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Children, Cities and Housing: Rights and Priorities

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discussion paper

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List of abbreviations

Abbreviation	Description
CCRI	Children's Climate Risk Index
Habitat III	United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Quito, Ecuador, October 2016)
HUD	United States Department of Housing and Urban Development
IIED	International Institute for Environment and Development
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
IOM	International Organization for Migration
MODA	Multiple Overlapping Deprivation Analysis
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
OPHI	Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UN-HABITAT	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
UN DESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNCRD	United Nations Centre for Regional Development
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
US HRSA	United States Health Resources & Services Administration
WASH	Water, sanitation and hygiene
WB	World Bank
WHO	World Health Organization

Executive summary

Globally, an estimated 1.6 billion people live in inadequate housing.[1] This includes 1 billion people living in informal settlements and slums, approximately 350 million to 500 million of whom are children (younger than 18).[2] Children living in poverty and inadequate housing are arguably one of the most vulnerable groups globally because of multidimensional poverty and their dependence on others and their surrounding environment to meet their basic survival and development needs. Children's well-being, including their cognitive development, health and education, is significantly impacted by the quality of their housing. Children living in inadequate housing are often more vulnerable to disasters, climate change, conflict and global pandemics. Although inadequate housing exists in both urban and rural settings, research into the so-called "urban advantage" demonstrates that in many countries the most disadvantaged children in urban areas are worse off than children in rural areas.[3] **By 2030, 60% of urban residents will be children living in inadequate housing in the**

> **"Adequate housing** means more than a roof over one's head. It also means adequate privacy; adequate space; physical accessibility; adequate security; security of tenure; structural stability and durability; adequate lighting, heating and ventilation; adequate basic infrastructure, such as water-supply, sanitation and waste-management facilities; suitable environmental quality and health-related factors; and adequate and accessible location with regard to work and basic facilities, all of which should be available at an affordable cost."
>
> **— United Nations, 1996**

[1] UN-HABITAT (2021), Urban Indicators Database.
[2] United Nations Population Fund (2007), UNFPA *State of World Population, 2007: Unleashing the Potential of Urban Growth*.
[3] UNICEF (2018), *Advantage or Paradox? The Challenge for Children and Young People of Growing up Urban*.

Global South,[4,5] further increasing the urgency for policymakers, multilaterals and development practitioners to address the urgent need for adequate housing. This discussion paper examines the combined challenges and vulnerabilities children in urban areas face because of poverty and the inadequacy of their housing, which in turn affects their access to food, sanitation, health care and education; impedes the realization of children's rights as enshrined in the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child; and compromises the ability of humanity to achieve a sustainable future for all.

Adequate housing[6] is a right of every person, regardless of age, gender, race or income level, and is the foundation for all human development, well-being and survival, as recognized by Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, or UDHR, and Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, or ICESCR. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, or UNCRC, outlines the distinct, inalienable and universal rights of children everywhere. Development organizations and policymakers use the UNCRC to inform their policies and programming for children and families. This document was the first of its kind to be universally ratified and to endorse children as having rights on a global stage. **Article 27 of the UNCRC recognizes the right of every child to a standard of living adequate for the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development.** It also recognizes the need for governments to take appropriate measures to assist parents and others responsible for a child's care with implementing this right and to provide material assistance and support programs, specifically regarding nutrition, clothing and housing. Similarly, the UDHR highlights access to food, clothing, medical care, social services and housing as key components of an adequate standard of living. Despite these acknowledgments, millions of children are living in informal settlements and slums in inadequate housing, and this number continues to grow. This paper calls for the specific right to adequate housing to be elevated, especially given its foundational nature for the achievement of other rights contained in the UNCRC, including the right to life, survival and development (Article 6); right to privacy (Article 16); right to health (Article 24); right to social security (Article 26); and right to education (Article 28).

The gap in current housing policies and programs derives from children being primarily viewed only within the context of family and household units, which is reflected in the mechanisms through which they can access housing and basic services. Research indicates, however, that children living in extreme poverty are expected to become independent at an earlier age in order to reduce the economic burden on their families. There are many examples of children operating outside of traditional family units, including unaccompanied and separated migrant children, orphans, and street-connected children. Children living without the support of a family system are increasingly vulnerable to violence, injury, abuse, exploitation, exposure to crime and drugs, and social and economic exclusion. With an increasing number of child-headed households and children representing a significant portion of the population in urban slums, new development approaches and practices are required to elevate the voices of children, protect their rights, and more directly address their housing needs and priorities.

[4] Thomas de Benitez, et al. (2003), Youth Explosion in Developing World Cities: Approaches to Reducing Poverty and Conflict in an Urban Age.

[5] The term Global South is used here to refer broadly to the regions of Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Oceania. It "references an entire history of colonialism, neo-imperialism, and differential economic and social change through which large inequalities in living standards, life expectancy, and access to resources are maintained." (Dados and Connell, 2012).

[6] General Comment 4 of the U.N. International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights outlines several conditions that must be met for housing to be considered adequate, including legal security of tenure; availability of services, materials, facilities and infrastructure; affordability; habitability; accessibility; location; and cultural adequacy. (OHCHR, 1991, CESCR General Comment No. 4)

The growing climate crisis and ongoing COVID-19 pandemic have compounded existing environmental, social and economic inequalities and vulnerabilities faced by children living in informal settlements and slums, increasing their susceptibility to the impacts of flooding, stresses from extreme heat or cold, poor air quality, overcrowding, etc. Extreme weather, disasters and public health emergencies also disrupt children's education and reduce their longer-term resilience and development opportunities. This double vulnerability requires urgent action to improve the adequacy of housing and settlement environments. When addressing the housing deficit for these children, it is necessary to understand their specific needs and priorities, as well as the unique challenges they face in urban areas.

Addressing the growing number of children living in inadequate housing in urban areas requires prioritization, partnerships, community engagement and elevation to ensure that the well-being of the next generation is not compromised and that this significant population cohort is not missed altogether in the design and implementation of relevant policies and programs. Given the scale, complexity and the challenges related to providing adequate housing in urban areas, building multisector and multistakeholder partnerships is necessary to raise awareness; pool resources and expertise; and support the co-creation, implementation and scale-up of viable solutions. **This discussion paper calls on policymakers, practitioners in the international development sector, academia and researchers, children's rights activists, the United Nations, international civil society organizations, the private sector, and the media to:**

- **Promote equitable urban futures by addressing the housing needs and priorities of children**, especially those who live in informal settlements and slums or on the streets without secure tenure and access to basic services, as a critical component of urban inclusion and equitable distribution of resources and opportunities for a sustainable future for all.
- **Build urban resilience by developing social protection systems** to improve children's access to adequate housing and improve their resilience to economic,

social and environmental shocks and stressors in urban settings. Governments and stakeholders should implement long-term policy solutions that include the provision of regulatory systems to support the provision of adequate housing and scale-up of social protection systems.

- **Use innovation and technology along with people-centered and community-led approaches to facilitate better data collection and management systems**, evidence-based programming and planning, and the coordination of local, regional and national data and information.
- **Encourage development of comprehensive urban housing strategies and programming that are built on people- and child-centered approaches**[7,8] and ensure the participation of individuals from vulnerable and marginalized populations in governance, decision-making, planning and implementation.
- **Allocate more resources and technical expertise to child-appropriate urban planning and governance** in the upgrade of informal settlement and slums, with a focus on improving the adequacy of housing and settlements, energy efficiency, green recreational spaces, neighborhood and street safety, and finding local solutions to mitigate the impacts of climate change and other shocks and stressors.
- **Build multisectoral and multistakeholder partnerships to address the housing and development needs of children in urban areas** through a common vision and shared objectives, and pool together resources, knowledge, innovation and capacity to achieve greater outcomes and impact.
- **Raise awareness and visibility of the challenges children in cities are facing because of inadequate housing and advocate for better policies, programming and resourcing** to support the upgrading of informal settlements and slums, prioritizing children's health, well-being, and inclusion and integration into broader city systems.

A wealth of research demonstrates a direct correlation between the quality, location and affordability of housing and a child's ability to survive and realize their full potential. The transformational impact of housing for all — regardless of age — demonstrates how children's access to adequate housing helps eliminate child poverty, improves health and mental well-being, creates enabling educational environments, reduces gender inequalities, increases access to basic services, and ultimately is a key contributor to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and building a sustainable future for the next generation.

[7] People-centered means supporting people to be at the center of the development process, with transparent access to relevant information, and with voice, choice, effective influence and initiative in decisions that affect their lives, reinforcing their agency and autonomy.

[8] A child-centered approach within safeguarding and development can be understood as "the system in which everyone recognizes children and young people as individuals with rights — including the right to participate in the process of making decisions about them — in line with their age and stage of development (Munro, 2011). Thus, it draws more explicitly on the rights of the child as formulated by Convention on the Rights of the Child, underlying children's agency and their roles in their families and communities, including rights as well as responsibilities. More specifically, the child-centered protection framework should 'examine how social workers understand the child's journey from needing to receiving help; to explore how the rights, wishes, feelings and experiences of children and young people inform and shape the provision of services, and look at the effectiveness of the help provided to children, young people and their families.'" (Munro, 2011, and Bruckauf & Cook, 2017)

1. Introduction

Adequate housing is central to achieving socially just, economically viable, healthy and environmentally friendly and sustainable cities, as envisioned in the New Urban Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals. The New Urban Agenda, or NUA, was adopted at the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development, or Habitat III, in Quito, Ecuador, in 2016 to provide guidelines for sustainable, intentional and inclusive urban development. The NUA is based on the principles of eliminating poverty and ensuring equal rights and access to resources and opportunities in urban spaces; promoting sustainable and inclusive urban economies, decent work for all, and secure tenure; and improving environmental sustainability through clean energy, sustainable use of land and resources, and building urban resilience in the face of disasters and the effects of climate change.[9] Rapid urbanization will create new challenges in terms of housing, infrastructure, basic services, food security, safety and livelihood opportunities. Ensuring access to adequate and affordable housing, especially for the urban poor, is essential for reducing the growth of slums and informal settlements and the number of individuals living in substandard housing.[10]

The Sustainable Development Goals, or SDGs, are part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted by the United Nations member states in 2015. These goals serve as a shared blueprint for achieving a more equitable and inclusive future for all. The 17 SDGs address a wide range of development challenges and emphasize the interlinked nature of global development targets. Housing is a key determinant for health, well-being, and access to resources and services. Consequently, adequate housing plays a central role in achieving numerous SDGs, even when housing is not explicitly

[9] Habitat III (2016), *The New Urban Agenda*.
[10] UN-HABITAT (2020), *World Cities Report 2020*.

mentioned. Sustainable Development Goal 11 makes the most direct link with housing by seeking to "make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable" by 2030 and requires the realization of the right to adequate housing and the provision of affordable housing options at scale with consideration of the needs of the most vulnerable groups. SDG 11 cannot be achieved without meeting the housing need of millions of poor urban residents who are living in inadequate housing conditions and have limited access to basic services, secure tenure, and other social and economic opportunities. The following table indicates how ensuring access to adequate housing for children and families in urban slums and informal settlements is essential for eliminating poverty and achieving progress toward many of the SDGs:

TABLE 1: ADEQUATE HOUSING FOR CHILDREN AS RELATED TO THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Goal	Relationship to adequate housing for children
SDG 1: No Poverty	Poverty cannot be eliminated while individuals are living in substandard housing that violates their rights and ability to thrive and survive. Adequate housing builds resilience and reduces vulnerability to economic, social and climate-related shocks and disasters.[11] Additionally, lack of affordable housing options and secure tenure reduces a family's ability to build generational wealth and contributes to cycles of poverty.
SDG 2: Zero Hunger	Affordable housing and secure tenure have been linked to improved food security; lower housing costs increase the percentage of income available to spend on food. The urban poor are often more vulnerable to price-induced food insecurity than their rural peers because of their limited ability to grow or access crops or natural food sources.[12]
SDG 3: Good Health and Well-Being	Adequate housing can improve child health outcomes by reducing exposure to toxic chemicals and indoor air pollution, reducing the spread of infectious diseases, providing access to safe WASH infrastructure, preventing injuries related to substandard construction materials and building practices, and reducing risks for non-communicable diseases such as cardiovascular diseases or respiratory diseases due to extreme temperatures and other risk factors. Housing with secure tenure is also linked to reduced stress and improved mental health outcomes.[13,14] In many cases, formal housing and a permanent address are prerequisites for accessing health services.
SDG 4: Quality Education	Children perform better in school while in the confines of a safe home. Housing quality and access to basic services benefit children's health, which leads to better school attendance rates. Adequate housing with sufficient space, light, electricity and internet connection improves a child's ability to thrive in school.

[11] Shulla, K., and Köszeghy, L. (2021), SDG Booklet: Housing Ensures Sustainable Development.
[12] IIED (2011), Technical Briefing: Urbanization and Food Prices.
[13] World Health Organization (2018), WHO Housing and Health Guidelines.
[14] World Health Organization (2017), Inheriting a Sustainable World? Atlas on Children's Health and the Environment.

Goal	Relationship to adequate housing for children
SDG 5: Gender Equality	Ensuring equal rights and access to housing for women and girls protects them from discriminatory policies and practices related to land distribution, titling and inheritance.[15] Women and girls face disproportionate risk for housing-linked health conditions because of the increased amount of time they spend at home. To reduce these health disparities, housing conditions must be addressed. Women and girls are also often disproportionately responsible for collecting water for the household, which eliminates time for leisure and livelihood-generating activities. Improving access to safe water sources in and around the home would improve gender equality in many settings.
SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation	Access to clean water and sanitation infrastructure is an important element of adequate housing. Improved water, sanitation and hygiene, or WASH, infrastructure has been linked to reduced incidence of diarrhoeal disease, one of the leading causes of child mortality. Urban poor are one of the fastest growing population groups and their unique water and sanitation needs must be addressed to achieve target goals for adequate water and sanitation access.
SDG 7: Affordable and Clean Energy	Individuals in inadequate housing will often pay higher costs to heat or cool their homes because of poor insulation and substandard building materials. Many individuals rely on open fires and simple stoves to cook their meals and heat their homes.[16] Despite living in urban areas, individuals residing in slums and informal settlements may have limited access to electricity when compared with their wealthy urban peers. Investments in affordable and clean energy for families and children in slums and informal settlements can save energy costs, reduce air pollution and mitigate the effects of climate change.[17,18]
SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth	Improved living conditions and reduced crowding in homes create opportunities for individuals, especially women and children, to practice livelihood activities from within the homes. Advancements in secure tenure, housing conditions and access to basic services associated with adequate housing mean that households can spend less of their income on home repairs and unpredictable rental costs. Convenient access to safe water and sanitation services, electricity, clean fuel sources, and transportation services also reduce the amount of time children and their families must spend in transit to meet their basic needs. This reclaimed time could be dedicated to income-generating activities or leisure time. Expanding or upgrading housing stock also creates dignified jobs for community members seeking employment. Children benefit from economic growth within their families and neighborhoods.

[15] Shulla, K., and Köszeghy, L. (2021), SDG Booklet: Housing Ensures Sustainable Development.
[16] World Health Organization (2018), *WHO Housing and Health Guidelines.*
[17] Shulla, K., and Köszeghy, L. (2021), *SDG Booklet: Housing Ensures Sustainable Development.*
[18] World Health Organization (n.d.), "Children and Air Pollution."

Goal	Relationship to adequate housing for children
SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities	The urban poor are often excluded from the social and economic benefits associated with living in a city. To reduce inequalities at the city and country levels, resources must be dedicated to support the development of affordable housing options and healthy, sustainable neighborhoods for all urban residents.
SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities	SDG 11 directly addresses the need for adequate housing, calling for **"access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services."** Addressing adequate housing for the urban poor is an essential step for building sustainable cities and communities. Sustainable urban planning must include considerations for adequate, affordable housing and sufficient social protections for individuals living in slums and informal settlements.
SDG 13: Climate Action	Individuals living in slums and informal settlements are extremely vulnerable to the effects of climate change because of the poor quality of their homes, their precarious location and their already compromised health conditions. Many informal settlements exist on land that is environmentally compromised or is more prone to flooding. Substandard building materials may also exacerbate the effects of extreme heat or cold. Children in slums and informal settlements are particularly vulnerable, as they are more susceptible to extreme temperatures and face a greater risk of being displaced multiple times over their life spans.
SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions	Recognition of informal settlements and security of tenure promote the inclusion of vulnerable groups (including women, children and migrants) in decision-making processes.[19] Strong, participatory governance systems model collaboration and tolerance for urban youth, which supports their social development.
SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals	Partnerships are required to increase access to adequate housing and related products and services and are vital for quality impact at scale. The scale, complexity and challenges related to providing adequate housing in urban areas and addressing the needs of children requires multisector and multistakeholder partnerships to raise awareness and pool resources and expertise to support the co-creation, implementation and scale-up of viable solutions.

[19] Shulla, K., and Köszeghy, L. (2021), *SDG Booklet: Housing Ensures Sustainable Development*.

2. Factors compounding the housing crisis

The demand for affordable housing in urban areas outweighs the supply both in the rental and ownership markets, especially with increasing land, infrastructure and construction costs. In many cities, the current housing crisis is manifested through a growing number of people living in informal, overcrowded and substandard housing. By 2030, most urban residents living in inadequate housing will be children who are more susceptible to the impacts of disasters, climate change, public health emergencies and conflict given their multidimensional poverty and already compromised living and health conditions.

2.1. Rapid urbanization

Globally, over 1 billion people are living in slums[20] or slum-like conditions, and 350 million to 500 million of them are children.[21,22] By 2050, almost 70% of the world's children will live in urban areas,[23] and most of them will be living in inadequate housing, largely in informal

[20] Slums are characterized by extreme poverty and a high degree of exclusion from the city infrastructure. They are typically high-density urban residential areas that consist of substandard housing with inadequate or deteriorating infrastructure and services. Slum and informal housing developments are often in geographically and environmentally hazardous areas, which increases risks faced by the inhabitants of these settlements. For monitoring purposes, the United Nations defines a slum household as a group of individuals living under the same roof in an urban area who lack one or more of the following:

a) Durable housing of a permanent nature that protects against extreme climate conditions.
b) Sufficient living space, which means not more than three people sharing the same room.
c) Easy access to safe water in sufficient amounts at an affordable price.
d) Access to adequate sanitation in the form of a private or public toilet shared by a reasonable number of people.
e) Security of tenure that prevents forced evictions.

Not all slums are homogeneous, and not all slum dwellers suffer from the same degree of deprivation. The degree of deprivation depends on how many of the five conditions that define slums are prevalent within a slum household. UN-HABITAT analysis shows that Sub-Saharan Africa's slums are the most deprived, with over 70% of the region's slum households having one or two shelter deprivations, but almost half suffer from at least two shelter deprivations. (UN-HABITAT, 2018)

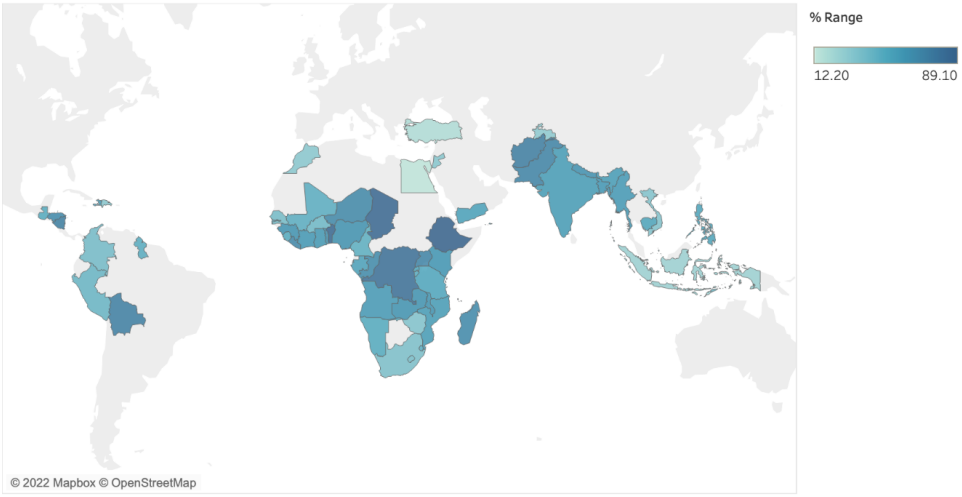
[21] UN-HABITAT (2021), *Urban Indicators Database.*

[22] UN DESA (2018), *2018 Revision of World Urbanization Prospects*.

[23] UNICEF (n.d.), "Growing Cities."

settlements,[24] overcrowded slums and refugee camps. Recent data from UN-HABITAT highlights the number of children living in slum conditions across Africa, Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean (see Figure 1). Of the 62 countries included in the report, 23 (37%) reported over half of urban children were living in slum conditions, with an increasing portion of the world's most vulnerable and disadvantaged children growing up in Asia and Africa.

FIGURE 1: PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN IN SLUM HOUSEHOLDS FOR STUDY COUNTRIES, 2004-19



SOURCE: UN-HABITAT (2021), *Global Urban Indicators Database*

According to global data from UN-HABITAT, insufficient affordable housing options in cities, especially in low- and middle-income countries, is one of the underlying causes of informal urbanization and growth of slums.[25] Recent data show that both the percentage of urban population living in slums and the absolute number of individuals living in slums are growing. This trend is likely to continue for the next decade unless concerted and comprehensive actions are taken by national and local governments and the international development community. These statistics provide evidence that child rights[26] cannot be fully realized if adequate housing is not comprehensively addressed in tandem with addressing other social and economic priorities.

Urban areas are struggling to cope with the increasing demand for housing and services caused by rapid urbanization and natural population growth. People migrate to cities in search

[24] The term "informal settlements" is used to describe a spectrum of housing arrangements ranging from squatting to informal rental housing. Informal settlements are unplanned areas housing significant populations that tend to lack access to public services and secure tenue. These settlements are usually overcrowded and tend to exist on land that is hazardous and more prone to flooding, sea or river erosion, etc., and on the outskirts of urban areas that are not ideal for housing such large populations. The United Nations defines informal settlements as areas where:
a) Inhabitants have no security of tenure that prevents forced evictions.
b) Neighborhoods often lack access to city infrastructure and basic services.
c) Dwellings may not comply with current planning and building regulations. (United Nations, 2015)

[25] UN-HABITAT (2020), World Cities Report 2020.

[26] Child-friendly cities, or CFCs, are cities, towns or other local governance systems committed to realizing the rights of children as defined in the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child. CFCs foster environments where children are protected from exploitation, violence and abuse; have a good start in life and grow up healthy and cared for; have access to quality social services; experience quality, inclusive and participatory education and skills development; express their opinions and influence decisions that affect them; participate in family, cultural, city/community and social life; live in a safe, secure and clean environment with access to green spaces; meet friends and have places to play and enjoy themselves; and have a fair chance in life regardless of their ethnic origin, religion, income, gender or ability. (Child Friendly Cities Initiative, n.d.)

of better social and economic opportunities or because of the impacts of climate change and conflict. Most of this growth is occurring in the Global South and is happening at a much lower per capita income than in other regions.[27] Many urban households are excluded from formal housing and networked infrastructures and are pushed to the peripheries of urban areas because of limited affordability, access and choice; lack of local government capacity; inefficient housing and land regulatory environments; and weak housing markets that struggle to meet the demand for affordable housing and basic services.[28] Residents of slums and informal settlements often have inadequate access to basic services like sanitation, clean water, clean energy, formal financial services, education and health care that create healthy and safe living environments. Even when such services are available, they may be unaffordable and unattainable for the poorest children and families in urban settings. Children living in slums and informal settlements are made more vulnerable through their lack of access to these services, which impact their physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development. Children also may be limited in their ability to access services and available support because of their legal status. Table 2 demonstrates that in some countries, children in urban slums are less likely to be registered at birth than their peers in non-slum settings.

TABLE 2: PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN UNDER AGE 5 WHO WERE REGISTERED, 2006-18

Country	Year	Urban		Rural
		Slum	Non-slum	All rural
Angola	2016	27.8	41.8	13.6
Bangladesh	2018	26.3	25.6	24.9
Benin	2018	89.3	96.8	82.1
Burkina Faso	2010	91.2	94.5	73.6
Cameroon	2018	72.5	83.9	47.1
Colombia	2015	96.1	97.4	95.8
Democratic Republic of Congo	2014	27.7	32.2	22.3
Haiti	2017	86.8	93.7	82.0
India	2016	85.6	92.2	76.1
Indonesia	2017	74.7	85.3	73.1
Myanmar	2016	92.5	95.0	77.7
Nepal	2016	50.4	56.3	57.8
Pakistan	2018	54.4	70.1	33.6
Peru	2006	91.5	95.4	93.3
Philippines	2017	92.4	95.1	90.4
Yemen	2013	47.0	49.5	24.1

SOURCE: UN-HABITAT (2021), *Global Urban Indicators Database*

[27] UN DESA (2018), 2018 Revision of World Urbanization Prospects.
[28] The U.N. definition of basic services refers to public service provision systems that meet human basic needs, including drinking water, sanitation, hygiene, energy, mobility, waste collection, health care, education and information technologies. UN-HABITAT adds social welfare and public and open spaces to the definition. (United Nations, 2021)

Conflict and the impacts of climate change are often contributing factors to urbanization. Camps for refugees and internally displaced people, or IDPs, are limited in their ability to provide education and employment opportunities. The long-term nature of displacement can make cities more attractive options for displaced individuals because of increased access to opportunities for employment, education, health care and psychosocial support.[29] Cities also offer access to informal labor markets and social networks that can provide a sense of anonymity for victims of conflict when compared with rural and camp settings.[30,31] However, by participating in these informal urban networks, displaced people are likely to join the urban poor who struggle to access basic services and adequate housing and meet their daily needs. The arrival of displaced people to urban areas can create challenges around integration and social inclusion as competition for limited employment and resources can heighten tensions and suspicion within communities.[32] Conflict and displacement can disrupt children's access to adequate housing when children and their families are forced to relocate because of violence, exposure to climatic events, food or water scarcity, or loss of livelihoods. When limited resources increase competition, there is a greater need for a child to contribute to the household economically, and when social cohesion within a community is disrupted by frequent displacement, a child's social interactions with their neighbors and peers can be limited. Both situations affect the child's development.

[29] Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (2018), *UnSettlement: Urban Displacement in the 21st Century.*
[30] Landau, L.B. (2014), "Urban Refugees and IDPs."
[31] Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (2018), *UnSettlement: Urban Displacement in the 21st Century.*
[32] Ibid.

2.2. Public health emergencies

Public health emergencies can disrupt entire social and economic systems and exacerbate existing resource strains. The COVID-19 pandemic brought to the forefront the importance of adequate housing for all and the close connection between housing and health. In addition to rapid urbanization and migration, COVID-19 has changed both the global housing landscape and the global situation of children, especially those living in slums, informal settlements and refugee camps, who are more vulnerable because of their inadequate living conditions (e.g., overcrowding and limited access to water and sanitation). Recently, 150 million additional children have been plunged into multidimensional poverty[33] because of the COVID-19 pandemic.[34] Sheltering in place, social distancing and remote learning are all challenging for children living in these types of human settlements. **Safe and dignified homes for children are more vital now than ever, as homes have become the sites of play, work, school and every other element of a child's life.** Children are perhaps those whose development was most impacted and left most vulnerable by the pandemic, as lockdowns and public health mandates had far-reaching implications for children's social, behavioral, educational and health indicators. Spending more time at home multiplies the impact of inadequate housing conditions on a child's development. Children who previously spent time outside of the home for educational and recreational activities largely lost those opportunities during COVID-19 lockdowns and public health mandates.

[33] The Oxford Poverty & Human Development Initiative, or OPHI, describes multidimensional poverty as a comprehensive approach to identifying the ways in which people suffer from various disadvantages. It expands on the idea of monetary poverty to capture a wider understanding of poverty, including other disadvantages such as poor health, a lack of clean water or electricity, and poor quality of work. (OPHI, n.d.)
[34] UNICEF (2020), "150 Million Additional Children Plunged into Poverty Due to COVID-19, UNICEF, Save the Children Say."

Because of the ongoing pandemic, children and mothers with young children have limited access to comprehensive health services. COVID-19 and growing global poverty have caused large population groups to lose their homes because they are unable to pay rent. This leads to a greater number of children and families living in inadequate conditions and makes it harder to access health services, which often require a formal or permanent address. Housing also has been an important element of the health system response to the COVID-19 pandemic, as lockdowns and at-home medical care have become key tools of health systems. In 2020, young children received fewer routine vaccines, and HIV prevention services halted in some countries. Health service declines impact vital preventive care and put children at greater risk of disease. Additionally, more children worldwide are now suffering from malnutrition and undernutrition than in previous years.[35] Countries around the world are reporting increased rates of food insecurity.[36] Children in urban and rural settings alike are impacted by overall food unavailability and the economic barriers to accessing adequate nutrition. Job loss directly impacts a family's ability to feed their children, and with many schools closed, feeding programs traditionally offered in school settings have become difficult to access, if not entirely unavailable. As COVID-19 increases global poverty, the nutritional status of the poorest children will continue to drop. Increased food insecurity means that families and individuals often must allocate more of their income to food and consequently have fewer resources available for rent and housing repairs and improvements. As such, many families and children are vulnerable to forced evictions and may lose progress made toward improving home conditions.

As a result of job losses and "shelter in place" orders, many children are not meeting their educational goals. For example, an estimated 1.6 billion children and youth globally were affected by school closures in 2020, and at least 31% of those children were not reached by digital or remote learning programs. **As noted in the UNICEF-ITU report (2020), 1.3 billion children between ages 3 and 17 do not have access to an internet connection in their homes.**[37] The digital gap not only limits children's ability to connect to online schooling but also prevents them from competing optimally in the digital economy and severely limits their future opportunities. Energy and information technologies are identified by the U.N. as basic services and as such should be considered critical components of adequate housing. This digital gap perpetuates existing inequalities and inequities between wealthier and poorer countries and communities. The social aspect of school life was also lost during the COVID-19 pandemic, and children suffered from isolation. The pandemic has highlighted the urgency of addressing children's right to a standard of living that prioritizes adequate housing to improve child development outcomes and upholds related human rights.

[35] Headey, et al. (2020), "Impacts of COVID-19 on Childhood Malnutrition and Nutrition-Related Mortality."
[36] World Bank (2021), "Food Security and COVID-19."
[37] UNICEF (2020), "Two Thirds of the World's School-Age Children Have No Internet Access at Home, New UNICEF-ITU Report Says."

2.3. Climate crisis

The climate crisis has already disrupted communities and ecosystems worldwide. **By 2030, 600 million of the urban poor will be directly exposed to climate change risks.**[38] Increasing global average temperatures have been attributed to rising sea levels, changes in water resources and arctic ecosystems, and increased incidence of flooding, drought, violent storms and extreme weather. A global temperature increase of 2˚C by 2050 will expose at least 800 million people to rising seas and storm surges.[39] In Jakarta, one of the fastest-sinking cities in the world, the first communities to lose their homes to rising sea levels were the urban poor living in slums on the outskirts of the city. Many communities find their way of life — and in many cases their very lives — at risk because of the current climate conditions. Women and girls are also acutely vulnerable to climate change because of pre-existing gender inequalities and social norms.[40]

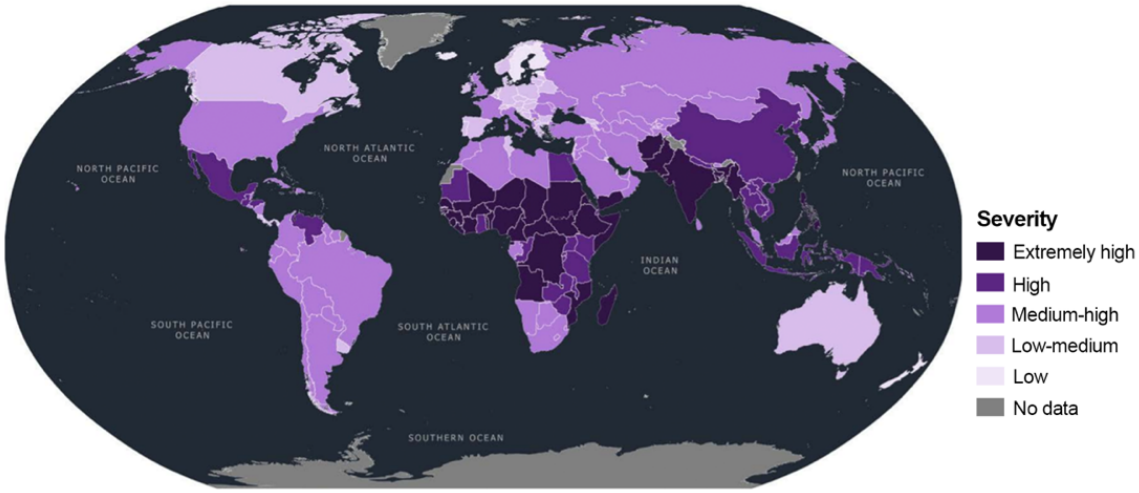
The effects of climate change on ecosystems, economies and communities have been motivating factors for migration and urbanization. While this is already occurring in many regions, the rate of migration to urban centers is expected to rise significantly in the coming years, as the effects of climate change begin to be felt more profoundly. **By 2050, there will be 143 million internal climate-related migrants across Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and Latin America if climate mitigating actions are not taken.**[41] Climate-related migration is motivated by increased water scarcity, decreased crop productivity and loss of livelihoods (particularly within agricultural communities), and damage to homes caused by rising sea levels and increased incidence of extreme weather events. Informal settlements, slums and substandard housing are increasingly exposed to flooding, rising sea levels and extreme weather, making them more vulnerable to the loss of life, property and livelihoods. Many of these settlements exist on land that is deemed undesirable, including the outskirts of cities, low-lying land earmarked for storm

[38] Cities Alliance (2019), “Building the Climate Resilience of the Urban Poor.”
[39] Cities Alliance (2020), “Climate Change and Cities.”
[40] World Vision International (2021), *Tackling a Double-Threat: Children at the Front and Centre of Urban Fragility and Climate Change.*
[41] Rigaud, et al. (2018), *Groundswell: Preparing for Internal Climate Migration.*

drainage, and steep slopes. These locations expose residents to disproportionate risks associated with flooding, landslides and extreme weather. Use of substandard building materials and practices and lack of infrastructure also influence a households' vulnerability to climate change. Resilient housing materials are needed to protect against flooding, withstand heavy storms, and cope with extreme temperatures. Several factors can impact heat stress in slums and informal settlements, including lack of trees and vegetation, poor construction materials, poor ventilation, efficiency and affordability of cooling technology, and lower elevation.[42] Extreme heat can also increase strain on water availability.

In August 2021, UNICEF introduced the Children's Climate Risk Index, or CCRI, as part of its report *The Climate Crisis Is a Child Rights Crisis*. This report addresses the growing body of evidence around children's unique vulnerabilities to the climate crisis and how their increased exposure to climate risks threatens their rights granted under the UNCRC. The CCRI incorporates a variety of indicators focused on two main pillars: Pillar 1 is exposure to climate and environmental shocks and stresses, and Pillar 2 is child vulnerability. **According to the CCRI, nearly half of the world's children live in countries at high risk for climate impacts.**[43] Figure 2 reflects data on children's climate risk by country.

FIGURE 2: CHILDREN'S CLIMATE RISK INDEX



SOURCE: UNICEF (2021), *The Climate Crisis Is a Child Rights Crisis.*

Children are more susceptible than adults to many effects of climate change, including extreme weather events, exposure to toxic environmental hazards, and diseases that will proliferate with climate change.[44] They will also experience the effects of climate change throughout their lifespans and face the consequences of opportunities lost because of the climate crisis.[45]

Despite being one of the groups most affected by the climate crisis, children and youth are often not included in the decision-making process around climate mitigation and adaptation. Children have unique needs and perspectives that are crucial to developing solutions for the climate crisis, and they have a right to be heard and involved in decisions that affect them. Including children and youth in urban and climate planning leads to better, more accessible and more inclusive cities for all.[46]

[42] Njagi, K. (2018), "As Slums Face Heat Extremes, 'I Feel Really Scared,' Residents Say."
[43] UNICEF (2021), *The Climate Crisis Is a Child Rights Crisis.*
[44] Ibid.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Child Friendly Cities Initiative (n.d.), "Practice Examples: Participation."

Some communities affected by the climate crisis may receive support in the form of voluntary relocation, but these interventions often target the household unit and do not include children and youth who exist outside of traditional household models. Independent children are often left out of national plans for relocation and are therefore further marginalized and more susceptible to a variety of risk factors. The displacement of children "resulting from environmental destruction or degradation, evictions or evacuations resulting from … natural or human-induced disasters … often take place without regard for existing human rights and humanitarian standards, including the right to adequate housing."[47] The presence and unique needs of independent children should be considered within voluntary relocation programming to ensure that children are given equal opportunities to relocate and are not excluded solely based on their independence from traditional family models.

For children without access to safe and adequate housing, the impacts can be fatal. Extreme weather caused by climate change is a growing cause of loss of life worldwide, disproportionately affecting children and the elderly. Housing is one of the key solutions to mitigate loss of life and loss of property due to extreme weather. Tackling the housing deficit can serve as part of a multifaceted approach to reducing the impact of the climate crisis in cities. While housing is not the solution to the larger issue, it is a way to mitigate some of the risks associated with climate change and allows service providers to think strategically about how sustainability may be incorporated into solutions. Other climate change adaptations that can be implemented from a housing perspective are disaster-resilient housing and infrastructure (e.g., paved roads, storm and surface drainage, piped water), voluntary relocations, energy-efficient housing, and climate change mitigation by reducing the carbon footprint by using more local and environmentally friendly materials. There are also opportunities to use sustainable technology and design to improve resource efficiency within homes, including improved insulation, well-designed fabric, smart design (e.g., appropriate orientation for solar access), low-energy appliances and cooling and heating systems, water-saving devices, water recycling and harvesting, and environmentally sound management of household waste.[48]

[47] OHCHR (2007), *Basic Principles and Guidelines on Development-Based Evictions and Displacement: Annex 1 Report of the Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing* (A/HRC/4/18, Annex I).
[48] UN-HABITAT (2015), *Green Building Interventions for Social Housing*.

3. Unique needs of children living in urban areas

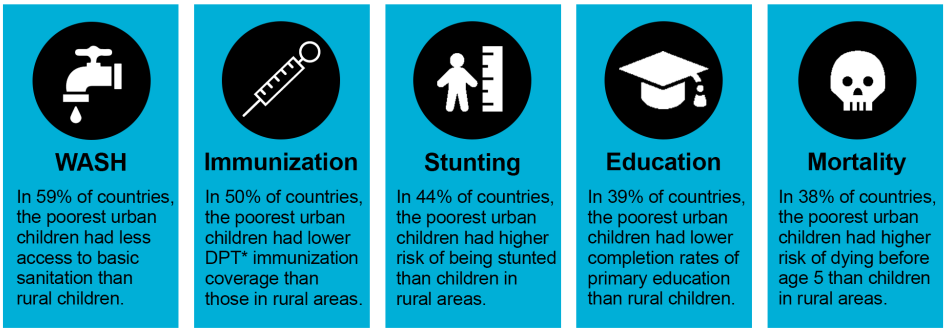
3.1. Children living in slum households and informal settlements

According to UNICEF, children are more likely to live in poverty than adults, they are more vulnerable to its impacts, and they represent half of those struggling to survive below the international poverty line (US$1.90 a day).[49] One billion children are considered multidimensionally poor, as they do not have access to basic necessities such as food, clean water and sanitation and they reside in conditions that challenge their rights, well-being and long-term prospects. Housing is a key component of most regional and national multidimensional poverty analysis frameworks, including UNICEF's Multiple Overlapping Deprivation Analysis, or MODA, model.[50]

Conditions in urban slums and informal settlements can violate a child's right to an adequate standard of living needed for their physical, mental and social development. A statistical analysis determined that not all children in cities benefit from the so-called "urban advantage" — the idea that higher incomes, better infrastructure and proximity to services grant urban children advantages over rural children.[51] Urban inequality and exclusion among children in cities can make many of the most disadvantaged children in urban areas worse off than children in rural areas. This "urban paradox" is a key consideration for resource allocation and program design for the well-being of all children in our increasingly urban world. Figure 3 provides examples of the urban paradox as it relates to health; education; and water, sanitation and hygiene, or WASH.

[49] UNICEF and World Bank (2016), *Ending Extreme Poverty: A Focus on Children*.
[50] Global Coalition to End Child Poverty (n.d.), "Child Poverty Reports."
[51] UNICEF (2018), *Advantage or Paradox? The Challenge for Children and Young People of Growing up Urban.*

FIGURE 3: KEY POINTS FROM THE *ADVANTAGE OR PARADOX* REPORT, 2018



**Diphtheria-pertussis-tetanus*

SOURCE: UNICEF, 2018, *Advantage or Paradox? The Challenge for Children and Young People of Growing up Urban.*

The Transformational Impact of Housing (Section 5) elaborates on how housing quality is related to improved outcomes in water, sanitation, hygiene, waste management, health, food security, education, security of tenure, safety, mental well-being and mobility. Children living in slums and informal settlements are arguably one of the most vulnerable groups globally, given the inadequacy of their standard of living, the multidimensional poverty they experience, and their dependency on others and their environment to meet their basic needs and survive.

Many homes in slums and informal settlements are substandard and are often overcrowded. Overcrowding in homes and communities impacts children's health, safety and security and compromises their ability to have well-rounded early childhood development, which is essential for achieving their potential as citizens.[52] Urban areas also present specific challenges for child protection, bringing heightened risks of exploitation, violence, crime and drugs, particularly for the most disadvantaged children. Many of these risks are also associated with high levels of social exclusion within cities, with less affluent urban areas often marked by informality, insecure tenure, overreliance on cash, disrupted kinship networks, and geographical isolation due to poor transportation systems.

Increased protection challenges can lead to children being kept indoors for many hours of the day in informal day care settings, increasing their susceptibility to health conditions associated with poor ventilation and lack of sunlight and Vitamin D, such as rickets. A study published in 2017 in Kenya reported that clinically defined rickets was present among 12.9% of children with complicated severe acute malnutrition, mostly from urban areas.[53]

In situations of extreme poverty, children are expected to become independent at a much earlier age to reduce the economic burden on their families.[54] This could include earning wages through a formal or informal job (at times being subjected to harmful or hazardous child labor) or moving out of the family home. Even with this premature independence, they are often excluded from political and legal systems and therefore cannot advocate for themselves or participate in the housing process as a renter or owner.

[52] World Health Organization (2017), *Inheriting a Sustainable World? Atlas on Children's Health and the Environment.*
[53] Jones, et al. (2017), "Vitamin D Deficiency Causes Rickets in an Urban Informal Settlement in Kenya and Is Associated With Malnutrition."
[54] International Labour Organization (n.d.), *Causes (Child Labour)*.

Many studies have concluded that children living in urban slums often have less access to education and lower literacy levels than their peers in rural and non-slum settings.[55] Education may be disrupted by several factors, including evictions, inability to pay school fees, and household dependence on child wages.[56,57] The COVID-19 pandemic also contributed to interruptions in schooling by causing school closures and amplifying the resource barriers (such as internet access) to distance learning. Rapid urbanization and the growing number of children living in urban slums and informal settlements necessitate explicit attention to addressing the unique housing needs and priorities of vulnerable children in urban contexts.

3.2. Addressing the housing needs of children

In the development sector, limited attention has been explicitly devoted to a child's right to adequate housing. However, a child's standard of living and consequent outcomes are greatly impacted by their housing and surrounding environment. Children are often primarily targeted for interventions through the family unit and social institutions like schools and youth programs, but these interventions may exclude categories of children with less traditional family models and limited ties to social institutions. Street-connected children,[58] child migrants, orphans[59] and other vulnerable children are entitled to adequate housing, and their specific housing needs should be considered during the planning and implementation of housing interventions. Similarly, housing interventions focused on the

[55] Ernst, et al. (2013), "Slums Are Not Places for Children to Live: Vulnerabilities, Health Outcomes, and Possible Interventions."
[56] UNESCO (2019), *Youth GEM Report: Migration, Displacement, and Education: Building Bridges, Not Walls.*
[57] UNICEF and International Labour Organization (2021*), Child Labour: Global Estimates 2020, Trends and the Road Forward.*
[58] The term "street-connected" is used in reference to children with varied connections to the streets. Save the Children identifies three primary groups of street-connected children:
1) Children who have run away from their families and live alone on the streets.
2) Children who spend most of their time on the streets working and fending for themselves, but return home on a regular basis.
3) Children from street families who live on the street with their family. (Bhaskaran and Mehta, 2011)
[59] The term "orphan" may have different meanings depending on the local context. In some cases, it may refer to a child who has one deceased and one living parent.

family unit without consideration for the diversity of social support systems and family models may fail to recognize opportunities to enhance programming to improve health, educational and social outcomes for all children. **It is usually assumed that the needs of children are inherently covered when the needs of households and communities are met, which is not necessarily the case.**

The family unit is traditionally defined as those living together related through marriage, birth or adoption.[60] Families and households are understood differently, with a household denoting those who regularly reside under the same roof and share meals or resources.[61] Family units and households alike vary in size and may change over time. Children's eligibility for and access to housing and basic services are often managed through the context of family and household units. Reaching children through the family unit structure is often effective but can also be complicated by a variety of social, political, environmental and economic factors that influence how families receive and use resources, and the unique circumstances faced by different types of children. **Examples of children operating outside of traditional family units may include unaccompanied and separated migrant children, orphans, and street-connected children.**

MIGRANT CHILDREN

The focus has traditionally been given to children migrating as part of a family unit, but recent trends have seen growing numbers of children and youth migrating independently because of a variety of push and pull factors, including economic disenfranchisement,

[60] U.S. HRSA (2017), "Definition of Family."
[61] U.N. definition of a family: "The concept of 'household' is based on the arrangements made by persons, individually or in groups, for providing themselves with food or other essentials for living. A household may be either: (a) a one-person household, that is, a person who makes provision for his own food or other essentials for living without combining with any other person to form part of a multi-person household; or (b) a multi-person household, that is, a group of two or more persons who make common provision for food or other essentials for living. The persons in the group may pool their incomes and have a common budget to a greater or lesser extent; they may be related or unrelated persons, or a combination of both. Households usually occupy the whole, part of, or more than one housing unit, but they may also be found in camps, in boarding houses or hotels, or as administrative personnel in institutions, or they may be homeless. Households consisting of extended families which make common provision for food, or of potentially separate households with a common head, resulting from polygamous unions, may occupy more than one housing unit." (United Nations, 1973)

climate change, food scarcity, conflict and the wider range of economic opportunities offered by urban settings. In 2018, 138,600 unaccompanied and separated children were reported globally.[62] Twelve percent of global migrants are children,[63] and roughly half of the global refugee population are under the age of 18.[64] Children who migrate independently lack access to assistance that usually occurs through the family. A parent or legal guardian may be required to enroll in schooling, qualify for feeding programs or receive shelter assistance. Many of these children also have no access to their legal citizenship or identity documents and may lack legal protection. Children living without the support of a family system are at increased risk of abuse, exploitation, and social and economic exclusion. They also may suffer from major mental health issues in addition to other health and well-being concerns. Providing comprehensive, safe and dignified housing for these children is a key component of ensuring their safety and development by assuring the right to a standard of living adequate for the child's development. In cases of migration, the family unit is not the most appropriate unit of analysis for best meeting the needs of children.

Even children who migrate with their families experience interrupted education, social and developmental progress because their housing, health care, education and social life are disrupted. Therefore, resuming these services as soon as possible is imperative to ensuring children's overall development and safety. Adequate housing ensures that children can take advantage of the services offered to them by the state or other development actors. Housing plays a key role in determining a child's ability to continue with schooling, receive health care, function socially, and meet their childhood development goals.

ORPHANS AND VULNERABLE GROUPS

Many nontraditional family units exist throughout the world. Orphans worldwide are cared for by extended networks of relatives and other community members without formal or legal custody, and thus many of these children are not viewed as a part of the family structures in which they actively participate. These informal adoptees are often not eligible for assistance programs designed for legally recognized children. This is specifically

[62] UNHCR (2019), *Global Trends — Forced Displacement in 2018.*
[63] IOM Global Migration Data Analysis Centre (2020), "Child and Young Migrants." Children defined as under the age of 18 in accordance with the UNCRC definition.
[64] UNHCR (2019), *Global Trends — Forced Displacement in 2018.*

prevalent in food assistance; families may receive a stipend or in-kind gift for the number of children they legally have rather than the number of children under their care. Similarly, children living on the street without connection to a recognized family unit will have limited access to assistance programs.

Conservative estimates place the number of children living on the street at over 100 million, but this is commonly recognized as an underestimate due to challenges in gathering accurate demographic information for this population.[65] This makes it impossible to fully understand the magnitude of need. Street children are often malnourished and lack access to medical services, which allows medical conditions such as injuries, infections, and skin and intestinal diseases to go untreated.[66] These unaccompanied children and youth are susceptible to a variety of greater risks in these areas, including human trafficking, gang activity, drugs and other factors that put young populations at risk and impact their quality of life.[67] Children working in tea shops, restaurants and machine shops in urban settings often sleep in those makeshift premises and are not counted or accounted for in standard surveys that exclude such places from the definition of "households."

Additionally, some children may belong to a recognized family unit but still have needs that are left unmet. This is often exemplified by children with complex intersectional identities. For example, children with disabilities have needs that are not shared by their families or peers without disabilities. Their status underscores a need for adapted housing that can mitigate some of the burdens of daily life. Understanding that these children have unique individual needs allows development actors to best target the most vulnerable members of a community. Housing that suits the needs of most children will not suit the needs of all, and housing that suits the needs of most family members may leave out the most vulnerable among them. Approaching housing for children with unique developmental and mobility needs from a traditional family unit perspective also may fail to recognize the importance of factors outside of the physical home. Safety, transportation and access to recreational spaces within the neighborhood and larger community all play an important role in a child's development and social inclusion. Acknowledging the needs and priorities of these children as key stakeholders within urban areas is essential for building inclusive, sustainable and accessible spaces for all residents.

[65] UNICEF (2003), *The State of the World's Children.*
[66] UNODC (n.d.), *Egypt Street Children Report.*
[67] Bhaskaran and Mehta (2011), "Surviving the Streets: A Census of Street Children in Delhi by the Institute for Human Development and Save the Children."

3.3. Child safeguarding and protection

Children experiencing inadequate housing (when securing and maintaining safe and stable housing conditions is not attainable) are at higher risk of harm. The experienced instability and unsafe conditions pose risks of neglect, physical dangers and psychosocial trauma to both the child and (if present) the caretaker, and also increase the risk of exploitation and abuse. When a child does experience trauma or abuse, the impacts on "a child's physical, mental and emotional health can be severe and long lasting."[68]

Children often lack voice both of their own agency (immaturity or age, asserting rights, decision-making, etc.) and political voice, which can make them susceptible to negligence and abuse. This lack of voice often makes children less likely to effectively report or resist abuse or violations of rights.[69] The Convention of the Rights of the Child stresses that "the child, by reason of his physical and mental immaturity, needs special safeguards and care, including appropriate legal protection, before as well as after birth."[70] Global studies have also shown that there is a significant potential risk to children's well-being and dignity caused by adults working in positions of trust. This can be exacerbated when engaged in housing interventions because of the high capital value of housing, the power of the guardian within a transaction (e.g., ability to control title or finances), the ability of a child to understand and have support within the housing process, and the significant imbalance of power between those who can grant housing (governments, agencies, etc.) as duty-bearers and the child as a rights-holder with a valid claim.

It is imperative that the rights and the safety of the child are considered within all actions in both child safeguarding and protection when focusing on the right to housing. The vulnerabilities of the child and the situation must be fully analyzed. Compounding and intersectional vulnerabilities are often at play (e.g., female children, children impacted by conflict/disaster, children of sex workers, etc.) and must be analyzed. These realities and risks must be factored into a safe programming design for housing interventions.

[68] UNICEF (2018), *Child Safeguarding Toolkit for Business.*
[69] HAQ: Centre for Child Rights (2008), *Handbook on Children's Right to Adequate Housing.*
[70] OHCHR (1990), "Convention on the Rights of the Child."

4. Children's right to housing

Children's access to adequate housing and safe settlement environments are fundamental for their survival, development and protection. Their overall well-being from their cognitive development to health and education is significantly impacted by the quality of their housing. The lack of adequate housing impacts their access to food, basic services, health care and education and impedes the realization of their rights as enshrined in the U.N. Convention of the Rights of the Child. Yet despite the adverse effects of these deprivations, children's right to adequate housing is not explicitly called out in international human rights law primarily because of their dependence on others for their housing, care and welfare. The growing number of children who do not form part of a traditional household, like street children, child-headed households, child migrants and orphans, are further compromised and highly underserved by assistance programs targeting traditional families. The number of children living in inadequate housing in urban areas continues to grow, which accelerates the need to elevate the discussion around children's access to adequate housing and children's right to an adequate standard of living. Addressing the inadequacy of housing and settlements that most urban children will reside in by 2030 is foundational for our shared future.

Adequate housing is the right of every person regardless of age, gender, race or income level and is foundational for human development and well-being. **The right to housing is encapsulated in the right to an adequate standard of living and** is governed by various human rights laws, including the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights, or UDHR, of 1948; the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, or UNCESCR, of 1966; and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, or UNCRC, of 1989**. At the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna in 1993, the international community affirmed the right of every individual to adequate housing. All human rights are interlinked, interdependent and interrelated. As such, access to adequate housing is a precondition for the enjoyment of several other human rights, including health and well-being, work, social security, voting, privacy, safety and education. "One of the areas where the indivisible and interdependence of human rights

and the rights of children become apparent is with respect to the existence of widespread poverty leading to inadequate housing," says UN-HABITAT's Subcommission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities.[71]

Despite the reaffirmed importance of full respect for the right to adequate housing and the setting of standards in human rights laws, 1.6 billion people live in substandard housing globally, and this number is growing daily, including an increasing number of children living in informal settlements and slums or on the streets. This housing deficit continues to grow, especially in the Global South, because of the scale and complexity of the housing challenge; high poverty levels; weak macroeconomic conditions; and the limited policies, resources and capacity available to meet the demand, especially at the local government level. Even in economically developed countries, there are increasing challenges around access to affordable housing, overcrowding, informality, and problems related to homelessness and inadequate housing.[72]

The UDHR articulates fundamental rights and freedom for all and was adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nation in December 1948. The UDHR provides that all people have the right to a standard of living that is adequate for their overall dignity, physical and mental well-being and overall quality of life. It also calls out motherhood and childhood as being entitled to special care and assistance. This law also directly ties the importance of housing for health and well-being.

Realizing Article 25 of the UDHR is a growing challenge and threatens the goal of achieving a sustainable, just and peaceful world for all. The need for access to adequate food, housing, health care and social security are such basic human needs, especially for children, yet the solutions to address these needs are so complicated and are affected by various social, economic, political and environmental conditions.

The foundation for the right to adequate housing is found in the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 25, paragraphs 1 and 2,** under the Right to Adequate Health. It states:

i. "Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of [themselves] and of [their] family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond [their] control.
ii. "Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection."

The UNCESCR, adopted in 1966, is the most important instrument that enshrines the right to housing. **The UNCESCR states that the right to adequate housing should be seen as the right to live somewhere in security, peace and dignity** and expands on the adequacy of housing and protection against evictions in general comments 4 and 7. General Comment 4 emphasizes that the right to housing should not be interpreted narrowly based on the physical dimensions as having just a roof and four walls or merely as a commodity. Several conditions must be met for housing to be considered adequate.

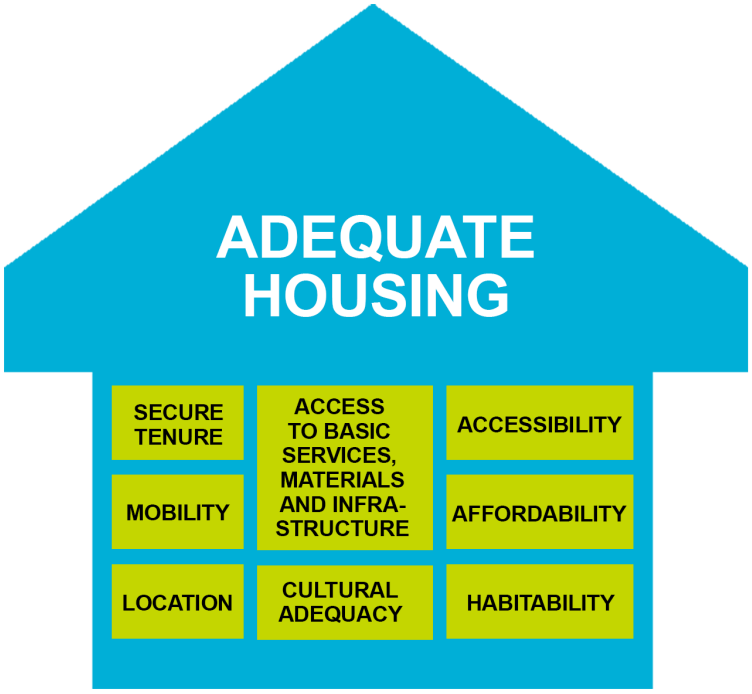
[71] UN-HABITAT (1994), Children and the Right to Adequate Housing: The Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities.
[72] The United Nations estimates that there are over 100 million homeless people worldwide and over 1 billion people who are inadequately housed. (Official Records of the General Assembly, 43rd Session, Supplement No. 8, Addendum A/43/8/Add.1)

Housing is considered adequate when the following considerations are in place:

- Security of tenure.
- Availability of basic services, materials, facilities and infrastructure.
- Affordability (ability to enjoy other human rights besides the housing costs).
- Habitability (minimum living standards).
- Accessibility (easy access for disadvantaged and marginalized groups with specific needs).
- Adequate location (access to the social infrastructure, employment places, far from polluted and dangerous places).
- Cultural adequacy (appropriateness of housing with consideration of cultural identity).

General comments 7 and 4 both consider that instances of forced eviction are prima facie incompatible with the requirements of the covenant and can be justified only in the most exceptional circumstances, and in accordance with the relevant principles of international law. General Comment 7 joins General Comment 4 as an authoritative interpretation of the right to adequate housing as protected by the ICESCR and as a guideline that assists with the adjudication of alleged violations of that right. Overall Article 11 (1) of the covenant, in combination with general comments 4 and 7, provides for **freedoms** such as the protection against forced evictions and the arbitrary destruction and demolition of one's home; freedom from arbitrary interference with one's home, privacy and family; and the right to choose one's residence, to determine where to live, and to freedom of movement. It also contains **entitlements** of security of tenure; housing, land and property restitution; equal and nondiscriminatory access to adequate housing; and participation in housing-related decision-making at the national and community levels.

FIGURE 4: ELEMENTS OF ADEQUATE HOUSING



The UNCRC is an international human rights treaty and safeguarding system adopted in 1989 as a commitment to the children of the world, comprising 54 articles that outlines children's distinct and inalienable rights and freedoms. The UNCRC was the first of its

kind to outline children as unique individuals having needs, rights and protections that must be met for their health and well-being, along consequences for the violation of these rights. The UNCRC is based on four guiding principles: nondiscrimination, best interests of the child, the rights to life and development, and child participation or the right to be heard.

Children's right to adequate housing is covered under Article 27 that states that every child has the right to a standard of living that adequately meets their physical and social needs and supports their development and that governments must help families who cannot afford to provide this standard of living through appropriate measures, with a focus on nutrition, clothing and housing. However, the specific right to adequate housing has not been assigned sufficient strength and relevance within the UNCRC, especially when considering the foundational nature of children's right to housing and its impact on other rights, including the right to health, education and well-being. Much of the emphasis on children within the terms of the UNCRC and within the work of development organizations focuses on the housing needs of children being met through traditional family units but does not adequately cover child-headed households, street children, orphaned children or children who migrate on their own to urban areas. The impact of the lack of adequate housing on children's development and ability to survive and thrive necessitates that children have an explicit right to an adequate standard of living both within and beyond their existence in social structures such as the family unit or governmental care systems. General Comment 7 of the UNCRC encourages the recognition of young children as social actors from the beginning of life, with particular interests, capacities and vulnerabilities, and of requirements for protection, guidance and support in the exercise of their rights and to emphasize the vulnerability of young children to poverty, discrimination, family breakdown and multiple other adversities that violate their rights and undermine their well-being.

Children have the right to feel safe at home, pursue education, express their identities and have access to basic services. Adequate housing is the foundation to a child's growth and well-being; therefore the compromised housing conditions that an increasing number of children reside in will impact their ability to reach their full potential. The proper prevention and intervention strategies during early childhood have the potential to benefit young children's current well-being and future prospects, as highlighted in General Comment 7 of the UNCRC. A wealth of research demonstrates a direct correlation between the quality, location and affordability

United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child (UNCRC)

Article 16 (1)

i. No child shall be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with his or her privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to unlawful attacks on his or her honour and reputation.

Article 27

i. States Parties recognize the right of every child to a standard of living adequate for the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development.
ii. The parent(s) or others responsible for the child have the primary responsibility to secure, within their abilities and financial capacities, the conditions of living necessary for the child's development.
iii. States Parties, in accordance with national conditions and within their means, shall take appropriate measures to assist parents and others responsible for the child to implement this right and shall in case of need provide material assistance and support programs, particularly with regard to nutrition, clothing and housing.

of housing and a child's ability to survive and thrive.[73] Thus, many of the other distinct rights of children cannot be assured[74] if a child lacks access to adequate housing and the services that housing provides. This is a crisis that is unfolding in front of our eyes.

Protecting the most basic rights of children requires that state parties provide material assistance and support programs to those who are caring for children to ensure access to basic services and housing and that no third parties can take away those provisions. Safe and adequate housing and community infrastructure ensure that children have access to the minimum basic services that ensure their health, nutrition, safety, development and protection.

5. The transformational impact of housing

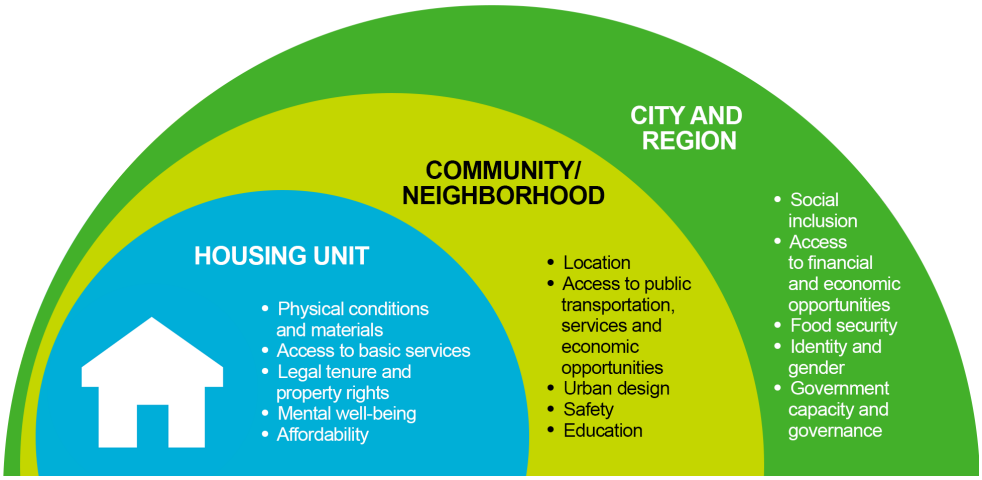
The transformational impact of housing demonstrates the benefits of adequate housing on human development (health, education and income/livelihood), broader economic development (economic growth and equality), and the environment (resilience and safety).[75] Research demonstrates how children's access to adequate housing helps eliminate child poverty; improves health; creates enabling educational environments; reduces gender inequalities; increases access to basic services and secure tenure; improves well-being, food security, safety and mobility; and ultimately is a key contributor to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and building a sustainable future for the next generation.

The concept of adequate, healthy housing stretches beyond a house's physical structure. Housing is a key determinant for health and well-being, which can be understood through three key lenses: the housing unit, the community/neighborhood, and the city and

[73] HUD Office of Policy Development & Research (2014), "Housing's and Neighborhoods' Role in Shaping Children's Future."
[74] "Assure" is used to signify protection, facilitation and fulfillment of and respect for specific rights.
[75] Entrikin, et al. (2020). *Literature Review: The Transformational Impact of Housing.*

region.[76] The housing unit includes the materials and construction quality of the physical structure, access to basic services and infrastructure, tenure and property rights, and affordability. The community/neighborhood lens incorporates the home's location; access to public transport, services and economic opportunities; urban design, public amenities and infrastructure (e.g., public space and street lighting); safety; and education. The city and regional context includes the economic, social and political aspects of an individual's relationship with society[77] along with environmental factors, including the impacts of climate change. An individual's social, economic and cultural identity all affect their ability to access adequate housing and are affected by systemic biases, social mindsets, discrimination and gender inequalities. The city and regional lens will address how housing is linked to social inclusion, economic opportunities and market systems, food security, and government capacity and governance. The following sections will explore how using these lenses allows us to better understand the transformational impact of housing on health, social, economic and environmental outcomes.

FIGURE 5: DIMENSIONS OF THE TRANSFORMATIONAL IMPACT OF ADEQUATE HOUSING



5.1. The housing unit

The physical environment of a home, including building materials, construction design, water and sanitation infrastructure, and access to basic services, has a significant impact on the health and well-being of children. Children on average spend more time at home than any other demographic, which multiplies the effect of substandard housing conditions and infrastructure on their physical, social and mental development. The following section explores how physical housing conditions, access to basic services, secure tenure and property rights, and mental well-being affect children in urban slums and informal settlements.

[76] This approach is modified from the WHO's approach to housing and health. The WHO identifies four key dimensions through which housing can be viewed: the physical structure, social environment, community and neighborhood. In this discussion paper, the community and neighborhood lenses have been combined.
[77] Hillemeier, et al. (2004), *Data Set Directory of Social Determinants of Health at the Local Level.*

HOUSING CONDITIONS

Housing conditions are a key mechanism through which environmental, economic and social inequalities translate into health inequalities. Housing in most informal settlements and slums is substandard in quality, and these settlements are often susceptible to hazards such as landslides, floods and industrial pollution because of their location and use of less resilient construction materials and practices. The use of unsafe building materials and substandard building practices, construction of homes in unsafe locations, and poor maintenance can expose people to a range of risks, including injuries caused by falls or collapsing buildings.[78] Unsafe electric connections within the home can also increase the likelihood of injury or death, especially in homes with young children. Certain toxic chemicals, such as asbestos and lead in paint and water pipes, are commonly found in homes using substandard building materials. Children are more susceptible to these toxins and hazardous chemicals given their stage of cognitive and physical development. Exposure to extreme temperatures indoors (due to structural challenges, limited materials, or lack of affordable heating and cooling options) can also contribute to poor respiratory and cardiovascular outcomes, particularly among children and the elderly, who are less able to regulate their body temperature.[79]

Indoor environmental quality is another key determinant of health linked to housing quality. Adequate space and proper ventilation can reduce the burden of disease by limiting the spread of infectious disease and exposure to toxic chemicals. Overcrowding is one of the defining characteristics of a slum and occurs when the physical space is inadequate for the number of inhabitants in the dwelling. Crowded housing has been linked to an increased risk of stress, injury and exposure to infectious diseases such as tuberculosis and COVID-19.[80] Indoor air pollution from tobacco smoke and cooking with coal and kerosene can contribute to asthma and allergic and irritant reactions, causing lasting damage to the respiratory system. Exposure to indoor air chemicals such as benzene,

[78] World Health Organization (2018), *WHO Housing and Health Guidelines*.
[79] Ibid.
[80] Ibid.

carbon monoxide, formaldehyde and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons may cause respiratory and cardiovascular diseases and deaths.[81] Poor ventilation and poor maintenance of a home may also support the growth of mold, which contributes to respiratory infection. Habitat for Humanity International estimates that as many as 40% of asthma cases can be attributed to factors in the home, such as molds, pests such as mice or cockroaches, or exposure to chemicals.[82]

Women and children face disproportionate risk for housing-linked health conditions because of the increased amount of time they spend at home. Children, particularly girls, often bear more responsibility for cooking and performing other household chores, which may increase their exposure to indoor air pollution and toxic chemicals and can lead to more burns and scald injuries. The World Health Organization reports that 41% of the world's population relies on open fires and simple stoves (that burn solid fuels) to cook and heat their homes.[83] Even children and adolescents who do not assist with cooking or child care tasks may be confined to the home to protect them from exploitation, abuse, violence and crime. Spending more time in the home raises the likelihood of health complications related to poor ventilation, indoor air pollution, overcrowding and exposure to toxic materials, in addition to mental health concerns due to limited social interactions.

Living in substandard conditions worsens the overall situation of children and leaves them increasingly vulnerable to abuse due to overcrowding and lack of privacy. Often when families or adults and children are living in the same room, the inability to gain privacy exposes children prematurely to sexual acts. This continues to be a challenge in many contexts where affordability levels do not create viable opportunities for families to relocate to homes with increased privacy. Nonetheless, privacy is a key consideration given the impact that premature exposure to sexual acts can have on children's mental well-being.

[81] Ibid.
[82] Habitat for Humanity (n.d.), "How Housing Affects Health."
[83] World Health Organization (2018), *WHO Housing and Health Guidelines*.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed many of the vulnerabilities in cities' housing infrastructure, particularly in slums and informal settlements where children and families live in substandard, overcrowded conditions that lack proper ventilation and safe water and sanitation facilities and where it is almost impossible to shelter in place and maintain social distancing. Slums report higher mortality rates among infants and children younger than 5 compared with non-slum areas. Children in slums suffer from higher rates of diarrheal and respiratory illness and malnutrition and have lower vaccination rates.[84] Safe and adequate housing environments are also essential for a child's proper physical and mental development.

SECURITY OF TENURE

Security of tenure — the legally defensible right to occupy land — is acknowledged as a central component of the right to adequate housing.[85] UNCESCR general comments No. 4 and 7 specify that individuals should possess some degree of security of tenure to protect against forced evictions, harassment and other threats.[86,87] Residents of informal settlements and slums are made vulnerable when available housing options do not provide necessary legal protections. Homes constructed without legal claim to the land put residents at risk for eviction and loss of any material or financial investments made to improve their home. The lack of rental contracts in most slums also means that renters can be evicted overnight, and housing costs can increase without notice or justification.

The absence of legal protections, prevalence of unpredictable income from roles in the informal economy, and greater vulnerability to environmental factors such as extreme

[84] Unger, A. (2013), "Children's Health in Slum Settings."
[85] OHCHR (n.d.), "Security of Tenure, Cornerstone of the Right to Adequate Housing."
[86] OHCHR (1991), *CESCR General Comment No. 4: The Right to Adequate Housing* (Art. 11 (1) of the Covenant).
[87] U.N. Committee on the Rights of the Child (2005), *General Comment No. 7: Implementing Child Rights in Early Childhood.*

weather and natural disasters increase the risk of displacement and permanent mobility for residents of informal settlements and slums. Children in these settings are particularly vulnerable, as they face a greater risk of being displaced multiple times over their life spans. Frequent moves affect a child's social and emotional well-being, and disruptions in education associated with changing schools can impact cognitive skills.[88,89] Moving to a new neighborhood can also mean changes in peer groups, household residents and caregivers who play an important role in the child's social development and safety.[90]

Although not homeowners themselves, children are affected when their parents or guardians lack legal rights to their land. In many countries, women lack formal legal rights to landownership and are subject to other policies that make it difficult for women to own homes. The children of single mothers are thus disproportionately impacted by the negative financial effects that these families face because of lack of secure tenure. Children living in families who lack secure tenure do not benefit from the same financial security and stability as their peers living in homes with legal deeds. Likewise, children living in homes that lack secure tenure cannot inherit these homes, which negates a family's ability to build generational wealth. A 2001 study conducted by the Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University found that owning a home compared with renting leads to a higher-quality home environment, as measured by indexes of the cognitive support, physical environment and emotional support of children in that home.[91] Additionally, the study found that a child's cognitive outcomes are up to 9% higher in math achievement and 7% higher in reading achievement for children living in owned homes. The measure of a child's behavior problems was also found to be up to 3% lower if the child resides in an owned home.

Secure tenure contributes to improved health and well-being by enabling people to have a secure home, thus allowing some degree of peace of mind and reducing stress associated with insecure housing and permanent mobility. It also allows people to improve upon their homes through incremental investing because there is no fear of eviction. This allows individuals and families to make improvements, including the addition of electrification or lighting or a bathroom, which would benefit health and education outcomes. Security of tenure assists family stability by reducing residential mobility, reducing stress levels in adults and children, and allowing individuals and families to focus on longer-term goals such as personal relationships and education. Social cohesion is also improved through increasing levels of residential stability and length of residence. OHCHR states that governments "have an obligation to take progressive measures to strengthen security of tenure for all persons using land or housing for their basic housing needs, and who currently lack such security."[92] Essential legal services for families seeking secure tenure provide children with more stable futures and promote inclusive societies, affecting access to education, transportation, food and school resources. Comprehensive social protection schemes should be implemented to ensure access to adequate housing and to reduce the likelihood of forced evictions and permanent mobility among the urban poor.[93]

[88] Coley and Kull (2014), "Is Moving During Childhood Harmful? Multiple Residential Moves Take a Toll on Children, but the Effects May Fade With Time."
[89] Sandstrom and Huerta (2013), *The Negative Effects of Instability on Child Development: A Research Synthesis.*
[90] Ibid.
[91] Haurin, et al. (2001), "The Impact of Homeownership on Child Outcomes."
[92] OHCHR (2014), *Guiding Principles on Security of Tenure for the Urban Poor.*
[93] World Health Organization (2011), *Social Determinants of Health Sectoral Briefing Series 1.*

MENTAL WELL-BEING

Children who have access to dignified housing where they feel safe and comfortable demonstrate improved mental health outcomes.[94] Fears associated with living in housing without secure tenure have a significant impact on mental well-being. Constant fear of forced evictions has been linked to negative mental and physical health outcomes, including depression, anxiety, psychological distress, poor self-reported health, high blood pressure and suicide.[95] Studies have found that young adults who experience eviction are more likely to report poorer health outcomes than their peers even years after the eviction occurred.[96] Housing stress has also been connected to an increase in reports of child maltreatment.[97,98] Children and adults lacking housing stability may also lack access to mental health services because of their income level.[99]

In addition to fear of eviction, individuals living in informal settlements and slums experience stigma and shame as a result of their inadequate living conditions and the association of slums with violence and crime. Many slum residents report hiding their addresses from employers and schools for fear of discrimination or being asked to leave.[100] Stigma and shame may discourage children and adolescents from pursuing opportunities for educational and social engagement with peers from non-slum communities.

[94] Rollings, et al. (2017), "How Housing and Neighborhood Physical Quality Affect Children's Mental Health."
[95] Vásquez-Vera, et al. (2017), "The Threat of Home Eviction and Its Effects on Health Through the Equity Lens: A Systematic Review."
[96] Hatch and Yun (2021), "Losing Your Home Is Bad for Your Health: Short- and Medium-Term Health Effects of Eviction on Young Adults."
[97] Chandler, et al. (2020), "Association of Housing Stress With Child Maltreatment: A Systematic Review."
[98] Bullinger and Fong (2020), "Evictions and Neighborhood Child Maltreatment Reports."
[99] Haurin, et al. (2001), "The Impact of Homeownership on Child Outcomes."
[100] Rashid (2009), "Strategies to Reduce Exclusion Among Populations Living in Urban Slum Settlements in Bangladesh."

ACCESS TO BASIC SERVICES AT THE HOUSEHOLD AND COMMUNITY LEVELS

Improving access to basic services is an essential component of improving the adequacy of housing and is a building block for human development. “Basic services” refers to systems that provide public services that meet basic human needs, including access to drinking water, sanitation, hygiene, solid waste management, energy, mobility, waste collection, health care, education and information technologies. **A child may be housed, but their right to housing is not fully realized without the provision of these services both within the home and within the larger community.** These services directly impact children’s health, education and social development and help build safer, healthier, more inclusive, more sustainable and more resilient communities.

Studies show that safe and adequate housing with access to latrines and other water, sanitation and hygiene, or WASH, infrastructure transforms the lives of children.[101] Over 700 children under 5 die each day from diarrheal diseases linked to poor sanitation and lack of appropriate WASH services.[102] According to the WHO, children living in informal settlements and slums are more vulnerable to infectious diseases such as pneumonia and diarrhea, which are some of the leading causes for child mortality under the age of 5.[103] These are all conditions that could be eradicated with improved access to adequate housing. Children in conflict areas are almost 20 times more likely to die from diarrheal disease linked to unsafe water than from the conflict itself.[104] WASH infrastructure within homes contributes to overall hygiene and facilitates healthy behaviors such as hand-washing. Access to WASH facilities in or near the home can reduce the risk of abuse for women and children. It also enables women and adolescent girls to manage menstrual hygiene in a safe, private and efficient way. Other considerations, such as adequate lighting near latrines and separation of sanitation facilities by gender, can also be incorporated to improve safety for women and children. The burden of collecting water for household needs falls disproportionately on women and children, particularly girls.[105] Convenient access to a safe water source in or near the home reduces the burden on women and children and allows time to be spent on other household or leisure activities. Availability of running water also reduces the need to store large quantities of water, which in turn reduces opportunities for stored water to become contaminated.

[101] UNICEF (2021), WASH and COVID-19.
[102] UNICEF (2021), “Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH).”
[103] World Health Organization (2020), Children: Improving Survival and Well-Being.
[104] UNICEF (2021), “Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH).”
[105] UNICEF (2016), “Collecting Water Is Often a Colossal Waste of Time for Women and Girls.”

Household improvements in WASH infrastructure and practices support better health outcomes at the neighborhood and community levels. The presence of WASH facilities in communities helps improve overall hygiene and encourages behavioral changes such as consistent hand-washing. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, household- and community-level WASH infrastructure, coupled with education on infection prevention and control measures, helped families and communities remain healthy and stop the spread of COVID-19 in their communities. WASH infrastructure, both in homes and in communities, improves the overall health of children, families and the larger communities by limiting the spread of waterborne diseases and reducing community transmission of highly transmissible viruses such as COVID-19 and flu-causing pathogens.

Access to lighting in homes is essential for children to do their homework, and street lighting is important for children, especially girls, to feel safe after dark. Children living in electrified households spend an average of 274 more days at school than those living in households without electricity. Electricity in the home also helps reduce gender inequalities by providing girls, who are traditionally more engaged in housework than boys, with opportunities to study after sunset.[106] Some communities rely on children, especially girls, to transport wood for fuel in the home, which adds another burden to their physical health and ability to engage in educational or recreational activities. Access to clean lighting, such as solar-based lighting, helps vulnerable communities reduce their reliance on poor-quality, highly polluting and expensive kerosene-based lightening; candles that are a fire hazard; and non-recyclable batteries. Solar-powered lamps are emission-free and provide reliable and renewable source of light that requires no overheads or underground cabling.

[106] UNICEF (2015), “Why Sustainable Energy Matters to Children: The Critical Importance of Sustainable Energy and Future Generations.”

Sustainable and environmentally friendly solid waste management systems can help children build healthy behaviors that will last their entire life. The rate at which waste materials are generated is rising globally. This, in conjunction with rapid urbanization, means that waste rates are projected to increase by 70% from 2016 to 2050.[107] Children living in communities without access to solid waste management systems will not only inherit a depleted environment, but also suffer from exhausted resources, decreased health outcomes, and increased likelihood of disasters and complications related to accumulated waste. It is important to provide communities with environmentally sound solid waste management systems now to mitigate communities' current environmental damage and improve health and environmental outcomes in the future.

A formal, permanent address is often a prerequisite for accessing health services. In communities with significant presence of informal settlements, health systems often do not allocate sufficient primary health care staff, facilities or resources to meet the needs of the local community. This creates geographic barriers to access and prevents vulnerable populations from receiving routine health services. Research shows that individuals experiencing housing instability have limited access to primary health care (preventive care and essential health services) and are more likely to have infectious diseases and chronic health conditions such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.[108] Investment in healthy and safe homes protects the health and livelihoods of children and their families by limiting time and resources lost while suffering negative health impacts.

[107] World Bank (2019), "Solid Waste Management."
[108] Martin, et al. (2019), "Adults with Housing Insecurity Have Worse Access to Primary and Preventive Care."

5.2. Community/neighborhood level

Children and families are greatly impacted by the social environment and infrastructure that exist immediately outside of their physical home. Community-level features include access to services, education and economic opportunities, public transportation, safety, and urban design. The proximity of a home to markets, schools, recreational space and transportation networks influences the opportunities that residents will have for social, educational and professional development. Accessing these services in a safe, efficient and affordable way is essential for reducing inequalities between the urban poor and their affluent peers.

EDUCATION

Housing, or lack thereof, for children and youth also serves as a driver of success or failure in educational settings. Housing quality and access to basic services benefit child health outcomes, leading to better school attendance rates. Children are guaranteed the right to an education under the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child, but without housing, many children struggle to access education. Globally, many schools require children to have a physical address to enroll; therefore children without access to housing or an address are all too often unable to enroll in school. The location of a home can also determine the quality of education a child receives. Children living in urban slums and informal settlements may be excluded from schools in more affluent areas of the city because of cost, distance or lack of transportation networks.

Children perform better in school while living in a safe home. Having a space to study with enough light and few distractions is critical to students' ability to thrive in school. Habitat for Humanity frames this issue by asserting that frequent or unplanned moves will often negatively impact a child's enrollment, attendance and achievement. A stable place to call

home provides a secure environment and adequate space to study and think.[109] Additionally, as many schools have moved to online learning in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, having a safe and dignified home is of the utmost importance to students' success in online education forums.

The COVID-19 pandemic has led many students to cease attending classes because of a variety of factors, such as lack of access to internet/Wi-Fi or lack of a place to attend class. The pandemic has exacerbated many of the educational inequalities children around the world were experiencing. A key contributing factor to these inequalities is internet access, especially for children living in poverty and without access to adequate housing. In 2019, 72% of households in urban areas had access to the internet in their homes.[110] While this was almost double the rate of connectivity in rural areas,[111] there is a still a need to reach the urban poor who are excluded from internet access and many of the other benefits associated with life in cities. Children around the world went into lockdown in March 2020, and because of school closures, many children relied on the internet to access educational materials. Subsequently, for children living in communities without connectivity infrastructure, education became difficult, if not impossible, to access. Internet access, once considered a privilege, is necessary to complete basic tasks in our current context. Electricity is also a key component for students to engage in online learning under pandemic circumstances and to complete homework during non-pandemic circumstances. These elements of housing and community infrastructure enable children to access their right to education and improve overall development outcomes throughout their lives.

[109] Habitat for Humanity (n.d.), "The Role of Housing in Educational Opportunities."
[110] International Telecommunication Union (2020), "Measuring Digital Development: Facts and Figures 2020."
[111] Ibid.

NEIGHBORHOOD INFRASTRUCTURE

Children have unique needs from their neighborhood to support their physical and social development. Urban planning that does not enable physical activity contributes to obesity and related conditions, such as diabetes and poor mental and cardiovascular health.[112] Adequate housing for children should include community features such as clean, safe and accessible green space, play space and sidewalks. Play is vital to a child's early development. Green spaces, playgrounds and communal public areas provide a setting for play in and around the homes of young children. Similarly, living in proximity to green space, whether it is privately owned as a feature of housing or public green space, improves the mental health of those who have access to it, including children. Green space and public play space also serve as sites for physical activity and socialization, important aspects of mental health and child development.[113] General Comment No. 7 of the UNCRC states, "Children's right-to-play space is especially at risk in many urban environments, where the design and density of housing, commercial centers and transport systems combine with noise, pollution, and all manner of dangers to create a hazardous environment for young children. Children's right to play can also be frustrated by excessive domestic chores (especially affecting girls) or by competitive schooling."[114]

[112] World Health Organization (2018), *WHO Housing and Health Guidelines.*
[113] UN-HABITAT and World Health Organization (2020), *Integrating Health in Urban and Territorial Planning: A Sourcebook*.
[114] U.N. Committee on the Rights of the Child, *General Comment No. 7 (2005): Implementing Child Rights in Early Childhood.*

MOBILITY

Transport and mobility services are essential urban infrastructure for improving livelihoods and access to social services in low-income, informal and slum communities. These services are vital to reducing the social and economic exclusion often experienced by residents of informal settlements and slums because of the isolated location of these settlements. Although children may not always be directly impacted by a lack of transportation services, parents and guardians who need to travel for work and lack such comprehensive services suffer from long and expensive commutes, limiting the time they spend with their families. Additionally, many children require transport services to attend school in another area. Transportation and mobility services allow children to explore communities other than their own, building connections between their community and the rest of the city. Even though transportation infrastructure is not situated within the home itself, it does change the dynamic of homes, giving parents and guardians more time, money and energy to invest in their children. Comprehensive transportation systems also enable individuals and families to receive necessary services, such as medical appointments for routine and specialized care. Children benefit from safe roads and bicycle lanes, which contribute to neighborhood safety and can influence the amount of time children spend outdoors within their community. Safe transportation services can also improve social and economic outcomes for women and girls who are able to exercise more freedom of movement; spend less time walking; and face fewer risks of exploitation, abuse and violence.

SAFETY

Cities attract individuals with the promise of economic opportunity, but they also reflect a concentration of crime and violence because of severe inequalities, unemployment and social exclusion. Safety plays an important role in the development of inclusive, sustainable cities and must be prioritized to ensure that a city's most vulnerable inhabitants do not become increasingly disadvantaged. **Urban safety expands beyond the physical safety of individuals, investments and infrastructure to encompass conditions that support freedom of movement and unfettered participation in school, public life and income-generating activities.**[115] Research on urban safety in South Africa has identified three main lenses through which crime, violence and resilience can be understood (see Figure 6).[116]

FIGURE 6: FACTORS INFLUENCING CRIME AND SAFETY

SOURCE: South African Cities Network (2016), *State of Urban Safety in South African Cities Report 2016*

[115] SaferSpaces (n.d.), *Urban Safety in South Africa.*
[116] South African Cities Network (2016), *State of Urban Safety in South African Cities Report 2016.*

The first lens focuses on conditions that support crime and violence, including statistics on crime and violence in the area and people's perceptions of their safety. The second lens addresses social and structural risk factors that can lead to increased crime in an area. Examples include informality; population density; social cohesion; income inequality; unemployment; and access to drugs, alcohol and firearms. Children and families in informal settlements and slums experience many of these risk factors by nature of the location and conditions in which they live. These settlements by definition are informal and densely populated and exhibit extreme income inequalities when compared with affluent urban neighborhoods. Trafficking, drug use, gang violence and sexual exploitation all affect children living in slums and informal settlements at a greater rate than their counterparts living elsewhere. Therefore, it is imperative to recognize that the location of housing determines a variety of safety and risk factors that can lead to child abuse, violence and exploitation.

The final lens examines the role of the local government and public-sector actors in mitigating the risks and conditions identified in the two previous lenses. City response encompasses policing strategies, upgrading public infrastructure to reduce crime, formalization of settlements and strengthening of secure tenure, expansion and upgrading of transportation networks, implementation and scaling up of social protection systems, and other social strategies, including youth programs and victim support services.[117] Allowing conditions that support crime and violence to grow uninterrupted in slums and informal settlements can have spillover effects on safety across the city. To reduce crime, it is essential for local government actors to invest resources in participatory, gender-responsive slum upgrading processes, and to implement social protection systems that address the unique needs and priorities of children.

5.3. City and region

The city and regional context has a significant impact on the ability of residents to meet their social and economic needs. In places where communities are formed by displaced people, residents struggle to create social cohesion and form a shared identity. The local economy, housing stock and housing finance systems will influence the cost of housing

[117] Ibid.

and the ability of residents to find jobs in the formal sector and to compete for housing within the traditional market. Food security can also be influenced by the cost of food in urban areas and proximity to alternative food sources. Environmental factors such as susceptibility to climate change and the prevalence of extreme weather events affect migration flows and the vulnerability of housing and community infrastructure. Together, these broader contextual factors impact the development of healthy, sustainable and inclusive cities for children and families.

INCLUSION AND SOCIAL COHESION

Some inequalities in housing experienced today are the result of a long history of structural discrimination and exclusion of certain communities. For some communities, these inequalities have been passed down from generation to generation. Individuals are affected by a lack of social cohesion and inclusion at the community/neighborhood and city and regional levels. Distrust and high rates of crime can influence the amount of time that children and families spend interacting with other children and adults in their neighborhood. Friendships that traditionally build over time can be harder to establish in environments where residents are frequently displaced because of insecure tenure, climatic events and increasing rent. At the city and regional level, residents of informal settlements and slums are vulnerable to social exclusion because of the location, informality and substandard living conditions of many settlements. Many informal settlements and slums are on the outskirts of cities because of the limited availability of land, affordability and choice. Settlements outside of the main urban area face greater risk of being excluded from many of the benefits associated with urban life, including economic opportunities and increased access to education and health services. Exclusion from these opportunities because of cost, transportation barriers, or a lack of clear administrative boundaries deprives residents of the benefits of urban lives without sheltering them from the increased cost of living and adverse health effects associated with living in informal settlements and slums. Data show that many of the most disadvantaged urban children are often worse off than their rural peers because of social exclusion.[118]

[118] UNICEF (2018), *Advantage or Paradox? The Challenge for Children and Young People of Growing up Urban.*

Informal slums and settlements without accepted governance structures in place will be limited in their ability to respond to stresses as a community. Consensus around governance enables community leaders to make collective decisions about urban planning and disaster preparedness. Creating a cohesive environment can be challenging in neighborhoods where residents move frequently because of forced evictions or concerns about crime and violence. Factors such as overreliance on cash, disrupted kinship networks and geographic isolation due to poor transportation systems also pose challenges for establishing connections within the community. Social cohesion is vital for children and adolescents to model tolerance and positive social skills that will shape how their generation interacts with others. To achieve full social cohesion, it is important for children to play a role in community decisions. Children and youths should be involved in making decisions with adults.[119]

FOOD SECURITY

Food security is a measure of the availability of food and individuals' ability to access food. According to the United Nations' Committee on World Food Security, food security is defined as meaning that all people always have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. Lacking adequate or secure access to food because of financial constraints is an important marker of material deprivation that contributes to health inequalities throughout a person's life. Children living in households that regularly spend over a third of their total income on housing (the international standard for unaffordable housing costs) experience significantly worse outcomes than other households that spend less than 30% on housing costs. When families and individuals spend over 30% of their income on housing, their ability to purchase healthy food diminishes. Access to stable, adequate and affordable housing means individuals will have more income to spend on necessities such as food.[120] Research indicates that families residing in subsidized housing have a lower chance of food insecurity than families on a waiting list for housing.[121]

[119] UNICEF Jordan (2019), *Towards a Child-Led Definition of Social Cohesion*.
[120] Burrowes, K. (2019), "How Stable, Affordable Housing Can Help Tackle Food Insecurity."
[121] Kirkpatrick and Tarasuk (2011), "Housing Circumstances Are Associated With Household Food Access Among Low-Income Urban Families."

The urban poor may also face equal or greater rates of food insecurity than their rural peers. Higher food prices in urban areas are often balanced by higher incomes and greater economic opportunities, but many of these economic benefits do not extend to the multidimensionally poor, who face geographic and social exclusion. The urban poor are often more vulnerable to price-induced food insecurity than their rural peers because of their limited ability to grow or access crops or natural food sources.[122] Most often, the urban poor respond to food insecurity by reducing spending on other parts of their budget or eating less.[123]

Many existing food subsidy programs provide aid through a family unit, which excludes categories of children who do not belong to a traditional family structure. In some cases, housing is a prerequisite to determining eligibility for food subsidy programs. Programs that rely on home addresses to determine eligibility and monitor aid distribution exclude individuals and families who do not have a consistent address. Children who are unable to secure sufficient food are at risk for malnutrition, disease and death. Food access can be reduced because of isolation and limited access to markets. Women and girls are at greater risk for household food insecurity because of the additional labor responsibilities that confine them to the home and limit their ability to diversify livelihood strategies.[124] They also often assume more responsibilities associated with caring for sick family members, which further restricts time available for income-generating activities.

ECONOMIC FACTORS

Housing has a significant impact on the economy of cities and regions. As demonstrated in the *Cornerstone of Recovery* report, housing is a larger than expected contributor to gross domestic product, or GDP, when both housing investment and housing services are included.[125] The report found that housing contributed an average of 13% of GDP in study countries, although the actual number is likely much higher because of undercounting and exclusion of informal housing and housing services in national accounts. Despite the central role of housing, national economic stimulus plans rarely include housing initiatives as a key

[122] IIED (2011), *Technical Briefing: Urbanization and Food Prices.*
[123] Ibid.
[124] Hendriks, S. (2002), "Unfair Burden: Women's Risks and Vulnerability to Food Insecurity."
[125] Habitat for Humanity (2020), *Cornerstone of Recovery: How Housing Can Help Emerging Market Economic Rebound from COVID-19*.

pathway for improving social outcomes. The adoption of inclusive strategies and stimulus policies toward housing markets creates an opportunity for significant social benefits, including improved housing conditions, individual welfare and community health improvement.[126] The urban poor are the demographic positioned to benefit most from inclusive housing markets and policies because of the health and social multiplier effects associated with improved housing conditions. Opportunities for housing finance and investment should reflect the presence and magnitude of informal settlements and prioritize expansion of incremental housing markets and renting and ownership options to meet the needs and priorities of a diverse urban population. While children may not be directly involved in housing finance, they will benefit from inclusive housing market policies that create pathways to ownership and improved living conditions for themselves and their families.

6. Recommendations for improving children's access to adequate housing

6.1. Promoting equitable urban futures

Equitable urban futures and sustainable development cannot be achieved if most residents, who are increasingly children living in informal settlements and slums, do not have access to adequate housing and social and economic benefits to support their holistic development and well-being. Prioritizing the housing and development needs of children must be pushed higher on the urban development agenda for the collective good of our shared future. Despite the complexity and scale of the challenges facing the provision of adequate housing in cities, there are opportunities to capitalize on the efficiency of scale, including the high concentration of people and resources and the resourcefulness of low-income households and communities to address their own problems, especially when organized and with access to resources and capacity-building support. The upgrading of informal settlements and slums also requires well-resourced and capacitated local governments working for and alongside communities.

[126] Ibid.

6.2. Building urban resilience by developing social protection systems

Poverty and social exclusion are key drivers of children in urban settings living in inadequate and unsafe housing or experiencing homelessness. Integrated social protection systems can help improve children's access to adequate and affordable housing in urban settings by addressing the poverty and vulnerabilities facing millions of children globally. International human rights law recognizes everyone's right to an adequate standard of living, which includes adequate housing. Governments and stakeholders should implement long-term policy solutions that include providing adequate housing and scaling up social protection systems.

6.3. Innovation and technology for data collection, data management systems and evidence-based programming

Using better innovation and technology along with people-centered and community-led approaches to facilitate better data collection and management provides evidence to support better decision-making, interventions, monitoring and evaluation. Adequate settlementwide assessments or profiles are important for understanding the needs and priorities of children and their families as well as existing housing conditions and any social or environmental risks and hazards. The social, economic, political and environmental factors and the barriers and systemic biases that low-income households and communities face in accessing adequate housing are important considerations. Investing in data collection and management systems and the coordination of local, regional and national data systems is essential for linking community needs to service delivery. Children's ability to meet academic, social, emotional and physical milestones depends largely on the adequacy of their living environment; therefore, using evidence-based program standards helps to identify which programs are needed most and determine their level of impact on child development and well-being. All smart and progressive cities today rely on smart data generation systems to provide services and solutions to urban residents, including children.

SDG 11 AND DATA COLLECTION

Sustainable Development Goal 11 seeks to "make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable" by 2030, leaving no one and no place behind, and is conditional to the realization of the right to adequate housing and the provision of affordable housing options at scale and diversity. SDG 11 provides guidance for monitoring 15 global spatial and nonspatial indicators, ranging from housing, citizen engagement, urban sprawl, access to urban services, cultural preservation, urban environment, disaster risk reduction and safety to urban policies and exposure to key environmental urban risk factors such as air pollution. All these components are key for the well-being of urban children in developed and developing countries. However, in terms of tracking progress on housing for children, data are still limited for urban areas because of challenges with informality, frequent mobility and a limited investment in city-level data collection systems. Data collection efforts around urban children in housing should be strengthened to include the main seven components of housing: legal security of tenure; availability of services, materials, facilities and infrastructure; affordability; habitability; accessibility; location; and cultural adequacy.[127]

6.4. Participatory strategy development and programming practices

Comprehensive strategy and programming approaches to informal settlement and slum upgrading that are people- and child-centered lead to more robust and sustainable communities. These approaches cater to the equitable inclusion of vulnerable and marginalized people in their own community processes through engagement in discussions, decision-making, planning and implementation of various interventions and programs, thus leading to more robust and sustainable outcomes and communities. Children are essential stakeholders, and where possible their active participation is necessary to support the design and implementation of potential solutions that include their needs, voices and perspectives. Equitable inclusion leads to better-served communities and addresses their multidimensional housing-related needs and priorities in a more integrated and impactful manner that improves their living conditions; quality of life; and resilience against disasters, climate change and global pandemics.

6.5. Dedicated resources for child-appropriate urban planning and governance

Establish multilevel collaborations that dedicate greater resources and technical expertise to support local governments to address the upgrading of informal settlements and slums and support better-designed and better-governed settlements. This includes addressing the adequacy of housing and settlements, improving energy efficiency, designing green recreational spaces, and finding local solutions to mitigate the impacts of climate change and the creation of urban designs, programs and policies that improve children and urban citizens' lives and increase their chances of development and prosperity. This requires innovative approaches that incorporate children's needs, priorities and ideas in settlement upgrading and city planning to create greener, more child-friendly and more inclusive settlements, spaces and cities.

[127] OHCHR, 1991, *CESCR General Comment No. 4.*

6.6. Multisectoral and multistakeholder partnerships for innovation and impact

The scale and complexity of the housing challenges in urban areas require the engagement of multiple stakeholders and sectors. Strategic partnerships that include public-, private-, community- and development-sector actors are required to address the housing crisis and contribute to the necessary systemic enhancements to the housing sector. Bringing together various stakeholders creates a common development vision across sectors and allows for the pooling of resources, knowledge and capacity that leads to greater outcomes and impact.

6.7. Awareness raising, advocacy and policy development

Raising awareness and visibility of the challenges children in cities face because of the inadequacy of their housing is critical. Policies should aim to improve the provision of adequate housing, basic services, tenure security and climate resilience and should mandate participatory processes, with a special focus on the needs and priorities of all vulnerable groups, including children and especially girls. Policies should also aim to address the housing needs of children who migrate to cities outside of traditional social structures.

7. Conclusion

Children require an adequate standard of living and housing for their physical, mental spiritual, moral and social development. This paper demonstrates challenges facing children in urban areas, their unique needs, the transformational impact of housing, and the link between adequate housing and a child's ability to survive and realize their full potential. Upgrading the informal settlements and slums that house 350 million to 500 million urban children around the world needs to be addressed urgently and in a proactive and comprehensive manner to improve the living conditions and quality of life of urban children and contribute to better health, education and livelihood outcomes.

To achieve the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals and the New Urban Agenda, development organizations must address the specific housing needs of children. Addressing children's right to adequate housing and the interconnected and transformational role of housing in achieving progress toward multiple SDGs will require meaningful, multisectoral partnerships among diverse development-sector actors. Children's access to adequate housing helps to eliminate child poverty, improve their health, create safe educational environments, reduce gender inequality, increase access to basic services, and ultimately build more sustainable communities (SDGs 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 11).[128] Additionally, focusing on children serves to reinforce the commitments outlined in the New Urban Agenda, including providing access to basic services for all citizens; ensuring citizens face no discrimination; promoting cleaner cities; strengthening citywide resilience to disasters; addressing climate change; respecting the rights of refugees, migrants and internally displaced people; improving connectivity; supporting innovative and green initiatives; and promoting safe, accessible and green public spaces. **However, without access to adequate housing, the rights guaranteed to children under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child cannot be realized and assured, and the goals set forth by the SDGS and the New Urban Agenda cannot be achieved.** To achieve any of these goals, policymakers and development-sector actors must consider children as individuals as well as within their family units and must promote access to adequate housing as an explicit right of children around the world.

[128] United Nations (n.d.), Sustainable Development Goals.

Annex I: Summary of housing-related rights in UNCESCR

UNCESCR	Summary of key components	Relevance to housing
Article 11(1)	Recognizes the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for themselves and their family, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions. The states' parties will take appropriate steps to ensure the realization of this right, recognizing to this effect the essential importance of international cooperation based on free consent.	**Enshrines the right to housing and the role of states in taking appropriate steps to support the realization of this right.**
Article 12	1. Recognizes the right of everyone to "the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health." 2. The full realization of this right shall include: A. The provision for the reduction of the stillbirth rate and of infant mortality and for the healthy development of the child. B. The improvement of all aspects of environmental and industrial hygiene. C. The prevention, treatment and control of epidemic, endemic, occupational and other diseases. D. The creation of conditions that would ensure medical services and medical attention to all in the event of sickness.	**Health and adequacy of housing** • The human right to health is recognized in numerous international instruments. • Article 25.1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights affirms: "Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services."
General Comment 4: The right to adequate housing (Article 11(1) of the Covenant)	1. The human right to adequate housing, which is thus derived from the right to an adequate standard of living, is of central importance for the enjoyment of all economic, social and cultural rights. 2. Although a wide variety of international instruments address the different dimensions of the right to adequate housing, Article 11(1) of the Covenant is the most comprehensive and perhaps the most important of the relevant provisions. 3. Despite the fact that the international community has frequently reaffirmed the importance of full respect for the right to adequate housing, there remains a disturbingly large gap between the standards set in Article 11(1) of the Covenant and the situation prevailing in many parts of the world. 4. The right to adequate housing applies to everyone, including individuals or female-headed households or other such groups. Thus, the concept of "family" must be understood in a wide sense. 5. The right to housing should not be interpreted in a narrow or restrictive sense as merely having a roof over one's head or viewing shelter exclusively as a commodity. Housing is seen as right to live somewhere in security, peace and dignity because the	**Highlights the foundational nature of the right to housing for the enjoyment of other rights.** • Expands on the adequacy of housing beyond four walls and a roof. • Expands on the right to adequate housing for everyone, including individual or female-based households or other such groups. • States that forced evictions are prima facie incompatible with the Covenant.

UNCESCR	Summary of key components	Relevance to housing
	right to housing is integrally linked to other human rights and to the fundamental principles upon which the Covenant is premised. Secondly, the reference in Article 11(1) must be read as referring not just to housing but also to adequate housing. As both the Commission on Human Settlements and the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000 have stated: "Adequate shelter means ... adequate privacy, adequate space, adequate security, adequate lighting and ventilation, adequate basic infrastructure and adequate location with regard to work and basic facilities — all at a reasonable cost." The reference also further expands on adequacy to include legal security of tenure; availability of services, materials, facilities and infrastructure; affordability; habitability; accessibility; location; and cultural adequacy. 6. As noted above, the right to adequate housing cannot be viewed in isolation from other human rights contained in the two international covenants and other applicable international instruments. 7. Regardless of the state of development of any country, certain steps must be taken immediately. As recognized in the Global Strategy for Shelter and in other international analyses, many of the measures required to promote the right to housing would only require the abstention by the government from certain practices and a commitment to facilitating "self-help" by affected groups. To the extent that any such steps are considered to be beyond the maximum resources available to a state party, it is appropriate that a request be made as soon as possible for international cooperation in accordance with articles 11(1), 22 and 23 of the Covenant, and that the committee be informed thereof. 8. States' parties must give due priority to those social groups living in unfavorable conditions by giving them particular consideration. 9. While the most appropriate means of achieving the full realization of the right to adequate housing will inevitably vary significantly from one state party to another, the Covenant clearly requires that each state party take whatever steps are necessary for that purpose. This will almost invariably require the adoption of a national housing strategy which, as stated in paragraph 32 of the Global Strategy for Shelter, "defines the objectives for the development of shelter conditions, identifies the resources available to meet these goals and the most cost-effective way of using them and sets out the responsibilities and time frame for the implementation of the necessary measures." Both for reasons of relevance and effectiveness, as well as in order to ensure respect for other human rights, such a strategy should reflect extensive genuine consultation with, and participation by, all of those affected, including the homeless, the inadequately housed and their representatives. 10. Effective monitoring of the situation with respect to housing is another obligation of immediate effect. For a state party to satisfy its obligations under Article 11(1), it must demonstrate, inter alia,	

UNCESCR	Summary of key components	Relevance to housing
	that it has taken whatever steps are necessary, either alone or on the basis of international cooperation, to ascertain the full extent of homelessness and inadequate housing within its jurisdiction. 11. Measures designed to satisfy a state party's obligations in respect of the right to adequate housing may reflect whatever mix of public- and private-sector measures considered appropriate. While in some states public financing of housing might most usefully be spent on direct construction of new housing, in most cases, experience has shown the inability of governments to fully satisfy housing deficits with publicly built housing. 12. Many of the measures that will be required will involve resource allocations and policy initiatives of a general kind. The committee views many component elements of the right to adequate housing as being at least consistent with the provision of domestic legal remedies. Depending on the legal system, such areas might include, but are not limited to: A. Legal appeals aimed at preventing planned evictions or demolitions through the issuance of court-ordered injunctions. B. Legal procedures seeking compensation after an illegal eviction. C. Complaints against illegal actions carried out or supported by landlords (whether public or private) in relation to rent levels, dwelling maintenance, and racial or other forms of discrimination. D. Allegations of any form of discrimination in the allocation and availability of access to housing. E. Complaints against landlords concerning unhealthy or inadequate housing conditions. 13. In this regard, the committee considers that instances of forced eviction are prima facie incompatible with the requirements of the Covenant and can only be justified in the most exceptional circumstances, and in accordance with the relevant principles of international law.	
General Comment 7: The Right to Adequate Housing (Article 11(1) of the Covenant) — Forced Evictions **General Comment 4: The Right to Adequate Housing**	1. The committee observed that all people should possess a degree of security of tenure that guarantees legal protection against forced eviction, harassment and other threats. It concluded that forced evictions are prima facie incompatible with the requirements of the Covenant. The Commission on Human Rights has also indicated that "forced evictions are a gross violation of human rights." However, although these statements are important, they leave open one of the most critical issues, namely that of determining the circumstances under which forced evictions are permissible and of spelling out the types of protection required to ensure respect for the relevant provisions of the Covenant. 2. The use of the term "forced evictions" is, in some respects, problematic. This expression seeks to convey a sense of arbitrariness and of illegality.	

UNCESCR	Summary of key components	Relevance to housing
(Article 11(1) of the Covenant)	3. The practice of forced evictions is widespread and affects people in both developed and developing countries. Owing to the interrelationship and interdependency that exist among all human rights, forced evictions frequently violate other human rights. Thus, while manifestly breaching the rights enshrined in the Covenant, the practice of forced evictions may also result in violations of civil and political rights, such as the right to life; the right to security of the person; the right to noninterference with privacy, family and home; and the right to the peaceful enjoyment of possessions. 4. Although the practice of forced evictions might appear to occur primarily in heavily populated urban areas, it also takes place in connection with forced population transfers, internal displacement, forced relocations in the context of armed conflict, mass exoduses, and refugee movements. In all these contexts, the right to adequate housing and not to be subjected to forced eviction may be violated through a wide range of acts or omissions attributable to states' parties. 5. Many instances of forced eviction are associated with violence, such as evictions resulting from international armed conflicts, internal strife, and communal or ethnic violence. 6. Other instances of forced eviction occur in the name of development. Evictions may be carried out in connection with conflict over land rights, development and infrastructure projects, such as the construction of dams or other large-scale energy projects, with land acquisition measures associated with urban renewal, housing renovation, city beautification programs, the clearing of land for agricultural purposes, unbridled speculation in land, or the holding of major sporting events like the Olympic Games. 7. In essence, the obligations of states' parties to the Covenant in relation to forced evictions are based on Article 11.1, read in conjunction with other relevant provisions. Specifically, Article 2.1 obliges states to use "all appropriate means" to promote the right to adequate housing. 8. Women, children, young people, older people, indigenous people, ethnic and other minorities, and other vulnerable individuals and groups all suffer disproportionately from the practice of forced eviction. 9. Forced eviction and house demolition as a punitive measure are also inconsistent with the norms of the Covenant.	
General Comment 14: The Right to the Highest Attainable Standard of Health (Article 12)	1. Health is a fundamental human right indispensable for the exercise of other human rights. Every human being is entitled to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health conducive to living a life in dignity.	This comment recognizes that the right to health is closely related to and dependent upon the realization of other human rights, including the right to housing.

Annex II: UNCRC linkages to housing

TABLE 4: THE UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD LINKAGES TO HOUSING[129]

Article	Summary of key components	Relevance to housing
Article 1	Child means every human being below the age of 18.	Definition of "child."
Article 2	2.1. Rights not to be discriminated against regardless of ethnicity, gender, religion, language, abilities or any other status.	Nondiscrimination.
Article 3	3.1. Best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration. 3.2. Ensure protection and care, especially in areas of safety and health.	Best interests of the child.
Article 6	6.1. A child has the inherent right to life. 6.2. Ensuring survival and development of the child.	General Comment 7 makes linkages to Article 6 and recognizes that the right to survival and development can only be implemented in a holistic manner, through the enforcement of all the other provisions of the convention, including rights to health, adequate nutrition, social security, an adequate standard of living, a healthy and safe environment, education, and play (Articles 24, 27, 28, 29 and 31).
Article 7	7.1. Registration of a child immediately after birth.	Birth registration, name, nationality and care.
Article 12	12.1. A child's right to participate and express their own views in all matters affecting them.	The right to participate in all matters affecting the child can be applied to the development of child-centered programming for improving the adequacy of housing and settlement environments.
Article 16	16.1. No child shall be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with their privacy, family, home or correspondence. 16.2. The child has the right to the protection of the law against such interferences or attacks.	Right to privacy and protection against forced evictions.
Article 19	19.1. Child safety and protection. 19.2. Establishment of social programs and support.	The right to participate in all matters affecting the child can be applied to the development of child-centered programming for improving the adequacy of housing and settlement environments.

[129] UNICEF United Kingdom. (n.d.), *A Summary of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.*

Article	Summary of key components	Relevance to housing
Article 27	27.1. The right of every child to a standard of living that is adequate for the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development. 27.3. States parties, in accordance with national conditions and within their means, shall take appropriate measures to assist parents and others responsible for the child to implement this right and shall in case of need provide material assistance and support programs, particularly regarding nutrition, clothing and housing.	Right to an adequate standard of living provided through adequate housing.
Article 31	31.1. States parties recognize the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child, and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.	**Leisure, play and culture** Highlights the importance of recreational and green spaces. The right of the child to rest, leisure, play, recreational activities, cultural life and arts was recognized in General Comment 17. Furthermore, profound changes in the world in which children are growing up are having a major impact on their opportunity to enjoy Article 31 rights. Play and recreation are essential to the health and well-being of children and promote the development of creativity; imagination; self-confidence; self-efficacy; and physical, social cognitive and emotional strength and skills. They contribute to all aspects of learning. **Linkages to Article 27:** Inadequate standard of living, insecure or overcrowded conditions, unsafe environments, unsanitary outdoor conditions, inadequate food, or enforced harmful or exploitative work can all serve to limit or deny children the opportunity to enjoy their childhoods. **Article 31 rights:** States parties are encouraged to have regard to the implications for children's rights under Article 31 in policies relating to social protection, employment, housing and access to public spaces for children living without opportunities for play and recreation in their own homes.

Article	Summary of key components
General Comment 7: Implementing child rights in early childhood	24. Access to services, especially for the most vulnerable. 25. Birth registrations. 26. Standard of living and social security: Young children are entitled to a standard of living adequate for their physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development (Article 27). The committee notes with concern that even the most basic standard of living is not assured for millions of young children, despite widespread recognition of the adverse consequences of deprivation. Growing up in relative poverty undermines children's well-being, social inclusion and self-esteem and reduces opportunities for learning and development. Growing up in conditions of absolute poverty has even more serious consequences, threatening children's survival and their health and undermining their basic quality of life. States parties are urged to implement systematic strategies to reduce poverty in early childhood and combat its negative effects on children's well-being. All possible means should be employed, including "material assistance and support programs" for children and families (Article 27.3), to ensure that young children have a basic standard of living consistent with rights. Implementing children's right to benefit from social security, including social insurance, is an important element of any strategy (Article 26). (b) Children without families (Articles 20 and 21): Children's rights to development are at serious risk when they are orphaned, abandoned or deprived of family care or when they suffer long-term disruptions to relationships or separations (e.g., due to natural disasters or other emergencies, epidemics such as HIV/AIDS, parental imprisonment, armed conflicts, wars and forced migration). These adversities will affect children differently depending on their personal resilience, their age and their circumstances, along with the availability of wider sources of support and alternative care. Research suggests that low-quality institutional care is unlikely to promote healthy physical and psychological development and can have serious negative consequences for long-term social adjustment, especially for children under 3 but also for children under 5. To the extent that alternative care is required, early placement in family-based or family-like care is more likely to produce positive outcomes for young children. UNCRC/C/GC/7/Rev.1, page 17: States parties are encouraged to invest in and support forms of alternative care that can ensure security, continuity of care and affection, and the opportunity for young children to form long-term attachments based on mutual trust and respect, for example through fostering, adoption and support for members of extended families. Where adoption is envisaged, "the best interests of the child shall be the paramount consideration" (Article 21), not just "a primary consideration" (Article 3), systematically bearing in mind and respecting all relevant rights of the child and obligations of states.

Annex III: Case studies

Promoting equitable urban futures in Monrovia, Liberia

Case study: Liberia Country Program

Partners: Cities Alliance, Habitat for Humanity International, YMCA, Slum Dwellers International, UN-HABITAT, World Bank, Women in Informal Employment and Organizing, Federation of Liberia Urban Poor Savers, private-sector partners, and the government of Liberia

Activities: The Liberia Country Program, or LCP, was a comprehensive urban upgrading program to improve the lives of 400,000 slum dwellers in Monrovia while contributing to sustainable development, poverty reduction, and social and economic inclusion. The LCP used a collective impact model to support a common urban agenda and vision with mutually reinforcing activities, shared measurement, continuous communication and support from Cities Alliance. The program used a slum upgrading unit, or SUU, to effectively engage government in slum upgrading and affordable housing interventions. The establishment of the SUU created an institutional platform to engage other government ministries and agencies, transfer knowledge, and facilitate the allocation of in-kind resources. The government provided oversight and technical support, policy guidance, technical compliance support, and review of infrastructure designs and was actively involved at the implementation stage.

Results: Community-level interventions have influenced a policy shift from forceful evictions of slum communities to supporting slum upgrading. The government has committed to connecting the target community, Peace Island, to the electricity grid as part of the $63 million Light Up Monrovia scheme funded by the EU and to the upgrading of the road to the slum community. The sustainable and on-site solutions for providing basic services implemented in Peace Island have also influenced the thinking of government agencies. Consequently, the Liberia Water and Sewer Corporation has been advocating for the adoption of stand-alone community water systems as a more sustainable solution to the water crisis in Monrovia.

Integrating children in strategy development in Thun, Switzerland

Case study: Children and young people's participation in local planning revision[130]

Partners: UNICEF Switzerland, Thun's Planning Office, Children and Youth Unit from the Office for Education and Sport, students at four local upper schools (years 7-9), young children and parents

Activities: In spring 2017, the city of Thun engaged children, young people and parents in the process of revising its local planning strategy to gain input and perspectives on the future development of their city. Students at four local upper schools used class time to complete online surveys about their leisure activities and make suggestions about the placement and design of recreational spaces using a map of the city. Younger children participated in a neighborhood inspection tour with their parents and provided feedback via subjective maps, interviews and questionnaires depending on their age.

Results: The activities and support from the Children and Youth Unit and the city of Thun's planning office collected valuable knowledge about the needs of children, young people and parents regarding future city development. Both departments affirmed that study results added value to their planning and that the gathered data will be used to further develop projects in both departments.

[130] UNICEF Switzerland (n.d.), "Children and Young People's Participation in Local Planning Revision."

Collaboration for child-appropriate urban planning in Lima, Peru

Case study: Child-friendly spaces with the Urban95 program[131]

Partners: Bernard van Leer Foundation, Lima city government

Activities: The Urban95 program advocates for urban planning and policies that address the needs of babies, children and caregivers, who are often overlooked in planning and design processes. In 2019, the Bernard van Leer Foundation (part of the Urban95 program) teamed up with the Lima government to upgrade 12 run-down public spaces into child-friendly spaces for children and their caregivers. Public spaces are essential elements of the community in neighborhoods where space at home is often limited. Perceived safety in public spaces also has significant impact on social cohesion.

Results: Despite challenges related to the global COVID-19 pandemic, the Urban95 program was able to upgrade all 12 spaces using low-cost solutions such as recycled materials. Designs for the spaces emphasized walkability, contact with nature and safety. Community members from one project site initially reported being skeptical of the need for baby-friendly spaces when there appeared to be very few children in the neighborhood. However, this lack of visibility was found to be linked to a lack of perceived safety on the part of caregivers who consequently chose not to spend time in public spaces with their babies. Upon completion of the project, babies and caregivers were reportedly much more visible within public spaces.

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