

## **Habitat III input: A 'children first' focus in the New Urban Agenda**

### **UNICEF-FIA Foundation Partnership Child Road Traffic Injury Programme**

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We face a dramatic demographic shift, particularly in the urban centres of the developing world. The proportion of children and youth in our cities globally are forecast to expand rapidly. By 2030, it is estimated that as many as 60% of all urban dwellers will be under the age of 18. And all this of course is within the context of rapidly growing urban populations generally.

We must prioritise the protection, health, welfare and development of children in the New Urban Agenda. This must involve aligning the New Urban Agenda with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. And we must ensure that urban policy frameworks allow for the empowerment and engagement of children and youth in the future of urban sustainable development.

Cities are engines of growth with 70% of global GDP generated in cities. Yet child poverty and inequity continue to be persisting characteristics of urban environments. In Latin American cities, one in every three children grow up in precarious households while even in our developed cities, in a large metropolis like New York, 30% of children live in poverty. Meanwhile in rapidly growing cities such as Dar es Salaam, the proportion is towards 70%. Over half of the world's people – including more than a billion children – now live in cities and towns, many without access to basic services, thus unable to enjoy the "urban advantage". Everything is available – just not for them.

Children can be the cornerstone of social change, inclusion and sustainable development. Only once we guarantee the wellbeing of children is it possible to break the cycle of poverty and inequity. However, the problem is that they are frequently marginalised or entirely absent from the urban agenda.

To address these deficits, a 'children first' focus can be adopted in concrete areas of urban policy. One key example is in road traffic injury. The New Urban Agenda must prioritise the protection of vulnerable road users, pedestrians and cyclists in policy frameworks and design principles. And a core part of this must be the protection of all children, including the poor and vulnerable. As a priority, and as a matter of child rights in the urban context, the New Urban Agenda must include a focus on providing a safe and healthy journey to and from school for every child. This involves ensuring safe routes to school for all children, with walkable pavements, safe road design and effective speed management. While this approach must start with children, the most vulnerable in society, such a policy framework can provide a hub and focus for wider action ensuring safe and sustainable mobility for all groups – women, those living in poverty and the elderly.

During this conference we launch a new input into Habitat III, a report issued jointly by UNICEF and the FIA Foundation highlighting the immense burden of road traffic injury on children living in urban poverty. Initial trauma following a road traffic crash is just the start. This report shows how families in poverty typically pay ten or twenty times a monthly wage following a road traffic injury incident, resulting in a decline in living standards, a loss of education and descent into a prolonged cycle of poverty just at the point in which they were striving to contribute most to society, the economy and their own hopes for a better future. Road traffic injury is now recognised as the biggest health burden on children over the age of 10 globally. It represents a severe drain on families, on the future

of our cities and an immense burden suffered by children themselves. Yet it is entirely preventable with a new approach to sustainable mobility, safe walking and cycling policies, and programmes to protect the vulnerable on the roads of our cities.

UNICEF with the FIA Foundation and major SDG partners in the Global Initiative for Child Health and Mobility are advancing this agenda. We commend Member States and city authorities to this policy agenda and strongly urge its inclusion within the Declaration and implementation of Habitat III.