Children in Cities
Researching with Children in Four Kazakh cities to support child friendliness recognition.

Final Kazakhstan Report 2015
The author would like to thank all the child co-researchers from schools in Aktau, Astana, Kyzylorda and Semey who collected the data for us and shared their lives with such grace and enthusiasm. Thank you also to the teachers and university students who worked with the team as research mentors in each of these cities. In particular I would also like to thank UNICEF staff and local government officials in each of these cities and nationally that supported the research projects to go ahead.

The author would also like to thank the Australian based research assistant Katina Dimoulias who worked to develop the quantitative elements of the data for the report and Professor Paul James, Director of the Institute of Cultural Studies for his support and feedback on the theoretical work involved in the data analysis.

Copyright 2015
Citation details: Malone, K. (2015) Researching with children in four Kazakh cities to support child friendliness recognition, University of Western Sydney, Bankstown, NSW, Australia.

If you would like any information about this report please contact:
Professor Karen Malone
Centre for Educational Research, University of Western Sydney
Mobile 0407352864 k.malone@uws.edu.au
www.childfriendlycities.com
www.childfriendlyasiapacific.net

Cover Drawing by Child Researcher Danira from Astana, female, age 8.
“I draw the picture of Baiterek because it is very interesting and beautiful place. It is located in a nice city. Our country is yours, there are many flowers, the surroundings and blue, because it is the sky”
Table of Contents

1. Introduction .............................................................................. 4

2. Background ............................................................................. 6
   Overview .................................................................................. 6
   Child Friendly and Sustainable Cities .......................................... 6
   UNICEF Child-Friendly Cities Initiative ....................................... 8
   Theoretical Analysis .................................................................. 9

3. Children’s Research Methodology ............................................ 11
   Participatory Research Methods Overview ................................... 11
   Conducting workshops in four cities ......................................... 14

4. Children’s Research Results ................................................... 16
   Ecological domain – a clean and healthy child friendly city .......... 16
   Cultural domain - a learning and playful child friendly city .......... 22
   Economical domain - an equitable child friendly city .................. 27
   Political Domain - a secure and participatory child friendly city .... 30

4. Recommendations ................................................................. 37
   Methodological recommendations ............................................ 38
   City Based Recommendations ................................................ 38

5. Concluding statement ............................................................. 41
1. Introduction

Kazakhstan became a member of the United Nations on the 2nd March in 1992 and signed the convention on the rights of the child in 1994. The UNICEF Child friendly cities initiative started in 2006 in the Republic of Kazakhstan as the means for creating an environment where cities would begin to value the importance of implementing strategies that addressed the rights of the child. The UNICEF country office in Kazakhstan acts as a central technical advisory body to the National government and in the promotion and implementation of the CFCI. The Child Rights Protection Committee was set up in 2006 through the Ministry of Education and reports directly to the Minister. They are the main national advocates for Child Friendly Cities. The Kazakhstan Children in Cities, child friendly cities research project was implemented throughout 2014. Funded by UNICEF Kazakhstan it was a child friendly participatory research program engaging 177 children in research about their lives in the cities where they are living. The four cities where children were living included. The study was conducted in four cities of Astana, Semey, Kyzylorda and Aktau, with approximately 40 children from each city being involved. The aim of the study was to build capacity in order to create opportunities for children to be involved in collecting data about their lives in many neighbourhoods around the city. These four cities had identified they would like to develop local capacity in order to conduct research with children to compliment their national UNICEF child friendly cities recognition process. The concept of a child friendly city is not based on an ideal end state or standard model rather it is a framework with the goal of creating a city and community wide commitment to addressing the needs of children, investing in their future and creating policies and strategies to achieve this. Central to achieving this goal is the need to develop baseline data with children about lives in the city, that is, to understand how to best provide for children by identifying the gaps, issues and challenges. The study was conducted in the city with the support of local adult mentors working alongside the children who took on the role as the co-researchers. These mentors, who included local teachers, UNICEF staff, local government staff and university students, were provided with training on the child friendly cities initiative and child focused participatory research. The research methods the children used to collect their city wide data included photography, drawing, guided tours, surveys and interviews. The research was conducted with children as part of their school program with the support of the school Principals and staff.

The outcomes of the research revealed that many of the concerns children had around safety in public spaces; cleanliness of the urban environment; fear of strangers; improvements needed for local courtyard playgrounds; and better road safety especially the desire for better footpaths and demarcation between roads and walkways and play spaces, were similar across all city sites regardless of the size or unique geography of the city. With this is mind though it is clear that children in cities such as Astana have access to greater diversity of resources, more and better quality playgrounds and parks then children in smaller regional cities and also children with disabilities or special needs are more likely to be included in schools and have their needs meet in the community. This diversity of needs is also present not just between one city to the next but also within cities. So depending on where a child might live in relation to specific resources, facilities or services can have significant positive or negative impact on their quality of life. The neighbourhood children were living in, in each of the cities was selected specifically because it was representative of the ‘typical’ community life for children in that city.

Underpinning the child-friendly urban planning and programming process, evident in UNICEF CFC wide research studies in Kazakhstan, is a human rights-based governance model that embodies the principles of non-discrimination, survival, sustainable development, and participation as enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It has been shown throughout the global programs that understanding the impact of exclusion, through child and family consultation in CFCI, has lead to the identification and addressing of barriers that prevent impoverished children and their families from using services or exercising a number of their rights of citizenship. By making neglected groups more visible and granting all children a platform to secure their needs and rights, the Child-Friendly Cities approach contributes to achieving sustainable development goals with equity. Investing in children and families is essential for strengthening children’s ability to reach their potential as productive, engaged, and capable citizens who contribute fully to their societies now and in the future. Child friendly and sustainable cities should therefore be viewed as a simultaneous bottom-up and a top-down program of political, economic, cultural and ecological transformation.
Some of the core findings from the study have been summarised into key changes or recommendations from the children of what they wanted in order to make their neighbourhood and their city more child friendly:

**Aktau City**
- Children were concerned about helpless animals on the streets and said they wanted a nursery for animals built.
- Children wanted shelters or refuges for homeless people and young people who were in need of support, whether due to drug addiction or having problems at home.
- Children wanted more variety of places to visit. Many said their was a need to build educational and entertainment places for children, especially teenagers who were bored and had nothing to do, which often led to incidents.
- Because the city is on the steppe there is not much vegetation, so children wanted more parks with more greenery, so there were places to walk and to breathe fresh air.
- Children wanted the streets and buildings to be cleaned up. For the council to get rid of the trash and clean the buildings with drawings and swear words on them.

**Astana city**
- Children were concerned about strangers and in a city where having sense of connection to neighbours and a community can often be lost, providing neighbourhood watch or other strategies to overcome issues of stranger danger should be considered as an ongoing important focus.
- Traffic is a major area of concern for children and especially around schools children wanted to feel safer by the establishment of street calming strategies.
- Children said they would like to have access to more nature and outdoor environments close to their homes.
- Children reported the government never or only sometimes consulted them about their life or their community. It is important that the city sets up regular and easily accessible options for children to communicate their concerns.

**Kyzylorda city**
- Children wanted a clean environment with less garbage and dirt and more trees and flowers in their apartment courtyards.
- Children wanted more parks and green spaces close to where they live so they can visit them regularly not just in the centre of the city.
- Children want improved playgrounds in the courtyards and especially to ensure they that are inclusive playgrounds that can accommodate children with special needs and disabilities.
- Children living out of town said they need more buses because the buses are overcrowded and it's hard to get to school.
- Children want to be included in decision-making about their city and would like to participate in the planning for change and be active in improving their city.

**Semey City**
- Children want more sealed footpaths and roads to stop the dirt and dust and to create a place to walk off the road for safety.
- Children want more lawn and landscaped areas that had trees and flowers that created a buffer between the playgrounds and the car parks in the courtyards.
- Children requested fences creating a demarcation between the children’s play spaces and the car parks and road.
- Children asked for regular pick up of rubbish and garbage left lying around including dead and rooting dogs carcases.
- Old buildings that are falling a part, open holes to underground piping, overhead piping should all be removed, covered or boarded up so they don't cause hazards and dangers to children.
- Children in this city were the least likely to feel prepared if a dangerous situation should occur. Emergency preparedness education and talks by police, emergency services so children learn ways to be safe and to deal with dangerous situations is recommended.
- Children in Semey were the least likely of all children to know about child rights – it is important to start to educate the children and the community about the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
2. Background

Overview

A child friendly city is a place where children’s rights and needs are at the centre of good community planning and policy. It is place where adults listen to children and young people and take what they say seriously. The principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) highlight the responsibility of the States Parties to uphold the child's right to live in a safe, clean and healthy environment and the right to engage in free play, leisure, and recreation. One key characteristic of a child-friendly city is its capacity to provide opportunities for children to have freedom of movement to explore, uninhibited by physical, social or cultural constraints. Using this criterion, many cities around the world rate poorly in terms of their child-friendly status. But this hasn’t always been the case. A generation ago in many high-developed nations children were far more likely to be able to play independently in their own neighbourhood or village. When parents have been asked to reflect on their childhoods, they usually recall having far more freedom than their own children have today mostly this is due to cities becoming larger, having more traffic, an increased fear by many parents of children’s safety because of strangers and other hazards. In this report we will investigate if Kazakhstan is also revealing a trend of less mobility for cities. Children also in many cities around the world say they have less time available to play or have freedom outside because they are busy doing homework, after school activities, domestic chores or sport. Other reasons for the loss of children’s freedom in cities include the erosion of natural or wild spaces in urban areas due to buildings, the lack of pathways or bike lanes, natural risks from floods, landslides, pollution are other hazards due to modernisation. How the built environment supports young people to engage in activities within their city is also a significant indicator of child friendliness. Increased traffic, and more roads, car parks that are now crowded with cars leaving little space for play and the implications of living in crowded high rise apartment blocks all impact on children’s lives in cities. To compensate for a loss of green spaces and outdoor playgrounds some cities provide valuable infrastructure that children can access; sport grounds, children’s play centres or entertainment facilities, shopping malls; skate parks. Additionally, with city infrastructure there is the likelihood of children and their families having better access to schools, hospitals, community centres and variety of other health and social services that could have significant impact on a child’s quality of life and well being. This study had the aim of exploring through child focused research with children in a variety of diverse communities within four cities in Kazakhstan what children are experiencing to determine what potential advantages or disadvantages there are for them growing up in cities. The global issues associated with changing contemporary childhoods as is being identified through child friendly cities research around the world will act as a backdrop to the results from children in Kazakhstan.

Child Friendly and Sustainable Cities

In studies of human-environment relationships, there is a strong assertion that humans learn through engagement with their environments. The rationale for this study is based on the evidence that children who do not have direct access to their environments, are unable to learn the necessary spatial, physical, psychological, social and analytical skills required for urban competence nor will children be socialized into ways of being that associate environmental engagement with living active healthy lifestyles and the capacity to contribute and adapt to a sustainable future. The principles of sustainable development clearly demand that the simultaneous achievement of the goals of sustainability should meet the needs of the present generation without compromising those needs of future generations. The goals of sustainability insist nation governments maintain the integrity of their global partnerships and local policies through processes, which are participatory and equitable. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) identifies a child’s well-being and quality of life as the ultimate indicator of a healthy environment, good governance, and sustainable development. The principles of the Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC) reinforces these goals of sustainability when it challenges governments to uphold the child's right to live in a safe, clean and healthy environment with their both human and nonhuman companions. As one of the most vulnerable groups in our community, children have a special interest in these goals. The detrimental impact of unchecked urbanisation, where sustainability is not achieved, was seen to affect children profoundly and limit there potential for a future life. Since the late eighties there has been a convergence, and in many instances a symbiotic relationship between the principles of sustainable development and children’s rights.
Due to an increasing degradation of urban environments there has been a progressive dehumanization of urban space, a dehumanization that has affected in particular children, who have seen their freedom of movement compromised. In recent times there has been significant debate about the impact of children and young people’s loss of experience to engage with their local environments as part of their everyday community life. It has been argued, this move away from children being active and visible in their community is the direct impact of a culture of risk, fear, and litigation. This trend to keep children indoors or behind fences is in light of current childhood research that states by not allowing children to engage in independent mobility communities are denying children the opportunity to develop the environmental literacy, risk assessment skills and resilience that they will need to be safe and confident when managing the more complex environments urbanization now presents for them. As children lose the freedom to create, explore and gain mastery over their physical and social environments they also lose opportunities that will be significant in developing healthy lifestyles, social networks and environmental competence. The opportunity for children to move freely in the environment without an accompanying adult is defined in the literature as children’s independent mobility. Children’s independent mobility (CIM) is measured in terms of spatial range or roaming range, this measure can be determined by parents or caregivers in terms of the boundaries they set or through a negotiation between children, parents or caregivers and even the community. Children’s spatial range may change according to a child’s maturation, health and cultural background, social and cultural influences in parenting styles and boundary making (often influenced by issues of safety and risk), physical attributes of the environment and differences in the role of the community to act ‘in loco parentis’.

Research suggests that factors affecting parents' decisions about permitting or restricting children’s mobility and factors affecting children’s decisions about their mobility are place-based. These placed based decisions are influenced by children’s age, what the physical, social and traffic environment offers, as well as cultural issues such as parenting styles and norms and views of childhood and children’s competence. In their publication, One False Move… A Study of Children’s Independent Mobility Hillman et al (1990) documented a decline of independent mobility amongst children aged 7-15 years in the UK. They compared survey results from 1971 with the results of a similar study conducted in 1990 in the UK and Germany. Continuing to replicate the study comparisons have been made over the past ten years in Finland, Belarus, New Zealand, Japan and Australia. Nearly all countries showed that there has been a significant decrease in children’s freedom to move around with adult regulation in most cities around the world. A combination of high car use, urban design and traffic regulation that favours private transport creating poor pedestrian environments have contributed to the feeling of cities being unsafe for children. Parents and children across the many studies have a shared view that they are worried about roads with high traffic volumes, speeds, and poor driver behaviour. In most industrialised nations, parents cite traffic as a major reason for driving their children to school, even though ironically they are contributing to the situation where school zones them become dangerous for children. All these recent studies illustrate significant contrasts in children’s independent mobility around the world according to urban design, parenting norms and issues around fear and safety. And regardless of urban form, parents living in many different environments from around the world have indicated that traffic and stranger danger, is one of their greatest concerns when restricting children’s movement in cities. For the first time this work in Kazakhstan has takes the same CIM research tools to see whether these trends are also being seen in developing cities in Kazakhstan. Results from two cities, Semey and Astana are included and compared to other countries to start to develop a benchmark for later longitudinal comparison.

Around the world research on children’s place encounters have shown regardless of specific cultural nuances, the type, quality and diversity of the place within which a child lives, has a direct effect on the child's life experiences, their health and well-being, their social identity and their potential for developing important environmental skills and knowledge that will allow them to be confident and safe city dwellers. Research has shown that local neighbourhoods and villages, outside or within a city environment are important places for children to develop their emerging identity. Those facilities and services found close to a child’s home for instance, can offer a set of local affordances in relation to the child’s city encounters and their developing sense of self. The affordance of an environment is the measure of a place’s capacity to respond and complement the child's identity building. Many child researchers argue that the affordances found in a local environment offer elements to support children to engage with their city. The quality and diversity of elements in an outdoor environment that respond to the vast differences in children’s abilities and needs also influences children's choice of informal play activities and decides on how spaces come to promote health lifestyles and personal development. Through outdoor exploration spaces can allow for unstructured play, generating a
sense of freedom, independence and inner strength which children can draw upon when experiencing future incidents of stress and anxiety. However, access to high quality environments is unequally distributed, especially between children living in rural, semi rural, small towns, peri-urban and new and old urban areas. The equitable distribution of access to quality environments includes ensuring there are opportunities for children in wheelchairs or with other disabilities to access places to socialise and engage with their community. With all children spending less time outdoors today than they used to there is a concern that children have become more disconnected from the urban environment, thus understand it less and are therefore less likely to develop the environmental knowledge and skills to be able to move around safely. Using children’s drawings and photographs of their neighbourhoods and the subsequent interviews about these we have in the Kazakhstan study sought to reveal through insights available from children how they evaluate the quality of their outdoor environments for all children will all their diverse needs. A city that is addressing the impact of discrimination of children in neighbourhoods is a city that is addressing its fundamental issues of child friendliness.

Research on children growing up in cities around the world illustrates that for children to gain the benefits of their physical, social and cultural surroundings urban policy and planning must be informed by real research with and by children about their life experiences and there should be genuine participation of children in the planning process. Kevin Lynch, author of growing up in Cities in 1977, adding empirical credence from a planning perspective through his observations of cognitive mapping exercises, found that adult and child knowledge of their urban environments correlated with their actual use of space. That is the more time a child spends in a quality environment the more likely they are to understand the environment and possibly be someone who is motivated to improve the environment. Louise Chawla writing on the Growing up in Cities project some years later stated: “…if cities are well planned, they can provide many advantages for children and for the attainment of a sustainable future”. According to David Driskell, urban planner and researcher in the Growing Up in Cities project stated the benefits of young people’s participation for planners and policy-makers is that they will “make better and more informed planning and development decisions”, they will “more fully understand the needs and issues of the communities they serve”, they can “educate community members on the inherent complexities and trade-offs involved in policy and development decision-making” and most of all they will “create urban environments that are more child friendly and humane”. For this reason children are central to our research program in Kazakhstan. By incorporating a participatory research methodology we are engaging with young people directly and fulfilling the CRC that state all children have a right to participate in decisions that will have impacts on their quality of life.

UNICEF Child-Friendly Cities Initiative

A Child-friendly City is a system of good local governance committed to the fullest implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (see Box 1). Large cities, medium-size towns as well as smaller communities even in rural settings are all called to ensure that their governance gives priority to children and involve them in decision-making processes (UNICEF 2008). UNICEF’s Child-Friendly Cities (CFC) initiative was first conceived in response to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992 and then more vehemently in the meetings leading up to and around the development of the Habitat II meetings in Istanbul in 1996. It came at a time when it was being recognised that the situation of urban children around the world was of critical concern and that discussions on sustainable development, the management of human settlements and the rights of children could not be done in isolation. The emerging child-friendly cities philosophy was underpinned by the view that to actively implement at a national and local government level the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) you needed a healthy environment, good governance and sustainable development. According to UNICEF a child-friendly city ensures that all children have the opportunities to express their views and participate in decision-making about their community in the same way as any other citizen of the city. In this study there was a fundamental shift in thinking about urban development, from where children’s needs which are normally decided by adults on behalf of children, to a view that children should be partners with adults (urban developers, researchers, parents and architects) in dreaming and designing a neighbourhood for children. The focus of child friendly cities has primarily been on children’s survival equality but in recent times with a shift in focus of the United Nations to sustainable development, child friendly cities will have an important role to play in nurturing humane and sustainable cities.
In 2013 UNICEF released its post 2015 agenda report that stated “Sustainable Development is the core concept for the Post-2015 Development Agenda and provides an integrated response to the complex environmental, societal, economic and governance challenges that directly and disproportionately affect children”. It also identified that sustainable development must balance equity on all fronts and break the cycles of poverty, therefore ensuring children have “access to care, nutritious food and clean water and a safe environment in which to grow, participate and learn - free of violence, pollution and the risks of disaster”. The UNICEF report identified three principles driving the post 2015 agenda for children: Sustainable development starts with safe, healthy and well-educated children; Safe and sustainable societies are, in turn essential for children; and Children’s voices, choices and participation are critical for the sustainable futures we want. Societies, the report argued, can only claim to develop sustainably if children’s needs and rights, particularly those in the poorest and most vulnerable neighbourhoods, are being addressed. This was reiterated in UNICEF SOWC report for 2012 where it stated “equity must be the guiding principle in efforts for all children in urban areas. The children of slums – born into and raised under some of the most challenging conditions of poverty and disadvantage – will require particular attention. But this must not come at the expense of children elsewhere. The larger goal must remain in focus: fairer, more nurturing cities and societies for all people – starting with children”.

This study utilises the framework of the global child friendly cities initiative and its new agenda to support child friendly and sustainable cities. The study incorporates a rights-based paradigm and replicating a number of studies that have been conducted by the author utilising a similar research design. Additionally, the methods and tools used have grown out of the authors involvement in the ten-year UNESCO Growing Up In Cities project (which takes at its core a significant focus on building relationships and discussions between key partners in children's lives; children, parents, community, city council and urban developers and planners. The following section provides a short summary of some of the key research informing the current view on children and cities globally. According to UNICEF a child-friendly city ensures that all children have the opportunities to express their views and participate in decision-making about their community in the same way as any other citizen of the city. In this study there was a fundamental shift in thinking about urban development, from where children's needs which are normally decided by adults on behalf of children, to a view that children should be partners with adults (urban developers, researchers, parents and architects) in dreaming and designing a neighbourhood for children.

**Theoretical Analysis**

In this introduction to some of the contemporary issues for children in cities around the globe I have endeavoured to provide some starting points for considering the theoretical areas for which the data emanating from the participatory study of child friendliness with children in Kazakhstan will be analysed. Framing this analysis is the *Circles of Social Life* method that begins with four domains of social practice and meaning: ecology, economics, culture and politics. Together with writers such as Paul James, we have been building upon this method to understand the complexity of children's lives - not as a standalone or separate consideration, but built into the centre of the human condition. Because the method starts with basic questions of human existence, considering persons as related to others and to nature, both the integral place of children in the social whole and the unique dimensions of children's lives can be brought into inter-relation. Recent examples of the application...
of the method can be found in *Urban Sustainability in Theory and Practice* (2015). As evidenced by a series of projects in different cities across the world, these four domains provide an entry into a comprehensive framework for understanding the very complex nature of ‘social life’. The domains, systematically broken down into subdomains and aspects, are helpful when considering ways to map to the practice, meaning and materials expressions of social life. In the case of Kazakhstan children in cities the aim is to consider how to support positive development that is sustainable in evolving city environments. The approach seeks to determine how we can engage in both quantitative and qualitative analysis of how children evaluate the quality of their cities to be able to meet their needs, and the needs of other children and member of their communities.

The following table provides a quick sketch of the four domains and how they relate to some of the key articles from the convention on the rights of the child. The CROC is the central platform through which child friendly cities is built and therefore is essential to always use it as the central reference point for analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domains of Social Practice</th>
<th>Example from <em>Convention Rights of Child</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ecology</td>
<td>–from materials and energy to embodiment and food (including physical health)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Article 6 —‘right to life’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Article 24 —‘right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health ... adequate food, clean drinking water, consideration of dangers and risks of environmental pollution’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economics</td>
<td>–from production and resourcing to wealth and distribution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Article 23 —‘right of the disabled child to participate equally in community life ... ’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Article 26 —‘the right to benefit from social security, including social insurance ... ’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Article 27 —‘right ... to a standard of living adequate for the child ... ’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>–from identity and engagement to enquiry and learning (including mental health)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Article 7 —‘right from birth to a name, the right to acquire a nationality and, as far as possible, the right to know and be cared for by his or her parents’.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Article 28 —‘right of the child to education ... :’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Article 29 —‘education directed to develop respect for nature’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Article 31 —‘right of the child to rest and leisure; to engage inplay and recreational activities ... :’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politics</td>
<td>–from organization and governance to ethics and accountability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Article 13 —‘right to freedom of expression.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Article 14 —‘right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Article 15 —‘right to freedom of association’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Article 16 —‘right to the protection of the law’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Urban Sustainability: Domains of Social Practice

These domains align easily with the key CFC Index dimensions provided in the Kazakhstan Child Friendly Cities Index. The CFC index dimensions include Children’s good start to life; Children protection from harm; Children’s education and knowledge; Children’s decent standard of living; Children’s play and cultural activities; and children’s civic participation. This index will in time become the framework for a set of nationally identified indicators that cities in Kazakhstan will monitor progress of child friendliness in the process of being recognised as child friendly cities. The following box illustrates how the theoretical domains of urban sustainability connect with the National CFC Index dimensions. This will be discussed in more detail within the report.

Domains of Social Practice alignment with Kazakh Child Friendly Cities Index

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Urban Sustainability Domains of Social Practice</th>
<th>Kazakh National CFC Index Dimensions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ecology —from materials and energy to embodiment and food (including physical health)</td>
<td>Children Good Start to Life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economics —from production and resourcing to wealth and distribution</td>
<td>Children’s Decent Standard of Living</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture —from identity and engagement to enquiry and learning (including mental health)</td>
<td>Children’s Education and Knowledge Children’s Play and Cultural Activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politics —from organization and governance to ethics and accountability</td>
<td>Children’s Protection from Harm Children’s Civic Participation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10
3. Children’s Research Methodology

Participatory Research Methods Overview

Participatory research projects, such as the Children in Cities project in Kazakhstan, aim to ensure that participants feel engaged, significant and comfortable in expressing their ideas. The research engaged with children aged 6-16 years using participatory research, a methodology that supports an authentic engagement with children to express their views as autonomous agents. This approach seeks to appreciate the ‘whole child experience’ and acknowledges that children are not constituted through adults but the child’s world is constituted through encounters with their material surroundings. Children’s participation in such a project should be transparent, inclusive, interactive, responsive, educational and relevant to the local communities involved. With participatory place-based research methodologies, children are engaged as co-researchers, that is they would have the opportunity to be involved in all stages of the study including the research design, data collection, data analysis, reporting and taking action. This style of participatory research promotes children to be active knowledge producers rather than passive knowledge consumers and supports children to be a catalyst for transformative practices and agents for change. Participatory research often utilizes a variety of research methods mostly qualitative and often very focused on collecting data on children’s everyday experiences from their own perspective. Children in the study in Kazakhstan engaged in visual, oral and mobile methods including drawings of their place and dream places, photography and photo-voice storytelling, guide tours and walking interviews

These methods allows the child researchers to engage in deeply enriched interactions that enable the children to identify their concerns, ideas and desires of what is important for them as active members of a community. Participatory methodologies work on the premise of crosschecking triangulation as a way of validating the correlation between the quantitative and qualitative data that is collected across the entirety of the project. Therefore, a number of tools and possibilities for engagement are normally available for children of different ages, abilities, experiences and interest. Children from the four cities in Kazakhstan conducted research about their local neighbourhood through visual, oral and mobile research methods – this is a multi-method study design. A multi-method participatory approach is often used in Child Friendly cities research projects worldwide. There are obvious advantages to using a multi-method approach with children, including for validity and also to increase research access. From validity perspective the use of multi-methods helps the researcher to establish triangulation that is by seeing the same data arising regularly even if in totally different data forms, significance can start to be established. The use of expressive and creative data collection techniques (photography, drawings) along with the more formal research methods (surveys and interviews) allows the children to engage in the research in a more participatory manner, that is they have choices and opportunities to select styles of data gathering that suits their own skills, strengths and interests. Photography and drawing approaches for instance allows even very young children to be involved while not relying heavily on adult’s facilitation and interpretation. The diversity in the age of the participants is also an important factor when considering on the tools most suited for the participatory research design. In these child friendly cities workshops, a multi-method using visual, mobile and oral based tools were determined to be the most flexible and attentive to the needs and capacities of the children to be involved.

Designing Children’s Participatory Research Workshops

The aim of child focused participatory research workshops is to provide the opportunity for children using a variety of methods, collect data about their experiences of their neighbourhood and to evaluate the quality of the life in their cities for children. The four cities included in the study provide a diversity of city sizes and contexts, with a variety of different age group children and different language groups. The idea was to provide an opportunity to illustrate the flexibility of the workshop methods in these alternative settings to see how flexible they would be to be incorporated in many diverse cities found in Kazakhstan. All the cities involved have been interested in the opportunities to be involved in the national CFC recognition program and by participating in the children’s research workshop were hoping to build capacity in the city in order to be able to replicate the methodology in the future as part of their ongoing monitoring of child friendliness. There are a number methods available to incorporate into the design of the participatory research workshops the follow provides a summary of some of the key methods often used in child friendly cities research projects.
Surveys
Surveys are a valuable tool for acquiring large scale data sets on children’s lives that can be quantified for use by policy makers and government departments locally, and for comparisons nationally, or internationally. The adult researchers filled in the surveys for young children through a dialogue technique, and with the older children they filled them in themselves either with the support of an adult or if they were confident they often filled them in by themselves. The surveys can be designed by children or by outsiders. In this case we used predesigned surveys. One was a modified UNICEF CFC survey and the other a global CIM survey. The different surveys may be for children, child carers, community members, or government officials whose role it is to support children’s needs. Comparing differences between the different groups within a community or even other cities or countries can often be very illuminating for children. Surveys can be paper based or online. All children in this study were given paper-based surveys in either Russian or Kazakh language depending on their preference. The data coming from our community surveys is about providing key trends or themes that can then be followed up in other aspects of the research. There is no intention to provide reliable quantitative data that is generalizable for a city. The survey data was entered on to excel spread sheets and then graphed for each city and then all cities combined.

Interviews and storytelling
Interviews and stories can help to bring our attention the way we come to know places through the lives of significant people, significant places or events. The stories we can tell about the local area can include ourselves or be about others. They may be the recounting of an experience we have had personally or they may be a story that has been passed down to us from their experience or passed down over many years through many others peoples retelling. Interviews are the basis for most storytelling and children display great skills in recording the stories of themselves, their friends and peers and other community members. The interviews and storytelling can be audio recorded or videoed for later reference and use. In this study children were interviewed while they participated in the drawing activities and when they shared their photographs. Interview notes were written by the research mentors on to the drawings and photograph transcript sheets and were entered and translated into visual data templates for each individual child alongside the images. The templates were combined to create visual reports combining all children in each city. Additionally, in some cases children were interviewed on video and asked to provide short concise video entry-addressing adults about their concerns to improve the city.

Drawings and mental maps
Participants drawings of their urban environment, which can be called a mental map or cognitive map, provide a useful tool for discussing and exploring: what children know and how they experience the urban landscape; their range of movement around the spaces; their favourite or least favourite places and why. When asking children to draw their neighbourhood or their place it is important not to give them too much context. A mental map is image of a place that all animals create in their mind. It is our mental GPS system and for survival is an essential capability allowing us to find our way home, know where safe or unsafe places are, what to expect when we turn a corner in the street. By not describing in detail what children are to include, it means we can have a better sense of how the child comes to imagine themselves as a ‘body’ located with the physicality of the place. Conceptually, it is believed that the more animals physically experience an environment the more detailed the mental map will be, so it provides insights into the way a child constructs their place knowing, their attachment to a place or the significance of objects in a place (home, park), the social networks and connections may be obvious, mobility and accessibility how they move through the place; and what they constitute as ‘my place’. A short interview or debriefing discussion where the key aspects of the map/drawing are discussed and unpacked with an adult is conducted with the child. Or alternatively, especially with older children, they might write about the drawing or mental map themselves. For the dream drawing children are asked to draw a place with all the qualities in it that are important for children. They can draw on experiences of places they have been before in their city or other cities, or it can be an imaginary place. The interview or notes children write about this drawing help us to imagine what are children’s priorities for designing a child friendly and sustainable city. It is important again to allow children to feel free to express the selves in a way that is creative and inspiring and not limiting. Some children say I can’t draw, but this shouldn’t be a barrier. The dream drawing therefore might be modelled from clay, a digital collage on their IPAD, a collection of photographs. All children in the study completed a cognitive map (neighbourhood drawing) and a dream child friendly city drawing on to an A4 sheet of paper. These drawings were then scanned and inserted in the visual templates and also saved in folders for later reference.
Photography and Photovoice
Photographs taken by young people are valuable tools for gathering information on their urban environment. It is important that the participants have a chance to experiment using the equipment so a number of focused tasks to give them experience is important. The use of interviews to support an analysis of the photographs is critical. Just having photographs and making adult judgements based on there content does little to provide the valuable insights that children data can provide? Photographic methods are often used to compliment or support other methods, for example interviews and stories, behaviour mapping and guided tours. Not all children in the study had the opportunity to participate in the Photovoice activity. Children were given the opportunity to use a disposable camera, take photographs using a camera or use an IPAD or smartphone. Some children also selected photographs from their own family collection to bring along. Children were interviewed about their photographs and had the chance to share photographs with other children if they wanted to speak in groups about shared experiences. Photographic techniques were used only in the study sites of Semey and Astana.

Spatial and behaviour mapping
Participants spatial maps provide a valuable resource for understanding children's independent mobility and why. That is, where children are allowed to go unaccompanied by adults in their neighbourhood. Behaviour mapping is a research technique that can be carried out in a locale and involves looking at the way children and/or adults move through or locate themselves in certain areas of the environment. It is especially useful to see how certain constructed environments (i.e. playgrounds, school yards, shopping malls) are being used by children and adults. This is helpful for improving the value of spaces to children’s lives. Spatial mapping wasn't utilised in this project with children, although the researchers did go out into the community in each of the study sites and conduct their behaviour mapping activities using photographs and observations notes.

Guided tours and walking interviews
Guided tours and walking interviews of the urban environment by young people are a valuable method for understanding their perspectives on, and use of, the environment. Viewing places first hand elicits new information and serves as a catalyst for working and provoking new ways of thinking about their place. Guided tours can act as a starting point for exploring the environment or can be utilized in partnership with some of the other activities (i.e. photography, drawings). Using the scenario that you are a tour guide taking some one new to your community around the locality is an easy way to set up the method. Guided tours were utilised in both Semey and Astana. The guided tours were conducted in two different ways. Firstly, for the younger grade the tours was taken in whole group as part of an extension of the classroom research activity. The area close to the school was the main focus of the tours and children were able to use the physical environment as a stimulus to share experiences and show us examples of things they were concerned about. The group discussions were videotaped and also photographs and notes were taken during the tour. With the older children we asked them to take us on their journeys home so we could see the way they would walk to and from school. Along these routes they highlighted places where they played, places they might go shopping or play sports, they also introduced us to neighbours or shopkeepers and other people in their community who they felt contributed to their well being. On these walking home tours they also took us to busy road junctions that worried them, and took us along busy dirt roads and showed us key places of concerns, including their courtyards of their homes. Some parents and occasionally teachers accompanied the researchers on these tours.

Focus groups
Focus groups at the start of a research project can provide the opportunity for children to be partners in the research design, for them to select what most appropriate data collection techniques suit them or their community and to get them thinking about the purpose and potential of the research. Focus groups after the initial data collection provide the opportunity to explore evidence and data and analyse data, work together to consider solutions and design actions of the future. In this study, if there was any time available a short debriefing focus group was held with the group of young people so they could share with each their concerns.

From these potential methods it was decided for this study of four cities in Kazakhstan to include drawings, (neighbourhood and dream), interviews, surveys, photo-voice and guided tours as the main data collection methods.
Conducting workshops in four cities

Overall, 177 children aged between six and sixteen years old participated in the child friendly participatory research workshops from the four cities. Sixty-five children aged 6-9 years, seventy-two 10-12 years and forty 13-16 year olds. Not all children in the four cities were engaged in all the research data collection methods within the workshops. Children had the opportunity to choose from those methods available. Also each city had a slightly different research design to accommodate certain resource, time and age limitations. In Semey and Astana city for instance, the sessions ran over two days, a week apart using all six methods. Whereas, in Aktau and Kyzylorda the workshop session was run on one full day with only three of the methods used. All children and parents involved in the project completed an UWS ethics consent form before being able to participate and ethics approval was obtained from the university ethics committee.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>6-9 years</th>
<th>10-12 years</th>
<th>13-16 years</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aktau</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Astana</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyzylorda</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semey</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ages of child researchers by city

To support the research with the children a number of teachers and university students engaged in training workshops before the participatory workshops in order to learn about how to support the children in their
data collection. Central to these training sessions was to learn about strategies to support children’s participation in authentic and ethical ways that are congruent with children’s rights. Also the role of the adult mentor was to create an environment that stimulated independence but was not patronizing about the child’s capacity, as this can be offensive to children. It was about allowing children to identify their own strengths, so by using a multi-method approach and allowing flexibility in children’s involvement it meant children could decide for themselves the type and level of participation that would be right for them. Local university students worked as research mentors in the classrooms in Aktau.

Kazakh Children’s Research Workshop Methods Overview

Session 1: How child-friendly is my community?

a. Drawing ‘My neighbourhood’ – Children are asked to draw a picture of their neighbourhood including all things important to them on it. Each individual child then had an interview where they shared information about their drawings. Alternatively some of the older children wrote their own notes.

b. Survey – Child friendliness survey was conducted in class and filled in by children or for the younger children research mentors helped to fill in the survey.

c. Survey - Children independent mobility survey was filled in by the child researcher & then at home and brought into the first workshop. This was only conducted in Semey and Astana.

d. Guided tour – This activity was child directed and children had the opportunity to take the adult researchers around their neighbourhood showing an explaining the issues, challenges and also the positives that the place represented for them. The guided tours were only conducted in Semey and Astana.

e. Drawing ‘My dream place’ – Children are asked to draw a picture of their dream child friendly place - putting all the things on it that would make it a place great for children.

f. Photographs – in two of the cities (Semey and Astana) children were asked to bring along photographs of their local area and or of places they had been to or seen that represented child friendliness. Children were then interviewed about their photographs.

Session 2: My dreams for a child-friendly community

e. Drawing ‘My dream place’ – Children are asked to draw a picture of their dream child friendly place - putting all the things on it that would make it a place great for children.

Overview of methods and cities

This box provides an overview of the final workshop design. Based on two session that focus first on children’s sharing their experience of the neighbourhood and their evaluation of it in terms of affordances and accessibility; and the second focusing on their dream of how it could be or what a child friendly city or elements of child friendliness look like in cities.

![Graph showing methods and number of child researchers by city.](image)

While not all cities engaged in the same methods they did follow the focus of each session. Children also within cities did not always participate in every method available. An important characteristic of participatory research design is its internal flexibility that must be able to respond to the needs of the researchers/participants. This final graph provides a specific overview of the number of children who engaged in the specific research methods at each site. The total data set compiled for this report across the four sites added up to 173 neighbourhood drawings, 170 dream drawings, 175 CFC surveys and 79 child and parent CIM surveys; 78 photovoice activities and four guided tours with 45 children participating.
4. Children’s Research Results

The following research results combine the many modes of data that was received through the multi-method approach used in the research data collection process. Therefore the results are a collection of graphs, drawings, children’s text and photographs. The central and most significant survey data provided was collected using the child friendliness survey but where relevant CIM survey data is also included. There were some small modifications made from the first trial of the survey in Semey and Astana in May, so in some cases there is not data for those cities in all graphs. Some data that was collected for those cities alone were included only in the individual city reports. The data has been organised around the four domains of social practice supporting a child friendly and sustainable city. These include the ecological domain, the cultural domain, the economic domain and the political domain.

Ecological domain – a clean and healthy child friendly city

Having a clean and accessible urban environment is fundamental to children health and well-being. Especially for children living in high rise apartments, as many do in Kazakh cities, the outdoor spaces close to the buildings where children live act as central spaces for play and social engagement. Through the survey we asked the children a number of questions about the quality of the outdoor environment. These questions directly relate to many of the Children’s good start to life Kazakhstan National CFC Index indicators. The research results reveal overall 46% of the children in the study believed that their community is mostly a clean environment, free of garbage and dirty water. Children in Kyzylorda and Semey illustrated the most concerns about the state of the environment in regards to garbage and water quality. Result from the child friendliness survey for example revealed that 52% of children from Kyzylorda felt their community is only sometimes a clean environment. Most children in Astana, Semey, Aktau and Kyzylorda felt they have enough safe drinking water at home, and the issue of air quality was quite specific to certain neighbourhoods in cities, often a you would imagine correlating with industries or other elements in the environment that were causing concerns about emissions of contaminants.

I took a picture of construction garbage near my house. I don’t like it because it is dirty here, a lot of dust, and one can get injured.

Evengi, aged 10 years, Astana
An example of children’s concerns about garbage comes from Evengi, a boy, aged 10 years from Astana and from Aktau Alena, a girl aged 15 years provided a drawing of her neighbourhood and when interviewed spoke about the rubbish around the city, in particular her concerns about the graffiti on the buildings, her fear of the nuclear radiation from the nuclear reactor out of town and lack of clean air.

“Our city is a rubbish dump!! Because of the radiation there is no clean air, nothing to breathe, plants don’t survive. Wherever you go, everywhere are spits, trash, buildings with drawings, swear words.

Alena, aged 15 years Aktau

Children in Semey were very concerned about the cleanliness of physical environment of their neighbourhoods. Particularly when on the guided tour of the neighbourhood children showed us the poor condition of the roads and playgrounds close to their apartment blocks and also rubbish and dead animals lying around. The following photographs were taken with the children while we walking around to illustrate the issue they said needed to be addressed in their immediate environment.

Dead dog rotting near apartment

Underground stormwater pipes – with the opening exposed in the middle of the road
Many children in all the four cities, like Alena, discussed the issue of clean air. Overall less than half (40%) of the children surveyed felt their community's air is clean, smoke-free and not smelly. Whilst 60% of Astana children believed the air is mostly clean, smoke-free and not smelly 51% of Kyzylorda and sightly less in Semey, thought the air in their community was only sometimes clean. Over 10% or 1 in 10 children in Semey and Aktau believed the air was never smoke free or clean.

In Semey, for example when children took adults on a guided tour of the neighbourhood they commented frequently about the inconsistent quality of the air due to their location close to a cement factory.

"We would like more grass and trees so we can freshen up the air. The neighbourhood has a cement factory very close by that is constantly pumping bad stuff into the air."

Group Guided Tour, Semey City.

In her interview about her neighbourhood drawing Yana aged 14 from Aktau was also concerned about the dusty air. This was a common complaint by children in all the cities except for Astana.
“My neighbourhood. Rubbish dump! No sightseeing places. Dusty air. Two different groups of society. A lot of incidents. Lack of educational and entertainment places. Bad people”.

Yana, aged 14 years, female Aktau

Children from Semey city when they took adults on a guided tour of their neighbourhood pointed out these gas outlets that are placed in many courtyards of the buildings, normally next to the playgrounds. Many children said they could smell the gas sometimes when playing and this worried them. Children in the focus group stated:

“Gas pipes and outlets are a real danger. Many are very close to the playgrounds. They leak gas and can cause accidents. The gas is piped into the buildings from here”

Group Guided Tour, Semey City.

But not all children in different cities or even in the same city have identical experiences of living in their neighbourhood. This is why it is always important to provide a diversity of childhood experiences and realise that sometimes hazards and dangers are specifically located in pockets of a city and children’s lives can be quite dissimilar depending on where in a city they are situated. Asel, for example, is 9 years old and she lives in Kyzylorda, when she was asked to draw and describe the environment around her house she provided a very positive description. Anna who lives in Semey, the city with seemingly the most challenges regarding pollution, acknowledges the cars are not good for the environment but also believes the area can still be beautiful if you have lost of trees.

“I drew my house because of the beauty and nature near the house. The air near my house is fresh. Trees nature’s beauty and air’s freshness protect. People throw used items in rubbish bins.”

Asel, age 9 years from Kyzylorda.
"There are many cars. But it is beautiful because of some of the trees”.

Anna 11 years old, Semey

Also on a positive environmental note, 96% of children surveyed across Astana, Semey, Aktau and Kyzylorda felt they have enough clean and safe drinking water at home. Overall, though the study revealed that less than half (48%) of all children surveyed felt there were places where they could connect with natural elements in their community. Children in Semey were less likely then in other cities to have access to natural environments or natural materials only 30% had access most of the time and for 30% of children in Semey they said they never have access to nature. Children in Aktau and Kyzylorda were more likely to have opportunities to connect with nature than children in Astana or Semey.

![Chart showing water access](chart1)

**I have enough safe water to drink at home**

![Chart showing nature access](chart2)

**There are places in my community where I can be in contact with nature**

Even though the dirt, the dust, the rubbish and other issues were pertinent in children’s evaluation of the ecological aspects of their neighbourhoods in most cases, there were also children who lived in the same neighbourhoods who spoke positively about their environment.
I drew a sea because I have good memories associated with sea. I like the sea and to spend time by the sea. I also drew a small house in the fall. I was born in the fall, that is why I like fall. I also like to walk in the rain. I like to listen to the sound of rain. After rain there is clean air, I like to watch a rainbow.

Mziya, aged 15 years, female, Aktau

Many children in Aktau for example, spoke about the beauty of the Caspian Sea and the boulevard that has been built along its foreshore to allow the community to enjoy its beauty. Many children also drew their neighbourhood and then added nature to improve its qualities.

Kristina aged 11 years, from Semey drew a picture of her neighbourhood then added a few extra things to make it more child friendly. This included living closer to her school. Having a clean environment and building a hand-made swing.

Roza, aged 15 years from Kyzylorda, draw her city once it had also become more child friendly. Her new city would have a clean environment with lots of natural elements and well designed and planned architecture. She also wanted the Aral Sea to flow again and be healthy.

“I want our city to have clean and green trees. I dream that we have skyscrapers in the city. I want to have a lot of trees, greenery, and flowers not only in the city center, but also on the outskirts. I wish there are also buildings with different architecture design and that irrigation ditches in the city were full of water, to water greenery. The city should have places where guests from other cities and countries could go. I wish there were also a lot of sightseeing places around residential buildings. I wish tourism around the Aral Sea was developed so tourists from different countries, republics and cities could come. I wish the Aral sea is not drying out and has lots of fish”.

Roza, aged 15 years, Kyzylorda.

Asylkhan is aged 9 years and live in Kyzylorda. His dream is to be an astronaut and to improve the ecology of his country.
My dream is to be a head of a spaceport. I want to look at the Earth planet from afar. I want to improve our country and to protect its ecology. I want to see a spaceship. I also wish to be on TV. I think that my mother would be proud of me then. I wish there was a swimming pool in my courtyard. I will build a big house when I grow up. There should be some place to have a rest in the yard. I want my courtyard to be clean and pretty.

Asylkhan, aged 9 years, Kyzylorda

Shamil, aged 16 years from Kyzylorda also provided a very typical response for children in the regional cities where the landscape is quite challenging. In his dream drawing Shamil drew the mountains, lots of trees, fresh rivers, animals. Many children used this idealised image of mountains and trees to represent the importance of clean air and an unpolluted environment, many said it was the city of Almaty and they would like to live there. We also had many children draw iconic buildings from Astana, the capital, and said their dream city to live was Astana because it had lots new buildings, footpaths, no dust and a cleaner environment.

“I love mountains because there is no mountains in our city. I love nature and animals. I would like to walk in the mountains, which would be interesting. I want to take pictures of animals. I would want to explore the underwater world. And I would want to dance because of being happy”.

Shamil, aged 16 years, Kyzylorda.

Cultural domain - a learning and playful child friendly city

Culture is the emans through which we express and share our common understandings about the world we live in. For children there are key sites where culture is produced through their activities with other children and often also in partnership with adults. Schooling is the primarily means through which children are educated about the social world and through language acquisition knowledge, creative enquiry and learning they come to understand themselves and their place in the world. For this reason schooling and education is a powerful space for contestation and engagement and inclusion or exclusion from school can have significant impacts on a child’s capacity to participate fully in their social world. In this the cultural domain we also discuss the role of play and leisure opportunities for children within the community. This data is important in many aspects because it is often seen as a marker of how a city is valuing its children. That is, the number of play or child specific facilities and services for children is often used as an indicator of a cities commitment (in terms of culture and resources) to support its children.

Education

Children in the cities were asked to comment on their access to school and their experiences of learning when in schools. The data clearly identified that children attended school regularly on mostly live close to their school. The first graphs come form the CIM data obtained in Astana and Semey and illustrates that mostly children walk to school; travel to school with parents or alone and spend on average 5 minutes only to get to school.
This data provides some interesting insights into the life of children in these cities. We can see that for children in Semey driving to school rarely happens and partly this is due to proximity but also that many families are poor and wouldn't have a car available to drive a child to school. We also noticed that parents often accompany children on their travel to school, but when talking to children we found out that walking home from school was a totally different matter with children mainly walking with friends or alone. Many children also told us they often go home to an empty apartment and will once they have dripped off their school bag go back into the community to connect up with friends to play in the many courtyard areas between apartments.

Children when they took us on the guided tours as a walking trip home showed us the way to their homes. For many their houses were within only a few streets of the school. Keeping in mind particularly in Semey that children in cement city all live in high rise apartment blocks then we can see that high density neighbourhoods do allow for this close proximity to happen. Even though children are close to school we did encounter children both in Semey and Astana negotiating very busy main roads with heavy traffic.
was clear from the way that many children moved around the traffic with ease, that they had been taught from an early age how to be safe around heavy traffic.

So what happens when children are actually in school? The research study was conducted within schools so it provides the researchers an opportunity to view children within the school environment. The diversity of quality of school buildings and facilities was very diverse, with schools in Astana having much better quality classrooms and technology. Having said that though it was clear from our discussions with children and the survey results that many children really valued their schools and though their teachers were providing a good education. This graph shows the results from asking children if they felt teachers listened to them in the classroom. On the whole it shows across all four cities most children (except for in Semey) feel their ideas are valued and listened to by their teacher. Only 42% of children from Semey felt their ideas were ‘mostly listened to by their teachers’ as compared to 73% of children from Astana.

In keeping with a strong focus on the importance of children engaging with natural environments, most children in the Kazakhstan study sites (89%) reported learning about how to protect the environment in their school curriculum.

**Play and recreation**

Cities are often evaluated on their child friendliness by the number and quality of ‘child specific places’ (such as playgrounds) that are accessible to children. By doing a city services and facilities audit many city officials may list the quantity of playgrounds this number does little to really provide insights into how these playgrounds may impact on children’s quality of life. There are two elements that need to be considered with evaluating play opportunities for children. Firstly whether they exist at all and the affordances the play spaces provide. For example, the affordances might be evaluated in terms of what age, gender and abilities of the child does the play space accommodate; whether children can play at different times of the day or weather; are their hazards such as cars, pollution, dogs that might be a danger to the child’s safety. Often this issue of play provision can also be mapped in terms of equity, are play spaces more readily available or better quality in some neighbourhoods compared to others. The second issue to consider is play spaces accessibility.
Where is the play space in relation to a child’s house, school and can they travel to and from the play space safely alone or with friends or only with adults? Are their footpaths, signs, traffic lights across main roads, all these issues of accessibility influence a child’s capacity to utilise these spaces. This first graph starts this evaluation of play provision as a critical part of children’s culture production and it’s associated issues by identifying broadly whether place spaces exist in the community.

The results reveal that 93% of Astana children respond positively to having places for play, games and sports in their community, while only 67% of Semey and 69% of Kyzylorda children felt that these types of play places were available for them. And while only 7% of 3 of the 41 children interviewed Astana said they did not believe there were play spaces in their community in contrast in Kyzylorda 10 of the 45 children (nearly 1:4) didn’t have access to play spaces, with Semey and Akatu having a number who didn’t or only sometimes had play spaces. This one result reveals a lot about the inequity between the large new urban environments of cities like Astana and the smaller, regional cities such as Kyzylorda and Semey. The following photograph was taken of Sabrina at one of the local parks in Astana where she plays.

In the photo I am in a park in Astana. It is very fun and beautiful there. There are a lot of greenery, trampolines, slides and many other carousels there. The carousels there are very bright and they make our mood. Me and my cousin sister like to jump on a trampoline there.

Sabina, aged 9 years, female, Astana

I live in a village called Kyzylzharmah. I get to school by van #14. I like my street and courtyard, but I wish they built a playground and there was no trash and the street were clean and green. I wish there was a small park and a cafeteria. I hope we will have these in future.

Ainur, aged 16 years, female, Kyzylorda.
In contrast to the photograph data from Sabrina in Astana, the drawing and interview text from Ainur who lives in a small village out of the main city of Kyzylorda speaks of her concern about the cleanliness of the environment. Even though Ainur states he likes his street and courtyard he wishes that he had a playground and other facilities close to his house. She draws a picture of her village with some of the extras she would like that would improve her neighbourhood.

Madina also wishes her local play space was cleaner. This type of very dusty open courtyard with very limited play equipment was very commonplace in many of the courtyards we were taken to by children while in Semey city.

The second question on the CFC Survey about play included asking children about having enough time to play. The results show only 60 – 70% of all children said it was mostly true that they have enough time to play, rest and enjoy themselves. This left a third of children who felt they only sometimes had enough time to play, rest and enjoy themselves. The results of this question are much for consistent across all the sites, which reveals the strong influence of consistent national policies around such things school attendance hours, school holiday times.

I always play and swing here. Sometimes I can come here alone. I can stay here for 2-3 hours. Sometimes I come and play here with my doll.

Kristina, aged 7 years, female, Semey city.
And unfortunately for some children maybe they have too much time to fill in and play on their own. This photograph came from Kristina who told us this is her closest playground to her apartment block in Semey. She told us there is a road next to her house so she must walk to get to this playground. Her dream was to live in a Castle where she would have her own room and where there would be flowers and someone would sing her to sleep with a lullaby.

There is evidence in the central city area that these issues of poor quality play environments identified by children in the cement factory neighbourhood have been considered and parks and playgrounds and surrounding areas have been upgraded. This good act as models of good practice and be extended into the poorer neighbourhoods.

This is an example where setting the play space away from the road, constructing a fence, concrete blocks and some landscaping has improved the quality and safety of a playground space in Semey City.

An example of creating safety by erecting a fence to the back, concrete pathways as buffers and sealing the car park and constructing segregated car spaces with concrete blocks.

The other important question is children’s independence and freedom to access a variety of places within their community. With the CIM survey we asked children to nominate activities they had accessed alone or with friends their own age over the weekend just passed. From this list of possibilities it was clear for children in Astana and Semey the activities they engaged in the most included going to a playground or park, playing sport, walking or cycling around (Astana children more so than Semey children) or visiting friend’s homes. And did they believe they should have more freedom to be by themselves in the neighbourhood? The majority of children in both cities (60%) believed they had adequate freedom but around 40% said they would like more. What would they like to do? Responses included: I would like to spend all day with my friends; be outside for a long time, and that I am not told what to do; to walk near school; to play away from the house; to play at another neighbourhood, to stay longer outside; to walk with friends, to talk and have fun.

Economical domain - an equitable child friendly city

Within the economic domain the focus is on how resources and services are managed and distributed. For children in cities this can be related directly to the capacity for children to have equitable access to such things as social and community services, parks, playgrounds. The focus would be on ensuring children don’t experience discrimination based on their gender, age, location, financial status, religious beliefs, abilities or special needs. Accessibility to facilities as discussed in the cultural domain is also an important factor when considering equity issues and the realities of poverty and discrimination in children’s lives.

While equitable access to services was not a question directly asked of the children we are able to determine how children are viewing such things as discrimination and inequitable treatment of diverse groups of children through a number of the CFC survey questions. For example, we asked children if they believed children were treated equally in school, in particular was gender an issue. For all cities most children did say that adults in schools treated children the same no matter what their gender. Interestingly, in Kyzylorda this was even more evident with a stronger response by children. 96% of all children from
Kyzylorda felt that boys and girls are mostly treated the same way in school. Overall, across all cities 78% of children reported that boys and girls are treated equally in their school. Aktau was the only city where a significant number of children (15%) stated children of different genders were never treated equally.

Similarly, around 82% of all children surveyed also reported that children with disabilities were respected and given equal treatment in their school. However 28% of Aktau children felt that this was either never or only sometimes the case in their school. This response from Aktau could be because in the majority of schools in Aktau there are not inclusive policies to allow children with special needs to attend public school. Going from the formal arena of schools, there is a sudden decrease in the investment of funds for equality for children with special needs in the community domain.

When we asked children if there were places for children with disabilities to play in their local neighbourhood, only 27% (one third) of children reported that play places in their community could be used by children with physical disabilities. The likelihood of there being more inclusive playground facilities for children of all abilities is much higher in Astana. As a new city it is clear that the type of infrastructure being provided is now adhering to inclusive policies and practices around children with different abilities. Although this is appositive and welcome change, it also highlights in the inequalities
when over 50% of children in the three other cities say it is never true that playgrounds will support children with different needs. For a city like Semey much of the infrastructure is old and designed before concerns around providing for disabilities was considered, therefore it will take quite extensive auditing and retrofitting to transform the physical environment to be more user friendly. Kazbek supports this view when he dreams that his dream city had an amusement park with rides that children with disabilities could also ride on.

In my dream I wish Kyrgyzstan has a big amusement park. I wish there are all conditions for children. I want our city to have a lot of attractions in the amusement park. I wish there were created special amusement rides for disabled children. I wish there are trees and flowers in our city in order to clear the air.

Kazbek, aged 9 years, Kyzylorda.

I wish there will be a bridge. So that children will be able to walk. I wish to have there a special path for children with disabilities, for those who are on the wheelchairs

Sultan, aged 6 years, male, Semey City.

Even basic infrastructure such as footpaths in main streets is often not adequate for wheelchair users or even mothers with prams. The following dream drawing from Sultan, aged 6 years from Semey reveals many very young children are also aware of the limitations that the physical environment has for children who may be in a wheelchairs or in others ways restricted in their mobility. An essential component of working towards more equitable distribution of health, safety, care, support, infrastructure within a city for children, is their ability to exercise their rights.
Therefore, one of the questions on the CFC survey asks children directly if they have heard of children's rights. Overall 60% of children have heard about children’s rights. While 83% of Kyzylorda children had been informed of children’s rights on public television or radio only 30% of Semey children had heard about children’s rights.

Questions of rights are also focused around access to information technology and communication. In the most recent changes to the CIM survey a question was included about mobile phone access. We asked parents in Astana and Semey if children owned a mobile phone and to our surprise the results showed very high mobile phone ownership by primary age children, with 93% in Astana owning a mobile and 78% of children in Semey. This issue of rights and how children take up their rights within the public domain also falls under the broader heading of the political domain of the city and will be discussed in the following section.

**Political Domain - a secure and participatory child friendly city**

The politics of a city, who is welcome or is not, who is included, who is excluded in the physical environment is often defined as the ‘geographies of power’. The public and private life of children is often very much regulated and embedded within adult’s ways of being and engaging in the world. Children are often spoken about, spoken for and although present in the social domain, they needs are often decided by someone else. They legitimately have little power to transform or pertain to the organisation and practices of their social life. To be recognised as a child friendly city, that is a city operationalizing in a very practical sense the convention on the rights of the child, it is not enough to provide for the needs of children according to an adults perception or specific objective data, it is a responsibility for city officials to engage directly with children. To create a secure and participatory child friendly city is to first consider the importance of children being able to participate in the public domain in a very real embodied sense, actually being present. To be able to do this children need to feel safe and secure, they need to feel the public domain is a place absent of abuse of and violence and they need to know should they need help or support there are other adults who they can approach. Much of the data in this study around children’s freedom and safety came from the CIM survey which was only used in Astana and Semey but provides a useful model for the types of questions that could be included in eh CFC survey to explore this issue further. The second component to the political domain is the opportunity, once children are visible and present in the community that children and young people are encouraged and supported to make authentic contributions to discussions, planning and transformations of the city to ensure it provides specifically for the needs of children. The data around participation comes directly from the CFC survey where a number of questions around participation were elicited. To complete this section on the political domain I have included some of the comments and dream drawings from the children who were asked if they did have the opportunity to speak to mayor or other council officials about how to create and change the city so it was more child friendly city what would they say.

**Security**

Feeling safe is a critical aspect of child friendly city. For many children especially in cities such as Semey and Aktau where children are expected to walk to and from school and spend lengthy times outside playing in local playground without adult supervision, feeling secure is important to children’s daily life experiences. When asked if they felt safe in their homes, almost all (92%) of the children surveyed unanimously stated they felt safe at home.
This short comment from Yersultan about his family is typical of many very positive comments about family life children gave, especially in the smaller cities.

My house is pretty. There are trees near my house. There is also a grocery store. I really like my house. My house is big and there live seven people. These seven people are my grandfather, grandmother, father, mother, uncle, aunt and me. I love my family very much.

Yersultan, aged 9 years, male, Kyzylorda.

Whilst 66% of all children said they could talk to adults outside of their family about abuse or violence if they needed to, almost one fifth of children from Astana and Aktau did not feel this was true for them. Of critical importance therefore to a child's safety and feeling of personal security is their capacity to envisage there are adults who should they need help are available to support them. This can mean coming to their aid in an emergency situation and or having an adult (such as a counsellor or even a friendly neighbourhood) who they can talk to outside of their immediate family. Over 60% of children across all the cities identified that they had an adult that they felt comfortable to talk to about any issues they had concerning their own personal safety. This is important and while this amounts to around two thirds of children feeling that they had this safety net, this still leaves one third of children who only sometimes or never felt like they had an adult to speak to if they felt threatened or likely to suffer from violence of abuse.

When discussing children's safety in neighbourhood fear of strangers is often identified as one of the main issues for children and one of the greatest concerns of their parents.
In our research with children in three of the Kazakh cities around 60% of the children surveyed felt protected from abduction by a stranger. The results were slightly higher in Astana and Aktau with only 40% in Kyzylorda, feeling this way. This left around 20% of children from Astana, Aktau and Kyzylorda who said they never felt safe from being taken by a stranger, and another 20% who said they only sometimes felt safe. There is no response from Semey children because they didn't have this particular question on their CFC survey.

Results from the CIM survey given to children from Astana and Semey we can see when asked what worried children when in their neighbourhood children from both cities were concerned about strangers, particularly the children from Semey whose response was 10% higher then for Astana children. Children in both these cities also worried about getting lost, traffic, being bullied and feeling old enough or deal with the things being the neighbourhood alone might bring up for them. For all these other issues, children from Astana where overall worried much more than children from Semey.

I have a playground in my neighbourhood. But I don’t like it when I see many strangers and cars here.

Alinur, aged 7 Years, Semey City

This photograph was taken by Alinur, aged 7 from Semey city, and when interviewed he told us this in the photograph was his apartment block and the playground where he often played, he told us he was worried when he saw strangers or cars around his playground. When we asked parents if they were fearful for their children of strangers in the neighbourhood a similar number of parents also agreed strangers were a concern.
Whilst 70% of all children surveyed believed walking and/or cycling in their community was safe, one third of children from Astana, Semey, Aktau and Kyzylorda either felt it was never or only sometimes safe to do these activities.

Adele from Astana took a photograph of her local courtyard area near her apartment and said she was worried that the lack of demarcation between the road and where children and parents run or walk around meant cars could go crazy and hit you. This was very common in many cities we visited where courtyard areas maybe planned originally as spaces for playgrounds or just being outside walking around or sitting have been taken over as carparks.

I don’t like that our courtyards are not safe. Cars may go at a crazy speed around the courtyard. Children run around the courtyard, parents walk with their babies in baby carriages. Children run out of the house across the road towards the children’s playground. There is no fencing for cars.

Adele, aged 10 years, Astana

Feeling protected from gangs/armed groups was reported by 73% of children overall, yet this still left almost one third of children from Aktau and Kyzylorda expressing they never or only sometimes felt safe from these groups.
Finally, when considering security within the environment it is important to take into account children’s preparedness for dangers or hazards that might be in their environment and whether they feel able to respond safely. From the results of the child friendliness survey it was found 82% of children believed they would know what to do if there was a hazard in their community, however 33% or one third of children from Aktau responded that they may not know what to do. An example of the types of hazards include dangers from people but all hazards such as leaking gas pipes, as discussed by children at Semey in the section on the ecology of the cities for children.

This drawing and interview text from Divara, aged 8 years, girl, Astana provides a useful insight into her ideas around what she believes are the aspirations for her and her friends in terms of having a quality environment that safe for children.

"My dream is children can walk in a garden safely”. My dream is that children are happy and go around easily and freely. I drew bright colors: red and lilac butterflies. I am in the centre of the drawing with my friend Arlan. We are walking on a green lawn. We are enjoying the flowers and life. In Kazakhstan we all like to walk and play with friends. And we like the sun. May all children on Earth live and enjoy the sun. This is my dream. You will be happy like me!"

Divara, aged 8 years, Astana

**Participation**

An important right for children in a child friendly city is the right and freedom to express their own point of view and to be involved in activities to help transform and change their community.
When asked about their involvement in projects children responses were varied with children in Aktau responding that they have had the least amount of opportunities. Overall only 33% of all children surveyed expressed that they help with projects to change their community and more children in Kyzylorda providing a positive response.

Close to half of the children surveyed expressed the view that the government never asked their opinion about their life or community. It was the highest in Astana with 63% of children reporting the government never consulted them about their life or their community. The child friendly cities project in cities provides an important opportunity for this engagement with children and through this research we have already changed this statistic.

On an even less positive note only 18% of all children surveyed expressed that they had participated in planning or decisions for their community. Children from Aktau are the least likely to have experienced involvement in a community participatory project.

Although unlikely to have participated in project as a child, Yerdos, who is eight years old from Aktau has a dream is to be successful by building a hotel and many shops to contribute to his city.

In my dream there is a hotel and I will be successful and will build many houses and shops. If I succeed with my goal, I would contribute to my city. I would like to visit different cities and travel a lot.

Yerdos, aged 8 years old Aktau
Aruzhan is a nine year old female living in Kyzylorda. When asked about her dreams for a child friendly city she drew a picture with lots of trees and asked for more beautiful buildings. She also acknowledges that she has a role to play in contributing to this future city that will be an improvement to the cities health.

In my dream I wish my birthplace, Kyzylorda city, was better. It will be good if skyscrapers and beautiful building are built in Kyzylorda. I wish there were more flowers and trees in the city. I will make my own contribution for the development of our city and improvement of citizens’ health.

Aruzhan, aged 9 years, female Kyzylorda.

Nurzhan lives in Semey and when he was asked to talk about his dream city, he told us his dream was to be able to participate in the city and help people: “I dream to help people. If I had money, I would help kind people” (Nurzhan aged 11, Semey city). And Yersultan from Kyzylorda wants to live in Astana and be the next president.

Astana is one of the most beautiful cities. I have drawn the “Ak-Orda” building. Our president Nursultan Nazarbayev works there. I wish “Ak-Orda” was even bigger then now. “Ak-Orda” is located in Astana city. Our president lives there. I want to rule the country in future like our president.

Yersultan, aged 9 years, male, Kyzylorda.

Dreams for Change
When the children dream about a child friendly city what to do they imagine? The following drawings and interview text from children all four cities provides some insights into what children told us they would tell adults if they had chance to engage with them about their views for improving cities.

“I would like to live in a village because I can have a cat and a dog there. Also, the air there is clean, and there are big and beautiful mountains. And I like to walk in the fields”.

Diana, female, aged 8 years, Aktau
“Fresh, clean, mountain air, horses, blue sky, mountains, plains: my DREAM place!”

Yana aged 14 years, Aktau,

I have many dreams. I want Kazakhstan to be better. I wish the air was clean and a lot of trees grew. I want to live in Almaty. There are many mountains, I like mountains. Almaty is considered the greenest city of Kazakhstan. There are many flowers and places for relax in this city.

Aidana. Aged 9 years, female, Kyzylorda

This is a backyard of my dream place. The pavement is everywhere to contain the dust. I wish to look after apple trees. I want to see tents and deck chairs so that people can lay on it and have a rest. I want to have a swimming pool. I would clean it myself. I am drawing mountains in order to show that there is a life behind this fence.

Artym, aged 11 years, male, Semey city.

I have brought this photograph of a factory because it pollutes air and water. There will be no trees without clean water. And there will be no clean air without trees. There is no factory in the city, but there is one outside. My parents told me. The pipe brings damage. The factory produces machines. I wish that these factories didn't pollute.

Danira, aged 8 years, Astana
4. Recommendations

Methodological recommendations

In this research study and in the subsequent report there has been a focus on acknowledging the capacity and important role children have to be partners in evaluating the quality of city to fulfil children’s needs and operationalize the convention of the rights of the child at a very practical level. The study has modelled how cities can obtain this data through methods that are not difficult or time consuming and where local capacity building with university students, local teachers, and local municipal officers can be important for supporting their participation acts as research mentors. This data provides important insights into the particular nuances found in neighbourhoods and seeks to acknowledge that while city based objective data provides useful evidence of how a city is functioning overall for children around key indicators it does not provide the richer understandings about the individual child’s experiences and the great disparity of experiences individual children may have within one neighbourhood and across a number of neighbourhoods. This disparity can be due to differences in the social-economic status of families often directly related to income; maybe due to generational health issues or particular neighbourhood based issues connected to the quality of the physical environment and historical infrastructure provision. For all these reasons city planners should endeavour to provide the whole of a city view of children’s lives and when devising their children’s strategy and short and long term action plans. Finally, when considering ways to respond to the diversity of children’s needs it is imperative that city planners understand the demographics of the city and through their research design endeavour to ensure representation of all the groups within the child population as possible. For the four cities studied in this report there was limited scope to be representative of the population, this is its major limitation. But truly representative isn’t just about numbers (i.e. 5% of the population was interviewed) it is ensuring that the diversity of all groups of children have had an opportunity to be represented. This would mean considering for example the different social status of families; children who have special needs; children who may be in state care; children from mobile families, homeless children; children in the judicial system and many other marginalised or disaffected children and families who may not be as visible in the governance system. The implications of this means that while we utilised schools as out main site of entry to access children, this in itself is limiting and other ways for connecting and engaging with children should be included in the study design.

City Based Recommendations

In this section the main issues and concerns identified by children have been discussed for each of the four cities. These are short term or immediate changes that would improve the quality of life of children within the neighbourhoods they live.

Aktau City

Aktau is the smallest of the four cities in the study. Located on the Caspian Sea in a geographically and historically unique area in the west of Kazakhstan. The city itself is quite young, set up predominantly to support uranium prospectors and oil workers in the 1960s, the apartment blocks are very soviet style with the city having very few planned or landscaped parks and play spaces. Overwhelming the children spoke of the sea front as the main feature of the town. A boulevard sweeps the coastline throughout the city and contains a significant paved area with lights, playground equipment, seats and small café’s scattered along it which children included in their drawings and discussions. While the apartment blocks themselves are quite run down and courtyards are often just dirt and dust, the young children particularly spoke mostly positively of their local environment. Many of the young children said they loved where they lived, were happy, and Amir aged 8 told us: “When I get back from school I help my mom. My mom sends me to the shop when there is no bread at home. I live a very joyful life. When I finish doing homework I go outside to play with my friends. I love my life”. Many children said they especially loved living close to the seafront. Bibizhan, aged 14 told us: “the seafront which was built recently, there are a lot of playgrounds there. Not only young people walk there, but also children with their parents. One can rent a bike and ride it there. In summer you can swim, the water is clean there” Many children also spoke about their family villages where their grandparents often still lived and where they visited. These villages were important because it is here where children said there was lots of grass and cattle. The main concerns children had though were consistent with living in a smaller regional city that was not close to one of the large modern cities like
Astana or Almaty. Children were concerned they did not have educational opportunities they spoke a lot about going to university and having a better education. For the older teenagers there concerns were the lack of things to do, being bored and not having many youth spaces within the city. Having interesting places to enjoy, more greenery, parks and play spaces, amusement parks and shopping malls were all on the list of improvements. One child even mentioned that they wanted the chance to see concerts by famous musicians and another was concerned about young people and drug addiction. There were overall concerns about the quality of the environment due to the dirt, dust and water quality (the water is all desalinated water) and a couple of the older teenagers noted their concerns about the possibility of nuclear radiation from the old nuclear reactor that was on the outskirts of town.

The key changes children wanted to make their neighbourhood and their city more child friendly:

- Children were concerned about helpless animals on the streets and said they wanted a nursery for animals built.
- Children wanted shelters or refuges for homeless people and young people who were in need of support, whether due to drug addiction or having problems at home.
- Children wanted more variety of places to visit. Many said their was a need to build educational and entertainment places for children, especially teenagers who were bored and had nothing to do, which often led to incidents.
- Because the city is on the steppe there is not much vegetation, so children wanted more parks with more greenery, so there were places to walk and to breathe fresh air.
- Children wanted the streets and buildings to be cleaned up. For the council to get rid of the trash and clean the buildings with drawings and swear words on them.

Astana City

Astana is the political capital and is the home of the President of Kazakhstan. Built in the north after independence the city Overall children living in Astana were the most satisfied with the quality of their lives. Living very western contemporary lifestyles, children in the city even in the poorer neighbourhoods still have the capacity to utilise what the whole city offers children. While in small pockets there is still some concerns related issues such as ADHD, obesity, anxiety, depression. Whether walking to school via main roads or play and experiences in the outdoors, which has shown to increase physical, mental and emotional health benefits of the natural environment. Children were also more likely to feel unsafe or exposed to dangers of gang violence and stranger danger then children from the smaller more regional cities. Parents of the children were also more likely to feel concerned about their child’s likelihood of being abducted or exposed to strangers. This is not usual considering trends in other larger cities around the world where CIM research has been conducted. The larger a city, the higher the population and the less likely you are to know your neighbourhoods or even recognise others as either locals or strangers. This uncertainty can build a sense of insecurity and can cause parents to regulate and prohibit children’s freedom to move around independently. While this maybe in the best interest of the child it can cause other health related issues, especially when the size of apartments on the whole are quite small due to the expense. Children were very proud of their city and included many photographs and drawings of significant monuments such as Baitreck and commercial buildings such as the Khan Shatyr. The children took many photographs and discussed their busy city lives with engaging in structured sport and leisure activities; using commercial facilities and shopping as central to this. This may be seen as a positive in many cases but evidence from around the world has shown that busy lives focused on very commercial activities can take time away from the opportunities to have free play and experiences in the outdoors, which has shown to increase physical, mental and emotional health related issues such as ADHD, obesity, anxiety, depression. Whether walking to school via main roads or being driven to school by car many children worried about the impacts of traffic on air quality and also the hazards associated with busy drop off zones at schools or bust intersections. This issue is found around the world in many busy cities and needs to be addressed, many cities have developed strategic plans on how to support walking to school programs and how to create traffic calming near schools. In a larger city with a bigger population children can feel that they have less opportunity to be listened to or to access city
officials. Children from Astana revealed in the surveys they felt mostly they did not have an opportunity to put forward their opinion on issues related to their life.

The key changes children wanted to make their neighbourhood and their city more child friendly:
- Children were concerned about strangers and in a city where having sense of connection to neighbours and a community can often be lost, providing neighbourhood watch or other strategies to overcome issues of stranger danger should be considered as an ongoing important focus.
- Traffic is a major area of concern for children and especially around schools children wanted to feel safer by the establishment of street calming strategies.
- Children said they would like to have access to more nature and outdoor environments close to their homes.
- Children reported the government never or only sometimes consulted them about their life or their community. It is important that the city sets up regular and easily accessible options for children to communicate their concerns.

Kyzylorda City
Kyzylorda is in the western region of Kazakhstan with a cold desert climate of hot summers and cold winters. It has a population of around 188,000 people. In modern times it has been known for its oil and gas fields and production of rice, while historically it was one of the centers of the Silk Road. The city is on the Syr Darya River, which is one of the rivers that use to flow into the Aral Sea, before it was diverted to irrigate the desert, therefore contributing to the drying up over time of the Aral Sea. Some of the older children were also concerned the issues around the drying up of the Aral Sea. The shrinking of the Aral Sea has been called “one of the planet's worst environmental disasters”. The region's once-prosperous fishing industry has been essentially destroyed, bringing unemployment and economic hardship. The Aral Sea region is also heavily polluted, with consequent serious public health problems. The departure of the sea has reportedly also caused local climate change, with summers becoming hotter and drier, and winters colder and longer. Kulanbekova from Kyzylorda stated her dream for Kyzylorda was that the Aral Sea was restored and it became an important tourists attraction. She wished that the Aral Sea was not drying out and there were lots of fish. Many children from the city were concerned about the lack of greenery, especially in the outskirts areas of the town. Because the city is built in a very dry desert region it is very difficult for plants to grow and many children noted that even though their families and others in their apartment block had planted trees it took a lot of manual watering and often the plants didn't survive. Many children wanted the opportunity to go to places outside often town close to the river where they could go fishing, swim and enjoy fresh air. From the survey data we can see many positives from the children compared to other cities researched. Kyzylorda children believed they were more likely to be protected from strangers then children in the other three cities. Over 80% or 20% more Kyzylorda children then the average across the other three cities said they had learnt about children's rights, and 82% children, again the highest said teachers in schools listened to their ideas. The area where they scored most poorly was in regards to there being garbage and smelly water lying around, only Aktau scored less.

The key changes children wanted to make their neighbourhood and their city more child friendly:
- Children in Kyzylorda, like many children living in the desert cities in Kazakhstan, want a clean environment with less garbage and dirt and more trees and flowers in their apartment courtyards.
- Children wanted more parks and green spaces close to where they live so they can visit them regularly not just in the centre of the city.
- Children want improved playgrounds in the courtyards and especially to ensure they that are inclusive playgrounds that can accommodate children with special needs and disabilities.
- Children living out of town said they need more buses because the buses are overcrowded and it’s hard to get to school.
- Children want to be included in decision-making about their city and would like to participate in the planning for change and be active in improving their city.
Semey City
Semey is a city of 300,000 people on the very northeastern border of Kazakhstan, in Siberian part of Kazakhstan and bordering with Russia. Semipalatinsk as it was called in times of the USSR was the closest city to the Soviet atomic bomb and nuclear weapons testing site that operated from 1949-1989. Residents of Semey have in the past suffered serious environmental and health effects from the time of its atomic prosperity, with nuclear fallout from the atmospheric tests and uncontrolled exposure being a major concern. Now the city is known as a major university town. The main issues for children in Semey were focused on the quality of the physical environment, in particular the courtyards and playgrounds where they spend a lot of their leisure time and the immediate streets that they use to move around. It is important to understand that without capacity to access resources beyond their neighbourhood, like say in Astana where children's parents drive them to facilities and services, there is reliable and safe public transport and shared footpaths and bike ways, children’s quality of life in Semey is very much tied into the quality of the immediate environment. The lack of sealed roads, little or no footpaths beyond the main roads means children share the roads with large trucks and cars that use up the whole road, often drive fast and cause lots of dust in the air. There are also the issues of old degraded buildings and garages left to decay in and around apartment blocks. These buildings become places where people or dogs could lurk, children sometimes play in and around being exposed to chemicals, tools, broken glass and pipes left lying around. These can create many hazards and risks to children's health and well being. Children also complained of having limited access to playgrounds, only some apartment block courtyards have playgrounds and those that are available are more often then not in bad condition, have no fencing or separation form car parks and internal courtyards roads. Many children and their parents were also concerned about these exposed play spaces being likely places where strangers could lurk and be a danger. Other concerns included the gas outlet pipes that often ran along close to the playground, with leaking gas often being detected by children while playing. Stray mange dogs were also a concern because they were unpredictable and children told us stories of children being bitten while being out in the streets. There were also many dogfights close to the apartment blocks. Dogs also often became victims to the big trucks and fast cars that used the dusty roads. On our short walk around the immediate neighbourhood with the guided tour close to the school, we came across three dead dogs rotting on the side of the road. Children said this was common.

The key changes children wanted to make their neighbourhood and their city more child friendly:
- Children want more sealed footpaths and roads to stop the dirt and dust and to create a place to walk off the road for safety.
- Children want more lawn and landscaped areas that had trees and flowers that created a buffer between the playgrounds and the car parks in the courtyards.
- Children requested fences creating a demarcation between the children’s play spaces and the car parks and road.
- Children asked for regular pick up of rubbish and garbage left lying around including dead and rooting dogs carcases.
- Old buildings that are falling a part, open holes to underground piping, overhead piping should all be removed, covered or boarded up so they don't cause hazards and dangers to children.
- Children in this city were the least likely to feel prepared if a dangerous situation should occur. Emergency preparedness education and talks by police, emergency services so children learn ways to be safe and to deal with dangerous situations is recommended.
- Children in Semey were the least likely of all children to know about child rights – it is important to start to educate the children and the community about the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The next stage for each of these cities would be to take the data obtained form the studies with these key recommendations combined with the objective quantitative data obtained through city census data, and produce a strategy for the city that is reflective of the needs of children. This strategy should include short and long term goals and focus with a focus on linking these to the core indicators devised by the National committee that will be the focus of ongoing monitoring and reporting. The city would then implement actions to address the issues identified and measure the progress of those actions over time. To evaluate the impact of these actions the city should then seek to re-engage with the children and their communities to ensure the actions have had real benefits in the lives of the children and their families.
5. Concluding statement

Within a rapidly urbanizing world, many governments particularly those in developing nations or those who are developed in localized but whole country approaches will struggle to implement long-term goals of sustainability. The impact of urbanization and global phenomena such as climate change and political and economic instability will mean many communities will face significant barriers to sustainable development. These barriers will come in the form of increases in pollutants and pathogens in the air, water, soil and food, natural disasters, additional road and traffic incidents and the on-going impacts of insecure poor quality housing, poor education and health provision. The only way forward for countries will be to consider how to embark on a process of stabilisation of their cities guided by principles of sustainability. Many of these key issues of unstable urban growth were identified over a decade ago as countries embarked on the task of addressing and monitoring their progress to rich the targets for the through the Millennium Development Goals (MDG’s). But as the 15-year time frame of the MDG’s draws near and as urbanization swells and sets to increase significantly in those countries, such as Kazakhstan who are transforming to become highly developed nations, children’s quality of life will be under the microscope and will become the core indicator of real sustainable progress. Already it is clear children’s rights, their wellbeing and sustainable development are central to a global post-2015 agenda for sustainable development. Investment in children in the past has shown to be a fundamental means to eradicate poverty, boost shared prosperity, and enhance inter-generational equity.

UNICEF Child friendly Cities initiative has since 1996 developed a comprehensive model of child centred engagement and investment and has been identified as a key strategic project in UNICEF’s urban post 2015 agenda. Underpinning the child-friendly urban planning and programming process, evident in UNICEF CFCI, is a human rights-based governance model that embodies the principles of non-discrimination, survival, sustainable development, and participation as enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It has been shown throughout the global programs that understanding the impact of exclusion, through child and family consultation in CFCI, has lead to the identification and addressing of barriers that prevent impoverished children and their families from using services or exercising a number of their rights of citizenship. By making neglected groups more visible and granting all children a platform to secure their needs and rights, the Child-Friendly Cities approach contributes to achieving development goals with equity.

For Kazakhstan to embark as it has on this project of encouraging cities to become recognized as child friendly at this time is highly commendable and admirable. The challenge will be to develop the long term view of data collection that allows the country to evaluate realistically it challenges and find ways to address the needs of children both in the large wealthy cities of Astana and Almaty and the lesser visible smaller cities and towns in the east and western regions where poverty, lack of social infrastructure and a difficult physical environment has for many years acted as stumbling blocks to moving progress forward. This focus on addressing children’s needs and to provide more child friendly and sustainable cities should not be determined only through a reward system where recognition is the main motivator. The important learning from global child friendly cities programs is that cities need to aspire to the importance of providing the best quality of life for its children because there is a shared community commitment to this ideal. So while ultimate responsibility may be with the city officials to set up proper and supportive governance systems to ensure the right economic and political platforms are available to launch such initiatives, there is also a responsibility for communities, including children with their families to be proactive in transforming their communities through their own local actions.

Everyone has a role to play in measuring, monitoring and transforming cities for children. Investing in children and families will be essential for strengthening children’s ability to reach their potential as productive, engaged, and capable citizens who contribute fully to their societies now and in the future. Child friendly and sustainable cities should therefore be viewed as a simultaneous bottom-up and a top-down program of political, economic, cultural and ecological transformation.