



Guide to creating urban public **SPACES** for children

| Summary



World Health
Organization



for every child



UN-HABITAT

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Cover: 1. Redesigned underused spaces for play for girls and young children in a park in Warangal, India. Photo credit: WRI India; 2. Graze, Lebanon. Photo credit: Catalytic Action; 3. Pop up play in progress in a park in Istanbul, Turkey. Photo credit: Sudeshna Chatterjee; 4. Boys rolling wheels down a hillside in Scotland. Photo credit: Play Scotland; 5. An inclusive child-friendly urban plaza in Amsterdam, the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Photo credit: Carve NL.

Contents

Introduction	1
About SPACES	1
Section 1. Defining public spaces for children scale, category, context	3
Scales of public spaces for children	3
Categories of public spaces for children	3
Contexts of public spaces for children	4
Section 2. SPACES principles and guidance	6
Principle 1: Safety and protection	6
Principle 2: Play, recreation and developmental needs.....	7
Principle 3: Access where need is greatest	7
Principle 4: Child health and well-being	8
Principle 5: Equity and inclusion	8
Principle 6: Sustainability and resilience	9
High-level recommendations, by SPACES principle.....	10
Section 3. Implementing SPACES: pathways, activities and tools	13
Pathways for implementing public spaces for children.....	13
Activities and tools for implementing public spaces for children	14
Conclusion.....	17
City examples	18



Introduction

Public spaces are important for everyone, but especially for children’s health and well-being. Evidence suggests that children’s optimal development is strongly associated with access to open public spaces and facilities, green spaces, safe and clean streets, clean air, outdoor activities, and the ability to get around freely and safely. Public spaces help meet children’s needs and rights to play; support their engagement in social and physical activities; help improve the quality of their everyday lives; and support their learning and natural-world socialization, active lifestyles, and healthy behaviours.

About SPACES

The *Guide to creating urban public spaces for children* (hereafter referred to as “SPACES”) and this accompanying summary aim to support the creation of quality public spaces for urban children and improve existing ones, ensuring they meet children’s needs. Developed by the United Nations Human Settlement Programme (UN-Habitat), the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), and the World Health Organization (WHO), SPACES emphasizes the importance of children’s right to play, as enshrined in Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which provides the universal legal basis for children’s right to rest, relax, play, and participate in cultural and creative activities.

This guide was developed using a comprehensive methodology that drew on both research and practice, examining the development of public spaces for children from conceptualization to implementation. This included a literature review, surveys with global experts, reviews of existing guidance on public

spaces expert peer review¹, as well as consultations with children themselves². The different concepts and principles in the guide are illustrated through practical city examples from around the world. Additional city examples are included in a descriptive annex to the main document.

Who SPACES is for

SPACES has been developed to support everyone concerned with the provision of public spaces for children – from government and non-governmental stakeholders and community and civil society organizations (CSOs), to schools, parents’ associations and the private sector. It aims to help frame the issue and provide entry points for investment and action. The guide was developed using a comprehensive methodology that drew on both research and practice, examining the development of public spaces for children from conceptualization to implementation. This included a literature review, surveys with global

1 The external experts who participated in the review are named in the main document. All experts completed a declaration of interest form in accordance with the WHO declaration of interests’ policy for experts. No potential conflicts were identified.

2 The main document, the methodology, references, acknowledgements and the annex of city examples can be found here <https://iris.who.int/server/api/core/bitstreams/7b9e9b13-4224-4cd4-a7bd-d9a872a74d3a/content>.

experts, reviews of existing guidance on public spaces, as well as consultations with children themselves. The different concepts and principles in the guide are illustrated through practical city examples from around the world. Additional city examples are included in a descriptive annex to the main document.

The urgent need for public spaces for children

Well-designed public spaces that are regularly used by children are a strong indicator of a livable city – not just for children but for all city dwellers. Yet globally, only 44% of urban residents have an open public space close to them, and in low- and middle-income countries this figure falls to 30%. Vulnerable children, such as those living in poorer urban areas,

are disproportionately affected, often living on busy roads in places with few green spaces and play areas. Even in cities offering overall greater green-space availability there are substantial inequalities, with the most deprived neighbourhoods lacking access.

The availability and quality of public spaces that support children's every day and long-term needs are increasingly challenged by unplanned and unregulated urbanization, population growth, the privatization of public space, rising pollution and motorization, and increasing climate hazards. These global factors, combined with a growing obesity crisis (partly due to food poverty and reliance on cheaper, unhealthy food) mean that the need for spaces where children can engage in physical activities and develop social connections is more urgent than ever.



Section 1. Defining public spaces for children: scale, category, context

This guide defines public spaces for children as **those that can be easily and freely accessed and enjoyed by all children, either alone or with friends or family, regardless of gender, ethnicity, sexuality, nationality, social status or physical ability.** Whatever their context, these places are safe from physical hazards (such as pollution, waste, traffic, falls or drowning risks); and social risks (such as crime, exclusion, or bullying). Whether they are streets, neighbourhoods, existing public open spaces, or the small, “liminal” spaces, such as stairwells or alleyways from which children carve out a place for themselves, they are:

- places that children *learn* from;
- places where children *engage* with nature;
- places that *support* children’s free action;
- places that *nurture* children’s cultures and adventures.

Scales of public spaces for children

SPACES sets out three scales that are important when planning public spaces for urban children so that as they grow, they encounter and engage with a wide range of age-appropriate public spaces in their everyday lives. These are the city scale, neighbourhood scale and the housing/domestic scale (see [Table 1](#) for examples).

Categories of public spaces for children

This guide uses four broad categories where public spaces for children may exist – **streets, public open space, public facilities and liminal spaces.**

Streets

A vital public space for children to play and socialize in, especially for those lacking access to parks, playgrounds and other designated recreation spaces.

Public facilities

Such as public libraries, civic/community centres, municipal markets and public sports facilities, youth centres, museums, transport hubs, etc.

Public open spaces (by scale)

Housing scale

Semi-private open spaces

Courtyards in multi-family housing, communal gardens, and small, doorstep play areas in high-rise housing.

Neighbourhood scale

Public open spaces

Urban parks, community parks or gardens, and playgrounds within parks, where children can climb trees, play safely around water, and experience flowers and wildlife. In informal settlements, such spaces may be improvised or community-created, often from reclaimed or under-used land.

Semi-public open spaces

Schoolyards and community gardens are seldom publicly owned or managed but represent two of the most important open spaces in children’s lives in many neighbourhoods.

City scale

Blue-green spaces

At city scale these include municipal parks, woodlands, waterfronts, wetlands and marshes, public gardens, natural recreational areas etc.

Civic open spaces

Civic squares, open-air museums, sports fields, open public markets and educational, recreational, and transport areas.

Liminal spaces

Liminal spaces are those that typically have no fixed use or purpose, or have been forgotten, neglected, or misused. These marginal, transitional and often accidental public spaces between destinations or awaiting redevelopment have much value for children's free play at all scales.

Contexts of public spaces for children

In addition to the three scales and four categories, SPACES also looks at public spaces according to three specific urban contexts: **planned contexts, informal and slum contexts, and crisis and resilience-building contexts.**

Planned contexts

A planned urban context is one in which the use of land, development of housing and the maintenance of environments is pre-considered and designed to shape a city and best manage its development. Parks and playgrounds are typically considered the most relevant places for children within formally planned environments to keep them safe, though far too many children lack access to well-provisioned parks and playgrounds due to inequity in distribution.

Informal and slum contexts

Informal settlements are typically high-density, mixed-use areas that are often left out of the urban development planning process and frequently lack proper infrastructure and services. Slums are characterized by particularly poor living conditions and are typically compact, walkable, high-density, mixed-use areas, with less motorized traffic in narrow internal streets, and large populations of children who have less tightly scheduled time and constraints (such as lack of permission) to play outdoors. These factors contribute to making many slum streets and open spaces rich play environments, though there are often cases where the only available outdoor spaces are unsafe, such as solid waste dumps or flood zones.

Crisis, recovery and rebuilding contexts

Globally, urban areas are at the centre of migration and displacement issues: more than 60% of all refugees and 80% of all internally displaced persons live in urban areas while globally the numbers of children displaced continues to rise. Children affected by disasters or conflicts face immediate and long-term consequences and re-establishing normality is key to their well-being and post-trauma recovery. This is dependent (among other things) on public spaces such as schools, play spaces, and streets that allow them to play, learn, and socialize with peers.

Table 1. Examples of public spaces, by scale and category



Housing	Neighbourhood	City
<p>Streets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sidewalks, alleyways, cul-de-sacs 	<p>Streets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Market streets, residential streets, sidewalks, pedestrian bridges 	<p>Streets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Streets in front of cultural facilities, main streets in shopping areas
<p>Public facilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play areas for young children, exercise areas, community halls 	<p>Public facilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community centres, youth centres, open shelters, bus stops 	<p>Public facilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public libraries, museums, sports complexes
<p>Public open spaces</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Semi private open spaces: e.g. shared courtyards between buildings, allotment gardens, rooftops in multi-family homes, lobbies and corridors in high-rise apartment blocks 	<p>Public open spaces</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Semi-private spaces: e.g. schoolyards, sports facilities, afterschool clubs, community gardens and farms • Public spaces: e.g. wooded areas, playground, street squares, greenways 	<p>Public open spaces</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public green or blue spaces: e.g. urban forests, parks, beaches, botanical gardens • Civic urban spaces: e.g. plazas, squares, open spaces around public buildings
<p>Found and liminal spaces</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spaces between homes, lanes between buildings, planted and wild landscapes, common staircases 	<p>Found and liminal spaces</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vacant lots, wild planted patches, dead-end streets, leftover spaces between properties 	<p>Found and liminal spaces</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empty abandoned spaces, vacant lots, dead-end streets

Section 2. SPACES principles for quality public spaces

SPACES centres on six principles that are at the heart of creating quality public spaces for children (and that together form the SPACES acronym):



Safety and protection



Play, recreation, and developmental needs



Accessibility where need is greatest



Child health and well-being



Equity and inclusion



Sustainability and resilience



Principle 1. Safety and protection

Rationale: All public spaces should be safe and secure for children, yet in cities worldwide, children’s safety and protection are compromised by a range of environmental and social risks. Ensuring safety in public spaces includes addressing risk of injury and violence (e.g., road traffic; unprotected balconies and terraces; waterbodies; or contact with contaminants). In informal and formal contexts it means improving poorly lit streets and alleys and neglected parks and playgrounds that expose children to different forms of violence and abuse and consequently prevent their free use of these spaces. Fear of crime and violence involving guns and gang fights disproportionately affect adolescent boys, while sexual harassment and violence are a daily reality for girls and women in urban public spaces.

Many strategies exist to make public spaces safer for children, including measures such as reduced-speed streets and safe routes to school; removal of parking spaces (as obstacles to visibility), and creating safe-crossing options, wide footpaths, and play and rest spaces. Cities across the world are reducing speeds, redesigning and retrofitting streets as shared spaces to enable community life and children’s play, particularly in residential neighbourhoods, around schools and in commercial areas (see [city example 1](#)).

In informal settlements, public facilities such as youth centres, community toilets, and water-collection points (when designed with safe access for children – and especially girls – in mind) decrease risky behaviour in adolescents and minimize risks of harassment from adults; reduce violent crime-related fatalities; and improve girls’ safety. And in crisis and resilience-building contexts, humanitarian strategies and programmes can help improve safety and protection, for example by creating safe parks and child friendly spaces for children in disaster-affected neighbourhoods, host settlements and settlements; and upgrading public facilities such as schools and health centres as safe and socially cohesive spaces for host and refugee children and caregivers (see [city example 2](#)).



Principle 2. Play, recreation and developmental needs

Rationale: Play is vital to help children learn and take part in the world around them, stay active and healthy, learn and push boundaries, build resilience and friendships, and develop coping mechanisms for stress. Research shows that play also enhances brain structure and function, academic skills, and has both physical and mental health benefits.

Through play and interaction, infants and toddlers learn to move, communicate, socialize and make sense of the world around them. In middle childhood, children look for social independence, to spend time with their peers, and to engage in informal play and recreation as well as organized sports. Moreover,

there is growing evidence to suggest that play has intrinsic value in itself, and that modern society's tendency to overprotect children and minimize risk has led to significant reductions in opportunities for adventurous and outdoor play.

Partnerships between private companies, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and community groups help promote children's play by redeveloping local spaces or creating play areas in temporary camps. Public spaces for children can also encourage intergenerational play, making children's activities more accepted and influencing decisions on public space use (see [city example 7](#)).



Principle 3. Access where need is greatest

Rationale: Inadequate and inequitable distribution of public, open, especially green and blue spaces leave far too many urban children lacking access to them. Globally, almost one in three urban residents (and more than 60% of people overall in low-income countries) live in informal contexts – worldwide, this adds up to over a billion people. With little indoor space available, and formal parks often located in the more affluent parts of cities, children seek common and public spaces within and near their homes in which to spend time with friends, and to study, play, do chores and seek adventure. In situations of crisis or extreme poverty in precarious urban environments (where children often have a heightened need for play) this can lead to them playing in very unsafe areas.

Government policies, and advocacy and support from NGOs, can empower local governments

and community organizations to promote urban neighbourhood environments that have well-located destinations for children to use, such as green play and learning spaces, recreational centres, libraries, schools, or child health centres – all of which are associated with better child development, socio-emotional development and overall health, and improved parental perceptions of neighbourhood safety (see [city example 8](#)). They can also encourage local authorities to open up schoolyards after hours for the community to use, improving educational experiences and helping to build social cohesion.

Public spaces developed through low-income housing upgrades and resilience initiatives give children and other groups essential opportunities for outdoor play, recreation, learning, socialization, and green space access. These areas also support

rescue and recovery during disasters. Examples include road safety improvements, new play areas in refugee-hosting cities, upgraded school

playgrounds, and creating child- and women-friendly hubs near essential services (see [city example 9](#)).



Principle 4. Child health and well-being

Rationale: Persistent environmental health risks, such as air pollution and inadequate infrastructure for water and sanitation, threaten the well-being of many children in cities. Use of pesticides in parks and other green spaces can have negative impacts on children's health, as can the presence of toxic substances (e.g. lead, mercury and other heavy metals) from industrial sites, waste incinerators, unsound practices such as informal e-waste recycling and landfill etc. These situations are more likely in informal settings or in crisis and resilience-building contexts.

Rising global temperatures disproportionately affect children because they are less able to regulate their body temperature than adults during times of extreme heat, while all children suffer physical and mental health impacts when sleep is disturbed by excessive heat. And the increase in extreme heat worldwide (alongside heavy rains, monsoons and flooding) means the opportunity for children to play outside or engage in sport is yet more restricted.

Planned networks of public spaces around schools (such as schoolyards, streets, and open areas where children can play freely) improve children's physical and mental health and overall development (see [city example 10](#)). Evidence suggests green spaces benefit childhood development, support lifelong well-being, and reduce risks from early-life socio-environmental exposures by promoting better birth outcomes and lowering maternal stress. Children living over 20 minutes from green areas have poorer health and watch more TV than those closer to nature, while time spent in green spaces also improves focus and reduces attention deficit symptoms. Moreover, access to quality, inclusive, and accessible public open spaces reduces the risks for overweight/obesity – a key benefit given only 20% of the world's adolescent population is estimated to be sufficiently physically active.



Principle 5. Equity and inclusion

Rationale: Growing diversity in needs, rising inequalities, high population densities in planned and informal contexts, and limited resources and capacity at local level all challenge the inclusivity of public spaces. Across the world, young children, girls, indigenous groups, low-income groups, minority ethnic groups, children with disabilities, refugees and internally displaced people are routinely unable

to access public spaces because of exclusionary practices, while formal public spaces are often absent in low-income or resilience-building settings.

The lack of access to public spaces for children stems from a combination of sociocultural norms and gender biases, car-dominated planning, stereotyping of youth and certain minority ethnic groups, public-space

management practices, as well as lack of awareness of children’s rights in various levels of government and institutions. Enabling inclusive public spaces is closely linked to realizing social, spatial, and environmental justice and addressing the needs of all children and all genders, backgrounds, and disabilities.

The different abilities and needs of children should be considered when planning and designing public spaces for children so they enable satisfying play opportunities for all children without discrimination of any kind (see [city examples 13 and 14](#)). Moreover, disabled children have an equal right to play freely without being unduly overprotected and perhaps

have an even greater need for opportunities to take risks in play, since they may be denied the freedom of choice enjoyed by non-disabled peers.

Promoting and developing equitable and inclusive public spaces for children means incorporating universal design guidelines; creating “pause and stay” places for young children on streets; accepting the presence of youth in public spaces; partnering with street children to transform unused/disused urban spaces into hubs for essential services, play and recreation; and ensuring public spaces exclude no-one through entry fees or restrictive opening hours.



Principle 6. Sustainability and resilience

Rationale: Humanitarian crises and disasters are on the rise, with weather, climate and water-related hazards becoming more frequent and intense because of climate change. In 2019, one in every 70 people was caught up in a crisis, natural or man-made, and on average, children comprise over 50% of people affected by disasters. At the same time, urbanization places enormous pressure on cities’ natural resources, with huge consequences for air, water, soil, local food systems and the climate itself.

Global organizations such as UNICEF, WHO, and UN-Habitat highlight the importance of public spaces for both enabling sustainable, resilient development, and fully realizing children’s rights. This is because networks of public open spaces play a vital role in disaster recovery and resilience, including during earthquakes, flooding, and fires. And appropriately designed urban spaces, particularly green spaces, help improve air quality; cool hot city temperatures; increase drainage and aquifer recharge for flood control; dampen noise; and encourage greater biodiversity and CO₂ absorption. Additionally, public open spaces can accommodate nature-based solutions to erosion, heat, flooding and other environmental factors exacerbated by climate change.

Public spaces for children developed with resilience in mind not only mitigate climate change impacts but can also build children’s social and physical reliance in vulnerable contexts. Children overall are more vulnerable to short and long-term hazards, but in informal settlements they suffer higher mortality rates and increased illness during times of disaster, high temperatures and flooding. In these settings in particular, increasing green spaces and incorporating nature-based solutions in public spaces for children to cool temperatures and mitigate flooding can reduce risks associated with climate change, as well as provide opportunities for children to engage and interact with nature in playful ways (see [city example 16](#)).

And sustainability can embrace issues around the legal status of open spaces to remain as parks, playgrounds, and urban green spaces. It can include quality control standards to ensure the durability of all outdoor furniture and infrastructure (and that this is made from environmentally friendly materials); regular cleaning and maintenance of playgrounds; yearly safety audits; an annual budget for renovating, upgrading or replacing old playgrounds based on periodic audits.

High-level recommendations, by SPACES principle



Safety and protection

- Promote safety in public spaces through appropriate planning (including landscaping), policies, and regulations.
 - Design neighbourhoods to minimize the number of vehicular streets to be crossed when accessing parks and playgrounds and provide wide sidewalks and safe crossings.
 - Enable safe zones around schools and residential and play areas to regulate vehicular traffic, including redirecting or removing motorized traffic, traffic-calming measures around schools, and safe cycling infrastructure, refuge islands, kerb extensions etc.
 - Enable safe routes in neighbourhoods (e.g. short-cuts through alleys, back gardens, and greenways, passages with lighting) so children have quick and safe access to play spaces, neighbourhood amenities and friends, and can avoid traffic.
 - Prioritize visibility and accessibility by ensuring public spaces are well-lit, open, and visible from surrounding areas to enhance safety and allow children to move freely without fear, especially in high-density or informal settings.
 - Locate and design entrances, lobbies, corridors, stairwells, elevators and walkways in locations that maximize their visibility, including for amenities such as public sanitation facilities shared by males and females.
 - Undertake citywide safety audits on the state of parks, playgrounds, neighbourhood open spaces, pedestrian crossings, sidewalks, cycling facilities, green cover, speed limits in school zones and residential areas.
- Support and enable detailed mapping, audit and child-focused spatial assessment of public and common spaces to identify safety risks for children using participatory tools to assess how children and caregivers perceive safety in public spaces, and tailor interventions to address identified risks such as poor lighting, lack of surveillance, or unsafe infrastructure.
- Help make liminal spaces safe for children and caregivers through multistakeholder engagement and participatory, cost-effective strategies.
- Upgrade and implement redevelopment interventions that ensure safety from all hazards, including falls (e.g. from unprotected balconies), garbage, open water, open electrical wires, railway tracks, fires and other hazards for young children, using participatory approaches.
- Ensure play spaces in schools and neighbourhoods are durable, safe and secure, including for all children in host locations with large refugee and internally displaced communities, and that sustainability is considered in situations where temporary spaces become long-term.
- Ensure children from refugee and internally displaced communities are safe from threats, bullying, and other prejudices while using streets and open spaces in host settlements through participatory programmes to promote social cohesion between communities.
- Plan for inclusive emergency preparedness by designing public spaces to serve as safe zones during crises, ensuring they can accommodate temporary shelters, health services, and child-friendly facilities that are accessible and secure.



Play, recreation and developmental needs

- Plan for play across all categories of public spaces with a particular focus on residential areas, school zones and public open spaces near cultural and historic sites, sports and recreational venues.
- Create quality standards and regulations for designing rich play environments in public spaces that are diverse, stimulating, and accessible to all children.
- Identify and protect liminal places used by children to play and involve children in the process.
- Implement temporary street closures and schemes for school streets and play streets around all neighbourhoods where possible – especially in neighbourhoods lacking open spaces.
- Regulate privately owned public spaces such as large spaces outside apartment blocks or in the heart of large commercial mixed-use developments to incorporate gardens, courtyards, play spaces and playgrounds.
- Ensure that children’s play is recognized and sustained during slum upgrading and redevelopment efforts.
- Within crisis and resilience building contexts, upgrade and expand the scope of public facilities such as health centres and schools/training facilities to cater to refugee and displaced children and ensure they can access play areas.
- When planning citywide open public spaces, locate parks (including green and blue spaces and nature-based spaces), playgrounds, and playable areas within residential areas, near schools and public facilities frequented by children. Ensure that low-income neighbourhoods and/or areas with high child density and vulnerable populations are served.
- Advocate for school playgrounds to be open to the public after school hours and at weekends as community areas in neighbourhoods that lack open spaces.
- Ensure distribution of child-friendly places during upgrading and redevelopment efforts across informal settlements and co-locate children’s play spaces with other functions where synergies exist (e.g. community facilities, market spaces, community gardens, etc.).
- Support development of innovative public spaces in crisis and resilience building contexts by engaging with built environment and engineering experts as well local community groups, children’s organizations and agencies.



Child health and well-being



Access where need is greatest

- Map existing spaces to understand the location, distribution, quantity, quality, and accessibility of public space for children to inform inclusive and equitable decision-making when improving existing (and advocating for new) public spaces for children (particularly in slums and informal settlements).
- Ensure parks, playgrounds and informal play areas meet recommended environmental standards (e.g. for air quality and noise levels) and are free from soil contaminants and stagnant water, and ensure adequate solid waste management etc., locating them as far as possible from sources of pollutants (e.g. highways, waste facilities etc.).
- Plan and design public spaces for children that consider the changing climate and protect children from risks such as overexposure to the sun, hot weather, and from burns from metal play equipment.

- Ensure direct supervision by caregivers is possible for play areas used by children under the age of 5 years, such as by placing shaded seating around them and ensuring access to water sources and toilets.
- Make sure access to public spaces (streets and public transport) are universally accessible and allow for children of all ages and abilities to arrive there safely and comfortably.
- Ensure all community public spaces within crisis and resilience-building contexts are free from garbage, toxins, stagnant and other hazardous materials.



Equity and inclusion

- Consult with residents, including children, when redesigning shared open spaces in residential environments to ensure their active involvement in the design process.
- Plan and programme for age and gender-specific facilities, inclusive play opportunities, and rest and recreation areas for users and caregivers of all ages, gender, abilities and backgrounds in city-scale, neighbourhood and housing-level public spaces for children.
- Apply universal design principles that can provide suitable equipment for older children and those with additional support needs in inclusive parks and playgrounds.
- Identify and work to eliminate social and other barriers faced by slum dwellers in accessing safe and health-promoting public spaces.
- Transform the outdoor areas of institutional settings (such as schools, sports or recreation and health facilities) that are close to temporary settlements into multi-use neighbourhood spaces for everyone living in the community, including migrants, refugees and the host population.



Sustainability and resilience

- Invest in green and blue infrastructure designed to work with local environmental and ecological systems.
- Revitalize large city-scale ecologically sensitive but abandoned/disused green spaces as mini forests and urban wilds for nature-based recreation.
- Reclaim, renovate and programme identified areas of public vacant land and appropriate liminal spaces (e.g. transforming spaces under flyovers into skateparks or community parks).
- Introduce a diverse selection of local plants (with a variety of colour, scent, flowers and fruits) in public open spaces that promotes children's understanding of nature and biodiversity.
- Ensure play equipment in public spaces is durable and can withstand high use, is built from local materials, can be easily repaired, and is multifunctional.
- Enable and sustain community gardens, urban farms, and greenery in informal settlements in streets, open spaces, and liminal spaces such as roofs, walls, alleys, etc.
- In crisis settings and in recovery and rebuilding efforts, promote the development of public spaces for children in large-scale regional and national multistakeholder refugee resilience plans and programmes as well as local city-level resilience plans and programmes.

Section 3. Implementing SPACES – pathways, activities and tools

SPACES sets out two key pathways for realizing better public spaces for children: government-promoted pathways and partnership-based pathways.

Government-promoted pathways

All levels of national, subnational and local government promote and develop public spaces for children through formal policies, programming, planning, and legislative and regulatory tools; and by convening partners and facilitating joint action. This happens in all three main contexts:

- **Planned contexts:** National, subnational and local plans, programmes, policies, strategies and legislation can help shape urbanization and urban spaces at city level, and many cities have used these tools to develop public spaces for children as planned environments.
- **Informal settlements:** Local government engagement with informal settlements to plan public spaces for children can help understand informal settlements not just as physical structures, but as a microcosm of informal activities, social relationships and networks to sustain livelihoods and community leadership.
- **Crisis and resilience-building contexts:** In disaster risk-reduction efforts, government plans, policies, and programmes – such as national strategies for disaster risk reduction, climate action plans, and city resilience plans – can enable and support public space interventions.

Partnership-based pathways

Partnerships involving private companies, NGOs, CBOs, and private citizens can create, manage, sustain and own public space. The three partnership-based models that have successfully produced public spaces for children across all three contexts in this guide include:

- **Civil society-led partnerships** that develop initiatives ranging from city-wide public spaces to small, neighbourhood public spaces involving the community and local children;
- **Community-led partnerships** that typically involve innovative local practices for securing children's right to play in public space, involving parents, CBOs, and local government;
- **Private developer-based partnerships between government and private sector entities** that are typically funded by private companies, which leverage different financial instruments.

Partnership-based pathways are particularly relevant for informal contexts that rely on non-governmental support. They can also be helpful during and after disaster recovery, for example where community-based partnerships advocate for play to leverage free and adventurous spaces for children to support their well-being (see [city example 20](#)).

Activities and tools for implementing public spaces for children

Whether building new spaces or making existing public spaces child friendly and safe, the following activities and tools are intended as a broad (non-exhaustive) guide for action.

Activity 1. Conceptualize and engage

- **Understand and prioritize common needs** through participatory needs assessments conducted by or involving caregivers and children; groups of residents including women, older people, men, and youth; as well as community leaders and other stakeholders through transect walks, focus groups, surveys and interviews.
- **Set up a core working group** involving strategic stakeholders (including children) who bring community buy-in, professional expertise, and political and financial support.
- **Build strategic partnerships with stakeholders** to bring in the resources and expertise required to carry out the project, including government officials, funding organizations, built-environment professionals, NGOs, academia and think-tanks, and the local community.
- **Promote and enable dedicated institutional structures to create public spaces for children** e.g. by setting up structures and positions within local government to coordinate planning, implementation and place-management efforts.
- **Build the financial, technical, and managerial capacities of community groups** for community-led upgrading, management of public spaces, and community governance (see [city example 21](#)).

Activity 2. Map and document existing spaces

Maps are essential for planning and upgrading settlements, benchmarking social and spatial indicators, and protecting child-friendly spaces. Planning city-wide interventions or neighbourhood-specific ones using GIS mapping tools – overlaid with land-use maps and sectoral data (on health, education, income etc), combined with child-friendly strategies such as child-led walking tours, using photographic methods, observing current behaviours in the space, surveys and interviews – allows for a critical understanding of the location, distribution, quantity, quality, and accessibility of public space for children and particular challenges within each area for child health and well-being (see [city example 22](#)).

In **planned environments**, involving children from different age groups and backgrounds, using mobile phones, apps, GIS technology and tools to create public space base maps and physically verify identified public spaces using different methodologies has enabled creation of citywide public spaces. In **informal settlements and crisis and resilience-building contexts**, supporting and enabling detailed mapping and audits of public and common spaces verified by local communities have identified and prioritized the locations most in need.

Activity 3. Plan and co-design

All public space planning exercises must define, identify and protect (existing) public space, and ensure this definition is clearly enshrined in urban legislation and has mechanisms to enforce its protection. National, regional and local planning policies and regulations can help secure and protect sufficient public space for children's use; preserve natural landscapes, biodiversity and ecosystems; and ensure that a safe and networked system of public spaces – including streets, green spaces, and civic spaces – is accessible by children (see [city example 22](#)).

Other useful planning and co-design considerations include:

- **Leveraging complementary plans, programmes and initiatives at local and national scales that have similar high-level goals as public space for children** (e.g. those relating to sustainability, climate change, education etc.).
- **Enabling regular input from communities** – especially children – on plans and projects that concern them and ensuring their suggestions are acted upon.
- **Reviewing plans, projects and policies through a child-friendly lens** using tools such as drawing, storytelling, and play; and ensuring that children's views are acted upon.
- **Planning and designing multifunctional public and community spaces in informal settings.**
- **Integrating resilience planning and design with public and common space development in crisis and resilience building settings** e.g. by identifying flood-prone locations and developing community public spaces in these locations that deter floods as well as serve as multifunctional spaces for community use (see [city example 23](#)).
- **Planning and designing for phased development of public and common spaces** as initial budgets are seldom sufficient to immediately address all identified needs.

Activity 4. Budget and finance

Funding for children's public spaces can come from sources such as local authorities, government transfers, multiagency funds, local taxes, land value capture, and revenue streams like parking fees. Private donors, community fundraising, and planning regulations that require developers to provide public space also contribute. Integrating child-focused priorities into city budgets and investment plans helps ensure sustained support for children's rights and fosters inclusive urban environments.

Activity 5. Implement the initiative

A strategic action plan typically outlines how an initiative will be implemented, including:

- who will implement and administer the actions – the most suitable departments or agencies, and external collaborators with clearly established roles and responsibilities;
- the timeframe for each action – whether short, medium or long term, with start and end dates and interim steps;
- estimated capital and revenue costs of each action to ensure adequate resources (funding, technical assistance or materials);
- harmonization with the municipal work plan, where appropriate.

These steps apply to creating public spaces for children in informal settlements as well. Incorporating cultural values can encourage community ownership, and using local skills and materials helps reduce costs, improve construction quality, and ease maintenance. In both planned and informal settings, involving children and youth through activities like art, building temporary furniture, or planting trees can boost their sense of ownership and increase use. Community engagement also helps identify local leaders and offers training opportunities, especially for youth, in innovative building techniques.

Activity 6. Maintain and manage the space

Sustaining and ensuring inclusive use of public space for children requires ongoing maintenance, management, and evaluation. Maintenance responsibilities vary by space and are often shared between public and private sectors. Key actions include regulating use to promote respect for children's access, removing exclusionary signage, establishing routine upkeep with minimum standards, and coordinating cross-sector efforts. Projects that involve local groups from the beginning and use durable, easily maintained materials foster ownership and sustained care of these spaces.

Activity 7. Monitor and evaluate

Any public space strategy needs regular, open and transparent audits for the city to track progress, so it is crucial to include monitoring indicators in any strategic action plan. Indicators should align with the recommendations under the SPACES principles. They should include markers for health inequities and allow data to be disaggregated by different sociodemographic factors, allowing changes in different population groups to be monitored and equity issues to be addressed (see [city example 24](#)).



Conclusion

Promoting public spaces for children can help provide access to safe, clean, playful, active environments and green spaces at housing, neighbourhood and city levels, with multiple benefits for health, learning, play and recreation, all of which are all integral to child well-being. The guide illustrates how planning for play to promote citywide public spaces for children also aligns with broader urban policy goals, including air quality, road safety, urban greening, climate resilience, and mental and physical health.

By leveraging government programmes, mayoral visions, community demands for change, international programmes and civil society advocacy, among others, public spaces for children have been created in diverse living contexts in low-, middle- and high-income countries. The guide illustrates some of the many ways in which public spaces for children – be it near the home, in the local neighbourhood or at

city level – can be created or improved. The principles and guidance in this resource invite stakeholders in all sectors, be it health, social welfare, education, finance, construction or urban design, and across government the private sector and civil society, to play a role. We hope SPACES will help governments (who are at the heart of creating such public spaces) to deliver better policies and programmes; allocate funding; and set up the systems for managing and maintaining public spaces for children.

Policy-makers and other duty bearers have the power to improve children’s living conditions in cities by promoting safe, green, and resilient public spaces in line with the commitments embodied in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Sustainable Development Goals. The guidance and principles outlined in this resource aim to help them do it. Let us put them to work.

City examples

Details on the city examples can be found in the main SPACES document (<https://iris.who.int/server/api/core/bitstreams/7b9e9b13-4224-4cd4-a7bd-d9a872a74d3a/content>). A summary of each of the 54 examples is included below.

City example 1. City-led initiatives to create safer streets for children (worldwide)

In Bogotá, more than 2000 school zones and other local streets have new infrastructure and signs setting maximum 30 km/h speeds, while in Pune, Moscow, and Barcelona there are efforts to create complete streets and shared streets – this involves increasing greenery and shade as well as providing for children’s play and rest.

City example 2. Government-led initiatives to promote child safety and well-being in crisis and resiliencebuilding contexts (Egypt)

To support Syrian refugee and host communities, Egypt’s Y’ahl El-Hay project, led by Ecumene Studio with UNHCR and other partners, renovated public health centres to create child-safe, welcoming environment, upgrading kindergarten facilities and transforming unused areas into vibrant, child-friendly spaces.

City example 3. Partnerships for child-friendly cities (Quelimane and Maputo, Mozambique)

City-level programmes in Mozambique, supported by UNICEF and other international agencies, have transformed unsafe public spaces in Quelimane and Maputo into child-friendly areas by involving children in participatory workshops to improve street safety, lighting, sanitation, and play facilities.

City example 4. Social urbanism policies targeting vulnerable locations to create safe public spaces to benefit children (Medellin, Colombia)

Medellin’s “right to the city” initiatives transformed marginalised neighbourhoods by integrating parks,

libraries, and improved transport, fostering safer, more cohesive, and opportunity-rich environments for children.

City example 5. Government-led partnerships promoting play facilities in green spaces (Jakarta, Indonesia)

Jakarta’s RPTRA initiative provides multifunctional, child-friendly public spaces in low-income urban areas to support play, learning, and community well-being for children and families.

City example 6. Government-led initiatives for legally mandating a “masterplan for play” approach for urban development (Regensburg, Germany)

Regensburg’s legally mandated, rights-based Masterplanning for Play ensures children’s participation in urban planning, embedding inclusive, accessible, and playful public spaces throughout the city, even in marginalised areas.

City example 7. Community advocacy to revitalize green spaces (São Paulo, Brazil)

The Movimento Boa Praça in São Paulo transformed neglected neighbourhood parks into vibrant, child-friendly community spaces through grassroots mobilisation, participatory planning and regular community activities. And the “Mind the step” project in Jardim Nakamura transformed neglected public staircases into vibrant, accessible spaces for community engagement and play through participatory design led by young architects.

City example 8. City government-led public space for children in informal and resilience settings (Recife, Brazil)

Recife’s Primeiro a Infância programme, led by the mayor, integrated early childhood development with urban planning to create safer, more inclusive public spaces in marginalised neighbourhoods – engaging

communities through participatory workshops, improving infrastructure and accessibility, and supporting Venezuelan refugee families with targeted services and facilities.

City example 9. Schools as vital public spaces for host and refugee children (Ghazze, Lebanon)

In Ghazze, Lebanon, local NGOs and partners rehabilitated school facilities and created a modular playground through participatory design and community involvement, enabling inclusive education and play for both host and Syrian refugee children.

City example 10. City-led planning for play to promote happy and healthy childhoods (Barcelona, Spain)

Barcelona’s “Plan for Play in Public Spaces” aims to make the city healthier and more liveable by embedding play and green spaces into urban planning, especially around schools, to promote children’s well-being and climate adaptation by 2030.

City example 11. Upgrading and redeveloping informal settlements for child health (Jhenaidah, Bangladesh)

Jhenaidah empowered its community – including children – to co-design inclusive public spaces next to rivers, ponds etc., resulting in a city-wide plan that meets the diverse needs of all residents.

City example 12. Inclusive placemaking by children and adolescents as part of slum rehabilitation (Mumbai, India)

Collaborative efforts in Mumbai’s Lallubhai Compound have empowered children and the community to transform neglected open spaces into vibrant, green, and safer environments, leading to increased use by girls and women and inspiring wider municipal support for similar greening initiatives.

City example 13. Inclusive play space within “Garbage City” (Cairo, Egypt)

In Cairo’s Manshiyat Naser, architect Renet Korthals Altes collaborated with the local community to transform a garbage-filled area beside a special

needs school into an inclusive, sustainable playground using upcycled materials, offering accessible play opportunities for children of all abilities and creating a shared neighbourhood space.

City example 14. Advocating for and enabling inclusive city-wide playable spaces (Dumfries, Scotland, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)

In Dumfries, local families and stakeholders collaborated to create more inclusive and accessible playgrounds, exemplified by the renovation of Catherine Street Park with features designed for children with disabilities to play alongside their peers.

City example 15. Safe parks for host and displaced communities (Arsal, Lebanon)

In response to a large influx of Syrian refugees, the Arsal Child-Friendly Spaces project in Lebanon created the town’s only safe and inclusive public park—designed collaboratively with children and stakeholders—to serve both refugee and host communities and promote resilience through accessible play and supervision.

City example 16. Sustainability and resilience to improve child and community health (Fiji and Indonesia)

The RISE programme revitalises informal settlements with sustainable, nature-based water and sanitation solutions, creating child-friendly, biodiverse public spaces that improve community health and resilience.

Case example 17. Restoring ecological niches (Mexico City, Mexico)

Through collaborative efforts involving children, the community, and partner organisations, Tarango Canyon in Mexico City was transformed from a neglected area into a revitalised natural space featuring gardens, play zones, and communal platforms, fostering environmental stewardship, social cohesion, and new opportunities for exploration and cultural exchange.

City example 18. Government-led upgrading through participatory initiatives (Thailand)

Participatory slum upgrading initiatives, such as Thailand's Baan Mankong Programme, empower poor urban communities to collectively enhance housing, basic services, and communal spaces – creating safer, more sustainable public environments for children.

City example 19. The Changing Faces Competition (Nairobi, Kenya)

The Changing Faces Competition, led by the Public Space Network, unites civil society groups to collaboratively revitalise neglected public spaces using local resources, resulting in over 200 transformations that have enhanced safety, fostered play opportunities for children, and encouraged sustainable community engagement.

City example 20. Partnership-led initiatives to rebuild better for children after disasters (Kobe, Japan)

Integrating open space planning into disaster recovery, Kobe, Japan established multiple child-friendly pocket parks in residential neighbourhoods after the 1995 earthquake, fostering play, recreation, and resilience for local children.

City example 21. Urban regeneration programmes fostering community maintenance (Fresnillo, Mexico)

Urban regeneration programmes, such as Mexico's National Social Housing Renewal and Revitalization Programme, can transform neglected spaces into safe, multi-purpose public areas for children and communities, enhancing social cohesion, reducing crime, and fostering local stewardship even where municipal resources are limited.

City example 22. City-level assessment of open public spaces for children (Sharjah, United Arab Emirates)

Sharjah, UAE, conducted a comprehensive city-wide assessment of open public spaces for children—supported by UN-Habitat and UNICEF—using GIS mapping and app-based data collection, leading to

improved planning and design guidance for child-friendly spaces.

City example 23. Rotunda Linear Park as part of the Corridors of Freedom Initiative (Johannesburg, South Africa)

Johannesburg's Rotunda Linear Park, developed through inclusive community engagement and supported by various partners, transformed a former street into a vibrant, child-friendly public space that fosters safety, active lifestyles, and community ownership in the wake of apartheid-era segregation.

City example 24. Flood-resilient infrastructure (Kibera, Nairobi)

The Kibera Public Space Project, led by Konkuey Design Initiative, collaborates with local communities to create resilient, multifunctional public spaces by retrofitting and co-designing play areas, flood-resistant infrastructure, and accessible communal facilities that support both child-friendly activities and micro-enterprises.

City example 25. Methods for maintaining and monitoring public spaces for children (worldwide)

From Belfast to Regensburg, and Tirana to Cairo, cities around the world employ a range of methods – including audits, app-based reporting, community engagement, and participatory evaluation – to monitor, maintain, and improve public spaces for children, ensuring their safety, accessibility, and resilience across diverse contexts.

City example 26. Government-led child-friendly public space interventions (China)

China's child-focused urban planning prioritizes safe, accessible, age-appropriate public spaces that support play, mobility, and development. Cities like Shenzhen and Shanghai integrate children's needs into large-scale projects, promote nature-based spaces, and ensure direct child participation in planning through workshops, councils, and co-design initiatives, fostering inclusive, community-driven environments.

City example 27. Civil-society led inclusive play spaces (Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (China))

Since 2012, Playright Hong Kong partnered with UNICEF to research the needs of all children to develop an “Inclusive Play Space Guide,” train students, and hold a design competition for Hong Kong’s first inclusive playground at Tuen Mun Park.

City example 28. Partnership-led child-friendly neighbourhood initiatives

(Belfast, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)

In Belfast, child-friendly spaces are central to the Healthy Cities Programme. The Connswater Community Greenway project addresses flooding and local disparities with a 9km park, a 16km continuous foot and cycle path, upgraded parks, and improved access to schools, all supported by regional and local policies.

City example 29. Community-led playstreets: global experiences London's Hackney Play (London, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)

Streets project offers after-school and holiday play sessions on housing estates with limited green access, providing tents, games, and arts, along with youth services nearly every evening. Inspired by the United Kingdom, Australia’s Play Australia leads the 1000 Play Streets movement, helping local governments create safe play spaces on quiet roads.

City example 30. City-led urban regeneration of public spaces (Amsterdam, the Kingdom of the Netherlands)

The city of Amsterdam has built an underground garage and a multi-use recreational area at Van Beuningen square, turning a neglected inner-city site into a lively public space for socializing, play, and sports, especially benefiting a low-income, immigrant neighbourhood.

City example 31. Government strategies for open public spaces (Melbourne, Australia)

“Plan Melbourne 2017–2050” guides city growth with initiatives like “Open Spaces for Everyone,” supporting planning for parks, waterways, and trails across 32 local areas. Projects such as Greening the Pipeline and the transformation of a decommissioned reservoir into Booran Reserve playground increase green space access, particularly for underserved communities.

City example 32. City-led gender inclusive policies (Vienna, Austria)

Einsidler Park was redesigned to create a gender-neutral space by reducing boys’ dominance and adding safety features, seating, and multi-functional play equipment. These changes encouraged inclusive use by older adults, girls, young children, and caregivers, influencing city planning attitudes toward gender and children.

City example 33. Government-led multi-level play system (New Zealand)

In response to declining play opportunities for children, New Zealand developed a comprehensive multi-level play system, led by Sport New Zealand, which incorporates play into all levels of policy and focuses on accessible, enjoyable, and sustainable neighbourhood play environments through its Neighbourhood Play Systems Model.

City example 34. City-led child-friendly urban planning (Singapore and London, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)

Since 2006, Singapore’s Housing Development Board (HDB) estates have followed universal design principles, ensuring accessibility for all ages and abilities. Recent projects have transformed under-used areas into multi-purpose community spaces, rooftop gardens, and play streets. And in London, Hackney’s supplementary planning guidance mandates that all new developments must incorporate a Child Impact Assessment within the planning validation process.

City example 35. Government-led, child-supportive street design: the Woonerf (Worldwide)

The Woonerf model, originating in Delft in 1969, has transformed residential streets into shared spaces prioritising both play and pedestrian activity, inspiring international adoption and underscoring the importance of flexible policies, community engagement, and sustained advocacy in urban street design.

City example 36. City government-led storm-resistant parks (New York, United States of America)

New York City has increased climate-resilience efforts with improved waterfront planning and green infrastructure. Hunters Point South Waterfront Park replaced an industrial site with flood-resistant features like tidal marshes, bioswales, rain gardens, and a retaining wall that doubles as seating. The park was built in two phases, adding play areas, sports courts, bike paths, wetlands, and a viewing platform.

City example 37. Urban regeneration creates opportunities for children (King's Cross, London, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)

King's Cross in central London underwent significant regeneration in the early 2000s after previous failed attempts. Transit-oriented development and public-private partnerships created a dynamic mixed-use area, with 40% of the 67-acre site dedicated to public spaces. The project introduced diverse play areas for children, housing, shops, workplaces, new streets and parks, as well as Granary Square with water jets and access to natural reserves and the canal.

City example 38. Public-private development of Darling Harbour Children's Playground (Sydney, Australia)

The Darling Harbour Children's Playground in Sydney is the city's largest inner-city playground, offering 11 age-specific zones, sensory features, and facilities designed for all ages. As a major public-private project, it draws families with illuminated evening

access and includes sustainable elements like rainwater harvesting and energy-efficient lighting.

City example 39. Partnership-based development of Flyover Park (Calgary, Canada)

In Calgary, Canada, nearly every resident is within a 5-minute walk of green space. Flyover Park, once an underused and unsafe area in Bridgeland-Riverside, was transformed by volunteers into a lively hub for events, offering amenities for all ages, including play structures, ping pong tables, and flexible spaces for learning. The project involved students, community groups, and the Parks Foundation Calgary, with funding from government and private grants.

City example 40. Civil society-led school zone to make streets safer (Mumbai, India)

World Resources India worked with Mumbai authorities and Christ Church School to pilot a safer school zone in Byculla. Based on mapping, surveys, and student input, interventions include a 200m school zone, clearer traffic lanes, signage, colourful pedestrian crossings, speed-calming measures, and improved sidewalks.

City example 41. Partnership-based child-friendly city initiative (Colorado, United States of America)

Growing Up Boulder (GUB) is an independent NGO that empowers youth participation in city decisions. Partnering with the City of Boulder and Boulder Valley School District, GUB has involved over 7,000 young people in 100+ projects with 60 partners, influencing city planning on topics like accessibility and public spaces. They created an inclusive city map with input from 700 children and caregivers.

City example 42. Government-led urban food programmes, urban farming and community gardens (Thailand)

To address food security concerns for children, cities are promoting urban farming and community gardens. Studies show children's involvement in these programmes improves nutrition and healthy eating. In Thailand, the Green and Healthy Community

Program has expanded supported city farms from 50 in 2010 to 267 in 2019.

City example 43. City-government promoted tactical urbanism to innovate play spaces (Mexico City, Mexico)

In Mexico City, the Laboratorio para la Ciudad initiated short-term projects to transform underused public spaces for children, with their input shaping the designs. However, these efforts could not be expanded due to political changes, underscoring the difficulty of maintaining such initiatives without formal city council approval.

City example 44. Civil society-led partnership to revitalize degraded green-blue spaces (India)

In Gurugram, India, the Chakkarpur-Wazirabad Bund was transformed from a derelict, polluted channel into an inclusive green corridor for recreation, commuting, and education through a collaborative effort between citizens, government, and private partners.

City example 45. Participatory upgrading linked to government initiatives (India)

In Odisha the state government manages urban land development and enacted a regional land rights act to secure tenure for all slum dwellers. Through the JAGA Mission, the state coordinated with other agencies to upgrade basic services and prioritize mapping, protecting, and developing communal areas. This comprehensive approach improved streets, open spaces, and community facilities at scale.

City example 46. City-led, integrated urban planning for health and well-being (Medellin, Colombia)

In Medellin, Proyecto Urbano Integral (PUI) worked with the innovative Metro Cable project that used aerial cable cars as mass transit to integrate inaccessible hillside communities, helping improve physical and social infrastructure in marginalized neighbourhoods near to cable car stations. This resulted in new parks, plazas, and public facilities such as a sports centre, community centre, a library and a medical centre.

City example 47. Partnership-led participatory upgrading of a community playground (Kampala, Uganda)

In Lukuli, Kampala, participatory planning involving diverse stakeholders, local materials and labour improved a community playground. Upgrades included land levelling, flood mitigation, natural play features, gender-sensitive toilets (incomplete at the time of writing), a parents' corner, and tree planting. The community actively maintains the playground, which hosts girls' netball teams, school events, and municipal activities.

City example 48. Community and civil society-led building of youth-focused facilities (San Jose, Costa Rica)

In La Carpio, an NGO called Integrated System of Art Education for Social Inclusion (SIFAIS) set out to foster social inclusion and transformation by engaging children and youth through arts, athletics, and education programmes. The foundation began with a youth orchestra and has expanded to offer skills training, legal support, and microenterprise opportunities.

City example 49. Civil society and community-led pop-up play in crisis situations (Hanoi, Viet Nam)

During the COVID-19 pandemic, as part of its Global Public Space Programme, UN Habitat worked with local partners, municipal governments, and local communities to facilitate mobile and pop-up playgrounds in some low-income neighbourhoods in Hanoi, Viet Nam. As part of this initiative, 10 pop-up play sessions were enabled in five low-income neighbourhoods where children lived in cramped housing and had few opportunities for safe play.

City example 50. Community-led, child-sensitive urban planning and design for equity and inclusion (Beirut, Lebanon)

In Beirut, Catalytic Action's My Place/Street project claimed a liminal space owned by the city and officially registered as a sidewalk for developing a vibrant public space for children. Participatory design workshops with local community groups, including

children, revealed the community wanted a place that nurtured children's play, offered a safe shaded place for resting, and provided an aesthetically pleasing space in the neighbourhood.

City example 51. National, regional and city disaster preparedness plans, policies, and strategies (Jakarta, Indonesia)

In Jakarta, a floodprone megacity with 13 rivers flowing through it – urbanization has eroded green spaces and reduced the capacity for stormwater drainage. Between 2017 and 2022, Jakarta's governor introduced the Taman Maju Bersama concept to collaboratively create green public spaces with communities and develop parks that will serve as sponges through nature-based solutions and make Jakarta a climate-resilient city.

City example 52. Plans and interventions to mitigate and adapt to climate change (the Kingdom of the Netherlands and France)

Rotterdam's Waterplaza transformed stormwater drainage hidden in underground pipes and tanks into visible, vibrant public space that is explicit about its utilitarian function but also rich in play and leisure opportunities for young people and the public. And in Paris, Municipal departments collaborated on Paris's "greening schoolyards" initiative, as Paris is prone to overheating and flooding and residents need more green space.

City example 53. Civil society-led initiative to build inclusive Kaniashkan adventure playground (Halabja, Iraq)

In 2009, spurred by the lack of safe play spaces for children, human rights photographer Thomas Carrigan helped launch the Halabja Community Play Project (HCCP) to create a public playground to support children's well-being through play. HCCP worked with children, town officials, and the Shepherd's Gift Foundation to design a unique play space using land, trees and materials donated by the town's mayor.

City example 54. Civil society-led creation of safe spaces for children in crises (Bosnia and Herzegovina, South Sudan, Jordan)

In 2014, nearly 60% of children in Bosnia and Herzegovina were impacted by floods that damaged vital infrastructure. Organizations including World Vision, UNICEF, Save the Children, and local partners set up 18 child-friendly spaces (CFS) in safe areas. And in 2013, when internal conflict displaced hundreds of thousands in South Sudan, the International Federation of Red Cross created three CFS in Bor, Malakal, and Juba, offering psychosocial support and protection. And in Za'atari Camp, Jordan, which is home to the largest number of Syrian refugees, UNICEF and Mercy Corps established four playgrounds to provide inclusive play spaces for children –sheltered structures fully supervised by staff, equipped with play equipment such as seesaws, slides, sandpits and beanbags.

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Suggested citation. Guide to creating urban public spaces for children: summary. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2026. <https://doi.org/10.2471/B09713>

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