Strategic Plan 2014 – 2017

Introduction

This plan outlines the overarching strategic direction for Child to Child and is presented in three sections:

1. Part One sets out the current position of Child to Child, including:
   1.1. An overview of Child to Child;
   1.2. An overview of Child to Child approaches;
   1.3. Our vision, mission & underpinning values;
   1.4. Our scope and reach

2. Part Two provides a situational analysis, including:
   2.1. An overview of the global context;
   2.2. Barriers to children’s participation

3. Part Three sets out Child to Child’s:
   3.1. Theory of change
   3.2. Strategic priorities and objectives for the next three years

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1 The strategy builds upon the draft strategy produced in September 2012, incorporating subsequent ideas generated during trustee discussions and a recent Theory of Change workshop, facilitated by INTRAC, which was attended by staff, board members and consultants. It is also informed by on-going discussions on governance and corporate communications at board level.

It draws upon a comprehensive consultation exercise with numerous stakeholders undertaken as part of a study carried out in spring 2011 to determine whether and how Child to Child might establish a Research, Training and Consultancy service and an initial review of publications carried out during the same period. It also draws upon a range of documents produced in the last decade, which reflect upon the history of Child to Child and lessons learned.


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Part One: Current Position

1.1 Overview of Child to Child

Child to Child is an international child-rights agency located at the Institute of Education, University of London. It is a pioneer of the children’s participation movement and works to realize and mainstream children’s right to participate, as set out in Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the most widely ratified international human rights treaty.

Conceptualised in 1978 as a means to commemorate the forthcoming UN Year of the Child, Child-to-Child encompasses a range of participatory approaches intended to enable and empower children and young people worldwide to reach their full potential and achieve their rights by promoting the holistic health, well-being and development of themselves, their families and their communities.

In 1987, an organisation was established to further develop Child-to-Child approaches and promote their use. A formal network of Child-to-Child users was established. Since that time, Child to Child has been:

- Providing services to agencies and others in Africa, the Arab world, Latin America and Asia in order that they understand how to create the space for – and support the practice of – children’s participation
- Delivering capacity building (through delivering training courses, mentoring and support) to enable organisations to effectively plan, implement and evaluate participatory programmes and initiatives
- Producing and disseminating materials and resources, including the development and publication of materials in local languages
- Working with others to advocate for children’s participation
- Influencing policy and practice

1.2 Overview of Child-to-Child approaches

Child-to-Child approaches are a practical way in which children’s rights can be effectively realized, addressing children’s right to survival, protection, development and participation. The Convention’s guiding principles of inclusion, non-discrimination and being in the best interests of the child underpin Child-to-Child approaches. They:

- Promote active learning that link learning with taking action to promote the health, well-being and development of children, their families, peers and communities;
- Are rights-based and grounded in the UNCRC’s guiding principles of inclusion; non-discrimination and the best interest of the child; and
- Have been demonstrated to enhance the personal, physical, social, emotional, moral and intellectual development of children.
Child-to-Child has been adapted for a variety of contexts, developing expertise in thematic areas including:

- Supporting orphans and vulnerable children affected by HIV and AIDS
- Water and sanitation in refugee camps
- Life-skills education and child protection
- Inclusive education for children with disabilities
- Early childhood development
- Health education and promotion in schools
- Disaster risk reduction

Child-to-Child approaches are used by, and Child to Child is a respected partner, of:

- United Nations organizations, including UNESCO and UNICEF which awarded Child to Child the Maurice Pate Award for Innovation in 1991 and with which we recently collaborated on an early childhood development initiative that was piloted in six countries between 2007 – 2010;
- International non-governmental organisations such as WorldVision International, Plan International and Save the Children, to which we provide training and consultancy support; and
- Local NGOs such as ACE Africa (which recently won the STARS Foundation Award for its work using the Child-to-Child approach to promote the health and wellbeing of children and communities impacted by the HIV and AIDS pandemic in Kenya and Tanzania) and Pikin to Pikin, with whom we are partnering to deliver a five year intervention focused on early childhood development and life-skills education in Sierra Leone.
- Teacher training and professional development service providers. Child-to-Child training has been incorporated into teacher training and continuing professional development curricula in countries including Uganda and Zambia.

These significant achievements have been delivered by a very small staff team (currently five full-time, two part-time and two interns) and a small network of international expert advisors / consultants.

1.3 Vision, Mission and Values

Our Vision is of a world where children are empowered to participate in the realisation of their rights

Our Mission is to create space where children and young people are listened to and taken seriously in the exercise of their rights

Our values:

- We put children and young people at the heart of what we do
- We listen to and take seriously the perspectives and views of young people
- We respect children and young people as agents of change
- We acknowledge and respect children and young people’s evolving capacities
- We are committed to the safety of children and young people at all times

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• We seek to work equitably and inclusively with all children and young people
• We are honest, transparent and accountable to all of our stakeholders, including children
• We provide value for money in all that we do
• We ensure that our work is sustainable and replicable

1.4 Our Scope and Reach
We work both in the UK and internationally in partnership with agencies, which work with children and young people least able to exercise their rights.

Through an ethos of being copyright-free, Child-to-Child approaches have spread to over 70 countries worldwide, mainly in Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Latin America, with materials translated into over 35 languages. It was estimated in 2007 that Child-to-Child approaches impact 1.5 million children annually.

We are currently impacting upon a minimum of 300,000 children, figures which include those children directly benefiting from initiatives we are involved in with international partners such as UNICEF and local partners such as Pikin-to-Pikin Movement (Sierra Leone). These figures do not include direct / indirect beneficiaries of organisations that use Child-to-Child approaches within their programme strategies, such as ACE Africa, which operates the largest CtC programme in East Africa and which has CtC Health Clubs in 200 schools in Kenya and Tanzania. By 2018, we intend to increase the numbers of children directly benefitting from CtC approaches to 1,000,000.
Part Two: Situational analysis

2.1 Barriers to children’s participation

Despite being a fundamental human right, for most children, being listened to and respected and having the opportunity to play a meaningful role in issues which affect them is not an option. Whilst there are undeniably pockets of good ‘participatory’ practice, there is much to be done to mainstream children’s participation to ensure that all children are able to realise their right to be heard.

There are numerous barriers to the widespread realization of children’s fundamental right to participate in matters that affect them:

- Despite ratification of the UN CRC, most societies do not actively promote or support children’s rights to participate. Many governments – despite being signatories to the convention – have failed to develop the legal and policy frameworks that would enable meaningful implementation of Article 12. Participation is marginalised in favour of legislation and policy intended to meet governments’ other obligations under the CRC, namely provision of services and protection.

- Adults often do not recognise nor support children’s rights to participate and consequently they are excluded from decision-making. Cultural attitudes may mean that children are not recognised as having useful and legitimate contributions. Too often they are seen as adults in the making rather than as people in their own right ‘here and now’. During their childhood, children may be viewed as the ‘property’ of adults. Unsurprisingly, these barriers may be compounded in countries where certain constituencies of adults are themselves not fully able to realise their rights (for example, women, minority groups and those with disabilities).

- Children are disenfranchised as a constituency. They lack economic, social and political power. They often do not have access to good quality education that would provide them with the information they require to understand their rights. Even those that do go to school are not necessary educated about their rights. Consequently, children are not aware that they have the right to participate and do not have the skills or knowledge to exercise it. These challenges may be compounded by discriminatory attitudes towards children from marginalised groups, including those with disabilities, those from minority communities and girls.

These barriers to participation are often further compounded in societies experiencing (a) significant man-made or natural humanitarian crises, such as conflict, which may lead to forced migration and displacement; (b) high levels of absolute poverty and / or significant inequalities between social groups. Such conditions mean that children – or certain groups of children – are, for example, likely
to be: unable to attend school as they need to work in order to supplement or provide household income; heading households; street-affected; vulnerable to exploitation and abuse; and / or face significant malnutrition and hunger. Any or all of these factors will significantly inhibit children's abilities to participate.

2.2 Global Context for children's participation

In the 25 years since the Convention on the Rights of the Child, there has been a growing emphasis on increasing the levels - and enhancing the quality - of children's participation. Despite over two decades of practice, many organizations still struggle with the challenge of practically incorporating quality participatory practice into their work. Whilst pockets of good practice have developed, there does not yet currently exist a robust and comprehensive evidence base capable of demonstrating the outcomes and impact of children's participation across a range of sectors and settings. The evidence that does exist is piecemeal. The lack of such an evidence base means that it is difficult to prove conclusively the intrinsic benefits of participation for children and communities.

The introduction of global initiatives including the Education for All agenda and the Millennium Development Goals have inevitably - and laudably – led to a focus on initiatives that can be proven to deliver effective development interventions intended to improve life chances and reduce poverty across populations. This emphasis on evidence-based interventions has also been driven by the global economic downturn, which has led to a reduction in available resources for development and a concomitant (and understandable) emphasis on 'value for money'. The emergence of new and hugely influential philanthropic foundations, such as Gates and the Children's Investment Fund Foundation are also driving this new development agenda, seeking low-cost technological innovations that can deliver benefits to scale, with a particular emphasis on reducing morbidity and mortality amongst vulnerable populations including women and children. It is not immediately apparent how the process, people-oriented nature of children's participation can contribute to these emergent priorities, particularly given the lack of a robust and comprehensive evidence base. The Child-to-Child movement globally, with its historic focus on health and development, has generated some piecemeal evidence that such participatory approaches can deliver improvements in critical health outcomes but it has never had access to the types of the resources that would enable it to deliver such outcomes to scale.

Rights-based agendas are therefore vulnerable to being sidelined by a development agenda more focused on quantifiable – and potentially 'scalable' - results, for example the numbers of vaccinations given and there is increasing evidence that the commitment to such rights-based approaches is being eroded. Save the Children and UNICEF have both recently reaffirmed their commitment to prioritizing 'survival', with an emphasis on the under-5s. Whilst UNICEF retains an Adolescent
Development and Participation Unit, it has reduced staffing capacity with a specific remit on participation. The downgrading of child rights is also reflected at national levels. For example, in 2011 the British government issued a statement that its “centrally-driven human rights priorities do not include child rights”. It decided not to renew or replace its child rights strategy and disbanded its child rights panel. Further to this, the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee has recently reported “there are persistent criticisms by children’s rights groups that the FCO is failing to treat children’s human rights as a priority. We continue to believe that the FCO should do more to gain the confidence of children’s rights groups in its human rights work. As a relatively simple step, we recommend that the Foreign Secretary appoint a child rights expert to his Advisory Group on Human Rights: this would provide reassurance to children’s rights groups that the FCO is alert to the particular demands of supporting children’s human rights worldwide”.

However, it is not clear that evidence-based, value for money, scalable interventions can effectively address the structural inequalities within societies, which means that the benefits generated by those interventions are not equally shared. For example, gender bias persists in many countries, which means that girls and women do not benefit equally from increased access to education or health care. Such interventions are also not appropriate for the challenges faced by young people particularly in middle-income countries – social problems such as endemic violence and drug use. These are not easily amenable to technological fixes and require meaningful engagement and participation of affected populations.

The downgrading of child rights therefore inevitably risks a shift in emphasis away from approaches which value the contribution that children and young people can and should make to their own wellbeing and that of their communities. It is also risks undermining the potential for children and young people to engage meaningfully with the societies in which they live, engagement which creates the foundations from which democratic principles and practices can emerge and become embedded, critical precursors for the democratic accountability required to facilitate economic development.

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If participation is to remain on the development agenda, there is an urgent need to demonstrate its many benefits, to generate a comprehensive evidence base detailing outcomes and impacts across a range of settings and contexts. To ensure that such outcomes are impacts are of the highest possible quality, there is also a critical need to provide opportunities for skills training and professional development for those engaging with children and young people and to create opportunities for them to share good practice. Child to Child is ideally placed to provide leadership for this agenda and to enhance the contribution it can make to the international movement for the institutionalisation and mainstreaming of children’s fundamental right to participate in the development of their futures.
Part Three: Our Theory of Change

Our theory of change identifies five areas, which need to be addressed if children's right to participate is to be fully realised:

- The recognition that children are capable of making a meaningful contribution
- The creation of an enabling environment, with 'space' relinquished to sharing power and providing decision making opportunities to children and young people
- Adults and children recognising that all children have equal rights
- The development of appropriate policy and legal frameworks with commitment to implementation, backed by sufficient resources
- Governments and donors placing children at the heart of their agendas and the post-2015 framework

3.1 Child to Child's Programme

The first three areas outlined above, are direct drivers of children's participation and Child to Child, with its 30 years of experience of promoting participation is uniquely positioned to make a significant and measurable contribution to their realization. It will achieve this through delivering the following interlinked components:

- Building and strengthening the community of practice

  Participation should no longer be a privilege available only to the few, but a right that can be realized by the majority of children. Child to Child is committed to developing a critical dialogue with its global partners and others engaged in the practice of participation to promote its institutionalization. In setting out to bring participatory approaches into mainstream practice, Child to Child is concerned to achieve consistency in the quality, experience and measurable outcomes achieved by the use of its Child-to-Child approaches and other participatory methods.

Child to Child's current networks are extensive, encompassing as they do practitioners and participants, as well as children, families, agencies and communities who have engaged with Child-to-Child processes over the 30 years of its operation.

Child to Child will revitalize and strengthen these network of participation practitioners, with the aim of developing a coherent community of practice which seeks to continuously review and improve the outcomes for children.

The development and strengthening of an international community of practice will be made possible by a dedicated digital platform convened by Child to Child on behalf of the sector. This interactive platform will enable the sharing of experiences, expertise, research and materials, and bringing together what is inevitably a widely distributed and sometimes quite isolated “family” of
practitioners from across the globe. The digital platform will offer a web based home for the international debate on children’s participation and a gateway to research and best practice in this field, including an online catalogue of well indexed learning resources and materials and a database of e-learning opportunities.

In addition to the digital platform, Child to Child is a founder and committed partner on the annual conference series on children’s participation: Children As Actors Transforming Society (CATS), alongside Initiatives of Change and the Universal Education Foundation and children and young people, who are integral to the planning and delivery of the conference. CATS seeks to create a community of practice, to consolidate and share what has been learned and to establish effective systems and processes to embed participation. Working in partnership with young people to deliver CATS will demonstrate what young people are capable of and model the type of inter-generational partnership working Child to Child would like to see more of.

Child to Child also hosts a quarterly Forum for NGO Practitioners Working in Children’s Participation. During this forthcoming strategic period we will seek to strengthen the Forum and ensure that it is connected with and to CATS and the digital platform.

Child to Child will continue to offer capacity building and technical support to its partners to drive up standards of practice and will continue to work in partnership with organization to innovate and develop new resources and materials in response to emerging social issues.

- **Developing the evidence base for the scope, quality and impact of participation**
  The sharing of the substantial practice based experience gained by Consultants and NGO’s working in contrasting social, cultural and political settings, will offer a significant contribution to enabling shared best practice and quality monitoring. Child to Child recognises the essential role of research and evaluation in informing best practice and in establishing confidence amongst funding agencies for the work of the charity and others engaged in children’s participation.

Child to Child is committed to building the evidence base for children’s participation and to promoting improved monitoring and evaluation of children’s participation. Child to Child will work in partnership with other key players in the child rights sector (Save the Children, UNICEF, World Vision, Plan International) to advocate for agencies to use the children’s participation M&E Toolkit which has recently been tested in the ‘Step Change’ global pilot. This provides a comprehensive theoretical framework that can be used to assess the scope, quality and impact of participation.
Child to Child will incorporate interactive crowd sourcing technologies into the digital platform to (a) enable agencies to share their evaluation data which can (b) be aggregated into larger data sets clearly demonstrating the scope, quality and impacts of participation.

Child to Child is committed to furthering and extending its working relationship with funding agencies and academic institutions to encourage research in this area and to incorporating the outcomes of this research into its own practice and the practice of others.

The last two areas outlined in the Theory of Change above, are more complex, macro-level issues, which will require sophisticated, multi-sectoral responses from a range of partners. However, Child to Child can make a significant contribution towards change in each of these areas by:

- **Policy and advocacy to create an enabling environment**

  Placing Child to Child as a convener of a globally and digitally networked hub of agencies – including the world’s leading child rights agencies (UNICEF, Save the Children, World Vision, Plan International etc) and practitioners has the potential to create a formidable platform for advocacy. The commitment to M&E (outlined above) in conjunction with crowd sourcing technologies capable of generating aggregated data sets and a solid evidence base that demonstrates the *intrinsic value* and significant benefits of participation and rights based approaches, which revitalise and invigorate communities and societies by enabling children to engage firsthand with participatory democratic principles and practice. This evidence base will also demonstrate that participation is *a means to achieve* other policy priorities, for example reducing infant mortality.

Child to Child is committed to developing a global scorecard for children’s participation, using ten indicators that have been established in the M&E Toolkit (see above) and are also reflected in the self-assessment framework developed for the Council of Europe. Child to Child will systematically gather evidence on these indicators, which provide an overall framework for measuring the extent to which governments globally are meeting their obligations under the CRC to promote and respect children’s participation rights. This information will be shared on the digital platform.

The annual conference on children’s participation – CATS – also provides a significant platform to advocate for the benefits and outcomes of participation. CATS is designed and delivered together with children and young people, thus providing an actual model of genuine partnership working and showcases exemplary practice from around the world.
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Part Four: Strategies

We have designed five strategies to put our theory of change into action and work towards achieving our mission:

1. **Convening international learning networks and forums for dialogue to continuously develop and promote children’s participation**

We will work with participation practitioners and others committed to participation to build and strengthen the community of practice in order that we can work collectively to promote participation.

2. **Capacity building individuals and organisations in the planning, implementation of participatory programmes and initiatives, through delivering training courses, mentoring and support**

We will provide a range of technical support services to agencies and others in order that they understand how to create the space for – and support the practice of – children's participation.

3. **Developing and promoting participatory approaches by documenting and sharing experience-based learning and action research, and producing and disseminating quality materials**

We will work systematically and in collaboration with others to build the evidence base for participation and build the capacity of agencies to monitor and evaluate their work effectively. We will disseminate the learning generated to our international networks and use it to inform the development of new resources and materials.

4. **Policy development, awareness raising and advocacy on children’s participation in partnership with other organizations**

In partnerships with others and through strategic alliances, we will advocate to keep participation at the heart of the international development agenda with others to influence policy and decision makers in the UK and internationally.

These four externally facing strategic objectives will be underpinned by an objective to ensure that we have sufficient human and financial resources to deliver our plan:

5. **Building the sustainability of the organization by (a) maximizing opportunities to generate unrestricted earned income and (b) ensuring that we have a staff team with the knowledge, skills and expertise they need to perform their roles effectively**

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We will increase our commercial capability so that we can maximize the income generated as a consequence of selling training and consultancy services. There will be a particular emphasis on identifying and developing funding streams to support our to fulfil our advocacy and strategic objectives, activities not easily supported by current trends in project focused funding. While maintaining the copyright free principle that Child to Child has with respect to its training and teaching materials, we will also consider appropriate ways to access new income sources and to extend its income generation activities.