

THE COMPETENCY-BASED APPROACH FOR DEVELOPING **CHILD PROTECTION** OCCUPATIONS AND SERVICE UNITS

Using the competency-based approach to develop policies, directives, decisions, plans and programmes applicable to child protection professionals and service units.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This document describes how to use a competency-based development approach to strengthen the priorities, directives, decisions, plans and programmes of child protection professionals and services. It was made possible thanks to the support and active participation of a broad range of partners to whom the International Bureau for Children’s Rights (IBCR) is deeply grateful. The IBCR would like to thank the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie for its technical and financial support throughout the process.

The IBCR also wishes to thank the various partner institutions that took part in the process, including the Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, Penal Reform International, the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, UNICEF, the Office of the UN Secretary General on Violence against Children, Terre des Hommes and the Working Group on Justice for Children.

It is also important to highlight the significant contributions made by many other non-governmental organisations, state departments and child protection specialists from all sectors. Representing 19 countries, these individuals and organisations generously shared their time and knowledge to assist with the preparation of this document.

In addition, the IBCR wishes to thank the members of its Board of Directors, namely Joanne Doucet, Théophile Nkyemba, Jean-Claude Legrand and Ghizlane Benjelloun, whose dedication and valued input enabled a comparative analysis of the practices used in Europe, Africa, the Middle East and the Americas.

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FOREWORD

Organisation internationale de la Francophonie

The Organisation internationale de la Francophonie (OIF) promotes and protects children's rights in French-speaking countries, while ensuring that the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) are respected. Over the past several years, the OIF has assisted with training and capacity-building initiatives for the various types of professionals who are responsible for the effective implementation of this document.

In doing so, the OIF has supported the outstanding work carried out by the International Bureau for Children's Rights (IBCR) and its broader efforts to promote competency-based development for child protection professionals and service units.

From 2009 to 2020, various initiatives were carried out to identify the core competencies for security forces, social services workers, justice personnel and people working

with children deprived of liberty, in accordance with the practices and procedures established in international child protection standards. Once this step was complete, the OIF decided to add its voice to the reflection on how to better integrate these competencies into the priorities, directives, decisions, plans and programme specific to child protection occupations and services.

This report responds to a key issue, namely: how to use existing reference frameworks at the technical, operational and management levels. One of the strengths of this report is that it goes beyond defining core competencies for a specific sector and identifies areas of cross-sector overlap, as well as multisectoral tools and realistic opportunities for strengthening child-friendly practices.

The OIF hopes this report will be of use to child protection workers around the world, helping reinforce the capacity-building dynamics and strategies for all professionals, both male and female, who interact with children, including in key areas such as child participation, the best interest of the child and personalisation for each child's specific needs.

The OIF is delighted to have had this opportunity to collaborate with the IBCR once again and encourages all of its partners to establish new roadmaps or action plans enabling competency-based development for their child protection services and professionals, drawing on the recommendations and real-life experiences presented in this report.

It is an additional step forward in our efforts to promote and protect child rights and, ultimately, to defend human rights.

Antoine Michon

Director of Political Affairs and Democratic Governance
Organisation internationale de la Francophonie



International Bureau for Children's Rights

A major and global challenge persists in child protection: how can we be accountable to those we are supposed to protect?

Around the world, government ministries, departments and teams are looking to increase procedural efficiency while working within financial, political and other constraints. But in the course of optimising processes, it can be easy to lose sight of what matters most: what are the realities of the children who come into contact with child protection institutions?

A child's experience with the judicial system, social services or security forces can have a fundamental effect on their development. Therefore, services must be tailored to ensure children's rights are upheld and their specific needs are met. However, the time that a child spends in contact with institutions is only a fraction of their lives and personal history. For this reason, it is crucial to look into the child's everyday reality to ensure they are provided with adequate support.

All child protection services must be child-friendly. Providing effective protection requires special skills and an in-depth review of processes and procedures. More specifically, it involves evaluating and taking into consideration the best interests of the child and allowing children to participate in decisions that affect them without putting them at risk. It also involves using language and tools that are appropriate for the child's level of development. Finally, it involves creating a work culture in which children feel protected and able to report violence or abuse without compromising their wellbeing. Achieving all of this is only possible with input from trained people and appropriate mechanisms. The required core competencies must be learned and developed, and not improvised.

The International Bureau for Children's Rights (IBCR) has worked to strengthen child services around the world for more than 10 years. This has included defining core

competencies in child protection for defence and security forces (2011), social services workers (2017), justice personnel (2019), and people working with children deprived of their liberty (2020).

While this work was initiated by the IBCR, it was conducted jointly by various actors in the targeted sectors and in partnership with the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie (OIF). This collaborative effort continues today and now focuses on integrating the competency-based approach into the key occupations and service units that interact with children.

How can organisations update their practices and internal culture to make accountability to children part of their core missions? This is the question that guided our reflections over the past year. This report outlines our proposals, which draw on lessons learned and lived experiences.



Théophane Nikyèma

Chairman of the Board of Directors
International Bureau for Children's Rights



Guillaume Landry

Director General
International Bureau for Children's Rights

United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence Against Children

Children of all ages come into contact with protection systems, especially those who are at risk of or involved in violence or other crimes as victims, witnesses or perpetrators.

Therefore, workers who interact with children—including police officers, gendarmes, health care or educational staff, judges, prosecutors, social services professionals and people working with children deprived of liberty—must be sensitised accordingly and provided with suitable tools, guidelines and training. This involves an ongoing process of building shared practices and knowledge, and monitoring frontline workers to make sure children’s rights are protected during the provision of services.

As the United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, I strongly believe in the need to develop framework documents based on best practices and real-life experiences. These will enable us to develop integrated child protection systems that are age-appropriate, child-centric and child-friendly, and in which children are treated as full subjects of the law.

The core competency reference documents established through the International Bureau for Children’s Rights’ initiatives are a valuable contribution to the development of these frameworks. Moreover, this report goes a step further by proposing concrete actions that protection service units can take to ensure that children’s rights are exercised everywhere and in all circumstances.

Child protection is dependent on the availability, accessibility, adaptability, acceptability and quality of the services offered to children. These services must respond to their needs while respecting their rights and best interests. This report addresses all of these critical issues.

I encourage states to invest in the development and professionalisation of child-facing workers by drawing from the roadmaps outlined in this report and the recommended uses of the core competency reference documents, while taking into account the factors for success mentioned herein.



Najat Maalla M’jid
United Nations Special Representative
of the Secretary-General on Violence
Against Children

INTRODUCTION TO THE COMPETENCY-BASED APPROACH

DEVELOPING CORE COMPETENCY FRAMEWORKS FOR FOUR CHILD PROTECTION SECTORS

Since 2009, the International Bureau for Children’s Rights (IBCR) has led several consultations with the support of the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie (OIF) and hundreds of experts from around the world. These consultations have resulted in the development of **four international frameworks on core competencies for effective child protection**.

In 2011, these consultations led to the definition of core competencies for security forces that would enable them to make their practices more child-friendly. In 2016, a similar exercise was conducted to define the roles and responsibilities of social services professionals in relation to their interactions with children. The IBCR’s work core competency development work extended to justice personnel in 2018 and persons working with children deprived of liberty in 2020. Subsequent to each of these consultations, reference documents were published so that the established core competencies could be shared more broadly.

These four reference documents are global in scope and aim to be sufficiently inclusive so that government ministries, agencies, organisations, and institutions can use

them to shape their professional development initiatives. These documents support the capacity-building process for practitioners who come into contact with children every day, and help translate child protection principles, laws and standards into concrete skills, attitudes and behaviours. Already, these reference documents are having an impact in each of the countries where they are used, including Afghanistan, Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Canada, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Honduras, Jordan, Madagascar and Tunisia.

So far, the IBCR has trained more than 60,000 technical practitioners and policymakers using these frameworks and the competency-based development approach that underpins them. These capacity-building initiatives have led to changes in the practices used by the targeted professionals and their interactions with children. What is more, these tools are also being used in the capacity-building exercises of early partners such as UNICEF, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Save the Children, Terre des Hommes, the Committee on the Rights of the Child, Defence for Children International and the United Nations Department of Peace Operations.



“All personnel in contact with children need to realise that each child is a full subject of the law and that their rights must be protected at all times, regardless of the circumstances. This idea is central to the core competency reference documents for actors in the child protection system.”

- **François Crépeau**,
Professor of Public International Law at McGill University, Canada (2020)



INTEGRATING THE COMPETENCY-BASED APPROACH AT THE DECISION-MAKING LEVEL

Bolstered by these achievements, the IBCR initiated a new phase in 2021 by translating the four existing reference documents into practical roadmaps intended to help decision-makers, managers, directors and department heads appreciate the importance of **using a competency based approach to update their strategic priorities and directives** and initiate significant and sustainable changes within their teams.

In all its interventions, IBCR encourages a holistic approach to strengthening child protection systems. This

is based on the idea that the sum of each worker’s actions—whether they be carried out by a police officer, social worker, magistrate, prison guard or other professional—exceeds the results achieved independently in each sector. Therefore, it is not enough to reinforce skills, review the work environment or the procedures used by isolated groups of professionals. In order for children to have access to quality services that truly uphold their rights and take their experiences into account, the entire system must be rethought.

In this sense, this profound transformation hinges on decision-makers, managers, departments and other authorities. Before we can strengthen the child rights competencies in so-called “frontline” services—i.e., those that involve direct contact with children—the authorities responsible for promoting competency-based development

› An international effort

With this in mind, the Bureau mobilised nearly 40 child protection specialists in October 2021 to brainstorm, share experiences and propose concrete courses of action on **how to use the competency-based approach to develop the occupations and service units involved in child protection and how to transform existing guidelines into practical roadmaps**. An online workshop¹ was held with members of national organisations and international child protection agencies from 11 countries. The participants reflected on how technical partners and sponsors could promote the competency-based approach in the projects and programmes they developed, implemented, funded and/or supported.

In addition to the online consultations, a face-to-face workshop was held in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, with

must adopt a strong and structuring vision.

It is therefore important to determine more precisely how decision-making, monitoring, planning, and methods for addressing and promoting this approach affect the desired outcome.

decision-makers, managers and department heads representing the targeted sectors in eight French-speaking African countries, namely Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire, Mali, Niger, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Senegal, Togo and Tunisia. The workshop led to the development of recommendations on how to promote the use of the competency-based approach within child protection teams and programmes in the concerned countries.

Participants discussed various issues related to the existing competency frameworks, including workflows, training, the need to create collaborative work modes, multi-sectoriality, accountability and child protection measures. They also prepared a realistic plan for achieving the desired changes. These various topics are addressed in this document.



“How can police officers interact and communicate more effectively with children, their families and their communities? How can social workers adapt their interventions to suit each child’s needs and circumstances? How can prosecutors and judges tailor their procedures to children’s needs, developmental levels and realities? And how can personnel working with children deprived of liberty provide them with better protection and keep them safe from harm? The competency-based development approach gives us the tools to address these questions and use them to improve the professional practice of those involved in child protection.”

- **Joanne Doucet**,
Expert on strengthening child protection systems and IBCR board member (2021)



1. The various experts who participated in this initiative are listed on page 62.



02

THE COMPETENCY BASED APPROACH

02

WHAT ARE CORE COMPETENCIES?²

The term “competency” is used to describe the knowledge, experiences, skills and behaviours required to perform effectively in a given job, role or situation. Competencies are the various characteristics, attitudes, capabilities, skills, knowledge and behaviours that a person already has or may acquire.

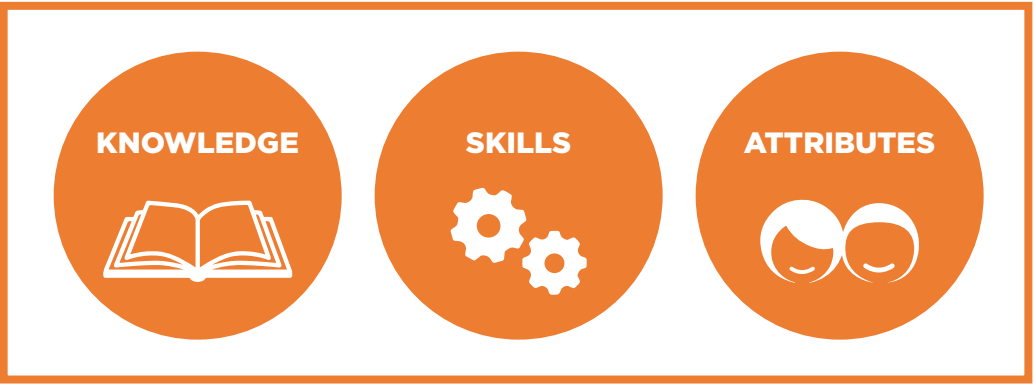
There are three facets to each competency:

- » **Knowledge**, is information that a person has acquired. It involves **KNOWING** a law, legal provision, procedure, concept, mechanism, partner, principle, structure or obligation. Having knowledge about something increases a person’s capabilities. It is a starting point from which professionals can take action. Child-protection personnel must have knowledge on child development phases, legal provisions applicable to children in specific international conventions, and the concepts of the best interest of the child and child participation.
- » **Skills** are a person’s ability to apply knowledge and act on it. Skill is synonymous with ability. Practically, this means knowing **HOW** to apply or make use of

a law, legal provision, procedure, concept, mechanism, partnership, principle or obligation. Being skilful involves effectively executing a practice in one’s everyday work. To support skill development, training programmes should not be purely theoretical and learners must be prepared to address specific issues that arise in their line of work. Child-protection personnel must be skilled at interviewing children, involving a child’s family in a manner that is appropriate and referring cases to other professionals as needed.

- » **Attributes** are all of a practitioner’s qualities, **ATTITUDES** and behaviours. They can be innate or learned through training and experience. Practically, this means demonstrating an attitude that facilitates the application of a law, legal provision, procedure, concept, notion, mechanism, partnership, principle or obligation. By demonstrating a specific attribute, a person shows they are able to adjust their approach, language, body language, and the way in which they apply a competency. Being empathetic, a good listener and respectful are examples of attributes.

COMPETENCY



The first step in identifying core competencies for a given sector is to prepare a list of the professional competencies that an individual needs in order to fulfil their duties effectively. These competencies must then be defined in accordance with a detailed analysis of the circumstances surrounding that individual’s work. Special attention must be paid to the way definitions are formulated. The right

level of language must be used and definitions must cover all three aspects of a competency. When combined, the competencies provide a comprehensive set enabling the professional to fulfil their professional duties effectively, which necessarily involves adopting a child-friendly approach.

2. The definitions provided below are intended to facilitate the understanding of this report and may differ from the conventional meaning of the terms. Helpful resources include: *Dictionnaire Larousse*, www.icem-pedagogie-freinet.org, and *La construction des compétences*, www.pedagogie.ac-nantes.fr (2012).

WHY IS IT NECESSARY TO DEFINE CORE COMPETENCIES?



“In order to effectively protect and care for children, you need to offer quality services and meet their needs in a manner that takes into account their rights and best interests. This means that personnel working with children, regardless of the institution they report to, must be suitably trained and equipped to know how to interact with children, adapt and coordinate their interventions to suit the needs, profiles and personal situations of the children in their care. Investing in training on how to act, interact and react in response to the various backgrounds and profiles of children, while protecting their rights and best interests, is essential for strengthening child protection systems.”

- **Najat Maalla M'jid**,
United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children (2020)



Having a clear reference document on core competencies can be very useful. For example, it can help hiring authorities prepare job descriptions, determine what qualities candidates should have or help supervisors guide employees in their capacity development in order to be more effective in their jobs. Moreover, having a series of well defined core competencies can be helpful when creating or updating training programmes and when assessing whether training is leading to improved services and trajectories for children within the protection system.

Core competencies can also be used to establish a standard level of service to better protect the public, evaluate services, reform practices and, in this context, ensure that the child’s experience is a key consideration when planning work methods and services. By adopting a core competency framework, professional organisations can structure and standardise their interventions involving children and, in particular, ensure that children participate in the process.

Finally, using a competency-based approach is an effective way for professionals to strengthen their capacities pertaining to children’s rights. While different competencies are needed for different professions, certain core competencies are essential for all personnel working in child protection. All of these workers play an essential role in the child’s journey by respecting and upholding their rights. Regardless of their occupation, they all have the same final objective: to protect the best interests of the child. For this reason, all workers who interact with children must follow an established methodology, take into account each child’s specific needs, and ensure that the rights of children are respected in every regard in their interventions.



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THE ORIGINS OF THE COMPETENCY-BASED APPROACH

Child protection systems



Every child in the world grows up within a protection system made up of girls, boys, women and men, all of whom have a role to play and responsibilities to uphold in that protective environment. As defenders of their own rights, children are at the heart of this system, in which families, communities, the state and the international community all intervene, both formally and informally. Any initiative to strengthen child protection systems must involve assessing these various stakeholders, providing them with the tools they need and strengthening their capacities so that each actor—shopkeepers, grandparents, sisters, brothers, lawmakers, teachers, neighbours, police officers, lawyers, traditional or religious leaders, and journalists—can effectively fulfil their role in protecting children and promoting their rights.

In order to assist children while protecting their rights and best interests, child protection professionals need to have adequate training, skills and knowledge on children's rights. This is why the IBCR has been working

since 2009 to define the core competencies that personnel in four key child protection sectors need in order to make their practices more child-friendly.

The five documents presented below are available on the IBCR website in French, English and Spanish³: www.ibcr.org/publications.

3. The guide for security forces is only available in English and French.

SECURITY FORCES

In November 2009, on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, members of the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie (OIF), Francopol, the IBCR and a dozen police and gendarmerie academies from French-speaking Africa met in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. The objective of this meeting was to raise participants' awareness of children's rights and the principle of the best interest of the child in the context of police practice. At this conference, participants realised that while police forces were familiar

Regional workshops and specialist meetings

After collecting these observations, the three organisations furthered the process by holding a regional workshop in Cotonou, Benin, in December 2010. It was attended by decision makers and educators from a dozen countries, who together analysed the child rights training framework for security forces. This analysis led to the development of a core competency reference framework for security forces. The document was validated in 2011 by specialists from the field (psychologists, security personnel, United Nations representatives, civil society representatives and public authorities) and adopted that same year by approximately 60 police and gendarmerie training schools.

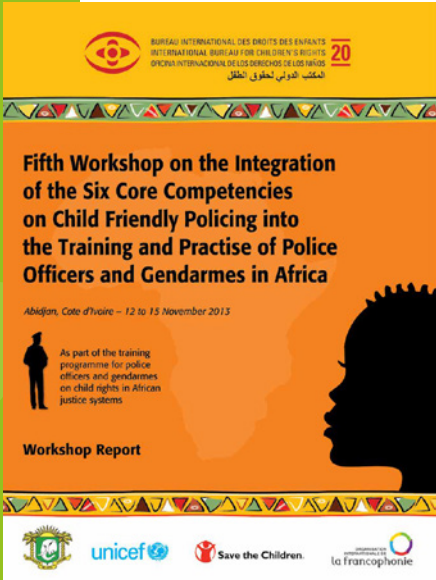
with the vocabulary associated with children's rights, they were less clear on the actual meaning of these terms and how to apply the concepts they represented. Consequently, police officers were not entirely committed to the principles behind the terms. The situation is partly due to the lack of training on children's rights. Training is irregular, short in duration and not evaluated. It doesn't lead to child-friendly practices in the professional practice of police and gendarmerie officers.

The resulting reference document was also produced as a detailed report and made publicly available so that the core child-rights competencies could be more readily used to develop training programmes for security forces in the concerned countries. Since then, it has informed the work of the IBCR and various other international organisations specialising in promoting children's rights within juvenile justice and child protection systems.

This reflection on the core competencies for security forces was the first step in a series of similar consultations in other areas of child protection. Furthermore, competency-based development has become fundamental to the IBCR's work.

CORE COMPETENCIES FOR SECURITY FORCES

- 1 | Knowledge, promotion and implementation of children's rights
- 2 | Knowledge and application of the rules of ethics and professional conduct
- 3 | Knowledge of children
- 4 | Interaction and communication with children, their families and communities
- 5 | Collaboration with all formal and informal stakeholders towards a coordinated intervention
- 6 | Efficient use of working tools adapted to children



SOCIAL SERVICES

From 2014 to 2016, the IBCR partnered with UNICEF, Terre des hommes and International Social Service to carry out a similar exercise, but this time for the social services sector. An initial discussion workshop was held in Senegal in June 2014 to allow various participating agencies to share their approaches and understandings of the issues that are particular to this field. Case studies were then developed on a country-by-country basis to better define the competency development plan and training programme for social services professionals.

In 2016, a regional workshop was held in Cotonou, Benin, with representatives from 10 countries and the four organisations that initiated the process. Together, they validated the core competencies needed by social services workers in order to effectively interact with children. Since then, the IBCR has further developed the reference document by adding detailed information about the knowledge, skills and attributes related to each competency. The IBCR has disseminated the document in 10 countries introducing institutional reforms aimed at enhancing the professionalisation of social services professionals.



CORE COMPETENCIES FOR SOCIAL SERVICES PERSONNEL

- 1 | Promoting and applying children's rights
- 2 | Acting ethically and according to professional conduct rules
- 3 | Interacting and communicating effectively with children
- 4 | Adapting work methods to each child's needs and personal circumstances
- 5 | Collaborating with other sectors and effectively coordinating services
- 6 | Making effective and appropriate use of work tools specific to the social services sector
- 7 | Communicating and working with families, groups and communities

JUSTICE PERSONNEL

The IBCR's work on strengthening training programmes for justice personnel in several countries revealed a lack of consensus on what knowledge and skills needed to be developed. As a result, a reflection exercise was initiated in 2016. Several workshops were held in Burkina Faso, Costa Rica and the Democratic Republic of Congo, as these three countries had already begun updating their child-rights training programmes for justice personnel. Judges, prosecutors and juvenile justice stakeholders from these countries contributed to the preliminary process, providing insights on their needs and experiences.

These consultations resulted in a preliminary list of core competencies. In 2018, justice and child protection professionals were invited to a workshop in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, aimed at improving and validating the IBCR's preliminary work on the core competencies. The group then broke these competencies down into knowledge, skills and attitudes. Thanks to the diversity of participants—who represented 19 countries, various professional backgrounds (law, security, social work, psychology and health care) and agency types (civil society, government and international organisations)—a broad

range of viewpoints helped shape the competency grid, ensuring that it was both comprehensive and relevant. These meetings led to the creation of a report on core

child rights competencies for justice personnel, which was published in 2018.



“Magistrates are leaders who oversee all judicial procedures involving children. In order to achieve child-friendly justice, we must develop the skills of these magistrates, identify best practices applicable to their profession, and appeal to their sense of personal responsibility and dedication.”

- Philip Jaffé,
Director, Interfaculty Centre for the Rights of the Child at the University of Geneva and member of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (2018)



CORE CHILD-RIGHTS COMPETENCIES
FOR JUDGES AND PROSECUTORS

An initiative aimed at promoting child-friendly justice



CORE COMPETENCIES FOR JUSTICE PERSONNEL

- 1 | Interacting and communicating with children in an appropriate manner
- 2 | Adapting procedures to the child’s specific needs, level of development and circumstances
- 3 | Interpreting the rules of law through the use of national, regional and international case law and legal instruments relating to children
- 4 | Taking action to effectively promote and protect the rights of the child
- 5 | Optimising cooperation with formal and informal actors in the juvenile justice and child protection systems
- 6 | Acting ethically and complying with judicial conduct principles relating to children

PERSONNEL WORKING WITH CHILDREN DEPRIVED OF LIBERTY

Building on its experience developing core competencies for security forces, justice, social services sectors, the IBCR began a fourth work phase in 2020. This new initiative aimed to reflect on and formally establish core competencies for personnel working with children deprived of liberty. 70 individuals working in this sector and in child protection were invited to participate in a consultative

process to determine the core competencies required in their occupations. The process involved a unique hybrid delivery model, with a series of online consultations with representatives from some 30 countries as well as an in-person workshop in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, attended by specialists from eight French-speaking African countries (Burkina Faso, Senegal, Mali, Niger, Togo,

Benin, Côte d’Ivoire and Chad). During the week-long consultation, participants identified the situations and settings in which children may be deprived of liberty, the workers who interact with them, including their roles and responsibilities, and the factors that need to be considered in such situations.

As a result of the discussions, eight core competencies were identified to help workers who interact with minors deprived of liberty make their practices more protective of children’s rights. A report was subsequently published with complete details on these competencies, including the associated knowledge, skills and attributes.



CORE COMPETENCIES FOR PERSONNEL WORKING
WITH CHILDREN DEPRIVED OF LIBERTY

- 1 | Being familiar with and applying national and international laws and standards relating to child deprivation of liberty
- 2 | Tailoring interventions to uphold the rights and reflect the trajectory of each child deprived of liberty
- 3 | Creating an environment that is conducive to effective communication and interactions with children
- 4 | Protecting and safeguarding children deprived of liberty and reducing the risk of harm
- 5 | Adapting applicable tools, procedures and systems to the needs of each child deprived of liberty
- 6 | Promoting and facilitating child reintegration and rehabilitation in each intervention
- 7 | Collaborating with all formal and informal actors, including institutional workers, family members and community representatives, to ensure that interventions are effectively coordinated
- 8 | Being familiar with and adhering to the code of conduct applicable to personnel working with children deprived of liberty



“For me, as a representative of a South American NGO that provides training to various actors in the child protection system, this workshop was a unique opportunity to share thoughts and experiences with my counterparts from the Americas and Africa. We were able to identify the similarities in our practices, as well as the common challenges we all face. The methodology used for developing the core competency frameworks is crucial for reaching consensus and creating a model that can be used in other contexts.”

- Andréa Querol, President of CHS Alternativo, Peru (2020)

FOUR SECTORS, FOUR PILLARS OF CHILD PROTECTION

Even though core competencies vary from one sector to another, all workers in the child protection system have a role to play in shaping the trajectories of children. What is more, they all have the same goal: **to safeguard the best interests of the child**. For this reason, the IBCR has developed a guide that sets out the core competencies common to the four target sectors. It provides an overview of the similar knowledge, skills and attributes that people in these occupations need to effectively protect child welfare, while also underscoring the importance of multisectoral collaboration.







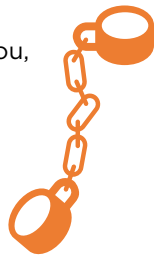
The core competency grids presented above⁴ were developed collectively and are intended to be comprehensive, universal and applicable to all, but they can and should be adapted to suit the context and on-the-ground reality in each country.

In many countries, one of the main challenges is not the absence of legal texts, but rather a lack of a specific framework explaining how to apply the texts in practical terms. Laws are often written in a very general way and,

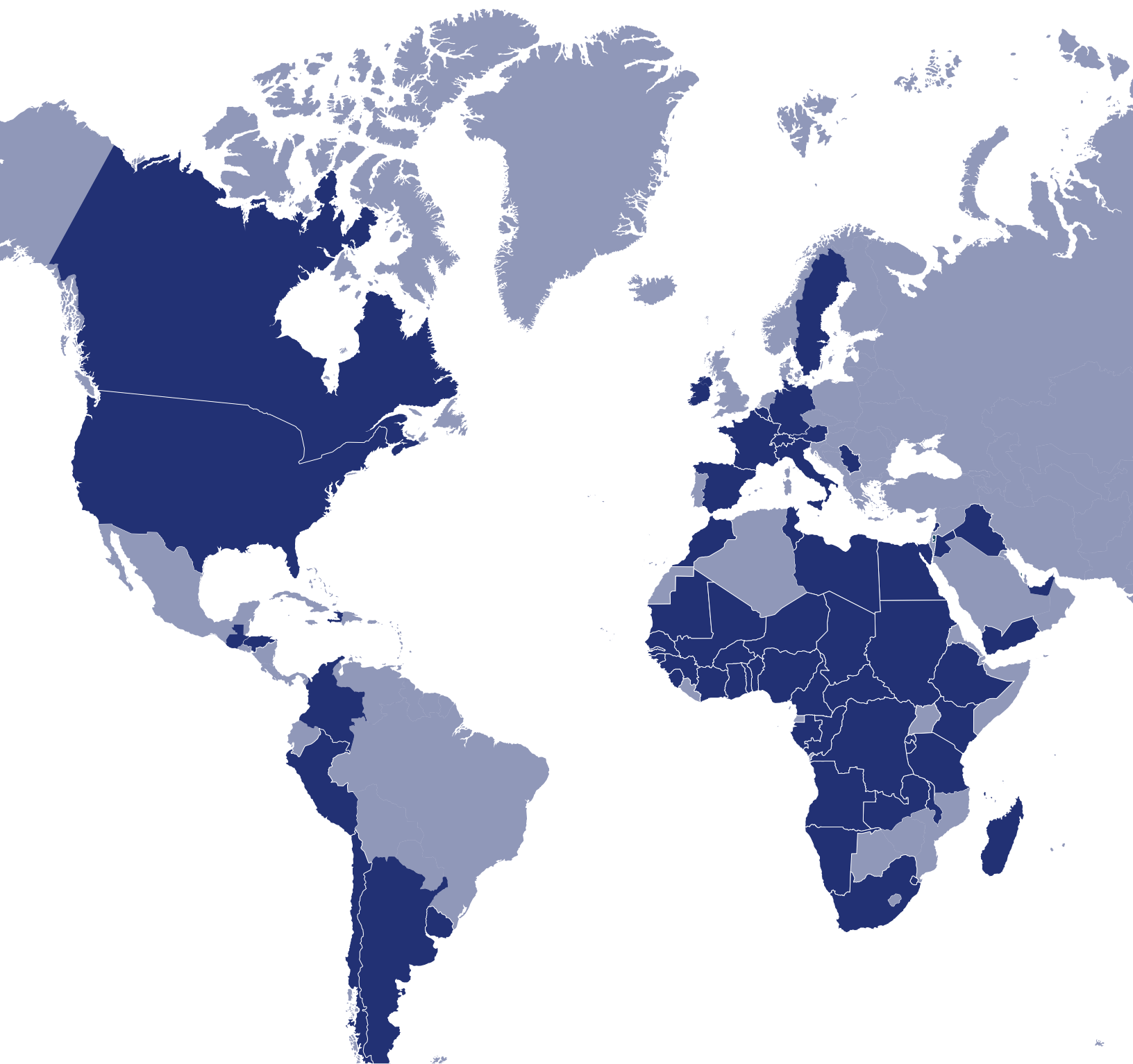
as a result, a given provision may be applied in different ways, depending on how it is interpreted. The reference documents resulting from the IBCR-led projects set a foundation for establishing clear guidelines for professionalising interventions, adapting practices and ensuring that child rights are consistently upheld in the four targeted sectors. The reference document does not describe an ideal, but rather it summarises the primary core competencies that personnel interacting with children need to have in order to adequately fulfil their duties.

4. Detailed descriptions of each competency—including the associated knowledge, skills and attributes—are available in each sector report as well as in the comprehensive report featuring all four competency frameworks. (These documents are available in French, English and Spanish on the IBCR website: www.ibcr.org/publications).

History of the consultative workshops led by the IBCR

2009	CONSULTATION ON CHILD RIGHTS TRAINING FOR POLICE FORCES - Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso		WORKSHOP ON THE INTEGRATION OF THE SIX CORE COMPETENCIES ON CHILD-FRIENDLY POLICING INTO THE TRAINING AND PRACTICE OF POLICE OFFICERS AND GENDARMES IN AFRICA - Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire	
2010	REGIONAL WORKSHOP ON THE APPLICATION OF INTERNATIONAL JUVENILE JUSTICE STANDARDS FOR POLICE IN WESTERN AND CENTRAL AFRICA - Cotonou, Benin		2014 REGIONAL WORKSHOP ON SOCIAL WORK TRAINING - Dakar, Senegal	
2011	EXPERT WORKSHOP ON CHILD RIGHTS TRAINING FOR SECURITY FORCES IN FRENCH-SPEAKING AFRICA - Dakar, Senegal		2016 REGIONAL WORKSHOP ON CORE CHILD PROTECTION COMPETENCY AND CAPACITY BUILDING FOR SOCIAL SERVICES PROFESSIONALS - Cotonou, Benin	
	REGIONAL WORKSHOP ON CHILD RIGHTS TRAINING FOR POLICE AND GENDARMES IN FRENCH-SPEAKING AFRICA - Niamey, Niger		2018 EXPERT WORKSHOP ON CORE COMPETENCIES FOR JUSTICE PERSONNEL - Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso	
2012	REGIONAL WORKSHOP ON THE INTEGRATION OF CORE CHILD-FRIENDLY POLICING COMPETENCIES INTO POLICE AND GENDARME TRAINING AND PRACTICES IN AFRICA - Lomé, Togo		2020 CONSULTATIVE PROCESS ON THE CORE COMPETENCIES FOR PERSONNEL WORKING WITH CHILDREN DEPRIVED OF LIBERTY - Regional workshop in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso - International online consultation conducted in three languages (French, English, Spanish)	
2013	REGIONAL WORKSHOP REPORT ON JUSTICE FOR CHILDREN IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA, ESPECIALLY THE FAMILY AND CHILD PROTECTION UNITS - Amman, Jordanie		2021 CONSULTATIVE PROCESS ON USING THE COMPETENCY-BASED APPROACH TO INFORM THE PRIORITIES, DIRECTIVES, DECISIONS, PLANS AND PROGRAMMES OF CHILD PROTECTION PROFESSIONALS AND SERVICES - Regional workshop in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso - International online consultation	

› Countries involved (delegations) in the development of core competencies



Angola, Argentina, Austria, Bahrain, Belgium, Benin, Burundi, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Canada, Central African Republic, Chad, Chile, Colombia, Comoros, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, France, Gabon, Germany, Ghana, Gambia, Guatemala, Guinea, Haiti, Honduras, Iraq, Italy, Jordan, Kenya, Lebanon, Libya, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Morocco, Mauritania, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Occupied Palestinian Territories, Peru, Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Scotland, Senegal, Serbia, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Spain, Sudan, Sweden, Switzerland, Swaziland, Tanzania, Togo, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, United States, Uruguay, Yemen, Zambia.

04

USING THE COMPETENCY-BASED APPROACH TO DEVELOP CHILD PROTECTION OCCUPATIONS AND SERVICE UNITS

04

There are a number of different ways to use the competency-based development approach to strengthen professional practices and services that involve interacting with children.

Specifically, using a competency-based approach is helpful for:

- Establishing clear guidelines and requirements for the day-to-day tasks of each occupational category
- Developing accurate job descriptions
- Determining strategies for recruiting the right people
- Evaluating applicant skills during the hiring process
- Planning capacity-building programmes for personnel
- Developing plans, strategies and tools for basic training, professional development and specialised courses
- Measuring the effects of professional training

- Assessing the quality and impact of interventions with children
- Developing procedures
- Establishing service standards
- Implementing monitoring and complaint mechanisms
- Etc.

This section describes **four concrete applications of the competency-based development approach and the associated core competency grids**. It also discusses the conditions needed in order for existing action plans to be improved.

It therefore presents a comprehensive roadmap designed to help child protection agencies update their practices and organisational cultures in an effort to make accountability to children central to their core missions and to further professionalise child-facing services.

DIFFERENT USES FOR CORE COMPETENCY GRIDS



The purpose of core competency grids—such as those developed for justice personnel, security forces, social workers, and staff working with children deprived of liberty—is to make professional practices and services more child-friendly. Several levers of action, intended for use independently or in combination, have been identified to make child protection systems more:

- **Available** by establishing and promoting referral methods that work for the various services involved
- **Accessible** for all children without discrimination
- and regardless of their physical location, economic resources, language or other personal or social considerations
- **Tailored to children's rights and unique personal circumstances**, particularly those of children in vulnerable situations
- **Child-friendly** so that children feel safe, are treated with dignity, and can express their views and be heard by trained professionals
- **Responsible**, in particular by providing children with the opportunity to seek recourse if their rights are violated or not adequately upheld

To make this possible, four uses of the core competency grids were identified (though other applications may exist), namely: to validate unit workflows and service descriptions, develop staff training programmes, assess personnel performance, and establish standards of service.

// Job descriptions and unit workflows //

In order to function effectively, child protection services must have well-planned internal workflows, job descriptions and employee recruitment processes. Core competency grids can help guide decision-makers in all three of these areas.

Protection services must be organised in terms of the actual services they aim to deliver and the clientele they serve. Therefore, units that deal with juvenile cases must be structured in a manner that suits children's needs and have sufficient and adequately trained personnel to effectively handle the caseloads. In addition, each worker's roles and responsibilities must be defined clearly and in detail. It is common for appropriate job descriptions to be lacking. Finally, all actors involved must work in concert when setting up new services or reviewing existing ones.

It is important to define who does what and to the standards that need to be established within the system and the units that comprise it. When determining workflows, you must know each unit or department's availability before referring children to them. While it seems obvious, this aspect is critical. Finally, it is preferable to build on existing procedures and work methods instead of creating entirely new ones. This will save time and effort, and it will reduce resistance to change.

“Using a competency-based approach makes it easier for us to recruit workers with the right skills and qualities for the position and the child services we aim to provide. As decision-makers, our role is to help new recruits learn the ropes and make sure protecting the best interests of children remains central to everything our agents do”.

- Agnibi Hortence Kpidi,
National Police Gender Coordinator, General Directorate of the National Police of Côte d'Ivoire (2021)

Beyond general organisation and workflows, each child protection unit should have **job descriptions** for all the positions appearing within its organisation chart. Actors from several countries involved in this process indicated that job descriptions are often lacking for the various occupations and services involved in cases involving minors. Yet, workers need a reference that clearly sets out their duties and the procedures for carrying them out,



as this creates a sense of accountability, provides a basis for developing work plans and enables individuals to effectively fulfil their child protection role. Job descriptions can also be used to assess and justify an individual's role and contribution. This is especially important considering that child protection units and services are often undervalued due to a lack of understanding of their missions. Job descriptions can therefore help promote recognition and appreciation for the different roles involved in child protection.

When developing job descriptions, it is essential to work collaboratively with other departments and professional fields, or even with members of civil society. This way, various perspectives will be taken into account and the descriptions will cover all the competencies required for carrying out the various tasks associated with the position. This dialogue will promote the development of job descriptions that are oriented toward child-friendly practices and formally structured protective actions, so that children receive the same services regardless of whom delivers them.

In terms of **personnel recruitment**, it is important to have clear, standardised practices that are known by all members of a given unit. This will ensure the process is efficient. Preparing the job posting, clearly describing the required competencies for the position, and publishing and sharing the opening are key to recruiting workers with the right skills and abilities to work in child protection.

In addition, special tools, such as written tests and interview grids based on the competency frameworks, should be used to make sure the right candidates are chosen to work with children. The candidate capacity assessment grids should go beyond experience and technical knowledge to also cover skills and attributes. Applicants must be assessed for the concrete skills they need to perform the job effectively.

The recruitment process also gives organisations an opportunity to determine what type of basic training or professional development courses would prepare their workers to interact with and assist children more effectively.

Finally, recruiters should also gauge the applicant's level of interest in working directly with children. Even though this should be an essential consideration, it is often overlooked. To find candidates who will remain dedicated

over the long term, it is important to assess their personal aptitude and motivations for engaging in a career in children's rights, including their open-mindedness and ability to adapt to new and emerging issues. These practices should help reduce staff turnover, an issue that seriously undermines child protection.

“In many countries, staff mobility and turnover are high among people who work with children. This can sometimes be discouraging. But by using the competency-based approach to develop training for these professionals, we're able to go beyond knowledge sharing and can help change the mindsets and behaviours that workers demonstrate when interacting with children. Including this type of training in curricula results in noticeable and lasting changes in practices, even if trainees change jobs.”

- **Jean-Claude Legrand**,
Child protection specialist and IBCR board member (2021)

A concrete example in Nigeria

Acting on a three-year plan, the Nigerian government has, in recent years, invested substantially in a new personnel recruitment strategy, under which all candidates staff are required to apply in the same manner and provide a minimum commitment of two years of service. This strategy has strengthened child protection units and led to improved service quality for children.

CONCRETE ACTION – A FEW EXAMPLES

- Create job descriptions and profiles that match the core competency frameworks
- Encourage child protection personnel loyalty in order to prevent attrition
- Create more specialised services for child protection: child protection police squads, juvenile court judges, child welfare and rehabilitation centres, special units facilitating child access to justice, etc.
- Make child protection work and services more attractive



// Personnel training //

It goes without saying that competency grids should be used for personnel training purposes. Course content should be developed specifically for the group of learners so that they come away with the various competencies deemed necessary for providing child-friendly service in their line of work. The competency frameworks are useful for planning courses that cover all areas of the target group's responsibilities.

All training programmes must be adapted, regardless of whether it is basic training, professional development or specialised instruction. In other words, courses must prepare trained personnel to recognise, promote and defend children's rights through concrete action and develop their ability to take into account each child's specific needs. Training must focus on recognising children as full subjects of the law and as active participants in their own development and protection. Learners should be taught how to adapt services to children's rights, needs, and interests, and how to effectively ensure that children participate in procedures that affect them. In addition, training must be as comprehensive as possible and equip professionals with a comprehensive set of tools to work effectively in their field. In the justice sector, training should address the right to due process in both civil and criminal proceedings, as well as rights relating to all other processes related to justice, including customary and religious justice, international courts, and alternative and restorative dispute resolution.

“The process of defining child-rights competencies for justice personnel gave me a better understanding of my work as a judge, and especially of the importance of having a methodology for the duties related to the position”.

- **Chrystelle Adonon**,
Judge, Cotonou Court, Benin (2018)

Competency-based training must meet certain criteria, including but not limited to:

- **Establish clear training objectives** with specific reference to the required knowledge, skills and attributes
- **Explain**, during the training exercise, **which activities will be used** to assess whether the knowledge, skills and attributes
- **Include**, in the key messages, **a reminder that participants should strive to be equally proficient** with the various knowledge, skills and attributes presented during the training activity
- **Dedicate equal time and energy to each core competency** so that participants develop a balanced approach in their work with children deprived of liberty
- **Ensure that assessment activities focus on measuring change** in order to determine whether workers have developed the required skills and attributes (and not just acquired the knowledge)

People who participate in the training can also become agents of change in their communities. After becoming more aware of the role they should be playing in promoting and protecting children’s rights in community, family and work settings, the learners adopted new attitudes about this issue and even applied their new competencies outside the scope of their professional practice.

Finally, it is important to mention two key aspects for training to be effective: it must **always be evaluated** and unit managers must have the means **measure the impact** of the training on providing child-friendly services.

“The child protection sector is essentially driven by the people who work in it. Qualified workers are better able to meet the needs of girls and boys, especially if they have the right tools and core competencies. Certain behaviours, skills and attitudes are essential for dealing with issues of violence against children and effectively assisting children. All of this impacts the confidence that service providers inspire in children, families and communities.”

- *Francesco Cecon,*
Child Protection Advisor, International Programmes, Save the Children Spain (2021)

CONCRETE ACTION - A FEW EXAMPLES

- Create training courses based on international core competency frameworks
- Base training on a multisectoral approach to promote, from the outset, cooperation and seamless support between service units and sectors
- Develop different levels of training: basic training (for new hires), specialised courses (for special units or high-ranking officers), and professional development (for regular personnel already in service)
- Apply an andragogical approach by emphasising learner participation and basing the content on students’ experience or skills to help them develop and strengthen their knowledge, skills and attitudes
- Certify national instructors to train the other workers in their respective sectors
- Involve children in the development of training tools, such as audiovisual materials developed or practical workshops, in order to create a rich and interactive learning environment that goes beyond simple knowledge acquisition and facilitates a deeper understanding and the development of a comprehensive range of concrete skills



CASE STUDY
Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)

Between 2015 and 2020, a project was carried out in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to **make the professional practices of police, justice and social services workers more child-friendly** using the competency-based approach. The exercise led to notable results:

- Children’s opinions are taken into account more often, with consideration for their age and level of maturity.
- All three sectors report increased use of child participation.
- Improved privacy and confidentiality in cases involving children:
 - › Professionals make a special point of shielding children from outside observers and ensuring they are not exposed during the various stages of their trajectory within the justice system
 - › Separate interview rooms have been set up in CPPSV units to ensure that conversations are kept confidential when handling cases involving minors
 - › Courts isolate children more regularly during hearings held in prisons and, in the social services sector, safeguards are put in place to ensure children’s confidentiality and privacy
- Thanks to the implementation of new professional training programmes, prejudices that biased professional services—particularly those related to economic class or gender—were deconstructed.
- Standardised interventions are offered to all children, without distinction, while taking into account their gender and the principle of non-discrimination.

The new practices are implemented and shared by **local “champions” who receive special training and child-rights certification through the project**. This ensures that capacity-building initiatives have a lasting impact.



“There is a well-documented need for customised training for professionals who deal with children. [...] In fact, these workers constantly ask for it. But they want well-designed programmes that will make a real difference to their everyday work. If we do not invest in the real professionalisation of child protection services and personnel [...], we will fail in our fulfilling our obligation to children.”

- *Marta Gil, MENA Programme Coordinator - Access to Justice, Terre des Hommes (2020)*



“ We all agree that specialised staff training, collaboration and reintegration plans are essential if we want to provide the best possible care and assistance to all children. We firmly believe that this collaborative effort will bring about positive change [...] at the international level.”

- *Capitaine Marwa Alabbassi, Police Officer at the Juvenile Welfare Centre, Ministry of Interior of the Kingdom of Bahrain (2020)*

// Personnel assessments //

Evaluating staff is a key to ensuring that child protection activities are successful and that practices have actually improved following the application of the core competency frameworks. It's important to **bring the focus back to child protection** and not use the appraisal process to “monitor” workers or to simply check off a career advancement requirement.

Instead, evaluations are an opportunity to give recognition where it is due. Workers can be congratulated for showing the right behaviours and attitudes, making their interventions more child-friendly or demonstrating key skills and attributes. At the same time, different evaluation techniques can underscore the importance of child protection work and encourage practitioners to implement more child-friendly approaches.

This type of service-oriented appraisal is still not widespread. The competency frameworks can be used to

develop professional goals that are directly related to on-the-ground practices and have clearly defined, pre-determined evaluation methods. The frameworks can also provide a baseline for determining whether workers are successfully making use of new skills and for creating capacity-building plans based on the assessment results.

In order to know whether or not a person has a specific skill, it's important to provide them with an evaluation grid outlining goals and targets. Both the worker's performance (output) and behaviour should be assessed. A number of different methods can be used to achieve this:

- **List the expected behaviours** (based on the competency frameworks).
- **Specify which behaviours correspond to each level of responsibility:** basic, intermediate and advanced. (This approach is used in the Child Protection in Emergencies Competency Framework produced by the Alliance for the Child Protection in Humanitarian Action⁵)
- **For each competency, rate behaviours** as satisfactory, meets expectations or below expectations. (This approach is used in the Humanitarian Coordination Competencies and the Alaskan Core Competencies for Direct Care Workers in Health and Human Services⁶)
- **Break down each competency** into knowledge, skills and attributes. (This approach is used in the Patrol Officer Training Programme at Collège Maisonneuve⁷)



5. See: <https://alliancecpa.org/fr/child-protection-online-library/cadre-de-competences-pour-la-protection-des-enfants-dans-laction>

6. The full text is available here: <http://annapoliscoalition.org/?portfolio=471>

7. See: <http://www.enpq.qc.ca/futur-policier/programme-de-formation-initiale/approche-par-competences.html>

Examples of points to consider when evaluating whether employees are focused on the best interests of children in cases of domestic violence⁸:

- Was the officer's primary concern the best interest of the child?
- When assessing the best interest of the child, did the officer consider the fact that there is violence in the home?
- Did the officer effectively supervise the interactions between the abusive parent and the child?
- Was the child's right to be heard respected?

Examples of points to consider when evaluating the accessibility of juvenile justice services⁹:

- Were all children able to access services, regardless of their physical location, economic resources, language or other personal or social considerations?
- Have all barriers to children's access to justice been removed?
- Have in-person and/or online procedures or methods of recourse been set up for children who are unable to access traditional justice mechanisms?



CONCRETE ACTION – A FEW EXAMPLES

- Formally integrate competency assessments into the child welfare occupations and units
- Develop assessment tools based on the core competency frameworks
- Establish clear procedures and goals for child protection professionals



“Using a competency-based approach is fundamental for helping national child protection practitioners defend their arguments at all programme development stages—from identification, analysis and design through to implementation—but, most importantly, it is helpful for monitoring and evaluating staff”.

- *Jean-François Basse, UNICEF Representative, Madagascar (2021)*

8. Example taken from the *Practical Guide on Access to Justice and Preventing and Responding to Violence against Children*, developed in 2021 by the Office of the United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children.

9. Example taken from the *Practical Guide on Access to Justice and Preventing and Responding to Violence against Children*, developed in 2021 by the Office of the United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children.

// Establishing service standards //

The competency-based approach provides professionals with an opportunity to discuss their practices, the challenges they face, and how these can be addressed in a way that respects children’s rights. This is a fundamental for establishing service standards that are known, accepted and applied by all. In other words, this approach facilitates the creation, dissemination and use of practical tools (such as standard operating procedures) that define the minimum standards applicable within a department,

professional body or system with regard to children’s rights and child protection. These tools specify how to conduct effective interventions that meet international standards and uphold children’s rights. It’s a matter of clearly defining who does what, with whom, where, why, when, how and for whom. These tools must be developed through a broad participatory and consultative process and then disseminated at the national level to promote their widespread use.

A CONCRETE EXAMPLE:
SERVICE STANDARDS FOR RECOURSE MECHANISMS AVAILABLE TO CHILDREN

Children have a right to clear and effective methods of recourse against alleged violations of their rights. This is essential. Service standards must clarify and facilitate the management of potential recourse methods. They should increase stakeholder awareness and sensitise them to the need, while also reducing the harm experienced by child victims. Standards are therefore needed to make sure that restitution, compensation, rehabilitation and support are provided in a manner that is timely, holistic and proportionate to the severity of the harm experienced by the child, while taking into account the child’s views, safety, dignity and integrity.



“Children who are vulnerable or have experienced neglect, abuse or violence, including sexual abuse, need professional assistance. But they also need a nurturing environment with caring adults who are attentive to their situation and feelings. This is one of the key areas where the competency-based approach brings added value. It helps people working with children to better understand their emotions, their developmental needs and their right to be respected and receive adequate support.”

- Jean-Claude Legrand,
Child Protection Specialist and IBCR board member (2021)

The competency-based approach also makes it possible for professionals to modify their interventions to each child’s personal situation and needs. For instance, girls, Aboriginal children and children with mental disabilities may be particularly vulnerable and exposed to specific types of violence. These children must have access to **special services** that take into account the discrimination and marginalisation that they face—and this requires specific service standards.

More broadly, when the competency-based approach is adjusted to a given socio-cultural context and focused on children’s experiences, it allows practitioners to tailor their responses to suit the ever-changing signs and

manifestations of inequalities and child rights violations. This approach allows civilian and state service providers to acquire the skills and attitudes they need to adapt their practices and provide a professional response to diverse situations by drawing on the same set of cross-sector competencies. It should be a key part of any long-term structuring vision, especially in unstable situations leading to the emergence of new threats and contexts affecting children.

Finally, in order to effectively protect children’s rights, a service unit must have a **child protection policy that includes monitoring and complaint mechanisms**. While fundamental, this need is often overlooked, even within

child protection structures. The main objective of these policies and tools is to uphold and safeguard the rights, safety, security and dignity of children in contact with protection services. In addition, units should develop and

set up reporting and referral mechanisms, including descriptions of the specific responsibilities of certain staff members, for use in the event of suspicions, complaints, or non-compliance with the policy.

An example from Burkina Faso

From 2015 to 2021, the IBCR worked with institutions in Burkina Faso to define the trajectory of children in contact with the justice system. Having an established process would ensure that children receive support that takes into account their rights and needs. To ensure the professionals responsible for assisting these children are familiar with their roles and responsibilities, the IBCR produced and disseminated four practical guides (often referred to as “standard operating procedures”) intended respectively for security forces, social workers, magistrates and prison guards. **These new tools define the entire trajectory for children in contact with the law, something that had not been done before.**

The guides ensure that children receive clear, standardised treatment that is respectful of their rights at every step in their trajectory, from their initial contact with the justice system to the investigation and final decision on their case, which could result in detention or police custody as a last resort. In addition, six comprehensive training courses on children’s rights and child-friendly practices were developed and permanently added, along with evaluations, to the curricula used in the professional and vocational training schools that feed into the project’s target sectors. In-service and upcoming professionals in the targeted sectors now receive from comprehensive, adapted and concrete training on children’s rights and best practices for interacting with them.

Two major project achievements:

- 1. **Social workers are increasingly being called on by police stations and remand homes and asked to collaborate with justice personnel on cases involving children.** Among other things, this increased collaboration allows for the systematisation and improvement of social investigations aimed at collecting information about a child’s background. These investigations are now more detailed and consistent, resulting in faster case processing times. This progress was made possible thanks to the sector-specific core competency frameworks.
- 2. **The Government of Burkina Faso has assumed responsibility for ensuring that ministers or department heads sign the prefaces of standard operating procedures, directives or technical notes, as an indicator that the practices are officially sanctioned. It has also agreed to disseminate these tools at the national level.** This demonstrates the government’s awareness that child protection practices need to change and its willingness to formalise the new practices developed for agents. Government backing will ensure that the tools and documents are actually used, while also demonstrating the importance of involving policymakers to generate concrete changes that benefit children.

CONCRETE ACTION – A FEW EXAMPLES

- Establish and describe the minimum standards of service offered within a department, professional body or system with regard to children’s rights and child protection
- Provide mechanisms that allow children to seek recourse for alleged violations of their rights
- Have procedures and practices that allow professionals to tailor their practices to uphold children’s specific rights
- Make sure all units providing services to children have a child protection policy



SHARING EXPERIENCES
Implementing the Quebec intervention model for young offenders and the competency-based approach

When I first started my practice at the Montreal Youth Court in the 1980s, the various professionals who worked there (most of whom were defence lawyers, social workers, criminologists, judges, probation officers, prosecutors, etc.) were all very competent in their respective disciplines, but they had difficulty understanding each other. As a result, even though everyone cared about the best interests and needs of the children and adolescents, cases were rarely resolved in a harmonious and effective manner. All of the disciplines misunderstood each other. Ultimately, this was a great disservice to the overarching goal, which was to protect society and defend the needs of youth.

Eventually the various organisations recognised that working in silos was generating inefficiency in dealing with situations that were already complicated to begin with. They therefore put together some cross-sector training modules based on highly complex work scenarios. This gave each professional an appreciation of the knowledge and skills of the various groups working within the Youth Chamber—and it hardly cost anything.

The prosecutors on my team and I were really excited about this approach. It gave us the chance to learn quickly by examining concrete situations and applying these ideas in real-life situations. It did a lot to make our work more effective. This approach also introduced us to the specific characteristics of the Quebec intervention model.

The common courses were practical and familiarised us with the vocabulary and specific concepts used in other disciplines, which was tremendously valuable. Over the years, we realised how having a shared baseline of knowledge and skills made a real and lasting difference in our ability to effectively handle cases involving youth.

Today, as professionals face increasingly complex situations, it is unreasonable to expect that workers in child protection occupations and services can achieve the required level of knowledge and skills without the competency-based approach. This approach is simple, effective, concrete and inexpensive. Wherever it is used, it derives its value from the combined contributions and effective mobilisation the unit’s various actors. It is therefore necessary and important for organisations to use this practical approach for programme development and their members’ professional development.

- Annick Murphy,
Quebec’s former Deputy Director of Criminal and Penal Prosecutions
and IBCR board member



SUCCESS FACTORS FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COMPETENCY-BASED APPROACH

// Political will //

Access to quality child protection services requires sufficient leadership and **political will to prevent, address, and eradicate child rights violations**. This type of political will translates into comprehensive legal, strategic and judicial frameworks, and effectively organised child protection services, policies and budgets. Strategies, plans and policies are essential for providing direction and frames of reference for actors in the protection system. However, the challenge is to ensure that they are contextualised to reflect the realities that children face and adapted to suit local needs and practitioner skill levels. To be effective, strategies must be flexible, context-specific, pragmatic and measurable.

Although political will is often tied to funding, governments can also take responsibility by getting involved in professional development programmes and professionalisation plans for the various occupations and units involved in child protection. This can be done regardless of available budgets. Strategies will be more effective, better accepted and applied more rigorously if the persons responsible for their implementation believe that the proposed priorities and areas of action are aligned with their realities, capabilities and skills. **This is why it’s important**

to align competency frameworks, unit workflows and national strategies.

Political will also translates into a serious effort to ensure compliance with legal frameworks and policies so that practices truly protect children. Governments must fulfil their due diligence obligations. This means verifying whether public authorities commit errors or omissions in connection with their child protection duties. Political will must also translate into fighting impunity for perpetrators of child rights violations.



“The competency frameworks will be excellent tools to support reflection exercises, guide discussions and put pressure on states.”

- Denisse Araya Castelli,
Director of Raíces, Chile (2020)





“Using the competency-based approach to develop child-facing occupations and units is a good way to respond to the need for States to adapt, formalise and standardise protection techniques and mechanisms, especially legal texts and strategic policies.”

- **Mahamadou Nazir Sani Djibo**,
Police Officer and Deputy
Head of the National Police's
Protection of Minors and Women
Division, Ministry of Interior and
Decentralisation, Niger (2021)

CASE STUDY

Costa Rica

From 2015 and 2018, the International Bureau for Children's Rights was involved in a project to support anti-human trafficking efforts in Costa Rica. Project activities were carried out with a participatory approach in order to promote inter-sectoral and inter-institutional dialogue among police officers and justice personnel whose duties involve interacting with children and victims of trafficking. The participants, including children, were able to actively contribute to their own development with regard to combatting human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation.

This capacity-building exercise was based on **the core competency frameworks, which were adapted to the Costa Rican context** through ongoing collaboration with various public agencies associated with the National Coalition against Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling (CONATT), the judiciary, as well as the police schools and training units (covering highways, border control, tourism, migration and air surveillance). **While the core competencies are intended to be universal and prepare professionals to assist children in any context, it is desirable and necessary to modify them to better reflect the national context.**

Training tools must be tailored to enable each operational unit to gain the various competencies and apply them at all the legal, institutional, political, social, community and religious levels. Finally, since human trafficking is a national and transnational crime, the project focused on sharing best practices, challenges, knowledge and experience between countries in the region. Consideration of the regional context is what enabled the development of new child rights training programmes that are relevant in Costa Rica.

// Budget allocation //

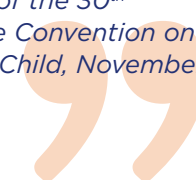
Effectively safeguarding children's rights also requires **adequate and ongoing funding** for the implementation of legislation at the national and local levels. Insufficient budgets can limit the ability to carry out action plans, which can then lead to situations in which children's rights are not upheld. Actors in protection systems face a challenge in convincing decision-makers that funding units working with children is mandatory. Without such budgets, it is not possible to fulfil child protection commitments.

As mentioned above, the key isn't necessarily investing more funds, but rather establishing a budget that will allow actors to adopt the target practices and deliver the expected changes. Improving child protection budgets can be achieved through child-rights sensitive budgeting in all ministries, identifying and involving key figures in advocacy, and establishing a clear roadmap. Successful budget advocacy requires strong, simple and targeted messages that aim to increase awareness among decision-makers.



“Now more than ever [...] we will focus on developing gender-sensitive policies so that each institution allocates resources to improve child protection. The most important thing is to make the entire population more aware of our individual and collective commitments to promoting the rights of children in Burkina Faso.”

- **Hélène Marie Laurence Ilboudo born Marchal**, Minister of Women, National Solidarity, Family and Humanitarian Action, Burkina Faso, on the occasion of the commemoration of the 30th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, November 2019



// Identifying and supporting internal “champions” //

Another requirement for effectively promoting and protecting children's rights is **the appointment of national resource persons—or “champions”**—who have already developed the required child protection competencies and have a credible track record. Protection systems must be supported by their communities. This involves working with these experienced and recognized resource persons, as well as community leaders (influential figures, religious leaders, entertainment or sports celebrities, etc.) who can get messages out more effectively and broadly. Identifying these people and onboarding them as advocates can help advance the cause of children's rights.

The same is true for raising awareness about child welfare occupations and units. Government agencies and civil society institutions must therefore develop awareness-building programmes targeting the public and the actors in the child protection system, with a view to changing attitudes and garnering support for new child-friendly behaviours and practices.

Finally, to circle back to the use of the competency frameworks during training, learners also need the right type of guidance and supervision during their training to nurture their drive to do more than merely memorise



ideas and truly embody the core competencies. Young professionals benefit greatly from having a leader they can identify and consult with in their department or professional body. Practitioners are less likely to resist change when they feel understood and supported by their institution. Being supported by in-house “champions” can make a difference and allows trainees to consolidate what they’ve learned over the long term.



“Training trainers is the most effective method of creating long-term benefits for children. It results in national resources who can share best practices for improving interventions and ensuring they are contextually appropriate. This has a direct effect on resistance to change”

*- Ghizlane Benjelloun,
Child Psychiatrist at the Ibn Rochd University
Hospital in Morocco and member of the
IBCR’s Board of Directors (2021)*

// Child participation //

The core competency frameworks also help ensure that the work conducted by child protection actors is truly sustainable and responds to the concerns and expectations expressed by children.

It is essential to value the children’s right 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. Children are able to understand and form opinions on decisions affecting them, and therefore can genuinely participate in projects aimed at promoting children’s rights. Therefore, education and training are essential for empowering children to demand that their rights be respected.

And since all child protection systems aim to protect children and defend their rights, the actors within these

systems must therefore be accountable to children. Children must be involved in the process of updating practices and their trajectories and experiences must be a key consideration behind all changes. This is why it is essential to increase child and youth involvement in protection and monitoring activities, rather than simply consulting with them. As a process, child participation is continually evolving. In addition to being well thought out, inclusive, flexible and appropriate, it must make sense for them. The actors within the child protection system must listen to what children have to say and ensure that they are protected at all times when participating in activities.

Concretely, each state, structure and actor must determine how to increase child mobilisation and participation, treating them as full subjects of the law and encouraging them to become agents of change. They must also ensure that children are perceived and treated as such by the other units and actors in the protection system.

**A CONCRETE EXAMPLE:
THE IBCR’S 2021-2024 STRATEGIC PLAN**

AN 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 assume 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. It 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 child protection services and the various organisations, institutions and communities that interact with them.

The strategic plan and theory of change are available on the IBCR’s website: www.ibcr.org/publications



“All too often, child rights training focuses on knowledge, and glosses over skills and attributes. Over the past few years, I’ve found that the IBCR’s approach is to define the core child protection competencies directly with practitioners to help them make lasting improvements to their everyday practices. Of course, this exercise is only truly successful if children feel that they will be provided with a safer and more protective environment, even in challenging situations. That’s why children need to participate in monitoring and evaluation processes. Fortunately, the monitoring and assessment tools are included in the intervention strategies based on the core competency frameworks.”

*- Joanne Doucet,
expert on strengthening child protection systems and IBCR board member (2021)*



// Establishing indicators and follow-up measures //

In order to have an effective child protection system, you need to evaluate actions using pre-determined indicators. This will make it possible to strike a balance between the objectives that have been established and the activities that have been carried out. These indicators can be stated in national strategies, action plans, or individual department targets. Ultimately, evaluations are helpful for identifying and learning from situations, both positive and negative, and using these insights to inform restructuring initiatives and changes benefitting children.

By drawing on reliable data and concrete results, child protection workers and units can develop and strengthen their skills. Therefore, protection systems should develop mechanisms for collecting and analysing data related to children's rights. Ideally this should be conducted using a broad and cross-sector approach (covering the justice, police, social services, prison, health care and other sectors). Data representing real-life situations can be used to support advocacy work, inform capacity-building plans, formalise new procedures, and document institutional failures or situations in which children's rights are violated or threatened.

// The multisectoral approach and the decentralisation of services //

“Too often, our work isn’t coordinated, but we recognise that providing effective care for children requires that actors work in synergy. [...] I believe that establishing inter-sectoral collaboration and synergy will result in a quantum leap in the Congolese child protection system.”

- *Hilaire Ngoie,*
President of the Bukavu Juvenile Court in Eastern DRC (2017)

Multisectoral collaboration between child protection services is essential for child rights violations to be properly prevented and defended. A number of actions are required to make this possible. First, training programmes for child protection practitioners should be designed to be multisectoral. This shift can be supported by applying the techniques identified earlier in this report. At the operational level, professionals and children must be familiarised with available services and the various steps in case processing procedures.

Finally, protocols and standard operating procedures may need to be adopted to clarify the different steps in the protection process and ensure that child protection roles and units are able to collaborate effectively. By facilitating communication between workers and units,

multisectoral procedures lead to better interventions. This holistic approach promotes multi-sectoral consultations when a decision needs to be made about a child. This makes the process participatory and collaborative. The experience for children is now smoother and improved coordination between the various professions results in faster and more appropriate treatment of cases involving children.

A multisectoral approach is especially important because it allows service units to work more closely with children. Even if not all sectors are represented or operational in child protection cases, they will nonetheless have the knowledge and skills required to report situations and refer children to the appropriate resources. Being able to adapt and respond appropriately is doubly important in health or humanitarian crises when children's vulnerabilities are exacerbated and constantly evolving.

This is a reminder that every child in the world grows up within a protection system made up of girls, boys, women and men, all of whom have a role to play and responsibilities to uphold in that protective environment. As defenders of their own rights, children are at the heart of this system, in which families, communities, the state and the international community all intervene, both formally and informally. A multisectoral approach must involve assessing these various stakeholders, providing them with the tools they need and strengthening their capacities so that each actor—shopkeepers, grandparents, sisters, brothers, lawmakers, teachers, neighbours, police officers, lawyers, traditional or religious leaders, and journalists—can effectively fulfil their role.



“As a result of the consultations on competency frameworks, I’ve started giving more thought about the people behind child-facing structures and systems, and, consequently, the need to define their core competencies. The consultations also helped give me a better sense of why a cross-sectoral approach is important for improving child justice and protection systems.”

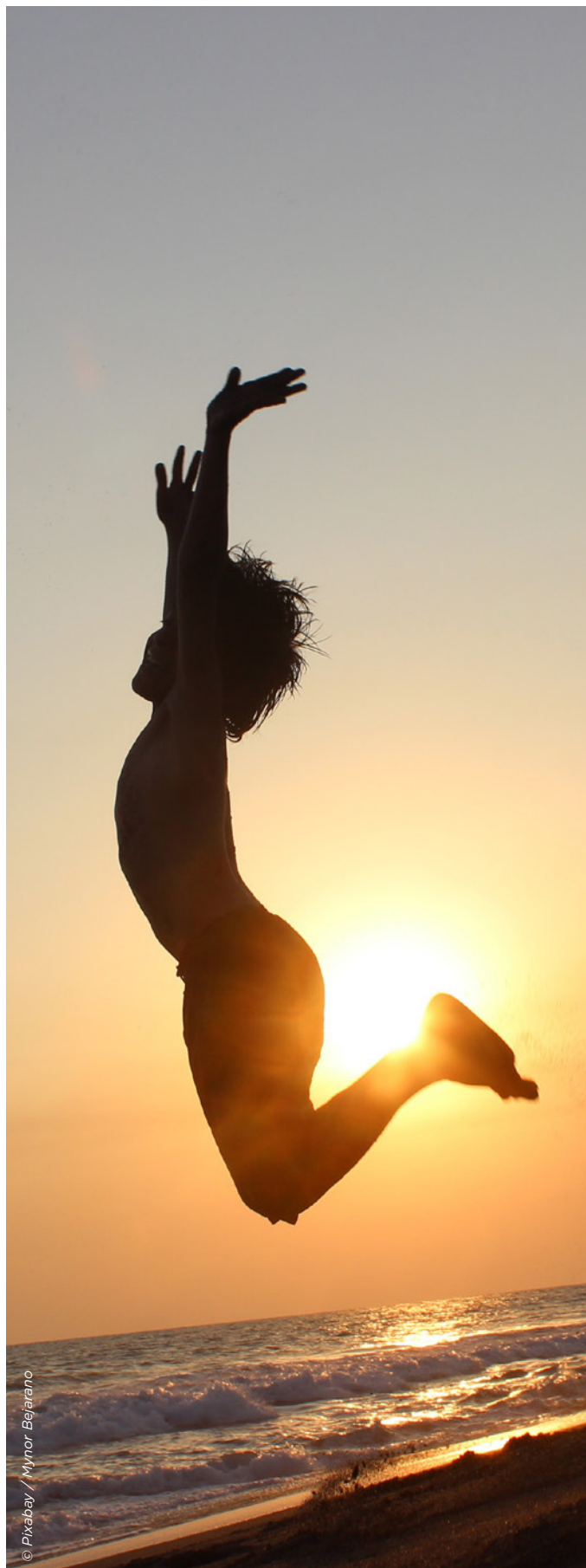
- *Daniela Baro,*
Child Protection, UNICEF Regional Office for West and Central Africa (2020)

CASE STUDY
Honduras

Following a participatory analysis conducted jointly with representatives from government agencies and civil society, the IBCR initiated a project in Honduras in 2019 to improve the response to human trafficking, at the institutional and community levels. One of the objectives is to strengthen the current system that responds to cases of human trafficking and exploitation, led by the Inter-Institutional Commission against Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking in Persons (CICESCT) and its members (such as the Ministry of Labour, the Prosecutor’s Office, the Judiciary and the police) at the national and local levels. **The competency-based approach is being used in the multisectoral activities carried out to support child rights in Honduras.**

More specifically, at the community level, a participatory approach was developed to strengthen education and capacity-building programmes for members of municipalities and civil society, so that they could identify trafficking risks and establish early warning mechanisms. At the same time, competency-building plans were also strengthened for members of Honduran institutions (including the police, justice sector, Ministry of Labour and CICESCT), to better prepare them for prosecuting trafficking and exploitation crimes. Honduras is a prime example of how the competency-based approach can be used to strengthen multisectoral action, particularly by integrating sectors that are often overlooked with regard to child protection.





© Pixabay / Mynor Bejarano

In conclusion, many agents of change must be mobilised in order to make successful use of the competency-based approach. These are people who have the ability to spark social change, particularly in the area of child protection, thanks to their profession, field of work, or their hierarchical status in the workplace or in society. Agents of change include all workers with professional responsibilities for children, members of institutions, opinion leaders and religious leaders, as well as individuals within formal and informal child protection systems who can be sensitised and mobilised to become agents of change.

Creating lasting, child-friendly change within 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. By upgrading the skills of all actors within child protection systems, including those who are often overlooked, and by improving the procedures governing their interactions with children, we can increase awareness of what these workers do and strengthen the social fabric that safeguards children.

“Establishing these core competencies will allow us to standardise the services provided to children around the world.”

- *Issoufou Alkassoum*,
Director, Incarceration Alternatives and Social Rehabilitation, Niger (2020)

05

ROADMAPS FOR EIGHT FRENCH-SPEAKING COUNTRIES IN AFRICA

05

In October 2021, representatives from eight French-speaking African countries met in Ouagadougou, as part of the consultation on how to use the competency-based approach to develop occupations and service units involved in child protection. The representatives worked on national roadmaps containing concrete objectives for their respective child protection systems.

Intended as guidelines for authorities, decision-makers, division heads and unit managers, the roadmaps set out concrete ways in which the competency-based approach can be used to develop policies, strategies, orientations and directives. They outline a practical approach for sparking significant and sustainable changes within their teams.

The roadmaps offer concrete, realistic and measurable recommendations that are aligned with current national strategies. The proposed actions aim to support the professionalisation of frontline, child-facing services and enable the concerned countries to adopt a strong and structuring vision of the service units involved in child protection. Organisations in these countries, and other groups that wish to learn from these roadmaps, now have access to concrete tools for improving their practices,

rethinking their organisational cultures and making accountability to children a key principle in their core missions.



“Competency frameworks [...] are tremendously valuable for developing continental programmes and policies on child protection. Strengthening the competencies of personnel working with children is a priority for the African Union. We encourage member states to use these frameworks to accelerate efforts to professionalise roles and develop guidelines so that, ultimately, we can better protect the rights of children.”

- Mariama Mohamed Cissé, Director of Social Affairs, African Union Commission, Ethiopia (2020)

Here is an overview of the eight country-specific roadmaps, which are presented in alphabetical order.

BURKINA FASO

- Develop and implement a plan to **disseminate the core competency frameworks** to child protection actors
- Develop, standardise and disseminate **tools to help monitor, supervise and guide** child-friendly practices
- Strengthen **understanding of the Quality of Service (QoS) data collection system** and its use as a national tool for monitoring the quality of child protection services
- Develop a **capacity-building plan** for child protection actors based on the identified core competencies
- Hold train-the-trainer sessions in order to **create a pool of qualified instructors** for key child protection issues
- Implement a **capacity-building plan for the Children’s Parliament** (leadership training, updating texts, renewing units)
- **Advocate for the development of child protection specialists** within the judicial personnel, judicial police officers and prison staff
- Establish **attractive career opportunities** for child protection workers

CÔTE D’IVOIRE

- Organise **professional development sessions** for child protection professionals based on the competency frameworks in areas with a high prevalence of violence against children, as defined in the Violence Against Children and Youth Survey (VACS)
- Organise **training sessions based on the competency frameworks** for the focal points working at the national police and gendarmerie gender desks
- **Disseminate the key competency frameworks** to instructors working in the training centres for occupations involved in child protection
- **Strengthen ties between the existing mechanisms** used within sectors
- **Refresh the pool of instructors** working for the police and gendarmerie
- **Update training modules** for police and gendarmes to include the topics of sexual and gender-based violence
- **Standardise data collection mechanisms** used by police and gendarmerie departments, both internally and externally
- **Organise joint training sessions** for police officers, gendarmes, justice personnel and social services workers on the new provisions of the Penal Code and the Code of Criminal Procedure relating to the management of cases involving children in contact with the justice system
- **Strengthen the operational capacities of specialised child protection services** in areas with a high prevalence of violence against children, as defined in the VACS
- **Strengthen the operational capacities of the police and gendarmerie gender desks**
- **Renew the units within the Children’s Parliament**
- Draft a **memo calling for the formalisation of the national police’s Gender Coordination Unit**





DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

SOCIAL SERVICES SECTOR

- **Recruit and build the capacities of social services paraprofessionals**
- **Refresh and adapt the software** used by the Child Protection Social Work Department (DISPE)
- Advocate for a **simplified registration process** for the National Institute of Social Work
- Obtain a **decree in favour of creating the Children's Parliament** in 2022
- Develop a **strategic plan and national policy documents** on child protection
- Advocate for **increasing the protection budget** to 2% by 2022

JUSTICE SECTOR

- Establish a national **programme for the social rehabilitation** of children in conflict with the law
- Earmark a **special budget for custodial facilities**
- **Add child protection modules** into the National Judicial Training Institute's training programmes for officers working in the Child Protection Division

POLICE SECTOR

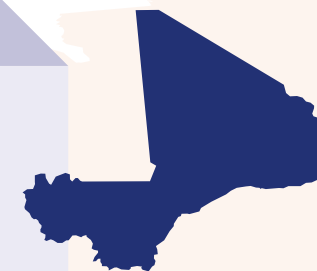
- **Promote familiarity** with the Child Protection Act
- Develop a **child protection action plan**
- Upgrade the Child Protection Department to a Division

MULTISECTORAL

- **Create a single tool**, by standardising and combining the tools used by all three sectors, and disseminate it broadly

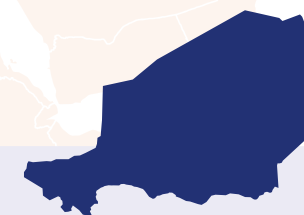
MALI

- **Revise the Protection Code** with a view to passing the Child Protection Act
- **Develop multisectoral capacity-building modules** on child protection (for the protection, justice, security, health care and social services sectors)
- Establish a **national pool of instructors** so that training can be expanded to the regional and local levels
- **Train managers** on the standardised tools for managing cases involving children
- Continue to **set up child protection committees and networks** in collaboration with children and communities
- **Strengthen the capacities of childcare facilities** to ensure the needs of all children are met, including those with disabilities
- **Strengthen the multisectoral consultation frameworks** of all stakeholders (government agencies, civil society organisations, technical and financial partners, NGOs/associations, care institutions, etc.)



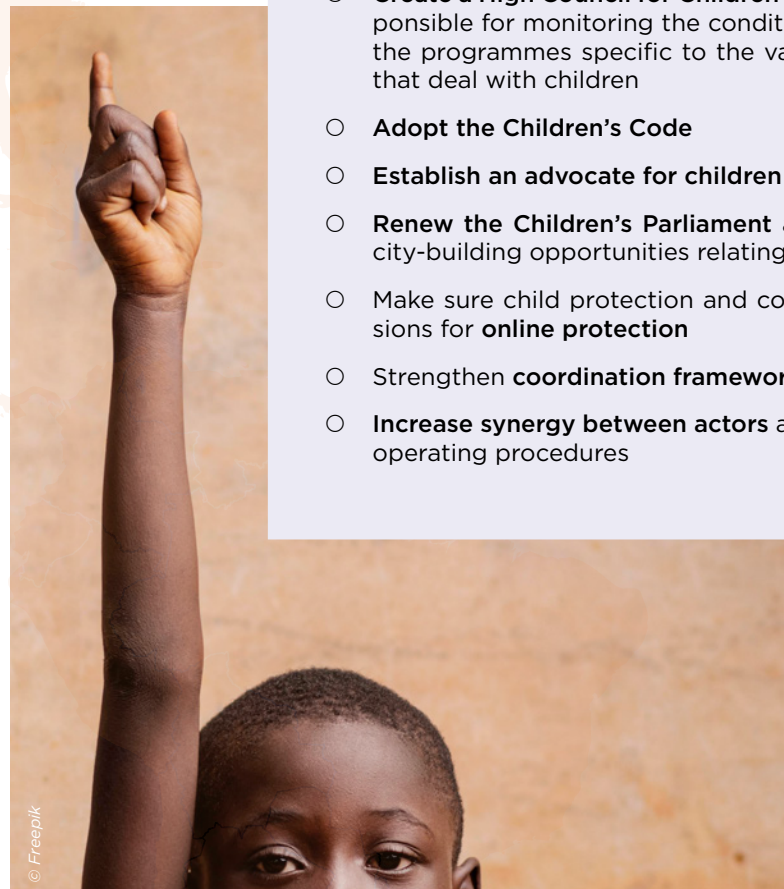
NIGER

- **Update the national child protection strategy** to reflect the current context and the four core competency frameworks
- **Provide technical support** to the various child protection committees
- Take steps toward **establishing child rights-sensitive budgeting**
- Create a **multisectoral pool of instructors** with expertise in children's rights
- Accelerate the **adoption of the Children's Code**
- **Strengthen the capacities of the Children's Parliament**
- **Develop an HR plan** that will enable child protection actors to specialise and promote the retention of these workers
- Promote the **standardisation and use of child-rights data collection tools and system**



SENEGAL

- Implement a **national capacity-building plan** for child protection workers
- **Update the training modules** on children's rights in basic training and professional development programmes for police officers
- **Strengthen the child-rights capacities** of prison wardens and add training on psycho-social welfare
- Provide all prison administrators with **general training** on children's rights
- Establish a **multisectoral pool of instructors**
- Improve the **national child protection system**
- Provide **appropriate funding** for departmental child protection committees
- Establish an integrated, **multisectoral information system** for cases involving children
- Establish and operationalise **reliable national databases**
- **Increase child protection budgets**
- **Get mayors involved** in protecting the children in their communities by encouraging them to adopt child rights-sensitive budgeting
- Recruit a **multidisciplinary team** for the Juvenile Unit
- Take action to **promote the retention of child protection workers**
- **Align the legal and institutional frameworks** for child protection
- **Create a High Council for Children** that reports to the President's Office and is responsible for monitoring the condition of children in the country and coordinating the programmes specific to the various departments, structures and institutions that deal with children
- **Adopt the Children's Code**
- **Establish an advocate for children**
- **Renew the Children's Parliament** and provide child parliamentarians with capacity-building opportunities relating to participation
- Make sure child protection and community outreach programmes include provisions for **online protection**
- Strengthen **coordination frameworks**
- **Increase synergy between actors** and their interventions by establishing standard operating procedures



TOGO

- Strengthen **coordination and complementarity between actors** by implementing measures aimed at increasing synergy (such as adopting standard operating procedures)
- **Reorganise the Prison Management and Rehabilitation Division**
- **Disseminate the competency frameworks** to the child protection units within government ministries
- Validate and adopt the **National Juvenile Justice Strategy**
- Strengthen **community protection mechanisms**



TUNISIA

- Operationalise the **High Council for Child Protection**
- Finalise and implement the **Integrated Child Protection Policy**
- Revise the **Child Protection Code** through a participatory approach that includes children and all relevant actors
- Revise the **Organic Law on Judicial Power** (with increased focus on specialisation)
- Develop and implement an **advocacy strategy** for alternatives to child detention
- Strengthen **coordination between the different units** within the child protection system by creating new protocols for collaboration, a central committee and regional coordinating committees
- Develop an **information system specifically for cases involving children** in contact with the law and produce shared reports to be disseminated periodically to all departments
- **Strengthen the capacities** of actors in charge of promoting alternatives to child detention
- Develop **better planning tools**
- Develop and implement a **system for monitoring and evaluating** action plans

PRACTICAL REFERENCES ON CORE COMPETENCIES



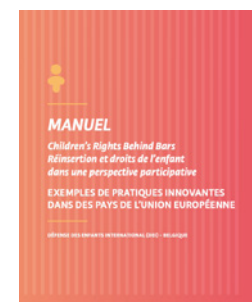
PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR INTERVIEWING AND ASSISTING CHILD VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE

The Organisation internationale de la Francophonie has developed a Practical Guide on Interviewing and Assisting Child Victims of Crime. It was created with input from a broad range of specialists who interact with children—including doctors, psychiatrists, paediatricians, social workers, teachers, police officers, prosecutors, magistrates, children's rights defenders and non-governmental organisations—from French speaking countries, as well as France's National Human Rights Commission. **The Guide focuses on how to interview and assist child victims of crime** and is intended for police and justice professionals.



PROTECTING CHILDREN'S RIGHTS IN CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEMS

A training manual and reference point for professionals and policy makers, developed by *Penal Reform International*¹⁰.



WORKER SELF-ASSESSMENT GUIDE - CHILDREN'S RIGHTS BEHIND BARS

Child rehabilitation and children's rights from a participatory perspective, developed by Defence for Children International (DCI) Belgium¹¹.



BRIGHT SPOTS PROGRAMME

A set of examples showing how to include children's perspectives in services units providing alternative care¹².

10. Available online: <https://cdn.penalreform.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Childrens-rights-training-manual-Final%C2%ADHR1.pdf>

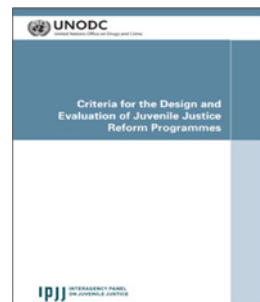
11. Available online: http://www.childrensrightsbehindbars.eu/images/DEI_EU-handbook_FR_LowRes-interactif.pdf

12. Available online: <https://coramvoice.org.uk/for-professionals/bright-spots/bright-spots-programme/>



FOUNDATIONS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE'S BOARD

An example of youth involved in strategic boards of directors¹³.



CRITERIA FOR DESIGNING AND EVALUATING JUVENILE JUSTICE REFORM PROGRAMMES¹⁴



REFERENCE ON PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT IN EMERGENCY SITUATIONS¹⁵

EFFECTIVE PRACTICES FROM A VARIETY OF BACKGROUNDS

› Tools for defending the rights of child victims and witnesses of crime

On July 22, 2005, the United Nations Economic and Social Council adopted the *Guidelines on Justice in Matters involving Child Victims and Witnesses of Crime*. Since then, a trilateral agreement between the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), UNICEF and the IBCR has led to the creation of various plain-language documents on the Guidelines, such as:

- The child version of the *United Nations Guidelines on Justice in Matters involving Child Victims and Witnesses of Crime*, which provides explanations and examples of the nature and scope of each of the 10 listed rights
- The *Child Victims and Witnesses of Crime Manual*, which explains to justice sector professionals how to apply the guidelines on child victims in the law and in professional practice

- An introductory booklet which presents the United Nations Model Strategies and Practical Measures on the Elimination of Violence against Children in the Field of Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice and outlines 17 strategies and various measures to implement them
- The Training Programme on the Treatment of Child Victims and Child Witnesses of Crime for Law Enforcement Officials, which supports planning and training, including train-the-trainers courses

13. Available online: <https://www.chip-partnership.co.uk/2016/08/08/young-peoples-board/>

14. Available online: https://www.unodc.org/documents/justice-and-prison-reform/crimeprevention/Criteria_E_book.pdf

15. Available online: <https://www.who.int/teams/mental-health-and-substance-use/treatment-care/equip-ensuring-quality-in-psychological-support> et <https://whoequip.org>

› In France, a mobile learning app to improve interactions with human trafficking victims

ECPAT France, a non-governmental organisation, developed a mobile learning app as part of ReACT, a European project co-financed by the European Commission. The app, which is available on the App Store or Google Play (by searching for ECPAT France) provides quick and around-the-clock access to online training courses (including offline content and the option to take several courses

at the same time). The fun and interactive content, which includes games, videos featuring experts, specialised information sheets and more, is intended to be used in tandem with in-person training. The application now includes training on child trafficking in France for lawyers and legal guardians. Additional modules are currently being developed on other topics and for different stakeholders.

› Peru: A national judicial network

In 2013, CHS Alternativo, a Peruvian civil society organisation, campaigned for the creation of a national judicial network to combat human trafficking. Since then, the network has selected the most motivated and committed justice stakeholders (prosecutors, judges, police officers and victim advocates) to take part in various capacity-building exercises. The network initially had 35 members and now has more than 120 from across Peru. Its members are invited at least twice a year to participate in training workshops, where they can strengthen their capacities and improve mutual cooperation.

In addition, members can coordinate joint actions and strategies for defending human rights, particularly those of women, children and adolescents who are victims of sexual violence, trafficking, migration, smuggling and sexual exploitation. The magistrates in the network consult and support each other through email, WhatsApp groups and conference calls. They are able to hold these discussions because of the relationships they have developed over the past several years. Their experience demonstrates the importance of creating opportunities to share information and learn in order to better defend of the fundamental rights of all victims of crime.



GLOSSARY

› Best interests of the child

A concept that aims to ensure that decisions and actions uphold the rights of children and support their overall development. It is a substantive right in that every child has the right to have their best interests assessed as a primary consideration in any decision that concerns them. It is a principle of legal interpretation that must take precedence over other possible interpretations. In addition, it is a procedural rule because any decision-making process must include an assessment of the positive and negative impacts on the child or children involved. Therefore, the best interests of the child are determined on a case-by-case basis, based on the unique circumstances specific to the child or children concerned, as well as the broader context and needs of the individuals involved.¹⁶

› Child

Every human being below the age of 18 years, unless majority is attained earlier under the law applicable to the child¹⁷.

› Child-friendly services

These are services that are accessible, respectful and inclusive, in addition to being relevant to children’s rights, needs and realities, and taking into account children’s best interests, views and right to participation. Child-friendly services allow for fair treatment that protects the child’s survival and development, in accordance with the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*.

› Child in conflict with the law

A child in conflict with the law is any child suspected, accused or found guilty of committing a criminal offence.¹⁸ A child in conflict with the law shall be presumed innocent until found guilty by an independent and impartial court. Depending on the situation, these children may also be victims or witnesses of crime.¹⁹

› Child in contact with the law

Refers to any child who interacts with the judicial system, whether for criminal matters (as a victim, witness or person in conflict with the law), or for civil matters (such as

situations pertaining to family, adoption or protection), or for administrative reasons (such as children who are displaced, applying for migratory status, etc.)²⁰

› Child participation

Child participation refers to ongoing processes that include information sharing and dialogue between children and adults, based on mutual respect, and through which children can learn how their views and those of adults are taken into account and influence outcomes of these processes.²¹ Child participation processes must be transparent, informative, voluntary, respectful, relevant, child-friendly, inclusive, safe and risk-informed, accountable, and led by trained adults.²²

› Child protection system

Every child grows up within a system in which every person, organisation and institution has a role and responsibility in ensuring that children’s rights are respected and that they can reach their full potential. As the primary defenders of their own rights, children are at the heart of this system of formal and informal structures upheld by families, communities, the state and the international community. This “protection system” encompasses a multitude of diverse microsystems and is shaped by laws, policies, social expectations and cultural norms.

› Child rights responsibility-holders

Those who have primary responsibility for ensuring, protecting and defending children’s rights are governments and state service providers who take action at the legislative, policy, structural, cultural, economic and social levels to uphold children’s rights. More generally, adults who have responsibilities toward a child also have an obligation to respect, protect and defend the rights of the child.

› Child-rights training

Training for personnel working in a sector serving the child protection system aimed at developing the core competencies required to interact professionally with children and in a manner that is respectful of their rights. The training must be tailored to suit the context and the

target audience, use participatory learning methods for adults, and be evaluated. It can be offered as part of basic training (for new hires), specialised courses (for special units or high-ranking officers), and professional development (for regular personnel already in service).

› Competency-based approach

An approach aimed at helping workers in protective fields improve their abilities to defend and uphold children’s rights in the field. With an end goal of enabling practitioners to master a predetermined set of core competencies, this approach covers the various attitudes, skills and knowledge that they either already have or need to develop in order to provide child-friendly service.



› Defense and security forces

Employees of the state in charge of protecting the security of the State, defending its interests and protecting its citizens and territories from threats of all kinds. This includes the armed forces and, depending on the state’s administrative structure, may also include police and gendarmerie forces, national guards, paramilitary forces (such as border guards, coast guards, fire departments, etc.), intelligence services and other similar agencies.

› Deprivation of liberty

Deprivation of liberty means any form of detention, imprisonment or placement of a person in a public or private custodial setting, from which the person is not permitted to leave at will by order of any judicial, administrative or other public authority²³. Child detention can take many forms, such as children living in prison with their primary caregivers or situations resulting from the administration of justice or institutionalisation in the context of armed conflict, for reasons of national security or for the purposes of detention in migratory situations.²⁴

› Institutions where children are deprived of liberty

The term “institutions” means all public or private settings outside the justice system or the penitentiary administration, where children can be deprived of liberty. Such institutions may include, but are not limited to, orphanages, reform schools, closed remand rooms or other correctional institutions, institutions for children with disabilities, for children with health problems (e.g. facilities dealing with behavioural disorders, psychiatric facilities), for children with drug, alcohol or other addictions, for the protection of victims of abuse including trafficking, for children without parental care, from where the children are not permitted to leave at will.²⁵

› Minimum age of criminal responsibility

The minimum age of criminal responsibility is the “minimum age below which children are presumed not to have the capacity to infringe the criminal law.”²⁶ This minimum threshold is established by law. It means that only children who are at or above this age at the time they allegedly committed a crime can be subject to criminal proceedings and be convicted. The Committee on the Rights of the Child encourages states to set the minimum age of criminal responsibility to at least 14 years²⁷.

16. Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment No. 14 on the right of the child to have his or her best interests taken as a primary consideration, May 29, 2013 (CRC/C/GC/14).

17. Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1577 UNTS 3, Art. 1.

18. UN General Assembly, United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice (The Beijing Rules): resolution adopted by the General Assembly, November 29, 1985, A/RES/40/33, available online at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/3b00f2203c.html>, Rule 2.2 c.

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› **Multi-sectoral approach**

An approach that consists of taking into account all the various components of the child protection system, and equipping and strengthening them so that all actors can work in a complementary manner and fulfil their roles in promoting and defending child rights.

› **Personnel working with children deprived of liberty**

Any person whose mandate is to supervise and ensure the welfare of children deprived of their liberty by order of a judicial, administrative or other public authority. These individuals work in public or private child detention centres, placement centres, holding facilities or any other place from which the child is not allowed to leave at will.

› **Rehabilitation**

Rehabilitation is the post-release or post-sentence phase of a child's life, during which they continue to be monitored and supervised. The purpose of this phase is to support the child's return to the community and to reduce their risk of reoffending.²⁸ Rehabilitation measures may include probation, counselling, enrolment in community assistance programmes or other forms of support. The term "reintegration" is generally preferred to

"rehabilitation" as the latter is thought to divert attention away from external factors and responsibilities bringing a child into conflict with the law.²⁹

› **Re-integration**

Re-integration is a process that allows children to re-establish or take roots in society. It involves a process of social, economic and political reintegration, for example: through the restoring of family, peer and community relationships; and through participation in educational or livelihood activities, cultural and leisure activities, and decision-making processes. Art. 40 of the CRC specifies that every child in conflict with the law has the right to be treated in a way which takes into account the desirability of promoting their reintegration and assuming a constructive role in society.³⁰

› **Restorative Justice**

As an alternative to court proceedings, restorative justice involves bringing together the victim/survivor, perpetrator and, in some cases, others affected by the crime to actively seek the resolution of issues arising from the crime, usually with the assistance of a mediator.³¹ This approach provides victims with an opportunity to obtain

reparation, feel safer and find peace of mind. It also enables perpetrators to become aware of the causes and effects of their actions and to take responsibility in a constructive manner.³²

› **Re-victimisation**

Re-victimisation refers to a situation in which a child is the victim of several incidents of crime over a period of time.³³ This includes all forms of abuse, harassment, or physical or psychological assault that occurs subsequently to the initial victimisation. The concept refers to the fact that child victims of abuse or crime are statistically at greater risk of a repeated victimisation, either in the short term or as an adult.³⁴

› **Secondary victimisation**

Secondary victimisation refers to victimisation that is not the direct result of a crime, but rather of the responses of individuals or institutions to the victim.³⁵ It is an indirect violation that follows the original violation of the child and refers to "victim-blaming attitudes, behaviour, and practices engaged in by community service providers, which results in additional trauma [...]." Secondary victimisation can also be understood as the negative social reaction to the initial harm, which victims experience as additional harm.³⁶

› **Social workers**

Any person with a professional background in social welfare and whose work involves supporting children, families, groups and communities in order to make lasting improvements to their wellbeing and conditions, while empowering them at both the individual and social levels. Social services personnel include social workers, social assistants, support workers, special educators or other equivalent designations depending on the country.

› **Standard operating procedures**

The term "standard operating procedures" is used to describe the terms of reference, internal procedures and intersectoral protocols which formalise work methods within a department, professional body or system, and which specify how to perform tasks effectively and in accordance with international standards.

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ABOUT THE IBCR

Founded in 1994, the International Bureau for Children’s Rights (IBCR) is an international non-governmental organisation whose mission is to protect and promote children’s rights in a manner consistent with the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* and its optional protocols.

Committed to creating a world in which every child enjoys rights equally and in all circumstances, the IBCR strives to strengthen child protection systems and build the capacities of personnel working directly with children. The IBCR’s approach is based on the four main principles of the CRC: systematic consideration of the best interests of the child, non discrimination, the right to life, survival and development, and respect for the views of the child and the right to participation.

Since it was first founded, the IBCR has worked in nearly 50 countries and shared its expertise by offering training in seven languages to more than 64,000* workers, resulting in better protection for millions of children.

In 2021, the IBCR developed a new strategic plan to ensure that, for the next four years, its activities and initiatives would be focused on one clearly stated ambition: **“To rise up to the level of children.”** It is not uncommon for the issue of child protection to be notably absent from the priorities of the very institutions responsible for safeguarding them. For this reason, the IBCR aims to continue instigating positive change in the way in which children are assisted and protected through the regular provision

of services. The IBCR’s new strategy is built on four pillars of action:

- **Listening to children and ensuring their participation**
- **Providing tools and training to workers with professional responsibilities for children**
- **Improving responsibility sharing and collaboration between project participants**
- **Mobilising agents of change and ensuring they are recognised**

The strategic plan and theory of change are available on the IBCR’s website: www.ibcr.org/publications.

Since 2015, the IBCR has implemented various multisectoral and multi-year projects, with the opening of satellite offices and the deployment of field staff in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burkina Faso, Senegal, Costa Rica and Honduras. In each of these five countries, projects spanning three to five years have been implemented to provide in-depth capacity building to security forces, social services workers and justice system professionals. These projects are being led in partnership with local governments and with financial support from Global Affairs Canada and UNICEF. The IBCR’s operational team also includes volunteers who are deployed in 11 countries to work with 35 partners.

**These numbers fluctuate annually. For further information, refer to the IBCR brochure, available online on the organisation’s website.*



IBCR PUBLICATIONS

Children and Armed Conflict: A Guide to International Humanitarian and Human Rights Law (2010)	FR	EN
Expert training workshop on children’s rights training for security forces (Dakar, Senegal, 2011)	FR	
Regional initiative to support justice for children in the Middle East and North Africa (Amman, Jordan, 2013)	FR	EN
Fifth Workshop on the integration of the core competencies for Child-Friendly Policing into the Training and Practice of Police Officers and Gendarmes in Africa (Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire, 2013)	FR	EN
Reference Guide on the Regional and Inter-Regional Laws and Standards Relevant to Policing Practice in Africa (2014)	FR	EN AR
Assessment of Knowledge, Attitude and Behavioural Change among Security and Defence Forces (2014)	FR	EN
Youth voices and participation in the justice process: Judicial trajectories of victims and witnesses of crime in Quebec (2017)	FR	
Core Child-Rights Competencies for Judges and Prosecutors - Promoting child-friendly practices for magistrates (2018)	FR	EN ES
Child-rights core competencies guide for social services personnel - Promoting child-friendly practices in the social services sector (2020)	FR	EN ES
Child-rights core competencies guide - Promoting child-friendly practices security forces, social services workers, justice personnel and people working with children deprived of liberty (2020)	FR	EN ES
Core competencies for staff working with children deprived of their liberty - Tools and knowledge for providing child-friendly interventions (2021)	FR	EN ES

DOCUMENTS ON CHILD PROTECTION

The Beijing Rules: United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice (1985)	FR	EN	ES	AR
The Tokyo Rules: United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for Non-custodial Measures (1990)	FR	EN	ES	
The Riyadh Guidelines: United Nations Guidelines for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency (1990)	FR	EN	ES	AR
The Havana Rules: United Nations Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of their Liberty (1990)	FR	EN	ES	AR
The Vienna Guidelines: Guidelines for Action on Children in the Criminal Justice System		EN	ES	
The Bangalore Principles of Judicial Conduct (2002)	FR	EN	ES	
The Lilongwe Declaration on Accessing Legal Aid in the Criminal Justice System in Africa (2004)	FR	EN		
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Guidelines on Action for Children in the Justice System in Africa (2011)	FR	EN		
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The Munyonyo Declaration on Justice for Children in Africa (2012)	FR	EN	ES	
Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (2012)	FR	EN	ES	
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Resolution 69/194: United Nations Model Strategies and Practical Measures on the Elimination of Violence against Children in the Field of Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (2014)	FR	EN	ES	
The Mandela Rules: The United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners	FR	EN	ES	AR
Guidelines on the Conditions of Arrest, Police Custody and Pre-Trial Detention in Africa, African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights (April 25, 2015)	FR	EN		AR
International Association of Youth and Family Judges and Magistrates (IAYFJM) Guidelines on Children in Contact with Justice (2016)	FR	EN	ES	
United Nations Global Study on Children Deprived of Liberty (2019)		EN		
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