportunities for outdoor play. Children living in the slums and those with special needs are the most negatively affected in this regard. Slum dwellers do not have safe spaces in which to play, and they are not welcome in public spaces to mingle with other children. Once well-to-do children and their families leave the space, only then can these children play in it. But the imposition of fees and open times of parks and play spaces (in the name of maintenance) largely prevents slum children from accessing them. In their own neighbourhoods, accidents such as falls in open drains and wells are commonplace. Where recreation spaces do exist, virtually none are accessible to children with special needs, some even being impossible for them to enter.

Children's right to play is thus threatened as open spaces are shrinking and taken up for roads and buildings. While nearly half of the surveyed children indicated that they would like to hang out in parks and playgrounds, such facilities are not adequate given the size of the population of the city. According to BBMP officials, there are 154 playgrounds and 916 parks in Bangalore city now, but those parks are basically for adults, not children.[28] Instead of neighbourhood playgrounds, the city now has parks with manicured lawns and paved walkways. There are increasingly fewer parks available *for play* and parents often must travel across town to find one. The government and society share responsibility for this situation, as little priority has been given to

children's issues and developmental needs. Indeed, both younger and older children need to have separate play spaces.

As streets are taken over by vehicles, traditional play spaces – including streets and street corners – have become a threat to the safety of the children. Pollution emitted from motorized vehicles, nearby industries, and from garbage makes outdoor play unsavoury. While some children do have access to existing parks, the survey participants typically expressed a desire for more parks with basic infrastructure facilities, such as drinking water and security.

Bangalore's parks and park-like areas around lakes are being encroached upon in the name of development, infrastructure, and even patriotism. Cubbon park, one of the city's most luxurious green spaces that sprawls across 334 acres, has been threatened as the Metro wants nine acres for its underground station and the Bar Association wants space for its office building and vehicle parking. The city's first Eco Park in Padmanabha Nagar has been converted into a conventional high tech park. Recently, an attempt was made to turn Indira Gandhi Memorial Musical Fountain Park into a national military memorial. The city's once 280 lakes have been reduced to 67, the victims of residential layouts, bus stands, a stadium, and silting. Adding development or infrastructure in a park means reducing even further the existing inadequate 'lungs' of the city that helps to keep the public healthy. However, the destruction of parks in the name of development is by no means inevitable; in Hanoi, Vietnam, for instance, threats to an existing park were successfully blocked by an active and vocal coalition, and instead of bulldozing it, the government acted to improve the park by planting more trees.[29]

Shrinking open spaces and crowded housing systems aggravates the scenario; lack of exercise takes its toll physically (in terms of obesity and general poor health), emotionally (lack of stress relief) and socially (lack of opportunities to play with others). In

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[28] http://www.hindu.com/2009/11/10/stories/2009111060040300.htm.

[29] For more information, see D Efroymson, TTKT Ha, and PT Ha. *Public Spaces: How They Humanize Cities.* HealthBridge and WBB Trust, Dhaka, October 2009.

Bangalore, even in the smallest streets, vehicles are parked on both sides of the street, leaving little or no space for children to play. The streets, which once served as the main play spaces (and continue to do so even in many wealthy countries), have shrunk into parking lots.

Health

According to the surveyed health professionals, the endless flow of vehicles in Bangalore has polluted the air so badly that children in the 2-10 age group are seen to have increasingly more respiratory infections, with a particularly significant increase in asthma rates. As a result of their health issues, these children are less active, which further affects their overall development.

Other major problems include skin and respiratory diseases, mainly due to environmental pollution. Lack of exercise and a rich diet (as promoted in advertisements) subject the children to a number of lifestyle-related diseases. Children's diet may also be affected by the common belief that poisonous pesticides have made even vegetables and fruits harmful for people to eat; while pesticides are certainly not good for us, there is no question that not eating fresh fruits and vegetables leads to disease and premature death. Diarrhoea, due to unhygienic living conditions and unsafe drinking water, adds to many children's health problems.

Another source of health concerns comes from personal computers and cell phone games: Bangalore doctors reported seeing an increasing number of children with refractive errors in their eyes, an inability to focus on images which causes blurred vision. Children as young as 3-5 are also seen with this problem.[30]

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[30] "PCs and phone games blur children's vision," *Times of India*, 7 July, 2010. http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2010-07-07/bangalore/28293421_1_eye-problems-refractive-errors-vision

Generational changes and values

When comparing their perceptions of their own childhood experiences with those of the present generation, the majority of the surveyed parents expressed optimism about today's children, stating that in spite of excessive homework and increasing obesity rates, the young today are more independent, secure, and have good self esteem and a better ability to build social relationships with adults and children. Parents also reported feeling that today's children have better outdoor recreational opportunities and are able to travel to school and elsewhere independently more so than in the past. Such perceptions, however, contradict the parents' reported and observed behaviours concerning their fears for their children's safety when travelling and playing outdoors.

Teachers' perceptions largely echoed those of the parents. Teachers noted that children are more able to travel independently and to talk to adults, and that outdoor recreational activities are better; they also felt, however, that social delinquency has worsened and that overweight/obesity has increased. They were evenly divided on whether the situation has improved or worsened in terms of children feeling independent, secure, and having self-esteem.

Some people reported feeling that single-child syndrome has reduced children's skills to problem-solve, negotiate, share, and adjust; as a result, they noted, "we are bringing up a less competent generation." Instead of allowing them to spend their days running around and riding bicycles, parents have encouraged technical devices and for self-entertainment. Children in Bangalore now tend to occupy themselves with digital 'toys.' At the same time, one doctor pointed to parents who have become so focused on the status symbols of elite schools that they subject their children to long distance motorized travel each day, further reducing their ability to exercise or play outdoors.

Trends in the city's growth demonstrate that it is highly infrastructure–oriented. While the National Urban Transport Policy mandates that people, and not vehicles, should be the focus of urban transport, the reality is quite different in Bangalore: trees are felled, parks taken over, and pollution continues to increase as the city planners focus on widening roads to accommodate more vehicles rather than building a public transit system supplemented by good conditions for walking, cycling, and other forms of non-motorized transport that would be safer, more convenient, and healthier for children.

One does wonder how much attention has been devoted to building shopping malls and office buildings instead of providing basic amenities to children, and how much attention and expense goes into creating a system for car- and motorbike-based mobility as opposed to a system that allows for independent mobility for those of all ages and incomes.

Changes desired

Despite the challenges that they reported facing, the survey respondents also noted some positive aspects of their city. They also pointed to changes that could help make their city more child-friendly and liveable. The surveyed children's most common request to make the city more child-friendly was for the creation of better and/or more parks and playgrounds within their immediate neighbourhoods. Other common requests were for improved basic amenities such as uninterrupted water and power supplies. Parents' responses were similar, focusing on more playgrounds and parks and restriction of traffic within neighbourhoods. Only 4% of the surveyed parents thought that the most important change would be better roads. Teachers' responses included improving the availability of pure drinking water and public toilets, and creating more space for recreation in properly maintained parks.

These suggestions for change were somewhat different than those made by people working in the health and development fields, who looked at the question from a broader, societal angle. According to the NGO representatives who were interviewed for this study, for example, city planners' continued focus on infrastructure development (in the form of road widening, flyovers, and underpasses) was coming at the expense of the city's children, who were consistently losing access to treed playgrounds and fields. Such infrastructure projects, they noted, need to be critically evaluated and the negative health and social development impacts that they create need to be brought to the attention of all stakeholders.

Similarly, one health professional opined that a large number of child-friendly policies exist, but implementation and monitoring remains weak or non-existent. None of the concerned agencies can be seen as leaders, and a lack of accountability worsens the situation. Some of the interviewees opined that the situation is, in fact, as bad as having no policies at all. On the other hand, some of the interviewees felt that, rather than relying on policies, citizens should take care of their own communities: the government formulates policies, but, they said, citizens pose obstacles to their implementation. They suggested that it is every citizen's responsibility to do their part to make the city more child-friendly.

Nagpur

Overview

Nagpur lies precisely at the center of India. It is located in the state of Maharashtra and is the largest city in central India. With a population of 2.13 million,[31] Nagpur does not suffer from some of the problems that the residents of Bangalore and other large cities face. It is non-cosmopolitan in nature and is growing much more slowly than is Bangalore. By watching the struggles that larger cities endure and the solutions that are implemented (successfully or otherwise) elsewhere, the residents of Nagpur are generally able to address problems before they arise. The provision and maintenance of public spaces, for example, was identified as a priority before such spaces were lost in the city.

That said, the city is not as child-friendly as it might be. As is common elsewhere in India, in Nagpur the number of motorbikes has rapidly increased in recent years, making the city's roads busier and more polluted. The city lacks a good public transport system, and while many people move about on foot or by bicycle, there are few amenities available to make such modes of mobility pleasurable. In addition, the culture of many of the city's residents is to keep children at home outside of school hours to continue their homework or to engage in home-based activities; few parents noted seeing the value or importance of outdoor and/or group play activity in their children's lives or development (or in society more broadly).

Transport, traffic, and safety

Most children in Nagpur reach school by cycling or walking. Their families typically own a bicycle or a motorbike; only 9% of Nagpur families own a car. Yet despite there being very limited private car use, traffic and pollution are still major

problems. Most of the city's schools lack reduced speed zones within their immediate vicinity. Busy and crowded streets with heavy vehicles and fast moving traffic adjacent to schools make it difficult for children to reach school safely.

The teachers who participated in the study considered traffic to be the most serious urban challenge facing children; the high level of traffic makes it difficult and unsafe for children to cross the roads or to manoeuvre through the city streets. Other potential street-level safety issues, such as harassment or kidnapping, were considered to be far less significant threats than vehicular traffic.

While few of the surveyed children reported having experienced an accident in the streets, the study results highlighted the importance of perceptions of safety: a city reporting few traffic-related injuries may not be a safer city, but may rather be one in which few people venture into the streets. Actual and perceived risks, accompanied by fears of injury or death, greatly limit children's mobility in Nagpur. Half of the surveyed parents reported feeling that it is unsafe for their children to travel alone, more than 50% only allowed their children to visit nearby places, and less than one-fifth sent their children alone within the local community. Only 2% of the parents claimed that they had no problem sending their children alone anywhere in the city. Mobility restrictions are particularly severe on girls. As was the case with the teachers, parents rated traffic as a higher safety threat than other potential issues such as anti-social behaviours. Given that over-protection of children can have an adverse effect on their confidence and self-esteem, steps are clearly needed to increase actual safety and independent mobility of the young.

Sports, play, and recreational facilities

Most children in Nagpur reported their enjoyment of physical activity, including cricket and football, and their love of playing in open spaces and parks. They also noted that their

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[31] https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/in.html

favourite places to hang-out in the evenings included gardens and parks, rather than the library, the city's squares, the home of a relative, or a church or temple. However, the study also revealed that this stated preference for outdoor games may have been more a desire than a reality. While half of children reported that their hobbies included outdoor games, only one in five included an outdoor game in their list of actual leisure activities. This suggests that while many would have liked to play outside, there might not have been a playground near their home or the existing playground might not be sufficiently safe. Consequently, when the children returned home from school, they typically turned to other forms of leisure, including watching TV and playing games on the internet.

Half of the surveyed parents reported that their children did not have access to outdoor recreational facilities, even when parks or open ground were observed nearby. Half of the respondents reported that their children played in the streets. This correlates with the findings of international studies that demonstrate that children prefer places that are busier and frequented not only by other children (such as playgrounds) but by people of all ages. Despite the traffic risk, such places can also be safer for children, as adults can protect children from potential abuse by peers or older children/teens. However, the other half largely kept their children indoors.

While the majority of surveyed schools reported that they observe the annual sports day, less than half provide organized sports activities twice per week, and less than one quarter provide sports activities every day. The city had average standards of available public space and infrastructure for children's developmental activities. Few housing complexes, on the other hand, had open spaces, playgrounds, or gardens suitable for children's recreational activities. Some of the available playgrounds and gardens were not properly maintained for any kind of recreational purpose. It was also observed that the

city lacked any kind of infrastructure to address the particular needs of girl children. Most of the available grounds were used by boys in the city. Girls did not have a proper place to hang out in the evenings or to play games. Similar to childhood mobility, then, girls faced much greater restrictions on their leisure activities in Nagpur than did boys. Most parents reported not allowing their girl children to go even to nearby playgrounds, parks, or open spaces.

The kinds of facilities and infrastructure that support healthy development were observed only in expensive, mostly private, schools. This means children from lower economic backgrounds have very limited access to high quality recreational facilities. In a country with a rapidly growing economy and much wealth amid vast poverty, this discrimination in recreational opportunities reveals much about societal valuation of children.

Despite their reported fondness for active play, children in Nagpur are deprived of physical exercise due to their busy academic schedule, the lure of sedentary activities, and the lack of facilities and opportunities for such exercise. The study also demonstrated that, in many cases, parents did not encourage their children to engage in physical exercise. While the next generation might be more informed, it cannot be said with certainty that it will be more productive due to this lack of physical fitness. Further, children are better able to concentrate in school when they are physically active, so even the possibility of them being more intelligent and informed could be a pipe dream if we do not give children more and better opportunities to behave the way children naturally do: actively and joyously.

Health

The main concern that the surveyed adults expressed about children's health was pollution, followed by harsh climate and poor drinking water facilities. Children who suffer from asthma and other lung diseases are likely to suffer more when the air is

polluted. Furthermore, two-thirds of parents of privileged children noted that obesity is now a major health issue. The main reason identified for higher rates of obesity was the growing habit of consuming junk foods. Parents insisted that commercials that promote food products such as sugary cereals, snacks, fast food, and soda pop are so attractive to children that they become hooked on these products, with a consequent rise in obesity. Important as that is, what parents did not mention, or perhaps even notice, was the amount of time children spend watching TV or playing video games, and their limited walking and cycling, which are also major contributors to the obesity epidemic.

Generational changes and values

The survey respondents noted that, compared to the previous generation, today's children experience more independent mobility. Outdoor recreational facilities and opportunities have become much better than they were previously. The majority of the respondents also reported feeling that today's children are more independent, with good self-esteem and an ability to relate easily with both adults and children.

However, most respondents were concerned about growing obesity rates among children, stating that this generation has worse health problems than they experienced as children. The study team noted that children in Nagpur ate much junk food. Whenever there was an occasion to celebrate, children were observed splurging on junk and/or fast foods. Their poor diets were compounded by their lack of physical exercise.

More than half of the respondents believed that children are now not as safe roaming the streets as they might have been two or three decades earlier. Despite the perception that outdoor recreational facilities are better, and despites parents' stated understanding that outdoor play and nature activities are important for childhood development, most surveyed parents stated that they found it difficult to get their children away from

the TV, computer, and video games.

The study participants also felt that this generation was worse off in terms both of social delinquency and quantity of homework. They strongly felt that their children had become overburdened with homework, which included not only additional tutoring, but also personality development classes and skill development classes such as learning to play the guitar, swim, dance, or sing. As a result, children hardly have time for themselves, for rest or for spontaneous, child-centred recreational activities. That more than one third of parents reported their children face too much homework provides some indication that parents see something missing in their children's lives that they themselves had enjoyed when they were younger: opportunities for socializing, for outdoor active play, and for learning informally from adults. At the same time, though, half of parents stressed a belief that their children's studies were, or should be, more important than having friends and playing. It seems, then, that in spite of their observations that their children's lives are in some ways more difficult than their own had been, parents prefer to emphasize academic studies and, in doing so, restrict their children's ability to make friends. This raises the spectre of success-driven children who lack social skills as well as that all-important citizenship quality of empathy. While schoolwork is obviously important, it is also important that children have opportunities to play, and to mingle with people outside their immediate circle to learn about and gain sympathy for those different from themselves.

While in some ways this generation experiences many opportunities that were not available to their parents, they also miss out on much of what is important to children: the chance to play outdoors in unstructured games; the ability to walk and cycle without an adult escort in and beyond their immediate neighbourhood; and relationships with a range of adults.

Changes desired

Children in Nagpur seemed, for the most part, to enjoy a good social life in their local communities. They reported having good relationships with their neighbours, celebrating festivals, and helping and supporting each other in times of difficulty. The adults in the housing complexes guided the children in their studies and personal lives. Perhaps as a result, many children expressed a desire to continue living in the same community.

For those children who desired change, the most commonly cited changes included increased safety and security. In some communities, the children reported that their neighbours were uncooperative or often involved in fights and conflicts, which made the children (particularly the girls) feel insecure when they were out at night. This problem was noted for areas such as the Pandarabodi slum and similar neighbourhoods, all of which were also observed to be lacking in a number of basic amenities and infrastructure, such as good educational institutions, safe drinking water, hospitals, and good roads. Children who lived in market areas also expressed a desire to move because of heavy traffic, which made it difficult for them to go out. Large vehicles frequently passed close to their homes, limiting the children's mobility and increasing their risk.

More than half of the respondents said that they desire changes in their neighbourhoods, including more open spaces for play and recreation, maintained playgrounds with decent play equipment and drinking water, dustbins to keep the city clean, improved roads, increased security for girl children, quality education for all, proper sanitation and drainage systems, and a pollution-free environment. Others asked for better and safer transport facilities, traffic regulation and better road facilities, a good police system, actions to save the environment, better libraries, separate grounds and clubs for girls, public toilets, and better drinking water supplies.

CITIES FOR CHILDREN: MOVING FORWARD

Cities can be both positive and negative places for children to live, depending, in part, on whether they are a wealthy few or the impoverished many, and whether we consider as important only material deprivation or also social deprivation. Particularly the smaller cities of India may be doing a better job of maintaining a sense of community than many other cities around the world, but some caution must be applied when looking at the findings of this study. Rising obesity rates, fear of crime and accidents, concern about pollution, and the challenges of traffic congestion are worse than they were in the past, and will only continue to increase with greater industrialization and 'development' unless something is done now to ensure that 'child-friendliness' becomes the underlying concern of governments and citizens.

The proper implementation of policies is a major factor in making a city child-friendly. Yet the roles played by many different stakeholders for the smooth implementation of child-friendly policies and programmes has been minimal to date, particularly when one considers the intensity, and importance, of the issue. People's awareness about various existing or potential policies designed to make a city child-friendly was notably limited, as was political initiative for policy creation and implementation. Bureaucracy, vested interests, and complicated politics cause people who desire change to become discouraged. Lack of coordination and non-convergence of different departments working for children makes the issue worse.

Ideally, neighbourhoods, towns, and cities should be places where children can socialize, observe, learn, be directly involved in and contribute to the functioning of society. There should also be places of refuge for them, places where they can gather together and feel safe while socializing with a wide range of people. There should be tolerant, caring adults who support them. If the younger generation switched to cycling and walking

instead of having to rely on parents to drive them everywhere, one part of the huge disparity between the rich and the poor might be reduced. Active transport would also provide much needed exercise, which in turn would reduce numerous health risks, particularly those related to non-communicable diseases.

Cities need to build sustainable systems and increase their local capacities to be supportive of children's needs and to fulfil their obligations to the principles contained in the UN *Convention on the Rights of Children*. This will only be possible by creating environments that are based upon cooperation and partnership at every level across national and local borders. The UNICEF *Child-Friendly Cities initiative*, for example, provides a framework for building a local system of governance that is committed to fulfilling children's rights.

ESAF has also used its research results to design a phase 2 program that directly addresses several of the concerns raised by children, their parents, and other stakeholders in Bangalore and Nagpur. This multi-pronged program seeks to:

- Make parks and public spaces more functional and accessible to improve physical activity among children;
- Promote the development and construction of parks for disabled children;
- Promote car-free zones; and
- Pilot 'Active & Safe Route to School' programs.

By taking the issue of children's rights seriously, including the right to grow and thrive in healthy urban environments, we can do much to improve the situation for current and future generations of India's most precious resource, our children.

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APPENDIX 1: OVERVIEW OF EXISTING POLICIES, LEGISLATION, AND OTHER INSTRUMENTS RELATED TO CHILDREN

Legal Provisions for Child Development in India

The Constitution of India
Upholds the rights of all citizens in unequivocal terms. Children are no exception to this. Important provisions related to children in the Constitution include:

- **Principles of Social Justice, Equality and Dignity (Preamble)**

We, the people of India, have solemnly resolved to constitute India into a Sovereign, Socialist, Secular, Democratic, Republic and to secure to all its citizens:
- Justice, social, economic and political;
- Liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship;
- Equality of status and of opportunity; and to promote among them all
- Fraternity assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity and the integrity of the nation; in our constituent Assembly, 26th day of November, 1949, do hereby adopt, enact and give to ourselves this constitution.

- **Right of Equality (Article 14)**

The state shall not deny to any person equality before law or the equal protection of laws within the territory of India

- **Prohibition of Discrimination (Article 15(1), (3)**

(1) The state shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, and place of birth or any of them.
(3) Nothing in this article shall prevent the State from making any special provisions for women and children.

- **Protection of Life and Personal Liberty (Article (21)**

No person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty except according to procedure established in the law.

- **Right to Free and Compulsory Education (Article 21A)**

The State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of age 6 to 14 years in such a manner as the state may by law determine.

- **Prohibition of Child Labour (Article 24)**

No child below the age of fourteen years shall be employed to work in any factory or mine or engaged in any other hazardous employment

- **Policies to be followed by the State (Article 39)**

The State shall, in particular, direct its policy towards securing:
(e) that the health and strength of the workers, men and women, and the tender age of children are not abused and that citizens are not forced by economic necessity to enter vocations unsuited to their age of strength; and
(f) 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 exploitations and against moral and material abandonment.

- **Provisions of Early Childhood Care and Education (Article 45)**

The Sate shall endeavor to provide early childhood care and education for all children until they complete the age of six years.

The provisions related to children in the Indian Constitution received further impetus and was strengthened by the official ratification of the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)** on 11th December, 1992 by the Government of India. The core principles of the Convention are highlighted below:

- **Definition of the Child (Article 1)**

A child means every human being below the age of 18 years.

- **The Principle of Non discrimination (Article 2)**

State parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that the child is protected against all forms of discriminations or punishments on the basis of the status, activities, expressed opinions, or beliefs of the child's parents, legal guardians or family members.

- **The Principles of the Best Interest of the Child (Article 3)**

In all actions concerning the children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interest of the child shall be a primary consideration.

- **The Principle of Survival and Development (Article 6)**

a. State parties recognize that every child has the inherent right to life.
b. State parties shall ensure to the maximum extent possible the survival and development of the child

- **The Principle of Child Participation (Article 12)**

States parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.

- **The Principle of Protection from Abuse and Neglect (Article 19)**

The state shall protect the child from all forms of maltreatment by parents or others responsible for the care of the child and establish appropriate social programmes for the prevention of the abuse and the treatment of the victims.

Policy

• **National Policy for Children, 1974**

An Advisory and Drafting Committee to review the National Policy has been set up to focus on the current priorities with respect to child rights.

• **National Charter for Children, 2004**

The National Charter for Children was adopted on Feb 9, 2004 and promotes highest standards of health and nutrition, provides for free and compulsory education and protects children from economic exploitation.

• **National Plan of Action, 2005**

The NPAC envisages a Plan for collective commitment and action by government in partnership with communities, children, civil society and has set some time-bound targets:

- Reduce IMR to below 30 per 1000 live births by 2010
- Reduce CMR to below 31 per 1000 live births by 2010
- Reduce MMR to below 100 per 100000 live births by 2010
- Provide universal, equitable access and use of safe drinking water and improved access to sanitary means of excreta disposal by 2010
- Provide 100%access to basic sanitation to rural population by 2012
- Eliminate child marriages by 2010
- Eliminate disability due to polio mellitus by 2007
- Reduce proportion of infants infected by HIV by 20% by 2007 and 50% by 2010.

• **11th Five Year Plan (2007-12)**

Pursuing its thrusts of inclusion, protection, health and education, the 11th Five Year plan lays down the following specific targets with respect to children:

- Raising the sex ratio for 0-6 years from 927 in 2001 to 935 by 2011-12 to 950 by 2016-17
- Ensuring women and children comprise at least 33% of direct or indirect beneficiaries of all govt. schemes
- Reducing IMR to 28 and MMR to 1 per 1000 live births by end of Plan period
- Reducing malnutrition of children below 3 years to half of present levels by end of Plan period
- Reducing anemia by 50% among women and girls by end of Plan period
- Reducing dropout rates till secondary level for all children by 10% by end of Plan period

• **National Policy for Persons With Disabilities, 2006**

With respect to children with disabilities (CWD), this policy looks at:

- Right to care, protection and security of CWDs
- Right to development, equal access to rights, opportunities and participation
- Inclusion and effective access to education, health and specialised rehabilitation services
- Recognition of special needs for care and protection of children with severe disabilities.

• **Policy Framework for Children and AIDS in India, 2007**

This policy seeks to integrate services for children with existing development and poverty reduction programmes.

• **Draft National Tribal Policy, 2006, National Rehabilitation and Resettlement Policy, 2007 and National Urban Housing and Habitat Policy, 2007**

These policies have sought to look at the specific impact of homelessness, displacement and land alienation of tribal communities on children.

- **National Child Labour Policy was adopted in 1987**

Following the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986 The Ministry of Labour and Employment has been implementing the national policy through the establishment of National Child Labour Projects (NCLPs) for the rehabilitation of child workers since 1988.

- · The **National Policy on Education** (NEP) is a policy formulated by the Government of India to promote education amongst India's people. The policy covers elementary education to colleges in both rural and urban India. The first NEP was promulgated in 1968 by the government of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, and the second by Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in 1986.
- · Integrated Plan of Action to prevent and combat human trafficking with special focus on children and women
- · Guideline for HIV care and treatment in infants and children 2006
- · National Nutrition Policy 1993
- · National Health Policy 2002

National Legislation

- **The Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986.**

The Act prohibits the employment of children below the age of 14 years in 16 occupations and 65 processes that are hazardous to the children's lives and health.

- **The Factories Act, 1948.**

The Act prohibits the employment of children below the age of 14 years. An adolescent aged between 15 and 18 years can be employed in a factory only if he obtains a certificate of fitness from an authorized medical doctor. The Act also prescribes four and a half hours of work per day for children aged between 14 and 18 years and prohibits their working during night hours.

- **The Mines Act, 1952.**

The Act prohibits the employment of children below 18 years of age in a mine. Further, it states that apprentices above 16 may be allowed to work under proper supervision in a mine.

- **The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection) of Children Act, 2000.**

This Act was last amended in 2002 in conformity with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child covers young person below 18 years of age.

- **The Minimum Wages Act, 1948.**

Prescribes minimum wages for all employees in all establishments or to those working at home in certain sectors specified in the schedule of the Act. Central and State Governments can revise minimum wages specified in the schedule. Some consider this Act as an effective instrument to combat child labour in that it is being used in some States (such as Andhra Pradesh) as the basis on which to prosecute employers who are employing children and paying those lower wages.

- **The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009.**

Provides for free and compulsory education to all children aged 6 to 14 years. This legislation also envisages that 25 per cent of seats in every private school should be allocated for children from disadvantaged groups including differently able children.

- The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan or the **Education for All Programme, 2001-02.**

This is an effort to universalize elementary education. This programme aims to achieve the goal of universal elementary education of satisfactory quality by 2010.

- **Schemes for Children** under the **10th Five Year plan** include the Planning Commission's Integrated Programme for Street Children which aims to prevent the destitution of children and engineer their withdrawal from streets by providing facilities like shelter, nutrition, health care, education, recreation and protection against abuse and exploitation. Accordingly to the Government, during the 10th Five Year Plan, over 200,000 children benefited from this.

- The **Scheme for Working Children in Need of Care and Protection** by the **Ministry of Women and Child Development** provides non-formal education, vocational training to working children to facilitate their entry into mainstream education. This scheme has been implemented through NGOs. According to the Government, around 7,000 children benefited from this programme from 2005 – 2007.

- **Pre-natal diagnostic Technique (Regulation and Prevention of Misuse) Act 1994**

- **Karnataka Municipal Corporation Act, 1976**- This Act provides guidelines and provisions for all the departments to be functional at various levels in the state.

New Legislation

- **Commission for the Protection of Child Rights Act, 2005.**
This Act enabled the creation of the National Commission for the Protection of Child Rights.

- **The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (PCMA), 2006.**
This Act provides for more stringent punishment for offenders and calls upon the State Governments and Union Territories to appoint Child Marriage Prohibition Officers. Efforts are also underway with UNICEF and other NGOs to create greater awareness on this Act.

- **The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005.**
This law provides a comprehensive definition of domestic violence with protection being offered to children.

- **The Unorganized Workers Social Security Act, 2008.**
Provides for health and maternity benefit for workers and their children.

- **Communal Violence (Prevention, Control and Rehabilitation of Victims) Act, 2005.**
Enhanced punishments and protection of children who are victims of communal violence are provided for in this Act.

- **The Scheduled Tribes and other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006.**
This Act seeks to recognize and vest forest rights and occupation of forest land for traditional forest dwellers who have been residing in forests for generations. It lists the evidence required for such recognition and vesting.

- **Right to Information Act, 2005.**
This Act empowers citizens to seek information from public authorities ensuring transparency in governance.

Institutional Mechanisms

- Department of Women and Child Development upgraded to **Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD)** in 2006 to address all child welfare, development and protection issues. Programmes pertaining to child welfare and development moved from Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment to MWCD.

- **Establishment of the National Commission for the Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR)** - The NCPRC was established in March 2007 with a mandate to monitor enforcement of children's

rights, ensure effective implementation of laws and programmes, investigate and recommend actions on child rights violations. The NCPCR has received complaints and set up Working Groups related to child labour corporal punishment and juvenile justice. It has organized conferences, workshops and public hearings on child labour, corporal punishment and child abuse. It has engaged with the Planning Commission, Ministry of Labour and Employment and MWCD on policies and programmes for abolition of child labour during the 11th Five Year Plan. States like Maharashtra, Goa, Sikkim and Delhi have also set up State Commissions. Karnataka State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (KSCPCR) has been set up by the State Government in July 2009 which is an independent statutory body under the Commissions for Protection of the Child Rights Act 2005.

- **National Human Rights Commission –** With respect to children, NHRC has focused in the reporting period on trafficking of children, child labour, and child marriages. Following the Nithari child killings, the Commission recommended that a national tracking system and a Missing Persons Desk be established at each police station. Mandatory reporting of missing children within 24 hours to the NCPRC was also suggested. NHRC, UNIFEM and ISS also undertook a pioneering study to understand trafficking among women and children.