

Strategy 2011 – 2013

Introduction

The main aims of Childwatch International Research Network are to:

- **Identify and promote a research agenda on critical issues of global significance in children's lives**
- **Strengthen Child Research Capacity where it is weak or lacking.**
- **Make child research available, relevant and accessible for:**
 - **Civil society organisations engaged in child rights programming and in influencing policies**
 - **Policy makers responsible for developing rights based policies responding to the situation of children.**

Objective 1: Strengthened Interdisciplinary Child Research Capacity

Quality child research and the knowledge base for policy development have to speak to the realities of local contexts. Consequently, a strategy for capacity building will be based on efforts to develop models of research that respects diversity, are culturally relevant and scientifically competent.

Through providing financial and administrative support to regional networks and study groups, Childwatch will:

- Support documentation about the situation of children and demonstrate the importance and relevance of child research
- Promote child research in disciplines where a child perspective is weak or lacking
- Facilitate sharing of information related to research development and monitoring of indicators
- Assist the development and strengthening of regional and national child research centres, study groups and networks
- Support initiatives for exchange of data and joint research
- Encourage collaborative child research projects
- Organise capacity building of junior researchers as a separate activity and as an integrated part of study groups and regional networks
- Coordinate international research projects on children

Objective 2: Child Research Relevant for Implementation of Child Rights

Implementation of child rights as stated in the UN Convention on the rights of the child and other human rights instruments is dependent on professionally solid child research. Civil society, policy makers, service providers and those implementing programmes for children need access to information about and analysis of children's lives and well being.

In collaboration with civil society actors, governments, and international agencies we will contribute to generating, exchanging and applying research based knowledge about children.

Childwatch will:

- Organise dialogues between academics and civil society to analyse existing knowledge for action, and define new areas for urgent development
- Establish and support partnerships between research centres and between NGOs and research centres.
- Document and disseminate good practices based on child research
- Initiate and support events where child research is on the agenda
- Disseminate information through publications, the Internet and other channels.

Thematic Focus:

In this strategy period Childwatch will focus in the following themes¹:

- Governance and Participation
- Violence against children
- Protective environment

Objective 3: More resources allocated for Child Research

Childwatch advocates that more resources be devoted to child research. We will actively promote increased funding on the agendas of relevant local, national and international bodies.

In order to secure improved resources for child research especially in countries and regions where little exists, Childwatch International will:

¹ Documents elaborating the approach to work on these themes are under development. These documents will present guidelines for how the work will be organised in order to respond to the following principles:

- Facilitating partnerships between Key Institutions and with civil society agencies and institutions, external government, university, and professional communities
- Building research capacity on children's rights internationally
- Promoting children's perspectives and participation
- Conducting ethical research with children and young people
- Enabling Majority World engagement
- Strengthening Childwatch regional networks
- Building the research capacity of young researchers/academics

- Support the Key Institutions in their efforts to raise the demand for child research in their countries and regions
- Support the coordination of the regional and international development activities of existing associations and institutions involved in child research
- Document the potential and importance of improved child research capacity both nationally, regionally and internationally
- Support efforts to secure funding for collaborative research of global significance to impact policies for children.

Objective 4: A membership culture and structure supporting the overall objectives

Childwatch International is a network of research institutions governed by a culture of reciprocity and interest in learning from differences. Exchange of ideas and resources rooted in true respect for the strengths and competence of each institution is the basis for our work.

Childwatch International will seek to expand the membership base in the following regions: Latin America and Caribbean, Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, Middle East and North Africa.

Child research institutions in these regions will be encouraged to apply for membership, especially those that can play an active role in promoting child research in their own countries and regions.

In Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand additional Key Institutions will be considered given that the relevant institutions have top international expertise in research areas prioritised by Childwatch International. They should also represent access to resources of crucial importance for realising the objectives of Childwatch International. (People, networks, research agenda, publications etc.)

Key institutions in this part of the world are only of interest if they have a research policy and programme that includes work with and capacity building of institutions and researchers in Latin America and Caribbean, Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, Middle East and North Africa.

Annex: The Strategy Process

This strategy is being developed through a process informed and influenced by the following events, agencies and documents:

Children's Rights at a Cross-Roads Conference, 2009: Organised by Childwatch, in collaboration with the African Child Policy Forum, and the UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre this Global Conference was held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from November 30th - December 2nd 2009 to mark the 20th anniversary of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Over 300 participants representing academic institutions, international organisations, governments, non-governmental organisations, civil society and youth, met to renew their commitment to children's rights and the role of knowledge in advancing this cause. Key objectives of the Conference were to identify key dimensions of a global research agenda for the realisation of children's rights, to establish a framework for collaboration between policy makers, practitioners and academics for the improved use of research, and to develop models of collaboration with youth in participatory research. The Proceedings Report incorporates the Plenary Session Proceedings, the Roundtable Discussions and Recommendations and the Call for Action.²

Overseas Development Institute paper: A first draft of this paper³ was published as a background paper for the *Children's Rights at a Cross-Roads* Conference. In its final form it analyses the linkages between knowledge and policy in child rights issues in order to supplement current partial understanding of these dynamics in the sector. The ultimate aim of the paper is to safeguard children's rights by presenting frameworks and lessons through which to promote the appropriate design of rights strategies. In particular, the multiple types of knowledge that shape policy agendas are discussed, as well as the impacts of political context and the role of different actors at play in the policy arena. Finally, some broad suggestions on improving the child rights knowledge-policy interface are provided, with special attention towards knowledge generation, the translation of knowledge, and the institutionalisation of child rights.

Key Institutions Assembly 2009: This assembly was held in Addis Ababa on December 3rd – 4th 2009 following the conclusion of the *Children's Rights at a Cross-Roads* Conference. It was attended by 36 representatives from 24 Key Institutions. Some important reflections and priorities emerged from a group work session towards the end of the Assembly on the future of Childwatch, the central thematic issues we should focus on, our strategic goals, and the best ways of implementing these. These suggestions were recorded in the Assembly Minutes and are reflected in the new strategic foci developed by the Board.⁴

² The Proceedings Report is available at <http://www.africanchildinfo.net/conference/>

³ Harper, C., Jones, N., & Tincati, C. (2010, July 26). *Opportunities and Challenges in Promoting Policy- and Practice-relevant Knowledge on Child Rights* (Working Paper 318). London: Overseas Development Institute. www.childwatch.uio.no/publications/research-reports/odi-background-paper

⁴ www.childwatch.uio.no/events/key-institution-assembly/

The Research Council of Norway/Norad: During 2010 The Research Council of Norway and Norad conducted an assessment of four research networks.⁵ Childwatch was found to be “an important international venture that straddles quite well the lines between research, policy and practice. ... It is living up to the objectives set for its support by Norad” (p. 8). While Childwatch’s regional and thematic networks were considered “important driving forces” (p. 8), the evaluation concluded that Childwatch operates as a Consortium, rather than a Network. Our emphasis on research and advocacy has meant that networking has become a subsidiary activity, that we are oriented toward the interests of researchers and tend to disseminate our findings through conventional academic outlets. In particular, it was recommended that Childwatch further develop the ‘convenor’ function of a network⁶ so that our activities and dissemination move well beyond our own member institutions.

Consultations:

In conjunction with the CWI Board meeting in April 2010 discussions of future priorities and modalities for collaboration were organized with:

- **UNICEF:** Separate meetings with the departments for Policy and Practice, Child Participation and Child Protection
- **The UN Special Representative on Violence against Children**
- **Human Rights Watch**

⁵ The Role of Networks in Development Research: A Review of Four Norwegian Research Entities (2010).

⁶ The six Network functions are described as: community-building, filter, amplify, facilitate, provide and convene (p. 3).