

Five-Year Strategic Plan

2020-2024 *

1. Introduction

Child Rights Connect is an independent, non-profit organisation founded in 1983 as the *Ad Hoc Group for the drafting of the Convention on the Rights of the Child* (CRC). Once the CRC was adopted, the network became the *NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child* and the **key strategic partner of the UN Committee on the Rights on the Child** (CRC Committee), together with UNICEF. Since then, Child Rights Connect has been the expert NGO working closely with the CRC Committee and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to drive and support the development of international legal standards as well as their implementation at the national level.

Being the only international network of children's rights organisations based in Geneva, Child Rights Connect became the coordinating platform for civil society advocacy at the Human Rights Council (HRC) soon after obtaining special consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in 2012. **Through Child Rights Connect, children's rights defenders, including children, can speak with one global voice in front of the international community and have a stronger influence on political decisions.** In 2013, Child Rights Connect took on its new name to better depict its unique role of connecting children's rights defenders¹ to the United Nations (UN) human rights system.

Today it is one of the largest international child rights networks. Through its more than 90 member-organisations, it has a **worldwide reach with members from all regions**. Child Rights Connect members are national, regional and international organisations and coalitions working with and for children in various contexts, including fragile States, States in conflict situations, least developed countries, and States in transition. This broad and diverse membership brings together a wide array of expertise in children's rights and a vast diversity of experiences and approaches for realising children's human rights worldwide.

* Adopted at the General Assembly of Child Rights Connect in May 2019.

¹ Our use of the term "children's rights defenders" includes Child Rights Connect members, national, regional and international NGOs, child rights coalitions, children, child-led organisations and national human rights institutions (NHRIs).

Vision:

Child Rights Connect envisions a world in which all children have their human rights respected, protected, promoted and fulfilled, as enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols.

Mission:

Child Rights Connect advocates for and supports the full implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols for the realisation of children's rights worldwide. Child Rights Connect does this by convening and engaging with civil society and other relevant actors, by fostering cooperation and collaboration, and by empowering children's rights defenders, including children, to meaningfully participate in global advocacy for children's rights at different levels.

Principles and values:

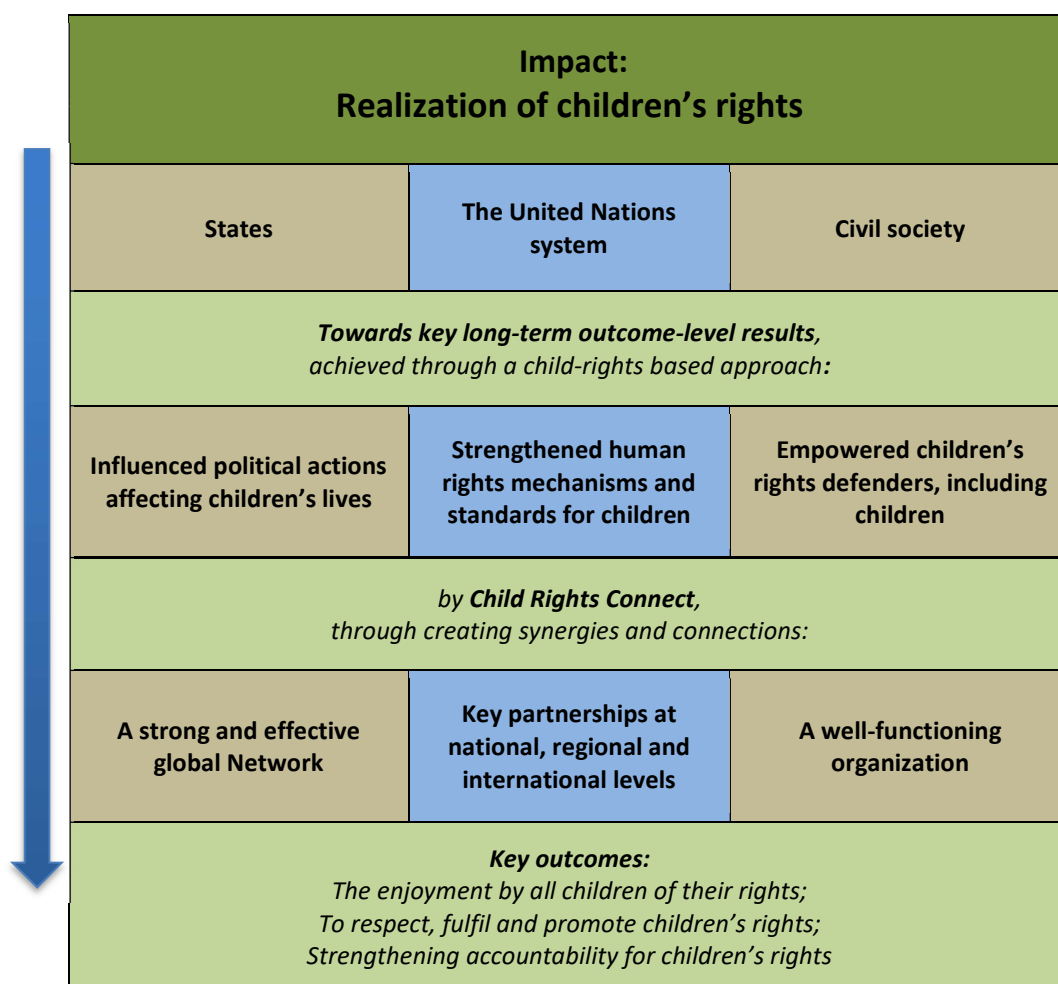
A child rights-based approach underpins Child Rights Connect's work with and for children, both in what it seeks to achieve and how it goes about achieving it. Child Rights Connect prioritises the human rights principles of equality, non-discrimination, participation and accountability. The organisation is constantly seeking approaches that are collaborative, sustainable, fair, harmless, inclusive, multipliers of knowledge, respectful, environmentally friendly and sensitive to difference and diversity.

Child Rights Connect provides a unique platform to **ensure local to global advocacy** where advocacy in Geneva can draw on local and national experiences, learning and data across regions and where international commitments secured in Geneva can be integrated into local and national advocacy by members. Child Rights Connect's core work consists of:

- **Empowering children** to exercise and claim their rights by advocating for and facilitating their participation in national, regional and international human rights mechanisms and processes;
- **Reinforcing children's rights advocacy at national and regional levels** by empowering children's rights defenders worldwide to engage with the CRC Committee, the other Treaty Bodies and the broader human rights system through information, knowledge and collaboration;
- **Setting child rights international legal obligations and standards** that States are obliged to take action on and that strengthen the rule of law;
- **Enhancing accountability** to children by strengthening the effectiveness of the CRC Committee's monitoring processes, as well as the Treaty Body system and other key UN human rights mechanisms that are mandated to assess State compliance with their obligations;
- **Influencing the international political discourse and agenda** by setting and promoting innovative discussions and perspectives of children's rights in a changing global environment;
- **Strengthening the understanding and application of child rights-based approaches** among children's rights defenders, States, the UN mechanisms and the private sector by promoting the indivisibility of children's rights within the human rights, development, peace and security agendas, to ensure all children enjoy their rights;
- **Advocating for the follow-up and implementation** of recommendations made by the CRC Committee and other key human rights mechanisms to hold States accountable and support them in their duties;
- **Advocating for the universal ratification** of the CRC and its Optional Protocols and removal of reservations to those instruments.

2. Theory of Change

Child Rights Connect's theory of change is represented by the graphic below.



3. Strategic Priorities for 2020-2024

1. Advance the recognition, protection and empowerment of children human rights defenders (CHRDs), including through child participation at national, regional and international levels.
2. Empower children's rights defenders through reporting to the CRC Committee in targeted States to advance sustained global engagement.
3. Strengthen accountability to children by building synergies between the CRC Committee, the other Treaty Bodies, the HRC, the SDGs and the youth agenda.
4. Advance the ratification of OPIC and its strategic use by children's rights defenders to contribute to the realisation of children's rights.

4. Results Framework

4.1 Programmatic priorities and outcomes

Outcome 1: Advanced recognition, protection and empowerment of CHRDs, including through child participation at national, regional and international levels.

Outputs:

- 1.1 Increased capacity of the Network's members and Working Groups to strengthen the normative and policy frameworks related to the protection and empowerment of CHRDs in identified countries and in collaboration with children.
- 1.2 Increased number of accessible resources and tools on the CRC Committee and the UN human rights system specifically targeting children.
- 1.3 Increased and more effective engagement of CHRDs with the CRC Committee, the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders, the Treaty Bodies and the Human Rights Council.
- 1.4 Strengthened international standards for CHRDs under the lead of the CRC Committee and the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders.

Outcome 2: Empowered children's rights defenders through reporting to and cooperating with the CRC Committee in targeted States to advance sustained global engagement.

Outputs:

- 2.1 Increased coordinated and long-term engagement with the CRC Committee by the Network's members, Working Groups and child rights coalitions at national, regional and international levels.
- 2.2 Increased capacity of the Network's members and children to engage in reporting to the CRC Committee in countries with limited or no civil society participation, in particular in Asia-Pacific and Africa.
- 2.3 Increased engagement of children in the development of General Comments, the organisation of Days of General Discussion and other relevant Committee activities based on transparent processes.

Outcome 3: Strengthened accountability to children by building synergies between the CRC Committee, the other Treaty Bodies, the Human Rights Council, the SDGs and the youth agenda.

Outputs:

- 3.1 Increased coordinated action from Network members and TB-Net (the NGO Network on the UN Treaty Bodies) to engage with the Treaty Bodies system, including through more coherent children's rights standards and jurisprudence.
- 3.2 Increased capacity of Network members to understand and harness the links between the CRC Committee, the Treaty Bodies, the Human Rights Council, the SDGs and the youth agenda in order to advance accountability to children at the national level.
- 3.3 Increased capacity of the Network's members and Working Groups to monitor and follow-up on relevant UN recommendations at the national level.
- 3.4 Increased number of UN mechanisms apply CRC standards and practices on child participation.

Outcome 4: Advanced ratification of OPIC and its strategic use by children's rights defenders.**Outputs:**

- 4.1 Increased number of States championing OPIC leads to new ratifications, exchange of good practices and State-led awareness raising initiatives.
- 4.2 Increased awareness and understanding of OPIC by States, children, CHRDs, Network members and lawyers, including through child-friendly information and resources.
- 4.3 Increased capacity of children to advocate for OPIC ratification and implementation, including through technical support and capacity building.
- 4.4 Increased number of admissible communications and requests for inquiries by empowered children, CHRDs, Network members and lawyers.

4.2 Organisational priorities and outcomes***Outcome 5: More active and balanced membership.*****Outputs:**

- 5.1 Increased engagement of the Working Groups in strategic programmatic work.
- 5.2 More regular and effective coordination and communication between Child Rights Connect's Secretariat, the Network's members and the Working Groups working at the regional level.
- 5.3 New members from under-represented regions (Africa and Asia-Pacific), in countries where there is a weak or no member presence, join the Network and engage in the programmes.
- 5.4 New members from NGOs working on themes that are absent or under-represented in the Network and that are relevant to the Strategic Priorities.

Outcome 6: Strengthened governance and financial stability.**Outputs:**

- 6.1 An Executive Committee (ExCo) of Child Rights Connect with high profile experts and a General Assembly (GA) attended by senior level member representatives.
- 6.2 Increased number of diverse donors, including human rights foundations, and increased partnerships with the private sector for pro-bono as well as financial support.

Outcome 7: A well-functioning organisation.**Outputs:**

- 7.1 Effective strategic management, including strategy, planning, monitoring and evaluation.
- 7.2 An effective and engaged Executive Committee (ExCo) and General Assembly (GA), ensuring vision, making decisions, and fulfilling accountability and oversight responsibilities.
- 7.3 Effective engagement with the permanent Children's Advisory Team.
- 7.4 Effective and efficient operational management, for finance, human resources, office and Network administration, logistics, and IT.
- 7.5 Adequate and stable funding from diverse sources, for effectiveness and sustainability.
- 7.6 Effective communications, including branding and visibility, and communication support to programmes and management (social media, website for internal and external audiences).