Child Impact Assessments

Different tools for implementing the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
The work of applying the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and a child perspective in different organisations is a process that needs to be developed. Agencies, local authorities, and county councils are asking for both theoretical and practical information about how to implement the Convention on the Rights of the Child in practice. Some of the tools that are already being used in the efforts to implement the Convention in various organisations include child impact analysis, child checklist, child accounting, child balance sheet, and child supplement.

**Child Impact Analysis**

Child impact analyses are tools for translating the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) into concrete action and making the best interests of the child visible. By means of child impact analyses local and regional decision-makers can work systematically and ensure that decisions have a child perspective. The aim is to improve children’s and young people’s living conditions. One possible work and decision process for a child impact analysis may look like this:

**Step 1: Mapping**
The first part of the work process should contain a survey and a plan for how and from where the knowledge and information needed are to be obtained. It is also necessary to assess whether the factual basis is sufficient or whether more surveys, statistics or research are needed in order to be able to make a decision. The knowledge basis must show what groups of children the issue concerns and may have an impact upon and what groups of children can be excluded. It is important to pay attention to children’s living conditions as regards, for example, special needs, mental or physical ill-health etc. The child’s or children’s own opinions must also be brought out.

**Step 2: Describing**
The next step is to draw up a description based on the material that has been obtained. It is important that the issue in question, the proposal, the budget or the policy decision be put into context and that the aim is clear. The current regulations that apply in the particular area should be described, together with how the proposal relates to the articles of the CRC.

The description should make clear which child or children are concerned directly or indirectly by the measure, in what way they are concerned, and how they have been identified. It may sometimes be a good idea to elucidate the issue on the basis of the child’s or children’s gender, age, level of development and their own prerequisites within their families, in their environment, and in their own networks including, for example, their day-
care centre, their school, their leisure time and their friends.

**Step 3: Analysing**
The third step should consist of a problem analysis where the motivation behind the proposal and its impact are described in more detail. A basic condition for a proposal to be given a hearing is that there are more positive impacts than negative ones. What factors, problems or needs lie behind the proposal? What are its objectives and aims? Have the bases for the proposal changed as a result of the opinions that came to light in the dialogue with the children. An important part of the analysis phase is of course to assess how the proposal relates to the undertakings in the CRC. Here it is a question of analysing the factual material and trying to predict the effects of different decisions. In this respect it is important to make a special review of how the proposal relates to those groups of children with special needs that may have been identified at the survey stage.

**Step 4: Testing and decision**
The fourth step in the process has to do with the actual purpose of a child impact analysis, viz. to examine in detail and take a decision. The scrutiny of the best interests of the child, that is to form the basis for the decision, must be based on the knowledge that has been obtained.

The scrutiny step involves making a total assessment of all relevant factors based on the survey, the description and the analysis. Here it is important to include in the assessment everything that concerns the child’s or children’s physical and mental well-being and development, for example their right to protection and care and to play and leisure.

**Step 5: Evaluating**
It is also important to evaluate what effects the decision had in reality and how far they were in agreement with the premises upon which the child impact analysis was based. The final step in the process is therefore to follow up and check whether the measures had the desired impact.

Such impact analyses are called impact evaluations. An impact evaluation allows an assessment to be made of whether the desired impact has been achieved or whether further measures are needed. Children affected by the decision must also be given the opportunity to participate in such impact evaluations. By carrying out evaluations of this kind the organisation gains experience and becomes increasingly better at making child impact analyses. If we always allow the best interests of the child to be our guiding-star in the decisions, this will gradually contribute to higher quality in all municipal and regional
activities that concern children and young people.

Some municipalities have developed and used a child checklist. The method can be said to be a simplified form of child impact analysis.

**Child Checklist**
A checklist contains a number of questions that must be answered before any decision that is to be made. Examples of questions include:

- How does this proposal affect children’s and young people’s situation?
- Have children and young people had the opportunity to influence and participate or give their opinions regarding the proposal?
- Does the proposal take into consideration the Convention’s wording “to the maximum extent of available resources”?

The basic idea behind the child checklist is to make clear in a simple fashion that the impact of all decisions must be described on the basis of how they affect children. The aim is to ensure that attention is paid to the child and young people perspective at all levels. The child checklist must accompany the matter from beginning to end.

A child checklist might look as follows.

**Child checklist**
Responsible: 
Administrator: Record no.
Subject:
Along with almost 200 other countries, Sweden has ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Convention on the Rights of the Child establishes the fact that all children and young people below the age of eighteen have the same rights. The right to life and development. The right to grow up in a secure environment and be protected from abuse. The right to have their views and opinions respected. The best interests of the child shall always be a primary consideration. The Convention on the Rights of the Child consists of 54 articles.

• The child checklist for (instance in question) is to be included as a basic document in all decisions where the issues listed below are relevant.
• The following questions are to be answered before decisions are taken. Where the answer is “No”, a detailed analysis must be made of what the impact will be for children and young people. Possible alternatives should be made the object of further study.

1. Does the decision mean that children’s and young people’s best interests are made a primary consideration?
   Yes ☐    No ☐
   Remarks: ____________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________

2. Does the decision mean that children’s and young people’s social, economic and cultural rights are considered?
   Yes ☐    No ☐
   Remarks: ____________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________

3. Does the decision mean that children’s and young people’s right to good health is considered?
   Yes ☐    No ☐
   Remarks: ____________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________

4. Have children and young people been given the opportunity to express their views?
   Yes ☐    No ☐
   Remarks: ____________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________

5. Have the needs of children and young people with physical or mental disabilities been given special consideration?
   Yes ☐    No ☐
   Remarks: ____________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________
Child Accounting - The budget as an important steering document for children and young people

The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child keeps a close watch on whether countries use the maximum of their available resources to realise the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The committee attaches great importance to whether there is a child perspective in the budget process and that children’s services are not cut back disproportionately compared to other services. The budget process must give prominence to the best interests of the child not only at the national level but to an even greater extent at the local level.

Realising the Convention on the Rights of the Child is a question of innovation, but also, to a great extent, involves making use of already existing formal structures and procedures. These can both support and create a framework for making changes. This primarily concerns the municipal budget and balance sheet processes. The budget is the most important tool for living up to the Convention’s article 4 that requires states, authorities and municipalities to prioritise the allocation of sufficient resources to children and young people so that the objectives set can be attained. The budget shows whether this is done. The budget also shows how the politicians responsible prioritise between different needs, whether action is taken, and how they follow up and report the outcome.

In order to be able to affect the allocation of resources to children and young people, knowledge of how the political and administrative control systems function is required. It is important to know how the budget and balance sheet process works, what it involves, and when it is possible to influence the process. This includes an understanding of the political mechanisms – what is “politically acceptable” and what can create goodwill for politicians. In the same way, an understanding of the set of concepts relating to the budget process is also essential.

The budget lays the foundation for the focus of the service and is used to inform various interested parties of what the politicians wish to prioritise over the next few years. The financial framework gives a clear picture of their intentions. Anything not included in the budget therefore runs the risk of being considered less essential.

The budget is the starting point for the continuous follow-up. The cost outcome is compared to the budget. The budget acts as a kind of guiding principle, whereby the profit or loss for the year in the annual accounts is compared, among other things, to the budget.
**Child Balance Sheet**

A child balance sheet is a summary of the outcome of activities that directly concern children and may involve every department making a special evaluation when drawing up the final accounts for the year of how the decisions taken have affected conditions for children and young people in the area or in a municipal activity.

Several attempts are being made to find ways of drawing up special child balance sheets. Many of the child balance sheets that are drawn up today, however, do not contain the information needed to be able to answer important questions such as, for example, what proportion of our resources was allocated to children and young people and how have children’s and young people’s conditions improved or deteriorated.

Child balance sheets have hitherto mainly been used as tools for mapping a situation and reporting. They have thus generally come to resemble traditional reviews of operations. That child balance sheets have come to be of this nature, and principally reported what has been achieved in positive terms, is not a problem that is confined to child balance sheets. It is a characteristic of final accounts in general. Extensive efforts are being made in most areas to develop this way of reporting.

Despite the fact that child balance sheets have not yet found their final, definitive form, they have nonetheless contributed to a holistic view of activities and services for children and young people. It has been very useful to have an overall picture of the efforts that have been made and the measures that have been taken. A child balance sheet can be a powerful tool for describing and calling attention to the real shortcomings that exist for children. The balance sheet is also the basis for audits and assessments of liability.

Since a child balance sheet serves such an important function, the following questions are relevant:

- Who is responsible for drawing up the balance sheet?
- Can/should external assistance be sought to make the measurements that are to form the basis of the child balance sheet?

In order for the balance sheet to function as part of a communicative process, the people involved must have the ability to understand and analyse the results and have a mandate to exert influence in the organisation. The balance sheet must show:

- Profit or loss in relation to the budget
- Results that are measurable
- A population perspective
- Results that can be used directly as a basis for action

Since the balance sheet is part of the basis for the next budget, this is then a form of performance management. The results shown in the balance sheet must indicate which services/activities and financing are needed for the coming period. Performance management is being used to an increasing extent by both central government and local authorities and is based on a rational view of management and a number of assumptions:
- It is possible to differentiate between ends, means and results
- Overarching goals can be broken down into operational goals
- Operational goals can be translated into measurable performance and impacts
- The outcome can be reported back to the political level
- There is great commitment on the part of both civil servants and politicians to use this process.

**Child Supplement**

A child supplement is an appendix to the normal budget that indicates more clearly the prioritisations that should be made as regards children for the coming year. No definitive form has yet been decided for this particular tool. The definition of the concept and its purpose and content varies between the bodies that have so far tried the method. The premise here is that it can fulfil an important function as a *statement of objectives*. If the objectives in the child supplement are linked to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, it can be an important element in the realisation of the Convention.

Putting into practice the Convention’s statement about using “the maximum extent of resources” to live up to article 4, requires bases for decisions that make it possible to foresee the effects of political and administrative decisions. In a child supplement to the budget, different levels can report how they intend to prioritise in order to secure children’s rights according to the terms of the Convention to the maximum extent of their available resources. A child supplement can clarify the total effort as regards children and young people and clarify the prioritisations made compared to children’s and young people’s needs and wishes.

Children and young people may not be unfairly discriminated against in relation to adults or in relation to each other. The budget’s child supplement can describe what considerations were made in this respect.

A child supplement is able to emphasise a child perspective in an organisation. The supplement also functions as a bearer of information, both within the organisation and towards the citizens, including children and young people themselves.

A child supplement can for example comprise a summary and report of objectives and measures that are aimed directly or indirectly at children and young people. It must also contain an impact assessment of how these direct or indirect measures concern children’s and young people’s situation. All operations and activities run or carried out by committees, companies or boards must be included.

The child supplement is drawn up by describing the objectives and measures as they relate to the target group or age group, together with an analysis of how the organisation, activity or commission affects the children’s situation. This might comprise, for example, the construction of a building, the rescheduling of public transport, the upkeep of parks, library opening hours etc.
The board is responsible for ensuring that all operational plans are discussed in a child perspective and that a child supplement is drawn up. The child supplement can be published either directly as a separate chapter in the programme of operations or as an appendix.

A child supplement can contain the following items:

- State the objectives of the activities from a child and young people’s perspective
- State how knowledge is to be disseminated and discussions carried on
- Describe how the organisations involved ensure that the children can put their views and exert their influence
- Map and describe the current situation
- Draw up an impact assessment
- Any direct financial investments and prioritisations made are to be reported. What, for whom, costs, outcome, and effects.
- Follow-up

In all local authorities and agencies, it is important to have an overview of all relevant statements of objectives and plans. How are legislation, municipal objectives/letters of appropriation and the Convention on the Rights of the Child connected? In which planning documents does the Convention on the Rights of the Child have a given place? It is a strength if there exists a common view that permeates different statements of objectives and plans, for example as regards influence and participation for children and young people.

Sources:
Med barnkonventionen som karta och kompass i kommuner och landsting
Ett steg framåt! En handbok om barnkonventionen för kommuner och landsting
Barnets bästa – från vision till verklighet
Uppnå kvalitet i beslut som rör barn och unga