

THE CHILD-FRIENDLY CITIES INITIATIVE PROGRAM: INDONESIA-UNICEF COOPERATION IN PROMOTING THE FULFILLMENT OF CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION RIGHTS IN THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS IN SURABAYA

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Abstract

The Child-Friendly City Initiative program has contributed to encouraging the fulfillment of children's participation rights in the development process in Surabaya City. Using a descriptive qualitative method with a literature study of journal articles, reports, news, and official documents from the Ministry of Women Empowerment and Children Protection of Indonesia, P3APKB Office of Surabaya City, Surabaya City Children's Forum, Surabaya City Child-Friendly City Task Force Team, UNICEF Indonesia and interviews with the Surabaya City Children's Forum Management via zoom. This research found that the fulfillment of children's participation rights in Surabaya has met the standards of Robert Hart's Child Participation Ladder and Lundy's Child Participation Model after the World Child-Friendly City predicate in Surabaya. Secondly, Surabaya has also obtained the Main Level Child-Friendly City (CFC) title through children's involvement in the Development Planning Conference and support for the Children's Forum. Finally, through the CFCI program, the Surabaya Government significantly ensures that children's right to participation in local development is realized through various initiatives, although there are negative contributions that the Surabaya Children's Forum also experiences. This research uses thematic analysis to fill in the gaps in the contribution of the Child-Friendly City Initiative program, especially in fulfilling children's participation rights in development in Indonesia.

Keywords: CFCI, Child Participation Rights, CFC, Surabaya, UNICEF

Introduction

Safe and child-friendly spaces refer to physical, social, and emotional environments that support children's optimal development and protect them from all forms of harm. The concept of child security is closely related to the idea of human security, which emphasizes the protection of individuals from direct threats to their well-being, including threats to safety, freedom, and survival (Öztürk, 2024; United Nations Development Programme, 1994; van der Haer & Brown, 2024). In the context of child issues, this approach includes physical, psychological, and social protection for children, especially in conflict, disaster, or economic instability.

This concept is integral to the broader study of Human Security in international relations, emphasizing protecting and fulfilling children's rights in a secure, nurturing environment conducive to their growth (UNICEF, 2018). From a human security perspective, this approach encompasses physical protection from violence, exploitation, and discrimination and the empowerment of children through the right to meaningful participation in decision-making processes (Lustitiani & Ajisuksmo, 2022).

The fulfillment of children's rights, especially the right to participate in the decision-making process, is an essential barometer in ensuring that the child-friendly concept can

work. This is not only a moral responsibility but also a legal obligation mandated through the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which almost all countries in the world have ratified. The right to participation allows children to actively voice their interests, especially in the development process, thus creating an inclusive, safe, and friendly environment for them. In the context of human security, children's participation rights strengthen the protection and empowerment dimensions, which are essential elements in ensuring children's welfare and mitigating the risk of exploitation and violence. By positioning children as development actors, as shown in research related to the ASEAN Children's Forum and the Children's Forum in Indonesia, this strategy strengthens the legitimacy of public policies, ensures the sustainability of development based on the needs of future generations, and creates international norms that are relevant to be applied locally (RI, 2019; Rizki et al., 2015; Silverio, 2016; UNICEF, 2020).

Thus, it is vital to ensure the effective implementation of child-friendly concepts, which requires international cooperation. Through cross-country collaboration, international organizations such as UNICEF have played an essential role in developing policies, providing technical resources, and supporting initiatives such as the Child-Friendly Cities Initiative (Sitepu, 2023; UNICEF, 2018). This underscores the importance of international actors' involvement in addressing this issue, which transcends local boundaries and has attained global significance in the context of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The overarching objective of the Convention is to ensure that children are in spaces that are conducive to their well-being and development.

According to UNICEF (2018), child-friendly spaces are places where children's rights are fulfilled, including the right to play, learn, and interact positively without the threat of violence, discrimination, or exploitation. On the other hand, Chawla (2002) emphasizes that child-safe spaces include physical elements, such as accessibility, structural safety, and risk reduction, and psychological

elements, such as an inclusive atmosphere that values children's participation in decision-making. Bronfenbrenner (1979), through his developmental ecology theory, underlines the importance of positive interactions between children and their environment, emphasizing that child-friendly spaces should enable supportive relationships between children and their families, schools, and communities (Cochran, 2007; Nallari, 2011; UNICEF, 2018).

The difference between these views lies in their focus, with UNICEF providing a rights and policy approach, Chawla emphasizing design and participation elements, and Bronfenbrenner focusing on relational dynamics within the child's ecological system. Despite their differences, these views complement each other, creating a holistic perspective that safe and child-friendly spaces should fulfill their physical, psychological, social, and human rights needs.

Therefore, the establishment of safe spaces free from violence and the facilitation of appropriate participation by children according to their age and maturity level are of paramount importance. Indonesia has endeavored to uphold this concept as a moral obligation and responsibility of the nation that has ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) on September 5, 1990, through Presidential Decree Number 36 of 1990. The government of Indonesia has demonstrated a commitment to protecting the rights of children by implementing various programs under the Indonesian Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection. One such program is the Child-Friendly City, which aims to create a safe and friendly environment for children in accordance with the principles of the CRC (DPR, 1985; Nurussobah, 2019; Perserikatan Bangsa-Bangsa, 1989).

In addition to implementing the Child-Friendly City program, one form of the Government of Indonesia's efforts in the Convention on The Rights of the Child (CRC) implementation process is cooperation with UNICEF in encouraging the fulfillment of children's participation rights, which is very

important, especially in the context of inclusive and sustainable development. One of the main initiatives in this collaboration is the Child-Friendly Cities Initiative (CFCI) (Lustitiani & Ajisuksmo, 2022; Sitepu, 2023; UNICEF, 2021).

It is a program launched by UNICEF in 1996 that focuses on empowering local governments to support and protect children's rights in urban environments. CFCI builds on the principles of the CRC by promoting environments where children's voices, needs, and rights are integral to urban planning and governance. The program emphasizes the importance of creating urban spaces that support children's well-being, including safe spaces for play, quality health care, access to education, and participation in civic life, including integrating children's rights into public policy and urban design (Alias et al., 2023; Cordero Vinueza et al., 2023).

The CFCI framework focuses on five key objectives to establish child-friendly governance: (1) ensuring children are valued and respected, (2) promoting their right to voice and participate in public decision-making, (3) providing access to essential services, (4) creating a safe and clean environment, and (5) encouraging opportunities for play and family life (Roche, 1999; UNICEF, 2018, 2022).

Geographically, CFCI has snowballed and is now present in more than 38 countries, reaching up to 30 million children in cities such as London and Barcelona, and even in 2024, Surabaya as one of the major cities in Indonesia has been recognized by UNICEF as a CFCI (UNICEF, 2018).

Surabaya was first awarded as a Child-Friendly City in 2011. Since Mayor Tri Rismaharini's leadership began, Surabaya introduced various programs, such as issuing local regulation number 6 in 2016 on child protection, construction of playgrounds and libraries, and Public Order Police (Satpol PP) services to keep children safe at night. This effort continues until today; the Surabaya government has had various initiatives such as the construction of Rumah Anak Prestasi, a child-friendly information center, providing

opportunities for children to be directly involved in public forums such as Development Planning Conference/musrenbang at the village, sub-district, and city levels which causes their voices to be more accommodated in the city's development process. This commitment is also evidenced by Surabaya City having won the Main Child-Friendly City Award eight times in a row from the Ministry of Women Empowerment and Children Protection of Indonesia (Ajeng et al., 2024; Arindi & Hidayat, 2024).

Research related to the CFCI program in Indonesia has not been widely researched. It shows through Scopus and Google Scholar through the Publish or Perish application that study with the keyword "The AND Child AND Friendly AND City AND Initiative AND in AND Indonesia" with a range of years 2019-2024 found 15 suitable articles. There is not even a publication with the keywords "The Right of Child Participation in the Development Process in Surabaya through the Child-Friendly Cities Initiative Program."

However, research related to the implementation of child-friendly cities in several regions has been conducted and has been published; the author found through the Publish or Perish application that there are five articles and one thesis. All previous studies have examined various aspects of child-friendly policies. However, these publications have not addressed the CFCI program and mostly focus on policy evaluation, implementation strategies, or general child protection issues without directly addressing mechanisms that enable children's active participation in governance (Alviana et al., 2021; Arindi & Hidayat, 2024; Jannah et al., 2022; Mahendra, 2019; Nurhayati et al., 2018; Sitepu, 2023).

For instance, Mahendra and Sujanto (2019) evaluate the 2016-2018 Yogyakarta City CFC policy emphasized policy outcomes rather than children's participatory dynamics. In a similar vein, Arindi and Hidayat (2024) research on the optimization of the *PUSPAGA* program in Surabaya centered on institutional support mechanisms. However, it did not delve into children's lived experiences and involvement

in governance processes. Furthermore, research such as Alviana et al. (2021) explore the role of *Forum Anak Banyumas* in realizing a child-friendly district frames participation within the lens of multi-stakeholder partnerships but does not have a specific focus on how children's voices influence actual decision-making.

Other studies, such as Nurhayati et al. (2018) analysed CFC policy in Makassar and Jannah et al. (2022) conduct study in Palembang, examine broader policy frameworks, leaving gaps in understanding the operationalization of children's participation rights. While these works highlight the importance of child-friendly policies, they often treat participation as an abstract principle rather than a tangible process that influences governance. Hanifan Sitepu (2023) focuses on UNICEF's role in addressing child marriage through CFCI, provides valuable insights into the broader contributions of this initiative. However, the national scope of the study and its focus on specific social issues limit its overall comprehensiveness.

Thus, this research offers a new perspective on the implementation of the CFCI program in Surabaya, with a particular focus on its role in promoting children's participation rights in the development process. Furthermore, this research uniquely examines how CFCI, as a UNICEF-Indonesia program, directly facilitates children's meaningful participation in governance at the city level. Conversely, this research endeavors to explore the contribution of CFCI as a UNICEF-Indonesia cooperative program in promoting the realization of children's participation rights in the developmental process, particularly in the context of Surabaya, spanning from 2015 to 2023.

Based on this description, this research focuses on analyzing more deeply the form of Indonesia-UNICEF cooperation through CFCI in Surabaya and the contribution of CFCI in encouraging the fulfillment of children's participation rights in development in Surabaya City. The research question is "How does the CFCI Program Contribute to Encouraging the

Fulfillment of Children's Participation Rights in Development in Surabaya?." Therefore, the subsequent sections examine the theory of international cooperation and children's participation.

Theoretical Framework

International Cooperation

The theory of international cooperation in international relations is a theory that explains how international relations actors work together based on principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures that are in accordance with the expectations of actors. International cooperation is defined by Robert Keohane, who says *that cooperation occurs when actors (states or non-state actors) adjust their behavior to the actual and anticipated preferences of others through policy coordination* (Keohane, 2020). International cooperation started with the assumption that states are the main actors in collaboration, but today, cooperation occurs not only between individuals but also between collective entities, such as companies, political parties, ethnic organizations, terrorist groups, and nation-states. Recently, research has involved other actors, such as intergovernmental or intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), which have been included in this analysis (Dai et al., 2010).

According to K.J Holsti, international cooperation is the process by which states or other global actors work together to achieve common goals or solve common problems (Holsti; 1995). It can involve various forms of collaboration, negotiation, and coordination among sovereign entities, often within the framework of international institutions or treaties. International cooperation can occur across multiple issues, including security, economics, environment, and human rights, and can occur at the bilateral, regional, or global level. Holsti also argues that international cooperation can materialize due to the following:

- a. The view of two or more interests, this indicator will look at the extent to which cooperation can accommodate the interests of the countries and international organizations involved,
- b. The views or expectations of a country, where this indicator will look at cooperation in meeting the expectations and goals expected by the countries involved,
- c. Agreement on specific issues: this indicator will measure the effectiveness of cooperation in resolving or addressing particular issues that are the focus of collaboration,
- d. Official or unofficial rules, where this indicator will assess the clarity and effectiveness of the regulations or mechanisms agreed upon in cooperation, both formal and informal, and transactions between actors, this indicator will measure the intensity and quality of interactions and resource exchanges between states and international organizations within the framework of cooperation (Holsti, 1995; Little & Smith, 2005).

International cooperation is carried out not only between countries individually but also between countries under international organizations or institutions. One form of global collaboration is manifested through one of the international organizations, UNICEF, which plays an essential role in implementing the principles by supporting the Convention on the Rights of the Child and fostering cooperation between countries to protect children's rights and ensure their welfare. Through various program initiatives and participation in a global network, UNICEF contributes to a more coordinated and effective response to international issues affecting children.

The success of international cooperation is often measured by the ability of countries to address these strategic issues and achieve mutually beneficial outcomes, which can be reflected in the effectiveness of international

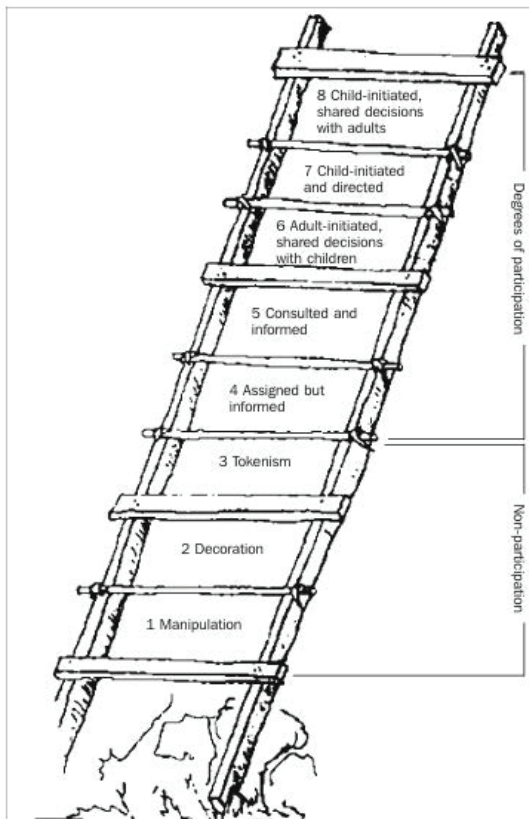
institutions and the stability of the global system. In the context of the CFCI program, success indicators may include metrics that assess the effectiveness of international cooperation in achieving the goal of Surabaya becoming a World Level Child-Friendly City, (a) ensuring children are valued and respected through involvement in child participation platforms, (b) promoting their right to voice opinions and participate in public decision-making as assessed through children's involvement in Public Policy Forums (Regional Development Planning Conference/ *Musrenbang*) (c) providing access to essential services as evidenced by programs and policies that are born from children's suggestions (d) creating a safe and clean environment as evidenced by child-friendly infrastructure and environment and (e) encouraging opportunities for play and family life with indicators on the availability of child-friendly play spaces and family life preparation programs for children and adolescents. These five metrics constitute the framework in UNICEF's CFCI.

Child Participation

Participation is a spontaneous involvement accompanied by awareness and responsibility for the group's interests for the common good, such as actively socializing, making decisions, or implementing development projects. Furthermore, participation is often associated with mutually beneficial conditions for the two interacting parties and a person's full involvement in society and himself in various activities (Sari et al., 2024). One form of participation that exists in society is child participation.

Furthermore, children's participation is also defined by Hart as the process of children's involvement in decision-making, which is very broad, so Hart (1997) developed a participation ladder policy, each level of which has its indicators (Thoomaszen, 2017). The ladder of participation can be described as follows:

Figure 1: Child Participation Ladder



Source: (Hart, 2008; Thoomaszen, 2017)

In addition, children's participation is also described by Lundy (2007) as a model of participation that translates from Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child by developing four dimensions that need to be considered in implementing meaningful children's participation, including 1) Space is a mechanism or platform that children can use to express their views in a child-friendly manner. 2) Voice is a mechanism or platform that children can use to express their views in a child-friendly manner. 3) Audience is a dialog with parties who must listen to and consider the views/voices of children. 4). Influence is children's views that must be taken seriously and acted upon. The highest level of child participation is in the collaboration of actions taken by children and adults (duty bearers) for specific purposes with the needs expressed by children. This model also emphasizes that one of the crucial principles in children's participation is the availability of procedures for involving children in influencing decisions and feedback mechanisms to children regarding the decision-

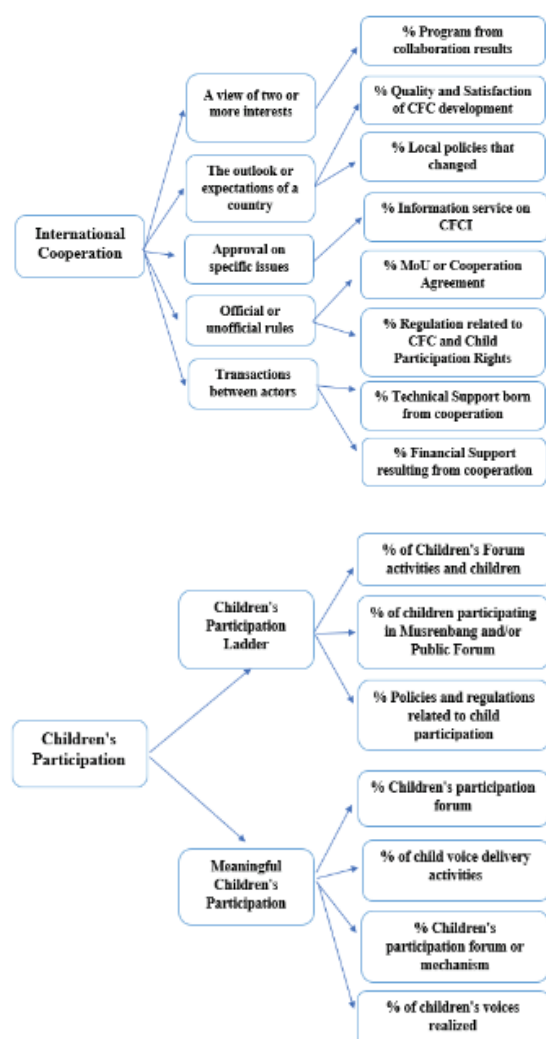
making process related to the fulfillment of their rights (Solin & Ruwaida, 2022).

The definition of children's participation is also contained in the Regulation of the Minister of Women Empowerment and Child Protection of Indonesia Number 1 of 2022 concerning Amendments to the Regulation of the Minister of Women Empowerment and Child Protection of Indonesia Number 18 of 2019 concerning the Implementation of Children's Forums, which defines children's participation as the participation of children or groups of children to express their views according to human dignity about everything related to them and carries out with the awareness, understanding, and willingness of children so that children can enjoy the results or benefit from their participation. Children's participation has criteria contained in the guidelines for children's participation in the development process, namely being an Indonesian citizen, being at least 12 (twelve) years old and at most before 18 (eighteen) years old, being able to communicate well, being able to submit proposals for children's aspirations, representing a child participation forum in the area where the child is located, including a statement of willingness to be involved in the development process (*informed consent*), getting permission from parents/guardians by including a letter of authorization, and must be accompanied by facilitators and assistants.

Therefore, through the various definitions above, the researcher decided to take the definition in Law Number 35 of 2014 concerning Amendments to Law Number 23 of 2002 concerning Child Protection, which was then combined with the criteria listed in the Guidelines for Children's Participation in the Development Process issued by the Ministry of Women Empowerment and Children Protection of Indonesia. In addition, Hart's ladder of participation is used to see how far the fulfillment of participation rights has been implemented in Surabaya by involving the contribution of the CFCI program. Furthermore, the Lundy model will also be used to see whether the CFCI program contributes to fulfilling children's participation rights, especially in the development process in Surabaya City.

These two conceptual frameworks can be seen in the following operational definitions:

Figure 2. Operational Definition



Source: Processed by Researcher, 2025

Research Method

The research method used in this research is the descriptive qualitative method by collecting literature data from books, scientific journals, news articles, and official documents of government agencies of the Ministry of Women Empowerment and Children Protection of Indonesia, P3APKB Office of Surabaya City, Surabaya City Children's Forum, Surabaya City Child-Friendly City Task Force Team, to UNICEF Indonesia and others and relevant reports. Then, researchers collected empirical data through interviews with the Surabaya City

Children's Forum to deepen information and help researchers answer research questions using the Zoom platform. The type of interview was semi-structured; some questions were predetermined, but others were not planned (Adi Bhat, 2023). This allows the researcher to explore the topic in depth while still having guiding questions (Adams, 2015; DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019; Kallio et al., 2016).

Results and Discussion

1. CFCI program as a form of UNICEF-Indonesia cooperation

One form of international cooperation that can be seen in relation to efforts to fulfill children's rights and protect children at the local level is the Indonesia-UNICEF cooperation in the CFCI program. The Child-Friendly Cities Initiative (CFCI) program is a global initiative led by UNICEF to assist local governments in realizing children's rights at the regional level regarding the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

In Indonesia, the program was officially launched in Surabaya City on 14 November 2023 through the signing of an Annual Work Plan (RKT) between the Surabaya City Government, UNICEF Indonesia, and the National Development Planning Agency/*Bappenas* (Dinas Kominfo Provinsi Jawa Timur, 2023; Yunani, 2023).

In general, the program has five focus areas that are implemented in Surabaya as a World Child-Friendly City, namely a) Improving the quality of health and education services, b) Strengthening children's participation in development planning and supervision, c) Improving coordination capacity between government and community, d) Public awareness of children's rights, e) Collecting and utilizing data related to the situation of children in Surabaya (Faiq, 2015; Pemerintah Kota Surabaya, 2023).

The collaboration process between UNICEF and Indonesia in the *Child-Friendly Cities Initiative (CFCI)* program involves several strategic steps to support local governments, especially Surabaya City, in realizing children's

rights. This mechanism began with developing a *Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)* as part of the collaboration process to establish the terms and criteria for the collaboration, which included clear objectives, indicators of success, and evaluation mechanisms (UNICEF, 2018).

Then, UNICEF provided technical assistance to the Surabaya City government in implementing the CFCI program, which included analyzing the situation of children's rights, developing *baseline* data, and conducting program monitoring and evaluation. Furthermore, UNICEF also encouraged the active participation of children in the development planning deliberation (*Musrenbang*) and involved various stakeholders, including the private sector, universities, civil society organizations, and the media, in this collaborative process (Elaine, 2023, 2024a, 2024b).

The forms of cooperation between UNICEF-Indonesia, especially the Surabaya Government in relation to CFCI that have been carried out are as follows:

- a. Signing of Annual Work Plan (RKT)
On 14 November 2023, the Surabaya City Government, UNICEF Indonesia and the National Development Planning Agency (*Bappenas*) signed the Annual Work Plan (RKT) for the CFCI program. This is the first step in implementing this initiative, which aims to support Surabaya as a child-friendly city. The RKT focuses on five priority areas: improving health and education services and strengthening children's participation in development planning and monitoring (Yunani, 2023).
- b. UNICEF CFCI Team Visit
A delegation from CFCI UNICEF visited Surabaya on 25-26 March 2024 to strengthen the child protection system. The visit was led by Ms. Shema Sen Gupta, Director of UNICEF's Child Protection Section. The team interacted with various stakeholders, including local government and non-governmental organizations, and visited child-friendly public facilities

such as the Pusat Informasi Sahabat Anak (PISA) and Ruang Pusat Informasi Sahabat Perempuan (PRISMA) (Pemerintah Kota Surabaya, 2023; Tunas Hijau, 2024).

- c. Interactive Dialogue with Children
During the visit, UNICEF also held an interactive dialog between the UNICEF CFCI team and children from various communities in Surabaya. Children were allowed to express their opinions and ask questions on child protection issues. This provided insights for the UNICEF team and strengthened children's voices as an important part of policymaking (Tunas Hijau, 2024).
- d. Stakeholder Empowerment
UNICEF also collaborates with various stakeholders, including civil society organizations and the private sector, to maximize the efforts to fulfill children's rights. Surabaya City Government is committed to involving various parties in solving children's problems and building sustainable systems for future generations (Dinas Kominfo Provinsi Jawa Timur, 2023, 2024).
- e. Training and Capacity Building
UNICEF provides training to local governments and other stakeholders on child-friendly policy implementation. This includes capacity building in child-friendly budget planning and strengthening child protection systems at the local level (Tunas Hijau, 2024; Yunani, 2023).

This cooperation was carried out primarily in Surabaya, where the process of Surabaya's selection as part of CFCI began with the sending of an initiative letter by the Mayor of Surabaya to UNICEF on 13 September 2022 (Dinas Kominfo Provinsi Jawa Timur, 2024a). This letter signaled the city government's commitment to developing policies and programs that support children's rights. This recognition results from two years of continuous efforts to meet international standards in protecting and fulfilling children's rights.

After the letter was sent, Surabaya continued to improve by taking various strategic steps, including the development of Child-Friendly Infrastructure by building *Rumah Anak Prestasi (RAP)* in four areas of Surabaya, establishing a Child-Friendly Information Center and 487 Family Learning Centers (*Puspaga*) to support children's education and development, and building two new *daycare* facilities to support childcare (Arindi & Hidayat, 2024).

Then, Surabaya also actively involves children in public forums such as the Development Planning Conference (*Musrenbang*) at the village, sub-district, and city levels, ensuring that their voices are heard; even the Surabaya City Government also involves the Surabaya Children's Forum in the CFCI Forum in China (Redaksi Surabaya Today, 2024). In addition, Surabaya also has an innovative program called *Si TALAS* (Surabaya Child-Friendly City Information System), which is used to provide input and keep abreast of policies affecting these children (Ajeng et al., 2024).

At the policy and institutional level, Surabaya also continues to improve by issuing two new Mayor's Regulations (Perwali) in 2024 regarding the CFC implementation mechanism number 61 of 2024 and special protection for children number 62 of 2024, which previously Surabaya also had local regulations related to child protection and its relation to the Child-Friendly City (Dinas Kominfo Provinsi Jawa Timur, 2024; Peraturan Walikota (Perwali) Kota Surabaya Nomor 5 Tahun 2023 Tentang Pusat Informasi Sahabat Anak, 2023; Wahana Visi Indonesia, 2024). Through various initiatives and policies taken by the Surabaya City Government, Surabaya was recognized on 15 August 2024 as a World Child-Friendly City by UNICEF, marked by a certificate as the first Child-Friendly City in Indonesia to be recognized globally (Ajeng et al., 2024; Elaine, 2024a, 2024b).

Therefore, the cooperation between Indonesia, in this case Surabaya-UNICEF, can be said to be successful in encouraging the fulfillment of children's participation rights in the development process in Surabaya. The success of international cooperation can be

measured by the ability of countries to address these strategic issues and achieve mutually beneficial results, which can be reflected in the effectiveness of international institutions and the stability of the international system. In the context of the CFCI program, indicators of success can include metrics that assess the effectiveness of international cooperation in achieving the goal of Surabaya becoming a World Level Child-Friendly City. The five metrics are the framework in CFCI by UNICEF, which can be seen through previous forms of cooperation.

In line with Holski's opinion, this program can be explained by indicators where there are two or more views of the interests of UNICEF and Surabaya who want to become CFCI through cooperation programs that are born, such as monitoring and evaluation programs carried out by UNICEF on policies to fulfill children's participation rights in Surabaya, increasing the *Rumah Anak Prestasi* program as a forum for the participation of children with special needs, increasing children's involvement through the Children's Forum/other child participation forums, improving the services of the Family Education Center/*Puspaga* and optimizing the Technical Support Unit for the Protection of Women and Children in Surabaya City.

Then, the indicator of views or expectations from Surabaya itself to be part of CFCI has been realized through the coronation, which was held on 15 August 2024. Then, agreement on specific issues; in this aspect, both the Surabaya government and UNICEF agree that children's involvement in Surabaya City needs to be increased into meaningful participation through activities organized by both parties, for example, the involvement of Surabaya children in the CFCI World Level Forum in Beijing, involving children in dialogue between Children and UNICEF, and even asking Surabaya children to be able to compile a voice for the world.

Furthermore, many official regulations related to this program have been issued, starting with signing the MoU related to CFCI and the latest regional and mayoral regulations related to CFCI itself. Finally, indicators of transactions between actors are seen through the

technical support from UNICEF to the Surabaya government and the Surabaya government's budget support for programs organized concerning CFCI.

2. Contribution of the CFCI Program in encouraging the fulfillment of children's participation rights in the development process in Surabaya

The CFCI program that has been running in Surabaya is a significant step in encouraging the fulfillment of children's participation rights in the development process. This is in line with the results of the researcher's interview with the Surabaya Children's Forum Facilitator (2.b), who said that:

"I think it's safe to say that this CFCI has opened up a world of possibilities for children's friends, especially. It's also had a positive impact on the children's forum friends. Before this, we were pretty limited in Surabaya. I'd say that the people there were quite conservative. They didn't want to listen to children, and they didn't want to understand how. CFC actually was, so they are only limited to, yes, it's our administration, but if, for example, in the field, I feel that it has not fully passed and it is still below. But when there is CFCI, and there is much better monitoring, because maybe UNICEF is intense every week asking what it is like, and then the children also finally feel that Surabaya has a big commitment."¹

This interview shows that CFCI has become a driving force in ensuring that Surabaya City fulfills children's rights, especially involving children in the development process. Thus, it can be said that Surabaya City has fulfilled children's participation rights in several aspects. It is not just a display; children have been given

¹ The interview was conducted with the Surabaya Children's Forum Facilitator on November 11, 2024 at 20.30-21.15 WIB via Virtual Zoom Meeting.

space to convey their aspirations and be realized by the Surabaya government. As explained earlier, CFCI, which aims to ensure that children are valued, respected, and have the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes that affect their lives based on the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), has contributed to encouraging the fulfillment of children's participation rights in Surabaya.

The process of children's participation in Surabaya has its dynamics. This is because Surabaya City has become a Primary Level Child-Friendly City for 8 consecutive times, but the implementation of children's participation before the CFCI program can be said to be on steps 1-3, which is still manipulation, decoration, and symbolization. Children are often only involved and invited without knowing what they should do, and even when they express their views, they are only listened to without being realized, which is only for administrative purposes of fulfilling the Child-Friendly City indicators.

However, this CFCI Program makes changing views and increasing children's participation more meaningful. Even until the end of 2024, it can be concluded that children in Surabaya City can be at the highest level of the child participation ladder, namely the child's initiative and the gods follow. This level means that every activity that involves children comes from children and is supported by adults who certainly help the process of these activities.

This is in line with the views of the Surabaya City Children's Forum facilitator (2.b), who said:

"If we look at it from before and after CFCI, I'd say yes because when I was on the board, there was still no CFCI. When it was finished, CFCI came in. When I first became a board member at the beginning of 2022, I felt that children's participation in Surabaya was still not there. It seemed like the Children's Forum was just a display, and so on. Even though Surabaya's CFC had become the main CFC, it

hadn't become a full CFC. It was still a big question mark. Now, if I look at it, I think the participation of children in Surabaya in 2020 and 2021 wasn't particularly meaningful because there was still nothing from the Village Children's Forum or the Sub-District Children's Forum."²

This interview shows that the presence of CFCI can change the process of children's participation in Surabaya much more meaningfully and can involve children even more through the Children's Forum. This involvement involves children in the government's development process or activities and supports every program and activity carried out by the Surabaya Children's Forum. For example, what happened in Surabaya in 2023-2024, the management of the Surabaya Children's Forum has carried out various activities supported by the Surabaya City Government, for example, the Surabaya Children's Congress conducted by Surabaya City Children to convey aspirations and compile children's voices that will be submitted to the Surabaya government. Then, every month, the Surabaya City Office of Women's Empowerment, Child Protection, Population Control, and Family Planning encourages the Surabaya Children's Forum to be able to carry out activities with assistance from the agency.

The involvement of children and the Surabaya government's support for the Forum Anak Surabaya was expressed by the Chairperson of Forum Anak Surabaya (2.a), namely:

"In Surabaya, children's participation in development planning is well-established, supported by the local government through initiatives like the Children's Development Planning Conference (*Musrenbang Anak*). It allows children to collaborate and present their perspectives. The Forum Anak Surabaya also

² The interview was conducted with the Surabaya Children's Forum Facilitator on November 11, 2024 at 20.30-21.15 WIB via Virtual Zoom Meeting.

organizes the Children's Congress, a platform created by and for children, demonstrating their commitment to shaping the city's future. To gather input, the "Tali Aspirasi" division collects feedback through programs like *Gemakan Harapan*, utilizing tools like surveys and aspiration baskets placed across the city. These inputs are compiled and presented directly to city officials, including the Mayor, ensuring children's voices are integrated into policy discussions. This collaboration highlights Surabaya's progressive approach to fostering meaningful child participation in governance."³

This interview shows that the Surabaya Government has fully supported children and the Surabaya Children's Forum through related agencies after the CFCI program. Although it is not denied that the involvement of children and support for the Surabaya Children's Forum had also been provided before CFCI, it was not optimal.

In addition, children's participation is also described by Lundy (2007) that if analyzed in Surabaya government policies, it can be said that before the CFCI program, the four dimensions were not implemented optimally; for example, children's participation in Surabaya is often symbolic and limited to administrative activities such as *Development Planning Conference/musrenbang*, where children are often only formally invited without real influence on the policies taken. Children's Forums are also not yet active at the sub-district and neighborhood levels, and there are few dedicated facilities to support their involvement.

Meanwhile, the fulfillment of children's rights, especially the right to children's participation in the development process in Surabaya, has changed dramatically and can be said to be the impact of the existence of this CFCI program. If analyzed using the same

³ The interview was conducted with the Chairperson of the Surabaya Children's Forum on November 12, 2024 at 18.30-19.30 WIB via Virtual Zoom Meeting.

theoretical framework, namely the Meaningful Child Participation Model by Lundy, it can be concluded that the implementation of CFCI in Surabaya has an impact by making children's participation more meaningful. After this program, the government began to provide a broader and more conducive **space** for children, such as the construction of *Rumah Anak Prestasi (RAP)* and *Pusat Informasi Sahabat Anak (PISA)*, which became a place for them to do activities.

The Voice dimension is implemented through government support for children's forum activities that allow children to voice their aspirations in a structured way, such as the Surabaya Children's Congress and special forums to communicate children's voices to the world. In the **Audience** dimension, UNICEF's involvement as an international partner encourages the government to take children's aspirations more seriously through technical support and specialized facilities that facilitate effective feedback.

Finally, regarding **Influence**, children's participation in *Development Planning Conference/musrenbang* is not only ceremonial; they also have the opportunity to express their aspirations directly, which are often responded to by policymakers at local and international levels. In line with what was described by the Surabaya Children's Forum Facilitator (2.b), who explained:

"In 2023, Surabaya made significant progress in promoting meaningful children's participation, especially after the implementation of the Child-Friendly City Initiative (CFCI). The Development Planning Conference (*Musrenbang*) officially invited the Children's Forum, enabling them to express their aspirations and perspectives directly. The government facilitated the collection of children's voices, ensuring proper documentation and follow-through. The Children's Forum's involvement expanded to sub-district levels, supported by formal decrees issued in 2022-2023. Previously, adult representatives

often dominated these forums, but CFCI brought reforms, emphasizing genuine child representation. Notably, on Children's Day, the forum's chair presented the children's voices directly to the Mayor, reflecting a shift towards inclusive governance. This progress underscores the CFCI's transformative impact on children's participation in Surabaya."⁴

Through this interview with the Surabaya Children's Forum Facilitator, it can be concluded that the CFCI program in Surabaya has brought significant changes in children's participation that are more meaningful according to Lundy's concept, emphasizing space, voice, audience, and Influence. The children's forum began to be officially invited to the *Development Planning Conference/musrenbang*, given space to express their aspirations, and facilitated by the agency in collecting children's voices escorted to the minutes' stage. Children also presented their voices directly to the Mayor on Children's Day, reflecting the government's attention to children's views. The decrees of children's forums at the ward and sub-district levels were updated to ensure age-appropriate membership, with assistance from Forum Anak Surabaya, thus strengthening meaningful and inclusive participation.

Therefore, the *Child-Friendly Cities Initiative* (CFCI) program opens wider access for children in Surabaya to participate actively in city development, transforming their involvement from a mere formality to a meaningful process. However, the presence of CFCI also presents challenges and negative impacts for the children involved.

The first challenge is the capacity and understanding of the Surabaya city government to communicate with children. Surabaya city government often still needs more practical training to be able to interact with children comfortably and productively. In addition, while CFCI provides more significant space for

⁴ The interview was conducted with the Surabaya Children's Forum Facilitator on November 11, 2024 at 20.30-21.15 WIB via Virtual Zoom Meeting.

children to voice their views, better coordination is needed so that children's engagement does not clash with school time, thus not disrupting their education.

The second challenge is related to the community's low understanding of the importance of the CFCI program. Although Surabaya has been recognized as a child-friendly city globally, awareness of the essence of the program is still limited among the community. This impacts children's participation at the newly activated sub-district and village levels, where most children's forums still require assistance to operate effectively and sustainably.

Another challenge is the need for a more structured system to manage children's participation. Children's forums are often invited to government activities. However, there is no sustainable method or system to support their regular involvement, which in turn creates an excessive burden of participation on children, especially considering the high target of meeting UNICEF's child-friendly city indicators. This overall challenge was expressed by the Surabaya City Children's Forum Facilitator (2.b), who revealed that:

“The Child-Friendly City Initiative (CFCI) in Surabaya comes with its own set of challenges, especially when it comes to balancing children's involvement and their education. Sometimes, the demands of CFCI activities clash with school schedules, making it hard for children to participate fully. There's also some confusion because the program's targets can overlap, and it's not always clear how to prioritize them. While CFCI has helped change mindsets and establish Surabaya as a global child-friendly city, not everyone fully understands its purpose. Moving forward, it's important for the government and community to work together to improve the system.”⁵

5 The interview was conducted with the Surabaya Children's Forum Facilitator on November 11, 2024 at 20.30-21.15 WIB via Virtual Zoom Meeting.

On a personal level, children also face academic pressures due to their involvement in CFCI. The program demands active participation in various activities and meetings, often held on short notice or during school hours. This makes it difficult for child forum members, especially those still in school, to manage their time between academic obligations and CFCI participation, negatively impacting their academic grades and educational attainment.

In addition, limited coordination with the city government often creates inconvenience. The government usually invites children's forums on the spur of the moment for activities that appear to fulfill the needs of Child-Friendly City (CFC) documentation without considering the welfare of the children involved.

This creates pressure and fatigue for children, who feel that although CFCI has positive goals, excessive involvement in these activities can disrupt the balance between their personal lives, academics, and organizational activities. Finally, children perceived a lack of effective communication between relevant agencies and the children's forum, which suggests that the government needs to understand how to interact better to create a comfortable and practical participation environment. This is in line with the results of interviews with the Chairperson of Surabaya Children's Forum (2.a) and Facilitator of Surabaya Children's Forum (2.b), who said that the challenge in the CFCI program is the *academic pressure* that often collides with sudden official activities, such as meeting invitations in the middle of a busy school schedule or when there are exams. This makes children's forum administrators have to get permission from school, accumulate assignments, and affect grades. Students and administrators face a dilemma between academic priorities and organizational responsibilities, especially since many have grand ambitions.⁶

Thus, if analyzed using the ladder of participation, these challenges, if left unaddressed, then children's involvement, which should have been meaningful and

6 The interview was conducted with the Chairperson of the Surabaya Children's Forum on November 12, 2024 at 18.30-19.30 WIB via Virtual Zoom Meeting.

at levels 6-8 of Hart's ladder of children's participation, will return to a much lower ladder. This is unfortunate because Surabaya City has provided and fulfilled the rights of children who are not members of the Children's Forum but ignores the rights of children who are in it. Thus, an appropriate mechanism is needed to overcome this.

Conclusion

This research concludes three crucial things, namely, first, that the presence of the CFCI program helps the process of fulfilling children's participation rights in Surabaya City, which previously when analyzed using Robert Hart's Child Participation Ladder standard and Lundy's Child Participation Model was not sufficient to be considered as meaningful participation. However, after the efforts of Surabaya City to become part of CFCI, accompanied by monitoring programs and other programs in an attempt to encourage the Surabaya government to be able to meet all indicators of children's participation in the development process, making the Fulfillment of Children's Participation Rights in the Development Process in Surabaya City has met the standards of Hart's ladder of child participation which can be seen that various policies and efforts are on the 6th-8th rungs. Also, it has fulfilled the indicators of Lundy's model of meaningful child participation.

Then, this cooperation process through the CFCI program encourages strengthening the Children Forum of Surabaya's capacity, which is the main barometer in fulfilling children's participation rights. Although it cannot be denied, through this research, it

was found that there are challenges faced by the Surabaya Children's Forum, which are also children who need to have their rights fulfilled.

Finally, this study concludes that the CFCI program, which emphasizes the importance of children's active involvement in decision-making in the city, has contributed significantly and positively to the fulfillment of children's participation rights in Surabaya City. The monitoring and evaluation program conducted by UNICEF on policies to fulfill children's participation rights in Surabaya shows some real impact, as follows: *Rumah Anak Prestasi* program provide a forum for the participation of children with special needs, the Children's Forum/other children's participation forums are increasing children's involvement, and the Family Education Center/*Puspaga* has improved and the Technical Support Unit for the Protection of Women and Children in Surabaya City has been optimized.

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