

# 2021-2024 STRATEGIC PLAN

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To rise up to the level of children

INTERNATIONAL BUREAU FOR CHILDREN'S RIGHTS



To promote children's rights, we aim to strengthen child protection system and build the capacities of personnel working directly with children.



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# Realigning our strategies

The International Bureau for Children’s Rights (IBCR) is an international non-governmental organisation that has been working to instigate broad and sustainable improvements in child protection systems for more than 25 years. More specifically, we aim to make these systems more effective and child-friendly by focussing on children’s rights, collaborating with the people responsible for youth protection, by analysing protective environments and by facilitating capacity building for those who work directly with children.

The IBCR decided to expand its reach in 2015 and since then we have made lasting commitments in 45 countries through roughly 100 projects. Today, the IBCR is a driving force behind global initiatives to strengthen child protection systems. And yet, the organisation continually updates its practices to ensure that the changes we propose are truly sustainable and adequately respond to the concerns and expectations voiced by children. These objectives guided the IBCR team when we sat down to determine the organisation’s strategic priorities for 2021–2024.

The deliberations occurred just as several of the IBCR’s multi-year initiatives — namely those in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Burkina Faso, Costa Rica and Honduras — were ending. These major initiatives not only bolstered the IBCR’s reputation as an expert in strengthening national child protection systems, they also allowed us to enhance our ability to work in changing political, economic, security and health contexts.

It is not uncommon for the issue of youth protection to be notably absent from the priorities of the very institutions responsible for safeguarding children. For this reason, the IBCR aims to continue instigating positive change in the daily practice of those whose jobs involve interacting with children. Our goal is to help create child-friendly protection systems in which children’s needs, rights and development stages are taken into account. We aim to do so through child participation, permanent training for personnel interacting with youth, increased accountability at all levels, improved collaboration between the various stakeholders in child protection systems, and promoting the actions taken by agents of change.

2021-2024

## WHO BENEFITS FROM OUR PROJECTS?

The IBCR’s strategy is centred around key stakeholders in the child protection systems in our target countries or regions. These stakeholders include:



**Children:** All persons under the age of 18.



**Local and national civil society:** Local and community organisations, NGOs, associations, child protection networks, and agencies involved in safeguarding minors and promoting children’s rights in various spheres of influence.



**Influential people:** Formal and informal actors who influence social norms affecting children.



**Professionals working in fields targeted by our projects:** Defence and security forces, justice and social work personnel, personnel working in places where deprivation of liberty occurs, labour inspectors, border guards and other individuals whose day-to-day work involves interacting with minors.



**Formal and informal private sector:** Industries and entrepreneurs that come into contact with child exploitation and violence against children.



**Other persons involved in child protection:** Formal actors (teachers, caregivers, media, sports coaches, etc.) and informal actors (families, communities, youth groups, neighbourhood associations, religious and traditional leaders, etc.).



**National institutions:** governments, policymakers, legislators, standard setting organisations, and authorities tasked with establishing youth protection laws.

A world in which every child enjoys rights equally and in all circumstances.

- OUR VISION

OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES

*based on the Convention on the Rights of the Child*

- › Focus on child welfare and the best interests of the child
- › Non-discrimination
- › The right to life, survival and development
- › Respect for children's rights to participate and share their views

OUR FIELDS OF ACTIVITY



Children and the justice system



Children and emergency situations



Exploitation and violence against children



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RESPECT

INTEGRITY

INNOVATION

PROFESSIONALISM

- OUR VALUES

Promoting and protecting the rights of children around the world.

- OUR MISSION

## WHAT WE DO

### LISTEN

to local partners and work with them to develop innovative solutions that are respectful of children's rights and based on existing processes.

### STRENGTHEN

the capacities of frontline workers to address issues affecting children.

### PROMOTE

active participation from all stakeholders, including children.

### ENGAGE

individuals, communities and institutions so that they become agents of change.

### FOSTER

collaboration between the various professionals involved in youth protection.

### SUPPORT AND CHAMPION

reforms, action plans and legislation in favour of children's rights.



# ACTION

## OUR GUIDELINES

The IBCR has developed three distinct policies to guide, align and standardise its processes:

- A Child Protection Policy
- Guidelines for the Participation of Children in the IBCR's Project Management and Programmes
- An institutional Policy and Strategy for Ensuring Gender Equality in IBCR Initiatives

Going forward, these documents will underpin our strategy and ensure consistency in our approach.

The purpose of this strategic plan is to establish priorities and set clear guidelines for the IBCR's projects and activities over the next several years.

# THEORY

## PROBLEM

Children are not adequately protected because the applicable laws, protection systems and professionals within these systems do not take into consideration their rights, differences and ability to act.

## ACTIONS

**LISTEN** to local partners and work with them to develop innovative solutions that are respectful of children's rights and based on existing processes

**STRENGTHEN** the capacities of frontline community actors to address issues affecting children

**FOSTER** collaboration between the various professionals involved in child protection

**PROMOTE** active participation from all stakeholders, especially children

**ENGAGE** individuals, communities and institutions so that they become agents of change

**SUPPORT** et **CHAMPION** reforms, action plans and legislation in favour of children's rights

## EFFECTS

### ON CHILDREN

Children are **consulted on and involved** in projects

Spaces for participation are created and guarantee **inclusivity, representativity** and child **protection**

### ON PROFESSIONALS

Child-rights training courses are permanently added to professional training programs and enable participants **to acquire key competencies**

Institutional frameworks allow practitioners to apply their newly acquired skills

### ON INSTITUTIONS

The **advantages of cross-sector collaboration** are **recognised** and real benefits are achieved

Local authorities take action **to change social practices**

## RESULTS

Children are increasingly involved in **decisions that affect them** and are more likely to make significant and positive changes in their lives

**Actors in the child protection system:**  
-learn how to **uphold children's rights more effectively** in their work  
-**cooperate** more effectively and have a **better appreciation for each others' roles**

**Authorities** are increasingly aware of the **importance of having child rights-friendly social norms** and are committed to taking action in this area

**Agents of change within the community and national institutions** are **better trained and equipped** to mobilise on the issue of children's rights

**Suitable legislation** and national action plans are adopted and applied

## IMPACTS

Children receive better protection because of increased awareness of their rights within protection systems

Institutions are able to fulfill their responsibilities by acting in the best interests of children

### ON THE NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

**Legislative and normative changes in favour of child rights** are increasingly seen as well-founded and necessary

**Child rights** are a **key consideration in social issues**

### ON FORMAL AND INFORMAL ACTORS WITHIN CIVIL SOCIETY

The changed behaviour and practices of protection system workers lead to **positive change in the behaviour and practices of society** at large

A world in which every child enjoys rights equally and in all circumstances.

## VISION

# OF CHANGE



# Our ambition: To rise up to the level of children.

One of the fundamental principles of children's rights, which was introduced by Dr. Janusz Korczak, a pediatrician, writer and pioneer in the field, is that rather than bringing themselves down to a child's physical level, adults should elevate themselves to meet the child's capacities, feelings and rights. Children are the present. They are willing and able to claim their rights, express their views, form opinions and much more.

*"To rise up to the level of children"* is one of the IBCR's ambitions. This sentiment has always guided our work and will continue to do so for years to come. The idea is to bring the focus back to children within youth protection services and to encourage the various organisations, institutions and communities that interact with them to do the same.

## HOW WILL WE ACHIEVE THIS GOAL?

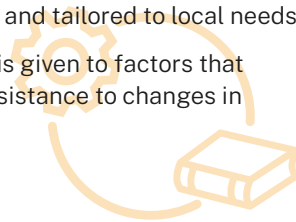
### 01 BY LISTENING TO CHILDREN AND ENSURING THEIR PARTICIPATION

- › Children are consulted on and/or involved in project oversight
- › Representativity and the best interest of the child are central considerations in child participation activities
- › A balance between child participation and child protection is maintained at every project stage



### 02 BY PROVIDING TOOLS AND TRAINING TO WORKERS WITH PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES FOR CHILDREN

- › Each project is designed to ensure that newly acquired capacities are maintained over the long term
- › Training materials and courses are practical, accessible and tailored to local needs
- › Consideration is given to factors that could cause resistance to changes in practices



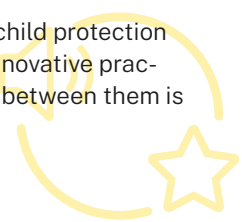
### 03 BY IMPROVING RESPONSIBILITY SHARING AND COLLABORATION BETWEEN PROJECT PARTICIPANTS

- › Institutional partner accountability is emphasised from the outset of each project
- › Partners are increasingly involved in tracking and achieving results
- › The project partners help develop and follow up on a post-project strategy



### 04 BY MOBILISING AND ENSURING RECOGNITION FOR AGENTS OF CHANGE

- › Lesser-known roles in child protection systems are promoted through various activities
- › Support is provided to actors who are in a position to facilitate changes in practices
- › Support is provided to child protection actors who introduce innovative practices and collaboration between them is strengthened



# Details of strategic priorities

- - Objectives and 2024 key indicators

# 01

## By listening to children and ensuring their participation

Child participation is central to the IBCR's approach. We value the right of girls and boys to freely express their opinions and to be actors in their own development, while taking into account their developmental stage, well-being and best interests. Children should be empowered in defending their protection and rights, and not simply be spectators to these processes. Since youth are able to understand and form opinions on decisions affecting them, they can meaningfully contribute to in the IBCR's projects aimed at promoting children's rights.

Ultimately, everything we do is aimed at improving youth protection and child rights enforcement practices. We ensure that children are involved in the process and that all changes are made with consideration to their trajectories and experiences. This means we are also accountable to these children. For the next several years, we are committed to increasing youth participation in both the execution and follow-up of our activities, so that their involvement goes beyond a simple consultation.

As a process, youth participation is continually evolving. In addition to being well thought out, inclusive, flexible and appropriate, it must make sense for them and for us. We must listen to what they have to say and ensure that they are protected at all times when participating in our activities.

*N.B.: Throughout the strategic plan, all indicators that do not target 100% should be understood as minimum targets, which the Bureau will strive to meet or exceed.*

### Children are consulted on and/or involved in project oversight

**100%** of new projects include an assessment of the status of children and the failings of the youth protection system in the target country or region, including information collected via consultations with children carried out in accordance with ethical best practices and key principles in youth protection.

**100%** of new projects include consultations with children who previously interacted with formal child protection institutions. These consultations occur at the project start-up, closing and at regular intervals during its execution.

An impact assessment is developed based on consultations with children occurring during and at the end of the project.

**50%** of the projects have a youth advisory committee that is representative of the affected population to provide feedback on the main strategic priorities and decisions.

**75%** of the youth involved in governance activities come away with an improved understanding of issues related to child protection and child rights.

### Representativity and the best interest of the child are central considerations in child participation activities

**75%** of the youth involved agree that they were given sufficient information and opportunity to participate effectively and that their views were taken into account.

### A balance between child participation and child protection is maintained at every project stage

**100%** of activities involving children organised by the IBCR and

**75%** of those organised by partners are subject to a preliminary risk analysis, risk mitigation measures and the IBCR's monitoring requirements.

# 02

## By providing tools and training to workers with professional responsibilities for children

**S**trengthening the capacities of professionals who work with children is one of the IBCR's core activities. We offer training on approaches for aligning practices with children's rights and we help develop and update tools that clarify and standardise the roles and responsibilities of the various actors in youth protection systems. In doing so, we enable professionals to do their jobs more effectively, gain a better understanding of children's rights and needs, and appreciate the special considerations specific to each individual. However, the IBCR's efforts are only worthwhile if they result in lasting changes in the everyday work and practices of the targeted institutions, organisations or professions. Lasting changes are key to establishing stable youth protection systems and services.

The IBCR has built its strategy for 2021–2024 around the notion of sustainability. We are committed to working with project partners to make sure initiatives and results are maintained over time. We will implement a robust advocacy strategy to ensure that the courses developed through our projects are permanently added to the basic training and professional development programmes for the targeted professions. We will allow all the actors in youth protection systems to access our assessments of the status of children and failings within these systems. And finally, we will share recommendations developed with stakeholders on required courses of action that are not within the IBCR's scope.

Each project is designed to ensure that newly acquired capacities are maintained over the long term

100% of our projects are designed to ensure that newly acquired capacities are maintained over the long term.

Training materials and courses are practical, accessible and tailored to local needs

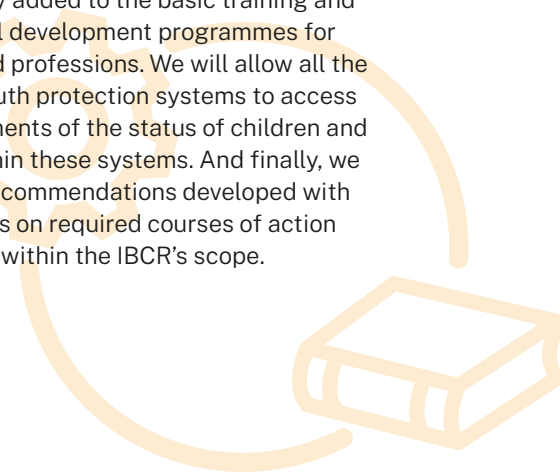
75% of the workers involved in our projects believe the tools and training are suited to their needs and easy to understand.

75% of the professionals who take the IBCR's training courses say it has prepared them to improve or change their practices to better protect children and safeguard their rights.

Consideration is given to factors that could cause resistance to changes in practices

100% of the risk factors identified in preliminary studies are taken into account when changes in practice are first introduced and reviewed on a regular basis.

75% of the professionals involved in the project say they are more aware of practices that infringe on children's rights, including in the area of gender equality.



# PRIORITY N°3



**T**he IBCR uses a collaborative approach in each of its initiatives. This involves ongoing collaboration with local child protection actors in all our target countries. Before recommending solutions or offering support, we actively seek their input and assess their specific needs and constraints.

Given that collaboration is fundamental for our work, we share responsibility for the success and sustainability of our initiatives with our strategic partners. We believe that sharing responsibility and emphasising collaboration with and between local partners leads to a stronger sense of agency for the project initiatives and results. This in turn translates into stronger engagement, even once the project ends, and promotes a longer-lasting and more far-reaching impact.

//////  
**Institutional partner accountability is emphasised from the outset of each project**  
//////

**90%** of project partners help develop a strategy to promote responsibility sharing and create sense of ownership.

//////  
**The project partners help develop and follow up on a post-project strategy**  
//////

**75%** of projects include a post-project strategy requiring input from the project partners.

//////  
**Partners are more involved in tracking and achieving results**  
//////

**100%** of projects provide for annual follow-up meetings with partners to review the action plan and make adjustments aimed at achieving better results.

**100%** of multi-year projects identify an oversight body tasked with tracking progress and ensuring results are achieved.

# 03

## By improving responsibility sharing and collaboration between project participants

The IBCR is committed to identifying and promoting the efforts made by workers within child protection systems to improve child safety and welfare at all levels.

Lesser-known roles in child protection systems are promoted through various activities

80% of the professionals and other actors within the child protection system who attended the IBCR's activities believe the experience allowed others to gain a better appreciation of what they do and the positive role they play in child protection.

Support is provided to actors who are in a position to facilitate changes in practices

85% of institutional and non-institutional actors say they helped make practices more child-friendly by the end of the project.

Support is provided to child protection actors who introduce innovative practices and collaboration between them is strengthened

85% of the actors who promote and implement innovative practices believe they have been strengthened by the project.

Of the various dysfunctions identified within the child protection system at the project outset through consultations with children, at least five are in the process of being resolved thanks to changes in the practices and behaviours of the workers who took the IBCR training.

The IBCR defines an agent of change as a person who has the ability to spark social change, particularly in the area of child protection, thanks to their profession, field of work, or their status in the workplace or in society. This includes all workers with professional responsibilities for children, members of institutions, opinion leaders and religious leaders, as well as individuals within formal and informal youth protection systems who can be sensitised and mobilised to become agents of change. Creating lasting, child-friendly change within youth protection systems is dependent on the combined efforts of these agents of change and their influence on social norms and perceptions of child rights, and on legal, economic and political frameworks.

The IBCR often works with professionals whose contributions are not sufficiently appreciated within child protection systems, such as members of armed forces, social workers, workers in the informal economy, labour inspectors, and prison workers. By upgrading their skills and the procedures governing interactions within youth protection systems, we can increase awareness of what these workers do and strengthen the social fabric that safeguards children.

04  
By mobilising agents of change and ensuring their contributions are recognised



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DES DROITS DES ENFANTS  
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