



# Child Rights Connect Strategic Plan

2025-2029

## 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*. Once the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) was adopted, the Network became one of the two key strategic partners of the UN Committee on the Rights on the Child (CRC Committee), together with UNICEF.

Today, Child Rights Connect is one of the largest international child rights networks. Through its 120 member and observer organisations,<sup>1</sup> it has a worldwide reach with members from all regions reaching millions of children in more than 190 countries. Child Rights Connect members are national, regional and international organisations and coalitions working with and for children in various contexts. 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.

As a global network, Child Rights Connect acts as the primary platform for civil society engagement – including with and by children – with Geneva-based UN human rights mechanisms and agencies, including the CRC Committee. Through Child Rights Connect, civil society and children can speak with one voice to drive and support the development of international legal standards as well as their implementation at the national level, particularly with respect to children whose rights are most at risk.

### ***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.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://childrightsconnect.org/member-network/>.

### ***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 and global-to-local 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. Through its permanent and global Children's Advisory Team, the organisation incorporates child participation throughout its work and operation, from planning to implementation, monitoring and governance.

Child Rights Connect's core work consists of:

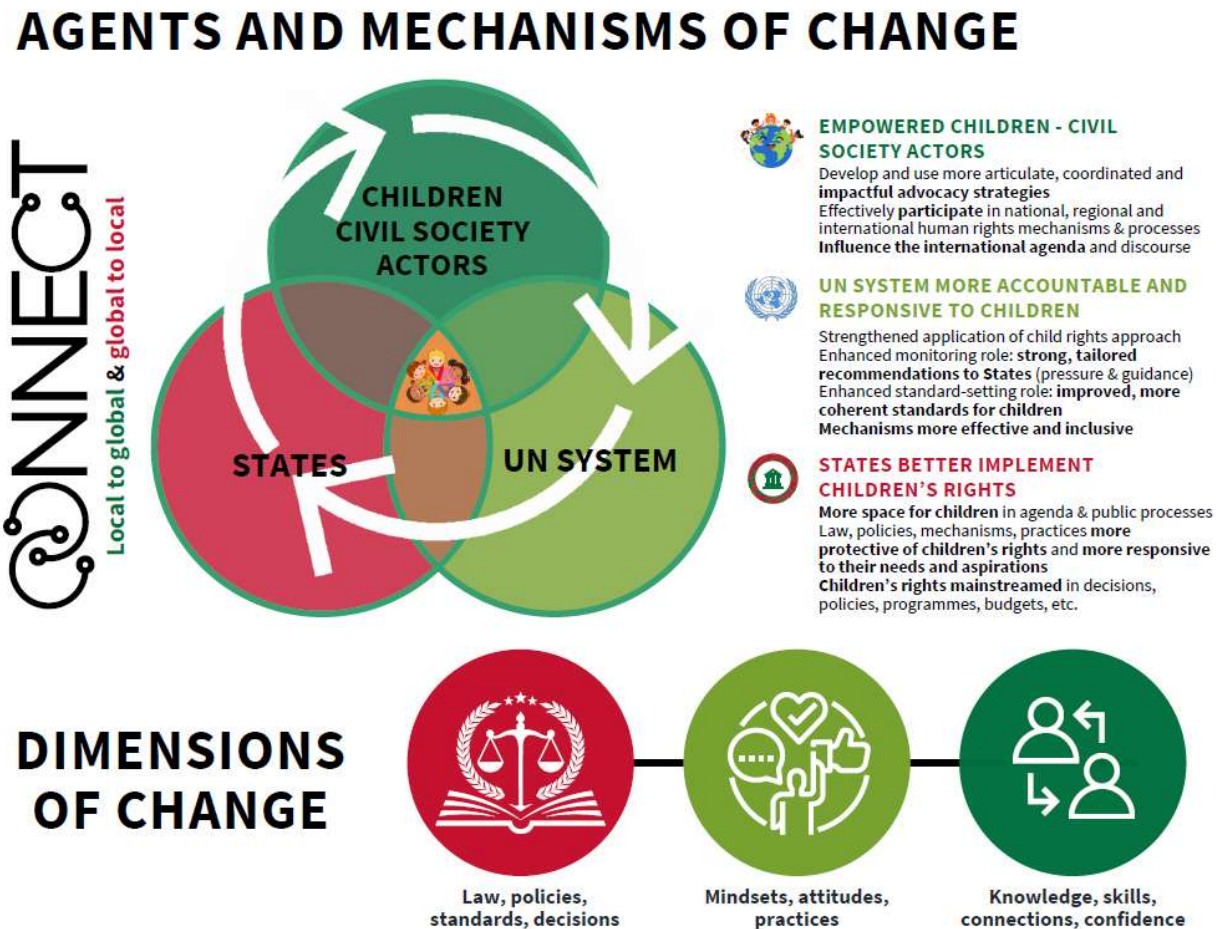
- **Uniting the child rights movement**, alongside the broader human rights movement and State champions, to speak with one voice with and for children in advancing key priorities and advocacy objectives;
- **Empowering children** to claim and exercise their rights by advocating for and facilitating their participation in national, regional and international human rights mechanisms and processes, including as child human rights defenders and through strengthened national and international standards on civil and political rights;
- **Reinforcing children's rights advocacy at national and regional levels** by empowering children and civil society worldwide to engage with the CRC Committee and the broader United Nations human rights system through information, knowledge and collaboration;
- **Influencing the enhancement of child rights international legal obligations and standards** that States and UN mechanisms 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 functioning of 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 civil society, 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, including through supporting implementation of the UN Secretary-General's Guidance Note on Child Rights Mainstreaming.

## **Strategic Priorities for 2025-2029**

1. To advance child participation and the rights, empowerment and protection of child human rights defenders (CHRDs) at global, national and institutional levels.
2. To advance accountability to children at global and national levels.
3. To strengthen the financial stability of Child Rights Connect.
4. To further strengthen Child Rights Connect's governance and operational structures.

## Theory of Change

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



This theory of change rests on the **transformative role of children as rights-holders and agents of change, and States as duty-bearers, as well as convergence between civil society actors and the UN human rights system** in advancing the realisation of children's rights around the world. As a key player situated at the intersection between rights-holders and duty-bearers, connecting civil society actors and the UN system at the international level, Child Rights Connect effects change through the following agents and mechanisms of change:

### ***Empowering children and other civil society actors***

Through a combination of awareness-raising, capacity-building, knowledge-sharing, technical assistance, support with advocacy, and networking/coalition-building, Child Rights Connect provides civil society actors including children, Network members and other non-State actors with the necessary knowledge, know-how, connections, and confidence to make the most of the UN human rights system to influence global, regional, and national standards for children.

The development of key civil society alliances, both within and beyond the Network, and connections between them also allows civil society actors, including children, to better collaborate and adopt a more unified approach to influence the realisation of children's rights through the UN system, as well as at regional, national, and local levels. By fostering safe, inclusive, and empowering child participation, not only does Child Rights Connect give effect to children's right to be heard and to participate in decisions affecting their lives but also contributes to enhancing responsiveness and accountability to children by the UN system, States and civil society.

### ***Making the UN human rights system more accountable and responsive to children***

By acting as the primary platform for civil society engagement with the UN system, including by children, Child Rights Connect allows UN actors to receive comprehensive, relevant and evidence-based information on the national implementation of the UNCRC, its Optional Protocols, and other relevant international law and standards promoting and protecting children's rights. This in turn enhances UN mechanisms' monitoring functions, standard-setting, working methods and application of a child rights-based approach.

The resulting international human rights laws, standards and recommendations are in turn used by children, Network members and other civil society actors as powerful tools to strengthen their advocacy for positive change at the local and national level.

### ***States better implementing children's rights***

Combined, the above two mechanisms of change have a joint effect on the system and ultimately influence States' law, policies, decisions and practices through pressure and guidance, for greater realisation of children's rights. The combined action of empowered child and civil society actors, and strengthened international human rights system, enhances accountability and positively influences political actions affecting children's lives. This results in fostering more space for children and child rights issues; more responsive national law, policies, mechanisms and practices; and the integration of children's rights at the national level, including national decisions, policies, programmes and budgets.

Through Child Rights Connect's local to global advocacy platform, civil society actors, including children, Network members and other non-State actors, speak with one global voice in front of the international community and thereby have a stronger influence on political decisions that draw on local and national experiences, learning and data. Civil society actors can in turn integrate international commitments into local and national advocacy to better advance children's rights on the ground. **Ultimately, this local to global and global to local approach accelerates impact** by directing States to appropriately adapt law, policy and practice and influence the action of other duty-bearers.

## Results Framework

### Programmatic priorities and outcomes

#### ***Outcome 1: Child participation and the rights, empowerment and protection of child human rights defenders (CHRDs) are advanced at global, national and institutional levels***

##### **Outputs:**

- 1.1 United Nations (UN) human rights mechanisms more systematically apply safe, equitable, empowering and sustained child participation practices
- 1.2 Children more systematically inform the development, and engage in the implementation of, Child Rights Connect programmes and projects
- 1.3 Global and national legal and policy frameworks on the rights, empowerment and protection of CHRDs are strengthened, in particular with respect to CHRDs' civil and political rights
- 1.4 More CHRDs are empowered to engage in safe and sustainable action as human rights defenders at global and/or national levels

#### ***Outcome 2: Accountability to children is advanced at global and national levels***

##### **Outputs:**

- 2.1 Members and other stakeholders are mobilised and supported to more effectively engage with the CRC Committee and other UN human rights mechanisms, from reporting to follow up
- 2.2 More members – and other stakeholders where possible – are mobilised and supported to counter the push back against child rights, including with respect to the shrinking space for civil society
- 2.3 More campaigns for ratification of OPIC led by members – and other stakeholders where possible – are supported
- 2.4 The UN implements a child rights approach across its work in line with the UN Secretary-General's Guidance Note on child rights mainstreaming
- 2.5 UN human rights mechanisms coherently enhance standards and practices to provide accountability to children

### Organisational priorities and outcomes

#### ***Outcome 3: The financial stability of Child Rights Connect is strengthened***

##### **Outputs:**

- 3.1 Child Rights Connect's visibility amongst the donor and philanthropic communities is increased
- 3.2 Funding diversification is increased
- 3.3 Financial resilience is improved

***Outcome 4: Child Rights Connect governance and operational structures are further strengthened***

**Outputs:**

- 4.1 Regular and effective Secretariat communications, and information platforms or tools, create, identify or stimulate opportunities for members, observers and Working Groups to better advance accountability to children
- 4.2 Child Rights Connect Working Groups are better connected within the network to mobilise and empower members' thematic expertise and strategic thinking
- 4.3 A global and diverse membership is maintained and grown
- 4.4 The General Assembly is better attended, makes high-level decisions and ensures accountability
- 4.5 The Executive Committee makes more timely, strategic decisions and ensures accountability and oversight
- 4.6 The Secretariat's operational management is further improved