

**STRATEGIC VISION FOR  
PROTECTING THE  
RIGHTS OF CHILD  
HUMAN RIGHTS  
DEFENDERS**



# WHAT IS THE STRATEGIC VISION ABOUT AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

You can find the  
meaning of the words  
in orange in the  
glossary at the end!



This document is all about protecting and supporting children who stand up for their own human rights or the rights of others. These children are called **Child Human Rights Defenders (CHRDs)**. They work to make the world a better place by raising their voices, speaking out against injustices, and fighting for the rights of others.

We are coming together as children, **United Nations (UN)** bodies, international and local **civil society organizations** and more. We want to see commitments, support and actions made by wider **civil society**, governments and donor communities to protect and uphold the rights of CHRDs.



# WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Around the world, many children are actively working to protect the environment, fight for social **justice**, and make sure everyone's rights are respected. However, these children often face big challenges, like being bullied, threatened, or even harmed for standing up for what's right. This Strategic Vision aims to create a safer and more supportive environment for these child defenders.



# WHAT DO WE WANT TO ACHIEVE?

The vision is to create a world where all CHRDs, regardless of their **gender, sexual orientation and gender identity, socio economic status, disability, race, political opinion,** and any other characteristics, are recognized, safe, supported, and empowered to:



Take part in decisions that affect them and can keep making a positive difference in the world.



To fully exercise their rights (that is: when people speak up, act, or make choices to show and use the freedoms and rights they have, like the right to learn, the right to be safe, or the right to share their ideas).



To call on NGOs and governments to be **accountable**.



# HOW CAN WE MAKE THIS HAPPEN? WORKING TOGETHER AS A COMMUNITY!

To achieve all of this, it is important to build strong communities where children and adults can work together. By sharing resources, supporting each other, and creating safe spaces, we can help CHRDs continue their important work. By working together, children, adults, governments, and organizations, we can help protect the rights of CHRDs and support empower them to build a better future for everyone. You can be part of these communities too!



# HOW CAN YOU USE THE STRATEGIC VISION? USE IT TO ADVOCATE FOR THE SUPPORT YOU NEED!



- It can be a tool to start discussions with your peers and networks of children (to define what you have and what you might need).
- It can help shape the agenda and opportunities if you are working with or you would like to work with adult partners and allies.
- Adult organizations are asked to sign on and add their logo to the Strategic Vision, you can invite organizations to join (here's how)!



# 4 PILLARS OF WORK

This Strategic Vision or plan is based on four main areas, called pillars, which outline the steps needed to support CHRDs.



**Pillar 1: Learning and sharing**



**Pillar 2: Protection**



**Pillar 3: Research, Policy, and  
Advocacy**



**Pillar 4: Public Awareness**



# PILLAR 1: LEARNING AND SHARING

Our vision is to build everyone's skills, especially CHRDs, through access to training and resources that help them learn about human rights, **advocacy**, and staying safe. To provide CHRDs with the skills, training and resources they are asking for. To create opportunities for children and adults to learn from each other and work together on human rights issues. Examples:





# PILLAR 1: LEARNING AND SHARING



## EXAMPLES

Learning Tools for CHRDs: Make and share easy-to-use guides to help children learn about their rights, staying safe, and working with others.

Mentors for CHRDs: partner adult **human rights defenders** and CHRDs who do similar human rights work.

Start-up Money for CHRDs: Help look for money to help children start and run their own campaigns.



# PILLAR 1: LEARNING AND SHARING



## EXAMPLES

**Meetups:** Organize empowering events where children and adults can learn and connect.

**Building Strong Communities:** Work together with different movements and groups to support children's rights, including child-led organisations or formal spaces for **child participation**, such as children's parliaments or councils.

**Tools for Adult Organizations** on how to support CHRDs: help organisations that are mainly led by adults to develop protocols and procedures to work with and for CHRDs.



## PILLAR 2: PROTECTION

Our vision is to develop ways to protect children who are at risk because of their activism. Risks reported by CHRDs include existing and new **repressive laws; lawsuits; sanctions at school; denial of public services; disinformation** campaigns; and various types of reprisals, such as threats, intimidation, violence, detention, killing, bullying. CHRDs can be protected by ensuring they have **access to justice** free legal help, safe spaces, and other needed protections. It also means that if adults human rights defenders have access to support and services, steps should be taken to make these supports/services accessible to children. Examples:



# PILLAR 2: PROTECTION



## EXAMPLES

Adapt **Protection Mechanisms** for Children: Update and improve protection mechanisms for adult human rights defenders to protect children who stand up for human rights. Find out where help is needed most and make sure adults follow rules to keep children safe.

Create and Share Child Participation and Safety Trainings: Develop new ways to include children's rights in everything we do, from planning projects to raising money. Make sure CHRDs can participate safely by training adults on how to support and protect them using fun and creative methods.

Make Support Last: Adult organisations should ensure long-term support for CHRDs by updating internal policies and including them in existing programs, making sure their rights are always considered.

Increase Access to Support Services: Find better ways to provide CHRDs with access to justice, including free **legal help**, mental health support, and other important services when they face challenges.



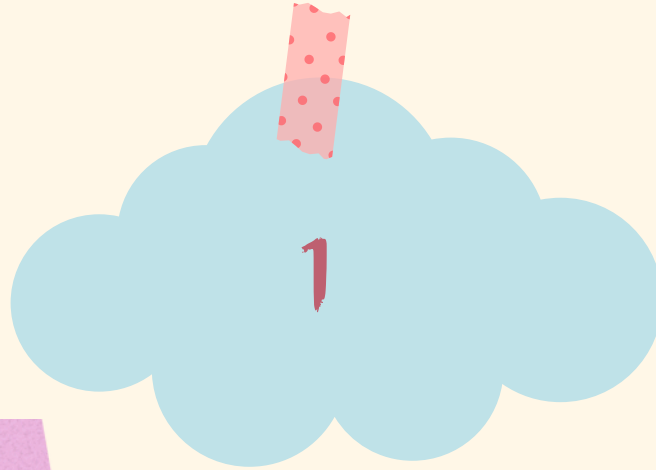
# PILLAR 3: RESEARCH, POLICY, AND ADVOCACY



Our vision is to work together to change and create laws and policies or programmes that protect the rights of CHRDs and allow them to participate in important decisions. This should include collecting information about the challenges CHRDs face and using this data to advocate for their rights. This can also mean to support CHRDs to go to court to change unfair human rights situations (also called **strategic litigation**). This will be done through:



# PILLAR 3: RESEARCH, POLICY, AND ADVOCACY



## RESEARCH, EVIDENCE, AND DATA COLLECTION:

- **Understand and Share:** Find out which countries and regions are most dangerous for CHRDs, especially those facing discrimination. Collect and share this information globally.
- **Show Positives:** Highlight the good things that children are doing to make the world better, like fighting for the environment and social justice.
- **Watch for Threats to CHRDs:** Keep track of new threats, including laws, that could harm children who are standing up for their rights. We can push for the establishment of mechanisms or structures that can track or monitor these threats in different countries or at the regional level.
- **Work Together:** Join forces with researchers to understand what CHRDs need and to identify challenges and solutions.





# PILLAR 3: RESEARCH, POLICY, AND ADVOCACY



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## GLOBAL ADVOCACY

Support big campaigns to get countries to implement the commitments that they have agreed to at the international level (for instance at the United Nations).

### 1. FOCUS ON UNITED NATIONS WORK

- Pay attention to important UN processes that protect children's rights, like sending information to the **UN Committee on the Rights of the Child**, the **UPR (Universal Periodic Review)** or the implementation of the **UN Guidance Note on Child Rights Mainstreaming** by the **Secretary General**.

Check the glossary to learn about these processes!

### 2. WORK ON SDG 16

- Connect with the Sustainable Development Goals related to access to justice and strong institutions to make sure children's voices are heard.

### 3. MORE SPACES FOR CHILDREN TO PARTICIPATE AT THE UNITED NATIONS.



# PILLAR 3: RESEARCH, POLICY, AND ADVOCACY

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## NATIONAL ADVOCACY



### 1. CHANGE NATIONAL LAWS

- Work to improve laws in your country that protect children's rights and allow them to participate in decision-making.



### 2. SUPPORT CHILD PARTICIPATION

- Push for **funding** and support for child-led initiatives and create guides to help children participate in making national policies.





## PILLAR 4: PUBLIC AWARENESS

People often misunderstand, exclude, and punish CHRDs for their actions. The difficulties they face are worsened by additional discrimination. There isn't enough public support or awareness of the vital role they play in society, their basic rights, and the positive impact they bring.

Our vision is to help people understand the important work that CHRDs do by sharing their stories and raising awareness about their contributions to society.

Examples:




# PILLAR 4: PUBLIC AWARENESS



## EXAMPLES



CREATE AND RUN GLOBAL COMMUNICATION PLAN(S) THAT SEND OUT STORIES, AND GRAPHICS, TO SHARE ON SOCIAL MEDIA AND IN THE NEWS.



WORKSHOPS TO DEVELOP CAMPAIGNS FOR PUBLIC AWARENESS ABOUT CHRDS. THIS MAY INCLUDE SHARING AND CREATING A POSITIVE NARRATIVE AROUND CHRDS AND SHARING POSITIVE STORIES.

# GLOSSARY

Term	What does it mean?
Accountability	Showing up for and setting out to accomplish the things one said they would do. It means taking responsibility to make sure the ideas and plans created turn into reality. It also includes a willingness to be transparent, allowing others to observe and evaluate one's performance.
Access to Justice	Providing support for children who have been harmed and correcting the harms that children face. This includes allowing children to complain if their rights are denied, listening to children and taking their complaints seriously, finding ways to restore their rights or punishing the person who violated their rights.
Advocacy	Telling people about something that is important to you and persuading them to take action to make a positive change. Examples include asking for lawmakers to make a law ending child marriage.



# GLOSSARY

Term	What does it mean?
Capacity building	Training people and creating tools to help them engage with UN mechanisms and advocate for their rights.
Child-led organization	A child-led organization is an organization where children are the ones making decisions and leading activities. In these organizations, children and adolescents choose what projects they want to do, come up with ideas, and work together to make things happen. Adults might help by giving advice or support, but the children are in charge and take the lead!
Child Human Rights Defenders (CHRDs)	Children standing up for their own human rights and the human rights of others (examples: teaching other children about children's rights, running a campaign or speaking up about a human rights issue).
Child-friendly	Ensuring resources and influencing spaces are made accessible to children with the understanding that these resources and spaces tend to be overcomplicated and difficult to navigate.



# GLOSSARY

Term	What does it mean?
Child participation	When children speak up or contribute to conversations about rights and can be heard or have their ideas included in decisions. It is a right in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
Child rights mainstreaming	Making sure that an action or idea relating to children's rights is well-known and acted on by everyone and considered in every decision.
Civil and political rights	Rights that include your right to: Seek, get and share information about your rights and about various human rights issues Have your ideas and opinions heard Have information about yourself kept private Be able to take part in peaceful protest You have these rights when you are online too!
Civil society organizations / non-governmental organizations	Charities or groups of people that work together to help children and others or fight for good causes like fighting poverty or climate change. These groups are not a part of the government.



# GLOSSARY

Term	What does it mean?
Disabilities	<p>As defined under the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), the term ‘persons with disabilities’ “is used to apply to all persons with disabilities including those who have difficulties with their body, mind, or senses (like seeing or hearing). These situations might last a long time and can make it harder for them to do the same things as others because of the way people, places, and rules are set up. It's important to make sure they have the same rights and chances to be part of the community as everyone else.</p>
Disinformation	<p>Spreading false information about a cause that can stifle the voices of activists. Commonly occurs in the form of political messaging distorting the goals of activists.</p>



# GLOSSARY

Term	What does it mean?
Sanctions at school (educational sanctions)	Penalizing students in their schoolwork for participating in activism (e.g., suspension for missing school to participate in a protest).
Ethnicity	Ethnicity is a way to describe a group of people who share things in common, like where their families come from, the language they speak, the traditions they follow, or even the foods they eat. For example, people from different ethnic groups might celebrate different holidays or wear different kinds of clothes that are important to them and their heritage.



# GLOSSARY

## Term

## What does it mean?

Free legal help  
(Pro bono legal  
services)

Legal services provided to those who cannot afford representation at no financial cost to that individual.

Lawsuits

Lawsuits are when someone takes another person to court or a judge to help them resolve a disagreement / argument (this could be because someone has not respected the human rights of the other person). Sometimes, lawsuits are used against human rights defenders in a malicious way to scare human rights defenders, so they stop defending human rights. Lawsuits can also be used by human rights defenders to protect themselves from attacks and threats.

Funding

Money provided by an organization or government for a particular purpose. For example, money provided by the government to an NGO for engaging children on a report about children's rights is funding.





# GLOSSARY

## Term

## What does it mean?

### Gender

Gender is about the social differences between women, girls, men, boys and people of different gender identities. People learn about these social differences as they grow up. These differences come from the way people in different cultures live, and they can change over time. Gender equality looks at understanding how situations might affect these people differently because of their gender identity and to ensure that they are not discriminated against because of it.

### Gender Identity

This term refers to how each person feels about their gender, which may or may not correspond with their sex assigned at birth. It is key to recognise that there are many diverse gender identities that do not fit into the binary genders of girls/women and boys/men and that are experienced by children and adults around the world. Gender can be shown through a person's identity (e.g., labels, pronouns), body (e.g., appearance) and expression (e.g., how you act, how you dress). While sex is determined by biology, gender is determined by society.



# GLOSSARY

Term	What does it mean?
Geographical region	A geographical region is a part of the world that shares similar features. It could be an area where the land looks the same, like mountains or deserts, or where people have similar ways of living, like speaking the same language or eating the same kind of food.
Governments	The people who make the rules for a given country or society and administer them. At a country level, a government can be a big system that encompasses a lot of institutions and leaders such as legislatures (the group of people that make laws), administration (those that help society run and provide services), judiciaries (courts where judges help settle conflicts between people or organizations, solve problems and find the right justice for a crime)
Human Rights Defenders (HRDs)	People standing up for their own human rights and the human rights of others. Can advance child rights through their own advocacy or by supporting CHRDs.



# GLOSSARY

Term	What does it mean?
Implementation	Taking an idea and putting it into practice in the real world.
Migration Status	Migration status refers to whether a person has moved from one place to another and their situation in their new location. It tells us if someone has come from a different country, city, or region to live in a new place. For example, someone might be a migrant if they moved to a new country to find a job, study, or be with their family.
Monitoring	Watching the progress of implementation to see how successful it is or to make sure that it is being done right.



# GLOSSARY

Term	What does it mean?
Network	<p>A group of organizations working together for a common goal. The Child Rights Connect Network for example, has 100 national, regional and international organizations that are working together to ensure that all children can fully enjoy their rights, as defined by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.</p>
Obligations	<p>Something, like a promise or a law, that requires someone to do something.</p>



# GLOSSARY

**Term**

**What does it mean?**

**Policy**

A plan or set of values, rules or intentions that help guide people as they make decisions

**Political opinion**

Political opinion is what a person believes about how their country should be run and what rules should be made. People can have different ideas about what is best for their community, and everyone should have the right to share their opinion.

**Protection  
mechanism (for  
HRDs)**

A way that the government makes sure that those who defend their human rights, or the rights of others are safe. Some protection mechanisms can also be put in place by NGOs or by the United Nations.



# GLOSSARY

## Term

## What does it mean?

### Public services

Services funded by governments or human rights organizations to provide for the general needs of a community (e.g., food stamps, public education, street cleaning, etc.).

### Race

Race is a way people are grouped based on physical features, like skin color, hair type, or where their family comes from. Even though people might look different, everyone should be treated equally, no matter their race.

### Religion

Religion is a set of beliefs that people have about the world, life, and what is important. It often includes believing in one or more gods, following special rules, and practicing certain traditions, like praying or celebrating holidays. Different religions have their own stories, teachings, and ways of understanding life.

### Report

A document that shares the results of research, investigations or analysis about a particular topic



# GLOSSARY

Term	What does it mean?
Repressive laws	Repressive laws are rules made by a government that limit or take away people's freedoms. These laws can make it harder for people to express their opinions, gather with others, or live the way they want. They can be unfair and may punish people for doing things that should be allowed
Safeguarding CHRDs	Protecting children from being exploited or abused. Prioritizing the needs of child defenders and ensuring adults working with children have the proper tools to appropriately communicate with CHRDs.
Secretary General of the United Nations	The person in the highest position of the UN that promotes the work of the UN, speaks out and acts for peace around the world. They work closely with all the countries to make sure they are fulfilling the mission of the UN.



# GLOSSARY

Term	What does it mean?
Sexual Orientation	Sexual orientation is about who a person feels love or attraction for. This can mean liking people of the same gender, a different gender, or more than one gender. It's different for everyone and can be a mix of feelings and connections with others. It can change over time.
Socioeconomic status	Considering both the social and economic factors that impact a person's opportunities in society and overall quality-of-life.
Strategy	A plan with a goal and real steps and actions that people need to take to achieve the goal.





# GLOSSARY

Term	What does it mean?
Strategic Litigation	Strategic litigation is a special kind of legal action taken with the goal of bringing about a big change in society. Instead of just helping one person or solving one small problem, strategic litigation tries to change unfair laws, protect people's rights, or set important examples for future cases. Lawyers and organizations often use strategic litigation to stand up for groups of people or to push for changes in the law that will benefit many others, not just the person involved in the lawsuit. It's like using courts as a tool to make the world fairer for everyone.
Sustainable Development Goals	A list of goals adopted by UN member states in 2015 which outlines how we can achieve peace and prosperity at a global level.



# GLOSSARY

Term	What does it mean?
United Nations (UN)	An international organization that was created in 1945 and is made up of over 190 countries that are known as member states. These countries work together to improve the world for everyone and protect human rights.
United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child	An international treaty that describes human rights for all children under 18 years old including economic, social, cultural, civil, and political rights.
Universal Periodic Review (UPR)	A process that the Human Rights Council uses to monitor and improve the human rights situation in every country around the world. They are universal because all states are reviewed, and all human rights are addressed.

