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Why do we need an urban health agenda that prioritizes children and adolescents in Latin America?

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RESÚMEN

Actores de diferentes sectores que trabajamos para mejorar la vida de los niños y adolescentes en las ciudades de América Latina, destacamos la importancia de revisar la agenda de salud urbana priorizando la salud de los niños y adolescentes con vistas a sociedades más equitativas, sostenibles y saludables. Razones para ello se relacionan con la creciente evidencia sobre 1) la relación existente entre los entornos urbanos y las disparidades de salud en las primeras etapas de la vida; 2) el papel clave que jugaron los entornos urbanos para los niños y adolescentes durante las primeras etapas de la pandemia; 3) el potencial que tienen las intervenciones urbanas dirigidas a niños y adolescentes para reducir las disparidades entre ellos y la población urbana en general.

RESUMO

Atores de diferentes setores que trabalham para melhorar a vida de crianças e adolescentes nas cidades latino-americanas destacamos a importância de revisitar a agenda de saúde urbana priorizando a saúde de crianças e adolescentes para sociedades mais equitativas, sustentáveis e saudáveis. Fornecemos razões de apoio para isso relacionadas às crescentes evidências sobre 1) a relação entre ambientes urbanos e disparidades de saúde no início da vida; 2) o papel fundamental que os ambientes urbanos desempenharam para crianças e adolescentes durante os primeiros estágios da pandemia; 3) o potencial de intervenções urbanas direcionadas a crianças e adolescentes na redução das disparidades entre eles e a população urbana em geral.

ABSTRACT

As actors from different sectors working on improving children and adolescents' lives in Latin American cities, we remark the importance of revisiting the urban health agenda prioritizing children and adolescents' health for more equitable, sustainable, and healthy societies. We provide supporting reasons for this related to the growing evidence on 1) the influence urban environments have on health disparities early in life; 2) the key role urban environments played for children and adolescents during first stages of the pandemic; 3) the potential urban interventions targeted to children and adolescents have on reducing disparities among them and urban population in general.

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Introduction

Worldwide, most of urban growth is in developing countries, where it is predicted that by 2030 almost 60% of urban population will be younger than 18 years (United Nations, UN Habitat Youth). Currently in Latin America nearly 130 million people under 15 years live in urban settings, representing approximately 30% of the urban population and around 80% of all under 15 population in the region (World Development Indicators). The rapid expansion experienced by many of the cities in the region

associated with inadequate urban planning in recent decades, has generated conditions of social inequality, environmental pollution, and climate risk that result harmful for health and well-being, particularly among children and adolescents (McMichael 2000, Jaitman 2015).

Children and adolescents are especially vulnerable to the detrimental urban environments and climate shocks due to biological and social conditions (UNICEF). The continued development of body systems during first

years of life and puberty are two instances of unique nutritional needs and vulnerability to the exposure of pollutants in the air, water, and soil that could affect their survival, growth, as well as neurocognitive and sexual development (Schwartz 2004, Cesario and Hughes 2007, Laidlaw and Filippelli 2008, Fisher and Eugster 2014, Gouveia *et al.* 2018). Likewise, children are less able to resist and survive climate shocks such as floods, severe weather, and heatwaves. Compared to adults, children and adolescents are also more at risk of death and severe illness from diseases that are likely to be exacerbated by climate change, such as malaria and dengue (UNICEF 2021).

In addition to their biological susceptibility, most of children and adolescents in Latin America face the challenge of living in cities that lack access to opportunities directly related to their nutrition, care, education, and recreation. Almost half of children and adolescents in cities suffer basic infrastructure deficits and food insecurity (Minujin). The increasing cost of and poor access to healthy diets as well as the greater exposure to aggressive marketing of ultra-processed products in urban settings are leading to a triple burden of malnutrition (stunting and micronutrients deficits combined with overweight/obesity) particularly among children and adolescents living in slums (UNICEF 2020, Bartlett and Tacoli 2021). The design of roads for car-based transport and the inadequate development and maintenance of public spaces for children and adolescents hinder their opportunities for safe and active mobility and outdoor leisure activities. This not only contributes to sedentary habits and behavioral risk factors for noncommunicable diseases (UNICEF 2020) but also it is linked to high rates of traffic injuries, which is the leading cause of death among population aged 5-14 (Clarke *et al.* 2019).

The COVID-19 pandemic has posed further challenges to the physical and mental well-being of children and adolescents in cities (Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe 2020) as urban areas has become the epicenter of the COVID-19 pandemic (United Nations). During the first months of massive lockdowns in Latin American cities, children and adolescents found significant barriers in securing access to education and healthcare (such as vaccination schemes and mental and reproductive health services) (Impacto del COVID-19 en los niños). These barriers and challenges have been even greater for children and adolescents living in informal neighborhoods and slums (Sabry and Clacherty 2021, Shand 2021). During this time the increased trend in domestic violence, substance abuse, self-harm and homicide rates among children and adolescents has been also exacerbated in Latin American cities (INSPIRE). The predicted rise in the proportion of population under poverty and the consequent intensification of social inequalities in the region as a result of the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic (Caribe CE para

AL y el 2020) place children and adolescents at a higher risk of social deprivation as well as greater risk of falling behind or dropping out of school with an early insertion in the labor market (Impacto del COVID-19 en los niños).

Because children and adolescents have their whole life ahead, any hardship during their first years of life as a consequence of social, climate, and environmental degradation represents a violation of their human rights. It also results in a lifetime loss of opportunities that will heavily contribute to the social and health disparities observed over the life course. Reducing the inequalities currently faced by children and adolescents in Latin America is then a priority to achieve more just societies, and actions implemented at the local level are key to deliver this goal. Cities have significant agency to articulate policies and programs that meet community needs, and interventions made in a local and participatory setting are more likely to be sustainable over time (Ezzati *et al.* 2018). Additionally, some local interventions targeted to children's needs have shown to bring benefits to elderly, or people with disabilities showing that cities that are equitable for children may also be so for the rest of the population (Global Age-friendly Cities).

We need then more disaggregated urban and health data to better understand how different urban environments shape social and health inequalities among children and adolescents in Latin America (Bartlett *et al.* 2021). Likewise, it is crucial to determine which local actions are key to reduce the impacts of climate change and COVID-19 pandemic on social and health disparities already existing among these groups.

Moved by these concerns, actors from different sectors interested in improving the livability of children and adolescents in Latin American cities, gathered in this piece to remark the importance of considering children and adolescents' health and rights as guiding principles for more equitable, sustainable, and healthy societies. Reasons for revisiting the urban health agenda prioritizing children and adolescents are related to the growing evidence on 1) the influence urban environments have on health disparities early in life; 2) the key role urban environments played for children and adolescents during first stages of the pandemic; and 3) the potential urban interventions targeted to children and adolescents have on reducing disparities among them and the urban population in general.

Urban environments shape social and health inequalities among children and adolescents in Latin America – Research findings from SALURBAL

SALURBAL is a research project that integrates health, socioeconomic, and built-environment data from 370

Latin American cities of 100,000 residents or more to study how urban environments and urban policies impact the health of city residents in the region (Quistberg *et al.* 2019). Within this project, we constituted the Maternal, perinatal, child, and adolescent working group (MAPECA) with the goal of quantifying the influence of city features on health disparities among women, children, and youth (SALURBAL 2021, MAPECA).

Using multilevel approach, we were able to show substantial heterogeneity in levels of infant and maternal mortality, adolescent birth rates, and low birth weight between cities within countries that are contributing to explain the observed disparities across countries in the region (Braverman *et al.* 2022, Ortigoza *et al.* 2021, Rodríguez López *et al.* 2021). We also showed that higher rates of these poor health indicators in Latin American cities were still significantly determined by conditions of urban poverty (such as marginalization, poor living conditions, and inadequate water and sanitation provision) (Braverman *et al.* 2022, Ortigoza *et al.* 2021, Rodríguez López *et al.* 2021). Lower population educational achievement and higher rates of crime were particularly linked to higher rates of adolescent births (Braverman *et al.* 2022). In addition, higher levels of women's empowerment in cities – determined by higher participation of women in the labor force and higher educational achievement among women – were associated with lower infant mortality and adolescent birth rates (Braverman-Bronstein *et al.* 2023, Ortigoza *et al.* 2021). Cities with better socioeconomic development presented higher prevalence of low birthweight and lower infant mortality independently of maternal characteristics (Ortigoza *et al.* 2021, Rodríguez López *et al.* 2021), which could be explained by the fact that bigger and more developed cities may offer more complexity and capacity of health services (such as c-section intervention (Perner *et al.* 2022), neonatal intensive care support) that could allow the survival of newborns and children with special needs.

These findings are supportive of the idea that reducing poverty and improving opportunities for education and social development among children and youth, and particularly among girls and women, in Latin American cities could improve child survival and healthy growth. It also highlights the further challenges cities have in creating adequate environments for all children to thrive, including those with disabilities and special needs. Recently, we found that almost 20% of children aged 36-59 months living in Mexican urban areas showed inadequate early child development, with inadequacies in literacy-numeracy as the main developmental deficit. City availability of services that contribute to child education and socio-emotional development, such as day-cares and

libraries, were associated with lower risk of inadequate development (Prado-Galbarro *et al.* 2021).

There is still much to learn about how city-features are shaping child behavior and health. We are assessing how urban environments contribute to the prevalence of stunting as well as overweight and obesity among pre-school children in cities from Chile, Peru, Mexico, and El Salvador. We are also examining how city features related to climate change, such as levels of air pollution and extreme heat temperatures are impacting child health in a wide range of cities in the region. In a recent study we found that higher ambient temperatures, particularly during months 7-9 of gestation, were associated with lower birthweight among term newborns, an effect further exacerbated among mothers with lower educational attainment (Bakhtsiyarava *et al.* 2022). Characterizing intra-urban disparities in health, particularly among children and adolescents living in informal settlements, is a further challenge on which we are working.

Through the development of research linking city-features and social and health disparities among children and adolescents, we seek to inform decision-making processes that contribute to reduce health disparities in the overall population. Part of this commitment has been reflected in the development of knowledge dissemination and capacity building activities in collaboration with other organizations aligned with the vision of urban health for children such as Equity for Children and the Global Alliance - Cities4Children.

COVID-19 pandemic posed further challenges to the lives of children and adolescents in Latin American cities – the voices retrieved by Equidad para la infancia

Equidad para la Infancia (Equity for children) is an initiative at the New School that focuses on advancing children's rights agenda and strengthening the impact of local programs and policies oriented to reduce urban inequality, through the creation and dissemination of original research, and the engagement with key stakeholders in transdisciplinary conversations (New School N).

During the first months of the pandemic in 2020 we carried out En Primera Persona (In first person (Equidad para la infancia)), a series of interviews with families about how lockdown measures impacted on children living in poor neighborhoods from some of the biggest cities in Latin America. Across cities and countries, most families shared similar characteristics: children were trapped in overcrowded homes with material and emotional deprivation. Their parents were underemployed or unemployed, and several children lost relatives that were their main caretaker. Women, who were mostly the main caregivers in the

family, bore the responsibility of home chores and securing livelihood while facing situations of gender violence in their households. When schools shut down, many children faced food insecurity and lack of opportunities for recreation, since most schools in Latin America provide meals and after school social activities in addition to their curricula. Despite governments' efforts to support the continuation of school programs remotely, many families struggled to help their children with their schooling since parents did not have either enough education for assisting children with homework or the appropriate resources (such as internet, TV, or even electricity) to grant their children adequate access to these remote activities

These testimonies of child vulnerability, moved us to develop two focus -group discussions called 'Salud Integral: niñez, malnutrición y pobreza en la pandemia' (Comprehensive Health: childhood, malnutrition and poverty in the pandemic' (Equidad para la infancia 2021)) and 'Niñez y COVID-19' (Childhood and Covid-19 (Equidad para la infancia 2021)), that included 20 professionals with expertise in child health, nutrition, social policies, urban planning, and children's rights. They shared thoughts about how key aspects of children's life in cities that were impacted by lockdowns could be revisited in the post-pandemic scenario through policies and actions that reverse or attenuate the increasing social inequalities in the region. Notes from the discussion and recording were included in a final report (Equidad para la infancia 2021) that highlighted the need to prioritize urban design of public and green spaces for children and youth, particularly in neighborhoods with housing deficits, since these areas are COVID-19 safe places where children and adolescents could interact. It also remarked the importance of integrated local interventions -including housing, transportation, and social support for women- for granting children and adolescent adequate nutrition and access to education and health care services that were reduced or defunded during lockdown.

COVID-19 pandemic made visible- and deepened - previous conditions of social inequalities, fragility of policies, and access to rights, reinstalling in the agenda priorities for public policies that were relegated in the past. The recognition of children as a priority target for these policies need to go along with the defense of their rights as citizens (WFP U & F 2020). As we reimagine cities to deal with COVID-19 -and any future pandemic- we can capitalize society's demand for safer streets and public spaces for children and all. Measures that keep children and adolescents safe on their journey and at school during the pandemic, for example, can also help to address other concerning risks among this age groups such as road traffic injury and

the effect of ambient and indoor air pollution exposure ([Guidance for Safe and Healthy Journeys to School](#)).

Urban space interventions are key to reduce inequalities faced by children (and all) in Latin American cities – the experience of Urban95 projects

Urban95 is a Bernard van Leer Foundation's initiative dedicated to reimagining cities from the height of an average healthy three-year-old child (95 cm) with the premise that if a city works for young children and their families it can work for all different people of all ages ([Urban95 Archives](#)).

In Latin America, projects have been carried out in cities from Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, and Peru ([Urban95 Challenge](#)). [Table 1](#) summarizes the interventions implemented across different countries.

Some of the projects focused on creating a child-friendly perspective in urban design by training key actors involved in urban planning (Research and Design Cluster on Culture, Urbanism and Early Childhood Investment-Sao Paulo, Brazil, ([University course for Latin American urban planners](#))) or transportation ('No más guaguas apachurrados' (No more squashed kids)- Cuenca, Ecuador, ([Engaging citizens in city planning in Cuenca](#))).

Other initiatives articulated community-based participation with local governments in the design, implementation, and management of public spaces that improve safe mobility for children and stimulate early child development in recreational areas. Most of the interventions in public areas were oriented to transforming existing abandoned or deprived indoor and outdoor public spaces. Through the regeneration of these areas with murals and paintings; the incorporation of playgrounds, urban furniture and toy libraries, the improvement of daycare facilities, and the inclusion of community gardens, many communities involved in these projects have perceived not only greater participation of children in public spaces but also an increase in the interaction between neighbors, strengthening bonds among community members and reducing violence ('Mi patio es más grande que el mundo' (My backyard is greater than the world, ([Encouraging outdoor play in Uberaba](#)))- Uberaba and 'Juego de Oasis' (Oasis Game, ([The 'Oasis Game' in Santos](#))) – Santos, Brazil; 'Creczo con mi barrio' (I grow with my neighborhood, ([Se estrena en Bogotá el concepto de](#)))- Bogotá, Colombia; 'Reconstruyendo sueños por Manabí' (Rebuilding dreams for Manabí, ([Children's perspectives in post-earthquake reconstruction in Ecuador](#)))- Bellavista, Ecuador; and 'a

**Table 1.** Summary of Urban95 projects by cities and countries.

City	Project Name	Description of the intervention	Achievements and Impact	Focus area
Argentina Tucuman	aUPA: (Parenting friendly pop-up public spaces) (Filling urban voids in Tucumán)	Intervention in abandoned urban spaces with 'parenting friendly pop-up urban furniture' through participatory decision processes where parents contribute to design and create this furniture and are involved in the creation and maintenance of these spaces.	The project created 15+ safe and durable prototypes of pop-up urban furniture, reusing local materials including textiles, plastics and cardboard that were placed in 5 unused places through a partnership with its owners for temporary use. Over 8000 people – parents, children, health professionals, teachers, students, and local community leaders- participated in training sessions for furniture creation and in the intervention of the places.	Urban redevelopment, civic engagement
Brazil Sao Paulo	Research and Design Cluster on Culture, Urbanism and Early Childhood investment (University course for Latin American urban planners)	Creation of an academic unit that develops workshops and courses on child-friendly design targeted to graduate students and professionals in architecture and urban design	A course on 'City, gender, and early childhood' has been delivered, which included two field visits to vulnerable urban communities. It has improved the understanding of children's needs in vulnerable communities by professionals involved in urban design. It generated partnerships between academic- professional organizations and the communities to develop urban interventions in poor neighborhoods.	Capacity building
Uberaba	Mi patio es más grande que el mundo' (My backyard is greater than the world) (Encouraging outdoor play in Uberaba)	Improve the use of public spaces by small children and caregivers through physical redevelopment interventions and activities aimed at overcoming safety fears related to outdoor playing	Playgrounds for small children, edible plant gardens with magnifying glasses for nature exploration have been developed in three parks. Tree house were constructed as a base for activities and is also open for school visits. Young Explorers sessions and training sessions for municipal educators followed the initial physical interventions.	Urban redevelopment, civic engagement
Santos	Juego de Oasis' (The Oasis Game) (The 'Oasis Game' in Santos)	Participatory development of urban space solutions for young children through game techniques involving dwellers from an informal settlement	Almost 400 members participated in meetings, workshops and events aimed at appreciating local resources available, defining collective aspirations for physical environment interventions, and mobilizing the community to achieve their goals. A space for playing soccer was upgraded making it safer for children. An abandoned shipping container was turned into a toy library and play space. A pedestrian path was beautified by removing litter, painting of colorful murals and planting vegetable and flower gardens on the margins	Civic engagement, urban redevelopment
Colombia Bogota	'Crezco con mi barrio' (I grow with my neighborhood) (Se estrena en Bogotá el concepto de)	A 'package' of interventions to be implemented in different areas of the city where children lack of access to public spaces for adequate recreation and mobility. Interventions involve: 1) participatory decision making on the areas to be intervened; 2) partnership with municipal authorities, and local private institution to support physical redevelopment of the areas; 3) Activities with the communities to promote its participation in redevelopment interventions and the use of the upgraded spaces.	First interventions occurred in ciudad Bolívar, a vulnerable district in Bogotá. Interventions involved the redevelopment of a soccer playground and a health care center where children also attend social activities. On the main wall of the health care center, local artists painted a mural inspired by the insights resulting from a community activity in which 300+ including children and caregivers where invited to think about what an ideal neighborhood should have for them. The activity helped to connect local authorities with children and caregivers' voices and served as a jumpstart for further collaborative interventions in the community	Civic engagement, urban redevelopment

(Continued)

Table 1. (Continued).

City	Project Name	Description of the intervention	Achievements and Impact	Focus area
Bucaramanga	Creando espacios para jugar' (Creating places to play) (Documentary on public space in Bucaramanga)	Creation of a documentary that shows the difficulties small children, people with disabilities, and elders in poor neighborhoods have in accessing to recreative spaces and public transportation giving the current urban design.	The documentary was shared on social media and screened to local authorities, social leaders, and school principals. The Universidad Autónoma de Bucaramanga broadcasted it for an audience of professors, researchers, students and parents. Since the release of the documentary the project has engaged with the city administration on priorities for developing public space	Urban redevelopment, civic engagement
Ecuador Cuenca	No más guaguas aparruchados' (No more squashed kids) (Engaging citizens in city planning in Cuenca)	Public communication campaign developed by the community of 3 poor neighborhoods and local stakeholders to raise awareness on children's rights while riding public transport and training bus drivers on good practices for child transportation safety	In partnership with University of Cuenca and Cuenca Transport Chamber the project develop training for drivers on good treatment for children aged 0-5.	Capacity building- Civic engagement
Bellavista – Quito	'Reconstruyendo sueños por Manabí' (Rebuilding dreams for Manabí) (Children's perspectives in post-earthquake reconstruction in Ecuador)	Physical redevelopment of urban spaces destroyed by the earthquake through participatory process that involves making community members and leaders to think about life from the perspective of a 3-year-old by using props such as giant cardboard doors, tables, and chairs.	Several workshops took place in the community to discussed what infrastructure Bellavista should construct to support young children and families. Recommendations were conveyed to local leaders. The project completed construction of two playground for children aged 0-5, aimed at promoting gross psychomotor skills (short climbing wall, bridge, swings and small slide), and socialization and play skills. Community members perceived playgrounds as safe spaces for children and a place for neighbors to interact, strengthening bonds among community members and improving day-to-day life.	Capacity building, urban redevelopment, civic engagement
Mexico Mexico City	Caminito a la Escuela' (Road to schools) (Safer roads to school in Mexico City)	Creation of a map application where parents can look for and incorporate data on road safety and traffic accidents around school zones	The map gave parents to assess where extra care is needed on their children's route to school. It gave them also information about the changes needed to increase child's safe mobility. The data mapping drew public attention to accident hotspots and the reasons for them (excessive speed, congestion, and lack of poor quality of road-crossing infrastructure) and mobilized public sector and civil society stakeholders to discuss potential solutions to the problems made visible by the map	capacity building, safe mobility, civic engagement
Peru Chorrillos- Lima Metropolitan Area	Abriendo caminos' (Opening Roads) (Opening Roads in Alto Peru 2021)	Creation of a pedestrian path safe for pregnant women and small children to connect with key places for their every-day needs in a deprived neighborhood	The participatory work in the development of this path contributed to increase walkability among other age- groups and led the community to the development of other initiatives that beautified the neighborhood with an increased use of public streets by the whole community	safe mobility, urban redevelopment, civic engagement

UPA'- Tucumán, Argentina, ([Filling urban voids in Tucumán](#))).

Interventions oriented to improve child mobility seek to grant caregivers and children safe routes to walk and cycle to key places of children's daily life such as healthcare, childcare, and parks. They involved the implementation of changes to the design of dangerous paths ('Abriendo Caminos' (Opening Roads- Lima, Perú, (Opening Roads in Alto Peru 2021)) as well as the provision of tools for parents to evaluate and improve school zones in order to save children from traffic accidents ('Caminito a la escuela' (Safer roads to school)- Mexico City- Mexico, ([Safer roads to school in Mexico City](#))).

As most of these projects took place in deprived and marginalized neighborhoods, the participatory aspect of these initiatives has contributed to the empowerment of vulnerable communities, raising the awareness of children's rights in cities. In many cases it has made more visible to local stakeholders the lack of access to safe and adequate places for recreation not only among children but also among elder people or people with disabilities ('Creando espacios para jugar' (Creating places to play- Bucaramanga, Colombia) ([Documentary on public space in Bucaramanga](#)). It has also encouraged dwellers to map opportunities and challenges related to mobility and public space and integrate data on disparities in services related to early childhood development as part of the monitoring actions in cities as well as placing childhood concerns within the public policy agenda ([Case studies on scaling early years initiatives](#)).

Conclusion

Through the study findings and experiences described in this piece, we showed that urban environments can shape social and health inequalities among children and adolescents. However, we also showed that local initiatives and policies that prioritize well-being during the first years of life can have the potential to greatly contribute to reducing these disparities over the life course. Many of these interventions targeted to children- such as the re-development of recreational spaces, and the design of safe routes for children- may also benefit other population groups systematically left behind from the city living such as women, elderly, and people with disabilities.

Addressing equity problems in cities from a childhood and youth perspective is key to face the increasing socioeconomic inequalities hitting Latin America during the post-pandemic. Envisioning a 'new normality' may require the redefinition of priorities for the urban health agenda in Latin America with a perspective that

- Articulates the Health in All Policies approach with the development and investment in local policies and strategies that recognize the interdependence of children's rights
- Addresses urban climate and social injustice through a life course lens, with particular focus on children and adolescent's physical and mental well-being
- Incorporates into urban planning the notion of public space as a place for daily use in the lives of children and adolescents necessary for their development and thriving.
- Invests in data collection and data systems for disaggregated intra- urban data
- Develops and includes indicators of child and adolescent well-being to the measures used to monitor health disparities and programs and services implementation progress in cities
- Fosters and supports further urban health research oriented to:
 - Examining urban determinants of social and health disparities among children and adolescents across and within cities
 - Identifying urban interventions and analyzing their impact on child and youth health
 - Articulating academic evidence with local actions

We must move from an agenda centered in emergency responses to one that develops comprehensive and inclusive actions towards the promotion of health, well-being, and equity, prioritizing children's rights as guidelines for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals targets in the region. The understanding of complex urban systems and problems to produce meaningful changes needs the involvement of all urban actors in the decision-making, including children and adolescents (Nordström and Wales 2019, Mansfield *et al.* 2021). In this process, it is necessary to actively promote children and adolescents' participation while reducing the barriers to their inclusion in the urban planning. Many of these barriers has been related to the notion that because children and adolescents are going through a period of psychosocial development, they still lack the knowledge and skills, attitudes and behaviors, and social connections that of adults to properly participate in community discussions (Ataol *et al.* 2019).

To safeguard that present and future generations of children and adolescents could live in cities that protect theirs and others well-being as well as the shared environment, the revisited urban health agenda needs also to contemplate re-structuring the system with which urban planning operates in to ensure that agency and accountability is built through the plural participation of children and adolescents, community

organizations, non-governmental and nonprofit organizations, and academia, among others.

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Notes on contributors

Authors are part of the Global Alliance Cities4Children an interdisciplinary consortium of organizations around the world that strives to ensure child rights are firmly embedded in the urban agenda. Our vision is that urban areas are planned, designed, and managed to support children and youth growing up healthy, safe, and having access to opportunities that allow them reaching their highest potential. Our scope of research, action, and advocacy involves children, young people, and their caregivers as well as all urban areas from cities to peri-urban areas and informal settlements in stable, developing and fragile contexts.

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Author contributions

AO, AB, MM, CVJ, AM, and SS conceived the idea. AO drafted the first version of the manuscript. All authors contributed to the revision and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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