

GOLD VI

**Case-Based Contribution
to Chapter 5: Caring**
*GOLD VI Report on Pathways
to urban and territorial equality*

Local governments' caring for the youth: Protecting the rights of the child in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic

In partnership with:

Produced by:



Local governments' caring for the youth: Protecting the rights of the child in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic

AUTHOR(S)

Jaume Puigpinós and Amanda Fléty

ORGANISATION NAME

UCLG Committee on Social Inclusion, Participatory Democracy and Human Rights

CITIES/COUNTRIES IT COVERS

Granollers (Spain), Grigny (France), Vienna (Austria), Rivas Vaciamadrid (Spain), Gwangju (Republic of Korea), Bogotá (Colombia), Lima (Peru), Fuenlabrada (Spain), Taipei, Berlin (Germany), Barcelona (Spain), Mexico City (Mexico), Seongdong (Republic of Korea), Mersin (Turkey)

CHAPTER

5: Caring

SUMMARY

The COVID-19 pandemic has put under the spotlight long existing social vulnerabilities and the additional risks faced by priority groups such as women, migrants or the elderly. Children and young residents have been among the most affected by quarantine measures, particularly due to the closing of schools, the economic hardship experienced by many families due to the sudden loss of income as well as the added difficulties for a public monitoring of their family context.

Local governments have played a relevant role in tackling these challenges in spite of the limitations imposed by the pandemic, most of the time by taking a more affirmative approach to social assistance and establishing cooperation pathways with local civil society working on the rights of the child in particular.

The following contribution explores several policies implemented by local governments with a view to protect the rights of the child during the pandemic, especially in terms of facilitating remote learning. The contribution pays specific attention to the role of local governments in guaranteeing the right to education in a context where schools were closed and it was hard to keep track of the situation of students: a central concern for advancing towards more equality and not vice versa.

In perspective, these interventions show the evolving role of local governments as more affirmative actors that care for all residents, recognizing their diversity and specific needs.

Puigpinós, Jaume, and Amanda Fléty (UCLG CSIPDHR). "Local governments' caring for the youth: Protecting the rights of the child in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic". *GOLD VI Pathways to Equality Cases Repository: Caring* (2022). United Cities and Local Governments.

Protecting the rights of the child: Key to addressing urban inequalities



Granollers fosters access to extracurricular opportunities through a lens of inclusion.
Source: Granollers City Council

Local governments play an important role in protecting the rights of the child through various ways, including local coordination of schools, proposal of extracurricular activities key for inclusion, monitoring of the family environment and granting cash transfers when necessary, establishment of targeted participatory democracy mechanisms and other civic engagement pathways...

While some of these policies are implemented by local governments directly (especially through affirmative approaches), most of the time they require coordination with other tiers of government (regional or national authorities) or local actors on the ground, including civil society groups and NGOs, sports associations, educational institutions...

Some local governments understand their role as one of coordination, which implies exercising some kind of leadership in pushing for an approach that puts caring for the rights of the child at the center.

A good example of this can be found in the Educating Cities movement, which has in **Granollers** (Spain) a good example of policy mainstreaming of such concept.¹ The Granollers model is especially based on stakeholder coordination, creating educational institutions aimed at all residents and fostering access to extracurricular opportunities (music learning, sports) through a lens of inclusion. In a context particularly marked by socio-economic hardship, **Grigny** (France) also implements the Educating Cities notion to support families in their parenting and educational role and providing additional spaces to support access to a safe and engaging environment to learn beyond school.²

These two examples reflect how **cities tend to recognize access to quality education and a good learning environment as key to support inclusion and address long entrenched inequalities.**

1. Ajuntament de Granollers. "Granollers, ciutat educadora". Granollers.cat. <https://granollers.cat/educacio/granollers-ciutat-educadora> [Accessed May 31, 2021].

2. Ville de Grigny. « Cité éducative – Grigny 2020 ». Grigny91.fr. <http://grigny91.fr/grigny-avance/grigny-cite-educative/> [Accessed May 31, 2021].

Caring for children in 2020: Local government initiatives during the pandemic

The pandemic has put under strain existing local programs and public policies protecting the rights of the child, with access to quality education being one of the most affected. In this context, **local governments aimed at caring for children at major risk of vulnerability, providing for instance the means to follow homeschooling at a time when schools were closed due to quarantine measures.**

Vienna (Austria) distributed more than 5,000 laptops among families without enough means to afford children's homeschooling;³ **Rivas Vaciamadrid** (Spain) also provided tablets and sim cards to support homeschooled children.⁴ **Gwangju** (Republic of Korea) did not only supply 2,600 smart devices to schools for supporting remote education among kids from low-income families, but also covered their internet fees during this time.⁵

Gwangju was also sensitive to the needs of students with disabilities, providing adapted online lectures to blind students, producing materials for students who were deaf or have developmental disabilities. This effort was possible thanks to the city Special Education Online Learning Support Group, which liaised a group of 48 teachers with local education authorities.

In other contexts, **local governments supported the local school system to adapt its contents to digital platforms.** In some cases, they even proposed new resource hubs with learning materials to support families in their homeschooling efforts. In **Bogotá** (Colombia), the "Aprende en Casa" (Learn at home) platform⁶ included a TV and radio channel with educational materials that particularly sought to moti-

vate kids in following their lessons. The same platform also included resources to support teachers and parents in helping homeschooled students follow the learning curriculum.

Lima (Peru) followed a similar course through its "Supérate Lima" (Outdo yourself, Lima!) platform⁷ but also the Facebook page of the city's education department.⁸ The "Escuela de Lima" initiative provided additional materials for both homeschooled children but also teenagers and adults. Again, the purpose here was caring as much for children to stay motivated and engaged with the learning process, as well as to foster responsible parenting and an adequate environment for the wellbeing of children.

Fuenlabrada (Spain) on the other hand created a platform to connect more than 120 local university students with 600 homeschooled children to provide free tutoring and educational support.⁹

These and other cities combined their efforts in **supporting homeschooled children with providing alternative spaces to pursue their education process.** The same **Rivas Vaciamadrid** (Spain) transformed its book club to the digital format and opened its doors to on-site visits as soon as possible, understanding these spaces are key for kids' socialization.¹⁰ **Taipei** did a similar effort by opening to the public as soon as it was possible its parent-child center, arguing how this space is critical for families to enjoy an alternative space to have fun and access educational materials.¹¹

3. UCLG-CSIPDHR. "Challenges and responses to COVID-19: Interview to Shams Asadi, Human Rights Commissioner of Vienna". Uclg-cisdp.org. <https://www.uclg-cisdp.org/en/news/latest-news/challenges-and-responses-covid-19-interview-shams-asadi-human-rights-commissioner> [Accessed May 31, 2021].

4. Ayuntamiento de Rivas Vaciamadrid. "Rivas dota de tabletas y tarjetas SIM al alumnado sin recursos". Rivasciudad.es. <https://www.rivasciudad.es/noticias/educacion/2020/04/22/rivas-dota-de-tabletas/862600134422/> [Accessed May 31, 2021].

5. Gwangju Dream. "온라인 개학, 특수학교 준비는?". Gjdream.com. <http://www.gjdream.com/news/articleView.html?idxno=504032> [Accessed May 31, 2021].

6. Red Académica. "Bogotá Aprende en Casa". Redacademica.edu.co. <https://www.redacademica.edu.co/estrategias/aprende-en-casa> [Accessed May 31, 2021].

7. Municipalidad de Lima. "Supérate Lima te convoca para participar en los módulos de autoestudio gratuitos en herramientas digitales". Superatelima.munlima.gob.pe. <http://www.superatelima.munlima.gob.pe/noticia/14> [Accessed May 31, 2021].

8. Lima Educación. Facebook.com. <https://www.facebook.com/EducacionMML> [Accessed May 31, 2021].

9. Ayuntamiento de Fuenlabrada. "En torno a 600 escolares de la ciudad se benefician del programa de apoyo educativo con estudiantes de la universidad". Cities for Global Health. <https://www.citiesforglobalhealth.org/sites/default/files/documents/2020-04/Apoyo%20escolara%20voluntarios%202%20281%29.pdf> [Accessed May 31, 2021].

10. Ayuntamiento de Rivas Vaciamadrid. "Vuelven los clubes de lectura: Ahora en versión online". Rivasciudad.es. <https://www.rivasciudad.es/noticias/cultura/2020/06/02/vuelven-los-clubes-de-lectura-ahora-en-version-online/862600138748/> [Accessed May 31, 2021].

11. Taipei. "City to Reopen Parent-child Centers under New Guidelines". English.gov.taipei.com https://english.gov.taipei/News_Content. [Accessed May 31, 2021].

Vienna (Austria) mobilized social services to monitor the situation of children in families at risk of vulnerability, and kept certain schools open as emergency spaces for children in need of a safe space.¹² Training municipal staffers and coordinating with national authorities was particularly relevant to pursue this effort.

In coherence with its caring efforts, local governments also looked at their relationship with children and youth audiences in general with a more empathetic look. Several examples of direct communication efforts can be found in how cities found ways to explain the pandemic to kids or listen to their views and fears in a public setting. **Vienna** (Austria) developed a short video about the pandemic and quarantine measures,¹³

focusing on its particular impact on the daily lives of children (closing of schools and leisure spaces for example). **Berlin** (Germany) followed the same footsteps to raise awareness on the need to follow public health recommendations.¹⁴

The local TV of **Barcelona** (Spain) opened a space that allowed children to ask questions to the Mayor regarding the pandemic.¹⁵ This allowed children's voices to be better heard and recognized within public debates dealing with the pandemic and how this affected residents' lives. The goal here was also to show that local leaders cared about children and how the crisis affected them particularly, answering sensitive questions about public health and beyond that even parents themselves found it hard to respond.

Intergenerational dialogue: A way to promote cities that care

If the COVID-19 pandemic offers a perfect example of how local governments advanced care-sensitive policies with regards to the rights of the child and how to address the specific needs of children in such a difficult situation, other **cities' efforts to ensure the wellbeing of older people in the same context (many times in connection to inter-generational dialogue efforts)** also offer a good example.

Throughout 2020, **Mexico City** (Mexico) implemented a special procedure to care for the needs of older residents living in isolation.¹⁶ On one hand, this program included granting home medical assistance and food delivery. On the other, it also provided social assistance and access to a network of volunteers, most of which local youth, who helped the program beneficiaries to cope with loneliness and isolation. This type of policy has been developed simultaneously by hundreds of local authorities across the world, many times relying on pre-existing procedures set by volunteers and NGOs.

Seongdong (Republic of Korea) also counts with a health program (the District HYO Policy) targeting isolated, low-income older people, which provides both home health assistance, but also opportunities to participate in socialization programs.¹⁷ These are aimed especially at tackling isolation and depression among the elderly. The District HYO case allowed the city to develop a successful cooperation scheme with different local providers of care services. It also helped devote more public resources to addressing an emerging need in a rapidly aging society.

The **Mersin** metropolitan municipality (Turkey) also counts with a relevant initiative in this field, which is the "*İkinci Bahar*" retirement home:¹⁸ a good example of how municipal retirement homes increasingly include alternative facilities, such as artistic workshops, psycho-social counseling services or socializing opportunities with youth volunteers.

12. UCLG-CSIPDHR. "Challenges and responses to COVID-19: Interview to Shams Asadi, Human Rights Commissioner of Vienna". Uclg-cisdp.org. <https://www.uclg-cisdp.org/en/news/latest-news/challenges-and-responses-covid-19-interview-shams-asadi-human-rights-commissioner> [Accessed May 31, 2021].

13. Stadt Wien. "Das Coronavirus Kindern einfach erklärt". YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kU4oCmRFTw> [Accessed May 31, 2021].

14. Kinderlieder mit Bobby. "Corona Erklärvideo für Kinder & Erwachsene". YouTube. <https://youtu.be/TKwZKZ0mi5M> [Accessed May 31, 2021].

15. Meritxell Hernández. "Quan tornarem a l'escola? La pregunta dels infants a l'alcaldesa Colau". Beteve.cat. <https://beteve.cat/politica/preguntes-ada-colau-nens-coronavirus/> [Accessed May 31, 2021].

16. Secretaría de Inclusión y Bienestar Social de la Ciudad de México. "Procedimiento de Atención Social para personas Adultas Mayores en soledad o impedimento de salud". Sibiso.cdmx.gob.mx. <https://sibiso.cdmx.gob.mx/atencion-social-personas-adultas-mayores-COVID19> [Accessed May 31, 2021].

17. UN Public Service Awards. "Initiative Seongdong District's HYO Policy". Publicadministration.un.org. https://publicadministration.un.org/unpsa/database/Winners/2020-winners/Seongdong_HYO [Accessed May 31, 2021].

18. UCLG MEWA. "UCLG-MEWA Committee on Social Inclusion Presidency Meeting". Uclg-mewa.org. <http://uclg-mewa.org/uclg-mewa-committee-on-social-%C4%B1inclusion-presidency-meeting/> [Accessed May 31, 2021].

How is care connected to these approaches?

The affirmative approaches adopted by local governments throughout the pandemic show how local policies are key to building a society that cares. Faced with an unprecedented health crisis, which included the enforcement of severe social distancing measures, municipalities played an essential role in recognizing, addressing and showcasing the specific and diverse needs of a social group particularly prone to vulnerability in this context: that of children.

As shown by the examples explored, these policies built caring pathways through coordination (of local stakeholders, of solidarity trends and volunteering initiatives), innovation (use of social media and digital platforms) and active involvement (mobilizing municipal staffers and resources to address particular needs or monitor concrete, often invisible situations). **The role of mainstreaming particular approaches to policy making, such as those of “educating city” or “human rights city”, proves to be particularly relevant for advancing caring efforts.**

References

- Ajuntament de Granollers. "Granollers, ciutat educadora". Granollers.cat. <https://granollers.cat/educacio/granollers-ciutat-educadora> [Accessed May 31, 2021].
- Ayuntamiento de Rivas Vaciamadrid. "Rivas dota de tabletas y tarjetas SIM al alumnado sin recursos". Rivasciudad.es. <https://www.rivasciudad.es/noticias/educacion/2020/04/22/rivas-dota-de-tabletas/862600134422/> [Accessed May 31, 2021].
- Ayuntamiento de Fuenlabrada. "En torno a 600 escolares de la ciudad se benefician del programa de apoyo educativo con estudiantes de la universidad". Cities for Global Health. <https://www.citiesforglobalhealth.org/sites/default/files/documents/2020-04/Apojo%20escolara%20voluntarios%202%20%281%29.pdf> [Accessed May 31, 2021].
- Ayuntamiento de Rivas Vaciamadrid. "Vuelven los clubes de lectura: Ahora en versión online". Rivasciudad.es. <https://www.rivasciudad.es/noticias/cultura/2020/06/02/vuelven-los-clubes-de-lectura-ahora-en-version-online/862600138748/> [Accessed May 31, 2021].
- Gwangju Dream. "온라인 개학, 특수학교 준비는?". Gjdream.com. <http://www.gjdream.com/news/articleView.html?idxno=504032> [Accessed May 31, 2021].
- Kinderlieder mit Bobby. "Corona Erklärvideo für Kinder & Erwachsene". YouTube. <https://youtu.be/TKwZKZ0mi5M> [Accessed May 31, 2021].
- Lima Educación. Facebook.com. <https://www.facebook.com/EducacionMML> [Accessed May 31, 2021].
- Meritxell Hernández. "Quan tornarem a l'escola? La pregunta dels infants a l'alcaldeessa Colau". Beteve.cat. <https://beteve.cat/politica/preguntes-ada-colau-nens-coronavirus/> [Accessed May 31, 2021].
- Municipalidad de Lima. "Supérate Lima te convoca para participar en los módulos de autoestudio gratuitos en herramientas digitales". Superatelima.munlima.gob.pe. <http://www.superatelima.munlima.gob.pe/noticia/14> [Accessed May 31, 2021].
- Red Académica. "Bogotá Aprende en Casa". Redacademica.edu.co. <https://www.redacademica.edu.co/estrategias/aprende-en-casa> [Accessed May 31, 2021].
- Taipei. "City to Reopen Parent-child Centers under New Guidelines". English.gov.taipei.com https://english.gov.taipei/News_Content. [Accessed May 31, 2021].
- Stadt Wien. "Das Coronavirus Kindern einfach erklärt". YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kU4oCmRFTw> [Accessed May 31, 2021].
- Secretaría de Inclusión y Bienestar Social de la Ciudad de México. Procedimiento de Atención Social para personas Adultas Mayores en soledad o impedimento de salud. Sibiso.cdmx.gob.mx. <https://sibiso.cdmx.gob.mx/atencion-social-personas-adultas-mayores-COVID19> [Accessed May 31, 2021].
- UCLG-CSIPDHR. "Challenges and responses to COVID-19: Interview to Shams Asadi, Human Rights Commissioner of Vienna". Uclg-cisd.org. <https://www.uclg-cisd.org/en/news/latest-news/challenges-and-responses-covid-19-interview-shams-asadi-human-rights-commissioner> [Accessed May 31, 2021].
- UCLG MEWA. "UCLG-MEWA Committee on Social Inclusion Presidency Meeting". Uclg-mewa.org. <http://uclg-mewa.org/uclg-mewa-committee-on-social-%C4%B1nclusion-presidency-meeting/> [Accessed May 31, 2021].
- UN Public Service Awards. "Initiative Seongdong District's HYO Policy". Publicadministration.un.org. https://publicadministration.un.org/unpsa/database/Winners/2020-winners/Seongdong_HYO [Accessed May 31, 2021].
- Ville de Grigny. « Cité éducative – Grigny 2020 ». Grigny91.fr. <http://grigny91.fr/grigny-avance/grigny-cite-educative/> [Accessed May 31, 2021].

CARING

This paper has been produced as a Case-Based Contribution to the sixth Global Report on Local Democracy and Decentralization (GOLD VI): the flagship publication of the organized constituency of local and regional governments represented in United Cities and Local Governments. The GOLD VI report has been produced in partnership with the Development Planning Unit (University College London), through the programme Knowledge in Action for Urban Equality (KNOW). GOLD VI focuses on how local and regional governments can address the local manifestations of growing inequalities and contribute to create “Pathways to urban and territorial equality”. The GOLD VI report has been produced through a large-scale international co-production process, bringing together over a hundred representatives of local and regional governments, academics and civil society organizations. This paper is an outcome of this process and is part of the *Pathways to Equality Cases Repository*, which collects the over 60 Case-Based Contributions produced as part of the GOLD VI report.

In particular, the present paper has contributed to Chapter 5 on “Caring”, which focuses on the multiple actions that promote the care of diverse groups within society through safety nets and solidarity bonds, and the ways in which local and regional governments can promote caring practices that support structurally discriminated and/or vulnerable groups, as well as those that have historically “taken care” of others.

Supported by:



**Funded by
the European Union**

This publication was produced with the financial support of the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of UCLG and UCL and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.



**Diputació
Barcelona**

This document was produced with the financial support of the Barcelona Provincial Council. Its contents are the sole responsibility of UCLG and UCL and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Barcelona Provincial Council.



**Sweden
Sverige**

This document has been financed by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Sida. Sida does not necessarily share the views expressed in this material. Responsibility for its content rests entirely with the authors.



**UK Research
and Innovation**

This document was produced by UCLG and the “Knowledge in Action for Urban Equality” (KNOW) programme. KNOW is funded by UKRI through the Global Challenges Research Fund GROW Call, and led by The Bartlett Development Planning Unit, UCL. Grant Ref: ES/P011225/1